A SERIES ON WHAT JESUS BELIEVED AND TAUGHT — AND LIVED

seventh lesson

How to become a disciple. Disciples and Christians

I. Jesus invites us to walk with Him as He walks in the kingdom of heaven and learn to walk as He walks: to have his heart, his faith, his love, and to act in his name, under his authority, as his co-laborers. (Matt 11:28-30, Luke 6:40, I John 4:17)

II. This is something we learn how to do. To follow Jesus is not to do as He said and did, but to be with Him to learn how to do what He said and did. That is, it is to be his pupils, his students, his disciples. The New Testament accordingly is a book by, about, and for disciples of Jesus. The word "disciple" occurs 269 times in it, the word "Christian" only three times, being introduced to refer precisely to disciples. (Acts 11:26) We become able to do progressively more of what He said and did as we through practice learn to trust the rule of heave and act from it. "I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus." (Phil 3:14)

III. The New Testament does not recognize a class of non- disciples who are Christians.— "Vampire" Christians: "Well, thank you Jesus, I would like to have a bit of your blood to cover my sins, but I wouldn't care to keep constant company with you! I have far better things to do!" Yet the leading "discipleship" group in Western Christendom divides Christians up in to: convert, disciple, and worker, clearly teaching that you can be and remain a Christian forever without becoming a disciple, much less a worker.

IV. The disciple of Jesus is one who, in response to the Word of the Kingdom of Heaven:
1. Sees living in the kingdom to be the most important thing in life. (Deut 30:11-20, Psalm 42, Jer 29:13, Matt 6:33, Matt 13:44-46, Luke 14:25-33)
2. Plans, and constantly reviews and revises plans, taking all appropriate steps or measures to so live. (Rom 8:13, Rom 13:14, Eph 4:22-24, Phil 2:12, 2 Peter 1:5-11)
3. Increasingly does the deeds and bears the fruit of the Kingdom life. (John 8:31-32, John 13:34-35, John 15:8, Luke 8:15, Matt 7:21-27)

V. We become a disciple of Jesus by deciding to be with Him to learn to be like Him. We are his disciples, his students, by "continuing in his word" (John 8:31-32): that is, by immersing ourselves in his example and teaching from the four Gospels and by venturing to put into practice what we see there, which will bring his constant presence into our ongoing life as a tangible reality. (John 14:18-26, Rom 8:4, 11, Heb 6:18-20, Heb 13:5-6, 1 Peter 5:5-7)

VI. As disciples we can now obey the Great Commission by going to all kinds of people and making them disciples (students). (Matt 28:19) You make disciples by ravishing people

with the word and reality of the Kingdom of Heaven and King Jesus, so that they pine for it, ache for it, and crash the party with tears of repentance and joy.

VII. Then, having become students of Jesus and been surrounded ("baptized") by the power and authority (the "name") of Father, Son and Holy Spirit, we teach them to observe, to do, "all things whatsoever I have commanded you," with the "all power in heaven and in earth" that is given unto Him who said: "I am with you alway, even unto the end of the world." (Matt 28:18-20) We say: "Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ." (1 Cor 11:1) And: "Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, and seen in me, do: and the God of peace shall be with you. (Phil 4:9)

The Great Omissions from the Great Commission are: We don't lead people to discipleship and we don't even try to teach them how to do what Jesus said and did. I do not know of a single church in existence today with a program designed and intended to teach people to do what Jesus said and did. How can we justify this? Our failures do not justify it. We must be willing to endure the tension of Christ's call or we will never be given the spiritual substance to meet it.

Have you ever decided to be a disciple of Jesus? Committed yourself to be with Him to learn from Him how to walk in the kingdom as He did? To learn how to be with Him?

You probably won't drift into discipleship. You will have to decide.