

Bo/Enter/The Twelve

Mark 3:7-19 (Matt 10:1-4; 12:15-21; Luke 6:12-16)

Read Mark 3:7-8

The healing and public challenge regarding healing on the Sabbath made the Pharisees mad and they conspired with Herod's administration. They devised a wicked plan (Mark 3:6). But Yeshua through insight of the Holy Spirit knew of their plan and left (Matt. 12:15).

He returned to the north shore of Lake Galilee, but with a very large crowd. People from all over Galilee, Judah, Idumea, Perea and even Phoenicia came to find the Rabbi of Nazareth. Some wanted to become His disciples but others just wanted healing.

So many sick came and they no longer waited patiently for healing, some pushed and even fell against Him to touch Him. The evil spirits would see Him coming, throw their host down before Him and shout, "You are the Son of God!" before leaving (Mark 3:11).

Read Matthew 12:15-16

He healed all of them who came, but in return asked for their discretion. Not even allowing the demons to acclaim Him.

Why a discreet ministry?

Yeshua felt God had sent Him to proclaim the good news about the Kingdom and to call people to repentance in anticipation of the Messianic Age. He wanted to train up disciples to carry the message forward. These large crowds impeded that mission.

The territory of Galilee teetered on the edge of a revolution, and with the large crowds He could easily ignite an insurrection. He didn't intend on stirring the civil unrest; he was not a civil activist.

During the days of the Master, the revolutionary Zealot movement had grown so large; Josephus considered them a 4th sect of Judaism [Sadducees, Essenes, Pharisees and Zealots]. Their theology followed the Pharisees but politically they believed only God was their ruler and lord, and they rejected Roman rule and advocated terrorism, assassinations and violent resistance!

The zealot movement started 30 years prior to the Master's ministry, in a city east of Bethsaida called Gamla.

This group of young, hotheaded Galileans was just waiting for a leader/preferably the Messiah to unite them and begin the war of Messiah. Their message was "God

alone reigns over Israel!" –which was dangerously close to Yeshua's –"The reign (Kingdom) of God is at hand."

So, people confused the two and the Zealots of Galilee rallied behind Yeshua as a revolutionary hero and warrior messiah, however He could only disappoint them.

Read Matthew 12:19

Matthew saw a prophecy from the book of Isaiah fulfilled by the Master, by His secrecy and low profile approach to ministry.

Matthew quotes Is. 42:16 the longest quote from the Torah in the Gospels. He doesn't quote the passage word for word again. The Septuagint may have influenced His word choices, but it's very much in the Targumic style. This passage is the first in the *Brit Chadashah* [New Testament] to link the Messiah to the mysterious suffering "Servant of the Lord". The Targum agrees with Matthew's connection.

Read Matthew 12:12-20

Isaiah says the Messiah will not yell in the streets to raise His supporters like the Zealots or like a political leader. He will NOT argue and fight to establish His way. Yeshua fulfilled these prophecies with His everyday manner and behavior. When the Pharisees conspired against Him, He withdrew to avoid confrontation. He was gentle, showing mercy to the weak.

Matthew quoted: "a bruised reed" no longer stands straight. It's vulnerable and fragile. "A smoldering wick" has only a spark of life left in it. Only a stub remains in the lamp, ready to be replaced. (*A Targum says the same)

His disciples today should learn the manner of their master. We are too quick to snuff out every smoldering wick with which we disagree or to break every bent reed, which stands in our way. We are quick to join a quarrel, raising our voice in the streets in the name of truth and dogma. In our zeal to advance the kingdom, we sometimes tread upon the principles of the kingdom. We should emulate the Master's gentle nature, standing firm for truth, but always with a low profile, and humble disposition.

Read Matthew 12:21

Christians don't normally see this as Christ's mission, but in His Messianic job description in Isaiah (42:4), Messiah comes to bring Torah to all nations. When Yeshua returns He will be judge over all humanity, legislating according to Torah and dispensing justice.

Matthew's version quotes the Septuagint version of Isaiah 42:4, which ends the passage with..."and in his name shall the Gentiles trust." BUT the Hebrew says..."and the coastlands will wait expectantly for His Torah."

Which is right?

Will the Gentiles wait expectantly for Torah or will they trust in His name? They are both the inspired Word of God....and they mean the SAME thing. By placing faith in Him, they also receive His teaching (Torah)!

Read Mark 3:9

The crush of the crowd made it difficult for Yeshua to teach His disciples. He told them to prepare a boat. He stepped in and they pushed off shore. Later He said to put into land a distance up shore. He got out and went up the hillside alone to pray. It was time to make some decisions.

Read Luke 6:12

The Master prayed, standing all night, in communication with the Father about the choosing of the 12 special men out of all of His disciples. He didn't turn anyone away from following Him, during His ministry, He even sent out 70 at one time to the villages of Galilee ahead of Him.

Why did He select a special group of 12?

Mark 3:14-15, explains so He could send them out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons. Matthew 10:1 adds to heal every kind of disease and sickness. Matthew 10:7 says they were to specifically preach His message: "The Kingdom of Heaven is at hand." They were His representatives acting on His behalf- just as the Father sent Him! He called these 12 to be "with Him"-discipleship and full time service.

He commissioned them to preach His message and gave them supernatural authority that He himself exercised. Matthew 10:8 adds to raise the dead and cleanse the lepers to their job description. These 12 uniquely represented Yeshua and His Messianic Mission.

Read Luke 6:12-13

In the morning He went to Capernaum and called all His many disciples to Him and chose 12 of them (Mark 3:13). He called them "apostles".

Apostles (Greek)= messenger sent out on a mission as an agent of the sender.
Shaliach (Hebrew)= to send/sent ones.

In Judaism this is a legal agent or representative dispatched on a mission to represent another man and his interests. *Shlichim* (plural), sent ones, didn't occupy

a religious office. They simply acted as agents of the sender. *They were a fully accredited representative with a specific commission.

The man sending the *shaliach* gave him something like a “power of attorney” – authority of the sender. Example, a man could send a *shaliach* on his behalf to betroth a maiden for him (Abraham/Isaac/Eliezer).

In this case the *shiliach* stood in for the man who sent him in the betrothal ceremony. A man could also send one to deliver a certificate of divorce too. Moshe, Elijah, Elisha and Ezekiel are all considered *Shlichim* for God because they preformed acts ordinarily performed by God alone.

The Sanhedrin sent out *shlichim* to carry out their orders and announce their decisions:

Declare a new month

Set the calendar

Establish matters of law

Appoint teachers

Maintain contact with the Jewish Community

Harvest the first sheaf of barley for First Fruits.

Mitzvahs were preformed or set aside on their authority.

For example they could travel on Shabbat, neglect the mitzvah of dwelling in a Sukkah or set aside any other ceremonial impediment to fulfill their mission, because they basically laid down their own life to fulfill their mission they were sent to do!

The rabbi’s commissioned their apostles by the laying on of hands in the name of the community sending them and they were not ordinarily sent alone, but in pairs. They also carried with them credentialing letters.

Why did Yeshua choose 12 men for His *Shlichim*?

The Lord told Moshe (Num. 13:2) to send one man for each tribe to spy out the land. These spies are referred to as Shlichim. Yeshua did the same and gave His 12 the authority of His name to teach, heal diseases and cast out demons.

Read Mark 3:14

The lost gospel of the Ebionites says He announced the 12 at Peter’s house and said they were to be the testimony to Israel. Mark 3:14 says “He appointed 12, so they would be with Him.” This idea of appointing a fellowship among the core of disciples comes from the schools of the Pharisees. Remember they organized themselves in to fellowships of *Chaverim*. A *Chaver*, “friend” lived according to the same legal standards as the rest of the fellowship. Those who did constituted a *Chavurah* (fellowship).

Things about the disciples similar to the Pharisees:

Same social structure

Similar to the Essenes:

Communal purse and common fraternity

Things about the disciples that are not similar to Pharisees:

Exclude sinners and tax collectors

Concern for litigious table rules (halachic etiquette)

Not similar to the Essenes:

Austere and monk-like asectism

Renounce all their personal property

Commit to lives of celibacy and ritual purity

This 12 became an extended family, a brotherhood. Just as other rabbi's followers called themselves "The House of _____" (Hillel, Shammai, etc). Rabbi Yeshua formed a house in which He was the head. As brothers they lived together, traveled together, worked together, prayed together and learned together: *Beit Yeshua*, i.e. "The House of Yeshua" (Ps. 133:1).

Read Mark 3:16-19

You can get the names of the 12 from four lists: Mark 3:16-19; Matt. 10: 2-4; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13.

Simon Peter is always listed first and Judas Iscariot is always last. Yeshua chose 2 Shim'on's, 2 Ya'akov's, three Yehudah's and eventually there were 2 Mattai's! In English that would be: 2 Simon's, 2 James' (Jacobs), 3 Judah's (Judas) and 2 Matthew's.

This repetition of names is the same popular English nomenclature where it might be common to have 2 Bobs, 2 Mikes and 3 Jims in a group of any men.

To avoid confusion the disciples used epithets and nicknames to distinguish one from another. Yeshua assigned some nicknames. The epithets sound almost like thugs in a mafia family or the assumed names of professional wrestlers than a respectable school of sages.

In modern times their nicknames would translate to: The Rock, Johnny Thunderhead, Big Jim, Little Jim, The Twin, Baby-face and Simon the Knife!

The Twelve:

Read Matthew 10:2 **Shim'on (Petros/Kefa) bar Yonah**

The first doesn't mean He was Yeshua's first follower- it means He was the Leader/spokesperson for the group. He is also considered one of the 3 Pillars with [Yochanan] John the Beloved and [Ya'akov/Jacob] James the brother of Yeshua.

Shim'on Peter and Andrew, sons of *Zavadi* [Zebedee], were brothers and they worked together as fisherman, the sons of a fisherman named *Yonah* (In English bibles Jonah = *Yonah* is a short version of Yochanan). They originally came from Bethsaida, a small fishing village, on the north shore of the Sea of Galilee. He married a Capernaum girl and relocated there to a house He eventually shares with his wife, his children, and his mother in law, his brother Andrew and Rabbi Yeshua from Nazareth.

At some point Yeshua gives him the nickname *Petros*, i.e. "Rock". Paul refers to Him as "*Cephas*" -Greek transliteration of the Aramaic word for "Rock" [*Kefa*]. *Shim'on bar Yonah* seems to be known by both epithets: *Kefa* (*Cephas*) and *Petros* (Peter).

According to the Church historian Eusebius, Peter left Judea and carried on a ministry to Jews living in Diaspora before traveling to Rome. While in Rome, he refuted the evil Simon Magus and spent some years among the Roman believing community. Sometime later, Emperor Nero arrested him and crucified him. He hung on his cross upside down.

Read Matthew 10:2 **Andrei bar Yonah**

Andrew is a name loaned from a Greek word that means "manly". Andrew may have had a different name but the Jewish community used His Hebraized version of the name Andrew [The Talmud mentions him as *Rabbi Chaninah bar Andrei*].

Andrew a fisherman, originally born in Bethsaida, he lived in Capernaum with his older brother Shim'on. Before becoming a disciple of Yeshua, Andrew already practiced discipleship under Rabbi Yochanan the Immerser, along with John the son of Zebedee. Andrew and John were also His very first followers.

The Gospels rarely mention Andrew, so there are legends about him. Origen says, after the disciples dispersed, Andrew preached along the Black Sea.

Church tradition reports He suffered martyrdom on an "X" shaped cross, either in Scythia or in the city of Patras, Achea on the north coast of the Peloponnese.

Read Matthew 10:2 **Ya'akov ben Zavdai**

The fisherman *Ya'akov ben Zavdai* was the older brother of the disciple John. Through terrible mistranslations his name is translated James, but it should be Jacob.

Another disciple of the 12 also named Ya'akov- James the son of Alphaeus, shared James son of Zebedee's same first name so they gave them the names "Big" [HaGadol] and "the Less" to differentiate between the two.

James and John lived in Bethsaida with their father [*Zavdai*] Zebedee. Zebedee owned several boats and also employed hired men in the trade, indicating a certain level of financial affluence. Shim'on Peter and Andrew fished in a partnership with him and his sons.

James' mother *Shelomit* [*Salome*] also became a follower of Yeshua. On one occasion she even asks the Master to grant her sons the places of honor on His right and left at the Messianic banquet. She also stood among the women at Yeshua's cross.

Even without his mother's efforts James quickly became one of the Master's closest disciples, second only to Peter. James, John and Peter formed an inner circle of the 12 that accompanied the Master most closely.

Christian legend has James traveling to Spain to spread the Gospel, but his early martyrdom makes that extremely unlikely. Herod Agrippa had James beheaded (In Acts) and made him the first of the twelve to suffer martyrdom.

Read Matthew 10:2 **Yochanan ben Zavdai**

Yochanan ben Zavdai was one of the three pillars. He may have been one of the youngest disciples, just a teen when he first became a disciple of Rabbi Yochanan the Immerser, along with his friend Andrew. According to church legend, he is the only disciple to have never married.

He wrote the Gospel of John but appears anonymously and cryptically as the disciple Yeshua loved. After the resurrection, John played an active role in the early years of the Jerusalem community. According to church legend, he later relocated to Ephesus and carried on an active ministry in Asia Minor until his arrest by Emperor Domitian and imprisonment on Patmos. When Domitian died his successor released his political prisoners. John returned to Ephesus and died there. Christian legend says that he lived into the days of Emperor Trajan (98-117 CE) and died in and is buried in Ephesus. He may be the only one of the 12 to have escaped martyrdom.

Read Mark 3:17 **Sons of Thunder**

Boanerges is the word used in the Greek version of the *Brit Chadashah*, that's translated "Sons of Thunder".

Boane- Hebrew "benei" = sons of

Rges – Hebrew ??? no one knows. There are four possibles, but none exact for Thunder, as is it the word "Ra'am".

So why did Yeshua nickname them this? Did it reflect the boisterous character of the two brothers? They once requested permission to call down heavenly fire on a Samaritan village. They even managed to make all the other 10 disciples mad at them (Matt. 20:24)!

It may have been because of their Zealot fervor, since the movement started out of nearby Gamla (close to Bethsaida). Maybe the brothers were eager to take up arms against Rome.

John and James also heard God speak in Thunder at the Transfiguration (Matt. 12:5).

Read John 12:2 **Philip**

A friend of the Zebedee brothers and another native of Bethsaida, Philip was probably also a fisherman.

Philippos (Greek) commonly used by first century Jews that means “horse-loving”. He might have been named after Herod Philip the Tetrarch, since his home village is in Herod Philip’s territory, just east of the border in Galilee.

According to church legend, Philip carried the gospel to Greece, Syria and Phrygia but traditions regarding him are especially uncertain because the early church confused him with Philip the evangelist (Acts).

Philip introduced Nathanael of Cana to Yeshua and brought him into the company of the disciples.

Read Matthew 10:3 **Natan’el bar-Talmi**

Christian tradition assumes that Nathanael of Cana (John 1:45-50) is the same as Bartholomew, which translates “son of Ptolemy”. Philip, Nathanael/Bartholomew are always paired together. Yeshua through the insight of the Holy Spirit prophetically saw Nathanael “under the fig tree”, which idiomatically speaks of studying Torah. From this the tradition came that he was a Scribe or a Rabbi. The mention of Law in John 1:45, has been used to support this; and on this basis Augustine excludes him as one of the twelve, because he was educated.

The Bible tells us almost nothing more about him. According to Eusebius, he travelled to India (anywhere east of Ethiopia) where he left behind a copy of the Gospel of Matthew. Other traditions have him in Ethiopia, Mesopotamia, Lyconia and Armenia where he is said to have been beheaded.

Read John 20:24 **Toma**

The name Thomas is from the Aramaic Toma, which means “twin”. The gospel of John often called him “Didymus” the Greek word for “twin”. Sources about Thomas explain his real name was Yehudah, i.e. “Judas”. As one of three named this of the 12, the disciples referred to him by his nickname, “The Twin” to avoid confusion.

We don’t know the identity of his other twin, but some early traditions report that he bore a striking resemblance to the Master. Perhaps people sometimes mistook him for his teacher, hence the nickname “The Twin”.

Thomas worked as a builder and craftsman in wood, ploughs, and yokes and balances, and boats, and boat oars, and masts, and blacks; in stone, slabs, temples and royal palaces.

Gospel readers remember Thomas for his pragmatic skepticism after the resurrection.

Church legend preserves many traditions and stories about the ongoing work of Thomas. Eusebius reports that the apostles chose Thomas to go to Parthia, and strong early church traditions insist that he carried the gospel into the East as far as India where he met with martyrdom (pierced with a sword) and still remembered among Christians today as Mar Toma. Eastern Christianity looks to Thomas the way the Western Christianity looks to Peter and Paul.

Several apocryphal books bear his name, including the Gnostic-flavored collection of Yeshua’s teachings called the Gospel of Thomas.

Read Matt. 10:3 **Mattai**

Matthew appears in all four gospels, but only the Gospel of Matthew calls him, “Matthew the tax-collector” (10:3). The Gospel of Luke calls Yeshua’s tax-collector disciple Levi. The Gospel of Mark names him Levi the son of Alphaeus. The name Levi, however never appears in the lists of the twelve. The name “Matthew” is the common Levitical and priestly name Mattiyahu or Mattiyah, which means “gift of God”. Mattiyahu commonly was abbreviated to Mattai.

Herod Antipas employed Matthew as a tax collector, a vocation that religious, first-century Jews regarded as despicable and traitorous. He operated a tax booth between Capernaum and Bethsaida, the border between the territory of Herod Antipas and Herod Philip. The disciples probably didn’t like them joining him at first, but quickly warmed up after the lavish banquet Matthew hosted at his home.

Irenaeus tells us Matthew preached the Gospel among the Jewish people and Clement of Alexandria adds that he did it for 15 years.

Eusebius tells us Matthew wrote his Gospel **in Hebrew** before leaving Israel. According to tradition Matthew did it for the benefit of the disciples he was leaving behind in Judea.

Church legends about Matthew's travels seem confused and uncertain; some have him taking the Gospel to Ethiopia, Macedonia, Persia and Parthia. Tradition offers no consensus on his ministry outside Judea and his martyrdom.

The Talmud may shed some light: The Sanhedrin executed five of Yeshua's disciples; one of them was named Mattai.

Read Matthew 10: 3 **Ya'akov ben Chalfai**

The Rabbi had another James (Jacob) in His 12: James the son of Alphaeus. This one was called "James the Less" – "*Ya'akov HaKatan*" i.e. "Little James".

The Bible offers us no info on him except the name of his parents, brother and son.

Church tradition mixes him up with James the brother of Yeshua. The Talmud mentions a Jacob of the village of Sekania who was a healer and a disciple of Yeshua. Sekania was near Nazareth and Cochaba, and 5 miles north of Cana.

The Arab city today, still bears the name. Christian and Muslims both revere the tomb of supposedly belonging to James, a righteous man and powerful healer.

His mother Mary [*Miryam*] and his brother Joses [*Yosef/Yosei*] also accompany Yeshua as disciples and his own son (see below).

Read Matthew 10:3 **Yehudah ben Ya'akov**

"Judas the son of James". The gospel of John refers to him as "Judas (not) Iscariot". The way he is listed paired with or right after, James the Son of Alphaeus, implies he was his son.

To keep him from being confused with Judas Iscariot, he is referred by 2 nicknames: Thaddaeus and Lebbaeus.

Thaddaeus [Taddai] – Aramaic nickname for "bosom-buddy".
Labbaeus [Labai] – is not real clear, but seems like a term of endearment like "lovekins".

If he was James' son, he could have been no more than a teenager. As his grandmother was also a disciple of Yeshua, she may have called him Labbaeus, while pinching his cheeks. Poor guy.

According to early church legend Thomas sent Thaddaeus to the city of Edessa, where he planted Syriac Christianity.

In Catholic tradition Thad is hopelessly mixed up with Jude, Yeshua's younger brother.

Rabbi Lichtenstein suggests Thaddaeus is *Todah* mentioned in the Talmud- another one of the 5 disciples the Sanhedrin put to death in Jerusalem.

Read Matthew 10:4 **Shim'on HaKannai**

Poor Shim'on has been horribly dishonored by translation and is the only disciple to be called a Gentile most of the time and a Canaanite at that! But the mysterious Greek word everyone stumbles over is Kanana, which means Zealot. In modern vernacular, he would be Simon the Terrorist.

"Zealots" in the days of the Master took on this name from the Torah's story of Phinehas and his zeal, in order to justify violence. Shim'on probably saw Yeshua as a possible leader for a potential uprising against Rome.

Armenian tradition has him martyred in Beirut, Lebanon with Judas son of James (above). But a host of contradictions come up against this.

Read Matthew 10:4 **Yehudah ben Shim'on**

Counting Thomas, Judas is the third Yehudah in the list of 12. His father's name was Shim'on, so he was Yehudah ben Shim'on, but the Gospels typically call him Judas Iscariot.

No one knows exactly what the Greek, Iscariot means. Even the Gospel writers uncertain how to spell it, because it appears in various forms.

1. Man of the village of Keriyyot
2. Dagger Man
3. False one, Liar

#1 means simply he was from the city of Keriyyoth.

#2 refers to the Zealot- assassin party of Sicari. Named after the daggers they carried to assassinate with.

This one makes sense, since he was always paired with Simon the Zealot. Perhaps his disappointments in the Master (not leading a revolt) lead him to his betrayal.

Judas served the 12 as treasurer. He held the moneybag and made the necessary purchases and distributed the alms. He may have been overweight. An exaggerated, late apostolic tradition recalls this detail about him.

After the ascension of the Master, the remaining eleven disciples replaced Yehudah with another disciple named Mattai.

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All twelve disciples had 2 things in common: They were all Galileans; all of them had previous contact with Yochanan the Immerser and have been immersed by him.

These are the 12: fishermen, a stonemason, a tax collector, and two terrorists- not the exceptionally pious or educated elites one might expect.

The churches iconography depicting pious-faced men overshadowed by bright halos obscures the real picture of 12 ordinary men called to an exceptional life of adventure. They knew the Master more than any other human beings had the privilege to. They walked with Him, experienced God's power with Him, faced danger with Him and shared joy and sorrows.

Their eyes saw and their ears heard what many prophets and righteous men desired to see and hear, but did not.

They kept the Sabbath with Him, slept in a *sukah* with Him; they made a Passover Seder with Him. They gave up careers, sacrificing everything, even jeopardizing their families financial standings in order to follow Yeshua: To memorize His words, to learn His traditions, to imitate His actions, and to raise up more disciples after Him.

According to Church legends, several years after the ascension, the remaining survivors of the 12 fanned out across the world to deliver the Gospel to all the nations. Thanks to their efforts, today we can number ourselves among the disciples of Yeshua. They are our brothers.