

Ir-nt-06
“They Straightway Left Their Nets”
Luke 4-6; Matthew 10
By Lenet Hadley Read

(There was great significance in calling **Twelve Special Witnesses** of God’s truth. Here we learn the importance of this pattern, from ancient times to modern).

I. Jacob’s having twelve sons, (which was obviously not an accident), was the beginning of the Lord’s purposeful division of Israel into twelve tribes.

A. This established the pattern for twelve great leaders, witnesses, and judges over Israel.

B. Continuing this pattern, the Lord chose a leader (or Judge) from each tribe (Numbers 1:44), therefore creating again the number of twelve (12).

II. After crossing the Jordan River, **the Lord commanded Israel to choose twelve stones as witnesses that this great and miraculous event had occurred** (Joshua 4).

A. The crossing of the Jordan, led by Joshua, pointed to Jesus Christ’s conquering death and leading His people into Eternal Life, their True Promised Land.

B. His commandment **that these twelve stones were a memorial or witness** of that **great crossing** set a significant step in the pattern.

C. **All these patterns taught of and were fulfilled when Jesus chose twelve apostles to bear witness that He had atoned for our sins and had arisen again. And that He had thus prepared the way whereby we too could pass over death and inherit Eternal Life.**

III. When Jesus chose His twelve apostles, He added to this concept by giving Simon the additional name of Peter (Petros in Greek) which means a “stone” (John 1:42). Later he refers to him as a “rock” (Matthew 16:13-19).

A. Unfortunately the above acts have caused much confusion.

1. JST John 1:43 explains that this reference to Peter should be as “a seer” as well as a “stone.” This would confirm that all leaders of the church would stand as firm as a rock, but that such firmness would come due to the receiving of revelation.

2. Note that Jesus calls Peter a “rock” **immediately after** Peter testified Jesus was the Christ. Jesus then pointed out *that “flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven”* (Matthew 16:13-19).

3. Thus Peter’s testimony is based on *revelation to him*.

4. Latter-day Prophets reveal that while *Peter did indeed become the Head of the Church and was blessed with the priesthood keys*, the true reference in both scriptures here is also to the Rock of Revelation, which would be the source of Peter’s leadership, and must always be the basis of all true Church leadership.

5. Furthermore, **the foundation of the church was to be based not upon just one, but upon twelve apostles, or seers, who would serve together as the foundation stones of Christ’s Church.**

a. **Being built on twelve foundation stones, rather than just one, would obviously give far greater firmness to the foundation of God’s Church.**

6. That those who were called “straightway left their nets” was a wonderful witness of their quick response to the Spirit and of their future dedication.

IV. Some claim that after Peter’s death, church leadership fell to successors who were bishops in Rome. But many studies show the fallacies in these claims.

- A. After the death of Peter and the other apostles, *John was the leader of the Church. He was the last living apostle upon whom Jesus bestowed priesthood keys at the Mount of Transfiguration. He too, as one of the twelve, was a Foundation Stone of Christ’s church, and the final receiver of Christ’s Revelations. So the priesthood authority would have fallen upon him.*
- B. *Upon his death, the full source of priesthood keys was lost and revelation ceased due to the cessation of apostles and prophets.*
- C. Paul verifies that the true foundation of Christ’s Church, must be apostles. He spoke of the “household of God, [which is] built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner stone” (Ephesians 2:19-20).

V. Jesus set the example for the apostles about witnessing by bearing witness publicly that He was the expected Messiah (Luke 4:14-32).

- A. He also began to refer to Himself as “The Son of Man” (not the son of *man*).
 1. There is much significance to this title. **For it actually means “The Son of the Man of Holiness”** or the Son of God (See Moses 6:57; 7:35).
 - B. While the apostles’ role was to witness of Jesus Christ, *one of Jesus’ roles was to witness of God the Father, of His true nature and loving goodness* (Matthew 11:25-27).
 - D. By using this very title, He was making that witness.

VI. The apostles, called to be “special witnesses” of Jesus’ role as Messiah and Savior, were chosen after much prayer and revelation.

- A. Jesus had called many men to follow Him as disciples. Just before His calling of the twelve apostles, He spent all night in prayer with His Father (Luke 6:12-13).
- B. Christ’s Church truly was to be led by twelve apostles, all of whom were blessed to be seers or receivers of revelation.
- C. Thus Jesus tells them from the beginning that they should not be overly concerned about what they should speak, but that the Holy Ghost would give them in their hour of need what they should say (Matthew 10:19).
- D. A dramatic true experience in the life of Jedediah Grant shows this promise still holds true for modern apostles. (Although this experience actually happened before he became an apostle). Elder Grant served a mission in Virginia, and came to be known for his excellent discourses. When questioned about their source, he replied that he did not write them out, but spoke as the spirit dictated.

They did not believe him and decided to test him. They persuaded him to agree to give a discourse with them selecting the subject. That subject would not be given him until the very time to speak. He agreed.

At the time he was to speak he was given a blank piece of paper. But truly speaking with the Spirit, he turned this trick into a testimony. He compared the blankness of the paper to the blankness of the idea that God created all things out of nothing. He

used its blankness as comparison to a God having neither body, parts, nor passions, saying, “Such a God I conceive to be a perfect blank.” He pointed out that current churches were led neither by prophets or apostles, which would make them a perfect blank, compared to Christ’s true Church. He said that the concepts of Heaven as being beyond the bounds of time and space, would also make Heaven a blank. (Leon Hartshorn, *Exceptional Stories from the Lives of the Apostles*, pp. 82-4).

VII. As with all things God does, there is apparently more than just an arbitrary reason for “twelve” tribes and thus “twelve” apostles.

- A. While there seems to be no written explanation, there is a pattern which explains it.
- B. When the people of Israel were first formed, the Lord had them place the Wilderness Tabernacle in the center. He then had them arrange three tribes on all four sides of that Tabernacle. This positioning stood as a witness of His Kingdom.
- C. The most important thing was that He was to be the Center.
- D. Each of the four sides represented the four directions of His Kingdom --- that is, it would be full, and encompass all four directions: North, South, East, and West.
- E. All four groups of tribes contained three tribes within them. Each set of three was patterned after the Godhead, and is thus the pattern of leadership in the heavens.
- F. All three groups had a leading tribe: Reuben, Dan, Judah, and Ephraim.
- G. When the four (4) sets of directions are multiplied by the pattern of the leadership of the heavens, (3), it becomes twelve: Leadership for all God’s Kingdom.
- H. So twelve, with its Christ-Center, would become the natural number witnessing that herein contained is God’s Kingdom.
 - a. In contrast, the number Seventy, which the Lord used to serve as the body which was sent into the world to witness of Him, was patterned after the number of those outside His Kingdom.
 - b. Thus Jesus called Seventy to go unto all nations to bear witness of Him. They were to seek those outside His Kingdom, and bring them into it, in love.
 - c. The Jews themselves and the earliest Christians understood that the number Seventy did represent all the Gentile nations.
 1. That number came from the time after the flood, when Noah’s descendants were listed as 72 (Genesis 10). (The Hebrews rounded out their numbers).

VIII. One of the final patterns using the division of twelve, will occur in the future when twelve thousand high priests, from each of the twelve tribes, or 144,000, will surround Jesus Christ and will serve Him as special ministers in the Kingdom of Heaven (Revelations 7:4-8; D&C 77:11).

- A. Thus, this pattern of twelve special witnesses of Jesus Christ and Truth was established from the beginning and will be multiplied in wondrous ways in the future.