

**THE MIRACLES
OF JESUS THE
MESSIAH**

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Selection and Call

7

The First Draught of Fish

Luke 5:1–11

1. And it came to pass, that, as the people pressed upon him to hear the word of God, he stood by the lake of Gennesaret,

2. And saw two ships standing by the lake: but the fishermen were gone out of them, and were washing their nets.

3. And he entered into one of the ships, which was Simon's, and prayed him that he would thrust out a little from the land. And he sat down, and taught the people out of the ship.

4. Now when he had left

speaking, he said unto Simon, Launch out into the deep, and let down your nets for a draught.

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.

7. And they beckoned unto their partners, which were in the other ship, that they should come and help

them. And they came, and filled both the ships, so that they began to sink.

8. When Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord.

9. For he was astonished, and all that were with him, at the draught of the fishes which they had taken:

10. And so was also James, and John, the sons of Zebedee, which were partners with Simon. And Jesus said unto Simon, Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men.

11. And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him.

Cross-references:

Matthew 4:18–22

Mark 1:16–20

This part of the book contains the special miracles directed to the Twelve Apostles. Some were performed before their call, and some after. The miracles were a special witness by Jesus to them that he was the Messiah, the promised Savior of the world. These were the men who would live and travel with Jesus throughout his ministry. They were different from those disciples that followed him generally. They were to lead the Church and testify of him, that others might come to know and believe.

Then as now, a disciple was someone who elected to follow Jesus and generally believed on his word. These followers were devoted to him, but they did not receive the special witness of the Apostles. The Apostles did not volunteer for their calling. Luke reports that the Lord "continued all night in prayer to God" (Luke 6:12) prior to the selection of the first Twelve. Having selected and called these from his disciples in general, he ordained them to the Apostleship. He reminded them of this special calling in his last instructions to them, given just before his death. "Ye have not chosen me," he said, "but I have chosen you, and ordained you" (John 15:16). The call of Apostle is one reserved for the Melchizedek Priesthood, "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."¹

At the time of the miracle of the first draught of fish, four of these future, special witnesses were called to follow the Savior: Peter, his brother Andrew, James, and his brother John. Although the selection of the four is mentioned in all three of the synoptic Gospels, only Luke records the miracle.

The call to follow Jesus in his ministry was a sacred experience, and how each of these four men chose to report it may well be reflected in the accounts that have come down to us. While each of the three Synoptics recorded at least some portion of the event, John elected to remain silent about it, as he so often did when he was personally involved in close relationships with the Lord. From the detail that is recorded, it is evident that the experience was an extremely personal and impressive one, causing the deepest soul-searching and commitment.

How well these disciples had known Jesus or followed him prior to this call is not known. It should be evident from the text and circumstance of the miracle, however, that they certainly knew of him, and perhaps had even received personal witness of his divine mission.

Although he did not report the calling of the four, John indicates that they had had some association with Jesus before the miracle. He records that the day after the baptism of Jesus, John the Baptist and two of his disciples were standing as Jesus walked by, and the Baptist, true to his mission and call, testified, "Behold the Lamb of God" (John 1:36). The two disciples followed Jesus. The Lord asked them what they were doing, and they inquired where he was staying. Invited to come and see, they stayed with the Lord that day. John identifies one of these two as Andrew, Peter's brother. The other has always been thought to be John himself.

As the miracle develops, Luke reports that Jesus was teaching by the Lake of Gennesaret, one of his favorite teaching places. The crowd of people "pressed upon him" to hear the word of God. Two empty fishing ships stood by the shore. The fishermen were washing their nets nearby. The ships belonged to Peter, his brother Andrew, and James and John. Jesus went aboard Peter's boat and requested that Peter "thrust out a little from the land." This gained him some separation from the crowd, allowing the multitude to sit or stand on the shore, that all might see

and hear him as he continued to teach "the people out of the ship." When he had finished the sermon he requested that Peter "launch out into the deep." Although Jesus had just taught of the kingdom of God from the deck of their boat, Peter and his partners were now to gain a much stronger testimony of him.

"Let down your nets for a draught," Jesus told Peter. The partners had been fishing all night, possibly in that very area, but had caught nothing. Peter told the Lord of this and continued, "Nevertheless at thy word I will let down the net."

Obviously Peter had confidence in the Lord. Perhaps hearing Christ's sermon had instilled this unquestionable belief, but more probably it was built upon Peter's previous acquaintance with the Lord. His confidence and faith had grown; thus, despite having labored all night in vain, when instructed to do so Peter let down the nets.

This simple act symbolized the Savior's plan for these four fishermen. He would later choose them from among all his disciples to become Apostles, and at least three of them would hold a special position in his eyes, even among the Twelve. Jesus drew these four fishermen to him just as the fishermen drew in the "multitude of fishes." They cast their nets in, and the catch was so great that the net broke. When they called to their partners, James and John, for help, they gladly came so that they, too, might participate in the catch. There were so many fish that when they took them into the ships, both were filled and began to sink. The future Apostles knew that they were in the presence of one greater than themselves.

Only Peter's reaction to the miracle is recorded. He fell "at Jesus' knees, saying, Depart from me; for I am a sinful man, O Lord." Peter and his brethren were frightened at the Lord's display of power. Peter's response was not a sign of weakness or unbelief, nor did Peter desire that the Lord should actually depart from him. Peter had merely expressed his own feelings of personal unworthiness at being in the Lord's presence.

The reaction was not unusual. Moses, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Gideon, Paul, and even John the Revelator, are recorded as acting much the same upon being called by the Lord to serve him (see Exodus 3:11; 4:10-17; Isaiah 6:5; Jeremiah 1:6; Judges 6:15;

Acts 9:6; Revelation 1:17). All these great men expressed their personal unworthiness, yet in no instance was weak faith implied. So it was with Peter. He did not feel worthy to stay in the presence of the Lord, but the Lord would not leave him; he had a great work for Peter and the others to do. In his response to Simon, Christ comforted him and said, "Fear not; from henceforth thou shalt catch men."

The fishermen recognized Christ's witness to them through the miracle, and they acknowledged it. The Psalmist had sung of him: "Thou madest him to have dominion over the works of thy hands; . . . the fowl of the air, and the fish of the sea (see Psalms 8:6, 8). Jesus' control over these creatures had received ample witness. He had spoken only to Peter to instruct him to let down his net, yet the "fish of the sea" had gathered that they might be drawn in. In so doing, Jesus had let down the gospel net, and had brought in four men who would be special witnesses of him. They would now be fishers of men, to bring all who would come into the kingdom of God. Finally, the record states that they brought their ship to shore and "forsook all, and followed him."

A rich man once asked Jesus how to gain eternal life. Jesus enumerated the basic commandments, to which the man openly acknowledged his compliance. The man continued his inquiry: "What lack I yet?" Jesus told him to sell all that he had, give the proceeds to the poor, and follow him. "But when the young man heard that saying, he went away sorrowful: for he had great possessions." (See Matthew 19:16–26).

Not so with the four fishermen. "They forsook all, and followed him." All that had meant so much to them—their boats, their nets and gear, their livelihood, and even their families—they left behind. These things had occupied their thoughts daily, but "from that moment the four were His devoted followers. The rich gain they would have prized so highly but an hour before, had lost its charm. Called to decide there and then, as a proof of their meekness for discipleship, they forsook all, and followed Him at once."²

Not all of the Twelve were present when this miracle occurred but they would eventually hear of it, for these humble fishermen would bear witness of it to them.