

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## Introduction

### Luke 6:13-16

*And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.*

- The lives of the twelve apostles are fascinating.
- The personality types of these men are just like us, and they are like other people we know.
- They were approachable.
- Their faults, as well as their triumphs and endearing features are chronicled for us.
- They too were prone to mistakes, misstatements, wrong attitudes, lapses of faith, and failure.
- They spanned the political spectrum.
  1. A former Zealot - a radical determined to overthrow Roman rule.
  2. A tax collector - considered a traitor by the Jews.
  3. At least four were fishermen.
  4. Others might have been tradesmen or craftsmen.
- With all of their faults and flaws, these men carried on the work of Jesus after His ascension.

## Jesus Knew Them

- He knew them as only their Creator could know them. **John 1:48-50**
- He knew all of their shortcomings but selected them anyway.
- He even knew Judas would betray Him, and yet chose him and gave him all the same privileges and blessings He gave the others. **John 6:70; 13:21-27**
- From our human perspective, the founding of the church hinged entirely on twelve men.
  1. They were chosen and trained in a matter of months, not years.
  2. He had to teach them the Scriptures and theology.
  3. He spoke to them of things to come.
  4. He employed them as instruments to heal the sick and do other miraculous works.
- By the time Jesus identified and called the Twelve from the larger group of followers, half of His earthly ministry was already over.
  1. These few men of mundane backgrounds had little more than eighteen months of training.
  2. Christ knew that the ultimate success actually depended on the Holy Spirit working in those men.

### John 1:48-50

*Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these.*

**I Cor 1:27-29**  
*But God hath chosen the foolish things of the world to confound the wise; and God hath chosen the weak things of the world to confound the things which are mighty; And base things of the world, and things which are despised, hath God chosen, yea, and things which are not, to bring to nought things that are: That no flesh should glory in his presence.*

- The training program at one point looked like a monumental failure.
  1. It seemed like the disciples forgot everything they were taught.
  2. Their own sense of failure was so profound they went back to their old vocations.

## *Why Study the Disciples?*

- The disciples were merely instruments in the hands of God, just as you and I can be God's instruments today.
- **I Corinthians 1:27-29**
- Two thousand years later, Christianity is a testimony to the wisdom and power of His divine plan.
- The disciples are fitting heroes and role models for us, despite their shortcomings.
- To study their lives is to get to know the men who were closest to Christ during His earthly life.
- The disciples had four different stages in their calling.
  1. Call to salvation
  2. Call to servanthood and ministry
  3. Call to apostleship
  4. Call to martyrdom

---

All beginnings are more or less obscure in appearance, but none were more obscure than those of Christianity.

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## *The Strategy*

**Luke 6:13-16**  
*And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.*

- Christ's strategy hinged on the twelve disciples rather than on the clamoring multitudes.
  1. His plan typified the character of the kingdom itself.
  2. A dozen men under the power of the Holy Spirit are a more potent force than the teeming masses.
  3. **Zechariah 4:6**
  4. He chose them before they chose Him.  
**John 15:16**
- The process of choosing and calling them happened in distinct stages.
  1. Phase one: a call to conversion
    - a. Salvation comes first for disciples.
    - b. They remained at their jobs.
    - c. Followed Christ's teachings
  2. Phase two: a call to ministry
    - a. Followed the miracle of full nets
    - b. They immediately left their nets.
    - c. Inseparable from this point on
  3. Phase three: a call to apostleship
    - a. This was a concentration on the twelve.
    - b. They were performing works and checking back with Jesus.

4. Phase four: a call to martyrdom
  - a. All but John and Judas were killed for their testimony.
  - b. Despite the obstacles they faced, they triumphed.
  - c. Against all odds they entered victorious into glory.

## *The Timing*

- Luke writes in **6:12** the phrase, "And it came to pass in those days..."
- "In those days" refers back to the immediately preceding account.
  1. Christ faced vicious opposition, and we are introduced to Jesus' adversaries in **Lk 5:17**.
  2. He was opposed for healing a paralytic, eating with sinners, plucking grain on the Sabbath, and healing a man on the Sabbath.
  3. The conflict reached a high point in **Lk 6:11**.
- The religious leaders wanted to destroy Jesus, and it was at this precise point that Jesus picked the twelve.
- The focus of Christ's ministry turned from the multitudes to the few.
  1. He did not choose a single rabbi, scribe, Pharisee, Sadducee or priest.
  2. The choosing of the twelve was a judgment against institutionalized Judaism.
  3. **John 1:11**
- The rejection of Him was complete, and they were hostile to His gospel.
- They despised His doctrine of grace and disdained the forgiveness He offered.
- The reality of Christ's impending death was very evident when He picked the disciples.

**Luke 6:12**  
*And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.*

**Luke 5:17**  
*And it came to pass on a certain day, as he was teaching, that there were Pharisees and doctors of the law sitting by, which were come out of every town of Galilee, and Judaea, and Jerusalem: and the power of the Lord was present to heal them.*

**John 1:11**  
*But as many as received him, to them gave he power to become the sons of God, even to them that believe on his name:*

**Luke 6:13**  
*And when it was  
 day, he called unto  
 him his disciples:  
 and of them he  
 chose twelve,  
 whom also he  
 named apostles;*

- **Luke 6:12b** tells us He first went into a mountain to pray, and He prayed all night.
  1. The phrase “continued all night” is the Greek word *dianuktereuo*.
  2. It speaks of enduring or toiling through a task the whole night long.
- He prayed for the men He would soon appoint and wanted His Father’s wisdom.
- The number twelve was filled with symbolic importance.
  1. There were twelve tribes in Israel.
  2. Jesus was in effect appointing new leadership for the new Way.
  3. The old system was based on physical *descent* from Abraham rather than the *faith* of Abraham.
- **Luke 6:13** says He named them apostles.
  1. The Greek verb *apostello* means to send out.
  2. The Greek word for messenger is *angelos*, but apostle means more than a carrier or herald; it conveys the idea of an ambassador or representative.

### Lists of the Twelve Apostles in the New Testament

Mat 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13, 26
Peter	Peter	Peter	Peter
Andrew (his brother)	James	Andrew	James
James (Zebedee)	John	James	John
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James (Alphaeus)	James	James	James
Lebbeus (Thaddeus)	Thaddeus	Simon (Zelotes)	Simon Zelotes
Simon (Canaanite)	Simon	Judas (brother of James)	Judas
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## *Simon (aka Peter)*

### **Matt 16:17**

*And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven.*

- Simon was a common name and there are at least seven Simons in the Gospel records.
  1. Two were among the twelve.
  2. Jesus' half brother
  3. Judas Isariot's father
  4. Jesus went to the home of one that was a leper.
  5. A Pharisee hosted Jesus for a meal.
  6. Simon the Cyrene carried Jesus' cross.
- Simon Peter's full name at birth was Simon Bar-Jonah, meaning "Simon, son of Jonah." **Mt 16:17**
- In **Luke 6:14** Jesus didn't merely give him a new name; He *also* named him Peter.
  1. "Peter" was sort of a nickname meaning "Rock."
  2. The Greek word used is *Petros*, and is the equivalent for "a piece of rock, a stone."
- By nature Simon was brash and undependable.
  1. Jesus gave him a name to be a reminder to him about who he *should* be.
  2. If He called him Simon, He was signaling him that he was acting like his old self.
  3. If He called him Rock, He was commending him for acting the way he ought to act.

### **Luke 6:14**

*Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,*

- There are two distinct contexts in which the name Simon is applied to him.
  1. Secular context
    - a. Simon's house **Mk 1:29**
    - b. Simon's wife's mother **Mk 1:30**
    - c. The fishing business **Lk 5:3, 10**
    - d. The use of Simon in this context has nothing to do with his spirituality or character.
  2. Spiritual context
    - a. When Jesus foretold his betrayal **Lk 22:31**
    - b. Found sleeping in the garden **Mk 14:37**
    - c. Three times when Jesus asked if he loved him. **Jn 21:15-17**
    - d. The use of Simon in this context is when he is acting like his unregenerate self.
- Peter was just like us. He succumbed to the habits of the flesh sometimes, and functioned in the spirit other times.

## *Family Life*

- Peter and his brother, Andrew, were heirs to a family fishing business.
- Three types of fish were caught in Jesus' day.
  1. The "small fish" mentioned in **Jn 6:9** are sardines.
  2. *Barbels*, a kind of carp, is the type mentioned in **Mt 17:27**.
  3. The most common commercial fish were the *musht*, and are known today as "St. Peter's Fish."

### **Luke 22:31**

*And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:*

### **Mark 14:37**

*And he cometh, and findeth them sleeping, and saith unto Peter, Simon, sleepest thou? couldest not thou watch one hour?*

### **Matt 17:27**

*Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee.*

**Luke 4:38**

*And he arose out of the synagogue, and entered into Simon's house. And Simon's wife's mother was taken with a great fever; and they besought him for her.*

**Matt 10:2**

*Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;*

**Matt 16:22**

*Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, Be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee.*

- We can gather from **Luke 4:38** that Peter had a wife.
  1. Some believe Paul suggests in **I Cor 9:5** that Peter took her on his apostolic mission.
  2. This may indicate they either had no children or their children were grown.

## *He Was The Leader*

- Peter is the first name listed in all four of the disciple listings.
- **Matthew 10:2** makes the statement, "The first, Simon, who is called Peter."
  1. The word translated "first" is the Greek term *protos*.
  2. It doesn't refer to the first in a listing, but rather speaks of the chief or leader of a group.
- Peter is often in the foreground acting as the spokesman for the group.
- When we look at Peter, we see how God builds a leader.
  1. No one is spoken to by the Lord as often as Peter.
  2. No disciple is rebuked as frequently as Peter.
  3. No other disciple other than Peter rebuked Christ. **Mt 16:22**
  4. No other disciple forcefully or publically denied Christ like Peter.
- God took a common man with an unsubmissive and impulsive spirit and shaped him into a rock-like preacher.
- Peter learned from his mistakes, and his character was transformed to the man Christ wanted him to be.

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

**John 1:38-40**

*Then Jesus turned, and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi, (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see. They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother.*

## Andrew

- Andrew, Peter's brother, is the least known of the four apostles in the lead group.
- He was not a part of the inner circle; however, he was featured with them at key times.
- He was the first disciple to be called. **Jn 1:35-40**
  1. He was responsible for introducing Peter to Christ. **Jn 1:41-42**
  2. His eagerness to follow typifies his character.
- Peter and Andrew were from the village of Bethsaida in northern Galilee.
- They both were probably lifelong companions with James and John. (Sons of Zebedee)
  1. The four likely took a break from fishing to see John the Baptist.
  2. Heard him preach and became disciples first of John and later, Christ
- Andrew's name appears only nine times in the New Testament and mostly only in passing.
  1. He lived in the shadow of his brother.
  2. Many times he is simply identified as being Peter's brother.
  3. We have no evidence of resentment or sibling rivalry in Andrew.

## Heart for Service

- Scripture seems to reveal that Andrew had the right heart for effectiveness.
  1. Never sought to be center of attention
  2. Did not resent those in the limelight
  3. Pleased to do what he could with the gifts and calling God gave him
- He was very thoughtful in what he did.
  1. He always seemed to say the right thing.
  2. The Scripture never attaches dishonor to him when he is mentioned by name.
- Andrew's name means "manly."
  1. The fishing trade required physical strength.
  2. He lived up to his name by having a passion for truth, and a will to endure extreme hardship.
  3. He had joined the ranks of John the Baptist; and to follow John, one could not be soft.

**John 1:41-42**

*He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone.*

## Heart for Soulwinning

- Andrew appreciated the value of a single soul.
  1. He is known for bringing individuals, not great crowds, to Christ.
  2. The most effective evangelism usually takes place on a personal level.
  3. When a soul gets saved through the result of a sermon, it is usually because an individual invited him to church.

**John 6:6**

*When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip,*

*Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?*

*Joh 6:6 And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do.*

**Matt 14:15**

*And when it was evening, his disciples came to him, saying, This is a desert place, and the time is now past; send the multitude away, that they may go into the villages, and buy themselves victuals.*

- Both Andrew and Peter had evangelistic hearts, but their methods were dramatically different.
  1. Andrew never preached to a crowd.
  2. Peter preached at Pentecost.
  3. It was Andrew who brought Peter to Christ.

## *Heart for Helping*

- Some people see the big picture more clearly because they appreciate the value of small things.
- At the occasion of the feeding of the five thousand, Andrew saw value in a small lunch.
  1. Philip responded that 200 pennyworth of bread couldn't feed that many. **John 6:6**
  2. In **Matt 14:15**, some of the disciples wanted to send them home to eat.
  3. In this setting we see Andrew bringing an other person to Jesus. A boy.
  4. He identified a food source and understood that no gift in Jesus' hands is insignificant.
- God's ability to use a gift is in no way hindered or enhanced by the size of the gift.
- The sacrificial faithfulness of the giver matters, not the size of the gift.
- God takes insignificant gifts from the faithful and multiplies them to accomplish monumental things.
- The Bible does not record what happened after Pentecost, but according to church tradition:
  1. He took the Gospel to Scythia (Russia).
  2. Ultimately crucified near Athens for leading a Roman governor's wife to Christ
  3. Was tied, not nailed, to an X-shaped cross for two days, and exhorted onlookers to turn to Christ



# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## James

**Matt 20:20**  
*Then came to him the mother of Zebedee's children with her sons, worshipping him, and desiring a certain thing of him.*

**John 18:15-16**  
*And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so did another disciple: that disciple was known unto the high priest, and went in with Jesus into the palace of the high priest. But Peter stood at the door without. Then went out that other disciple, which was known unto the high priest, and spake unto her that kept the door, and brought in Peter.*

- Of the three disciples in Jesus' inner circle, James is the least familiar to us.
  1. He never appears as a stand-alone character in the gospels.
  2. His name is always mentioned in conjunction with his brother, John, until the book of Acts.
  3. James was the eldest brother, which explains why his name is mentioned first.
- James and John were known as the sons of Zebedee. **Matt 20:20**
  1. That fact that their father was mentioned indicates he was a man of importance.
  2. Zebedee's entire family had enough status that John was able to get Peter into the high priest's courtyard. **John 18:15-16**
  3. Their family reputation in Galilee reached into Jerusalem.
- James is a much more significant figure than it appears on the surface.
  1. He witnessed Jesus' glory on the Mount of Transfiguration.
  2. He was one of three that witnessed the agony Jesus suffered in the garden.

## A Zealous Heart

- A key word that fit the life of James is *zeal*.
- His zeal was mixed with selfish ambitions that no doubt would have led to ruin.
- Jesus gave John and James the nickname *Boanerges* or "Sons of Thunder" to chide them.
- The disciple Andrew quietly brought people to Christ, but James wanted to call down fire to destroy a village.
- There is a legitimate place in spiritual leadership for people who have thunderous personalities.
  1. Elijah, who was a role model for James
  2. Nehemiah had passion. **Neh 13:25**
  3. John the Baptist had a fiery temperament.
- Zeal by itself can be less than righteous.
  1. Zeal apart from knowledge can be detrimental. **Rom 10:2**
  2. Zeal without wisdom is dangerous.
  3. Zeal mixed with insensitivity is often cruel.

## Commanding Fire

- **Luke 9:51-56**
- When Jesus headed to Jerusalem for the final time, He chose to travel through Samaria.
- The Samaritans were a mixed race of Israelites who had married pagans during captivity.
- They claimed to worship Jehovah but wanted to do it their own way and in their own place.
- Jesus sent messengers ahead of Him to secure a place to stay.
- It was obvious Jesus was going to Jerusalem for Passover and not Mount Gerizim; so they refused them accommodations. Deliberate inhospitality.

### **Rom 10:2**

*For I bear them record that they have a zeal of God, but not according to knowledge.*

### **Luke 9:51-52**

*And it came to pass, when the time was come that he should be received up, he stedfastly set his face to go to Jerusalem, And sent messengers before his face: and they went, and entered into a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him.*

**Mark 10:35-37**  
*And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory*

**Acts 12:1-2**  
*Now about that time Herod the king stretched forth his hands to vex certain of the church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.*

- James and John were instantly filled with outrage.
- They requested permission to call down fire on the village to destroy it, just like Elijah did.
  1. They thought to be on a solid precedent by using Elijah as the example. **II Kings 1**
  2. Their motives were wrong.
  3. In effect, they were asking to do something they knew Jesus would not do Himself.
  4. Jesus' mission was very different from Elijah's. Came to save, not destroy.
- Jesus taught that loving-kindness and mercy are virtues to be cultivated as much as righteous indignation and zeal.

## *Demanding a Throne*

- James and John put their mother up to asking Jesus if they could sit by His throne in Heaven. **Mt 20:20-24; Mk 10:35-37**
- Jesus responds to the request by asking if they are "able to drink of the cup..."
  1. They had no real concept of the cup, in spite of Him explaining numerous times.
  2. They self-confidently said "We are able."
  3. Jesus assured that they *will* drink of His cup.
- James wanted a crown of glory, but received a cup of suffering.
- James is the only apostle whose death is recorded in Scripture. **Acts 12:1-3**
- James was a man whose passions were eventually tempered by sensitivity and grace.

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## John

**John 13:23**

*Now there was leaning on Jesus' bosom one of his disciples, whom Jesus loved.*

**I Jn 3:9**

*Whosoever is born of God doth not commit sin; for his seed remaineth in him: and he cannot sin, because he is born of God.*

**I Jn 4:4-5**

*Ye are of God, little children, and have overcome them: because greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world. They are of the world: therefore speak they of the world, and the world heareth them.*

- Everything we observed about the personality of James is also true of John.
  1. The two are seemingly inseparable in the Gospel accounts.
  2. John's zeal and ambition mirrored his elder brother.
- It seems extraordinary that John became known as "*the apostle of love.*"
  1. Love was a quality he learned from Christ, not something that came natural.
  2. He wrote more than any other Apostle about the importance of love.
- When we compare the young disciple with the elder Apostle we observe his areas of greatest weakness developed into his greatest strengths.
- John had a zeal for truth; and of all the writers, he is the most black and white in this thinking.
  1. If born of God, we cannot sin. **I Jn 3:9**
  2. We are of God or of the world. **I Jn 4:4-5**
  3. Whoever sins does not know God. **I Jn 3:6**
- Truth was his passion. He knew believers *do* sin, but was concerned with the overall pattern of a person's life.

*"If you disagreed with Paul, he would argue with you all day; but if you disagreed with John he would simply look at you with eyes blazing and say 'You're a liar and the truth is not in you.'"*

-W.T. Conner

- Christ taught him that zeal for truth must be balanced by a love for people.
  1. If not balanced it can give way to judgementalism, harshness, and a lack of compassion.
  2. Ambition not balanced with humility becomes sinful pride, a self-promotion at the expense of others.

## Balanced Love and Truth

- A beautiful description of John is given in **Jn 13:23**; the one "whom Jesus loved."
  1. Five times this description is given.
  2. The literal meaning is "the one whom Jesus kept on loving."
- Only once do we see John speaking in the first three Gospels.
  1. After the argument over who would be the greatest in the Kingdom **Mark 9:33-34**
  2. John gives account to Jesus of how he rebuked a man for ministering in Jesus' name, but was not a part of their group.
  3. This most likely was a confession indicating the transformation that was taking place in John's life.
- John was always committed to truth, but slowly learned to balance with love.
- **Truth without love has no compassion, and love without truth has no character. I Cor 13:6**
- The truly godly person must cultivate both virtues in equal proportions.
- Know the truth and uphold it in love.

**Mark 9:33-34**

*And he came to Capernaum: and being in the house he asked them, What was it that ye disputed among yourselves by the way? But they held their peace: for by the way they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest.*

**I Cor 13:6**

*Rejoiceth not in iniquity, but rejoiceth in the truth;*

## Balanced Ambition and Humility

**Jn 19:26-27**

*When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman, behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.*

**Rev 1:9**

*I John, who also am your brother, and companion in tribulation, and in the kingdom and patience of Jesus Christ, was in the isle that is called Patmos, for the word of God, and for the testimony of Jesus Christ.*

- In his youth, John no doubt had ambitious plans for himself.
- If left unchecked, this virtue would have been his vice. Ambition without humility becomes egotism.
- The brothers' request to be seated by Jesus and their request for the chief thrones attest to their ambition.
  1. Their error was desiring *to obtain* the position more than they desired *to be worthy* of such a position.
  2. Christ emphasized that to be great you must become a great servant.
- John did eventually learn humility, and never once mentioned his own name or painted himself in the foreground.
- Only John's record mentions Jesus' act of washing the disciples' feet. No doubt stuck with him.
- John grew in love so much that Jesus trusted him with His own mother upon His death.
- Church history records that John stayed in Jerusalem and cared for Mary until she died.
- History tells us John became the pastor of the church the Apostle Paul planted in Ephesus.
- Under Roman Emperor Domitian, John was banished to the community island of Patmos.
  1. Believed to have lived in a cave there
  2. Wrote a book of the revelations he saw
- Unlike Paul, never does he mention his sufferings or hardships.
- Jerome mentions in his writings that John was so frail in his final days he had to be carried into the church in Ephesus.
- While preaching he would say no more than "Little children, love one another."
- John died a natural death circa a.d.100 under the rule of emperor Trajan.

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## Philip

**John 1:44**  
*Now Philip was of  
Bethsaida, the city  
of Andrew and  
Peter.*

**John 1:43**  
*The day following  
Jesus would go  
forth into Galilee,  
and findeth Philip,  
and saith unto  
him, Follow me.*

- Philip was the leader of the second grouping of disciples.
- Even though he is Jewish, he is only called by his Greek name that means “love of horses.”
  1. Alexander the Great spread Greek culture, customs, and language in the 4th century BC.
  2. Perhaps Philip came from a family of Hellenistic Jews.
- He grew up in Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Possibly the same synagogue. **John 1:44**
- We must not confuse him with Philip the evangelist who led the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ.
- Everything we know about Philip comes from John’s account of the Gospel.
- From what we can gather, he was a facts-and-figures man that was practically-minded.
- He seemed to have a weakness for identifying reasons things can’t be done rather than finding a solution.
- The day after the calling of Andrew, John, and Peter, Jesus found Philip and said, “Follow me.”
  1. **John 1:43**
  2. This is the first time Jesus sought out and found a disciple.

- Philip’s first response was to find Nathanael and tell him about Jesus.
  1. He told him, “We have found him..” **Jn 1:45**
  2. Obviously, they had been studying the law and were seeking the Messiah.
  3. He was amazed when discovering who the Messiah was...from Nazareth, son of Joseph.
  4. When Jesus called them, they were ready.
- Friendships provide the most fertile soil for personal evangelism.
- Nathanael’s first response was asking if anything good could come out of Nazareth. **John 1:46**
  1. Nathanael was from Cana, just north of Nazareth and a less-significant place.
  2. Local rivalry is reflected in Nathanael’s skepticism.
- Philip didn’t argue but said, “Come and see.”
  1. It is not necessary for us to be able to answer every possible Biblical question to bring someone to Christ.
  2. Christianity is about knowing Jesus, not just knowing details about the life of Jesus.

## Feeding Five Thousand

- Andrew and Philip each had a very different experience on the day of the feeding of five thousand.
- Philip had the right heart and was a man of faith, but was a man of *weak* faith.
- In **John 6:5** Jesus asked Philip a question to test him.
  1. He asked him where they could buy enough bread to feed this many.
  2. Apparently, he was the bean counter and administrator charged with logistics.
  3. Judas carried the money, and Philip was charged with distribution.

**John 1:45**  
*Philip findeth  
Nathanael, and  
saith unto him,  
We have found  
him, of whom  
Moses in the  
law, and the  
prophets, did  
write, Jesus of  
Nazareth, the  
son of Joseph*

**John 1:46**  
*And Nathanael  
said unto him,  
Can there any  
good thing come  
out of Nazareth?  
Philip saith unto  
him, Come and  
see.*

**John 6:5**  
*And this he said  
to prove him: for  
he himself knew  
what he would  
do.*

**John 14:6-7**

*Jesus saith unto him, I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh unto the Father, but by me. If ye had known me, ye should have known my Father also: and from henceforth ye know him, and have seen him.*

**John 14:8-9**

*Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father?*

- He wasn't testing Philip to see what he was thinking; he wanted Philip to reveal to himself what he was like.
- Philip was present when Jesus turned the water into wine, but now could only see the impossible.
  1. The reality of raw facts clouded his faith.
  2. He lost the opportunity to see the reward of faith.

## ***The Upper Room***

- After all the formal training of the twelve, their faith was still very weak.
- Jesus tried to comfort them over His imminent departure and explained that He and the Father are one. **John 14:6-7**
- Philip said, "Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us." **John 14:8**
  1. He most likely had the O.T. examples in mind.
  2. He hoped for something that would give clear vision.
- Jesus' reply basically asked Philip where he had been the last three years. **John 14:9**
- At this point, Jesus began to teach that what is needed is not a demonstration, but a comprehension.
- His preoccupation with business details shut him off from a full comprehension of Whose presence he enjoyed.
- Jesus' strength was eventually made perfect in Philip's weakness.
  1. He went on to Asia Minor and saw multitudes saved.
  2. He was stoned to death just eight years after the martyrdom of James.

# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## *Nathanael (Bartholomew)*

### **John 21:2**

*There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples*

- The gospel of John always calls him Nathanael.
  1. Bartholomew is his Hebrew surname meaning "son of Tolmai."
  2. Nathanael means "God has given."
- According to **John 21:2**, he was from the small town of Cana in Galilee.
- It was Philip who brought him to Jesus, and they always seem to be side by side.
  1. Philip knew he would be interested in the long awaited news of the Messiah.
  2. His brief introduction to Jesus is full of insight into his character.

## *Love For Scripture*

### **John 1:45**

*Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.*

- In **John 1:45**, it is obvious the truth of Scripture mattered to Nathanael.
- Philip knew he would be intrigued by the news Jesus was the One prophesied by Moses.
- Nathaniel was familiar with the Old Testament prophecies.
- In all likelihood, the two of them had come to the wilderness to hear John the Baptist.
- It appears that all of the apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were already true seekers of divine truth before meeting Jesus.

- Their hearts were open to the truth and hungry to know it.
- They were sincere in their love for God, and their desire to know the truth.

## *Struggle With Prejudice*

- Though he had strong spiritual interests and a devotion to the Word of God, he had certain prejudices.
- His response was, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?"
- He did not give a rational or biblical objection; but one based on emotion and bigotry.
  1. Reveals his contempt for all of Nazareth
  2. He was from Cana - a smaller, less-influential town that very few visited.
- True, Nazareth was a rough town, its culture largely unrefined and uneducated.
- Nathanael was simply echoing the Galileans general contempt for Nazareth.
- Once again, this is another example of God taking pleasure in using the common, weak, and lowly things to confound the wise.
- His prejudice blinded him to the fact that he himself had come from an equally contemptible community.
  1. Generalizations based on feelings of superiority, not on fact, can be spiritually debilitating.
  2. Israel rejected their Messiah because of prejudice.
  3. His own synagogue was filled with prejudice and tried to take Him to a cliff after He preached. **Luke 4:28-30**

### **Luke 4:28-30**

*And all they in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, And rose up, and thrust him out of the city, and led him unto the brow of the hill whereon their city was built, that they might cast him down headlong. But he passing through the midst of them went his way,*

**John 1:47**

*Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*

**John 1:48**

*Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee.*

**John 1:49**

*Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel.*

**John 1:50-51**

*Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.*

- Fortunately, his prejudice wasn't strong enough to keep him from Christ.
  1. Philip confronted his prejudice with facts: "Come and see."
  2. Prejudice is feeling-based and subjective; so the remedy is an honest look at objective reality.

## Sincere Heart

- Jesus greeted Nathanael as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile." **John 1:47**
  1. Not empty flattery, but a statement of fact
  2. Described him as a man of integrity and transparency
  3. He literally was saying "a man in whom is found no Jacob."
- Nathanael was amazed and asked Jesus how He knew him. Jesus replied that before Philip called, He saw him under the fig tree. **John 1:48**
  1. Fig trees were a shaded place where it was common to sit and study and mediate.
  2. To be under your fig tree, literally and figuratively, meant to be in a time of prayer or Bible study.
- It was not only that Jesus saw his *location*, but that He saw his *heart* as well.
- Nathanael replied, "Rabbi, thou art the Son of God." **John 1:49**
- Jesus answered him that because he believed, he would see even greater things. **John 1:50-51**
  1. Reference to Jacob's ladder
  2. Jesus is the ladder, and Nathanael would see the angels of God ascending and descending on Him.
  3. Jesus is the ladder that connects Heaven and earth.



# JESUS' TWELVE

FIRST SERVANTS IN THE CHURCH

## *Matthew (Levi)*

**Luke 5:27**

*And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me.*

- In all likelihood, Matthew was the most notorious sinner of the Twelve.
- He is the brother of James the Less, and probably born in Galilee.
- He is called by his Jewish name *Levi* and called by *Matthew* when in the listing of disciples.
- In his entire Gospel, he mentions his own name only twice.
- We have no evidence of him being a follower of John the Baptist.

**Luke 5:28**

*And he left all, rose up, and followed him.*

## *The Tax Collector*

- Matthew was a tax collector - a publican.
- This is the last credential you'd expect to see from a future apostle of Christ.
- Tax collectors were the most despised and hated people in Israel.
  1. They purchased tax franchises from the Roman government.
  2. Had an unspoken agreement they could assess whatever additional taxes they wanted
- Publicans and harlots and sinners are always grouped together by the Jews.

- There were two kinds of tax collectors.
  1. Gabbai
    - a. General tax collectors
    - b. Property, income, and poll
    - c. A set assessment
  2. Mokhes
    - a. Taxes on imports and exports
    - b. Good for trade, mostly everything that moved by road
    - c. Set tolls for roads and bridges
    - d. Charged tariffs on parcels/letters
    - e. Assessment was arbitrary and high
- There were two divisions of Mokhes.
  1. Great Mokhes
    - a. Stayed behind the scenes and hired others to collect taxes
    - b. Zacchaeus - **Luke 19:2**
  2. Little Mokhes
    - a. Manned a tax office and dealt with people face to face
    - b. The tax collector people saw and hated
    - c. This is what Matthew was.
- When a Jew became a tax collector, he was cut off from his own people and banned from the synagogue.
  1. No Jewish parent wanted this for their child.
  2. Matthew's name *Levi* is a reference to him being a part of the tribe of Levi.
  3. He did not become a priest but a publican.
  4. There was no sacrifice given for Matthew the publican.
  5. His occupation made him a traitor, and a social and religious outcast.

**Luke 19:2**

*And, behold, there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief among the publicans, and he was rich.*

## The Calling

### Luke 5:29

*And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them.*

### Luke 5:30

*But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners?*

- Matthew 9:9 records the call of Matthew.
  1. It comes out of nowhere, seemingly.
  2. Jesus simply said, "Follow me," and Matthew left everything.
- Following Jesus was a substantial sacrifice: if this venture was a failure, he could not go back.
- Matthew's first impulse was to bring his closet friends to Jesus.
  1. He put on an enormous banquet at his house and invited his colleagues. Luke 5:29
  2. Why did he invite the tax collectors? Because they were all he knew.
  3. This feast gave him time to explain his decision and introduce them to Christ.
  4. Jesus and the disciples gladly came to eat.
- It is interesting that three tax collectors are specifically mentioned in the Gospels, and each one found forgiveness.
- What caused Matthew to walk away and follow?
  1. He must have had a desire for change.
  2. He was spiritually hungry and understood the prophecies of the Messiah.
- Matthew quotes the Old Testament 99 times - that is more than Mark, Luke, and John combined.
  1. Most likely pursued his study of Scripture on his own
  2. Sitting in the crossroads, he no doubt heard testimony of Jesus' works.
  3. Had enough faith to drop everything and follow
- Matthew walked away from a lucrative career and gave his all for Christ to the very end.