

The Calling of the First Four Disciples Harmonizing the Gospel Accounts

When Jesus calls two sets of brothers as the first four men to serve as disciples (Simon and Andrew, James and John), there are variations in the details in the gospel accounts (Matt 4:17-22; Mark 1:14-20; Luke 5:1-11; John 1:35-42). By combining all four gospels, a fuller picture emerges and the details are more easily observable and understood.

Again the next day John was standing with two of his disciples, and he looked at Jesus as He walked, and said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. And Jesus turned and saw them following, and said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi (which translated means Teacher), where are You staying?" (John 1:35-38)

He said to them, "Come, and you will see." So they came and saw where He was staying; and they stayed with Him that day, for it was about the tenth hour. (John 1:39)

One of the two who heard John speak and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He found first his own brother Simon and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which translated means Christ). He brought him to Jesus. Jesus looked at him and said, "You are Simon the son of John; you shall be called Cephas" (which is translated Peter). (John 1:40-42)

Now after John had been taken into custody, Jesus came into Galilee, preaching the gospel of God, (Mark 1:14)

and saying, "The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is at hand; repent and believe in the gospel." (Mark 1:15)

"Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand." (Matt 4:17)

Now as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee, He saw two brothers, Simon who was called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. (Matt 4:18; Mark 1:16)

Now it happened that while the crowd was pressing around Him and listening to the word of God, He was standing by the lake of Gennesaret; and He saw two boats lying at the edge of the lake; but the fishermen had gotten out of them and were washing their nets. (Luke 5:1-2)

And He got into one of the boats, which was Simon's, and asked him to put out a little way from the land. And He sat down and began teaching the people from the boat. When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." (Luke 5:3-4)

Simon answered and said, "Master, we worked hard all night and caught nothing, but I will do as You say and let down the nets." When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; so they signaled to their partners in the other boat for them to come and help them. And they came and filled both of the boats, so that they began to sink. (Luke 5:5-8)

But when Simon Peter saw that, he fell down at Jesus' feet, saying, "Go away from me Lord, for I am a sinful man!" For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." (Luke 5:8-10)

The Calling of the First Four Disciples
Harmonizing the Gospel Accounts (page 2)

When they had brought their boats to land, (Luke 5:11a)

And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. (Matt 4:19-20; Mark 1:17-18)

Going on from there He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and He called them. Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him. (Matt 4:21-22; Mark 1:19-20; Luke 5:11b)

Of the twelve apostles, Simon Peter, Andrew, James and John would be the first four named in all the lists naming the apostles (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16)