
“For many are called, but few chosen.”

Matthew 20:16 (NKJV)

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So the last shall be first, and the first last—The Gentiles, who have been long without the true God, shall now enjoy all the privileges of the new covenant; and the Jews, who have enjoyed these from the beginning, shall now be dispossessed of them; for, because they here rejected the Lord, he also hath rejected them.

Many are called, etc.—This clause is wanting in BL, one other, and in the Coptic and Sahidic versions. Bishop Pearce thinks it is an interpolation from Matthew 22:14. The simple meaning seems to be: As those who did not come at the invitation of the householder to work in the vineyard did not receive the denarius, or wages, so those who do not obey the call of the Gospel, and believe in Christ Jesus, shall not inherit eternal life.

This place seems to refer to the ancient Roman custom of recruiting their armies. Among this celebrated people, no one was forced to serve his country in a military capacity; and it was the highest honor to be deemed worthy of thus serving it. The youth were instructed, almost from their cradle, in military exercises. **The Campus Martius** was the grand field in which they were disciplined: there, they accustomed themselves to leaping, running, wrestling, bearing burdens, fencing, throwing the javelin, etc., and when, through these violent exercises, they were all besmeared with dust and sweat, in order to refresh themselves, they swam twice or thrice across the Tyber!

Rome might at any time have recruited her armies by volunteers from such a mass of well-educated, hardy soldiers; but she thought proper, to use the words of the Abbe Mably, that the honor of being chosen to serve in the wars should be the reward of the accomplishments shown by the citizens in **the Campus Martius**, that the soldier should have a reputation to save; and that the regard paid him, in choosing him to serve, should be the pledge of his **fidelity and zeal** to discharge his duty. The age of serving in the army was from seventeen to forty-five, and the manner in which they were chosen was the following:—

After the creation of consuls, they every year named twenty-four military tribunes, part of whom must have served five years at least, and the rest eleven. When they had divided among them the command of the four legions to be formed, the consuls summoned to the capitol, or Campus Martius, all the citizens who, by their age, were obliged to bear arms. They drew up by tribes, and lots were drawn to determine in what order every tribe should present its soldiers.

That which was the first in order chose the four citizens who were judged the most proper to serve in the war; and the six tribunes who commanded the first legion chose one of these four, whom they liked best. The tribunes of the second and third likewise made their choice one after another; and he that remained entered into the fourth legion. A new tribe presented other four soldiers, and the second legion chose first. The third and fourth legions had the same advantage in their turns. In this manner, each tribe successively chose four soldiers, till the legions were complete.

They next proceeded to the creation of subaltern officers, whom the tribunes chose from among the soldiers of the **greatest reputation**. When the legions were thus completed, **the citizens who had been called, but not chosen**, returned to their respective employments, and served their country in other capacities.

None can suppose that these were deemed useless, or that, because not now chosen to serve their country in the field, they were proscribed from the rights and privileges of citizens, much less destroyed, because others were found **better qualified** to serve their country at the post of honor and danger.

Thus many are called by the preaching of the Gospel, **but few are found who use their advantages in such a way as to become extensively useful in the Church**—and many in the Church militant behave so ill as never to be admitted into the Church triumphant. But what a mercy that those who appear now to be rejected may be called in another muster, enrolled, serve in the field, or work in the vineyard? How many millions does the long-suffering of God lead to repentance!

Adam Clarke's Commentary.