

Chapter 7: Christ Calls 12 Apostles

Reading Outline:

- Luke 4:14-32; 5; 6:12-16
 - Matthew 10
1. Introduction
 2. Jesus Announces He is the Messiah
 3. Jesus Calls his Twelve Apostles
 - 3.1. Disciples of Jesus Christ
 - 3.2. What is an Apostle?
 - 3.3. The Original Twelve
 4. Jesus Ordains and Instructs the Twelve Apostles
 5. The Twelve Apostles Today
 6. Conclusions

1. Introduction

In this chapter we will discuss the witness Jesus gave in the Synagogue at Nazareth and the reception He received. We will address the calling of the Twelve from amongst His disciples. We will also answer the question, “What is an Apostle?” and consider Jesus’ charge to the Twelve. Then, we will note the connection between Jesus declaring His testimony as the Messiah and the special call of the Twelve today.

The Apostle Paul in his letter to the Ephesians wrote,

Ephesians 2:19-20

19 Now, therefore ye are no more strangers and foreigners, but fellowcitizens with the saints, and of the household of God;
20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone;

Paul was speaking to those who recently had become converts to the Church of Jesus Christ established in the meridian of time. He reminded them they were now one with the members of the Church. The Church of Jesus Christ is based upon the words of the Apostles and Prophets as directed through Jesus Christ. It is His Church. After His resurrection and today, He continues to administer His Church on earth through direct inspiration to those who are His recognized leaders.

2. Jesus Announces that He is the Messiah

During His youth, and early manhood, each Saturday on the Jewish Sabbath, Jesus and His family, attended the worship service conducted by the Rabbi in the synagogue in Nazareth. Similarly, other Sabbaths would find Him during his three-year ministry attending the synagogue in other communities in Israel.

James E. Talmage notes,

"Previously, Jesus "had [listened] to the reading of the law and the prophets and to the commentaries...as delivered by appointed readers; but now as a recognized teacher of legal age He was eligible to take the reader's place."¹

No doubt many in attendance had heard of the miracles He had performed in various areas, including the recent healing of a sick child in Capernaum while He had been in Cana, a distance of twenty miles. They were no doubt anxious to know what great miracle He would perform in their presence. There were also those in the congregation who had known His family for He had grown up in their village. Now He was famous, but previously they had not noticed anything about Him that would have set Him apart from other young men in the village. With anticipation, they now watched and listened to His every word.

The Rabbi handed Him the roll, or book of Isaiah. Jesus "found the place where it was written" (Luke 4:17).

Luke 4:18-19 compared to Isaiah 61:1-2

Luke 4:18-19	Isaiah 61:1-2
18 The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because he hath anointed me to preach the gospel to the poor; he hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised.	1 The Spirit of the Lord God is upon me; because <u>the Lord</u> hath anointed me to preach good tidings unto the <u>meek</u>; he hath sent me to <u>bind up</u> the brokenhearted, <u>to proclaim liberty</u> to the captives, and <u>the opening of the prison to them that are bound</u>;
19 To preach the acceptable year of the Lord.	2 To proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord, ...

Immediately the verses were recognized by those in attendance. It was a familiar scripture for it spoke of the Messiah who was to come to free Israel from bondage. All eyes were fastened upon Him as they wondered what great insight He would offer as He had sat down, signifying that He desired to provide a commentary regarding the reading.

As He spoke, they could hardly believe their ears.

Luke 4:21

21 And he began to say unto them, This day is this scripture fulfilled in your ears.

He has just declared to them, those who knew Him and had watched Him grow up...that He was the awaited Messiah!

The response to His words was varied.

Luke 4:22

22 And all bare him witness, and wondered at the gracious words which proceeded out of his mouth. And they said, Is not this Joseph's son?

This cannot be true. This is Joseph's son. He couldn't be the Messiah. Others must have thought in their minds, now He is going to provide a miracle for us, like He has done elsewhere, to demonstrate His power. Then we will know that He is the Messiah.

Luke 4:23

23 And he said unto them, Ye will surely say unto me this proverb, Physician, heal thyself: whatsoever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in thy country.

Yes, they thought, that is what we want. Show us a miracle and then we will believe. Maybe you could cut off someone's arm and then heal it. Then we would believe. Jesus' response is to declare unto those who would seek for a sign, even if He were to perform one for them, without the required faith, they would not believe.

Luke 4:24

24 And he said, Verily I say unto you, No prophet is accepted in his own country.

You would not accept my witness even if I were to perform a miracle. Your faith, diminished by your familiarity with me, is not sufficient for me to convince you. How can you doubt my personal witness to you given in my own voice?

Luke 4:25-27

25 But I tell you a truth, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elias [Elijah], when the heaven was shut up three years, and six months, when great famine was throughout all the land;
26 But unto none of them was Elias [Elijah] sent, save unto Sarepta, a city of Sidon, unto a woman that was a widow.

27 And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Eliseus [Elisha] the prophet; and none of them was cleansed, saving Naaman the Syrian.

What is He saying? Does He think that we are not as good as those Gentiles and Lepers? Does He not believe that we are good enough for Him to perform one of his miracles? Who does He think he is?

What they did not understand is the faith of the recipient, in this incidence, His personal witness born of the spirit, must proceed the performance of any healing or miracle. Its use, predicated upon divine authority, is to increase the faith of the believer, not merely to satisfy the curiosity of the doubter. Both the widow of Serpta and Naaman the Syrian, honored the request of the prophet thereby demonstrating their faith and they were blessed.

Luke 4:28-29

28 And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath,
29 And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong.

The reaction of the congregation to His declaration, had intensified from anticipation and wonderment and then murder! How dare He declare that they were not faithful enough for Him to perform a miracle! He was no Messiah. He was an Impostor, a Charlatan, one who was worthy of death!

Luke 4:30

30 But he passing though the midst of them went his way.

Kenneth S. Bennion states,

"What a mistake for the people of Nazareth to make! For thirty years the Messiah had lived among them and they had not known it. Now He had come to them filled with power, ready to declare His precious message to them, ready to heal their sick and to bless them if they would let Him. But they had no faith. They rejected Him and so lost the blessings that could have been theirs."²

Jesus had borne His testimony to those in the synagogue in Nazareth. They had rejected His witness. They wanted a miracle. When they did not get one, they became homicidal. They now joined the ranks of those who would hear His testimony, but would not accept Him as the Messiah. Would we also be among that number? How do we respond to the message of His servants today? Do we hear the whispering of the spirit bearing witness of the truth as they speak, or do we sometimes think that they are just ordinary men and not real servants of the Lord? Do we act upon their words, thereby strengthening our faith, or do we doubt and seek further assurance of their divine calling?

3. Jesus Calls His Twelve Apostles

We have previously noted Jesus' calling five to be His disciples who included Andrew, John, Cephas or Peter, Philip and Nathanael/Bartholomew. Jesus, after using his boat to teach a gathering of people along the shore, afterwards spoke to Simon Peter.

Luke 5:4-6

4 Now when he had left speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught [catch, haul].

5 And Simon answering said unto him, Master, we have toiled all the night, and have taken nothing: nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net.

6 And when they had this done, they inclosed a great multitude of fishes: and their net brake.

Peter, not Jesus, is the expert regarding catching fish. They had been fishing all night and had not caught anything. When Jesus directed him to go out yet further and there to let the net down, he hesitates, and then says, "nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net" (Luke 5:5). In other words, I am doubtful, but, nevertheless, I will follow your directions. The result was two-fold. The catch was so great that "it filled both ships [Peter's ship and his partners], so that they began to sink" (Luke 5:7). Also, Jesus re-extended the call to Simon Peter and John, and called James and "they forsook all, and followed him" (Luke 5:11)

Jesus saw a publican named Levi/Matthew who was a Jew employed by Rome to collect custom taxes.

Luke 5:27-28

27 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi [Matt. 9:9 Matthew], sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.

28 And he left all, rose up, and followed him.

3.1. Disciples of Jesus Christ

Andrew, John, Peter, Philip, Nathanael Bartholomew, James the son of Zebedee who was John's brother and Matthew Levi are individuals whose calls are recorded in the scriptures to be numbered among His disciples to come and follow me. We may assume that each of the others: Thomas (Didymus); James (James II, the son of Alpheus); Judas who is called Lebbeus Thaddeus by Matthew, Thaddeus by Mark, and Judas the brother of James by Luke; Simon Zelotes in Acts, Simon called Zelotes in Luke, and the Canaanite by Matthew and Mark, and Judas Iscariot, had also received personal calls and were then numbered among the Lord's disciples. Each also responded when the Savior had chosen them, left what they were doing, and followed Him.

James E. Talmage reminds us,

"Discipleship in general; any follower of a man or devotee to a principle may be called a disciple...Prior to [this] time none [of those called as disciples] had been distinguished by any special delegation of authority or appointment; they had been numbered with the disciples in general...prior to their call to the [Apostleship] none had been ordained or set apart to their sacred office."³

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Jesus is now going to call the Twelve: twelve men who will be his witnesses; who will bear, with him, the burdens of the kingdom; who will accept martyrdom and defy the rulers of the world; and who, save Judas the traitor and John the Beloved, shall seal their testimonies with their own blood...in less than two years (April, of A.D. 30) he will finish his mortal labors, ascend unto his Father, and leave the Twelve to preach the gospel in all the world and to build up that church and kingdom which will administer salvation to all who believe and obey."⁴

The twelve must be prayerfully chosen so they may be taught and prepared for the responsibility that will be theirs.

Luke 6:12-13

12 And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

Bruce R. McConkie states,

"Thus, we see Jesus (for the time for calling the Twelve is now) goes alone into a mountain to pray. All night long his petitions ascend to his Father; during the long hours of darkness he communes with the one who sent him and whose will he came to do. He needed--as we need during the long and dark days of life--direction from on high. He received answer to his prayer."⁵

Having sought and received full approval from His Father, as the day began, He called unto Him those disciples who would become His Twelve Apostles.

3.2. What is an Apostle?

Richard O. Cowan states,

The word “apostle” is a “sacred title...taken from the Greek word *apostolos*, which means one who is officially sent out as an envoy.”⁶

The title was selected by Jesus, “he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles” (Luke 6:13).

James E. Talmage states,

“The Holy Apostleship is an office and calling belonging to the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, at once exalted and specific, comprising as a distinguishing function that of personal and special witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of mankind.”⁷

Bruce R. McConkie adds,

“Apostles of the Lord Jesus Christ [are] mighty men of faith; pillars of personal righteousness; chosen spirits who were before ordained to walk with Christ, teach his doctrine, and testify of his divine Sonship...[They serve as his] legal administrators who shall in due course hold the keys of the kingdom; who shall have power to bind on earth and seal in heaven; who shall stand in the place and stead of the Lord Jesus when he returns to his Father to reign in eternal glory forever.”⁸

3.3. The Original Twelve

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“Those chosen by Jesus on this memorable morning are named, as a group, four times in the New Testament--by Matthew, by Mark, and twice by Luke, one in his Gospel and one in the Acts of the Apostles. No two of these listings give the same order of seniority, and in some instances the name applied to the same person varies. All of the lists place Peter first, and the three that mention Judas place him last. The account in Acts lists only the eleven, as Judas by then had served his purpose and sealed his traitorous conduct with a suicidal death.”⁹

Scriptural List of the Twelve Apostles				
Mt. 10:1-4	Mk. 3:14-19	Lk. 6:13-16	Jn. 21:1-2	Acts 1:13
Simon (Peter)	Simon (surnamed Peter)	Simon (he was named Peter)	Simon Peter	Peter
Andrew (his brother)	Andrew	Andrew (his brother)		Andrew
James (son of Zebedee)	James (son of Zebedee)	James	the son of Zebedee	James
John (his brother)	John (brother of James) He surnamed them Boanerges which is, the Sons of Thunder (Mk. 3:17)	John	the son of Zebedee	John

Philip	Philip	Philip		Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Nathanael (of Cana in Galilee) [Also called Nathaniel in Jn. 1:45-51]	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas (called Didymus)	Thomas
Matthew (the publican)	Matthew	Matthew		Matthew
James (son of Alphaeus)	James (son of Alphaeus)	James (son of Alphaeus)		James (son of Alphaeus)
Lebaeus (surname Thaddaeus)	Thaddaeus	Judas (brother of James)		Simon Zelotes
Simon (the Canaanite)	Simon (the Canaanite)	Simon (called Zelotes)		Simon Zelotes
Judas Iscariot (who betrayed him)	Judas Iscariot (which betrayed him)	Judas Iscariot (the traitor)		
			(and two other disciples	

Others called apostles in the Bible include Jesus Christ (Heb. 3:1); Paul (Ro. 1:1; 11:13; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1-2; 15:9; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 1 Tim. 1:1; 2:7; 2 Tim 1:1, 11; Tit. 1:1); Matthias (Acts 1:21-26); James the Lord's brother (Gal. 1:19); and Barnabas (Acts 14:4, 14).

Reference¹⁰

Bruce R. McConkie continues,

"The order in Mark is chosen since he was the disciple of Peter and is believed to have set forth views and feelings and factual knowledge received personally from the Chief Apostle."¹¹

The following list of the Twelve Apostles, is provided along with a brief commentary with the full reference being provided at the conclusion. (see Mark 3:16-20).

The Original Twelve Apostles

1. Peter	<p>Given name by Jesus meaning "seer or stone" (JST, John 1:42).</p> <p>Son of Jonah and brother to Andrew. As the "chief of the apostles...[he] was called by Jesus to preside over the earthly kingdom, to lay the foundation and build up the church which alone would administer salvation for that day and dispensation..[and with James and John] were in fact the First Presidency of Church in that day...[and would together] in resurrected glory in 1829 [return to the earth] to restore priesthood and keys and call men again to the holy apostleship" (Mortal Messiah: Book 2:105-106).</p>
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2. James, the son of Zebedee	He and his brother John were called Boanerges, meaning “sons of thunder,” or rugged and forceful characters. He is the son of Zebedee and brother of John (Matthew 4:21). “James and his brother John, their father Zebedee and Simon and Andrew were partners in a prosperous fishing business. They owned boats and employed servants. They forsook all to follow Jesus, and James was the first apostolic martyr in the meridian dispensation” (Mortal Messiah, 2:107).
3. John the brother of James	Zebedee is his father and James, his brother. He is referred to as the Beloved and as the Revelator. He is the author of the Gospel by his name, and of three other New Testament epistles as well as the Book of Revelations. He was granted his desire which was to remain on earth and teach the gospel until the Second Coming of the Savior.
4. Andrew	He is the son of Jonah and the brother of Peter (Matthew 4:18). You remember that after he and John had spent one day with the Lord, following the testimony of John the Baptist, he went to tell his brother Peter and said, “We have found the Messias [Messiah]” (John 1:41). “He is mentioned in connection with several New Testament incidents and...was with Peter when the Lord found them casting a net into the sea of Galilean water, and said, “Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men (Matthew 4:19)” (Mortal Messiah, 2:108).
5. Philip	He was called by Jesus to be a disciple by stating, “Follow me” (John 1:48). He may have been a Jewish-Greek as he was approached by the Greeks (John 12:21). He then contacted his friend, Nathanael Bartholomew who also received the call to be a disciple (John 1:49). Philip was with Jesus at the marriage feast in Cana and is mentioned several other times.
6. Nathanael Bartholomew	Following his coming with Philip to meet Jesus, and following the Savior telling him that Philip had found him under a fig tree, he declared, “Rabbi, thou art the Son of God” (John 1:49). “We know little else regarding him (other than his call to be a disciple) and the promise that he would see the heavens open and angels ascending and descending upon the Son of Man” (Mortal Messiah, 2:109).
7. Levi Matthew	He is also referred to as the Publican (Roman tax collector), a position he held at the time of his calling to be a disciple (Mark 2:14). He was the son of Alphaeus and the brother of James II or less. He wrote the Gospel of his name. “The numerous quotations in his Gospel from the Old Testament identify him as a scriptural scholar and a trained theologian” (Mortal Messiah, 2:109).
8. Thomas	Also called Didymus meaning twin (John 11:16; 20:24). Often referred to as the doubter. Bruce R. McConkie refers to Thomas as “one of the most valiant and courageous of the Twelve, [noting] when others of the Twelve counseled Jesus not to go into Judea, where the Jews then sought his life and where Lazarus lay in need of divine help, it was Thomas who said, “Let us go, that we may die with him” (John 11:16). (Mortal Messiah, 2:110).
9. James the son of Alphaeus	Referred to as James II (or less), the son of Alpheus. He is a brother of Matthew. “All we know (other than his family relationship with Matthew) is that he was ordained to the holy apostleship” (Mortal Messiah, 2:110).

10. Thaddaeus	He is called Lebbeus Thaddeus by Matthew, Thaddeus by Mark, and Judas the brother of James by Luke. “Other than his family relationship, the only other specific reference [is found in John when he asked] how or why Jesus would manifest Himself to His chosen servants and not to the world (John 14:22)” (Jesus The Christ, 225).
11. Simon, the Canaanite	<p>He is so designated in Acts as Simon Zelotes, and as Simon called Zelotes in Luke’s Gospel, and is distinguished by Matthew and Mark as the Canaanite which Talmage notes, “is the Syro-Chaldaic equivalent of the Greek word which is rendered in the English translation ‘Zelotes’ (Jesus The Christ, 225).</p> <p>Bruce R. McConkie adds, “The Zealots were a Jewish sect whose avowed purpose was to uphold the Mosaic ritual and stand as guardians of the law” (Mortal Messiah, 2:111).</p> <p>James E. Talmage continues, “Doubtless Simon had learned moderation and toleration from the teachings of Christ, otherwise he would scarcely have been suited to the apostolic ministry. His zealous earnestness, properly directed, may have developed into a most serviceable trait of character” (Jesus The Christ, 225).</p>
12. Judas Iscariot	Eleven of the Twelve were Galileans; Judas Iscariot only was from Judea. He was the son of Simon (John 6:71; 12:4). “He was the steward and almoner for Jesus and the other disciples, receiving and dispensing, to the poor and otherwise, such monies as came in to their hands. We suppose he had a testimony and followed Jesus willingly, although well he could have done so with ulterior motives—for money and power—and with evil intent. Certainly, Satan was his chief master; greed and avarice dwelt in his heart; he was dishonest in caring for the monies placed in his hands; and for thirty pieces of silver he planted a traitor’s kiss” (Mortal Messiah, 2:111-112).

References¹²

Bruce R. McConkie states,

“These, then, are the Lord’s Twelve—all save one are holy and righteous men—the ministers called to bear witness of his holy name and build up his earthly kingdom, first among the Jews, and then among the Gentiles.”¹³

4. Jesus Ordains and Instructs the Twelve Apostles

Consistent with Jesus having chosen His disciples, after a night of prayer, He selects the Twelve Apostles.

Luke 6:13

13 And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles.

Following their selection, He then ordains them.

Mark 3:14

14 And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach,

As part of the Lord's bestowal of His power and authority to His newly ordained Apostles, it is likely He also expressed these words. It is the same reminder He will give when He sent them forth to teach His Gospel.

John 15:16

16 Ye have not chosen me, but I have chosen you, and ordained you, ...

As part of their new ordination to the Apostleship, Jesus gave them the following commission.

The New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's manual states,

"a. They have power to heal the spiritually and physically sick.

Matthew 10:1

1 ...he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

"b. They are sent to the lost sheep of Israel to preach that the kingdom of heaven is at hand.

Matthew 10:6-7

6 But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.

7 And as you go, preach, saying, The kingdom of heaven is at hand.

They were to go forth "two by two" and "preaching that men should repent" (Mark 6:7, 12).

The "kingdom of heaven is at hand" meant the authority to be baptized and to prepare to receive the gift of the Holy Ghost was again upon the earth for all who were willing to forsake their sins.

"c. They are to use their priesthood power to bless and heal people.

Matthew 10:8

8 Heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, cast out devils: freely ye have received, freely give.

"d. They are to seek out those who are prepared to hear the gospel.

Matthew 10:11-14

11 And into whatsoever city or town ye shall enter, inquire [of your Heavenly Father] who in it is worthy; and there abide till ye go thence.

12 And when ye come into an house, salute it.

13 And if the house be worthy, let your peace come upon it: but if it be not worthy, let your peace return to you.

14 And whosoever shall not receive you, nor hear your words, when ye depart out of that house or city, shake off the dust of your feet.

“e. They are to teach as guided by the Spirit.

Matthew 10:19-20

19 But when they deliver you up, take no thought how or what ye shall speak: for it shall be given you in that same hour what ye shall speak.

20 For it is not ye that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaketh in you.

“f. They are to give their lives entirely to the Savior’s work.

Matthew 10:39

39 He that findeth his life shall lose it: and he that loseth his life for my sake shall find it.

Reference a-f.¹⁴

The Twelve were to unconditionally dedicate themselves to the service of the Lord. They were to love the Lord more than anyone or anything else.

Additional instruction:

g. They were not to concern themselves with their earthly needs for the Lord would provide for their food and clothing.

JST, Matthew 6:26-27

26 Nevertheless, ye shall go forth from house to house, teaching the people; and I will go before you.

27 And your heavenly Father will provide for you, whatsoever things ye need for food, what ye shall eat; and for raiment, what ye shall wear or put on.

How important are the Twelve Apostles to the true church?

We have noted previously that the Apostles and Prophets form the foundation of the Church of Jesus Christ (see Ephesians 2:20). The purpose of a foundation is to provide the underlying base or support upon which the building stands. It is essential to the stability and endurance of the structure. Remove the foundation and the building collapses.

The Apostle Paul taught,

Ephesians 4:11-14

11 And he gave some, apostles; and some, prophets; ...

12 For the perfecting of the saints, for the work of the ministry; for the edifying of the body of Christ:

13 Till we all come in the unity of the faith, and of the knowledge of the Son of God, unto a perfect man, unto the measure of the stature of the fulness of Christ:

14 That we henceforth be no more children, tossed to and fro, and carried about with every wind of doctrine by the sleight of men, and cunning craftiness, whereby they lie in wait to deceive;

The Apostles understood the importance of Twelve. Following the betrayal and death of Judas Iscariot, the eleven Apostles met to consider the names of two individuals to fill the vacancy. They made their decision “by lots” [prayerful inspiration] and “Matthias...was [then] numbered with the eleven apostles” (Acts 1:23, 26). It was clear they understood there should be Twelve Apostles.

Finally, the time came as a result of the persecution and death of the Apostles there was no longer anyone who held the required authority to direct the Church of Jesus Christ. The authority to act in God’s name was taken from the earth and the famine Amos had noted (Amos 8:11-12) began. The dawn of the restoration ended the famine and the eternal truths of the gospel were again upon the earth. This also included the requisite authority necessary for the ordinances to again be effective in heaven as well as upon the earth. How blessed we are to live upon the earth at this time when all the blessings promised the faithful are now available to give us heavenly guidance and direction in our lives.

One significant requirement of the true Church of Jesus Christ today is a Church based upon the foundation of Twelve Apostles.

5. The Twelve Apostles Today

The Doctrine and Covenants (Institute) Student Manual states,

“Brigham Young taught that Joseph Smith, Oliver Cowdery, and David Whitmer were the first Apostles of this dispensation (see Journal of Discourse, 6:320. To these, according to Heber C. Kimball, Martin Harris was later added (see Journal of Discourses, 6:29). These men were instructed to find and ordain twelve others who would form the Quorum of the Twelve [Apostles]...Thus the original quorum of twelve special witnesses was called by the first special witnesses of the Restoration.”¹⁵

Joseph Fielding Smith states,

“A meeting was called for the 14th of February, [1835], and on that day all the members of Zion’s Camp that could be called together assembled to receive such blessings as the Lord had promised them. President Joseph Smith then stated that the object of the meeting was to choose men for important positions in the ministry to go forth and prune the vineyard for the last time. He had been commanded by the Lord to prepare for the calling of Twelve Apostles, in fulfillment of the revelation given before the organization of the Church. (Doctrine and Covenants, Section 18). These twelve men were to be chosen from among those who went up in Zion’s Camp, and the three special witnesses to the Book of Mormon were to select them and ordain them.”¹⁶

Since February 14, 1835, there has been a Quorum of Twelve Apostles in the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-Day Saints. These twelve brethren have been called by revelation through the Prophet of the Church and each has been unanimously sustained by the three members of the First Presidency (Prophet and his two counselors) and the remaining members of the Twelve. Their name is then sustained by the membership of the Church at part of the General Conference, held in April and October of each year.

Joseph Smith asked and answered the following question,

“What importance is there attached to the calling of these Twelve Apostles, different from other callings or officers of the Church? (1) They are the Twelve Apostles, who are called to the office of the Traveling High Council, who are to preside over the churches of the Saints, among the Gentiles, where there is [no] presidency

established; and (2) They are to travel and preach among the Gentiles, until the Lord shall command them to go to the Jews. (3) They are to hold the keys of this ministry, (4) to unlock the door of the Kingdom of heaven unto all nations, and (5) To preach the Gospel to every creature. This is the power, authority, and virtue of their apostleship.¹⁷

You will note that there is little difference regarding the calling and responsibility of an Apostle today and the calling of the Original Twelve Apostles. Originally and in the early years of the Church, the original twelve traveled “without purse or script” in fulfillment of their missionary efforts. This is no longer the requirement either for the leaders in the Church, or the full-time missionaries. The original call of the Apostles was to “Go ye therefore, and teach all nations” (Matthew 27:19) however they were limited geographically. Today, the Apostles travel throughout the world in fulfilling their apostolic calling.

These are the names of the current members of the Quorum of the Twelve Apostles (May, 2018).

Quorum of 12 Apostles (2019)¹⁸



Each of us should take every opportunity to acquaint ourselves with the men who hold the Apostolic office today. We can do this by attentively listening to them when they speak, carefully pondering their written messages, following their counsel, and praying for them as they act in the Lord’s service.

6. Conclusions

We began this chapter with the visit of Jesus to the synagogue at Nazareth. There He bore his testimony to those who were present that He was the Promised Messiah. We then focused our discussion on the calling and responsibilities of the members of the Twelve Apostles. The testimony of the Savior and of His special witnesses, continues to date.

Doctrine and Covenants 107:23

23 The twelve traveling councilors are called to be the Twelve Apostles, or special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world—thus differing from other officers in the church in the duties of their calling.

Those in Nazareth were deaf to his witness and, therefore did not recognize the whispering of the spirit that bore witness to them that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the Living God.

It is the special calling of the Twelve to bear witness to all the nations of the world of the divinity of Jesus Christ. Some today are also deaf to their witness.

Today, just as then, there are several questions for each of us to answer for ourselves. They include: “Is He truly the Messiah, the Redeemer of the world? Did He organize His Church based upon a foundation of Apostles and Prophets? Is that Church upon the earth today? How do I recognize which of all the churches today is the Church of Jesus Christ?

One factor for our consideration is to inquire if the Church we are investigating is built upon a foundation of Apostles and Prophets? The answer to this important question as well as others will assist us in determining which is the true Church of Jesus Christ today.

Those in Nazareth were seeking to know the truth; they just didn’t recognize the witness of the spirit when it came to them. As a result, they lost blessings Jesus could have bestowed upon them. It is important to remember that in order for you and I to receive the spirit requires we exercise both our intellect (a willingness to consider the merits of the message) and our heart (a willingness to give credence to what we are feeling when we hear the message).

As we ponder the message we are reading, it is also important we do what we are being asked to do: read, pray, and, live the principles. In this manner we demonstrate by our actions a sincere desire to know the truth.

As it was for the Twelve, it is also true for us. Each of us must gain for ourselves, independent of another, a testimony of Jesus Christ as the Son of God and that He is Our Savior and Redeemer. As we continue our study of the life of Jesus Christ, may each of us come to know, with even greater surety, this eternal truth.

Footnotes

¹ *Jesus the Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 179.

² *The Life of Christ*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Sunday School Union Board, 1950, [Revised Edition, 1961], 58.

³ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 217, 227.

⁴ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 99-100.

⁵ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 104.

⁶ *The Twelve, Then and Now*. A Symposium on the New Testament, August 15-17, 1984. Provo, Utah: Brigham Young University, 1984, 92.

⁷ *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 227.

⁸ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 102.

⁹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 104.

¹⁰ Duane S. Crowther. *Jesus of Nazareth Savior and King*. Bountiful, Utah: Horizon Publishers, 1999, [Second Printing, October, 2001], 105.

¹¹ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 105.

¹² Bruce R. McConkie. *Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 105-112; James E. Talmage. *Jesus The Christ*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1915, [Thirty-fifth Edition, 1963], 225.

¹³ *The Mortal Messiah: Book 2*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1980, 111-112.

¹⁴ *New Testament Gospel Doctrine Teacher's Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1997, 24.

¹⁵ *Doctrine and Covenants [Institute] Student Manual*. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 1981, 35-36.

¹⁶ *Essentials in Church History*. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1950, [Eighteenth Edition, 1963], 181.

¹⁷ *History of the Church*, Vol. 2. Salt Lake City: Deseret Book Co., 1948, [Second Edition Revised, 1948, Seventh Printing, 1973], 200, numbers added for clarity.

¹⁸ “The Quorum of the Twelve Apostles.” *Ensign*, May 2018. Salt Lake City: The Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, 72.