

Gospels class 20—Jesus chooses Peter, Andrew, James and John, Heals a Possessed Man, Teaches with Authority 2013-11-2

Good morning/afternoon, everyone.

Today we'll continue with our study of the Gospels, covering several incidents that take place after Jesus moves to Capernaum, on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, as the center of His ministry. We talked last time about *why* He chose Capernaum out of all the other areas of towns of Galilee that He could've chosen and showed from prophecy and practicality why Capernaum was His best option.

Now we come to a portion of Scripture that some think is a contradiction, but it's really not. We're on page 17 of the Harmony at the heading "Jesus chooses Simon (Peter), Andrew, James and John." And some think this is a contradiction with what we covered considerably earlier on page 12 of the harmony, which covers John 1:35-51. And there we saw that two of the disciples of John the Baptizer were Andrew, Peter's brother, and John. Although John isn't specifically named, some of the details make it clear that he is one of the disciples of John who becomes an early follower of Jesus. They start following Jesus then, and Jesus also invites Peter, Philip and Nathaniel to follow Him.

We tend to assume that Jesus called all 12 of the disciples, or apostles, all in a relatively short time, a few days or few weeks apart. But that's just an assumption, and an incorrect one, since we'll soon see that Jesus is going to be calling others. We should also note that we aren't even told who all of the disciples or *talmidim* were. There were others who are nameless. Let's notice proof of that:

Luke 6:12-16

12 Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.

13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:

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

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

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

So we see here that the 12 apostles were *chosen from a larger group of talmidim* or disciples. How many, we don't know. We do know from Luke 10 that at one point He sent out 70 followers in teams of two, but they aren't named. We know that at a later point many who had followed Him turned back because of His hard sayings and no longer followed Him. So clearly there were more than just the 12 followers whom he chose to be apostles, a word that means "messengers."

We see more proof of this in Acts 1:15, 21-26, where they choose someone to replace Judas, who had betrayed Jesus and hanged himself.

15 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty), and said...

21 "Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22 "beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection."

23 And they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24 And they prayed and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen

25 “to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.”

26 And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

So here we see that there were at least two others who had been with the 12 throughout Jesus’ ministry, but they were never named in the Gospels. And apparently there were more than two, because they narrowed down the possible candidates to these two and then chose between them. My point in mentioning these examples is to show that when we talk about Jesus’ disciples, or *talmidim* as they would’ve been called in Hebrew, were a larger and somewhat fluid group, with some coming and going, and from them Jesus chose 12 to be apostles.

So let’s keep that somewhat fluid background in mind as we look at this next section here on the bottom half of page 17. Between those events recorded in John 1 and those we come to now, it’s possible that as much as a year has passed. A lot has happened. Let’s note **some of the things** that have happened that we’ve covered so far leading up to this point:

Jesus traveled to Cana in Galilee and turned water into wine.

He traveled to Capernaum with His family and those first disciples.

He went to Jerusalem at the Passover and overturned the money-changers’ tables.

He met with Nicodemus and talked about what it means to be born again.

He stayed in Judea for a while, with His disciples baptizing people.

After John the Baptizer is imprisoned, Jesus leaves Judea.

He and travels through Samaria, meeting the woman at the well and teaching in Sychar.

He starts teaching in various synagogues in Galilee.

In Cana He heals the son of a royal official who lives in Capernaum.

He returns to His hometown of Nazareth and is rejected and almost stoned to death.

He moves to Capernaum.

So quite a bit has taken place by this time. This took at least several months, perhaps around a year has passed. Were those same disciples we read about in John 1—Peter, Andrew, John, Philip and Nathaniel—with Him all of this time?

Obviously not. We know that at least those five started following Him shortly after Jesus was baptized by John the Baptizer down in Judea, but when He returned to Galilee and seems to have spent considerable time with His family, that at least some of them—Peter, Andrew and John—took some time off to go back to their livelihoods as fishermen. Incidentally, this is exactly what they did after Jesus was crucified several years later. Their leader is gone and they say, “Okay, I guess it’s time to go back to fishing”—and they did.

So what’s going on here? I think the simple answer is that these men are *simply not converted yet*. It appears that they were more or less part-time disciples when Jesus initially invited them to

follow Him. And maybe it was like that for us when we were first called. Maybe our calling and our level of commitment came in fits and starts or was just a part-time thing at first. I see that quite regularly among people who come into contact with Gods' truth. People will see and recognize the truth and know that's what God's Word says and that they need to commit to following it, but it's not easy. It's not an easy road to follow.

Eventually it takes with people or it doesn't and they drift away. But now, with Peter, Andrew, James and John, it's really serious. It's time to make a choice and not waver in their commitment any longer. Now Jesus is calling them to *leave everything* to follow Him, as we see mentioned in the text here. Now it's decision time for sure. It's all or nothing for them. And that sets the stage for what we see happens next.

So let's pick up the story here in **Mark 1:16-20**, and I'll just read Mark instead of Matthew since Mark includes a little more detail.

16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon (*Shimon Kefa* in Hebrew) and Andrew (this is a Greek name; we don't know what his Hebrew name was) his brother casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen.

17 Then Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men."

18 They immediately left their nets and followed Him.

19 When He had gone a little farther from there, He saw James (*Jacob* or *Ya'akov* in Hebrew) the son of Zebedee, and John (*Yochanon* in Hebrew) his brother, who also were in the boat mending their nets.

20 And immediately He called them, and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went after Him.

The Harmony of the Gospels which I patterned ours after, and some other harmonies put together by other scholars, put these accounts by Matthew, Mark and Luke together as though it's the same account. Matthew and Mark are clearly describing the same incidents. But Luke has enough differences in detail that he may be describing something different, but which took place at essentially the same time. So let's read Luke's account:

Luke 5:1-11

1 So it was, as the multitude pressed about Him to hear the word of God, that He stood by the Lake of Gennesaret,

2 and saw two boats standing by the lake; but the fishermen had gone from them and were washing their nets.

3 Then He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little from the land. And He sat down and taught the multitudes from the boat.

This is a hand-painted photograph of a fishing boat on the Sea of Galilee in the late 1800s, and this is very similar to the fishing boats of Jesus' day. So this gives you a good idea of what this would've looked like. They say that these boats had room for 12 people, and one could walk (that's a joke).

So why did Jesus get into Peter's boat and tell him to go out a little distance from the shore, and then sat down and taught the people on the shore? This sounds odd to us, but it actually makes a lot of sense. If you've ever been out on a boat on still water, you know that sound travels very well over water. Notice that Jesus has a large crowd surrounding Him wanting to hear Him teach, so He notices two boats, one belonging to Simon Peter, and asks Peter to row out a little bit from the shore so He can speak to the crowd from the boat and all of them can hear Him better. So Peter does this until Jesus finished speaking, and then Jesus tells Peter to do something.

4 When He had stopped speaking, He said to Simon, "Launch out into the deep and let down your nets for a catch."

5 But Simon answered and said to Him, “Master, we have toiled all night and caught nothing; nevertheless at Your word I will let down the net.”

Here we see an interesting detail. When had Peter and his fellow fishermen been fishing? They had fished *all night*. They caught nothing at all, brought their boats to shore in the morning, then **hailed their nets out and were washing and repairing them** and letting their nets dry out because if you left them piled up and wet they would start to rot and rip and tear the next time you used them. So they were washing them, making any repairs the nets needed, and laying them out in the sun to dry before using them again the next night.

Why were they fishing at night rather than in the day? I’ll give you a hint: What color were their nets? The nets were made out of linen. What color is linen?

Their nets are white—or at least light-colored. So they fish at night why? Because the fish can’t see the nets at night. The fishermen can sneak up on the fish. What happens when you’re fishing with light-colored nets in the daytime? The fish see your nets coming and swim away!

So Jesus tells Peter to drop the nets anyway, even though it’s now broad daylight, and Peter, probably out of respect for Jesus, does it even though he knows there’s no way it will work.

Continuing in verse 6—

6 And when they had done this, they caught a great number of fish, and their net was breaking.

7 So they signaled to their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both the boats, so that they began to sink.

So the miracle here is on several levels. First, to catch anything at all in the daytime with these light-colored linen nets is something of a miracle because normally the fish would see them coming and swim away. But to catch so many fish under these conditions, in the middle of the day, is also a miracle. And it’s such a great miracle that they run the risk of both boats sinking from the weight of all the fish!

8 When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus’ knees, saying, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!”

Why does Peter have this reaction? Put yourself in his sandals. Peter is a fisherman. He’s been fishing for years. He knows this lake like the back of his hand. He’s fished all night and caught nothing. All he wants to do is go home and go to bed and get a few hours of sleep before he goes out fishing again the next night. But this rabbi, this former stonemason who knows nothing about fishing, tells him to go further out on the lake where the water is deeper and throw out his nets—and in broad daylight, of all things, when it’s useless to fish because the fish can see the nets.

And what happens? Peter gets what was probably the biggest haul of fish he’d ever seen in his life! And his immediate reaction is, “I’m way out of my league here! This is surely no ordinary rabbi!” He knows a miracle has taken place. He also knows that if Jesus can do this and get what might’ve been weeks’ worth of fish in one cast of the net, what else could He do?

Peter has been a fisherman all his life, yet he has just been out-fished by someone who may have never gone fishing in His entire life. He is blown away, and all he can say is that he doesn’t even deserve to be in the presence of a Man like this. So he says, “Please go away from me, Master, I’m too much of a sinner to be around You!” And Luke goes on to explain—

9 For he and all who were with him were astonished at the catch of fish which they had taken;

10 and so also were James and John, the sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon.

Apparently James and John were in the other boat that came out to help them, and they had some

kind of business partnership as fishermen.

And Jesus said to Simon, “Do not be afraid. From now on you will catch men.”

11 So when they had brought their boats to land, they forsook all and followed Him.

So now, as it says here, they *do forsake all*—give up everything—to follow Jesus of Nazareth. It’s no longer a come-and-go or part-time thing following Jesus. Now it’s all or nothing. Now they’re in it all the way. And as we’ll see later, Peter, James and John become the three disciples who are closest to Jesus, what you might call His inner circle.

So how do we reconcile these two accounts—Luke compared with Matthew and Mark? I think there are two valid explanations. One is that they are two entirely different events, which is possible given the differences. Or it’s also possible that Luke’s account happens first, and then Matthew and Mark are both giving a broad overview of the events and speaking in very general terms—that Jesus is on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, He meets up with Peter and Andrew who have been fishing by casting nets into the sea, and then everything Luke describes fits in here next, with the end result that Jesus tells Peter and Andrew and then James and John to follow Him as His disciples, and they all then leave everything, including their father and hired servants and boats, and follow Jesus for the duration of His ministry.

I’m not sure which of these two explanations I would say is best or most accurate. The bottom line is that with both explanations we end up at the same place, with Peter, Andrew, James and John all forsaking everything to follow Jesus full-time after this—and that’s the key point that all three writers, Matthew, Mark and Luke, are making.

Any questions?

Let’s shift gears and consider for a moment the individuals Jesus has called. We don’t know much about most of the apostles. But we do see here quite a bit about Peter, Andrew, James and John—that a third of the apostles were commercial fishermen by trade. What kind of people does God call? We know from **1 Corinthians 1:26-29** that God doesn’t call many wise and noble people.

26 For you see your calling, brethren, that not many wise according to the flesh, not many mighty, not many noble, are called.

27 But God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty;

28 and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are,

29 that no flesh should glory in His presence.

The men Jesus chose weren’t great scholars or great thinkers or very wealthy or socially powerful and connected. They were just simple working men, the salt of the earth. These are the people whom God chooses to work with for the most part. And why does He do it that way? So that none of us should think we are all that great and mighty, or “glory in His presence” as it says here. No, all the glory goes to God because *He’s* the one doing the work. Our job is to humble ourselves and submit to Him so He will be able to work with and through us, and get ourselves out of the way. And if we do that, then we can be useful to God and He can do great things through us.

One of the study questions I sent out was, **What qualities of fishermen** (and women) would make them useful to God as “fishers of men”? Here are some I put on my list:

Patience This is probably the biggest. My father was a big fisherman as I was growing up. He had infinite patience to go out fishing all day. I could never get into it. I just didn't have the patience. As I tell people, once they outlawed dynamite for fishing, it took all the fun out of it. So I never got into fishing. Those of you who love it—you have more patience than I do. But patience is a very useful trait for God to work with in us. It takes patience to work with people. It takes patience to plant seed and wait for it to grow. It takes patience to teach people and wait for those efforts to bear fruit.

Perseverance is another useful trait in fishing and in being useful to God. A fisherman has to keep trying and not give up. For God to use us, we also must not become discouraged and give up when it seems like nothing is happening. We have to hang in there and keep trying.

Courage is another useful trait. Recreational fishing isn't that dangerous, because about the greatest danger you face is sunburn. But commercial fishing today, like some of the TV shows on "Deadliest Catches," show it can at times be quite dangerous. And it was a fairly dangerous occupation for Peter, Andrew, James and John. As we'll read later on in the Gospels, dangerous storms could rise up in a hurry on the Sea of Galilee, and people could drown.

Throughout the Bible we see that serving God can be dangerous to one's health. We see that time and time again. All of Christ's apostles, with the possible exception of John, died for their beliefs and teaching. So did John the Baptizer. So did Isaiah. Jeremiah was thrown into a muddy cistern and could've easily died there. Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were thrown into a fiery furnace, not knowing how that would turn out. Daniel was thrown into a den of lions. The apostle Paul was imprisoned and executed. We haven't seen the end of God's people being martyred. Serving God takes courage.

Knowing when the moment is right is another useful trait of fishermen and fishers of men. Sometimes the fish just aren't biting and it's time to go do something else. Knowing when the timing is right is useful in serving God. Sometimes people are receptive to God's truth and sometimes they are hostile to it. Sometimes God's truth will move people, sometimes it won't affect them at all or they will even become hostile to it. Right timing—knowing when the moment is right—is useful for both fishermen and fishers of men.

Knowing what "bait" to use is another useful quality of fishermen. Sometimes one kind of bait won't work while another works like crazy. And the next day the one that worked the day before won't work, and something else does. In the same way, the same approach doesn't work with everyone. Different people have different interests, different questions, different motivations. Some personalities react or resonate well with some people, but not with others. So to be useful to God, it's helpful to know these things.

What others can you think of?

Now let's turn to the top of page 18 in the Harmony and continue reading with what happens next. Mark and Luke give very similar accounts, but since Mark's is very slightly more detailed we'll read from his account.

Mark 1:21-28

21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

Last time I showed you some photos of the synagogue in Capernaum, including this one. This one actually dates to several centuries later, in the 300s or 400s, but it's built on the foundations of the first-century synagogue that Jesus taught in as we see a number of times in the Gospels. So this gives you some idea of what it would've looked like, with people sitting on the benches along the walls behind the columns and with more people probably sitting on mats on the large open floor in the middle. Capernaum is a remarkable place because you know that Jesus walked on some of these very same streets and stood in some of these very same buildings. Continuing in verse 22—

22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having authority, and not as the scribes.

23 Now there was a man in their synagogue with an unclean spirit. And he cried out,

24 saying, "Let us alone! What have we to do with You, Jesus of Nazareth? Did You come to destroy us? I know who You are—the Holy One of God!"

25 But Jesus rebuked him, saying, "Be quiet, and come out of him!"

26 And when the unclean spirit had convulsed him and cried out with a loud voice, he came out of him.

27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with authority He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

28 And immediately His fame spread throughout all the region around Galilee.

This is our first encounter with demons in the Gospels, also called "unclean spirits" and "devils" depending on the translation you read. Demons are very real beings. I've never encountered one that I know of, but I've had my suspicions about a few individuals. They're not something you want to encounter. I won't talk about them much because, to be blunt, the experiences I've heard from other elders and pastors is that if you discuss demons much, some people will start thinking about them and obsessing on them, and before long those people will start having demon problems. So it's best just to keep that subject far out of your mind.

What are demons? They are angels who joined with Satan in his rebellion against God. You can read about that in Isaiah 14 and Ezekiel 28. In that rebellion he convinced a third of the angels to rebel with him against God. We read about that in **Revelation 12:3-4—**

3 And another sign appeared in heaven: behold, a great, fiery red dragon having seven heads and ten horns, and seven diadems on his heads.

4 His tail drew a third of the stars of heaven and threw them to the earth . . .

The dragon, as we know, is Satan the devil. "Stars" in Bible prophecy is referring to angels. We see this in **Revelation 1:20—**

20 "The mystery of the seven stars which you saw in My right hand . . . : The seven stars are the angels of the seven churches

So this is a vision of the dragon, Satan the devil, rebelling against God and when he is cast down to earth he brings along with him the third of the angels who joined him in his rebellion, and they became known as demons. And as we'll see in the Gospels, Jesus encounters them quite frequently. I will note that there seem to be a lot of demons in the Middle East, and that makes sense. The Middle East is a center of God's attention, so that makes it a center of Satan's attention also. So we shouldn't be surprised to see Jesus encountering a number of demons during His ministry.

But of course, Jesus, as we read here, has the power to command demons to leave a person, and His power is far greater than theirs and they have to obey. So demons are not something to fear. We have a greater power on our side than they do.

Any questions?

In the remainder of our time I want to talk about a particular word and concept that's used here that very few people understand, but that has a great deal of meaning. It's a word we'll see several times in the Gospels, and it's translated "authority." Both Mark and Luke use it here.

Mark 1:21-27

21 Then they went into Capernaum, and immediately on the Sabbath He entered the synagogue and taught.

22 And they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having *authority*, and not as the scribes.

...

27 Then they were all amazed, so that they questioned among themselves, saying, "What is this? What new doctrine is this? For with *authority* He commands even the unclean spirits, and they obey Him."

If you look across the column at Luke's account, you'll see that he uses the same word in the same two places.

In the Jewish culture of that time, there was a particular concept that loosely translated as "authority," the word we see here in Greek translated into English. The Hebrew word was *smicha* (say "*smicha*"). It's spelled *smicha*, or sometimes you'll see it spelled *semikhah*. It's a word that doesn't translate well into English because we know what "authority" means, but here it had a specific religious or spiritual sense of meaning. You could say that it meant spiritual authority, and that would be fairly close.

Was Jesus a rabbi? Clearly He was. Jesus was acknowledged as a rabbi by several different kinds of people. One group was His disciples:

John 4:31 In the meantime His disciples urged Him, saying, "Rabbi, eat."

Another group was the Pharisees, or at least some of them:

John 3:1-2: 1 There was a man of the Pharisees named Nicodemus, a ruler of the Jews.

2 This man came to Jesus by night and said to Him, "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him."

Another group was the Sadducees:

Luke 20:27-28: 27 Then some of the Sadducees, who deny that there is a resurrection, came to Him and asked Him,

28 saying: "Teacher, Moses wrote to us that if a man's brother dies, having a wife, and he dies without children, his brother should take his wife and raise up offspring for his brother.

Keep in mind that the word "Rabbi" meant "Master" and "Teacher," and is sometimes translated this way as "Teacher."

A lawyer called Him Rabbi:

Matthew 22:35-36: 35 Then one of them, a lawyer, asked Him a question, testing Him, and saying,

36 "Teacher, which is the great commandment in the law?"

The crowds called Him Rabbi:

John 6:25: And when they [the people, the crowds] found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, “Rabbi, when did You come here?”

Note the different kinds of people who recognized Jesus as Rabbi: His disciples, a wealthy man who was a Pharisee, the Sadducees, a lawyer and the ordinary people who came to hear Him teach. Clearly Jesus was widely recognized as a rabbi. And He does rabbi things wherever He goes. He teaches in the synagogues. He teaches at the temple. He teaches along the lake shore. He teaches in the open fields. He uses the teaching methods that Jewish rabbis of the day used. He has people following Him around listening to His teaching. So He’s clearly a rabbi.

In first-century Galilee, there were *two kinds* of rabbis. The most common kind were called *Torah teachers*. *Torah* is the first five books of the Bible, the books of Moses. They knew these five books by memory. But they were also master teachers, and recognized as such by the community. We see them mentioned several times in the Gospels, where they are called “teachers” or “teachers of the law.” The five books of Moses were called the Torah, so they were called *Torah teachers*, meaning “teachers of the law.”

How did they teach? They taught by quoting the text of the books of Moses or the other books they had memorized. Again, they were very smart and knew their stuff. They would use parables to make an illustration of the text. We see Jesus doing both of these. But to back up their point, they would quote from what famous rabbis taught or said or wrote about what the text meant. They would say, “Rabbi Hillel says that this passage means such and such,” and that was used to prove their point. Whom do we find Jesus quoting to back up His points? He doesn’t quote anybody. He just says, “This is what it says—deal with it, period.” When the Gospels say He taught as one having authority, this is what it means—He didn’t need to quote anyone else to back up what He said.

And this brings us to the second kind of rabbi. These were rabbis with *smicha*—*rabbis with authority*. These were rabbis who knew the entirety of the Hebrew Scriptures, what we’d call the Old Testament, by heart. They were known as great teachers. Some were viewed as miracle workers. There weren’t many of them. If you took the 100 years from about 30 years before Christ’s birth until about 30 years after His death and resurrection, we know of about 10 rabbis by name who had *smicha*. You might recognize a few of the names, like Hillel, Shammai, and Gamliel, who was the apostle Paul’s teacher.

These men were the theological Einsteins of their day. They are brilliant men and brilliant thinkers. To this day Jewish teachers quote them as their authorities. They also were allowed, because they were recognized as such brilliant teachers, to come up with and teach their own new ideas, so long as it wasn’t in conflict with God’s Word, of course. Torah teachers couldn’t do that. That’s why they could only teach what others before them had taught, and they memorized and cited what those before them had taught.

But a rabbi with *smicha* could come up with new teachings, new ways of looking at God’s Word, new ways of applying God’s Word. They had the authority or *smicha* to do this. They were viewed as being so close to God that He had given them deeper insights and understanding of His Word to teach to others. So when we read here that “**they were astonished at His teaching, for He taught them as one having *smicha*, and not as the scribes,**” this is saying that He was recognized by some as one of these absolutely great, brilliant rabbis. And it was rabbis who had *smicha* who had disciples. Torah teachers didn’t have disciples. Rabbis with *smicha* had disciples.

Another reason the people were astonished at Jesus is because He had *smicha* at His age. Jesus is here probably 30 or 31 years old. The other rabbis who had *smicha* were much older. The youngest other one we know of was Akiva, and he received *smicha* at age 60. Hillel was 70. Shammai was 85. So how could Jesus have *smicha* at around 30? How could He have so much wisdom and understanding and insight and know God's Word so well at age 30? That's one reason they were so astonished and amazed at His teaching.

But if you were a rabbi with *smicha*, how did you get that *smicha*? Where did this concept come from? For the Jews of that day, it went all the way back to Moses and Aaron in Exodus 24 where they took 72 elders of Israel up to Mt. Sinai to meet with God. The thinking was that Moses and Aaron officially publically recognized these men with authority or *smicha*, and Moses and Aaron had *smicha*, so the way you got *smicha* was to have two individuals who had *smicha* publicly proclaim that you had *smicha*.

So who conferred *smicha* on Jesus? Let's turn to an incident recorded in **Matthew 21:23-27—**

23 Now when He came into the temple, the chief priests and the elders of the people confronted Him as He was teaching, and said, "By what authority are You doing these things? And who gave You this authority?"

24 But Jesus answered and said to them, "I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things:

25 "The baptism of John— where was it from? From heaven or from men?" And they reasoned among themselves, saying, "If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?'

26 "But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet."

27 So they answered Jesus and said, "We do not know." And He said to them, "Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things.

As we've covered before, in Jewish culture of that day, and we see this in the Gospels, it was common in a religious discussion to answer a question with a question. And in the responding question was the answer to the first question. So when they ask Jesus where He got the *smicha* to say and do the things He was saying and doing, what was His response? **"The baptism of John— where was it from? From heaven [from God, in other words] or from men?"**

What's Jesus saying? He's saying that He got His *smicha* or authority from John. When did Jesus get His *smicha* from John? Let's turn back to **John 1:29-34—**

29 The next day John saw Jesus coming toward him, and said, "Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!

30 "This is He of whom I said, 'After me comes a Man who is preferred before me, for He was before me.'

...

34 "And I have seen and testified that this is the Son of God."

What does John proclaim publicly about Jesus Christ? He says that Jesus is **The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world**, that **He was before me**, meaning that even though Jesus was born six months after John, He existed before John as the God of the Old Testament period, and that Jesus was **the Son of God**. Is that *smicha*? You bet it is! Jesus is the Lamb of God who removes sin, Jesus existed as God long before John was born, and Jesus is the Son of God. You don't get any more authority or *smicha* than that!

So here's one public proclamation that Jesus has *smicha*. What's the other one? Who else has *smicha* and publicly confers *smicha* on Jesus?

Let's look at **Mark 1:9-11**—

9 It came to pass in those days that Jesus came from Nazareth of Galilee, and was baptized by John in the Jordan.

10 And immediately, coming up from the water, He saw the heavens parting [ripped open] and the Spirit descending upon Him like a dove.

11 Then a voice came from heaven, "You are My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."

Jesus here receives His *smicha* from almighty God. Our Rabbi, our Teacher, our Master, is the only Rabbi in history to receive His *smicha*, His authority, directly from Almighty God!

That's pretty mind-boggling. We know that, because we understand that from John 1 and Hebrews 1 and Colossians 1 that Jesus was Himself the God of the Old Testament who interacted with human beings like Moses and Abraham and Noah. But to Jesus Christ's disciples and those of His lifetime, this was a mind-boggling concept. They wouldn't come to understand this until later. Yes, they heard these things and they heard Jesus say these things, but it took time for them to sink in. We understand that Jesus got His authority and teaching from God because *He was God*. But they didn't realize the meaning of that until considerably later.

And do we fully realize that? Do we realize that in becoming *talmidim*, disciples of Jesus who want more than anything else in the world to become just like Him, we are following the One who was the God of the Old Testament, who is the same yesterday, today and forever, who performed many great miracles and carried out His promises to be faithful to His people? That is the authority and teaching of our Lord and Master and Teacher and Rabbi, Jesus Christ.

I want to close with one final passage about *smicha* found in a familiar place, **Matthew 28:16-20**, where Jesus appears to the apostles one final time after His death and ascension to heaven. Here He tells them something about *smicha* and what we are to do as a result of that.

16 Then the eleven disciples went away into Galilee, to the mountain which Jesus had appointed for them. . . .

18 And Jesus came and spoke to them, saying, "All authority [smicha] has been given to Me in heaven and on earth.

19 "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit,

20 "teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age." Amen.

God the Father gave Jesus *all smicha*—all authority—in heaven and on earth. Christ's words here indicate that He has also given us, His Church, His disciples, *smicha* also—the authority to teach and declare His truth to all nations as we grow in grace and knowledge of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, led by God's Spirit.

Therefore—because of this—He tells us as His *talmidim*, His disciples, to go and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them and teaching them to observe all things that He has commanded us. And He will be with us in that work, even to the end of this age of man and the dawning of a new age to come at His return. Amen—so be it.