Twelve Ordinary Men – the apostles (6 weeks)

*Men who were chosen. Men with purpose. Men who were sinners just like you and me; yet, Jesus picked them as His own inner circle on earth and empowered most of them to lead His church after His resurrection. Find out about these Twelve Ordinary Men, the lives they led before they knew Jesus and how their lives changed after encountering the Living God.*

The Apostles

* Who can name the 12 apostles?
  + Named in Matthew 10:12
  + Mark 3:14
  + Luke 6:12
* We belong to the Holy catholic and apostolic church... what does that mean?
* Acts 2:42 – those who were converted to Christianity were devoted to the Apostles’ teaching.
* We see stained glass windows in cathedrals, paintings, icons... immortalizing the apostles, the men whom Jesus trusted to grow his church.
* Great men – giants amongst men. But not really.
* In the apostles we have regular guys who are flawed, ignorant to some, hold no great power, hold no religious authority.
* The men Christ chose were fisherman, a sinner – tax collector, a zealot – one who was a politician or a political activist
* Why would Jesus choose regular guys? No one of particular status?
* Who does all glory go to? God. Who does all power come from? God. Who makes possible the expansion of his kingdom? God.
* John – You did not choose me, I chose you.
* To what purpose?
* Mark 3 – live with him, proclaim his message, cast out demons...then Jesus named the twelve
* Consider what call was placed upon the lives of these men ... Judas Iscariot – whole different story. In calling the Apostles, Jesus was calling them to a life of hardship, of suffering, of martyrdom. As we will find, only one of the apostles lived to an old age – but not without persecution and suffering.
* Jesus had built a reputation for himself – he could have done a great campaign, glorifying himself, but he stuck to speaking truth and revealing the Father’s glory through his ministry.
* Jesus had disciples, those who followed him – he fed the 5,000 he had crowds following him around everywhere he went.
* The apostles were disciples of Jesus.
* Jesus didn’t begin with apostles – he began by teaching and healing and casting out demons...
* Disciples came and went – people were attracted to Jesus because he performed miracles and signs.
* They would also become disillusioned – John 6:53
* The 12 didn’t have anywhere else to go, they believed and they stayed.
* When it was time to pass along the ministry, to prepare the leaders of the church which he would establish after his resurrection, Jesus appointed the 12 apostles.
* Luke builds the story of the religious leaders hate for Jesus – the disruption he made to their lives and religious plans.
* Luke 6:11- In those days... at the right time, Jesus chose the men who would carry out his mission of bringing the gospel to the world.
* The apostles didn’t have to pass a test... they were undeserving to be Christ’s spokespeople. No one is deserving to be a spokesperson for Jesus. When compared to his perfection and holiness... we are less than nothing. We have not earned a position amongst the Son of God – Romans 3 all have sinned and fall short of God’s glory.
* Discouraged – Satan accuses – Christians become doubters of what God has called us to.
* God chooses the humble, lowly, meek, weak – there is never a question of the source of power in the transformation of the world through his church.
* Luke 6:12 Jesus prayed... all night... the trinitarian communication over the 12 that were to be called.
* An enduring task through the night.
* Prayed over who to choose? No – Jesus knew who was chosen. Perhaps he prayed for the men. He knew to what life he was calling them – to the suffering and martyrdom they would endure.
* Perhaps he prayed for Judas Iscariot.
* “Jesus in his humanity needed to pray all night, Jesus in his deity was praying the very prayer of God.” John MacArthur

Simon Peter

Review:

* In the apostles, we have regular guys who have no religious authority, they have no great power, have worldly jobs, are flawed... just ordinary men.
* God choose the humble, lowly, meek, weak and there is never a question of the source of power in the transformation of the world through his church.

**diagram of apostle names**

* These men are named in Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Book of Acts.
* The lists are all similar. The Apostles can be grouped into three groups of four.
* In EVERY mention of Jesus calling the Apostles, we see one name first – Simon Peter.
* *First* can mean that Peter, indeed was called first (as in line or placement) but Greek “protos” also has a connotation of first in rank – influence, chief

**map of Israel**

Life:

* Fisherman with his brother, Andrew and another set of brothers, John and James.
* From Bethsaida (John 1:44)
* Fishing business was centered in Capernaum, a major town on the north time of the Sea of Galilee, which was where Peter fished.
* Three common fish caught:
  + sardines (most likely the “small fish” spoken of that Jesus fed the five thousand with)
  + barbels (a carp-like fish, can weigh as much as 15 lbs) the name is derived from a latin word which means “beard” b/c it has little fringes off side of mouth)
  + muscht (tilapia is a muscht fish. Sometimes today they are referred to as St. Peter’s fish.)
* Simon Peter was married. References to her are in Matthew 8:14 (mother-in-law healed) and 1 Corinthians 9:5 (Peter’s wife accompanied him on missional journey).
* Not sure if he had children – in 1 Peter 5, he references his *son*, Mark, but this is similar to how Paul refers to Timothy – Mark was very close with Peter. It is the Mark who wrote the Gospel (would have had the stories directly from Peter).

Personality:

* Lots of words can describe Simon Peter:
  + Impulsive
    - dropped net and followed at Jesus’ invitation (Matthew 4:18-20)
    - jumped out of the boat when Jesus was walking on water
    - jumped out of the boat, not bothering to even get dressed, to see the resurrected Christ
    - lopped off the ear of the High Priest’s servant when they came to arrest Jesus
    - ready to build dwelling places for Elijah and Moses at the Transfiguration
  + Passionate
    - See above!
    - Luke 5:8 realized his sinfulness in God’s presence.
    - John 13:8-9 don’t wash me! Wash all of me!
    - Mark 8:32 rebuked Jesus for heading to Jerusalem where he would be killed.
    - Matthew 14:29-31 he demands he will never desert Jesus.
  + John MacArthur wrote that Peter had a “habit of revving his mouth while his brain was in neutral”.

What’s in a Name:

* Simon was a very common name.
* Jesus did not rename Simon Peter as God did with Abram (who would be known as Abraham). Jesus called Simon Peter BOTH.
* Peter means “rock”. Aramaic is Cephas – when you read Peter or Cephas, it’s the same person referred to in Scripture. 1 Corinthians and Galatians.
* Peter’s confession of Christ as the Messiah is the rock on which the church is built. Matthew 16:13-18
* MacArthur points out that Simon is often used referring to the secular life of Simon Peter (his work, his home, family life, etc). OR when Simon Peter is being rebuked or corrected by Jesus.
  + Luke 22:31 “Simon, Simon, listen! Satan has demanded to sift all of you like wheat” warning Simon – a warning to the weakness of Peter.
  + Mark 14:32-38 He took Peter, James and John. Addressed Peter as Simon when he had fallen asleep in the weakness of his flesh.
  + John 21:15-17 “Simon son of John, do you love me?” Peter denied Christ and this is when he is restored.

Major Marks of Ministry:

* Acts 1:12-26 Established leadership amongst the apostles.
* Acts 2:14-41 Delivers sermon on Pentecost
* Acts 3:4-8 Heals the beggar at the Temple, after which he delivers a sermon in Solomon’s Portico
* Acts 4 Peter addresses the Council
* Acts 9:32-43 Peter heals Aeneas and Dorcas
* Acts 10-11 Peter had the vision on the rooftop lifting ceremonial law of the unclean and opening the Word of salvation to Gentiles. (which was taken to Cornelius)
* Acts 12 Peter was imprisoned and set free by an angel of the Lord.
* Acts 15:6-11 Peter addresses the Council at Jerusalem
* 1 Corinthians we understand Peter had influence at the church in Corinth
* 1 & 2 Peter: Peter wrote his letters instructing and encouraging God’s people as they suffer for the sake of righteousness and warning against false teachers.

Death:

* Scripture tells us Peter died as a martyr **John 21:18-19**, but it does not record Peter’s death.
* Church tradition has Peter in Rome by the time of Nero’s persecution of Christians and Peter’s martyrdom taking place in 64. There are disagreements regarding where Peter was when he “left for another place” in the Book of Acts, but the church, as a whole, is settled on Peter being crucified upside down.
* Clement (2nd century Greek intellectual and theologian) wrote to the Corinthians “5:1 But let us pass from ancient examples, and come unto those who have in the times nearest to us, wrestled for the faith. 5:2 Let us take the noble examples of our own generation. Through jealousy and envy the greatest and most just pillars of the Church were persecuted, and came even unto death. 5:3 Let us place before our eyes the good Apostles. 5:4 Peter, through unjust envy, endured not one or two but many labors, and at last, having delivered his testimony, departed unto the place of glory due to him.”
* Eusebius (4th century bishop and historian) cited Clement of Alexandria’s testimony of Peter’s death who said he first had to watch his wife die. It is said that when Peter saw his own wife led out to die, he rejoiced because of her summons and her return home, and called to her very encouragingly and comfortingly, addressing her by name and saying, ‘remember the Lord!’” When it was his turn to die, Peter asked to be Crucified upside down because he wasn’t worthy to die as his Lord had died.

Final Thoughts:

* Simon Peter often learned the hard way, but he was handpicked by Christ, Himself, to lead the leaders of His church.
* Simon Peter struggled as we all do simultaneously saint and sinner.
* Consider this... For all Peter’s faults, he and one other disciple (probably John) were the only ones who followed Jesus to the high priest’s house to see what would happen to him. He was also the only one close enough to look into Jesus’ eyes when the rooster crowed.

Andrew

Review:

* In the apostles, we have regular guys who have no religious authority, they have no great power, have worldly jobs, are flawed... just ordinary men.
* God choose the humble, lowly, meek, weak and there is never a question of the source of power in the transformation of the world through his church.

**Show diagram of apostle names**

* These men are named in Matthew, Mark, Luke and the Book of Acts.
* The lists are all similar. The Apostles can be grouped into three groups of four.
* In EVERY mention of Jesus calling the Apostles, we see one name first – Simon Peter.
* Simon Peter was not the FIRST disciple within the apostles...

Life:

* Fisherman with his brother, Peter.
* Also from Bethsaida
* Lived in Capernaum with Peter (**Mark 1:29**)

**Show map of Israel**

* Andrew is a “background” sort of Apostle.
* Least known amongst the top grouping of Apostles.
* Events where we see the inner circle of Jesus being Peter, James and John, Andrew is missing.
  + healing of Jairus’ daughter
  + transfiguration
  + praying in the garden of Gethsemane
* We see Andrew present with this inner circle in Mark 1:29 and 13:3

Ministry with Jesus:

* While Peter is boisterous, Andrew is not.
* Andrew is the one to introduce Peter to Jesus. **(John 1:35-42**)
* Andrew was John the Baptist’s disciple... John was very clear that HE was NOT the Messiah and when he pointed out Jesus to be the Messiah, Andrew followed.
* What we see of Andrew in scripture is a quiet, yet effective evangelistic ministry and a certain trust in Jesus and His power.
* Andrew didn’t need to be the center of attention. And when Andrew spoke, it was good to listen to him.
* Macarthur points out that Scripture never attaches dishonor to Andrew’s actions when he is mentioned by name. (he was not perfect, and when the disciples are lumped together unknowing or acting in ignorance, he is part of that, but he is singled out with honor).
* Andrew seemed to labor in obscurity instead of the limelight.
* Andrew seemed to be intent on making sure people knew Jesus – as witnessed in his own introduction of Jesus to Peter (first thing after meeting Jesus, he makes sure to bring Simon to him).
* All the fruit of Peter’s witness came from knowing Jesus... Peter knew Jesus because Andrew introduced them.
* (**highlight the importance of the individual missionary aspect we are called to**)
* Peter preached and 3000 were added to the believers.
* Andrew introduced one and a time to meet Jesus...
* Is Andrew any less important?
* John 12:20 – Greeks came to find Philip – he brought them to Andrew. Andrew and Philip brought them to Jesus.
* This shows trust in Andrew as an Apostle – there is confidence in his leadership and knowing what to do.
* Andrew trusted Jesus (John 6:1-13) – he didn’t know what Jesus would do, but he knew Jesus could do something.

Glory:

* Andrew is a beautiful example of the humble servant – he did not seek his own glory, but always to bring people to Jesus.
* Are we called as Christians to labor for our glory? No.
* Mary Martha comparison... what about a Peter Andrew comparison? Is one better than the other?

Death:

* Bible doesn’t record what happened with Andrew after Pentecost, tradition says he took the gospel north.
* Eusebius, church historian, says he went as far as Scythia (Russia)
* He was crucified in Achaia (near Athens)
* He was lashed to cross instead of nailed to prolong the suffering.
* Hanging there 2 days, he exhorted people to turn to Christ

James and John (Sons of Thunder)

Review:

* Twelve regular guys that Jesus chose – already his disciples, He chose them to spend more time with Him to teach them and lead them because these were the men whom God had chosen to lead the church and to begin the mission of the church.
* Simon Peter was the “lead” Apostle. He was the impulsive, passionate follower of Jesus who both denied knowing Christ, yet, was the one who followed closely enough to make eye contact with Christ as he was being beaten.
* Andrew, Peter’s brother, was in the inner circle of the Apostles, but a background player. He is a great example of personal evangelism – making sure he could introduce people to Jesus (even at his death).
* Both Peter and Andrew were crucified in their martyrdom. Tradition says Peter was crucified upside down (requested by him because he was unworthy to die in the same way as Jesus) and Andrew was lashed, not nailed to the cross in order to prolong his suffering.

The Sons of Thunder:

* In the inner circle of the Apostles, we find another set of brothers: James and John.
* They, too, were fisherman in Capernaum. Probably a more prominent household than Peter and Andrew because they are described as James and John, sons of Zebedee – this signifies that Zebedee would be well-known.
* James is the elder of the two brothers. He easily could have been the “lead” apostle, but he wasn’t – that was Peter.
* Because his name is listed directly after Peter’s in two of the lists, John MacArthur reasons that he could have been second after Peter in leadership. An argument could be made to support that, but we don’t know for certain.
* James WAS present at key moments in Jesus’ ministry- the raising of Jairus’ daughter, the transfiguration, praying in the Garden of Gethsemane.
* We don’t have a lot about James, but we do know that he and John were both “big” in personality and aggressive. John the Baptist would have been similar – a fiery preacher. No fear of dishing it out.
* Mark 3:17 “James son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder);”
* We don’t know how often the nickname is used by Jesus, but it is significant enough for Mark to write in his Gospel and the nickname of aggressive or fiery-ness plays out in Luke 9.
* **Luke 9:51-56**
* Some texts have “like Elijah did” **2 Kings 1:9-12**.
* Backstory: the king was injured, he wanted a word from a soothsayer, accessing a false god. Elijah was divinely instructed to meet the king’s men and gave them a word that the king would die. The king realized the word was from Elijah and intended to have him killed.

“Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. He went up to Elijah, who was sitting on the top of a hill, and said to him, “O man of God, the king says, ‘Come down.’” **10**But Elijah answered the captain of fifty, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then fire came down from heaven, and consumed him and his fifty.**11**Again the king sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty. He went up and said to him, “O man of God, this is the king’s order: Come down quickly!” **12**But Elijah answered them, “If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty.” Then the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

* We also see the aggressive nature coming out when James and John lobby for the high seats in heaven. (in Matthew’s telling, we see the boys enlisted their mother to lobby on their behalf). Either way, they are confidently asking to be in places of honor.

James:

* James sought a crown of glory, but he received a cup of suffering.
* James was the first Apostle to be martyred.
* Fourteen years after serving under Jesus in his earthly ministry, James was killed.
* **Acts 12:1-3**
* This is the only Apostle’s martyrdom to be recorded in scripture.
* We know he was killed with the sword (beheaded) at the order of Herod.
* Herod Agrippa I, not Herod Antipas (the one who killed John the Baptist and put Jesus on trial)
* Very possible, probable, that this Herod was seeking continued power and authority – the death of James pleased the Jewish leaders, so he arrested Peter, too.
* James, after Christ’s death, didn’t become gentle or timid – if Herod has taken note of him enough to have him executed, we see the thunder had not ceased – was put to good use for the spread of the church!
* Fiery preacher – scary, off-putting but part of the church – James had mission and ministry. We need strong voices to stand up for the faith!

John:

* One word seems to sum up John’s ministry after Jesus’ death: love.
* After Luke and Paul, John has the most writings in the New Testament. He wrote the Gospel of John, the 1st, 2nd, 3rd letters of John, and the Book of Revelation.
* John was part of the inner circle within the Apostles. He was little brother to James and we read in the Book of Acts that he accompanied Peter in much of the early church mission.
* John outlived all the other Apostles, thereby giving him a unique role within the church and the foundation of the church.
* Medieval art often portrays John as a meek and mild person gazing at Jesus, but John was a fisherman – not a meek or mild trade!
* The case is made that John has equally earned the “Sons of Thunder” nickname with James.
* From Scripture, we can ascertain that John was very similar to James in personality – they are mentioned together “James and John...James and John... James and John” and John was part of the duo that was ready to call fire down from heaven to rain on Samaria along with the insistence of asking for a place of honor in Jesus’ Kingdom.
* John rebuked another for casting out demons in the name of Jesus without following along with them. **Mark 9:38**
* The aggressive personality we know John to share with James is transformed and through the decades we, the church, come to know him as the “apostle of love”.
* His brashness wasn’t a deterrent for who or what he was called to be in Christ- Jesus trusted John enough to care for Mary (**John 19:26-27**)
* John MacArthur pointed out that John is a wonderful example of what should happen to us as we grow in Christ – under the control of the Holy Spirit, the brash young disciple is molded to a loving and steadfast mature Father of the church. “His strength is made perfect in our weakness”.
* The boldness of John was used to boldly testify and stand firm in the truth of the gospel. “There is light, there is dark... you walk in light or in darkness, in the true light of Christ or darkness of sin.”
* Part of walking in the light of Christ is to walk in love – he emphasized love of other greatly. Great example: **1 John 2:10** **“Whoever loves a brother or sister lives in the light, and in such a person there is no cause for stumbling.”**
* Though John was not martyred, he suffered greatly for the faith. He first watched his great friend and teacher crucified. Then, after being given the charge to go making disciples of all nations, he lost his brother (James) and then one by one the other apostles...the brotherhood with whom he shared his life.
* He was left as the sole standing Apostle from the original 12.
* He experienced earthly persecution and suffering...
  + Early church history records that he was the pastor of the church planted in Ephesus by Paul.
  + Under the Roman Emperor Domitian, John was banished to a prison community on Patmos (Island off the west coast of Turkey.)
  + He lived in a cave and received the vision of Revelation.
* John lived until approximately 98 a.d.
* Jerome said the Apostle was so frail in his final days that he had to be carried into the church. He repeated over and over, “My little children, love one another.” He said this is what was on his lips constantly because “It is the Lord’s command, and if this alone be done, it is enough.”

Final Thoughts:

* The Sons of Thunder are an important part of church history and church witness. We see the passion and forwardness they had. James was not given the same lengthy opportunity to refine or hone in on how to use his boldness as his brother, but without a bold witness, how does the church not crumble?
* Peter, Andrew, James, John... all so different all so flawed all so passionate about the mission they were given to be fishers of men. We look to them not as the picture of perfect faith, but we look to them to see what the perfector of our faith can and will do!

The Other Guys – Philip, Nathanael, Matthew, Thomas, James, Simon, Judas

Review:

* First 4 apostles we studied were 2 sets of brothers.
* Each brother was different, and yet same. They were all fishers and all a part of Christ’s inner circle in that they were present (with the exception of Andrew) for pivotal points of ministry with Jesus.
* The next group of apostles we are going to study may feel hurried compared to the time we took with the inner circle, but that does not mean they are not important. What we will find is that each man served specific purpose within the spread and growth of the church.
* This is just as key to remember just as it is key that we keep in mind the flawed and very humanness of the apostles.
* Each disciple, each member of the church – each member of Christ’s body matters and has purpose in the body.
* 1 Corinthians 12:4-6 “Now there are varieties of gifts, but the same Spirit; and there are varieties of services, but the same Lord; and there are varieties of activities, but it is the same God who activates all of them in everyone.

The Other Guys:

Philip:

* Philip is a Greek name “lover of horses” but he would have had a Jewish name, as well. Scripture does not give it to us.
* MacArthur thinks this is NOT the same Philip of Acts 6 – that that was a deacon. Argument could be made though that it is the Apostle – he is preaching Christ!
* Philip is often paired with Nathanael (Bartholomew), and appears by name in Gospel of John.
* John MacArthur pieced together that Philip seems to be a “process person”. “He was a facts-and-figures guy – a by-the-book, practical minded, type of individual. He was corporate illjoy, pessimistic, narrowly focused, sometimes missing the big picture, obsessed with finding reasons something can’t be done rather than finding ways to do them. He was predisposed to be a pragmatist and a cynic – and sometimes a defeatist rather than a visionary.
* (not necessarily fair – a pragmatist doesn’t have to be a cynic or a pessimist)
* Feeding of the 5000 (John 6)
* Jesus singles Philip out – why? To test him!
* What do we do?
* Philip didn’t need to give Jesus a plan, but this reveals the materialistic thinking… the impossibility of what lay before them – but with God it is possible.
* The reality of the raw facts clouded Philip’s faith.
* When Jesus sought out Philip (John 1:43)
* Philip right away (as Andrew did with Peter) found Nathanael … you have to meet this guy – he is the Messiah!
* He finds his friend – importance of friendships as fertile soil (Erik – when you have evangelized to every one of your neighbors, we will do an evangelism event!)
* John 12:20-21 – when the Greeks came to see Jesus, they first sought out Phiip – maybe because of his Greek name (?)
* What was the proper protocol? Matthew 10 “**5**These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: “Go nowhere among the Gentiles, and enter no town of the Samaritans, **6**but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.”
* What should I do? Let’s go get Andrew –
* “Show us the Father…” (John 14:8) Jesus – “Believe”

Nathanael:

* Bartholomew
* Only mentioned in synoptic gospels when listed as an apostle.
* In John twice by name.. John 1 (Philip introduces him to Jesus) and John 21 when he is one who was fishing with Peter.
* John 1:46 – can anthing good come out of Nazareth? Nazareth was a rough town (uncultured, uneducated)
* God uses the unexpected, the weak the lowly –
* Jesus speaks of Nathanael 1:47 and the heart of who Nathanael is – “well done, good and faithful servant, enter into the joy of your lord.”
* Nathanael was not a hypocrite (like the Jewish establishment)
* Juxtaposition of the prejudice with what Jesus knew of Nathanael’s heart – he couldn’t see Nathanael, but he could see his heart (Psalm 19:14 – let the words on my lips and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to You, o Lord, my rock and my redeemer).
* Very little is known about his ministry – after the ascension, Nathanael went to Persia and India and as far as Armenia. Tradition says he was tied up in a sack and cast into the sea, another says he was crucified.

Matthew:

* All the men Jesus chose as His disciples were nothing to write home about – they were all (with the exception of Judas Iscariot) from the Galilee area – rural, fishing and farming.
* Commoners.
* Then we have a notorious sinner – Matthew, also known as Levi (Levi would be his Jewish name).
* Matthew was a tax collector – this is lower than low. A tax collector was the despised person in Israel.
* The tax collector (publican) was one who purchased a tax franchise from the Roman emperor and then extorted money from Israelites to fill Roman coffers and line their own pockets. They would use brute force and intimidation (mafia thugs) to shake people down for money.
* The tax collector, as John MacArthur puts it, was a “despicable, vile, unprincipled scoundrel.”
* Tax collectors were social pariahs and considered traitors to the nation. As an outcast, Matthew would not have been allowed in the synagogue to worship.
* Jesus calls Matthew/Levi (Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-29)
* Just as Andrew and Philip went to find brother or friend to introduce to Jesus, immediately – Matthew throws a party to introduce his friends to Jesus.
* His friends are “low-lifes” ... he was a low-life.
* Jesus came to claim the sinners – the tax collectors and prostitutes fit the bill.
* We don’t know why Matthew became a tax collector, but we know he dropped everything and followed Jesus when called.
* Matthew, we know had working knowledge of the OT – his gospel brings forth a heavy Jewish backing (quotes from Law, Psalms and Prophets).
* Matthew/Levi reminds us that Jesus can and does redeem the most despicable amongst men and uses them for His glory and in His mission.
* Scripture doesn’t give us much about Matthew (even though he wrote one of the gospels).
* Church history and tradition holds that he ministered to the Jews (makes sense) in Israel and abroad before being martyred for his faith. Tradition indicate he was burned at the stake.

Thomas:

* Thomas is only mentioned in the synoptic gospels once – when the Apostles are listed. What we hear of him, by name, or know of him comes from the Gospel of John.
* Thomas was a twin – though scripture doesn’t say anything about his twin.
* Doubting Thomas... what a bad rep he got for ONE statement recorded in scripture.
* Back up to John 11:6-8, 12-16
* MacArthur refers to Thomas’ statement as “heroic pessimism”. He expects that the worst will happen – Jesus and anyone with him will be killed, but Thomas is devout and ready to stand by Christ’s side, regardless of the danger.
* Thomas had courage and devotion to the Lord.
* “Better to die and be with Christ than to be left behind.”
* Thomas’ bravery and devotion showed a leadership and strength for the other apostles – they all went, too.
* Now we go to the nickname that has plagued Thomas for centuries... (John 20:24-25)
* Thomas didn’t believe. He doubted. He had no faith.
* Back up to John 20:19-20 (the disciples had to be shown his hands and side, too!) No one believed the women when they told of the empty tomb (Luke 24:10-12)
* Jesus knew his disciples and knew their flaws and fear and doubts in the face of the supernatural – but he was gentle with them. Jesus sympathizes with all of us in our fear and doubt.
* History has Thomas carrying the gospel to India (place in Madras where Thomas is said to be buried). Strongest tradition is that he was martyred by being run through with a spear.

James:

* James, Simon, and Judas are least well-known in Scripture. They were all appointed apostles, by their very call, they would have been instrumental in the mission and spreading of the church.
* All we know from scripture of James is that he is the son of Alphaeus. Even his name, James, is super common. His nickname “James the less” is probably a suggestion like “younger” as in the James of the Apostles who is younger than James, son of Zebedee.
* Some evidence in church history shows that James took the gospel to Syria and Persia. There are three possible accounts of his death: 1. Stoned; 2. Beaten to death; 3. Crucified.

Simon:

* Simon the Zealot!
* In Scripture, when he is referred to as Simon the Cananite, it is not referring to him being from Canaan. It is from a Hebrew root word which means *zealous*.
* Historian, Josephus, described four parties of Jews –
  + Pharisees – religious fundamentalists of their day. Very fastidious about the law.
  + Sadducees – religiously liberal, denying supernatural. Very rich and powerful, in charge of the temple.
  + Essenes – not mentioned in scripture. This was a celibate order who lived in the desert and devoted themselves to the law.
  + Zealots – politically minded and hated the Romans. Their goal was to overthrow the Roman occupation. They took part in terrorism and acts of violence to move their agenda forward.
* Simon was involved with this extreme group.
* Interesting that Jesus called both Simon and Matthew to this brotherhood in apostleship – Matthew and Simon would have been on opposite ends of the political spectrum. Matthew collecting taxes for Rome and Simon supporting the end of Rome.
* Note that as called disciples, these men rose past who they thought they were in the world and found they were brothers in Christ – and they would have worked side by side in spreading the gospel and in worship of the Lord.
* No good historical record of Simon’s death, but historical sources have Simon taking the gospel north to the British Isles.

Judas:

* The name Judas brings to mind treachery and betrayal and evil... actually means “Jehova leads”.
* This Judas had three names Judas, Labbaeus, Thaddaeus. Probably given name was Judas. Thaddaeus means “breast child” which could mean he was a youngest or a mama’s boy. Lebbaeus means “heart child” which could suggest he has a tender, childlike heart.
* We have one New Testament time of this Judas speaking – John 14:22. Upper room discourse and Jesus is telling of the coming Holy Spirit.
* Jesus explains that Christ would manifest himself to anyone who loves him.
* Early church tradition tells us Judas went north to Edessa which was a royal city in Mesopotamia (Turkey) and many sources have accounts of him healing the king named Abgar.
* Church tradition also has Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus being clubbed to death for his faith.

Judas Iscariot – the Traitor

* The name that means “Jehovah leads” ends up as a name that is notorious with betrayal and treachery.
* Iscariot signifies the region Judas was from. ...most likely a small town in southern Judea. This is significant in that the other apostles were from Galilee. Judas may have felt like an outsider from the beginning which could have helped him to justify his treachery for himself.
* We don’t know anything of Judas’ background other than his father’s name was Simon (common name) and we know he was trusted amongst the other apostles – he kept the treasury.
* His name appears in the list of the twelve disciples in the synoptic gospels and is left out in Acts – doesn’t appear at all.
* In Judas’ story we see the depth of hardness of heart and hate – Judas had spent 3 years with Jesus, witnessed all the others had witnessed, and, yet, he remained not only unchanged, but grew harder of heart and hateful.
* MacArthur points out that while the other 11 apostles exemplify how God can and does use the most flawed and ordinary amongst us to propel His mission forward, Judas is a warning of “spiritual carelessness, squandered opportunity, sinful lusts, and hardness of heart.”
* Judas was near Christ and yet became hardened in sin.
* We don’t know when or how Jesus called Judas, but he was called – he gave up his life to follow Christ, but he didn’t surrender his life to follow Christ – Jesus knew (John 6:64)
* Jesus’ apostles thought he was going to usher in the new kingdom and power of Israel – they saw him teach with authority, perform miracles, challenge the powers – it is very possible that Judas was interested in the worldly power Jesus showed and followed to gain from worldly ambition, out of greed and selfish gain.
* Waking up to the reality that Jesus was not ushering in an earthly kingdom of military, economic and political power, perhaps Judas grew in hate – thought he wasted 3 years of his life when he could have been gaining for himself.
* He listened to Jesus, saw all he did and was unmoved – he dove deeper into deceit.
* When Judas witnesses Mary anointing Jesus with the expensive oil, he goes to sell Christ for 30 pieces of silver.
* The oil was worth a year of working wages (300 denarii) Judas sold Jesus for the low price of what you would pay for a slave.
* Prophecy tells of Judas’ betrayal – Psalm 41:9; Psalm 55:12-14; Zechariah 11:12-13.
* Was Judas born with the purpose of betraying Christ and being damned?
* God knew Judas would betray him, scripture is fulfilled in the betrayal, but Judas wasn’t coerced into betraying Christ – he is responsible for his actions.
* The light of the truth in Jesus didn’t transform him – he hardened his heart at the revelation of Jesus. It was so hardened to the truth that Judas became a willing instrument of Satan.
* Divine mercy gave way to divine judgment – Judas was handed over to Satan because sin triumphed in his heart.
* Judas was damned because of his own failure to heed what he heard.

Twelve Apostles Named

|  |  |  |  |
| --- | --- | --- | --- |
| Matt 10:2-4 | Mark 3:16-19 | Luke 6: 14-16 | Acts 1:13 |
| Peter  Andrew  James  John | Peter  James  John  Andrew | Simon Peter  Andrew  James  John | Peter  James  John  Andrew |
| Philip  Bartholomew  Thomas  Matthew | Philip  Bartholomew  Matthew  Thomas | Philip  Bartholomew  Matthew  Thomas | Philip  Thomas  Bartholomew  Matthew |
| James  Thaddeus  Simon  Judas I | James  Thaddeus  Simon  Judas I | James  Simon  Judas  Judas I | James  Simon  Judas |

