
Christ's Disciples

The Official Calling of the Disciples

Matthew 4:18-22; Mark 1:16-20

Christ has now moved to Capernaum, which will become His headquarters. Matthew would later call this city Jesus' own.

Now Christ has already had an impact on these four disciples; they have come to believe through John the Baptist's ministry, and through Christ's word.

But it is time for Christ to put His disciples to the work of the Lord, so he put them on recall.

Matthew 4:18-22: "And 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 fisherman. And He said to them, 'Come after Me, and I will make you fishers of men.' And immediately leaving the nets, and followed Him. And 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. And they immediately left the boat and their father, and followed Him."

Mark 1:16-20: "And as He was passing through by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, "Come after Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." And immediately leaving the nets, they followed Him . And going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat [with others] mending the nets. And immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him."

Both writers agree completely with the details of the calling of Simon and Andrew.

Christ was walking, passing through by the shore of the sea of Galilee, just as we left Him in Luke 4. It is the adverbial present participle, PARAGON, which reveals the circumstantial background to the moment He saw Simon and Andrew. Apparently

He was on His way somewhere else, perhaps from Nazareth to Capernaum.

He saw the two brothers, as they were casting a net in the sea, for the purpose of fishing.

So Christ gave them a command - DEUTE OPISO MOU - literally translated, 'come after me.'" Both accounts agree to the exact wording.

Principle: This is the inspired retelling of this event. It is more probable that Christ spoke this command in Aramaic, the language of the day for the region. But, when two gospel writers agree on the exact Greek translation, you can rest assured that the spirit of the Aramaic has been captured, without any loss of meaning.

When two or more gospel writers disagree on the exact Greek translation, then the multiple accounts must harmonize to bring full meaning. The differences are the work of God the Holy Spirit as well, and they make the narrative better, not worse.

The second half of Christ's words of recall to His disciples has to do with their mission. They are going to be fishers of men.

Mark adds one note to the account of Matthew, and that is the word GENESTHAI. This is the aorist middle infinite of the deponent verb GINOMAI, 'to become.'

Mark's meaning is a little more graphic as to the nature of their transformation. It concentrates on function, and not quality.

The aorist tense tells us that the transformation from fishermen to fishers of men will be immediate. In other words, they will make the switch immediately. Second, there is no mention of quality here; they may have been crummy at first.

But remember, Christ had given them intensive training just a few months before, when they down by the river Jordan. They would have had some frame of reference for what they were about to do.

The disciples' response is immediate and sure - leaving their nets they followed Him. The adverb

of time EUTHUS leaves no question as to their obedience.

These men already had built up a certain amount of trust in Christ. They were believers in Him, and had begun to know Him.

Their nets were left right where they lay, and their boats, and their families.

The calling of the second pair of disciples runs very much the same as the first.

This time, Christ just 'calls' them. The implication is that His words are the same as those that went out to Andrew and Peter.

They too follow immediately.

These four are the only ones mentioned in the narrative, and so are likely the only ones with Him during this time. It would be only a short while until the call of Matthew, and a little more time until the twelve are officially appointed.

The Disciples

Matthew

God used an outcast. His name is a transliteration of the Aramaic word which means gift of God.

In his own Gospel, Matthew uses his regular name. In other gospels, the name Levi is used. It is likely that Matthew became his name after his conversion.

Matthew was a Jewish tax collector. It is likely that he was fairly well off financially because of his profession. This makes his decision to follow Christ all the more remarkable, because he left it all behind - Lk 5:28. It is likely that he worked at the toll house in Capernaum.

When he decided to follow our Lord, he threw a big party, and invited all his friends. His decision to follow Christ was immediate.

As a tax collector, Matthew was an outcast in Jewish society. He apparently had no friends who were devout in the Jewish faith for at his party there were only other tax collectors and sinners.

The Roman tax collectors were hated by the Jews because the Roman taxes were in addition to the Jewish taxes.

They were also hated because they represented the occupying forces of the Roman Empire.

The tax collectors made their living by inflating the Roman taxes. They essentially worked on commission.

Tax collectors were wealthy, but hated by their own society. They had to live with a tremendous amount of prejudice.

Because of this prejudice their social options were severely limited. They could only socialize with others who were outcasts.

It was easy for Matthew to follow Christ, considering his personal circumstances. Social isolation does not make it easy to enjoy personal wealth. No doubt he knew of the supernatural essence of Christ's ministry, and he may have even heard Him speak. It is often the outcast that finds it easiest to follow Christ.

Matthew is a rich man who defied the odds.

Remember Matthew if you are an outcast.

John Boanerges

Cousin "according to the flesh" of Jesus Christ. Brother of James (not the epistle writer). A native of Galilee. John's mother Salome was a follower of Jesus, and ministered to Him of her own means.

John was a fisherman of the Sea of Galilee, his life was hard work, but apparently it had paid off for his family, because they had servants, and were able to support the ministry of Jesus Christ.

Galilee was a region somewhat analogous to the U.S. South not too long ago. It is conservative to a fault, and more than a little rebellious in character. The fires of rebellion flamed openly in this region. In reality a lot of senseless violence took place in the name of the zealot movement, but there was very little virtue. This time was somewhat analogous to that of Northern Ireland today.

Great humility -

When John the Baptist points out Jesus as the Messiah, John follows without delay.

Never mentions own name in own Gospel.

Nicknamed, with brother James as the "Sons of Thunder", a reference to their manner in Word and Deed, Mk 3:17. It is likely that they had a fair amount of Zealot ideals in their heads.

Outspoken about his faith from the start.

"The disciple whom Jesus loved" - was the closest to Jesus of the inner circle of Peter, James, and John.

Was the only eyewitness to the cross among the disciples, and he was eyewitness to the resurrection, John 20.

One of the "Pillars of the Church", Gal 2:9. Paul had a high regard for him.

Took over as chief of Apostles some time in the late 70's.

Did not start writing until late in life.

His writing reflects the 50+ years of careful thought about the life of Christ and the Christian life.

Under his ministry, Ephesus became the center of the pivot which gave the Roman Empire its greatest time of prosperity under the Antonine Caesars, 98-180 A.D.

He used very basic Greek grammar to express incredibly deep theological ideas.

He was the key figure in the transition from the pre-canon period to the post canon period.

Peter

Peter's name was also Simon. The testimony of Peter always stands behind the writing of Mark in this epistle.

Overview: Peter is enthusiastic, emotional, swift to speak without thinking, full of love and anger, sometimes legalistic and snobbish, and Jewish in a prejudicial way. He is one of the independent, rebellious Galileans. He loves Christ so much, yet he cannot muster the spiritual resources to remain with Him in His arrest, trial, and death. He is the second to the tomb on the third day, and enters first, but did not believe what he saw.

He is the first of the disciples to see Christ after the resurrection. He is unsure of his standing with Christ immediately after the resurrection. Peter is a leader and very much a preacher, though not careful about what he says. He makes mistakes, he broods, and then he seeks and needs forgiveness in a desperate emotional way. In the end, he writes two epistles about suffering, and speaks his remembrances of Christ in a brief, but humble manner.

If there is one character trait of Peter which rises above all others, it is his emotionalism. Peter often let his emotions rule his thinking, much to his detriment and regret.

At the transfiguration of Christ, Peter emotionally desires to build tabernacles for Christ, Moses, and Elijah. He was not thinking. Mat 17:4.

Such a project would have placed the Messiah on equal footing with the two prophets.

Such a project hinted at the necessity for these three to grow spiritually when all three were in a completed state.

In other words, Peter fails to think rationally before he speaks.

At Christ's prediction of Peter's denial, Matt 26:35. Peter replies, "Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny you." (All the disciples said the same thing too).

Peter is the instigator here. All the disciples follow his heroic statement.

All the disciples follow in Peter's denial, as well.

John 21:15-17 records Peter's recovery before Christ, after the resurrection, "So when they had finished breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me more than these?' He said to Him, 'Yes, Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Feed my lambs.' He said to him again a second time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' He said to Him, 'Yes Lord; You know that I love You.' He said to him, 'Shepherd my sheep.' He said to him the third time, 'Simon, son of John, do you love Me?' Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, 'Do you love me?' And he said to Him, 'Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You.' Jesus said to him, 'Tend my sheep.'

Peter is still feeling guilt over his denial of Christ at this time, several days after Christ's resurrection.

Note that Peter does not blame himself for his failure, but Christ. He is projecting his failure onto God.

Christ asks Peter if he has agape love for him, and the answer is no. Only phileo love - friendship. Peter does not feel worthy enough, and so he describes his love as friendship.

Though Christ commands Peter to feed his sheep, Peter does not feel qualified to do so, because he is only a friend of Christ.

The second round is identical to the first.

The third round is significant: it is Peter's second threefold denial of Christ.

Peter's grief is founded on Christ's use of the word *phileo* the third time. In essence Christ says, "Do you even like me?" This because of the silence after the second command to tend His sheep.

Again, the command of Christ to feed his sheep.

Christ then predicts the kind of death Peter will die, and it is not what one would consider pleasant. He concludes the prediction with a command - 'Follow me!'

Peter is momentarily distracted by John, who was following them down the beach.

Christ cuts to the chase. 'Follow Me' is repeated, and that is the end of the story.

In your life, cut to the chase. Follow Christ. No excuses. No distractions. Get your eyes off of others, and follow Christ.

Peter is an early leader in the church, but fades from the limelight in about 50 A.D. Nothing is heard from him until he writes his epistles in the early 60's, and then dictates his gospel story to Mark in the mid-60's.

Peter wavered on the question of Gentiles and the church. In Acts 10, he receives direct guidance from the Lord on the subject of whether Gentiles should be allowed in the church. He responds positively, but just a few years later, he has to be rebuked by Paul on the very same subject.

Gal 2:11-14 contains that rebuke. "But when Cephas came to Antioch, I opposed him to his face, because he stood condemned. For prior to the coming of certain men from James, he used to eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he began to withdraw and hold himself aloof, fearing the party of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews joined him in hypocrisy, with the result that even Barnabas was carried away by their hypocrisy. But when I saw that they were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel, I said to Cephas in the presence of all, 'If you, being a Jew, live like

the Gentiles and not like the Jews, how is it that you compel the Gentiles to live like Jews?"

Probably the best analogy to Peter's early character is a politician on the campaign trail. Always promising, always in the limelight, but never following through.

But Peter recovers, and not long before his death he writes the most marvelous gospel and two Epistles.

James Boanerges

What we know about James is mostly related to his much more famous brother, John. Matt 4:21 communicates that they left the business and their father behind to follow Christ.

However, before John ever became famous, there was James, who was always mentioned first among the two brothers, the sons of Zebedee. This can be because he was older, or because he was the more prominent of the two at the time.

James was one of the inner circle of three along with Peter and John. Only they were present at the following events.

The raising of Jairus' daughter, Mk 8:51; Luke 5:37.

The transfiguration, Mat 17:1; Mk 9:2; Luke 9:28.

The garden of Gethsemane, Mt. 26:37; Mk 14:33.

The Olivet discourse, Mk 13:3.

Strangely, he is missing at the tomb on resurrection morning. This will always remain a mystery.

James was the first of the true twelve to die for his faith (Judas Iscariot does not count for obvious reasons). Acts 12:2 records that Herod Agrippa had him put to death with the sword.

This martyrdom may have been part of the impetus for John's late ministry, because it is only after this that John begins to rev up his engines.

Andrew, Simon's brother

Andrew is properly the first disciple of Christ. This is perhaps the most significant fact of his life. His brother Simon and business partners James and John followed his lead.

This places him as a leader, though quiet, because he really is not prominent like Peter, James, and John.

Andrew goes to lead his brother Simon Peter to the Messiah after hearing John the Baptist point the way. John 1:40-42

After his original call to discipleship, Andrew returned to fishing. When John the Baptist was placed into prison, Christ came back to Galilee, where He once again called Simon Peter and Andrew. Mk 1:14-18.

People ask him for advice at the feeding of the five thousand, John 6:8. He is included in the inner circle at the Mt. of Olives during the last week of Christ's life.

Philip

Philip is from the hometown of Andrew and Peter, Bethsaida. He is another of those conservative, rebellious Galileans.

There is one character trait that comes out again and again with Philip; he is practical. By this I mean that he is analytical, naturally a skeptic, and keeps his feet firmly grounded on planet earth.

This turns out to be an advantage in evangelism. He naturally senses the protests that unbelievers might make, and so simply says, 'come and see'. John 1:46. He describes Christ as the fulfillment of the Law and the Prophets, the distinction of a careful man. John 1:45.

This turns out to be a handicap in every day life with Christ.

At the feeding of the five thousand, Philip can only see the practical side of things, and so he leaves out the possibility of a miracle, John 6:4-7. Christ asks a rhetorical question and Philip gives Christ a non-rhetorical, practical reply. He is more concerned with money than miracles.

At the last supper, Christ tells his disciples that He is God incarnate, and that a relationship with the Father comes through Him. Philip then expresses his desire to see the Father. Christ rebukes him by telling him again that He is the embodiment of the father, John 14:6-11.

Philip is a good disciple to study for all the skeptics. He probably out-doubts Thomas.

James Alphaeus

He is the cousin of Christ. His mother Mary is the sister in law of Mary the mother of Christ.

He is the father of Jude, the one who wrote the epistle of Jude.

His father is Cleopas, one of the men on the road to Emmaus.

Apart from this we know little, but it appears that he wielded much influence in his family, for they seemed to all follow Christ.

Nathanael Bartholomew

This man may be a celebrity, or at least from a famous family.

Bartholomew is the name mentioned in the synoptic gospels. This means 'Son of Ptolemies' Since this is only a last name it is not specific as to the actual person behind it. It also may be interpreted 'Son of Ptolemais', a city on the North Coast of Palestine, not too far from Galilee. In modern parlance, 'the guy from Ptolemais'.

John uses Nathanael, the man's first name. The difference can be for the following reasons.

John knew the man's real name, and the synoptic authors did not. This may be true if he was just the guy from Ptolemais, but it seems unlikely, considering that he was with the disciples at the resurrection and probably for the years in between, unless 'guy from Ptolemais' was just a nickname.

There was a legitimate reason for the synoptic writers to keep the man's real name hidden, but this reason was diminished or eradicated by the time that John wrote some ten or fifteen years later.

The Ptolemies were the royal family in Egypt, and major players in the events following the death of Alexander the Great in 323 B.C. and the building of the Roman Empire.

The most famous of all the Ptolemies was none other than Cleopatra of Egypt.

Ptolemy the 15th was the son of Cleopatra, and it is possible that this Bartholomew was in this line of descent.

Bartholomew/Nathaniel exhibits an elitist attitude toward Nazareth that could come from being part

of a royal family, or simply from a neighboring town.

It is interesting to note that Christ says of Nathanael, "a real Israelite".

But Nathanael Bartholomew is of Egyptian heritage - he could not be a genetic Jew. But Christ talks about his spiritual heritage as Paul would... that the true Jew is the one who believes in Him regardless of his genetic make up.

Christ also comments that Nathanael is without guile, or cunning deceit. Another way to put it is that Nathaniel is very forthright; he says what he thinks. Nathanael is a straight-shooter with his words, as he has just demonstrated with his comment on Nazareth.

Nathanael is possibly from a royal family. His comment is one that a king would make about a backward country town. But his opinion is honest and forthright. "Can any good thing come out of Arkansas?"

Nathaniel's response to Christ's statement is surprise and disbelief. "How do you know me?"

Christ responds, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you."

We do not know what Nathanael was doing under the fig tree, but it was certainly related to his forthright nature. There is not much that is especially supernatural here.

On the basis of Christ's simple statement, Nathanael believes. It is now Christ's turn to register surprise.

On account of Nathaniel's belief, Christ prophesies: 'You will see the heavens opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.' This is a reference to behind the scenes of prayer. Taking the prayers to God, and returning the answers to man. However, this is a literal vision, and so Nathanael will have the gift of seeing behind the scenes of prayer.

Thomas

This is the second of the doubters (see Phillip) among the disciples, although all seem to fail, and doubt is the seed of all failure.

He was a twin, although his sibling is not mentioned at all in the Bible. Thomas is the

Aramaic word for 'twin', and the Greek equivalent Didymus was placed alongside it three times in John's gospel.

John 11:14-16, "Then Jesus therefore said to them plainly, 'Lazarus is dead, and I am glad for your sakes that I was not there, so that you may believe; but let us go to him.' Thomas therefore, who is called Didymus, said to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him.'"

Thomas here displays a rather caustic sense of humor.

Christ is present, yet Thomas says this to his fellow disciples; it was spoken under his breath.

Verse 8 says that there was imminent danger in Bethany, Lazarus' home town - that the disciples and Christ would be stoned if they went there.

Verse 16 reveals that Thomas was the kind of guy that would follow Christ unto to death, but not without getting his two cents in.

The disciples are not mentioned in the event surrounding Lazarus' resuscitation, so they actually may have been scared away by Thomas' remark.

John 14:1-5. "Let not your heart be troubled; believe in God, believe also in Me. In My Father's house are many dwelling places; if it were not so, I would have told you; for I go to prepare a place for you. And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again, and receive you to Myself; that where I am, there you may be also. And you know the way where I am going." Thomas said to Him, "Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?"

Thomas here shows a remarkable blindness to Jesus' discourse.

He misses the point that Christ is making; that He is going to die. Thomas' feet are still on terra firma, when they should be in heaven.

He does not know where Christ goes, and therefore he cannot know the way. At least he is honest.

Christ's reply is simple: "I am the way, and the truth, and the life; no one comes to the Father, but through Me."

John 20:24-29. "But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore were saying to him, 'We have seen the Lord!' But he said to them, 'Unless I shall see in His hands the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.' And after eight days again His disciples were inside, and Thomas with them. Jesus came, the doors having been shut, and stood in their midst, and said, 'Peace be with you.' Then he said to Thomas, 'Reach here your finger, and see My hands; and reach here your hand, and put it into My side; and be not unbelieving, but believing.' Thomas answered and said to Him, My Lord and my God!' Jesus said to him, 'Because you have seen Me, have you believed? Blessed are they who did not see, and yet believed.'"

Judas the unknown, or Thaddeus, or Lebbaeus

John 14:21-23 "He who has My commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves Me; and he who loves Me shall be loved by My Father, and I will love him, and will disclose Myself to him.' Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us, and not to the world?' Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him, and make Our abode with him.'"

This Judas is pretty astute. Here he wants to know the change. Why the disclosure? Why the ministry shift?

I found myself immediately wanting to hear more from this man, and yet he remains silent.

Thaddeus or Lebbaeus means 'breast'. This may be a clue to this man's affectionate or endearing nature, but such is only speculation.

Simon the Zealot

More often called the Canaanite, which means zealot. We know nothing more about him.

The Zealots were almost purely a political party. They called for the violent overthrow of the Roman rule.

They carried on the tradition of the Maccabees - they were militant, and full of zeal and purpose.

They were the cause of the Jewish wars and the destruction of Jerusalem.

They fought with complete fanaticism to the very end. They were extremely patriotic, but not many were Godly.

They took their patriotism to great excess, and vowed to strike down all the enemies of Israel.

Although they were politically correct (not in the modern sense), they were morally wrong, and in this they were most similar to the southern U.S. in the early 1800's.

Judas Iscariot, the Traitor.

All four of the gospels reveal before the fact that Judas will betray Jesus Christ, Matt 10:4; Mk 8:19; Luke 6:15; John 6:71.

Luke and John portray him as under the immediate direction of Satan Himself, Luke 22:3; John 13:27. There is little question from the latter verse that this man became demon possessed by Satan.

He was the group treasurer, a position that would have been given to a trustworthy person. John 12:4-7, But Judas Iscariot, one of His disciples, who was intending to betray Him, said, "Why was this perfume not sold for three hundred denarii, and given to poor people?" Now he said this, not because he was concerned about the poor, but because he was a thief, and as he had the money box, he used to pilfer what was put into it. Jesus therefore said, "let her alone, in order that she may keep it for the day of My Burial."

It was for this same money-grubbing motivation that Judas betrayed our Lord, and yet 30 pieces of silver was not very much money. His greed must have been great indeed.

Judas was so trustworthy that even when our Lord implicated Him before the betrayal, many of the disciples did not believe Him, John 13:28-29.

And yet at the last the scales fall from Judas' eyes and he realizes what he has done. Matt 27:3-5, "Then when Judas, who had betrayed Him, saw that He had been condemned, he felt remorse and returned the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' But they said, 'What is that to us? See to that yourself! And he threw the

pieces of silver into the sanctuary and departed and he went away and hanged himself."

Judas identifies Christ as honorable blood - one not worthy of betrayal.

Judas has a change of feeling. He now cares about what he has done. Before he was callused and uncaring. Now he does, but it is too late.

Judas still views his betrayal as permanent, and kills himself before the resurrection.

It is difficult to discern from this whether Judas was a believer.

Judas makes a really weak attempt at reparation by attempting to give the money back. Perhaps he had hoped to have Christ set free on account of this, but it utterly failed.

Luke puts the right end to the story in Acts 1:15-18. "And at this time Peter stood up in the midst of the brethren (a gathering of about one hundred and twenty persons was there together) and said, 'Brethren, the Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit foretold by the mouth of David concerning Judas, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus. For he was counted among us, and received his portion in this ministry.'" Now this man acquired a field with the price of his wickedness; and falling headlong, he burst open in the middle and all his bowels gushed out. And it became known to all who were living in Jerusalem; so that in their own language that field was called Aceldama, that is, Field of Blood).

Judas' body split open because it had been dead. This was the perfect contrast to Christ's death.

The betrayal of Judas is very well documented by Old Testament prophecy.

Many women followed Jesus Christ. The reason is simple: In a society where women were treated as unimportant, unclean, and generally inferior, Christ treated them with respect, and placed them on equal spiritual footing as men. As a result, Christ gained many women followers who were in many ways more valuable than even His closest disciples.

Salome. Mk 15:40; 16:1.

She is the mother of James and John, the husband of Zebedee; she is Mary, Jesus' mother's sister, and so the aunt of Jesus Christ.

Do not mistake Salome with the woman of the same name who demanded John the Baptist's head on a platter.

Mk 15:40-41, "And there were also some women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less [Alphaeus] and Joses, and Salome. And when He was in Galilee, they used to follow Him and minister to Him; and there were many other women who had come up with Him to Jerusalem."

These women followed Christ, the same verb here that is used of the disciples' following of Christ. These women are never identified as disciples proper, and yet they follow just as the disciples do. These women served Christ, the verb which is the basis for the spiritual gift of deacon.

Read Mark 16:1-8

This occurs after the initial visit by Mary Magdalene, before sunrise.

They used the excuse of anointing Christ's body (which they intended to do anyway) for going to the tomb to investigate Mary's claim.

The women reported to the eleven disciples and the other followers of Jesus, but they did not tell any outsiders. This is the explanation for the final verse.

Mary from Magdala

Luke 8:1-3, "And it came about soon afterwards, that He began going about from one city and village to another, proclaiming and preaching the kingdom of God; and the twelve were with Him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and sicknesses; Mary who was called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joanna the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others who were contributing to their support out of their private means."

Here is the introduction to the Ladies' auxiliary.

Many women were supporting Christ's ministry from their own means - making sure that the word was getting out.

Mk 15:47, "And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses were looking on to see where He was laid."

This is particularly astute, a key to everything that would follow.

As we know from the next verse, 16:1, they found out this piece of information so that they could care for the body of Christ. Their motivation was pure, and these two ladies were doing the right thing for the right reason.

If they had not found out the location of the tomb, then who knows how long it would have taken for them to locate it.

She is the first witness to the evidence for the resurrection, John 20:1-2, "Now on the first day of the week Mary Magdalene came early to the tomb, while it was still dark, and saw the stone already taken away from the tomb. And so she ran and came to Simon Peter, and to the other disciple whom Jesus loved, and said to them, 'They have taken away the Lord out of the tomb, and we do not know where they have laid Him.'"

Now, Mary saw the empty tomb and the angels and heard their declaration, but she misunderstood. She still assumed the death of Christ.

The 'they' here is a reference to the angels.

She goes and finds one of the disciples, and they treat her like Christ never did. They do not believe her words, and so they decide that they better check things out for themselves.

Mary, the sister of Martha and Lazarus

Luke 10:38-42 tells us that Mary had her priorities straight: "now as they were traveling along, He entered a certain village; and a woman named Martha welcomed Him into her home. And she had a sister called Mary, who moreover was listening to the Lord's word, seated at His feet. But Martha was distracted with all her preparations; and she came up to Him, and said, 'Lord, do You not care that my sister has left me to do all the serving alone? Then tell her to help me.' But the Lord answered and said to her, 'Martha, Martha, you are worried and bothered about so many

things; but only a few things are necessary, really only one, for Mary has chosen the good part, which shall not be taken away from her.'"

This woman had her priorities right.

This was her great opportunity to listen to the gospel from the Lord's lips and she was not going to miss it.

She chooses to set aside her responsibilities for the moment, and Christ vindicates her reasoning.

We choose our lifestyles.

With lifestyle comes obligation and responsibility.

We choose our responsibilities.

Mary could have gotten the information about what Christ said from her brother Lazarus, after her hostess responsibilities were complete.

Mary recognized that getting the information first hand and face to face was a priority.

Face to face is always better. Any other medium is inferior and diluted.

Matthew 26:6-13 tells us of Mary's anointing of Christ. "Now when Jesus was in Bethany, at the home of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him with an alabaster vial of very costly perfume, and she poured it upon His head as He reclined at the table. But the disciples were indignant when they saw this, and said, 'Why this waste? For this perfume might have been sold for a high price and the money given to the poor.' but Jesus, aware of this, said to them, 'Why do you bother the woman? For she has done a good deed to Me. For the poor you have with you always; but you do not always have Me. For when she poured this perfume upon My body, she did it to prepare Me for burial. Truly I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done shall also be spoken of in memory of her.'"

John 12:1-9 adds some important details to this story. 1. That it was Judas Iscariot who led the protest against the use of the perfume, and for seriously wrong motivation. The other disciples were fooled by his protest. 2. That Lazarus was present at this event, the resuscitated man who was a perfect backgrounder. 3. That the expensive perfume was spikenard, from India. Very expensive indeed. 4. That the perfume's scent filled the entire house.

This was just two days before the cross. The scent would have still remained when Christ went to His ordeal. People bathed much less often than we do in the era of modern plumbing.

The sweet fragrance of the sacrifice of the Lamb of God was literal, as well as spiritual, thanks to Mary.

Mary, the mother of James Alphaeus. She does not say anything, but Scripture records her as present at the cross and resurrection. Her husband is one

of those who talked to the resurrected Christ on the road to Emmaus.

Mary, the mother of Our Lord. She is the greatest of them all, faithful to her son to the very end.

Acts 1:14 makes it clear that the women were present after the ascension. No doubt they played an important role in the early church as well.
