



## Called

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### Quick Links to the Study

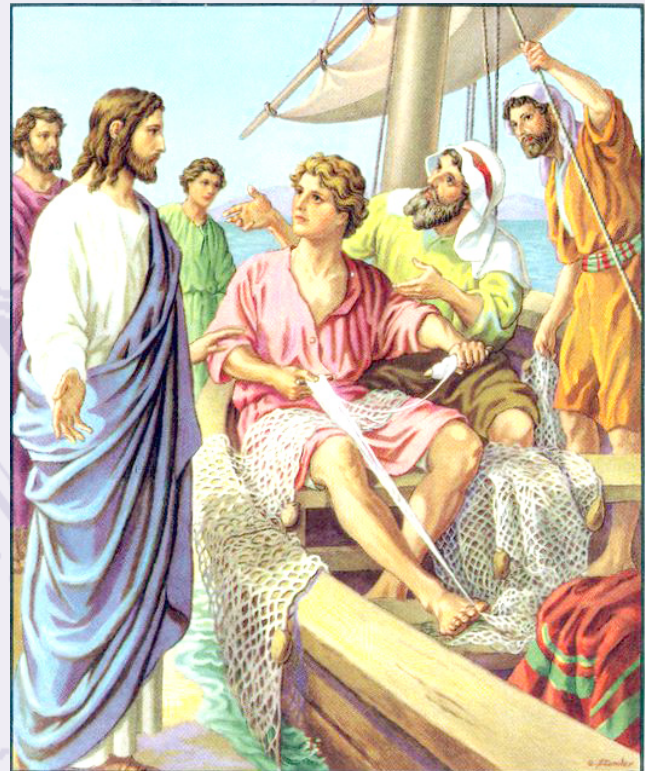
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During our history as Baptists, we have given a lot of emphasis to a “called ministry.” The stress has typically been for pastors and other church staff members to have a definite sense of divine calling into vocational Christian ministry. Often one of the scriptural sources for this understanding has been the calling of the disciples by Jesus as described in the four gospels.

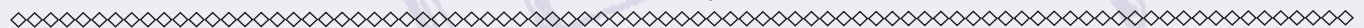
While making this demand upon the ministers in our ranks, we have not always seen the equal relevancy of the calling of these twelve disciples to our own lives. Somehow, the fact that they left their “jobs” as fishermen in order to follow Jesus puts them in a “clergy” category and out of a “laymen” category. Thus Jesus was calling clergy rather than laymen who are just supposed to support the clergy. This rather interesting reasoning we have inherited from Roman Catholic tradition that has been in place for many centuries.

Hopefully this study can dispel such thinking and bring us closer to the biblical model.



## I. Context

Much of the background material for this study will be drawn from [previous studies](#) in the Gospel of Mark. New material will supplement this previous study.



### a. Historical

**External History.** The compositional history of the origin of the second gospel. Contemporary New Testament scholarship in general will conclude that the second gospel was the first of the four canonical gospels to be written. Most likely, this took place sometime in the 60s of the first Christian

century. Subsequently in the following decade, once copies of this gospel were made and distributed across the Christian world of the eastern Mediterranean Sea regions, the writers of the gospels of Matthew and Luke gained access to this document and used it in the composition of their stories of the

life and ministry of Jesus. Although coming a decade or so later in the late 80s to early 90s, the fourth gospel betrays no signs of having had direct access to any of the three previously written gospels.

The study of the literary relationship of Matthew, Mark, and Luke is termed the [Synoptic Problem](#). What I have just described above has been the dominant viewpoint in synoptic gospel studies for the past three hundred years, and is labeled the [Two Source Hypothesis](#). It can be diagrammed as follows:



Although in contemporary American New Testament scholarship an alternative view -- Matthew being written first, Luke second, and Mark third -- is popular in some circles, the so-called "Marcan priority" view above still remains dominant among American scholars, and much more so among New Testament scholars world-wide. It is the assumption that I have worked from for the past forty plus years of study.

To be sure, this doesn't answer directly questions of authorship, time and place of writing etc. Here much greater diversity of viewpoint will be found.

The comparison of external evidence with internal evidence leads me to the general conclusion of the following. The external evidence, i.e., the traditions among the Church Fathers during the first six hundred years of Christianity, suggests that the writer of the second gospel was [John Mark](#). This was the young man who began the first missionary journey with Paul and Barnabas, but did not complete the work and returned back home to Cyprus. Being the nephew of Barnabas, the issue of whether or not to take [him](#) on the second missionary journey caused Paul and Barnabas to go their separate ways in ministry. But as the [later writings](#) of Paul indicate the tension between Paul and Mark was eventually resolved so that ministry together became possible again.

Although I don't agree with some of his conclusions about the external evidence, John R. Donahue (*Harper's Bible Commentary*, Logos Systems) does summarize the issues well regarding Marcan authorship:

Like the other Gospels, the text does not identify its author, but early church tradition (beginning with Papias, ca. a.d. 120; see Eusebius *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.15) attributed it to "Mark," a companion of Peter

in Rome (1 Pet. 5:13), who is then identified with the "John Mark" of Acts 12:12, 25; 15:37-39, and the "Mark" of Philem. 24; Col. 4:10; 2 Tim. 4:1. This attribution is called into question by the apologetic desire to associate a nonapostolic Gospel with the apostle Peter, by the frequency of "Mark" as a name in the Roman Empire, and by the ancient tendency to attribute works to important figures from the past.

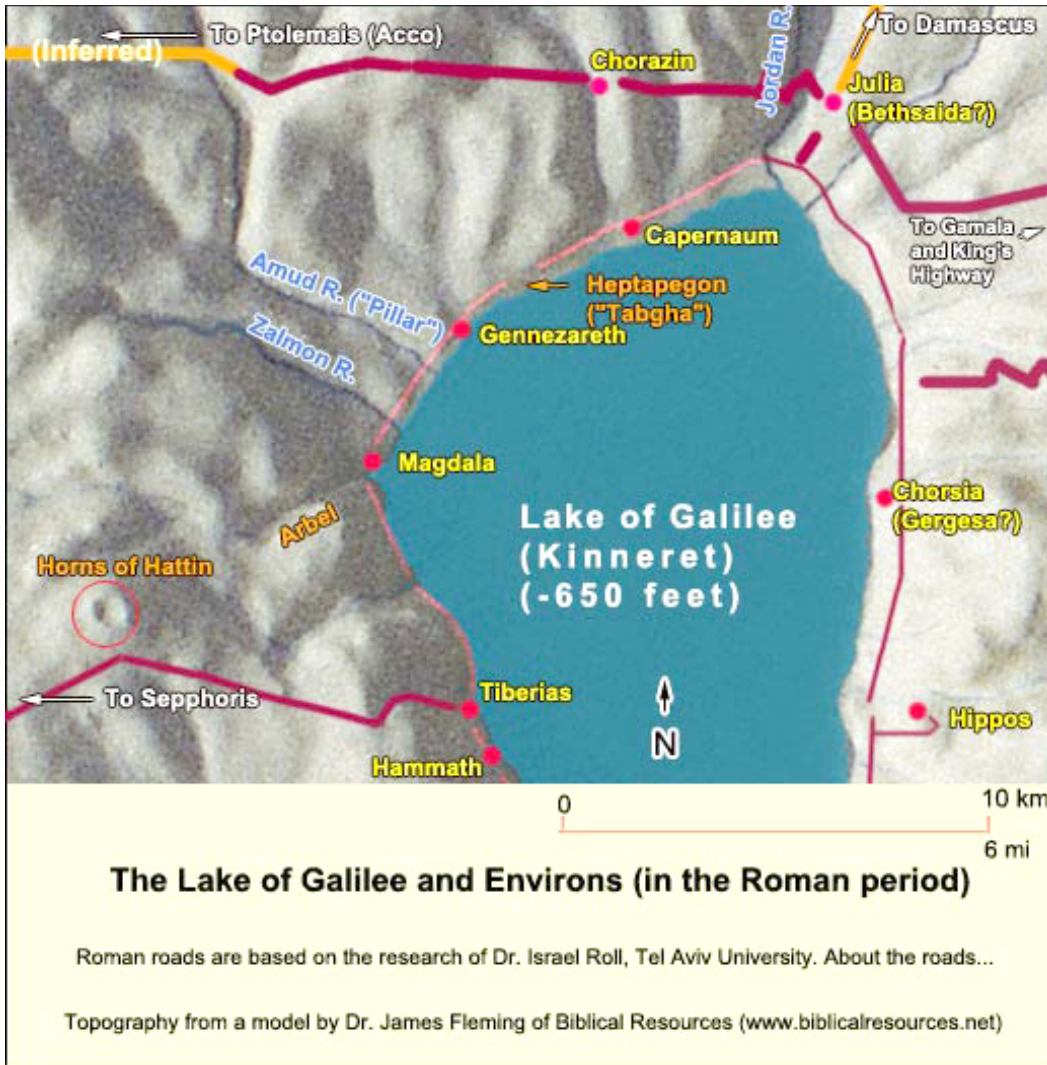
For the bulk of church history, principally on the authority of patristic writers (esp. Irenaeus Against Heresies 3.1.2) and certain internal evidence (see below), the final composition of the Gospel was situated at Rome, sometime after the martyrdom of Peter during the persecution of Nero (a.d. 64). Recently, because of the stress in Mark on Galilee as the place of the first and expected revelation of Jesus, along with its strong Palestinian coloring, its audience has been located in Galilee or southern Syria (see Marxsen).

Internal evidence from the Gospel (esp. chap. 13) offers clues to its situation and community. Like similar apocalyptic literature, Mark 13 (called often the "apocalyptic discourse"), while in the form of predictions given in the past, cryptically depicts upheavals in the lives of the readers. The civil disturbances (13:7-8) and intensity of the persecution described in 13:9-13 may reflect both Nero's persecution (a.d. 64) and the Jewish war of a.d. 66-70 (see commentary below on chap. 13).

The large number of Latinisms (Gk. terms or phrases that reflect Lat., e.g., 5:9; 6:37; 7:4; 12:14, 42; 15:15-16, 19, 39) suggest a setting where both Latin and Greek were used. The teaching on divorce reflects Roman law (10:10-12) and the widow's offering is explained in terms of Roman coinage (12:42, lit. two coins [Gk. *lepta*] are made equivalent to the Roman *quadrans*, which equals 1/4 of a cent).

The community included large numbers of Jews. Familiarity with the Jewish Scriptures is presumed and explicit citations of and allusions to them are frequent. They are the authoritative revelation of God, and the core of Jesus' teaching is a summary from the OT (12:28-34). Yet, the OT is quoted from Greek versions, rather than translated from Hebrew; Jewish customs are explained (7:3-4); Aramaic phrases are translated (e.g., 5:41; 7:34; 14:36; 15:34), and details of Palestinian geography are vague (6:45-7:37). The Gospel contains strong attacks on Jewish laws and institutions (7:1-23; 11:15-19), and implies a mission to the Gentiles (11:17; 13:10). Most likely the community comprises Jews and gentile converts living outside of Palestine, who are breaking away from





ers inside Mk. 1:16-20, and supplemented by the parallel accounts in Matt. 4:18-22 and Luke 5:1-11, place the event as taking place on the sea shore of the Sea of Galilee toward the beginning of Jesus' public ministry in Galilee.

Mk. 1:16 indicates that Jesus spotted Andrew and Peter fishing while he was walking "along the Sea of Galilee" (παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας). Matthew (4:18) used the identical terminology from Mark, but Luke (5:1) calls it "the lake of Genezareth" (παρὰ τὴν λίμνην Γεννησαρέτ). Robert Guelich (*Word Biblical Commentary*, Logos Systems) calls attention to the various names of this body of water over the centuries of written literature:

traditional Jewish observances.

The community is also most likely of lower socio-economic status. The language of the Gospel is not elegant, literary Greek, but the spoken Greek of ordinary people with occasional Semitic influence. The rich are suspect, as are those holding positions of power (10:23-25, 42). Ordinary items such as the "pallet" (2:4, 11) and the "basket" (6:43; 8:19) are those used by the poor. Though the available evidence precludes certainty, a Jewish-Christian community at Rome shortly after a.d. 70 would be an excellent candidate for the audience of the Gospel.

My argument would be to place the gospel prior to the destruction of the temple in AD 70, rather than afterwards. The link of Mark to the apostle Peter and consequently a "petrine" oriented gospel is a valid in my estimation. Thus the gospel was well underway in its composition by the time of Peter's martyrdom in Rome in the mid-60s, and probably completed soon afterwards. Whether Mark was still in Rome or had left the city by the completion of the writing can't be determined.

**Internal History.** The time and place mark-

"Sea of Galilee" (τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας), one of two of occurrences in Mark (cf; 7:31). This body of water has several names around the time of Jesus: Sea of Tiberias (John 21:1; cf. 6:1; t. Sukk. 3.3); Sea of Gennesar (Josephus, War 3.10.7); Lake of Gennesaret (Luke 5:1; cf. 8:22, 33; Pliny, Nat. Hist. 5.15.71) and Sea of Galilee in the Gospels. Both the underlying Hebrew/Aramaic  $\text{D}$ , yām, and θάλασσα in Koine can be rendered either "sea" or "lake." Since, however, θάλασσα more commonly means "sea" (cf. Num 34:11 LXX) and since only Luke 5:1 uses the more precise "lake" (λίμνη) for this body of water in the Gospels, we will continue the more common English translation of "sea," i.e., "Sea of Galilee" recognizing that this "sea" is an inland, fresh-water lake.

Jesus was on the western shore of the sea when he spotted these brothers, and most likely was walking northward toward Capernaum, since he will enter the city immediately after calling the four men to follow him (Mk. 1:21). The second set of brothers was spotted by Jesus as "he went a little farther" (1:19, προβάς ὀλίγον). In Capernaum Jesus will spend time at Andrew and Peter's home (Mk.

1:29), clearly indicating that Peter’s fishing business wasn’t located very far away from the town.

The time markers inside the passage are almost non-existent, and thus provide little indication about when this event took place, nor of how long a stretch of time was involved. Luke’s much more detailed narrative (5:1-11) suggests it lasted longer than one

might assume from a quick reading of Mark and Matthew (4:18-22). It is from the sequential listing of pericopes in the Synoptic Gospels that we can identify the time of the occurrence at [the beginning of Jesus’ public ministry](#) in Galilee.

**b. Literary**

**Genre.** The literary pattern that shapes the content of our passage is that of a call to ministry. Guelich (*WBC*, Logos Systems) describes this literary form quite helpfully:

In form and structure, this pericope corresponds more to a calling narrative (e.g., Pesch, 1:109; Schmal, Zwölf, 63–64; Hengel, Leader, 5) comparable to Elisha’s call (1 Kgs 19:19–21) than a biographical apothegm (Bultmann, 56–61) or an epiphany story (Lohmeyer, 33). This form, which also appears in 2:14 (cf. Matt 8:18–22) consists of a setting (1 Kgs 19:19a; Mark 1:16, 19), call (1 Kgs 19:19b; Mark 1:17, 20a) and a response (1 Kgs 19:20–21; Mark 1:18, 20b). The pericope itself consists of two scenes (1:16–18, 19–20) with the first containing a specific call and promise (1:17a, b; cf. 1:19). In the second scene the call lies implicitly in *καλεῖν* (1:20) and the response (1:20). The men’s common lot as fishermen makes the promise of the first scene appropriate for the second.

What we encounter here is Jesus’ call to these four men to join him as disciples who would become

channels of spreading his message to large numbers of people over the remainder of their lives. None of the four could have imagined the profound change in their lives that this day would bring. In their calling comes the voice of the Heavenly Father through the words of Jesus that had not been heard in Israel for many centuries. The prophets of the Old Testament had heard that voice. Now Galilean Jews of the first Christian century were hearing that voice many, many centuries later.

**Literary Context.** The literary context of our passage has two levels of significance meriting consideration. First, in the Synoptic Gospel story of Jesus it is positioned in a significant moment. Then, in the literary strategy of Mark it plays an important role to the Marcan portrait of Jesus.

First, in the larger story of the life of Christ, this call to ministry comes early in Jesus’ public ministry in Galilee, as is reflected in the [Life of Christ](#) page at Cranfordville.

	Matthew:	Mark:	Luke:	John:
I. Background and preparation for ministry	1:1-2:23 (4%) <sup>2</sup>	-	1:1-2:52 (11%)	1:1-18 (2%)
II. Beginning of public ministry	3:1-4:11 (3%)	1:1-13 (2%)	3:1-4:14 (5%)	1:19-4:54 (16%)
A. The public ministry of John the Baptist	3:1-12	1:1-8	3:1-20	-
B. The Beginning of Jesus’ Public Ministry	3:13-4:11	1:9-13	3:21-4:13	1:19-4:45
III. Galilean ministry	4:12-18:35 (51%)	1:14-9:50 (53%)	4:14-9:56 (24%)	4:46-7:9 (15%)
A. Phase One: To the Choosing of the Twelve	4:12-12:21	1:15-3:19a	4:14-7:50	4:46-5:47
17. Prophetic preaching	4:12-17	04. The Gospel of the Kingdom	21. Popular teaching	4:14-15
18. Four fishermen called	4:18-22	05. Four fishermen called	22. Rejection at Nazareth	4:16-30
19. Preaching and heal-		06. Sabbath exorcism at	23. Sabbath exorcism at	

Matthew:

Mark:

Luke:

John:

ing tour in Galilee 4:23-25	Capernaum 1:21-28 07. Peter's mother-in-law and others healed 1:29-34 08. Preaching and healing tour in Galilee 1:35-39	Capernaum 4:31-37 24. Peter's mother-in-law and others healed 4:38-41 25. Preaching tour in Gali- lee 4:42-44 26. Four fishermen called	
B. Phase Two: To the Withdrawals from Galilee 12:22-14:12	3:19b-6:29	8:1-9:9	-
C. Phase Three: To the Departure to Jerusalem 14:13-18:35	6:30-9:50	9:10-56	6:1-7:9

Although each gospel writer positions this pericope in a different sequence, all three list it as taking place at the outset of the Galilean ministry of Jesus.

Inside the Marcan literary strategy, the use of the piece of Jesus tradition plays a distinct role for the gospel writer, as Guelich (*WBC*, Logos Systems) notes:

Mark's setting for this pericope (cf. Matt 4:18-22; Luke 5:1-11) has significance for two reasons. First, by placing the call of the disciples at the outset of Jesus' ministry, the evangelist attests that the disciples were present at the beginning and thus legitimate bearers of the tradition, a motif which has traditional support (cf. Luke 1:1-2; Acts 1:21-22; 10:37-39). Second, by opening each of the sections of Jesus'

ministry (1:16-3:12; 3:13-6:6; 6:7-8:26) leading to the climax of Caesarea Philippi with discipleship pericopes (1:16-20; 3:13-19; 6:7-13) the evangelist also indicates the integral relationship for him of Christology and discipleship. This interplay of Christology and discipleship offers one of the central themes in Mark's Gospel.

Thus for Mark "calling" is first and foremost a calling to commitment to Christ as Savior and Lord. Out of that comes obligation to discipleship and service. Discipleship and being a Christian are one in the same. No artificial distinction between clergy and laity exists in authentic Christianity. Every person coming to Jesus for salvation is committing himself / herself to become a disciple of Jesus.

**II. Message**

**Literary Structure.** The internal thought structure of vv. 16-20 is very clear, as is reflected in the [Block](#) and [Semantic](#) diagrams in the larger internet version of this study. Verses 16-18 record the calling of Andrew and Peter, while verses 19-20 that of James and John. Within each of these two segments a threefold pattern is developed in brief summary. Jesus spots the brothers, he calls them to follow him; they respond by leaving everything in order to follow. The first segment, vv. 16-18, provides the voice of Jesus issuing the words of calling, while the second segment, vv. 19-20, gathers up these words with the single verb "he called them" (ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς).

Because this episode is also recorded in Matthew and Luke, we should consider their insights as a way to better grasp the ideas presented in Mark.



**a. Andrew and Peter, vv. 16-18**

Greek NT	NASB	NRSV	NLT
1.16 Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος. ἀμβάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ· ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς. 1.17 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. 1.18 καὶ εὐθὺς	16 As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 Immediately	16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets	16 One day as Jesus was walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother, Andrew, fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen. 17 Jesus called out to them, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how

ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.

they left their nets and followed him.  
followed Him.

to fish for people!" 18  
And they left their nets  
at once and went with  
him.



### Notes:

As mentioned above consideration of the three synoptic accounts is important for our understanding. Here we take a look at the three accounts laid out in parallel columns.

#### Matthew 4:18-20 NRSV

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him.

#### Greek NT

<4:18> Περιπατῶν δὲ παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν δύο ἀδελφούς, Σίμωνα τὸν λεγόμενον Πέτρον καὶ Ἄνδρε-  
'αν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, βάλλοντας ἀμ'βλη-  
στρον εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν· ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς.  
<4:19> καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου,  
καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. <4:20>  
οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθη-  
σαν αὐτῷ.

#### Mark 1:16-18 NRSV

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him.

#### Greek NT

1.16 Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἄνδρεάν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος, ἀμ'βάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ· ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς. 1.17 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. 1.18 καὶ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.

#### Luke 5:1-11 NRSV

1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

As one can easily tell from just a quick comparison, Matthew has followed his Marcan source very closely in reproducing this episode. Luke, however, has incorporated substantial additional material into his narrative. Additionally, he has collapsed two separate encounters with the two sets of brothers into a single scene, since he observes that James and John were business partners with Simon and Andrew (Lk. 5:10). The Marcan threefold call structure developed in 1:16-18 and repeated in 1:19-20 facilitates Luke's editorial change of the narrative. The first part of the narrative -- setting of crowds and instructions to Peter -- form the bulk of the supplementary material that Luke has added. Much of this material is very similar to one of John's resurrection appearances of Jesus found in [Jh. 21:1-14](#). I. Howard Marshall ("Luke," *New International Greek Testament Commentary*, Logos Systems) summarizes these similarities:

The two stories show a considerable amount of agreement in detail: after fishing all night, the disciples have caught nothing. Jesus commands them to let the nets down. They do so, and make an enormous catch. The effect on the nets is noted. Peter (in Jn., the beloved disciple) reacts to the miracle. Jesus is called Lord. The other fishermen present say nothing. The motif of following Jesus is present, and the catch of fish is symbolic of missionary success (Brown, John, II, 1090).

To be sure, differing viewpoints exist among scholars on the connection between Luke and John here, but arguments against either Luke or John having used material from each other are rather compelling.

For Luke, this new material helps explain why these brothers were so quick to respond with such a drastic decision to leave everything in order to follow Jesus. They had noticed the popularity of Jesus with the crowds and the instructions to fish on the other side of the boat with its amazing results convinced these men that Jesus was no ordinary individual.

**Setting (v. 16):** "As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting

a net into the sea, for they were fishermen.” When Jesus came to the shore of the Sea of Galilee he saw these two brothers throwing their nets into the sea trying to catch fish. It is unclear from Mark’s narrative whether they were throwing their nets from the shore into the shallow water, or whether they were in their boats just away from the shore using nets to catch fish. R.T. France (NIGTC, Logos Systems) explains:



ἀμφιβάλλω is a shorthand term for fishing by means of an ἀμφιβλήστρον (Mt. 4:18; δίκτυον, vv. 18, 19, is a more general term for ‘net’), the circular casting net thrown out either from the boat or by a man wading into the lake.

**Call:** “And Jesus said to them, ‘Follow me and I will make you fish for people’” (καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων). Matthew copies Mark’s words almost exactly (only a verb tense shift with λέγω). But Luke omits the command and retains only the promise “from now on you will be catching people” (Lk. 5:10).

For Mark and for Matthew the command “Follow me” (Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου) has central application for the idea of discipleship. To come to Jesus is to commit to follow him. In combination with the verb ἀκολουθέω in v. 17, this phrase takes on a formal meaning, rather than the typical sense of “come here.” Guelich (WBC, Logos Systems) explains:

“Come, follow me” or literally “Come after me” (δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου) offers one of several expressions for following Jesus (cf. ἀκολουθεῖν — 1:18; 2:14–15; 8:34; ἔρχεσθαι ὀπίσω — 8:34 v.l.; ἀπέρχεσθαι ὀπίσω — 1:20). The imagery graphically depicts the pupil’s role and relationship to the master illustrated by the disciples’ following the teacher who leads the way. In appearance, therefore, Jesus and his disciples looked like the rabbinical schools of his day (Str-B, 1:187–88; Schulz, Nachfolgen, 7–32). But Hengel warns about deriving “discipleship” and “following after” from a model of the rabbinical scribes. He notes that “following after” never was used to describe becoming a student of the Law (Leader, 51). Used in rabbinic sources in the concrete sense of “walking behind the teacher” when travel-

ing, the phrase “almost never takes the general meaning ‘when I was a pupil with Rabbi N. NCE’ ” (Hengel, *Leader*, 52). Therefore, “follower,” the familiar synonym for “disciple,” has its roots in the Christian rather than Jewish usage.

Hengel goes on to note that this call in 1:17 underscores the radical difference between Jesus and the Rabbi (Leader, 51). Rather than being chosen by his disciples as a Rabbi (cf. Matt 8:19) in order to study the Law, Jesus authoritatively summons his own disciples to join him in sharing his life and ministry (1:17; 3:14; 6:7). Theirs was not to learn and transmit his teaching of the Law (cf. Matt 23:8) but to become “fishers of men.”

“I shall make you fishers of men.” The future tense (ποιήσω) indicates what will transpire in the disciples’ lives and anticipates their future ministry (cf. 6:7). “Fishers of men” (ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων) as such does not occur in the OT Jer 16:16 refers to “fishers” and “hunters,” and several other passages mention the use of a “hook” (e.g., Ezek 29:4–5; Amos 4:2; Hab 1:14–17; cf. 1QH 3.26; 5.7–8; Wuellner, “Fishers of Men,” 88–133). Each of these references carries a negative tone of judgment, a meaning hardly appropriate here (cf. Smith, HTR 52 [1959] 187–203). A more approximate usage can be found in hellenistic literature (e.g., Diogenes Laert. 2.67; Ep. Arist. 2.23b; see Wuellner, “Fishers of Men,” 67–75), but it cannot justify locating the saying’s origin in the hellenistic mission (e.g., Schmithals, 1:105).

The common use by Jesus of metaphors drawn from everyday life such as servants, sheep, wolves, and farmers suffices to explain the “novel” usage here, especially set in the context of the disciples’ vocation as “fishermen” (Grundmann, 54; Pesch, 1:110; Hengel, *Leader*, 76–78). Jesus’ call, therefore, changes the disciples’ vocation implying a radical break with their former way of living. Instead of living by the fishing business, they will live to reach others.

**Response:** “And immediately they left their nets and followed him” (καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ). Mark’s shortened depiction heightens the dramatic effect of their response. Luke’s longer account underscores the Peter and Andrew’s deeper understanding of Jesus. Additionally, the fourth gospel suggests a prior contact of Andrew and Peter

with Jesus in the region of the Jordan River valley prior to Jesus' arrival in Galilee ([Jhn. 1:35-42](#)). Not to detract from Mark's writing style, but simply to note that one would be mistaken to assume this was the first contact of Andrew and Peter with Jesus.

What is the relevance of these verses to us today? At the heart is the core of the gospel message. Mark makes it clear that Jesus' call to these brothers was far more profound than joining a school of Jewish scribes studying the Law of God. Jesus was a teacher, but oh so much more than just a teacher. Unlike the Jewish scribes of his day who gathered students around them, these "students" didn't ask to join the scribal group. They were summoned authoritatively and decisively by the Teacher. But not to just study for a while. They were challenged -- in Luke's words (5:11) -- to leave everything and follow Jesus.

This is no Roman Catholic vow of poverty required only of the clergy. This is a call issued to anyone who would become a Christian. Salvation and discipleship are two sides of the same spiritual coin, as Mt. 10:37-29 declares:

37 Whoever loves father or mother more than me is



not worthy of me; and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; 38 and whoever does not take up the cross and follow me is not worthy of me. 39 Those who find their life will lose it, and those who lose their life for my sake will find it.

Here is the challenge of Jesus: "Follow me." And his promise: "I will make you fishers of men" (καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων). We are called to mission, i.e., to lead others to our Lord.

**b. James and John, vv. 19-20**

**Greek NT**

1.19 Καὶ προβάς ὀλίγον εἶδεν Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καταρτίζοντας τὰ δίκτυα, 1.20 καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς. καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ.

**NASB**

19 Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

**NRSV**

19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**NLT**

19 A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat mending their nets. 20 He called them, too, and immediately they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and went with him.

**Notes:**

As noted in the first section, Matthew closely parallels Mark's account, while Luke collapsed the calling of the two sets of brothers into a single narrative rather than two separate accounts. Thus we will list only Matthew in parallel to Mark.

**Matthew 4:21-22  
Greek NT**

<4:21> Καὶ προβάς ἐκεῖθεν εἶδεν ἄλλους δύο ἀδελφούς, Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ

**Matthew 4:21-22  
NRSV**

21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their

**Mark 1:19-20  
Greek NT**

1.19 Καὶ προβάς ὀλίγον εἶδεν Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καταρτίζοντας

**Mark 1:19-20  
NRSV**

19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets.

μετὰ Ζεβεδαίου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν καταρτίζοντας τὰ δίκτυα αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς. <4:22> οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὸ πλοῖον καὶ τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.

father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

τὰ δίκτυα, 1.20 καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς. καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ.

20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**Setting:** While Mark says, “he went a little farther,” Matthew changes it to “he went from there.” Matthew changes Mark’s “he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets”

into

“he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets.”

The brothers James and John are introduced at this point. Guelich (*WBC*, Logos Systems) provides some helpful clarification about their identity:

“James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother.” James, the son of Zebedee, who is only mentioned in connection with his sons, differs from James, the brother of Jesus (6:3), James, the son of Alphaeus (3:18), and James, the Less (15:40). According to Acts 12:1–2, Herod put this James to death in an attack upon the Church. John emerges as one of the leaders of the primitive Church alongside Peter in Acts 3–4 and Gal 2:9. These brothers appear in Mark mostly in company with Simon to form an inner circle of disciples at key points in Jesus’ ministry (5:37; 9:2; 13:3 with Andrew; 14:33). In 10:33, 41 they come together to request the privilege of sitting on Jesus’ right and left.

**Call:** Matthew preserves the exact words of Mark’s account: ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς (“he called them”). Although briefer than in the preceding encounter with Peter and Andrew, the voice of Jesus “Follow me and I will make you fish for people” is assumed for the calling of James and John as well. Here the father Zebedee is introduced but only as the owner of the fishing enterprise.

**Response:** Mark provides a succinct depiction: “and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him” (καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ). Matthew is somewhat similar in his depiction: “Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him” (οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὸ πλοῖον καὶ τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ). Both gospel writers underscore a decisive decision that meant a clean break from their life up to that point.

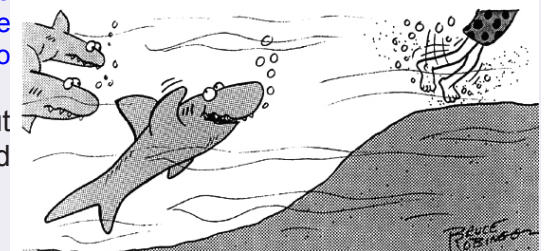
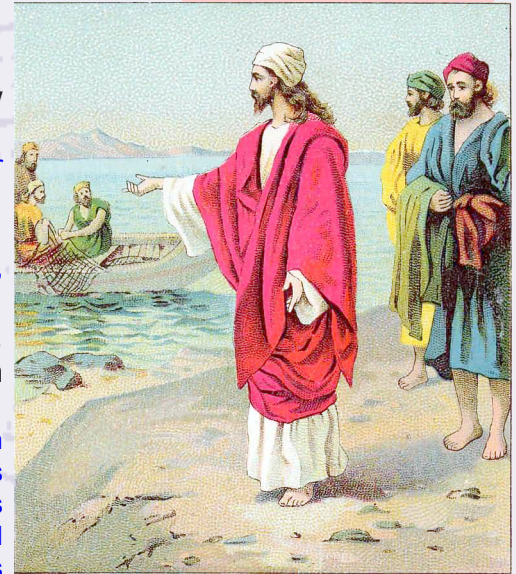
The connection of this to us today? Guelich (*WBC*, Logos Systems) offer these insights:

This traditional pericope reveals three significant aspects about discipleship in Jesus’ ministry. First, rather than the disciple taking the initiative in choosing the master, as was characteristic among the Jews, Jesus emerges as the central figure who dominates the scene and calls his own disciples by means of an authoritative summons. The absence in Mark’s narrative of any previous context that might make such an event intelligible, such as a previous awareness of or contact with the persons involved (cf. John 1:35–42), serves only to heighten the centrality of Jesus’ call and the disciples’ obedient response.

Second, the disciples respond negatively and positively. Negatively, they leave their occupations, and James and John also leave their father (1:18, 20). Discipleship means leaving behind their way of life and former ties. This motif of the cost of discipleship will intensify throughout the Gospel. Positively, they “followed him.” The disciples join themselves to Jesus, to accompany him and to participate in his life (see 3:14)

Third, the promise of 1:17 anticipates their new vocation—to become “fishers of men” rather than students of the Law. The disciples will not only accompany Jesus but he will enable them to share his ministry and eventually continue it. Perhaps even the sets of two brothers reflect the mission setting of witness by two-by-two (cf. 6:7).

Our challenge is to get in line behind our Lord and to reach out to others trying to bring them to Christ. May we do it in the love and compassion of our Lord. Not as spiritual sharks seeking a kill!



**Greek NT**

1.16 Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν Σίμωνα καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος. ἀμβάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ· ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς. 1.17 καὶ εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. 1.18 καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ. 1.19 Καὶ προβάς ὀλίγον εἶδεν Ἰακώβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ αὐτοὺς ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καταρτίζοντας τὰ δίκτυα, 1.20 καὶ εὐθὺς ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς. καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν ἀπῆλθον ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ.

**NASB**

16 As He was going along by the Sea of Galilee, He saw Simon and Andrew, the brother of Simon, casting a net in the sea; for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you become fishers of men." 18 Immediately they left their nets and followed Him. 19 Going on a little farther, He saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who were also in the boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately He called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired servants, and went away to follow Him.

**NRSV**

16 As Jesus passed along the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother Andrew casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 17 And Jesus said to them, "Follow me and I will make you fish for people." 18 And immediately they left their nets and followed him. 19 As he went a little farther, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John, who were in their boat mending the nets. 20 Immediately he called them; and they left their father Zebedee in the boat with the hired men, and followed him.

**NLT**

16 One day as Jesus was walking along the shores of the Sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and his brother, Andrew, fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen. 17 Jesus called out to them, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!" 18 And they left their nets at once and went with him. 19 A little farther up the shore Jesus saw Zebedee's sons, James and John, in a boat mending their nets. 20 He called them, too, and immediately they left their father, Zebedee, in the boat with the hired men and went with him.

**Matthew 4:18-22****Greek NT**

<4:18> Περιπατῶν δὲ παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας εἶδεν δύο ἀδελφούς, Σίμωνα τὸν λεγόμενον Πέτρον καὶ Ἀνδρέαν τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, βάλλοντας ἀμβληστρον εἰς τὴν θάλασσαν· ἦσαν γὰρ ἀλιεῖς. <4:19> καὶ λέγει αὐτοῖς, Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου, καὶ ποιήσω ὑμᾶς ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων. <4:20> οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ. <4:21> Καὶ προβάς ἐκεῖθεν εἶδεν ἄλλους δύο ἀδελφούς, Ἰάκωβον τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ Ἰωάννην τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ, ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ Ζεβεδαίου τοῦ πατρὸς αὐτῶν καταρτίζοντας τὰ δίκτυα αὐτῶν, καὶ ἐ-

**NASB**

18 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. 19 And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." 20 Immediately they 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; and He called them. 22 Immediately they left the

**NRSV**

18 As he walked by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea, for they were fishermen. 19 And he said to them, "Follow me, and I will make you fish for people." 20 Immediately they left their nets and followed him. 21 As he went from there, he saw two other brothers, James son of Zebedee and his brother John, in the boat with their father Zebedee, mending their nets, and he called them. 22 Immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed him.

**NLT**

18 One day as Jesus was walking along the shore beside the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon, also called Peter, and Andrew, fishing with a net, for they were commercial fishermen. 19 Jesus called out to them, "Come, be my disciples, and I will show you how to fish for people!" 20 And they left their nets at once and went with him. 21 A little farther up the shore he saw two other brothers, James and John, sitting in a boat with their father, Zebedee, mending their nets. And he called them to come, too. 22 They im-

κάλεσεν αὐτούς. <4:22>  
οἱ δὲ εὐθέως ἀφέντες τὸ  
πλοῖον καὶ τὸν πατέρα  
αὐτῶν ἠκολούθησαν αυ-  
τῷ.

boat and their father,  
and followed Him.

mediately followed him,  
leaving the boat and  
their father behind.

### Luke 5:1-11

#### Greek NT

<sup>5:1</sup> Ἐγένετο δὲ ἐν τῷ τὸν ὄχλον ἐπιχειῖσθαι αὐτῷ καὶ ἀκούειν τὸν λόγον τοῦ θεοῦ καὶ αὐτὸς ἦν ἐστῶς παρὰ τὴν λίμνην Γεννησαρέτ <sup>5:2</sup> καὶ εἶδεν δύο πλοῖα ἐστῶτα παρὰ τὴν λίμνην· οἱ δὲ ἀλιεῖς ἀπ' αὐτῶν ἀποβάντες ἔπλυνον τὰ δίκτυα. <sup>5:3</sup> ἐμβὰς δὲ εἰς ἓν τῶν πλοίων, ὃ ἦν Σίμωνος, ἠρώτησεν αὐτὸν ἀπὸ τῆς γῆς ἐπαναγαγεῖν ὀλίγον, καθίσας δὲ ἐκ τοῦ πλοίου ἐδίδασκεν τοὺς ὄχλους. <sup>5:4</sup> ὡς δὲ ἐπαύσατο λαλῶν, εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Σίμονα, Ἐπανάγαγε εἰς τὸ βάθος καὶ χαλάσατε τὰ δίκτυα ὑμῶν εἰς ἄγρην. <sup>5:5</sup> καὶ ἀποκριθεὶς Σίμων εἶπεν, Ἐπιστάτα, δι' ὅλης νυκτὸς κοπιᾶσαντες οὐδὲν ἐλάβομεν· ἐπὶ δὲ τῷ ῥήματί σου χαλάσω τὰ δίκτυα. <sup>5:6</sup> καὶ τοῦτο ποιήσαντες συνέκλεισαν πλῆθος ἰχθύων πολὺ, διερρήσσετο δὲ τὰ δίκτυα αὐτῶν. <sup>5:7</sup> καὶ κατένευσαν τοῖς μετόχοις ἐν τῷ ἑτέρῳ πλοίῳ τοῦ ἐλθόντος συλλαβεῖσθαι αὐτοῖς· καὶ ἦλθον καὶ ἔπλησαν ἀμφότερα τὰ πλοῖα ὥστε βυθίζεσθαι αὐτά. <sup>5:8</sup> ἰδὼν δὲ Σίμων Πέτρος προσέπεσεν τοῖς γόνασιν Ἰησοῦ λέγων, Ἐξέλθε ἀπ' ἐμοῦ, ὅτι ἄνηρ ἁμαρτωλός εἰμι, κύριε. <sup>5:9</sup> θάμβος γὰρ περιέσχεν αὐτὸν καὶ πάντας τοὺς σὺν αὐτῷ ἐπὶ τῇ ἄγρᾳ τῶν ἰχθύων ὧν συνέλαβον, <sup>5:10</sup> ὁμοίως δὲ καὶ Ἰάκωβον καὶ Ἰωάννην υἱοὺς Ζεβεδαίου, οἱ ἦσαν κοινωνοὶ τῷ Σίμωνι. καὶ εἶπεν πρὸς τὸν Σίμονα ὁ Ἰησοῦς, Μὴ φοβοῦ· ἀπὸ τοῦ νῦν ἄνθρωποις ἔσῃ ζαωγῶν. <sup>5:11</sup> καὶ καταγαγόντες τὰ πλοῖα ἐπὶ

#### NASB

1 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; 2 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. 3 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. 4 When He had finished speaking, He said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 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." 6 When they had done this, they enclosed a great quantity of fish, and their nets began to break; 7 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. 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!" 9 For amazement had seized him and all his companions because of the catch of fish which they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with

#### NRSV

1 Once while Jesus was standing beside the lake of Gennesaret, and the crowd was pressing in on him to hear the word of God, 2 he saw two boats there at the shore of the lake; the fishermen had gone out of them and were washing their nets. 3 He got into one of the boats, the one belonging to Simon, and asked him to put out a little way from the shore. Then he sat down and taught the crowds from the boat. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Put out into the deep water and let down your nets for a catch." 5 Simon answered, "Master, we have worked all night long but have caught nothing. Yet if you say so, I will let down the nets." 6 When they had done this, they caught so many fish that their nets were beginning to break. 7 So they signaled their partners in the other boat to come and help them. And they came and filled both boats, so that they began to sink. 8 But when Simon Peter saw it, he fell down at Jesus' knees, saying, "Go away from me, Lord, for I am a sinful man!" 9 For he and all who were with him were amazed at the catch of fish that they had taken; 10 and so also were James and John, sons of Zebedee, who were partners with Simon. Then Jesus said to Simon, "Do not be afraid; from now on you

#### NLT

1 One day as Jesus was preaching on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, great crowds pressed in on him to listen to the word of God. 2 He noticed two empty boats at the water's edge, for the fishermen had left them and were washing their nets. 3 Stepping into one of the boats, Jesus asked Simon, its owner, to push it out into the water. So he sat in the boat and taught the crowds from there. 4 When he had finished speaking, he said to Simon, "Now go out where it is deeper and let down your nets, and you will catch many fish." 5 "Master," Simon replied, "we worked hard all last night and didn't catch a thing. But if you say so, we'll try again." 6 And this time their nets were so full they began to tear! 7 A shout for help brought their partners in the other boat, and soon both boats were filled with fish and on the verge of sinking. 8 When Simon Peter realized what had happened, he fell to his knees before Jesus and said, "Oh, Lord, please leave me, I'm too much of a sinner to be around you." 9 For he was awestruck by the size of their catch, as were the others with him. 10 His partners, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, were also amazed. Jesus replied to Simon, "Don't be afraid! From now on you'll be fishing for people!" 11 And as soon

τὴν γῆν ἀφέντες πάντα ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.

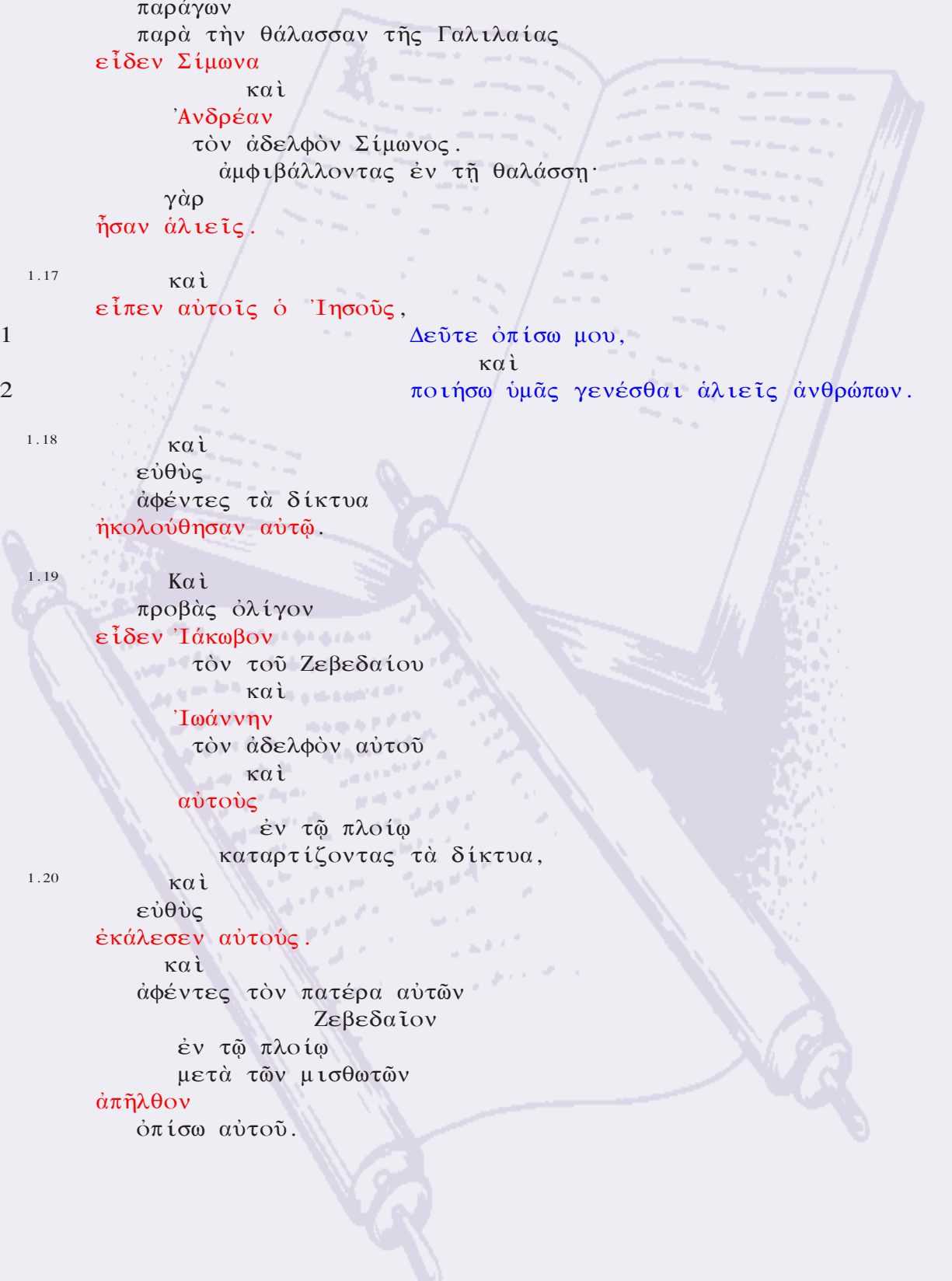
Simon. And Jesus said to Simon, "Do not fear, from now on you will be catching men." 11 When they had brought their boats to land, they left everything and followed Him.

will be catching people." 11 When they had brought their boats to shore, they left everything and followed him.

as they landed, they left everything and followed Jesus.



## Greek NT Diagram



1.16	Καὶ παράγων παρὰ τὴν θάλασσαν τῆς Γαλιλαίας
A	<b>εἶδεν Σίμωνα</b> καὶ <b>Ἀνδρέαν</b> τὸν ἀδελφὸν Σίμωνος. ἀμφιβάλλοντας ἐν τῇ θαλάσῃ·
B	γὰρ <b>ἦσαν ἀλιεῖς.</b>
1.17	καὶ
Γ	<b>εἶπεν αὐτοῖς ὁ Ἰησοῦς,</b>
1	<b>Δεῦτε ὀπίσω μου,</b>
2	καὶ <b>ποιήσω ὑμᾶς γενέσθαι ἀλιεῖς ἀνθρώπων.</b>
1.18	καὶ εὐθὺς ἀφέντες τὰ δίκτυα
Δ	<b>ἠκολούθησαν αὐτῷ.</b>
1.19	Καὶ προβάς ὀλίγον
E	<b>εἶδεν Ἰάκωβον</b> τὸν τοῦ Ζεβεδαίου καὶ <b>Ἰωάννην</b> τὸν ἀδελφὸν αὐτοῦ καὶ <b>αὐτούς</b> ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ καταρτίζοντας τὰ δίκτυα,
1.20	καὶ εὐθὺς
Z	<b>ἐκάλεσεν αὐτούς.</b> καὶ ἀφέντες τὸν πατέρα αὐτῶν Ζεβεδαῖον ἐν τῷ πλοίῳ μετὰ τῶν μισθωτῶν
I	<b>ἀπῆλθον</b> ὀπίσω αὐτοῦ.

