

# Luke 6:12-16

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*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 Baptist (John 1:35-40). *Andrew* probably followed John for a short time after the Baptist 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 right 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**

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