**Luke 6:12-16**

<https://thebiblesays.com/commentary/luke/luke-6/luke-612-16/>

Luke describes the time that Jesus went to the mountain to pray through the night. The next day Jesus calls His twelve disciples and also appoints them as apostles. Luke lists the twelve apostles by name.

The parallel Gospel accounts for this event are Matthew 10:1-4 and Mark 3:13-19.

It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God (v 12).

Luke signals a narrative shift with the phrase: It was at this time. The word translated as time in this verse is the Greek word ἡμέρα (G2250 – pronounced “hay-mer'-ah”). Its most common meaning is a literal “day,” but it can also mean a metaphorical “day,” such as in Luke 2:1: “Now in those days a decree went out from Caesar Augustus…” It seems that Luke uses it in the latter sense and is moving the story along to the next significant event in the life and ministry of Jesus.

Luke describes that Jesus went off to the mountain to pray. Based on the context of Matthew 5:1-2 and Luke 6:17-19, this mountain could be the same one that is referred to in the title of Jesus’s famous “Sermon on the Mount.” Tradition places Jesus’s sermon on a slope near the shore of the Sea of Galilee because the mountain’s precise location is not revealed.

This is not the first time Jesus has removed Himself from His disciples and those who gather to hear Him teach and perform miracles. Luke says that “Jesus Himself would often slip away to the wilderness and pray” (Luke 5:16). We also know that Jesus “was led around by the Spirit in the wilderness” for 40 days before being tempted by the devil and beginning His earthly ministry (Luke 4:1-2).

Jesus also prayed to God the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane before submitting Himself to be taken and crucified (Luke 22:41-42). These are not the only times Jesus removes Himself and prays to the Father (Mark 1:35-36, 6:46; Luke 9:18, 28-29, 11:1). These times of solitude and communion with God seem to be a precursor to important events or decisions in the life of Jesus.

Jesus spent the whole night in prayer to God before making one of the most important and world-altering decisions of His time on earth. He was going to call His twelve disciples.

And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles (v 13).

Jesus had a larger group of followers, also regularly referred to as His disciples (Luke 10:1; John 6:66). But Luke informs the reader here that Jesus had a closer group from among His disciples known as the twelve.

The twelve disciples will be with Jesus throughout the rest of His ministry. They will witness His miracles. They will hear His parables and discuss their meaning with Him in less busy moments. They will follow Him wherever He travels. They will be with Him in the upper room for the “Last Supper” (Matthew 26:20) and witness all that followed between then and their Lord’s arrest.

All but one of the twelve will abandon Him during His trial, hiding during His execution on the cross and in the day that follows. They will interact with the resurrected Lord after God raises Him back to life, and receive the Spirit of God to empower them to launch the Great Commission. According to Church tradition, they all suffered for their faith, dying a martyr’s death, except for John, who suffered the death of exile.

In Matthew’s Gospel account of this event, Jesus gave the twelve apostles authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness (Matthew 10:1). Before Christ sends His disciples out to harvest more followers and disciples, He assigns them with power to perform supernatural miracles.

For a time, at least, the twelve will be able to heal like Jesus was able to heal, because Jesus gave them authority to heal. They will be able to cast out demons like Jesus was able to cast out demons. This authority does not come from themselves, but from Jesus who commissioned them. In doing this for His disciples, Jesus is giving them the same pattern that He followed with His Father. In the gospel of John, Jesus said that He does nothing of His own initiative or power, but only what the Father tells Him to do. Throughout His earthly life, Jesus always acted entirely within the authority His Father granted Him. In many respects, Jesus is giving His disciples the opportunity to be like Him.

He also may be giving them this authority to help disperse the crowds that seem to be making it difficult for Jesus to communicate His message. By commissioning the twelve with these powers, Jesus might be able to spend more time teaching and less time healing. In addition, the gospel of the kingdom is proclaimed by twelve additional men, instead of by Jesus alone. The reach of Jesus’s ministry is greatly expanded by this strategy.

Finally, by giving the twelve authority to perform miracles, it also attracts less attention from His enemies toward Him, and helps Him keep His identity concealed until the appointed time, even as more and more Jews are blessed and offer more praises to God for the marvelous things He is doing.

Luke does not include Jesus’s giving of authority to His disciples in his account. This may be because Matthew then immediately describes Jesus sending out the twelve to “go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” and to “heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:5-8). Including the granting of such authority before being sent off makes sense for the order of events in Matthew. It also seems that Jesus is specifically trying to reach the people of Israel by giving His authority and power to the disciples.

Because Luke is writing to Greek Gentiles and trying to communicate the history of the life of Jesus and the disciples, this section meant for the Jews of Israel may not hold as much significance for Luke’s intended audience. It may also be that Jesus did not send His twelve disciples out immediately after calling them and thus the giving of authority is not pertinent to Luke’s account. We know that Matthew writes more thematically and Luke is concerned more with the chronological timeline of events (Luke 1:1-3).

At any rate, Luke does not emphasize Jesus’s command for His disciples to only go to the lost sheep of Israel as Matthew does—Luke probably does not emphasize this because he does not want to confuse the Gentile audience to whom he is writing and to whom the Gospel had since become available.

The twelve are both disciples and apostles of Jesus. Before Luke gives the names of the twelve, he uses the word apostles, instead of only disciples to describe them. The designation is important. Disciple means “learner” or “follower.” Jesus had many disciples. Luke later indicates that He had no fewer than seventy (Luke 10:1). “Apostle” carries more weight and authority. An apostle is literally one who is sent out on behalf of the one who sent him. They are like an ambassador. An apostle’s words and actions represent and carry a similar weight of the one the ambassador represents. Centuries later when the church was sorting out which written works should be included in the New Testament, a primary consideration was Apostolic sponsorship.

Luke begins to name those whom Jesus set apart as apostles:

Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew (v 14).

The first of the twelve was Simon, who is called Peter. Luke may have begun with Peter because he is featured as one of the main personalities ministering in Judea in the first half of Acts, and seems to be the leader of the twelve. It would make sense then to begin with the leader, and someone who is familiar.

Simon, who is called Peter, is probably the disciple that we also know the most about. Peter, along with his brother Andrew, were among the first of Jesus’s disciples according to Matthew and John (Matthew 4:18-20; John 1:40-42). Peter was a Galilean fisherman whose given name was Simeon (Acts 15:14). Simeon is the namesake of the second oldest of Jacob’s (later Israel) twelve sons (Genesis 29:33). Simon is the Greek version of Simeon. Both Simeons were described as short-tempered men of action. Jacob’s Simeon, along with his brother Levi, took revenge on the people of Shechem for the rape of his sister, “Each took his sword and came upon the city unawares, and killed every male” (Genesis 34:25). Until he became disillusioned by Jesus’s arrest, Simon Peter was willing to fight to the death for Jesus, and as his Master was being arrested, cut off a man’s ear, before Jesus told him to stop (John 18:10). One of the twelve tribes of Israel was named after Simeon, son of Jacob.

While Simon was the Greek version of his given name, this disciple was more widely known by the nickname, Peter. Peter is the Anglicized version of the Greek word for “rock” or “stone” which is “Petros.” Peter is also sometimes referred to as “Cephas” which also means “rock” (John 1:42).

“Petros” is a good description of Peter’s personality. Rocks are hard and Peter was hard-headed. Peter is blunt. He speaks his mind, which sometimes results in him saying awkward things (Mark 9:5-6). Sometimes Peter’s frankness leads him to say evil things, such as when he rebuked Jesus (Mark 8:32-33). But he also on occasion speaks bold truth, as evidenced by the fact that Peter blurted out to Jesus that He was the Messiah (Luke 9:18-20). His rough actions mirrored his plain and honest mind. He is sincere in the things he says, whether it is getting out of the boat to walk on water, or in being willing to die for his Lord.

Peter was among the three (along with James and John) of Jesus’s closest friends. The trio witnessed Jesus reveal His glory on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9; Mark 9:1-9; Luke 9:28-36). Peter infamously denied Jesus in the wake of His arrest and wept bitterly when he recognized his cowardice. The resurrected Jesus restored Peter and reaffirmed to His broken disciple that He had big plans for him, if he would follow Him to the death (John 21:15-22). Peter did follow Him. Peter exemplifies the primary characteristic Jesus seemed to apply to His selection of apostles—the willingness to fight and die for the cause. None of the twelve appear to have had credentials that would have impressed the Jewish elites.

Peter boldly preached the gospel at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-41). He is used by God to bring the gospel to the Gentiles (Acts 10). And he valiantly led the church in the face of constant persecution, first from the Jews (Acts 4:1-22; 5:17-42), later from King Herod (Acts 12:1-19), and eventually from Rome. It is believed that Peter was crucified by order of Caesar Nero in Rome. Tradition claims that Peter asked to be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to be killed in the same manner as his Lord.

Simon, who is called Peter is believed to have been the source for Mark’s gospel account. It was to the house of Mark’s mother where Peter came when he was miraculously released from prison (Acts 12:12). He is the author of at least two epistles (1 Peter and 2 Peter). In them, he urged his readers to live by faith in the face of fiery trials and false teachers so that they might obtain the reward of divine “inheritance” (1 Peter 1:4) and enter Jesus’s “eternal kingdom” (2 Peter 1:11) as his Master taught him and his fellow disciples to do (Matthew 6:20, 33; 7:13-14, 21).

Jesus loves Peter and will lead this fisherman from Galilee to do great things for His Kingdom. Peter’s sincerity and fearlessness will be used by God mightily.

The second apostle Luke names is Andrew, Peter’s brother. Like his brother, Andrew was a fisherman and an early follower of Jesus. But before Andrew followed Jesus, he was a disciple of John the Baptizer (John 1:35-40). Andrew probably followed John for a short time after the Baptizer relocated his ministry to Galilee (where Andrew lived) following his arrest and interrogation by the religious authorities in Jerusalem (Matthew 4:12). After John told Andrew that Jesus was the “Lamb of God,” Andrew found out where Jesus was staying and spent the night with Him. The next morning, Andrew told Peter that he had found the Messiah and brought him to Jesus (John 1:41-42).

Elsewhere the Bible says that Andrew brought the young boy who had the fishes and loaves to Jesus (John 6:8), and that he and Philip brought some curious Greek-speaking Jews to see Jesus (John 12:20-22). After Jesus prophesied that the beautiful stones of the temple would be torn down, Andrew, along with Peter, James, and John asked Jesus what He meant (Mark 13:3). Andrew is last mentioned by name in the Bible in Acts 1:13 where he is waiting in the upper room in obedience to the risen Lord’s commands to go to Jerusalem and wait.

Church tradition holds that Andrew was martyred and killed for his faith and executed on an x-shaped cross.

The third apostle Luke names is James the son of Zebedee. James and his brother, John, were Galilean fishermen, and probably worked in the family business for their father, Zebedee, and were partners with Peter (Luke 5:10). When Matthew 27:56 and Mark 15:40 are harmonized, it appears that James and John’s mother was Salome. Salome was at the cross with Jesus’s mother when He was crucified (Matthew 27:56; Mark 15:40). The parallel passage in John’s Gospel indicates that Salome may have been the sister of Mary (John 19:25). This would make James and John blood-relatives and cousins of Jesus.

These brothers were called to follow Jesus shortly after Andrew and Peter were called to follow Him (Matthew 4:21-22). Jesus referred to James and John as “‘Boanerges,’ which means ‘Sons of Thunder’” (Mark 3:17). Both brothers were zealous. On at least one occasion their zeal was misguided when they asked if their Master wanted them to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village who spurned Jesus’s request for hospitality:

“When the days were approaching for His ascension, He was determined to go to Jerusalem; and He sent messengers on ahead of Him, and they went and entered a village of the Samaritans to make arrangements for Him. But they did not receive Him, because He was traveling toward Jerusalem. When His disciples James and John saw this, they said, ‘Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?’ But He turned and rebuked them, and said, ‘You do not know what kind of spirit you are of; for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them.’ And they went on to another village.”  
(Luke 9:51-56)

James was fiery and ambitious. He wanted to be great. He prompted his mother to ask Jesus to appoint her sons to sit on Jesus’s left and ride side at the coming of His kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21, Mark 10:35-37). This request stoked resentment and jealousy among the other disciples (Mark 10:41). But Jesus did not discourage their ambition. He redirected their fierce zeal to be servants and encouraged their ambition to be great:

“Calling them to Himself, Jesus said to them, ‘You know that those who are recognized as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them; and their great men exercise authority over them. But it is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant; and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many.’”  
(Mark 10:42-45)

Interestingly, in Revelation 3:21, Jesus offers this reward to share His throne with Him to any believer in Laodicea who overcomes as He, Jesus, overcame. One trial Jesus overcame was the temptation to live in His own will, and to seize power rather than serving the mission His Father sent Him to serve.

Like Peter, James and John appeared to be part of Jesus’s closest group. The trio were allowed into the room when Jesus raised Jairus’s daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37). They were the only three disciples to witness Christ’s transfiguration (Matthew 17:1, Mark 9:2, Luke 9:28). And James, Peter, and John were brought by Jesus further into the Garden of Gethsemane and were asked to pray for Him as the Lord was deeply distressed about the cup He was about to drink (Matthew 26:36-27).

James was the first of the apostles to be executed and martyred for his faith (Acts 12:2). He was killed at the command of Herod Agrippa I of Judea around 44 A.D. The Sons of Thunder also demonstrate that Jesus selected His closest followers to have sufficient zeal to die for the cause to which they committed.

The fourth apostle Matthew names is John, James’s brother. John is seen alongside his brother every time James is mentioned in the gospels. John was particularly close to Jesus during His earthly ministry. In his own gospel account, it is often thought that John references himself by the description, “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

This disciple was the one who reclined beside Jesus at the last supper and asked who the betrayer was (John 13:23-25); who was the lone disciple who stood at the cross with Jesus’s mother (John’s aunt) and his own mother (John 19:25-27; see also Matthew 27:56 ; Mark 15:40); who ran with Peter to see the empty tomb (John 20:2-10); and who was with Peter and the risen Lord Jesus when the latter restored the former on the shore of Galilee (John 21:1-22). John also may have been the unnamed disciple who along with Andrew was first turned onto Jesus by John the Baptist (John 1:35-40).

In Acts, John is mentioned four times. He is in the upper room waiting with the other disciples (Acts 1:13). He was with Peter when Peter healed the lame man by the Beautiful Gate and then gave a sermon (Acts 3). As this sermon was being shared, John was arrested along with Peter by the temple guard and threatened by the Sadducees (Acts 4:1-23). And John was sent with Peter by the other apostles to Samaria to investigate the reports that the Samaritans had received the gospel (Acts 8:14). The only time he is mentioned in the non-Johannine epistles is when Paul describes him along with James (Jesus’s half-brother), Cephas (Peter) as “reputed pillars [of the Church]” (Galatians 2:9).

John was the author of four epistles. These were 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. John received the visions that were the source of Revelation while exiled on the island of Patmos (Revelation 1:9). Church tradition holds that John later died in exile on this island.

The fifth apostle Luke names is Philip. Philip was from the fishing village of Bethsaida, the hometown of Peter and Andrew on the northeastern shore of Galilee (John 1:44). Jesus personally called Philip to “Follow Me” the day after He summoned Peter and Andrew (John 1:43). Philip led his reluctant brother, Nathanael, to Jesus (John 1:45-51). The other three times Philip is mentioned in the Gospels are when he brought the Hellenized Jews to Andrew, and together the two led them to Jesus (John 12:21-22); when Jesus tested Philip asking Him where they were to buy food for the multitudes, before Christ miraculously fed them (John 6:5-7); and when Philip asked Jesus to show the Father to the disciples (John 14:8-9).

In between Jesus’s ascension into heaven and the coming of the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, Philip is with the disciples in the upper room (Acts 1:23). Church tradition holds that Philip the Apostle was martyred and killed for his faith and either crucified or beheaded in Hierapolis, a Roman city in Anatolia (modern-day Turkey, which was the Roman province called “Asia Minor”) around the year 80 A.D.

The sixth apostle Luke names is Bartholomew. This disciple is only mentioned by this name in the four listings of disciples. Besides Luke’s listing, these include Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, and Acts 1:13. Bartholomew is never mentioned by this name in John’s gospel. In all four listings, Bartholomew’s name immediately follows Philip. Bartholomew means “son of Talmai” and may have only been a patronymic name.

It is possible that this “son of Talmai” is the same Nathanael who Philip told “We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote–Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph (John 1:45). Nathanael’s response and his introduction to Jesus are interesting,

“Nathanael said to him, ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ Philip said to him, ‘Come and see.’ Jesus saw Nathanael coming to Him, and said of him, ‘Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!’ Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ Nathanael answered Him, ‘Rabbi, You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel.’ Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Because I said to you that I saw you under the fig tree, do you believe? You will see greater things than these.’ And He said to him, ‘Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see the heavens opened and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man.’”  
(John 1:46-51)

Church tradition holds that Bartholomew was martyred and killed for his faith in Armenia by crucifixion, decapitation, or being skinned alive.

And Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot (v 15).

The seventh apostle Luke names is Matthew. Matthew was a Roman tax collector in the employment of Herod Antipas. His job was to collect taxes on goods that flowed up and down the highway that ran from Damascus through Capernaum where he was headquartered, to the port town of Acre on the Mediterranean coast or to Jerusalem to the south.

As a tax collector he would have known the price of goods and been an excellent record keeper. To hold such a post, Matthew would have been fluent in Aramaic, the household language throughout Judea, and Greek, the commercial language of the Roman Empire. He also would have known a fair bit of Latin, the official language of the Roman administration. As a Jew, Matthew was fluent in Hebrew. Because he collected taxes for Rome, Matthew would have been despised by his fellow Jews as someone who sold out to the enemy. Tax collectors were known to overcharge the rates and grow rich off the excess.

Jesus called Matthew to be a disciple and later attended a party at Matthew’s house (Luke 5:29). Luke calls Matthew “Levi” when he is first introduced to Jesus (Luke 5:27). Levi is his name in Hebrew, and Matthew is his Greek name. Mark writes that he was the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). It is possible that Matthew was related to a second apostle named James, who also had a father named Alphaeus (Mark 3:18). The Bible never officially states that these two disciples were related, but they may have been.

Matthew is the author of the Gospel account bearing his name. He is not mentioned again in scripture after Luke lists him with the other disciples in Acts 1:13. Jesus’s selection of Matthew would likely have been considered controversial given his previous occupation as a tax collector, but the Bible makes clear that God looks past externalities and sees the heart (I Samuel 16:7).

Church tradition holds that Matthew was martyred and killed for his faith, possibly in Ethiopia.

The eighth apostle Luke names is Thomas. The name Thomas in Hebrew means “twin.” Beyond the listing of disciples, he is only mentioned by name on three other occasions in scripture. All of them are found in the gospel of John.

The first is after Jesus informs the disciples that He will travel to the village of Bethany, outside Jerusalem, to see Mary and Martha and weep for the death of his friend, Lazarus. In a sign of commitment to Jesus and pessimistic concern for His safety, Thomas tells his fellow disciples “Let us also go, so that we may die with Him” (John 11:16). The selection of Thomas also demonstrates that Jesus chose those who would have the commitment to die for the cause.

The second time we see Thomas in scripture is when Thomas is skeptical and doubts the disciples’ accounts that Jesus has risen from the dead. He famously declared, “Unless I see in His hands 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” (John 20:25).

The third and final time occurred eight days later, when Jesus did appear to Thomas and he confessed “My Lord and my God!” (John 20:28).

According to Church tradition, Thomas was martyred and killed for his faith as he shared the gospel in India.

The ninth apostle Luke names is James the son of Alphaeus. This disciple is not obviously mentioned by name outside the listings of the twelve anywhere in scripture. But he appears to be mentioned as “James” (Matthew 27:56) or “James the Less” (Mark 15:40) as the son of “Mary the wife of Clopas” (John 19:24). (This is a different Mary than Jesus’s mother and Mary Magdalene). Church tradition holds that Clopas was the brother of Jesus’s earthly father, Joseph (Eusebius of Caesarea, Church History, 3.11.2). If this report is accurate, then this disciple, James, would also have been related to Jesus as a cousin by marriage. If so it appears that Alphaeus, the father of James; and Clopas, the husband of Mary (John 19:24) are the same person.

James may have been the half-brother to his fellow apostle, Matthew, whom Mark also describes as the son of Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). The Bible never overtly makes this claim, but it does provide several points of evidence that, when drawn together, show that they might be related.

Church tradition holds that James the son of Alphaeus was martyred and killed for his faith.

The tenth apostle Luke names is Simon the Zealot. Matthew's gospel says he was a “Cananaean" (rendered in Greek, “Kananaios”). Mark’s list also uses the term “Cananaean." Luke tells us that Simon “was called the Zealot.” Luke repeats this label in Acts 1:13. "Cananaean" is an Aramaic word, the root of which is "qannā'," meaning "jealous" or “zealous.” In either language, Simon is known as "the Zealot."

The term Zealot referred to the militant political group of Jews who were zealous to liberate Judea from the pagan influence of Roman occupation.

The party of Jewish Zealots waged the Jewish wars that began in AD 66 and ended in AD 73. The headquarters of the Zealots was in Gamla, a fortress town about five miles from the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. The Romans placed a legion on the eastern shore of Galilee, perhaps because of the presence of the Zealots.

It could be that Simon was a member of that party, in which case he would have been part of a group of twelve that included a tax collector who worked for the Romans as well as a Zealot who was dedicated to eliminating the Romans. During the Jewish Wars, the Zealots at Gamla jumped from the cliff on which the city was located rather than be captured by the Romans. It is estimated that between three and four thousand leapt to their death. Jerusalem was razed to the ground as a part of this war in 70 AD. The final stand was made by the Zealots at Masada, when roughly a thousand Zealots took their lives rather than be captured by the Romans.

Church tradition claims that Simon the Zealot was martyred and killed for his faith, but its legends vary wildly as to where this was to have occurred. Some say he was killed in Samaria, some in Persia, and others say he was executed as far away as Spain or England.

It seems clear that Jesus desired the zealot spirit, and its attendant ambition, but intended to redirect it toward a courageous advance of the Gospel of the Kingdom (Matthew 4:17).

The eleventh apostle Luke names is Judas the son of James (v. 16). Like James, the son of Alphaeus, outside of the four listings of the twelve (Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:14-16, and Acts 1:13), Judas is not mentioned by name anywhere else in scripture. In the Matthew and Mark’s listings, Judas is called “Thaddaeus.”

Church tradition teaches that Judas was martyred and killed for his faith in Syria.

The last and twelfth apostle Luke names is Judas Iscariot. Judas Iscariot was the apostle who betrayed Jesus. The name Judas Iscariot means “Judah of Kerioth.” Kerioth was a town located in the far south of Judea, approximately 25 miles south of Jerusalem and 10 miles west of the Dead Sea. Judas had the distinction of being the only disciple from Judea. The Gospel of John indicates that Jesus spent his first year in Judea, with little known fruit. It could be that Judas was His only disciple from that area, and the one who would betray Him, which would make complete Judea’s rejection of Jesus.

Judas was the treasurer of the disciples. But he embezzled their funds. With a miserly attitude, he begrudged Martha and Lazarus’s sister, Mary, when she used expensive perfume to wipe Jesus’s feet instead of donating it to the Lord where Judas could secretly steal from the donation (John 12:4-6). Matthew reports that it was this occasion where Judas sought out Jesus’s enemies to bargain a price for betraying His master to them. His opportunity came quickly when Judas was in the city of Jerusalem with Jesus and the other disciples for Passover. He agreed to do this for thirty pieces of silver (Matthew 26:14-16). Luke says that Satan entered Judas as he did this (Luke 22:3). Since Judas was from Judea, he might have relied upon old connections in making this bargain.

Judas went with Jesus and the disciples to the upper room. There Jesus washed the feet of his betrayer (John 13:5). As He led the Passover Feast, Jesus announced that one of His disciples would betray Him and quietly identified Judas before sending him away. The other disciples were ignorant to what was happening and believed Judas was running an errand (John 13:21-28).

Judas did not return to Jesus until he came accompanied by a large, armed crowd sent by the chief priests and city elders (Matthew 26:47). He identified Jesus with a kiss. As Jesus was being tried for execution, Judas deeply regretted what he had done and tried to return the money. The priests refused it. Judas threw the money in the temple sanctuary, fled, and hanged himself. (Matthew 27:3-5)

Luke describes Judas falling and details that “all his intestines gushed out” (Acts 1:18). Matthew 27:4 indicates that Judas had great remorse when he saw that “he betrayed innocent blood.” His later suicide might have presaged the Zealots who would a generation later kill themselves when they did not get their own way. Many believe the inter-fighting of the Zealots in Jerusalem was largely responsible for their defeat.

As a group, the twelve were an eclectic bunch. They came from different backgrounds, including poor fishermen, wealthy Roman tax collectors, and national Zealots. They all appear to be from the Galilean region, with the exception of Judas Iscariot. What the twelve had in common was an ambition to be great and a zealous, fighting spirit that was willing to die for a cause. All but one made the transition from willingness to die for a national cause to willingness to die for God’s kingdom, a kingdom that is not of this world (John 18:36).

With His guidance and redirection, Jesus will make tremendous use of such men. They and others will found a movement that will sweep the world, bringing dignity to the oppressed, and contesting the morality of exploitation. Rome will crush the political zealots, but will fall to the spiritual zealots, when the Emperor Constantine will turn Rome over to church leaders in 330 AD.

**Biblical Text**

**12 It was at this time that He went off to the mountain to pray, and He spent the whole night in prayer to God. 13 And when day came, He called His disciples to Him and chose twelve of them, whom He also named as apostles: 14 Simon, whom He also named Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James and John; and Philip and Bartholomew; 15 and Matthew and Thomas; James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot; 16 Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.**