

The Gospel Unashamed

"From the cowardice that shrinks from new truth, from the laziness that is content with half-truths, from the arrogance that thinks it knows all truth, O, God of Truth, deliver us."

A Controversial Newsletter "The Printed Voice of Summit Theological Seminary"

~ All articles are written by Terry Carter unless otherwise stated ~

Vol. 36 No. 1

January 2023

Terry Carter, Editor

Calling Peter

All four Gospels record Peter, and others, being called by Jesus as disciples.

"18 And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. 19 Then He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 They immediately left their nets and followed Him. 21 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. He called them, 22 and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him." **Matthew 4:18-22 (NKJV)**

"16 And as He walked by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew 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 the son of Zebedee, and John 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." **Mark 1:16-20 (NKJV)**

"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. 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." 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. 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 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. 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." **Luke 5:1-11 (NKJV)**

"35 Again, the next day, John stood with two of his disciples. 36 And looking at Jesus as He walked, he said, "Behold the Lamb of God!" 37 The two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. 38 Then Jesus turned, and seeing them

following, said to them, "What do you seek?" They said to Him, "Rabbi" (which is to say, when translated, Teacher), "where are You staying?" 39 He said to them, "Come and see." They came and saw where He was staying, and remained with Him that day (now it was about the tenth hour). 40 One of the two who heard John speak, and followed Him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. 41 He first found his own brother Simon, and said to him, "We have found the Messiah" (which is translated, the Christ). 42 And he brought him to Jesus. Now when Jesus looked at him, He said, "You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas" (which is translated, A Stone)." **John 1:35-42 (NKJV)**

It should be clear that the account in **John** is a different incident than the others. The event recorded in **John** is the first call of Peter, Andrew, and another disciple who may have been John or James although the text does not say this.

Following are some reasons why this call is not the same event as the others:

1. The incident in **John** was very early in the ministry of Jesus. The other accounts were in the second year of His ministry.
2. The incident in **John** was at Bethabara on the Jordan river where John the Baptist was baptizing, **John 1:28**. The others were on the Sea of Galilee also called "the Lake of Gennesaret". This is

some 60 miles north of Bethabara.

3. The call in **John** happened after John the Baptist pointed Jesus out to Andrew and an unnamed disciple (possibly John or James). The events in **Matthew** and **Mark** happened as Jesus was walking by the Sea of Galilee. In **Luke's** account, He is pressed by the multitude as He stood by the sea.
4. In **John**, Peter is called via Andrew who went and found Peter and brought him to Jesus. In the others, Peter is called directly by Jesus Himself.

This makes the accounts in the synoptic Gospels more understandable. It makes much more sense that Peter and the others left everything to follow Jesus if they had been with Him before as we see in **John**. They were already acquainted with Him and knew that John the Baptist had called Him "the Lamb of God". They had already spent time with Jesus and followed Him for some time. These other accounts are not describing a stranger calling these men to follow Him as it is sometimes portrayed. Rather, it was a man they knew and had followed before, calling them back to Him.

It also helps to explain how Peter responded to the requests of Jesus in the **Luke** passage in particular. He allowed Jesus to use his boat as a place from which to teach the multitudes on the shore. He called Him "Master" when Jesus told him to launch into the deep and let down his nets for a catch. He said they had caught nothing all night, but at the word of Jesus he would try again. Peter is convicted after hearing Jesus teach and seeing the miraculous catch of fish. He falls down at Jesus' knees and says, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord".

This all makes more sense when you understand that Peter had previously been following Jesus but had gone back to fishing at some point.

The question remains as to whether the accounts found in **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke** are all the same incident or not.

There are certainly similarities between them. However, there are also differences. The **Matthew** and **Mark** account are nearly identical, leaving no room for doubt that they are both describing the same incident. However, they do differ from the **Luke** account in some details. Following is some of the differences:

1. In **Matthew** and **Mark**, Jesus is walking by the Sea of Galilee.

In **Luke**, He is standing by the sea as the multitude pressed about Him.

2. In **Matthew** and **Mark**, Peter and Andrew are casting a net into the sea.

In **Luke**, there are two boats that are empty because the fishermen were washing their nets.

3. In **Matthew** and **Mark**, Jesus sees James and John in the boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their nets after He had called Peter and Andrew and walked a little farther.

In **Luke**, Peter calls for his partners, James and John, in the other boat to come and help with the great catch of fish. Once they have done that and brought the boats to land, they all followed Jesus.

4. Andrew is mentioned in **Matthew** and **Mark**, but not in **Luke**. Of course, it is very possible that Andrew was there in the **Luke** account but just not mentioned.

5. **Matthew** and **Mark** say nothing about a crowd, Jesus teaching from Peter's boat, or the miraculous catch of fish. It is certainly possible that **Matthew** and

Mark simply didn't record these things, but this does seem like a lot to leave out if they are the same incident recorded in **Luke**.

6. In **Matthew** and **Mark**, James and John are mending their nets. In **Luke**, they seem to be washing them when Jesus arrives. Obviously, it is possible that they were doing both. However, in **Luke's** account they are not in the boat when Jesus arrives while in **Matthew** and **Mark** they are.

There are some commentators who believe that **Matthew**, **Mark**, and **Luke** are all recounting the same incident. This is possible but it seems unlikely to me with so many differences between the account of **Luke** and that of **Matthew** and **Mark**.

Other commentators think the incident in **Matthew** and **Mark** was earlier in the same day as the one in **Luke**. Still others think the incident in **Matthew** and **Mark** was some days, weeks, or even months before the one in **Luke**.

Beyond the differences in the accounts, there is another reason to think that **Matthew** and **Mark** recorded a different incident than **Luke**. That reason is the chronology found in those Gospels. While the Gospel writers are not always interested in chronology in their writing, the difference between them is of note here.

In both **Matthew** and **Mark**, Peter's mother-in-law is healed after the account of his being called by Jesus. In **Matthew** the healing is not recounted till **Matthew 8:14-17**, four chapters after the call of Peter. In **Mark**, the healing is recorded later in the same chapter although some time has obviously passed from Peter's calling.

In **Matthew**, this could be due to his organization of his book as he records ten miracles in **Chapters 8** and **9** that do not seem to be grouped

chronologically. Instead, they seem to be grouped by the nature of those miracles.

The first three miracles demonstrate His power over our bodies and disease.

The second three miracles demonstrate His power over both the physical and spiritual worlds.

The final four demonstrate His power over the otherwise incurable cases. However, the order does not appear to be the result of the organizational scheme of the book.

Putting this together with the differences between the account of **Luke** and that of **Matthew** and **Mark**, it is reasonable to conclude that **Luke** recorded a different incident than did **Matthew** and **Mark**. G. Campbell Morgan came to that conclusion as well.

"We need to be very careful not to confuse this story [in Luke chapter 5] of the draught of fishes, and the words which our Lord spoke to the disciples, with the call of the four to leave their nets. I say that emphatically, because almost constantly it is done; I mean by those who harmonize these stories.

The calling of the four recorded in Matthew in chapter four and Mark in chapter one, to leave their nets is confused with this. There is a very distinct difference between the occasions.

In Matthew chapter four and Mark chapter one, we have the account of our Lord calling these men to leave their fishing nets and go with Him. When He did that, they were fishing; Matthew and Mark distinctly tell us that they were at the moment casting their nets.

Here [in Luke] they were not casting their nets. They were washing them. As the story goes on we find that they had been fishing all night, and had had a bad night. The boats were standing empty, and the men were washing their nets." (From Luke V:1-

16 in "The Gospel According to Luke".)

Questions of chronology can be difficult especially when that was not particularly important to the author or authors who recorded these events for us.

Harmonizing the Gospels can be very difficult indeed in some places. We certainly cannot be dogmatic about this, but it does seem that **Matthew** and **Mark** recorded a different incident than **Luke**.

Peter, and others, were called to follow Jesus on at least two, and possibly three, separate occasions.

Despite all this, Peter and some of the other disciples went back to fishing one last time after the resurrection of Jesus. It took one more miraculous draught of fish for them to leave their nets and boats behind once and for all to follow the Lord.

"3 Simon Peter said to them, "I am going fishing." They said to him, "We are going with you also." They went out and immediately got into the boat, and that night they caught nothing. 4 But when the morning had now come, Jesus stood on the shore; yet the disciples did not know that it was Jesus. 5 Then Jesus said to them, "Children, have you any food?" They answered Him, "No." 6 And He said to them, "Cast the net on the right side of the boat, and you will find some." So they cast, and now they were not able to draw it in because of the multitude of fish. 7 Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Now when Simon Peter heard that it was the Lord, he put on his outer garment (for he had removed it), and plunged into the sea. 8 But the other disciples came in the little boat (for they were not far from land, but about two hundred cubits), dragging the net with fish. 9 Then, as soon as they had come to land, they saw a fire of coals there, and fish laid on it, and bread. 10 Jesus said to them, "Bring some of the fish which you have just caught." 11 Simon Peter went up and dragged the net to land, full of large fish, one

hundred and fifty-three; and although there were so many, the net was not broken." **John 21:3-11 (NKJV)**

Are we really any different than Peter and the other disciples who were called repeatedly?

How many times has the Lord called you to follow Him?

How many times has He called you to serve Him?

How many more times must He call before we leave all to follow and serve Him?