

The 12 Apostles of Jesus Christ

Update 7/21/16

This material is based upon the John MacArthur book “Twelve Ordinary Men.” It seeks to use the Gospel record and the book of Acts to learn about the men whom Jesus chose to preach the Gospel and help establish the Christian Dispensation.

These men were not scholars. They were not synagogue officials. Some were fishermen. One was a tax collector. Most were Galileans. They were 12, ultimately 13, ordinary men. And yet, by the power of Jesus and the work of the Holy Spirit, they accomplished extraordinary things.

Our primary goal is to learn what the Bible teaches us about these men and their mission. But a connected goal is to make a personal connection with the character of these men. We hope to come away with something like this: *“If they can learn, I can learn. If they can be useful, I can be useful. If Jesus patiently loves them, He can patiently love me. These men and I are much alike and that brings me comfort and purpose.”*

These 12 Apostles, (minus Judas, replaced by Matthias) became the foundational preachers for the Gospel of Jesus Christ. Their teachings, by the inspiration of the Helper, continue to shape lives and mold hearts even today. And yet, many don't know much about them, outside of perhaps Peter's denial or John's letters. That was the case back in the early 1500's. The Bible was only available in Latin, and so most folks had never read the Bible. And while they were "Christians" they didn't know the names of but a couple Apostles. Motivated by that, **William Tyndale** gave his life to translate the Bible into English, so people could know the truth of the foundation of who they were. They didn't have it before in their hands, but we do. So let's learn about the men who help found our faith!

This study will cover some basic facts about Jesus and the 12 and then, throughout the next 10 weeks, we will devote classes to the study of one or more of these men, giving them each personal attention. (Our study will be based on the book "*Twelve Ordinary Men*" by **John McArthur**)

"Apostle" represents the idea of being "CALLED OUT and SENT OUT" Called out of the masses and then sent out by Jesus to the masses. This "Called out" process had different stages in the gospels

1) Called to Conversion

- a. **John 1:35-37; 40-42; 43-45** – They first believed in Him. They followed Him as Lord. They did not leave their day jobs and walk with Him. (It was very early in the ministry). But they became disciples.

2) Called to Ministry

- a. **Luke 5:3-6,8-11** – They knew Him already. But this time, a little later in the ministry, they left everything and followed Him into the work. But many others had also done this

3) Called to Apostleship

- a. **Luke 6:12-16** – After a whole night spent in prayer, He came back and hand-picked 12 men out of all who were following Him. These were the 12 Apostles.

4) Called to Martyrdom

- a. **Matt. 28:18-20** – Now the 11, soon to be 12 were sent out, away from Jesus protective wing, to stand with the Spirit and share the gospel. 11 of them would be murdered, and the 12th would be exiled. This would define their life and death. But they were ready.

(For marking class – putting title in margin and referencing the next passage could make a nice chain!)

Focus of this Lesson will be upon #3 – Called to Apostleship

A. The TIMING

- a. Things were getting intense, in terms of opposition and hatred: **Luke 5:17,30; 6:7-11**
- b. So, with about two years left in ministry, He chooses these 12 men. In the near future His ministry was largely focused on preparing them, as He saw His death approaching.

B. The TWELVE

- a. Common men: fishermen, a tax collector, regular guys. Not rabbi's or scholars.
- b. Galileans: lower class, less educated typically. "nature like ours" – like Elijah – **Ja. 5:17**
 - i. **I Co. 1:20-21, 27-29** – not the men the world would expect.. that's the point!
- c. So, they made mistakes, as we'll see. But other than Judas, they were committed
 - i. **Luke 17:5** – "*The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'*"

C. The TEACHER

- a. Their hope was in their Teacher. They walked with the Son of God.
- b. He taught them about communion with the Father: **Luke 6:12** – prayed all night!
- c. He taught them to think Spiritually: **John 6:51-55; 66-68**
- d. And He promised them a Helper: **John 16:13**
- e. They, like, had but one hope to become who God needed them to be: Jesus.

D. The TASK

- a. They were called “apostles” by Jesus (**Luke 6:13**). This Greek noun “apostolos” means “one who is sent.” This term indicated that they were being groomed for a work.
 - i. Aramaic was the common language of that day and likely the language Jesus spoke. The Aramaic word is “shaliah” which meant: “an official representative.”
 - ii. In that sense, the word connoted Jesus selecting men to represent Him. To speak on His behalf and act with His authority behind them.
- b. Their task, in simple description was to:
 - i. **Mark 3:14** – Preach with Authority
 - ii. **Matt. 28:18-20** – By His authority and in His name
 - iii. **Eph. 1:4-6** – Revealers of the greatest mystery in all the world!
 - iv. **Heb. 2:3-4** – Removing doubt by the proofs they carried with them

E. The TRAINING

- a. I preached on “The Flawed Apostles” a couple of weeks ago. They needed work! As do we. I am heartened by their weaknesses; in the sense that Jesus worked with them and helped them grow and I believe He will likewise be patient with me if beckon for Him to increase my faith and I work daily to grow in His name.
 - i. They often lacked spiritual understanding – **John 13:6-8**
 - ii. They struggled with humility – **Matt. 20:20-28**
 - iii. Sometimes their faith was weak – **Mark 16:14**
 - iv. In trial they lacked commitment – **Mark 14:50**
 - v. And with weak faith came a lack of power – **Matt. 17:14-20; Mark 16:10-11**
- b. But Jesus continued to teach them by word and example. And He appeared to them after His resurrection... and they were changed men; mature men. So much so that they stood for Jesus in the face of certain persecution: **Acts 5:29-31**

These are the men we will study over the next several weeks. We will find ourselves in their character and I pray we will find ourselves in their growth. Sometimes we will want to be better than they were. Sometimes we can only hope to be as strong as they were. No matter what, Jesus handpicked them to give us the Gospel, and their journey is worthy of our attention.

Peter was among the first of the 12 to follow Jesus: **John 1:35-42**

Peter, Andrew, James and John: Always listed together and first four:

Matt. 10:2-4; Mk. 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13

And all four were fishermen: **Matt 4:18-22**

Peter, James and John seemed to represent Jesus' "inner circle": **Mt. 17:1-2; Mk. 5:36-37; 14:32-34**

Simon was his given name. Jesus renamed him "Peter": **John 1:42; Matt. 16:17-18**

Interesting, Simon seemed to be the name Jesus and the Gospel authors often used when Peter was regressing back to the "old self." Not always the case, but frequent enough to note:

Luke 5:3-10 – "Simon" in doubt; "Simon Peter" in faith. **Luke 22:31** – "Simon, Simon"

-- Not uncommon to have a new name associated with faith: **Acts 4:36-37** – "Barnabas"

Peter became a strong leader, committed teacher, and martyr for Christ, having progressed from wavering fisherman to bold Apostle by Pentecost: **Acts 2:14; 4:8-10; 5:12,29**

But there were 3 key elements of his life that brought him to that place:

1) Raw Material

- a. That is, the basic, innate qualities of his personality. They would certainly need to be molded, corrected and trained, but these helped him become a valiant faithful soldier.

- i. INQUISITIVE

- 1. No Apostle asked more questions than Peter, sought more answers, cared enough to dig, seek, find as he did.
 - a. **Mt. 15:12-15** – "explain the parable to us?"
 - b. **Lu. 12:40-41** – "parable to us, or someone else?"
 - c. **Mt. 18:21** – "how often shall my brother sin... I forgive him?"
 - d. **Jn. 21:20-22** – "Lord and what about this man?"
 - 2. Always wanting answers. Sometimes he was too impetuous. But it was in his nature to want to know what was happening and to understand it.

- ii. INITIATIVE

- 1. Peter is sometimes called: "the apostle with a foot-shaped mouth." He often spoke out of turn and out of place. But it was his initiative at work.
 - a. **Mt. 16:13-16** – "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God"
 - b. **John 6:66-69** – "You have words of eternal life."
 - c. **John 13:6-9** – "Never shall you wash my feet!"
 - 2. His personality is aggressive, involved, and responsive. These can be dangerous qualities, but under the right molding and guide, can make for useful service in the kingdom.

- iii. INVOLVEMENT

- 1. Never content to merely know and speak, Peter wanted to be apart of the action, the effort, the solution
 - a. **Matt. 14:26-30** – "command me to come to You on the water"
 - b. **John 18:10** – Peter cuts off Malchus' right ear
 - 2. Perhaps impatient in action, but active nonetheless. Once he matured, this natural tendency to DO would lead to sermons and stands of faithfulness.

2) Life Experiences

- a. The three years of Jesus' ministry was an up and down time for Peter. He learned many things about what it took to be a disciple. Often things went well, but other times not so well; however, he was being built, carved out, and shaped!
 - i. Learned the highs and lows of learning: **Matt. 16:16-23**
 - ii. Watched Jesus teach principles of the kingdom - **John 13:4-6**
 - iii. Witnessed Jesus' glorious ascension – **Luke 24:50-53**
 - iv. Received gift of the Holy Spirit – **Acts 2:1-4**
- b. Peter saw incredible things. He experienced humbling things. He endured much. And yet, he could have amounted to nothing, his raw material wasted. Instead, he learned from, these experiences, cherished them, and used them to make him who he became.

3) Character Qualities – (maybe not innate in personality, or drawn from experiences, but BUILT by self discipline because of how necessary they are in the kingdom of Christ!)

- a. SUBMISSIVENESS– not just to Jesus, but in all relationships of authority
 - i. **I Peter 2:13-18** – “Submit yourselves for the Lord’s sake”
- b. HUMILITY – a quality that is often not inherent but must be developed
 - i. **Matt. 26:31-33; Luke 22:33** – “I will never fall away!”
 - ii. **I Peter 5:5-8** – “humble yourselves under the mighty hand of God”
- c. LOVE – a selfless desire to serve and assist and support other people
 - i. **John 13:14-15,34-35** – The whole purpose of the foot washing
 - ii. **I Peter 4:8-10** – “keep fervent in your love for one another”
- d. COURAGE– not sword-swinging courage, but willingness to suffer for sake of Christ
 - i. **John 21:18-19** – Peter was going to be martyred.
 - ii. He watched Jesus do that exact thing and then come from the dead unscathed.
 - iii. **Acts 4:18; 5:28-29** – And so Peter cultivated this kind of resolve.
 - iv. **I Peter 1:3-7** – And Peter taught this same character trait to us as well!

Peter was obviously not a perfect man; not before he saw Christ raised, nor after (see Galatians 2). But he was a man who knew how to use his personality traits, life experiences, and character growth to build him into a useful servant for Christ and an effective teacher for Christians like us.

Secular history suggests his life ended with Peter first watching his wife be crucified. It is recorded that he said to her, “Remember the Lord.” Immediately afterward he too was crucified, only he requested to be killed upside-down as he considered himself unworthy to die as Christ did.

But it is his life we are considering and that can be summed up by his last written words: “*grow in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ*” (**II Peter 3:18**). Such he did. And such should we also.

Review Questions:

- 1) *What did Peter do before the ministry?*
- 2) *How close was he with Jesus?*
- 3) *Why was his name changed by Jesus?*
- 4) *In what way was he Inquisitive?*
- 5) *In what ways did he take Initiative?*
- 6) *In what ways did Peter actively get Involved?*
- 7) *How did the Resurrection shape Peter’s character?*
- 8) *What progress do we see in his letters?*

Have you ever met two brothers and thought, “how could these two come from the same stock?” Not because of physical appearance, or even moral choices, but because their personalities are so different. Such may have been the question asked when people met these two brothers: Peter and Andrew.

Peter, as we studied last week, was unfiltered and unrestrained. He was known for asking all the questions, giving all the answers, taking all the chances. He was bold and aggressive. Andrew, on the other hand, seemed to be just about the total opposite. However, both became leaders. Both were useful in the kingdom. And while you may not relate to the personality and impulsiveness of Peter, perhaps you can find your strength to stand through the example of the Apostle Andrew.

Basic Facts about Andrew:

- 1) Faithful even before meeting Jesus: **John 1:35-40** (already following John the Baptist)
- 2) The first of the 12 to follow Jesus: **1:35,40** (understood John’s teaching: **1:20,36**)
- 3) One of the 4 fisherman, who seemed especially close to Jesus: (Peter, Andrews, James, John)
 - a. All four left day jobs together to follow Jesus: **Mark 1:17-20**
 - b. All four alone with Jesus on various occasions: **Mark 1:29-34; Mark 13:3-5**
- 4) Eventually less noted in the Gospels and not a part of the tighter circle of 3: (Peter, James, John)
 - a. Not with them during Transfiguration or in the garden of Gethsemane: **Matt. 17:1; Mk. 14:33**
 - b. Only mentioned 13 times in the New Testament, four of which are in the case of listing the Apostles and often with the adage – “*Simon’s brother*” – **Mark 1:16**

Andrew did not have the same personality of his brother Peter. He was a leader. He was important, but he accomplished it in a different way, as we’ll see in the three points below. Because he was not standing at the front of the pack all the time, or serving as the mouthpiece for the group, he is not mentioned at all after the Gospels, except in **Acts 1:13**, where the Apostles are listed.

But this doesn’t mean he didn’t serve. In fact, there is secular evidence to suggest he served the faith valiantly until the point of his death. Here are a few documented notes on Andrew’s life: (Quotes are from John MacArthur’s *Twelve Ordinary Men*, pg. 74.)

- “Tradition says he took the gospel north. Eusebius, the ancient church historian, says Andrew went as far as Scythia. (That’s why Andrew is the patron saint of Russia. He is also the patron saint of Scotland.)”
- “He was ultimately crucified in Achaia, which is in southern Greece, near Athens. One account says he led the wife of a provincial Roman governor to Christ, and that infuriated her husband. He demanded his wife recant her devotion to Jesus Christ and she refused. So the governor had Andrew crucified.”
- “By the governor’s orders, those who crucified him lashed him to his cross instead of nailing him, in order to prolong his sufferings. (Tradition says it was a saltire, or an X-shaped cross). By most accounts, he hung on the cross for two days, exhorting passersby to turn to Christ for salvation.”

He was every bit as committed to and valuable in the kingdom as his brother Peter, but he used his inherent personality traits (which were very different than Peter’s) to serve Jesus, even to the end.

Let's examine three specific traits of Andrew we would do well to study and emulate:

1) He Saw the Value of Individual People

- a. Maybe Andrew didn't address the crowds or councils like his brother did, but Andrew was acquainted with Jesus and personally introduced individuals to the King.
-- **II Kings 5:2-3** – Like the servant girl, Andrew connected people in need to God.
 - i. **John 1:37-42** – It was Andrew who introduced Peter to Him
 1. “He found first his own brother Simon...”
 2. This didn't take public speaking ability, just some personal concern.
 - ii. **John 6:1-14** – Once again, Andrew helped the situation by bringing a boy to Jesus
 1. Others were at a loss and maybe overthinking the problem
 2. But Andrew knew the value of small steps, like one boy coming to Jesus
 - iii. **John 12:20-26** – He brought the Greeks to hear the Truth from Jesus
 1. I don't know why Philip went to Andrew and not straight to Jesus
 2. But I know who knew the right thing to do and did it: Andrew
- b. Maybe you are timid. Maybe you are afraid to speak up in a crowd or be the center of attention. Maybe you are more Andrew than Peter. That can be an ASSET. Because the biggest difference makers in the church are rarely those who stand before all, and more often those who will address the one and introduce them to the One who is over all.

2) He Saw the Value of Insignificant Gifts

- a. Sometimes people can see the big picture better if they have the ability to appreciate the small things and how such influence the whole. Andrew had this quality.
 - i. **John 6:4-6** – An issue arises and no solution is obvious to the apostles
 1. Philip sees that they don't have enough money: **John 6:7**
 2. **Matt. 14:15** – All the apostles seemed at a loss
 - a. Although Jesus tells them to handle it – **Matt. 14:16**
 3. **John 6:8-9** – While Andrew knew what the boy had was not going to be enough, he still brought him to Jesus for consideration.
 - a. And the rest is history! – **John 6:11-14**
 - b. What a difference a seemingly insignificant gift made.
- b. What a great point! Sometimes maybe we think too big. People need to wait for some grand gesture to make a difference, especially demonstrative folks. But here humble Andrew ushered in a boy's lunch and thousands were fed. Maybe making a difference is better accomplished by small contributions that God can use to make food for all!

3) He Saw the Value of Inconspicuous Service

- a. Some people won't play ball unless they get to pitch. That was the nature, from time to time, of James and John and even Peter. But not Andrew. He wasn't headlining or getting credit by the crowds. He just quietly and strongly led people to Jesus.
- b. Andrew exemplifies an attitude of humble service Jesus addressed early and often:
 - i. **Mark 9:35-37** – Andrew was likely to take the time to help that one child.
- c. So for those who relate little to Peter, perhaps your quiet strength and concern for one person at a time can find guidance and inspiration in the efforts of Andrew, a faithful Apostle of Jesus our Lord.

Thus far in our study we have examined the lives of two brothers: Peter and Andrew:

- 1) What have you learned about the character and growth of Peter?
- 2) How was Andrew different than his brother? And how did God use that?

Tonight our study focuses in on the Apostle James. There is little written about James as a stand alone character. (He is never mentioned without his brother in the Bible. Even in the text that records his death, the Bible says, "*James, the brother of John... put to death with a sword*" **Ac. 12:2**) However, he and his brother John did some things hand in hand in the gospel that tell us much about James. And the ending of his life indicates how much he grew and matured in the faith over a short period of time.

Let's look at some basic facts about the Apostle James:

- 1) James and John are brothers; 2 of the 4 fisherman apostles; all of whom left their day jobs to follow Jesus on the same day: **Mark 1:17-20**
- 2) James, as well as John and Peter, were among Jesus' inner circle of friends, who were with Him on some unique and important occasions. They certainly learned incredible things about Jesus:
 - a. **Mark 5:37-42** – Jesus raised Jairus' daughter – James' witnessed Jesus' POWER
 - b. **Matt. 17:1-8** – Jesus transfigured on the mountain – James saw His GLORY
 - c. **Mark 13:3-37** – Jesus reveals future events of Jerusalem – Jesus' SOVEREIGNTY
 - d. **Mark 14:33-42** – Jesus prays in the garden of Gethsemane – Jesus' AGONY (**v33-34**)
- 3) James and John were named by Jesus: "*Boanerges, which means, 'Sons of Thunder'*" (**Mk. 3:17**)
 - a. We will see in our study this is a reflection of their personalities and conduct.
- 4) This is NOT the same James who was a Jerusalem elder in the book of Acts (**12:17; 15:13**).
 - a. That particular James is the Lord's half-brother (**Matt. 13:55**)
 - b. Also, he did NOT write the book of James. This was also the Lord's half-brother.
- 5) The Apostle' James' death is recorded in **Acts 12:1-2**. This is only about 44 A.D.
 - a. James is the only Apostle whose death is recorded in Scripture.
 - b. Also, he was the first of the 12 to be martyred for the cause of Christ.

As mentioned above, James and John were called "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus. Most scholars contend this was a reflection of their "thunderous" personalities. Such people are bold and outspoken and intense. However, can also be impatient, overly judgmental, and zealous to a fault.

Certainly Scripture is filled with bold and intense people who did great things for God: **Elijah**, who called down fire from heaven to strike the enemy. **Nehemiah**, who whipped a whole nation into shape to rebuild the city walls. **John the Baptist**, who could call names of the Jews with the best of them (**Matt. 3:7-10**). This kind of zeal is powerful when used in maturity and with wisdom. However, the Scriptures warn of the dangers of zeal without knowledge: **Romans 10:1-3**.

Let's look at two examples that exemplify James' passion, as well as the need to control it:

I. Fire From Heaven – Luke 9:51-56

- 1) Why did the Samaritans not receive Jesus? Hadn't He been kind to them?
 - a. They were often at odds with the Jews; though Jesus had converted many (woman at the well) and used a Samaritan hero in one of His parables. They worshipped on mount Gerizim, near there, and rejected the idea of having to worship in Jerusalem.
- 2) I see the Samaritans are at fault here; but why do James and John jump to such a drastic response? (I mean, why not pray for them, or move on, or maybe rebuke them verbally)
 - a. Certainly they knew the story of Elijah – **II Kings 1:3**
 - i. They served false gods – "Baal-zebul" – **II Ki. 1:2**
 - ii. Elijah told them the king would die – **1:4**

- iii. King sent three groups of 50 to capture Elijah – **1:9-16**
 - 1. But fire was called down from heaven to consume the first two groups!
 - b. **To James, this seemed like a logical judgment upon the Samaritans at this time!**
 - i. Maybe this was the point in time where they got their name.
 - ii. Notice the arrogance in their words: “do you want US to command fire”
- 3) So what knowledge was their zeal missing, as they make this mistake?
- a. Love for truth and hatred of sin is needed. But so is patience and composure and diligence in teaching! After all, Jesus didn’t come to destroy all the sinners but give them a chance to be saved! (**Luke 9:55-56; Luke 19:10; Matt. 20:28; John 3:17; Jn. 12:46-47**)
 - b. Judgment is coming on the last day. This is the time for patient teaching and longsuffering. Wouldn’t you know it? Years later, this people James and John asked to kill... heard the Gospel and believed by the mouth of Philip! (**Acts 8:4-8**)

II. Thrones in the Kingdom – Matthew 20:20-24

James was not only fervent and passionate and zealous, but also overconfident and ambitious to a fault. When you put the three accounts of this event together, it is clear they put their mother up to this question.

- 1) Why would they inquire such of Jesus? (What were they hoping to gain?)
 - a. What did they often argue about? (**Luke 9:46**)
- 2) Jesus asks them a question in His response? Do they understand the question?
 - a. They said, “we are able.” Indicating they do not really get it. Jesus was speaking of agonizing and humiliating death on earth for the sake of God and heaven.
 - b. Ultimately Jesus accepts their call to drink the cup of suffering, but as to glory in heaven, that belongs to the Father! *Great point: Just strive for the goal of service and let God handle the awards and seating arrangements in heaven!* (A point Jesus made right after! – **Matt. 20:24-28**)
 - c. And if James’ death is any indication, he ultimately GOT THE POINT and tempered zeal with maturity and spiritual humility.

“The Son of Thunder had been mentored by Christ, empowered by the Holy Spirit, and shaped by those means into a man whose zeal and ambition were useful instruments in the hands of God for spreading of the kingdom. Still courageous, zealous, and committed to the truth, he had apparently learned to use those qualities for the Lord’s service, rather than for his own self-aggrandizement. And now his strength was so great that when Herod decided it was time to stop the church, James was the first man who had to die. He thus drank the cup Christ gave him to drink. His life was short, but his influence continues to this day.”

History records that James’ testimony bore fruit right up until the moment of his execution. Eusebius, the early church historian, passes on the account of James’ death that came from Clement of Alexandria: [Clement] says that the one who led James to the judgment-seat, when he saw him bearing his testimony, was moved, and confessed that he was himself also a Christian. They were both therefore, he says, led away together; and on the way he begged James to forgive him. And [James], after considering a little, said, ‘Peace be with thee,’ and kissed him. And thus they were both beheaded at the same time.’ Thus in the end, James had learned to be more like Andrew, bringing people to Christ instead of itching to execute them.”

“James is the prototype of the passionate, zealous, front runner who is dynamic, strong, and ambitious. Ultimately, his passions were tempered by sensitivity and grace. Somewhere along the lines he had learned to control his anger, bridle his tongue, redirect his zeal, eliminate his thirst for revenge, and completely lost his selfish ambition. And the Lord used him to do a wonderful work in the early church”

“Such lessons are sometimes hard for a man of James’ passions to learn. But if I had to choose between a man of burning, flaming, passionate, enthusiasm with a potential for failure on the one hand, and a cold compromiser on the other hand, I’ll take the man with passion every time. Such zeal must always be harnessed and tempered with love. But if it is surrendered to the control of the Holy Spirit and blended with patience and longsuffering, such zeal is a marvelous instrument in the hands of God. The life of James offers clear proof of that.” (Twelve Ordinary Men, John McArthur, pg. 93-94)

Thus far we have studied Peter, Andrew and James. John rounds out the group of fisherman and the group who followed Jesus together. John also rounds out the group of three (with Peter and James) who accompanied Jesus to some unique phases of Jesus' ministry (Transfiguration, Raising Jairus' daughter, Garden of Gethsemane).

John was much the same as James in the Gospels: They were both called "sons of thunder;" they both sought to call down fire upon the Samaritans; and they both requested to sit beside Christ's throne in heaven. These boys were bold and outspoken and intense. However, they were also impatient and zealous to a fault at times in their youth. Since we've studied James already, we will focus this study on some specifics concerning John himself.

Facts about the Apostle John:

- 1) He wrote 5 New Testament letters: (The Gospel, in which we see how he views Jesus) (3 Epistles, in which we see how John deals with brethren in the churches) (Revelation, where the immediate future was revealed through visions God sent him)
- 2) Extremely "Black and White" writer, dealing in absolute lines in the sand:
 - a. Gospel includes comparisons: Light/Darkness; Life/Death; Children of God/Satan
 - b. This is clearly seen in the I John Letter:
 - i. **1:6-7; 3:6,9; 4:4-5; 7-8** -- No gray areas. No uncertain terms.
- 3) John outlived all the other Apostles: As mentioned last week, his older brother James was the first to die (44a.d.). However, it is reported that John lived to around 98a.d, and died quite old and frail. It is therefore contended that he wrote the last New Testament books: Gospel of John and Revelation.

Truth was his passion and he seemed to bend over backward not to make it fuzzy. A thunderous personality, in connection with a passion for what is right may have led John to some extreme positions in his youth (see the calling down of fire as an example). Zeal and intolerance can all be useful tools, but only when held and employed in proper balance with other useful character traits. In this lesson, let's examine some areas where John learned that balance and grew to be a strong and fair, passionate and practical leader for the Lord.

I. He Learned the Balance of Truth and Love

- a. John, from the moment we meet him in Scripture, is following what is right
 - i. **John 1:35-36** – first John the Baptist then Jesus the Christ
- b. This stand for right never faded, seeing as how he used the word "Truth" 25 times in his gospel and another 20 times in his epistles. (**3 John 4**)
- c. But the danger here is a passion for truth that overlooks the need for compassion and love
 - i. We are well aware of James and John's recommendation for the Samaritans. Their intentions were good, based on truth, but what did they lack?
 - ii. **Mark 9** – (John's only "stand alone" comment in the Synoptic Gospels)
 1. **V1-9** – The three see Jesus transfigured and are told to keep it under wraps.
 2. **V33-34** – Arguments over greatness ensue.
 3. **V35-37** – Jesus teaches the 12 about true greatness in the kingdom. Jesus introduces the idea that LOVE is going to matter right along side TRUTH
 4. **V38** – John speaks up to say they tried to stop a man from doing works for the Lord because the man was not travelling with the 12. John had the truth, but he had little compassion or understanding for this man whom he did not know.
 5. **V39-41** – Jesus teaches them understanding for the work and efforts of others, not just themselves. Love for Jesus and love for truth binds us together.
- d. **John 13:1-14, 34-35** - Even up until the last night of Jesus' life on earth, He was teaching them the value and importance of love and kindness in service to one another.
- e. *"John was always committed to truth, and there's certainly nothing wrong with that, but it is not enough. Zeal for the truth must be balanced by love for people. Truth without love has no decency; it's just brutality. On the other hand, love without truth has no character; it's just hypocrisy"* (McArthur, p. 106). (Later, love became a HUGE element in John's letters)
- f. This balance between standing in the right and kneeling to love another is something John grasped well later in his life: **II John 1-6**. Such is a balance we need to find and know well.

II. He Learned the Balance of Ambition and Humility

- a. John and James were ambitious beyond their own wisdom in the early days
 - i. **Mark 10:35-40** – It is inappropriate for us to ridicule these two men too heavily. Wouldn't you want to sit in a place of honor with Jesus? But, this drive to be there with Him caused them to overlook and even fail to understand what it took to get there.
 1. They would have to first "drink the cup" of suffering and death. This they did not understand but would become well acquainted with later
 - ii. **10:41-45** – Jesus knew he had a group of men with the drive to do the work, but would they go about it with a servants heart?
- b. This led to much teaching on the subject of tempering ambition with humility
 - i. Whether to the Pharisees (**Luke 14:8-11** – places at the dinner table)
 - ii. Or His own Apostles (**John 13:1-14** – leaving the dinner table to wash feet)
- c. It is clear that John learned this balance well, not only by the way he spent his life serving Jesus and Christians, but by how much of his epistles encouraged God's people caring for one another.
- d. But consider this, for the last two decades or more, John was the last living apostle! He was stationed mainly in Jerusalem, before being exiled late in life. If it was about his own personal goals, he could have been the greatest among God's people for sure. But listen to how he describes himself in the last letter he wrote: (**Rev. 1:9** – "your brother and fellow partaker...")

III. He Learned the Balance of Suffering and Glory

- a. It is not hard to establish that John failed to grasp this relationship during Jesus' ministry
 - i. Note the three part evidence:
 1. **Mark 10:37** - He asked for the glory
 2. **Mark 10:39** – He immediately volunteered to drink the cup (not understanding)
 3. **Mark 14:46-50** – John, along with the others, fled when Jesus was arrested.
- b. It was not the asking for glory that set John up for the fall. After all, Jesus had already told the 12 that they would share in such glory: **Matt. 19:28**. It was a failure to understand at that time that
 - i. Suffering is the price of Glory – **Romans 8:17**
 - ii. Suffering is the prelude to Glory – **I Peter 1:6-7**
 - iii. Suffering is not comparable with Glory – **Romans 8:18**
- c. John learned all these things in the next three days as he watched Jesus show him the way
 - i. **John 18:15** – John was there when Jesus was wrongfully tried and beaten
 - ii. **John 19:26** – John is the only disciple noted to be at the crucifixion
 - iii. **John 21:20-22** – And John walked with Jesus after the resurrection and saw Him ascend!
- d. What a tremendously important balance for God's people to learn? Everyone wants heaven, but who is ready to suffer here and now to get there? Who among us understands that the road to glory is paved with sacrifice?
- e. And as noted above, John saw his brother die, outlived all the apostles, and lived into his old age writing letters and encouraging brethren. He learned to love and serve until death and let God hand out the crowns as He sees fit.
- f. At the end of his life, historian Jerome says in his commentary that though John was frail in his final days and had to be carried into the assembly, one phrase was constantly on his lips: "My little children, love one another." Asked why he always said this, he replied, "It is the Lord's command, and if this alone is done, it is enough."

Maybe we can relate to John's impetuous, even rigid nature when it came to truth. But can we learn to balance truth and love? Perhaps we understand personally the ambition to want to get things done right now, but can we see that humble service makes the greatest progress? And all of us want to be glorified by God, but are we willing to weigh the need to sacrifice for God in order to obtain it? Such things did John learn; and such are recorded and taught so that we can learn them too.

- Review:** 1) Why do you think Jesus chose these twelve men as opposed to Old Testament scholars?
2) How would you describe the personality of Peter?
3) In what way was Andrew, Peter’s brother, incredibly different?
4) James and John were called “sons of Thunder” by Jesus. What might that have been about?
5) What are some of the balances John learned, as is reflected in his 5 letters?

The process of this class is an investigation of the personality of each Apostle, as information is given to us. We want to know what kind of people they were, so that maybe we can see ourselves in them. If they were deeply flawed, we want to be impressed by how far they’ve come. With some of the 12, there is little information given and we use some measure of supposition to fill in the gaps of their personality. Such is a liberty we will take tonight with Philip. But first, a few basic facts:

- a) Philip is a Greek name, meaning “lover of horses.” Since all 12 apostles were Jewish, Philip likely also had a Jewish name, but it is never given. It is possible he came from a “Hellenistic” family.
- b) He was from the same city as Andrew and Peter (**John 1:44**) and it is possible that he and the first four we studied as well as Nathanael and Thomas were all fishermen in that region.
- c) John’s gospel is the only one of the four that records Philip’s words (4 occasions)
- d) Philip is the first one to whom Jesus said, “Follow Me” (**John 1:43**) – 4th overall to follow Him.
- e) Oh, and he is not the Philip from the book of **Acts (ch6-8)**, though he is listed in **Acts 1:13**

We know a few things about Philip, but we also have 4 specific places in John’s gospel where his words are recorded. From those locations, we will find a practical, logical, “by the book” kind of guy. His attention to data and practical conclusions helps him early on, but eventually inhibits his faith.

- I. **A Good Start! – John 1:43-46 – Philip and Nathanael follow Jesus**
 - a. Isn’t it great to see what Good Bible Study can produce? Some good ole fashion faith!
 - b. We will note later that Philip is incredibly practical and limited sometimes by the data in front of him. But here, that data was helping him. He clearly had read the Old Law and studied it to the point of expectation of the Messiah (a point many Jews missed).
 - c. Next week our study will be over Nathanael and we are sure to return to this passage, but take note of Philip. He is limited in understanding, evidenced by meagerly calling Jesus: “the son of Joseph.” But his learning has bore fruit. Study lead him to Jesus!
 - i. *NOTE: We know passages like **Romans 10:17**, but understand, that is not a general principle but an absolute one. The key to progress is Bible study.*
 - d. Also, I like his answer to Nathanael: “Come and see.” Practical, visual, real. And good.
 - i. *It should be said that evangelism to a stranger is hard. But evangelism to a friend should be natural. If you are friends and Jesus is your friend, the connection is easy.*
- II. **An Early Stumble – John 6:1-14 – Jesus Feeds the 5,000+**
 - a. Some scholars suggest Philip was the “bean counter” of the group. Not the fund manager, that was Judas, but the administrator who would have handled scheduling for food and board, etc. There would have been significant costs with 13 men travelling.
 - b. So here, he may already be counting heads thinking, “we can’t feed these people.”
 - i. **6:5-6** – Jesus uses this occasion to test Philip’s faith.
 - ii. **6:7** – Test failed. Philip was limited by his math skills. That is, his pragmatic, see it for what it is, thinking. He saw in terms of physical, not spiritual power.
 - iii. “He knew too much arithmetic to be adventurous” McArthur
 - c. Andrew seems a bit further along here and goes and gets the boy (as we’ve studied).
 - d. *He lost a chance to honor Christ because of his limited sight. What do you see? (II Co. 5:7)*
 - i. *How does our faith need to mature beyond what we see in Philip here?*

III. **A Troubling Hesitation – John 12:20-21 – Greeks Seek to See Jesus**

- a. Not sure how you feel about this exchange, but (once again) in comparison to Andrew, something just doesn't seem full about Philip's faith.
- b. It is difficult to say why the Greeks went to Philip. It could have been God's design for another test. Maybe they went to him because of his Greek name. Or maybe he was the appointment and itinerary administrator for the group. Regardless, they came.
- c. While Andrew is known for connecting folks to Jesus, and Philip did so in the case of Nathanael, Philip routes the group to Andrew and then goes with Andrew to Jesus.
- d. McArthur suggests in his book, "Twelve Ordinary Men" that Philip was liable to adhere to the raw data of "protocols and procedures," Perhaps he had written down the things Jesus had said about the Gospel to the Jews not the Gentiles: (**Matt. 10:5-6; 15:24**). Maybe this move wasn't in the playbook. Maybe he didn't know what to do.
- e. *Lesson: When you don't know what to do. When it is a new relationship or even a stranger. No matter who it is, no matter what the case, if they want to know more about Jesus, take them to Jesus!*

IV. **A Heartbreaking Question – John 14:1-14 – The Upper Room**

- a. This is it. The final night together as Jesus would soon be betrayed. John chapters 13-17 record a single event wherein Jesus dines with the 12 (soon to be 11) one more time.
- b. **14:1-7** – Jesus has used explicit language to teach His unity with the Father. He is going to be with the Father. He is the way to the Father. He has proven this Deity in countless miracles and sermons and acts of love.
- c. **14:8** – *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us."* WHAT? What kind of a statement is that? Well, it is the thinking of a man who wanted MORE evidence. Practical to the end, he was weighing the info and thought a little more would be enough.
- d. **14:9-14** – *"Have I been so long with you, and yet you have not come to know Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; how can you say, 'Show us the Father?'"*
- e. What Jesus had provided was not sufficient for Philip. He was fortunate. Since Jesus had set him aside to be a witness of His resurrection, Philip would see more evidence. But beware of seeking more than has been given! Be mindful of the dangers of an attitude that demands more proofs from a God who has proven so much. In nature, in the Bible, in our own spirit is the evidence of the Godhead and their preeminence. It is enough.

Conclusion: What we know of Philip gives us more examples to avoid that emulate. But he started with a trust in Jesus and slowly it built. You and I have started with that same trust; only, we want to build better and stronger. So, study the word to know the Lord. But believe in His power and His promises, even when it doesn't seem possible. Always default to going straight to Jesus when you need Him or when others are seeking Him. And let's not be the lost soul on judgment who simply needed more evidence to believe! God has provided enough to show the relationship between Father, Son and Holy Spirit and our need to obey Them.

Tradition tells us a better story about Philip's growth after the Gospel record. He was among the first to be martyred for his faith and service to Jesus. By most accounts he was put to death by stoning in the region of Phrygia (Asia Minor), eight years after the martyrdom of James. Before his death, multitudes came to Christ under his preaching.

Maybe we have made his mistakes. Maybe we can identify with his personality. If so, identify with his progress and end result as well. He pressed through physical sight limitations and lived for heaven!

Our study so far has been a series of pairings. We started with two brothers, Peter and Andrew. Both were fishermen and both willfully followed Jesus. The first was impetuous and overly zealous early on, but became strong and bold in faith. The second was reserved and seemed to think things through a little more. He became a strong worker with others on a personal, one on one, basis.

We then studied two more brothers: James and John. Also fishermen from Galilee, they had “thunderous” personalities and sometimes didn’t think their decisions through before speaking or acting. However, they trusted Jesus, learned from Jesus, and gave their lives for His cause.

Our third pairing is Philip and Nathanael. Philip is known for failing tests he should have passed, like in the case of feeding the 5,000 or questioning Jesus in the upper room. He learned from these lapses in faith and carried on the Lord’s work. It appears that Philip and Nathanael were close friends. They may have studied the Old Testament together and certainly knew each other well, even before following Jesus. After all, the first person Philip went to with news of Jesus was Nathanael.

We don’t know much about Nathanael. In fact, all our observations will come from one interaction between he and Jesus in John chapter 1. But he quickly embraces something that it seemed to take Philip a while to secure. While Philip was still asking for evidence on the LAST night with Jesus, Nathanael boldly proclaims who Jesus is on his FIRST day in the presence of the King!

Facts about Nathanael:

- 1) Called “Bartholomew” in all four places the 12 are listed: (Matt 10:2-4; Mark 2:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13). Yet he is called Nathanael in John’s gospel (John 1:45ff; 21:2)
 - a. Bartholomew was his Hebrew sir name, meaning “son of Tolmai”
 - b. Nathanael means “God has given.” His full name would likely be: *Nathanael Bar-Tolmai*
- 2) The only mention of Nathanael (or Bartholomew) outside of the four lists of the Apostles are found in John’s gospel: **John 1 / John 21:2**
- 3) **John 21:2** – Nathanael came from the small town of Cana in Galilee, where Jesus did His first miracle. Cana was very close to Jesus’ own hometown of Nazareth. So Nathanael knew about Nazareth, and perhaps the prejudice we will soon see was bred from his youth.
- 4) Philip and Bartholomew were apparently close friends. Firstly, Philip went straight to him after learning of Jesus (**John 1:43-45**). Secondly, they are always listed together in apostle lists.

Our focus is upon the account of Jesus and Nathanael’s meeting in **John 1:43-51**. Let’s begin by reading the account and make four observations about his progression in faith throughout that day.

I. His Love of Scripture

- a. Notice Philip’s first words to Nathanael. Philip references the Law and Prophets to make him aware of who was here. He didn’t say, “A man who can fix your marriage.” Or “a man who can heal people.” Both are true if needed. But he references Jesus as the one who fulfills Old Testament prophecy.
- b. This is a strong indicator that Nathanael knew the Scriptures. In fact, he was under a fig tree when Philip came. Some commentators suggest students would get outside of their cramped houses and sit under shade trees to read the Scripture. Maybe he was!
- c. Later, note who Nathanael says that Jesus is: “*You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel*” (**1:49**). Where on earth did he get that idea?
 - i. **Psalm 2:10-12** perhaps? - “*the Son.*” **Zephaniah 3:15** – “*King of Israel, the Lord*”
- d. Nathanael created the opportunity to follow the Lord, by regularly and fully studying the Word of God! What a great message! Whatever your faith will be tomorrow, it will grow from study today!

II. His Prejudice

- a. When told of Jesus, Nathanael's first response was: "*Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?*" (1:46). This is nothing short of a prejudicial term.
- b. Possibly Nathanael knew the Messiah was coming out of Bethlehem (Micah 5:2). But instead of saying, "Philip, the Messiah is connected to Jerusalem," he responds harshly.
- c. Cana was not exactly a popular, beautiful town. But Nazareth was considered to be even less respected. It is said to have been a rough town, with a culture that was largely unrefined and uneducated (McArthur 139). "Judeans looked down on all Galileans, but even the Galileans looked down on the Nazarenes."
- d. Nathanael is not the only one to level prejudice against Jesus because of his heritage:
 - i. John 7:52 – against Jesus and Nicodemus (for being a Galilean)
 - ii. Matt. 13:54-57 – Heritage, background, etc.
- e. Prejudice is ugly. It disallows you to see what God is doing because of what you see, or what you think you see. It approaches a situation already deciding that you know the person, you know their limitations and you know what is possible and impossible.
- f. It could have prevented Nathanael from knowing the Lord. But he was invited to "come and see," and he went. We would do well to remember passages like I Corinthians 1:26-27 when we judge others too quickly. Especially when handling the Gospel.

III. His Sincerity of Heart

- a. How do we know his heart was sincere? Jesus said so. Before Nathanael even spoke!
- b. "*Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!*" (1:47).
 - i. I want Jesus to say this about me! It didn't mean he was perfect, nor was David (a man after God's own heart); But he had integrity. He was not a hypocrite. Even in his previous statement, he was being honest.
 1. "*Israelite indeed*" – Not all Israelites were of the nature of Abraham. (Romans 9:6-7) - There was a lot of hypocrisy. But not in Bartholomew.
 - a. Greek word: *alethos* – same as John 8:31 – "my disciples indeed"
 - b. Wisdom would come, but integrity was present.
- c. Our words matter. Our choices matter. But those can take time and knowledge and maturity to develop. But our hearts, our tenderness, pliability, openness, that is what God first looks for, and speaks to here!
- d. I want Jesus to say this to me on the last day: Matt. 25:21,23. But that may depend on whether He can say this about me today! – John 1:47!

IV. His Willing Mind

- a. Nathanael is inquisitive but not convinced, so he asks, "*How do you know me?*" (1:48)
- b. Jesus answers, "*when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.*"
- c. Can you see his brain working? First, he knew to expect a Savior from OT Scripture. Second, the testimony of his friend Philip. Third, Jesus apparent omniscience.
- d. Response: "*Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel!*" (1:49).
- e. Look at what happens when a sincere heart is introduced to evidence of Christ!
- f. Jesus is apparently impressed: (1:50-51). If you believe now, wait until you see the great things to come! Perhaps verse 52 is a reference to His ascension, or more likely just a comparable phrase to the ladder Jacob saw in a dream (Nathanael would know that story). It is heartening to see sincere people see and love the Truth like this.
- g. Christ can build your faith to amazing levels and show you great things, but it starts with the humility, willingness and open mind to accept Him for who He is proven to be.

Conclusion: Little else is known of Nathanael. Some early writers say he preached in Persia and India, and nothing is proven about his death. But it is no wonder John tells his story. We are told in John 20:30-31 about why John wrote the letter. Bartholomew is that mission personified!

11 of the 12 disciples (excluding Judas Iscariot) were from Galilee, a people most Judeans looked down upon. They were not elite, religious leaders, but common and ordinary men. In addition, these men were spiritually unrefined and some of them deeply flawed. Maybe they were flawed by their personality tendencies, or prejudice history, or impetuous spirits; but the more we see about how ordinary these men are, the more we appreciate what Jesus came to do. Jesus came to find an imperfect people who knew they didn't have all the answers. He came to introduce a better life to folks, if they would believe in a greater authority. These men's transformations from mistake ridden to lives given are inspirational. They represent us, on a journey from one kind of person to another. And it is Jesus, in His patience and wisdom, who can get us to our destination.

This is no more clearly seen than in the case of **Matthew and Thomas**. They have been called "The Publican" and "The Pessimist." These two guys had issues. Issues that would have caused many to flee from them, yet Jesus was drawn to them. He saw hearts that could humbly learn, and He saw the potential in them to become faithful and committed servants of the kingdom!

I. Matthew – The Tax Collector

- a. Information on Matthew is sparse at best. He is sometimes called Levi (**Mk. 2:14; Luke 5:27-29**). Regardless, he only mentions his own name twice in his Gospel and the day he followed Jesus is the only individual instance we have recorded from his life.
- b. (**Matt. 9:9a**) - A Publican was considered the most despicable, vile and unprincipled of professions in that time. I mean it was prostitute then publican, in terms of bottom rungs of the social ladder. Tax collectors bought the right from the Roman government, and Jewish collectors were among the rankest of the rank to fellow Jews. Likely he was a religious outcast and forbidden even to enter the temple.
 - i. It cannot be confirmed that Matthew was previously dishonest, but his association to this profession doesn't give much hope. Called "Little Mokhes," the toll-collecting and sales taxing publicans who gathered funds in their booths were nearly always associated with dishonesty.
 - ii. Needless to say, no Pharisee would have EVER approached Matthew. But Jesus saw something in him. Jesus approached him and said, "**Follow Me.**"
- c. (**Matthew 9:9b**) – "*And he got up and followed Him.*" Who'da thunk it? This presumably money hungry, materialistic man, just got up and walked away from it to follow Jesus. No doubt he knew of the things Jesus had done, but then again, so did the Pharisees and they weren't following Jesus.
 - i. Maybe he was tired of being an outcast. Maybe money wasn't buying happiness. Maybe Jesus miracles cued him in on greater things than... things. For whatever reason, Matthew, from that moment on, left that business behind for Jesus.
- d. Immediately following this, Matthew threw a party at his own house and invited "tax collectors and sinners," so that they too might come to know Jesus. Why such a motley crew? Simple, those were the folks Matthew knew. He needed to repent and so did they. So he invited them. This story is recorded in three Gospels and we get something unique from each record:
 - i. (**Mark 2:14-17**) – Note, Matthew didn't have to invite too many. Tax collectors and sinners were already starting to follow Jesus. Jesus came to get the attention of lost sinners to humble them and heal them from their sin.
 - ii. (**Luke 5:27-32**) – Same story, but added words "*sinners to repentance.*" Let's get this straight, sinners followed Jesus but Jesus was going to demand they change their lives. They were humble enough to listen, to change. The kingdom is for those who will listen and repent, not for those who think they are right already.
 - iii. (**Matthew 9:9-13**) – "*I Desire Compassion and Not Sacrifice*" – This is point the Pharisees were missing. Jesus said this same thing in **Matthew 12**. God is reading hearts and while the Pharisees were doing many of the right things, they lacked compassion and mercy for their fellow man. This is why they accused Jesus disciples in Matthew 12 and why they are questioning Jesus mercy here.

- e. The Pharisees wanted to be justified above all others. Jesus came to find those who knew they were not justified, so that He may justify them through Him!
- f. Interesting, there are 3 stories in the Gospels pertaining to Tax Collectors. And in all of the cases, they humbly turned to Jesus!
 - i. Matthew – **Matthew 9:9**
 - ii. The Publican – **Luke 18:10-14**
 - iii. Zaccheus – **Luke 19:2-10**
- g. The point. Anyway, from any background, can be saved in Jesus. It doesn't matter what others think of you or what you've done. All who know they are sinners and turn to Jesus in faith and penitence and obedience will be saved! (**I Corinthians 6:9-11**)
- h. As for Matthew, little else is recorded. It is believed he preached in and around Jerusalem and possibly gave his life for Christ, being burned at the stake.

II. Thomas – The Slight Pessimist

- a. Thomas is most often called “doubting Thomas,” which is a bit of a bad wrap, in the sense that all the apostles carried the same doubts. But the few stories we have about him may indicate that he was a bit of a pessimist. You know, always negative, a worry-wart, seeing the bad side of things, glass half empty kind of guy.
 - i. *This lesson is less about coining him a pessimist and more about seeing how Jesus works with all people, no matter their problem, and can use anyone in His service!*
- b. Thomas was also called “Didymus” which means “the twin.” (**John 11:16**). We know nothing about his twin, but it is worth noting his connection to this term.
- c. Like Nathanael, we get no specific information about Thomas from the synoptic gospels. Everything we know about him comes from John's gospel. We have record of him making three statements. It is from these we perceive a pessimistic demeanor
 - i. (**John 11:8-16**) – Going back to Judea at this time was very dangerous. But Jesus wasn't hiding anything and He wasn't about to let Lazarus stay in the tomb. Thomas speaks nobly and boldly here: *“Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.”* This is quite heroic and a testament to his faith. But, the language is a bit negative isn't it? Jesus didn't say anything about dying, but that He was going to raise someone. Thomas did not sin, but seems to be expecting the worst.
 - ii. (**John 14:1-7**) – Jesus is describing that He would prepare a place in heaven for His Apostles. Thomas doesn't understand, but instead of saying, “Lead us there and we will follow,” he says, *“Lord, we do not know where you are going, how do we know the way?”* It's like he is saying, “Oh so you are leaving and we don't know where you are going. We'll never get there now.” Not a lack of faith, but a lack of good old fashion optimism, hope and trust that Jesus will lead you home!
 - iii. (**John 20:19-29**) – For whatever reason, Thomas was not there when the rest were fearfully cowering in a locked room and when Jesus showed them his wounds. Eight days later He is with them again and Thomas for the first time. He knew that Thomas had said, *“Unless I see in His hand the imprint of the nails, and put my finger into the place of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe.”* Where's the hope?! Where's the excitement of a good report, the acceptance of eyewitnesses?
 - 1. Well, could just be more of Thomas seeing the whole thing as a glass half empty, and full of doubt. It may have just been his nature.
 - 2. However, upon seeing the proof he is responsible for one of the best lines in all the gospels: *“My Lord and My God!”* Thomas affirmed the Deity of Jesus!
 - 3. Thomas moved past these hiccup and lived his life in faith and likely preached out his life in the India region until being martyred by a spear.
 - 4. But Jesus said, *“Blessed are those who did not see and yet believe.”* Maybe in part Jesus is saying, “Blessed are the optimists, the positive, the hopeful, the faithful!”

Once again, the message in these two men is to see whom Jesus chose, whom He worked with, and what He was able to develop them into. They had enough faith to press beyond occupation, culture and tendencies. Surely anyone from anywhere can find salvation in Jesus!

“And when day came, He called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles; ... **James of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; Judas the son of James,** and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor” (**Luke 6:13-16**).

If we knew nothing at all about these three men, or the entire 12, for that matter, the fact that they had all left everything to follow Jesus might be enough (**Luke 18:28**). If none of their character traits, tendencies or personalities were shared with us, we would still know that Christ selected them out of a group of followers, gave them power to work miracles in His name, and they became the heralds of truth on Pentecost on the day the kingdom began (**Acts 2:14**).

As it comes to these three apostles, that information is about all we have. What we know of them would be seen in passages that deal with the Apostles acting as a group. For instance, we know they all had miraculous powers in the gospels (**Matt. 10:1**). However, they all doubted Jesus after His resurrection (**Mark 16:14**). Ultimately, they all, (excluding Judas Iscariot), worshipped the risen Savior, accepting the commission to give their lives preaching heaven’s message (**Matt. 28:18-20**).

James the son of Alphaeus

The Bible mentions several men named James. It was very common. We have already studied James the son of Zebedee. He was John’s brother. We also know quite a bit about James, the Lord’s half brother (**Gal. 1:19**). He was in the Jerusalem meeting of Acts 15 and likely wrote the book of James.

As to our James, there are a few interesting things we may know about his lineage and family.

- His mother was at Christ’s crucifixion and the empty tomb on Sunday – **Mk. 15:40;16:1**
- It is possible that Matthew was his brother. Both sons of Alphaeus – **Mk. 2:14**
- Also could be Jesus’ fleshly cousin, if both Mary’s were sisters – **Mk. 15:40; John 19:25**

Other than passing references, James is utterly obscure. Even his nickname reflects lack of prominence: **James the Less** – (**Mark 15:40**). The Greek word is *mikros*, which literally meant “little.” Primary meaning is “small in stature.” But can also speak of “young in age.” Since there were two James in the group, it could reflect that he was the younger of the two. Some scholars suggest it had to do with a lack of prominence, since James and John were prominent figures.

I like this nickname because it reminds us that you don’t always have to be the big guy, the big name, the prominent figure, or the most well-known person to be extremely valuable to Jesus. He may not have spoken up or spoken out as much as others (no such references in the Bible), but that background quietness did NOT reflect a lack of faith or commitment. He too stood with Peter on Pentecost. And some evidence suggests he carried the gospel to Syria and Persia, until his life was taken from him (perhaps by stones or clubs) as he laid it all on the line for the Gospel’s sake.

Simon the Zealot

While the word “zealous” can have a positive connotation, sadly that is not the case here. The word Zealot, even today means, “a person who is fanatical and uncompromising in pursuit of their religious, political, or other ideals.” It is associated with being overly and overtly zealous. For the sake of being thorough, note that he is also called “Simon the Cananite” (**Matt. 10:4; Mk. 3:18**) in some versions, which does not mean he was a Canaanite, but has a root meaning: “zealous.”

The Zealots were a Jewish political party. “They hated the Romans and their goal was to overthrow Roman occupation. They advanced their agenda primarily through terrorism and acts of violence” (McArthur 175). “The Zealots were extremists in every sense. They were militant, violent outlaws.”

In fact, one of their most prominent leaders is mentioned in Scripture: Judas of Galilee (**Acts 5:37**). According to Josephus, in A.D. 70, when Rome was invading Jerusalem, he was killing his own Jewish people if they sought to negotiate with Rome.

So here is Simon, taught to be militant and to establish Jewish reign over Rome at all costs. When he first joined Jesus, he probably believed Jesus was going to set up His rule over Rome and all nations, as he ruled from Jerusalem. Interesting, he and Matthew were from opposite backgrounds. Matthew actually gathered tax money for Rome. "In another life" Simon may have sought to kill Matthew.

*What an amazing choice for Jesus to ask this man to follow Him. But there lies our lesson and our encouragement. People with passion and zeal have often wasted it on the wrong targets, or scorned it with the wrong emotions or actions. Jesus doesn't seek to rob us of that zeal, but refine and redirect it to the spiritual kingdom, and defeated the government of Satan in peoples' lives! (**Romans 10:1-4**)*

Judas, son of James

This man is noted more for who he was not than for who he was. "Judas (not Iscariot)" – **John 14:22**. He is sometimes called the apostle with three names. He is most often called James, which means "Jehovah leads." But in the KJV, **Matthew 10:3** lists him: "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus." In fact, when kids learn to list the apostle, we call him Thaddaeus. Lebbaeus literally means "breast child." While Thaddaeus means "heart child." It is certainly possible these were names he went by because they reflected something about his character; perhaps a tender, child-like heart.

John 14:21-24 – This tender-hearted sincerity and humility might be seen in the only place in the gospel where Judas' speaks. "Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself us and not to the world?" Likely a question bred from not understanding the nature of the kingdom, but he doesn't say something brash, nor does he rebuke the Lord. Is he expressing his disbelief that Jesus would disclose Himself to these ragtag 11, but not the whole world? Either way, Jesus accepts the question and answers it beautifully. Jesus is with all who love and obey.

Perhaps humble amazement that Jesus would have a relationship with us is healthy for our faith. He loves us in all His greatness if we but love and obey Him. That is overwhelming to realize. Judas had that faith. Early writers teach that Lebbaeus Thaddaeus took the gospel north, to Edessa of Mesopotamis. In fact, several accounts record him healing Abgar, the king of Edessa. It is most often believed that he was clubbed to death for Christ's sake in that region.

"Thus this tender-hearted soul followed his Lord faithfully to the end. His testimony was as powerful and as far-reaching as that of the better-known and more outspoken disciples. He, like them, is proof of how God uses perfectly ordinary people in remarkable ways" (McArthur 180).

“The most notorious and universally scorned of all the disciples is Judas Iscariot, the betrayer. His name appears last in every biblical list of apostles, except for the list in Acts 1, where it doesn’t appear at all. Every time Judas is mentioned in Scripture, we also find a notation about his being a traitor. He is the most colossal failure in all of human history. He committed the most horrible, heinous act of any individual, ever. He betrayed the perfect, sinless, holy Son of God for a handful of money. His dark story is a poignant example of the depths to which the human heart is capable of sinking. He spent three years with Jesus Christ, but for all that time his heart was only growing hard and hateful” (McArthur pg. 181)

“The New Testament tells us plainly about Judas – enough to accomplish two things: First, the life of Judas reminds us that it is possible to be near Christ and associate with Him closely (but superficially) and yet become utterly hardened in sin. Second, Judas reminds us that no matter how sinful a person may be, no matter what treachery he or she may attempt against God, the purpose of God cannot be thwarted.”

- I. **His Name** -- Judas Iscariot
 - a. Judas is from *Judah*, which means “Jehovah leads.” This indicates a faith in God by his parents, but of course builds the irony, as he was eventually led by Satan against Jehovah
 - b. His surname, *Iscariot*, signifies the region he was from: “ish” being man and Kerioth referencing a town south of Judea. He was apparently the only apostle who did not come from Galilee.
 - c. We know he was a master manipulator of men, as his fellow apostles didn’t know of his treachery, even when it was revealed before them. But the fact that Judas likely had little connection to them, coming in as an outsider, may have aided his efforts.
 - d. Ex) He was able to pilfer funds (**John 12:6**) with no one close enough to him to notice.
- II. **His Choosing** – He both chooses Jesus and is chosen by Jesus
 - a. Judas freely chose to follow Jesus. He too left everything to do so. (**Lu 18:28**)
 - b. In fact, he choose to stick with Jesus when many others abandoned Him (**Jn. 6:66-71**)
 - c. But why? Consider this. He most likely envisioned a physical kingdom. Jesus would rule, Romans would be driven out, Jews would fall in line, Judas, being an apostle, would have power and riches and honor beside the throne. He clearly had a love for riches, as his story makes clear, and Jesus was a perfect (miracle working) person to deliver it.
 - d. But also note that Jesus chose Judas. (**Luke 6:12-16**). Why did He choose Judas?
 - i. We could say it was to give Judas a chance to change. Or to exhibit Jesus great love and mercy and hope, even for those whose hearts are carnal.
 - ii. But the most substantiated answer would be: *Fulfillment of O.T. prophecy*
 1. **John 13:18** – Jesus quotes **Psalm 41:9**
 2. **Matthew 27:7-10** – Matthew quotes **Zechariah 11:12-13**
 - e. As noted earlier, this proves that no plan of God can be thwarted, only fulfilled. Even the sinfulness of men only illuminates the love and sacrifice of God and nothing is outside of his view or strong enough to stop the redemptive plan of Jesus!
- III. **His Disillusionment** – Expectation of a material, earthly kingdom led to his downfall.
 - a. **Matt. 19:27** – Peter said it, but all were thinking it. When do we get spoils of victory?
 - i. But men like Peter and Andrew learned and embraced the true nature of the spiritual kingdom (evidence by their letters). Judas did not.
 - b. Likely his disappointment and thoughts of how to get some money out of his investment in Jesus started earlier than we might think. (**John 6:70-71**) – Pretty early on Jesus calls him “a devil.”
 - c. We’ve already seen that he was pilfering the treasury (**John 12:6**), and this was likely well before the betrayal. He is in it for the wrong reasons, and with wrong expectations.

- IV. His Greed** – He is the sad and unfortunate poster-child for **I Timothy 6:10**
- a. Greed skews everything. It seeps into every event, every interaction, it becomes an idol in and of itself. Everything is seen in light of how it may be fed.... A sad sin to carry.
 - b. **John 12:2-8** – Here is an extravagant action of sacrifice and love for Jesus, and Judas chimes in cleverly, using the poor as part of his argument. Yet John, now guided by the Holy Spirit’s will, writes that his true motives were selfish.
 - i. Jesus chose to rebuke him mildly in this passage, whereas in other places He rebukes others like Peter much more strongly. Why? Maybe Jesus knew why Judas was there and what was in his heart and it just wouldn’t change him.
 - c. Certainly Judas was too blinded to receive the rebuke. For in **Matthew 26:14-16**, we see immediately following this event, he goes to the chief priests. For Judas, who did not appreciate the direction all this “kingdom” talk was heading, it was time to cut his loses and register some fiscal gain!
- V. His Hypocrisy** – Having already taken the money, he gathers with the disciples and Jesus
- a. **John 13:1-2** – Can you imagine this? Nobody, except Jesus, knows what he has done. And Judas sits in with them like nothing has happened. The world’s worst sinner is also the world’s biggest hypocrite. (A word which comes from the Greek for ACTOR!)
 - i. **V10-11,18-19,21** – Jesus starts to bring the truth to the surface before the 12
 - ii. **V23-25** – And no one had any idea who he was speaking off.
 - iii. Even looking to themselves: (**Matt. 26:22**). Judah hypocritically chimes in (**v25**)
 - b. **John 13:23-30** – Judas is exposed and leaves, though the apostles still don’t understand
 - c. The dangers of hypocrisy lie in their immediate benefits and appearance of success. Based on the other apostles, Judas was masterful. But to the all-seeing eye of Christ, he was sinful and never once fooled the Messiah, not even early on. (**John 6:70-71**)
 - d. *It is likely that Jesus causes Judas to leave BEFORE the Lord’s Supper is instituted. Not surprisingly, however. Jesus is pure and sinless and it is a communion with His disciples, not the devil and not Judas! Even now, (I Cor. 11:27-32), it is for those who examine themselves and find themselves to be faithful children of God, lets they be judged.*
- VI. His Betrayal** – A premeditated and planned event against the Son of God
- a. There is no telling how long he had planned to do it, but we know why he waited so long:
 - i. **Luke 22:6** – Cowardice. He looked for a small crowd situation, likely to protect his own skin. Certainly visible in the hundreds of soldier who came with him.
 - b. **John 18:1-5** – Judas chose the ideal place, knowing where Jesus would be
 - i. Reminds me of Daniel, who the enemies knew would pray in the window.
 - c. **Mark 14:44-45** – A prearranged signal was set: to kiss the Christ.
 - i. He called Him teacher and kissed Him.
 - ii. Interesting that Jesus called Judas “friend” – **Matt. 26:50**
 - d. *Jesus had done nothing but good and loving things for Judas, and yet it was rewarded by the kiss of betrayal, treachery and death. It should stir within us all the desire to be humble, honest and holy so as to never follow in Judas’ steps of turning against Jesus!*
- VII. His Death** – Judas feels the remorse of such a heinous act of selfishness and hate
- a. **Matt. 27:1-4** – There is a difference between remorse and repentance. Repentance acknowledges sin and seeks to make things right by turning to God. Remorse feels terrible about sin because it does not bring satisfaction, but extreme guilt. Remorse is needful, but amounts to little without a penitent heart!
 - b. **Matt. 27:5** – Instead of turning to God, he turned to despair and hanged himself.
 - c. **Acts 1:18** – Luke records his shameful and humiliating end.
 - d. Jesus chilling words sum it all up: *“It would have been good for that man if he had never been born” (Mark 14:21)*. Whatever it takes, we must not follow the example of Judas.

“Let his homesteads be made desolate, and let no one dwell in it”; and, ‘Let another man take his office’”
Psalm 69:25; Psalm 109:8; Acts 1:20. It was prophesied through the Psalmist David that Judas would betray Jesus, and also that another would be selected to carry on his mission.

Matthias is only mentioned twice in Scripture, and both references are in Acts 1. We know little about his individual actions as “one sent” by Christ to teach the Gospel. However, his story still has merit for us. Firstly, his selection helps us see exactly WHO can become an apostle:

Who can be an Apostle of Jesus Christ? (Acts 1:21-26)

- 1) *An Apostle must have witnessed Jesus Alive (1:21-22)*
 - a. This eliminates anyone who lived after the life of Jesus.
 - b. This helps us see what the Apostles did that we cannot do: testify of their witness.
- 2) *An Apostle must have witnessed Jesus Alive Again (1:22)*
 - a. These men were witnesses of the empty tomb: the strongest evidence for Jesus
 - b. They did not report on what they heard, but on what they saw with their own eyes.
- 3) *An Apostle must be selected by God (1:23-26)*
 - a. Casting, or drawing lots, was a common Jewish practice: **Lev. 16:8; Neh. 10:34; 11:1.**
 - b. This allowed them to support the one *“You had chosen to occupy this ministry.”*

What do we know about Matthias before his selection?

- 1) *We know he was with Jesus for most of His ministry – Acts 1:21-23.*
 - a. So he was just as qualified as the others to testify of Jesus’ teachings.
- 2) *He was likely among the “70” Jesus sent out - Luke 10:1-12.*
 - a. He likely had experience with the miraculous workings of the Holy Spirit.
- 3) *He was still faithful to Christ after His death and resurrection and among 120 – Acts 1:15.*
 - a. Some scattered. Some gave up. Matthias was in Jerusalem after with the Apostles.

So Matthias was with Jesus for years, likely working miracles, and accompanied the Apostles all throughout the Gospels. Yet, his name is never mentioned. I like this fact. The mission of following Jesus is not about name recognition, or being elevated to certain roles. When the 12 were arguing every week about who was the greatest, Matthias was in the shadows of anonymity, just following Jesus. He likely could have stayed there until his death with no issues.

But God had other plans. God took this man, who had labored well and quietly for so long, and elevated him into a position of public visibility and leadership. This was not necessary to validate his discipleship. (After all, Barsabbas is no less a Christian though he was not chosen). But last of all the Apostles to the Jews, Matthias was selected to inspire disciples and lead the lost to Christ.

While we cannot track the specific actions of Matthias in the early years of the church, we can track his actions as part of “the Apostles,” specifically in Acts chapters 1-12, *“both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria”* **Acts 1:8.** For the amount of class sessions we have remaining this quarter, we will work our way through these chapters examining how Christ used these men to help establish His Church.