

# The Call of Jesus and the Twelve Apostles

**Scripture:** Matthew 10:1-4

**Sermon Series:** Matthew

**Topic:** Jesus, Calling, Apostles

**Matthew 10:1-4 (ESV)**

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<sup>1</sup> And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction. <sup>2</sup> The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; <sup>3</sup> Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

## Introduction

This portion of Scripture has to do with the call and the commissioning of the Twelve apostles.

Jesus had gone about teaching in synagogues, preaching the gospel of the kingdom, and *"healing every disease and every affliction"* (9:35). He had been moved with compassion when he saw the crowds. They were *"harassed and helpless, like sheep without a shepherd"* (9:36). There were *"plentiful"* people who had need of help and protection. And so Jesus decided that it was time to expand and advance the kingdom of heaven. He was now doing to do that by sharing his authority with those whom he would choose.

**Matthew 10:1 (ESV)** And he called to him his twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affliction.

***He called to him his twelve disciples (10:1).*** This is the first time in his gospel that Matthew mentions the Twelve. His language here hints that the Twelve had already been formed as a distinct group. The other gospel authors record that Jesus chose the twelve earlier in his ministry (Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16).

Jesus *"called them to himself."* The verb '**called**' (*proskaleō προσκαλέω*) means,

“to urgently invite someone to accept responsibilities for a particular task, implying a new relationship to the one who does the calling—to call, to call to a task.”<sup>1</sup>

Jesus is not here for the first time naming the Twelve disciples. They’ve already been named. What he is doing is *calling them to a task*. This is different. The *calling here is a commissioning*. Jesus has already called the disciples, saying to them, “Follow me,”<sup>2</sup> but *now he is calling them to himself so that he can send them out*.

This is certainly true, for two reasons.

First, Matthew notes that Jesus called these twelve disciples his **apostles** (10:2). In Luke’s account he is even more specific and tells us, “He called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles” (Lk 6:13). The word ‘**apostle**’ (*apostolos* ἀπόστολος) means,

“one who is sent”<sup>3</sup> out as a “special messenger”<sup>4</sup> on behalf of another, who “shares the authority”<sup>5</sup> of the sender, who “commissioned [him] for a particular task or role.”<sup>6</sup>

This word, ‘apostle,’ is used in the NT in both a broad sense and in very narrow sense. The broader use of the word is seen, for example in 2 Corinthians 8:23 when Paul refers to Epaphroditus as “your messenger (*ἀπόστολος*) and minister to my need.” When the word is used in this broad way it is typically translated as ‘messenger.’ There are only three instances in the NT of the word being used in this way.<sup>7</sup>

However, in the vast majority of the uses of the word, 74 of 79 times, it is used in the narrow sense. When used in this sense, the word has a specific meaning, and refers only to those who meet two qualifications;

- a) an apostle had to personally have witnessed the living Jesus with his own eyes<sup>8</sup> and
- b) an apostle had to have been individually and specifically commissioned (i.e. sent out) by Jesus himself to proclaim the gospel to the world.<sup>9</sup> When understood

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<sup>1</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 423.

<sup>2</sup> See Matthew 4:18-22; 8:22; 9:9.

<sup>3</sup> Donald A. Hagner, *Matthew 1–13*, vol. 33A, Word Biblical Commentary (Dallas: Word, Incorporated, 1993), 265.

<sup>4</sup> Johannes P. Louw and Eugene Albert Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains* (New York: United Bible Societies, 1996), 541.

<sup>5</sup> Hagner, *Matthew 1-13*, 265.

<sup>6</sup> Louw and Nida, *Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament: Based on Semantic Domains*, 541.

<sup>7</sup> John 13:16; 2 Corinthians 8:3; Philippians 2:25.

<sup>8</sup> Acts 1:2-3, 22; 4:33; 1 Corinthians 9:1; 15:7-9.

<sup>9</sup> Acts 1:8, 24-26; 26:16-17; cf. Romans 1:1; Galatians 1:1; 1 Timothy 1:12; 2:7; 2 Timothy 1:11.

according to this definition, "there are no more apostles today, and we are to expect no more."<sup>10</sup>

Thus, an apostle is one who is sent out for a specific task and these twelve are here called apostles.

Second, when we look at 10:5, we find Jesus sending them out. "***These twelve Jesus sent out...***" Thus, this calling is a the commissioning of the Twelve. Jesus sent them out on a particular task, which we will explore further next week. But what is new is that he sent them out having granted them permission to share in his authority.

***He gave them authority (10:1).*** Matthew has been, since the sermon on the Mount, demonstrating the breathtakingly expansive authority of Jesus. He has shown Jesus' authority over everything from diseases to demons and from storms to sin. Matthew summarizes Jesus' authority in verse one, which he then shares with these Twelve apostles. He...

"...gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every disease and every affection."

We first saw this phrase back in 4:23, when Matthew told us of the beginning of Jesus' public ministry. We saw it again last week (in 9:35) in the pervious paragraph, which is what connects these two thoughts in Matthew's gospel. Jesus himself "***healed every disease and every affliction***" (9:15), and now he is sharing that authority with his disciples. This is a new step in Jesus' ministry. Up until now, he has not done this. But now is the time to for the kingdom of heaven to advance.

### Why Share Authority?

There at least three reasons for this advance, which we saw last week. First, the crowds of people are "***harassed and helpless.***" They are under spiritual attack and they have no natural means of defending themselves. Jesus looks at them and he is moved with compassion. Second, they have no one to help them or lead them. They are "***like sheep without a shepherd.***" They are leaderless. There is no one to protect them. There is one no to help them feed there spiritual needs. The Pharisees should have been their spiritual leaders, but they were move concerned with themselves than with the people. Third, Jesus see that the time is right. As Jesus looks out across the crowds he sees that the people are ready to listen. Jesus says, "***The harvest is plentiful, but laborers are few. Therefore, pray earnestly to the Lord to send out laborers into his harvest.***" This is where we left off last week. We ended with Jesus' command to "pray earnestly" for laborers to be sent.

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<sup>10</sup> Wayne A. Grudem, *Systematic Theology: An Introduction to Biblical Doctrine* (Leicester, England; Grand Rapids, MI: Inter-Varsity Press; Zondervan Pub. House, 2004), 906.

Now Jesus calls the Twelve to himself and commissions them to go out into the harvest, but before getting to the instructions Jesus gave to them as he sent them out into the harvest, Matthew decides to tell us the names of the Twelve, which he has not done yet in this gospel.

## Who Are the Twelve?

Matthew names the Twelve, but it may be helpful for us to know each of these men and learn what became of their lives.

1. **First, Simon, who is called Peter.** Matthew uses the word '*first*' here not simply to tell us that this is the first apostle on the list, since the powers of observation of even the most remedial reader would be able to discern this fact. Rather he says 'first' because Peter is the leader of the apostles. There are four listings of the Twelve apostles in the NT and in each of them Peter is listed first (and conversely Judas, who betrayed Jesus, is listed last).<sup>11</sup>

Peter was called Simon until he met Jesus. The first words Jesus spoke to him were,

"You are Simon, the son of John. You shall be called Cephas" (which means Peter).  
John 1:42 (ESV)

Cephas is the Aramaic word for 'rock' and Peter (i.e. *petros*) is the Greek word 'rock.' Jesus, upon his initial meeting with Simon, changed his name to Peter. Thus, he is often referred to as Simon Peter.

Peter was a fisherman by profession. He and his brother, Andrew, together shared a family fishing business. Thus, Peter was a small business owner. Before meeting Jesus, he spent his days rising early, preparing his boat and nets along the shore of the Sea of Galilee, and then hours out on the water casting his nets and catching fish. Then the messy job of cleaning and selling the fish.

Peter was born in **Bethsaida**, which is located on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was married, for Jesus healed his mother-in-law of a fever (Lk 4:38).

He owned house in Capernaum and he most likely had children though we are not specifically told this fact. Paul tells us that Peter took his wife with him when traveled on mission (1 Cor 9:5).



**Personality.** Before meeting Jesus, Peter was bold, a little arrogant, and quick to speak. Apart from Jesus, no other name is mentioned more than his throughout all the gospels. Peter asks

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<sup>11</sup> Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13.

more questions than all of the other disciples combined and it was usually Peter who would ask Jesus in private to explain what he had taught in public. Peter was quick and bold to declare his loyalty to Jesus, but also he three times denied Jesus on the night before his crucifixion. Yet, Jesus forgave and restored Peter and he went on to lay down his life for this Jesus whom he loved.

**Ministry.** After being rescued from prison and planned execution by king Agrippa, Peter left Jerusalem and went to minister in Rome. While preaching there, for about 25 years, Peter shared the gospel with a concubine of Nero and she became a believer. This enraged Nero, who then sought to put Peter to death.

**Death.** Nero ordered him arrested and Peter spent about nine months in prison, before he was martyred in around A.D. 68.<sup>12</sup> Eusebius cites the testimony of Clement, who reports that before Peter's death, he was forced to watch the crucifixion of his own wife.<sup>13</sup> As she was led away, Peter said to her, "Remember the Lord."<sup>14</sup> Peter was then severely scourged and crucified upside down, claiming that he was not worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord and Savior.<sup>15</sup>

2. **And Andrew his brother.** Andrew was Peter's brother. Andrew lived with Peter in his house (Mk 1:29) in Capernaum and was a partner with him in their fishing business. Andrew was the first of the twelve whom Jesus called<sup>16</sup> and it was he who introduced Peter to Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

**Personality.** Andrew was first a disciple of John the Baptist, but when John said that Jesus was "*the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world,*"<sup>18</sup> Andrew immediately left John the Baptist and began following Jesus.<sup>19</sup> In fact, Andrew followed Jesus back to his room and spent the day with him and then became convinced that Jesus is the Messiah (Jn 1:41). Later in Jesus' ministry some Greeks ask to meet Jesus and it was Andrew who introduced them to him (Jn 12:20-22). It seems Andrew had a penchant for introducing people to Jesus.

**Ministry.** Andrew is reported to have traveled north along the northern shore of the Baltic Sea preaching the gospel in the regions that are today Romania and Ukraine. He then went south into Greece. At this point, accounts vary, but apparently not only did he preach the gospel of Jesus, but he also preached against idol worship. A provincial governor's wife became a

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<sup>12</sup> John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* (Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, 2000), Digital version, chapter 1

<sup>13</sup> John MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men* (Nashville, TN: Nelson Books, 2002), Chapter 2, Apple Books.

<sup>14</sup> John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, chapter 1.

<sup>15</sup> *Ibid.*, footnote 6.

<sup>16</sup> John 1:35-40.

<sup>17</sup> John 1:41-42.

<sup>18</sup> John 1:29, 36.

<sup>19</sup> John 1:37-38.

believer.<sup>20</sup> The governor was doubly angry with Andrew, first for preaching against the worship of idols and second for being the means of conversion of his wife. He demanded that she recant her faith, but she refused.

**Death.** The governor ordered Andrew to be crucified. However, in order to prolong his suffering, he ordered to be tied to the cross rather than being nailed to it. He hung there for two days, all the while preaching the gospel to passersby.<sup>21</sup> He reported died on the 30th of November.<sup>22</sup>

3. **James the son of Zebedee.** James is the older brother of John. The two brothers are very often mentioned together in Scripture. Zebedee was likely a prominent man, since these two brothers were always referred to as being his sons. James (and John) were workers with their father in a fishing business. They had some sort of business partnership with Peter and Andrew (Lk 5:7, 10).

James is one of Jesus' three closest friends and may have ranked second in leadership behind Peter, since he is always listed second behind Peter. James with one of the three invited to join Jesus on the Mount of Transfiguration (Mt 17:1) and in the room where Jesus raised Jairus's dead daughter back to life (Mk 5:37).

**Personality.** These two brothers are those whom Jesus referred to as "sons of thunder" (Mk 3:17). This name would tell us that James was a very passionate, zealous, and perhaps somewhat loud man. We have one hint at his zeal for when Jesus was planning to travel through Samaria on his way to Jerusalem, the Samaritans did not receive him and refused to welcome him into their town because of his intention to go to Jerusalem to worship. When James and John discovered this, they were enraged and asked Jesus, "Lord, do you want us to call down fire from heaven to consume them?" (Lk 9:54). They said this as if Jesus, had he wanted, was unable to do so on his own. They had a bit of an overly high view of themselves.

James was also a bit overly ambitious. He and his brother conspired together to persuade their mother, Salome<sup>23</sup>, to ask Jesus if the both of them could have the highest seats of honor when Jesus entered his kingdom, one sitting on his left and one on his right (Mt 20:20-24). Jesus answered telling them that they didn't know what they were asking and that God the Father would be the one to pass out the heavenly seat assignments. When the other ten apostles heard this request, they were angry at them.

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<sup>20</sup> MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, chapter 2.

<sup>21</sup> Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, chapter 1.

<sup>22</sup> Ibid.

<sup>23</sup> Matthew 27:56; Mark 16:1.

**Death.** The end of his life is recorded in Acts 12:1-3. Herod Agrippa decided to persecute Christians in Jerusalem and he chose James as his primary target. The first century historian Eusebius records that according to the testimony of Clement of Alexandria, that the man who accused James and led him to the judgment seat, after listening to his testimony, became convinced that James was telling the truth about Jesus and he too professed faith in Christ.<sup>24</sup> Herod became so enraged that he commanded they both be executed. As they were being led away to their death, this man begged James to forgive him. After considering his request for a little while, James said to him, "Peace be with you," and gave him a kiss of friendship.<sup>25</sup> They were then both beheaded with the same sword. James is the first apostle to be martyred. His death is the only death of the Twelve that is recorded in Scripture and happened in A.D. 44.<sup>26</sup>

4. **And John his brother.** John is the younger brother of James and the son of Zebedee. Since he was the younger brother, church history has often held that he was very young when he came a disciple and so he is often depicted with youthful features. He is often depicted with a cup in his hand, which represents an account that he once drank poison, but was unharmed.

John was, like his brother, a professional fisherman, who helped to manage the family business. He, along with Andrew, was first a disciple of John the Baptist before becoming a disciple of Jesus.<sup>27</sup> He, with Peter and his brother James, comprised the group of disciples who were closest to Jesus.

**Writings.** John is very well known to us. Next to Paul, he wrote more of the NT than any other person. He wrote the Gospel of John, the three epistles, and the Revelation of John (you will note that Revelation is singular).

**Personality.** Much of what he learned about James is true of John. He was one of the "sons of thunder," he too was a overly self-confident, and exceedingly zealous. He too wanted to have a seat of honor in Jesus' heavenly kingdom. However, meeting Jesus transformed him. If in the early days he was a bit too proud and tended to be arrogant, by the time he wrote his gospel, he is so self-deprecating that he does not even name himself, but simply refers to himself as "the disciple whom Jesus loved."<sup>28</sup>

His focus on Jesus in his gospel is unlike any of the other three. His writing is intensely personal, deeply theological, and passionately focused on the truth. John was with Jesus on

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<sup>24</sup> MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, chapter 4.

<sup>25</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Roy Joseph Deferrari, vol. 19, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 100.

<sup>26</sup> Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, chapter one.

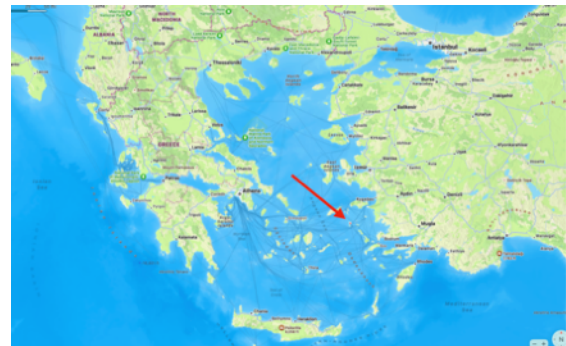
<sup>27</sup> John 1:35.

<sup>28</sup> John 19:26; 20:2; 21:7, 20.

the Mount of Transfiguration, in the room when he raised a little girl from the dead, he sat next to and leaned upon Jesus at the Last Supper, he prayed with him in the garden, and he was the first to recognize him after his resurrection (Jn 21:7).

John was the only disciple who was an eyewitness of Jesus' crucifixion. He saw them pound the nails and pierce him with the spear. John stood at the foot of the cross with Mary, Jesus' mother, and then cared for her after Jesus' death (Jn 19:25-27).

**Ministry.** During the persecution in Jerusalem, John left and went to Ephesus, where he became pastor of the church there which Paul had planted.<sup>29</sup> While there, a great persecution of Christians arose under emperor Domitian, who may have tried to kill John, but failed, he was exiled to a prison community on the *isle of Patmos*, which is a small island in the Aegean Sea southeast of Greece off the west coast of Turkey. While there he lived in a cave<sup>30</sup> and there he received the revelation, which is the final book of the Bible.



**Death.** John is the only one of the Twelve to have died a natural death. He outlived them all, but he too suffered for his faith in Jesus and the preaching of the gospel. John lived to be in his nineties. The emperor Nerva, who succeeded Domitian, allowed John to return to Ephesus, where he lived out his final days. He died around A.D. 98 during the reign of Trajan. Jerome, in his commentary on Galatians, wrote that at the end of his life, John was so frail that he had to be carried into the church.<sup>31</sup> Jerome said that he often repeated the phrase, "My little children, love one another." When asked why he so often said this, he answered saying, "It is the Lord's command, and if this alone be done, it is enough."<sup>32</sup>

5. **Philip.** In all four lists of the apostles, Philip always is listed fifth. He is referred to as Philip the apostle to distinguish him from Philip the evangelist, whom we later meet in Acts 6 and 8. Philip was from Bethsaida, just as was Peter and Andrew (Jn 1:44). He was likely friends with Peter and Andrew before being called to be a disciple by Jesus.

It is likely he too was a fisherman since after the resurrection of Jesus, when the disciples returned to Galilee and Peter said he was going fishing, Philip may have been one of the unnamed apostles who went with them (Andrew may have been the other Jn 21:2-3).

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<sup>29</sup> MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, chapter 5.

<sup>30</sup> Ibid.

<sup>31</sup> Ibid.

<sup>32</sup> Ibid.



**Personality.** John is the only gospel writer who mentions Philip with any detail. None of the other authors mention him at all, other than naming him as one of the Twelve. We meet him in John's first chapter. Philip was in wilderness with John the Baptist and we are told that Jesus "found Philip and said to him, 'Follow me'" (Jn 1:43). Jesus actually sought Philip and then when he found him, he called him to follow him. Philip was the fourth disciple to be called by Jesus, but the first one whom Jesus sought out to join him.

After Jesus found Philip, Philip then went and found Nathanael and invited him to come follow Jesus. In that conversation, Philip said something quite amazing. He said to Nathanael, "We have found him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (Jn 1:45). Philip, apparently from the first day he met Jesus, was convinced that he was Messiah. This is astonishing. He knew his Bible and was convinced that Jesus was one. Nathanael was very skeptical and said, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip simply replied, "Come and see" (Jn 1:46).

We have another glimpse into Philip's life. Just before the Passover, during which Jesus would be crucified, some Greeks worshipers came to Philip and said, "Sir, we wish to see Jesus" (Jn 12:20-21). Philip then went and got Andrew and together they took these men to Jesus.

**Ministry.** Later in life, Philip left Jerusalem and Judea and went northwest into **Phrygia**, which today is Turkey. He spent time there preaching in various cities but found Heliopolis to be the city of greatest need. Apparently he found them worshipping a large serpent and after preaching against this idolatry for some time, and seeing the conversion of many, he killed the snake (perhaps to prove that it was not a god).



**Death.** This so enraged the city magistrates that they put him in prison, then scourged him, and finally crucified him.<sup>33</sup> He reportedly died eight years after Jesus, putting his death in A.D. 52.

6. **And Bartholomew.** It is likely that Bartholomew is the same person who is called Nathaniel in John's gospel. Matthew, Mark, and Luke tell us nothing about Bartholomew, but in John Nathaniel is a disciple of Jesus from the beginning of his public ministry to the end. He is there at the beginning with Peter, Andrew, James, and John following John the Baptist (Jn 1) and he is there with them fishing on the Sea of Galilee the morning Jesus appears to them after his resurrection (Jn 21:2). Thus, like Simon Peter, this man is called Bartholomew Nathaniel. Bart Nat is probably easier to remember.

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<sup>33</sup> Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, chapter one.

One of the reasons for seeing these two names as representing one man is that in all the synoptic gospel lists, Philip and Bartholomew are always listed next to each other and we find a similar connection in the Gospel of John, where Philip and Nathaniel are closely related. The two are also closely connected in many of the earliest church histories as well. Evidently Philip and Bart Nat were very close friends.

John's first chapter tells us that it was Philip who went and got Nathaniel and brought him to Jesus. Nathaniel was prejudicially skeptical and openly confessed his doubts that any person from Nazareth could be the one whom Moses and prophets foretold (Jn 1:41, 45). In fact, he said, "*Can anything good come from Nazareth?*" (Jn 1:46). Philip said, "*Come and see*" and Nathaniel followed and met Jesus.

**Personality.** Jesus, when he saw him, said, "*An Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!*" (Jn 1:47). This is an incredibly statement. Nathaniel was an honest man. A man who spoke the truth and never pretended. He was not a faker or an actor, but he was a man of integrity. After meeting Jesus in person he quickly overcome his prejudice amazingly confessing, "*Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!*" (Jn 1:49). This is quite an incredible proclamation for one who had only just met Jesus and Jesus promised him that he would see "great things" as he followed him, so it seems right that this Nathaniel is the Bartholomew elsewhere listed as one of the Twelve.

John tells us that he was from Cana in Galilee (Jn 21:2), which is the same town in which Jesus performed his first miracle (of turning water into wine John 2). He is only mentioned in two places in John, the first and last chapter. He too may have been a fisherman, but we don't know anything else about him.

**Ministry.** The early church fathers tell us that he went half way around the world to India to preach the gospel. Eusebius tells us that he translated Matthew's gospel from Hebrew into Greek and also into at least one Indian language. After India, he went to the areas of Armenia and Azerbaijan to preach the gospel of Jesus, where he spent considerable time.

**Death.** There are several accounts of his death. The most widely accepted is that he was crucified in either Armenia or Azerbaijan about A.D. 71. Reportedly he was taken down before he died, and was beheaded.<sup>34</sup> There are other more incredible accounts of his death that included him being flayed alive, but these are uncertain.

7. **Thomas.** Most of know him as "Doubting Thomas," but the in the Bible he is called "Didymus," which means, "the twin" (Jn 16:11; 20:24). He had either a twin brother or sister, but the Bible does not record which. He is only mentioned once in each of the Synoptic

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<sup>34</sup> Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, chapter one.

gospels and that is only when the names of the Twelve is listed. Like Bart-Nat, we know all that we know about Thomas from John's gospel.

**Personality.** We first meet Thomas at the scene of Lazarus' death. When Jesus announces that Lazarus has died, he then told the disciples of his intention to go to Lazarus' house. The disciples advise against this because "the Jews" there upon his last visit had attempted to stone him and so they thought it *not* a good idea to return (Jn 11:8). Jesus affirmed his intention to go despite their hatred of him. To which Thomas says these words,

"Let us go also, that we may die with him" (Jn 11:16).

Thomas' loyalty to both Jesus and Lazarus is evident here. If his master wanted to return to a place where the people had planned to kill him, then Thomas was ready to go with him, even if it meant death.

We next see Thomas is at the Last Supper when Jesus was talking about his death and his leaving them. Thomas began very distressed at hearing Jesus talk like this. He did not want to be separated from Jesus. He did not understand what Jesus was talking about, so he asked a question, "*Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?*" (Jn 14:5). If Jesus was going away some place, Thomas wanted to be sure he knew the way to find him so that he could be reunited with him. Jesus responded with those amazing words, "*I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me*" (Jn 14:6). Jesus was going to the Father and this meant he had to die first. This was overwhelming to Thomas.

Then Jesus died and Thomas was separated from him. Apparently this sent Thomas into a bit of downward spiral of depression. After Jesus death all the disciples gathered together to be together no doubt to comfort one another during this time of grief (Jn 20: But Thomas refused to join them (Jn 20:24). During this time, Jesus appeared to the gathered disciples, but since Thomas was not there, he did not see Jesus. When the other disciples told them that Jesus was alive, Thomas said, "*Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe*" (Jn 20:25). A week later he had his opportunity. Jesus appeared to Thomas in person and invited him to touch his wounds. But seeing him was enough. Thomas did not need to touch him. He saw him and believed and said, "*My Lord and my God!*" (Jn 20:28).

**Ministry.** After the ascension of Jesus into heaven, Thomas reported sailed to India to preach the gospel in A.D. 52 and landed in Kerala where he planted several churches. He later traveled to Chennai where he was run through with a spear in A.D. 72.

8. **And Matthew the tax collector.** He was also called "Levi, the son of Alphaeus" (Mk 2:14). (In Rembrandt's painting there is an angel on his shoulder.)

He was an employee of the Roman government. He was viewed as a traitor and a sinner by his fellow citizens, who would have sought to avoid him at all costs. "Tax collectors were the most despised people in Israel."<sup>35</sup> They were known for collecting more taxes than was required in order to pad their own pockets and improve their own personal wealth. However, when Jesus called Matthew, he left everything—job, money, and all—in order to follow Jesus (Mt 9:9).

**Personality.** Matthew lived in Capernaum, which became the home base for Jesus' ministry after he moved (or rather was kicked) out of Nazareth. Matthew was evidently humbled by the grace Jesus showed him since he only speaks of himself in the third person in his gospel. He wrote his gospel in Hebrew to his fellow Jews to prove to them that Jesus fulfilled all the OT law and all that was spoken about messiah by the prophets. His gospel may be the first written and was apparently written while he was in Jerusalem.

**Death.** Church tradition holds that Matthew preached and ministered in Judea for about a decade before he went to Ethiopia to preach the gospel, plant churches, and minister in the name of Jesus. He was martyred for this faith in Jesus in about the A.D. 60 by being slain with a **halberd**, which is a spear with a battle axe on the end of it.



9. **James the son of Alphaeus.** He is also known as James the younger, or The Less, to distinguish him from the better known James, son of Zebedee. The Greek word for 'less' (*mikros*) can mean young or small of stature. For this reason some called him 'little James,' as in short of height. However, we could call him little James because we know little about him. In fact, apart from his name, the Bible reveals only a very little more about this James.

You will note that he is called "son of Alphaeus," as is Matthew Levi, thus, some believe these two are brothers. This seems doubtful since it is nowhere mentioned that they were brothers and while other brothers are named, if this were true, why would this fact never be mentioned? Most likely then James and Matthew are not brothers, but their father's simply share the same name.

This is not the James who is the half-brother of Jesus. James the brother of our Lord Jesus is he who wrote the epistle. Regarding this James, the son of Alphaeus, we are not told that he wrote anything.

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<sup>35</sup> MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, chapter 8.

We do know his mother's name was Mary (Mk 15:40). She was one of the Mary's mentioned who was a friend of Mary the mother of Jesus. She was an eyewitness of the crucifixion and on resurrection morning she came with Mary carrying spices to anoint Jesus' body.

**Death.** Church tradition of his death tells us that while preaching in Jerusalem, he was stoned to death.

10. **And Thaddeus.** This apostle is also called, Lebbaeus<sup>36</sup>, and "Judas, son of James" (Lk 6:16; Acts 1:13). Jerome called him "Trinomial—the man with three names."<sup>37</sup> We know almost nothing about this apostle as well.

**Personality.** There is only one time he is reported to have spoken in Scripture and that is during the Last Supper. He asks, "*How is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world?*" (Jn 14:22). This reveals a loving heart toward the lost of the world.

**Ministry.** His love for the lost of the world are seen in his actions after Pentecost. A few years after Pentecost he went north to preach the gospel and ended up in the city of Edessa, in what is today Turkey. While there he healed king Abgar of his illness, along with many others, in the name of Jesus and so the gospel spread widely through him and his ministry.<sup>38</sup>

**Death.** He was either crucified<sup>39</sup> or clubbed to death<sup>40</sup> with an axe.

11. **Simon the Zealot.** He is also known as Simon the Cananaean (Mk 3:18). The word 'cananaean' does not refer to the land of Canaan, but rather to the Hebrew word that means 'zeal.' Simon was a member of a group of political activists who were known as the Zealots, for their zeal to rule themselves and throw off Roman dominion. They hated Roman rule and their occupation of the land. They advanced their agenda through terrorism and acts of violence.<sup>41</sup> These looked forward to the coming of Messiah to destroy Rome.

In all four NT lists of the Twelve, Simon is always listed eleventh, just in front of Judas the betrayer.

One wonders how such a zealous political activist such as Simon got along with Matthew the former employee of Rome.

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<sup>36</sup> Matthew 10:3, see ESV footnote.

<sup>37</sup> MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, chapter 9.

<sup>38</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea, *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*, ed. Roy Joseph Deferrari, trans. Roy Joseph Deferrari, vol. 19, *The Fathers of the Church* (Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press, 1953), 76.

<sup>39</sup> Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, chapter 1.

<sup>40</sup> MacArthur, *Twelve Ordinary Men*, chapter 9.

<sup>41</sup> Ibid.

**Death.** After the destruction of Jerusalem in A.D. 70, Simon traveled widely preaching the gospel. He went through Egypt, northern Africa, Libya, Mauritania, and eventually even into Britain, where he was either crucified or sawn in half, or perhaps both.

12. *And Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.* Most everyone knows the last name on the list, which is the name of Jesus' betrayer.

Judas loved money. John described him as a thief. He was the treasurer of the apostolic band for John tells us that that was the keeper of the money bag and used to take from it whatever he wanted (Jn 12:6).

Jesus said about him, "*Did I not choose you twelve? And yet one of you is a devil?*" (Jn 6:70). John then tells us that Jesus was talking Judas (Jn 12:71). Thus, Jesus was not surprised by Judas' behavior, but rather he knew he was a devil and not believing in him throughout the whole of his ministry. Jesus knew from the beginning who did and did not believe in him (see Jn 6:64).

Judas sold Jesus for thirty pieces of silver, which is about equivalent to about \$7,500 today.<sup>42</sup> He betrayed Jesus with a kiss as Jesus had been praying in the Garden of Gethsemane. After betraying Jesus, Judas regretted what he had done, but it was too late. The betrayal could not be undone. Thus, Judas went out and hanged himself to death (Mt 27:5).

## Conclusion

Jesus chose an interesting bunch of guys with whom to share his incredible authority and send out into the world to heal the sick, cast out demons, and preach the gospel.

He chose plain local fishermen, owners of small business, government employees, political activists, two pairs of brother, a twin, all of various heights, weights, and builds. Yet, apart from the one who betrayed Jesus, they each spent their lives obeying this calling and commissioning of Jesus. They traveled the world preaching the gospel of Jesus; from Jerusalem to Armenia, and India to Britain.

They were beaten and beheaded, mocked and maligned, scourged and stoned, tortured and terrified, imprisoned and impaled, clubbed and crucified, and yet they valued spreading the

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<sup>42</sup> See *ESV Study Bible* note at Matthew 26:15.

message of the Jesus more than their own lives. All but one of them shed his blood in order to tell the world who Jesus is. These were men *"of whom the world was not worthy."*<sup>43</sup>

Who is willing to love the soul-saving Gospel of Jesus more than life itself? I wonder are we willing to lay down our lives in order for the gospel of Jesus to reach the least reached people on the planet who have still not yet heard of the name of Jesus of Nazareth, the Christ of God?

### **Discussion Questions**

1. What kind of authority did Jesus give to his disciples? (10:1; cf. 4:23; 9:35)
2. What does the term 'apostle' mean?
3. What is the difference in meaning between the terms 'disciple' and 'apostle'?
4. With whom of the Twelve apostles do you most identify? Why?
5. What if anything did you learn?
6. Do you sense the Lord speaking to you in any particular way? If so, what might he be saying to you?
7. What questions did this passage raise that you would like to have answered?

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<sup>43</sup> Hebrews 11:38.