

The Twelve: Four Disciples

(Philip, Thomas, James son of Alpheus and Jude)

MEET THE MEN

Name: Philip

Marital Status:

Home town and general facts: Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. He was called by Jesus to follow him the day after Peter and Andrew.

Profession: Unknown

Age: Unknown

Death: A second century Ephesian tradition believes he died at Hierapolis, roughly one hundred miles inland of Ephesus. Another tradition says Philip was crucified; and as a result, medieval art often depicts Philip on the cross.

Name: Thomas, or Didymus, meaning the twin

Profession: Unknown. Possibly a fisherman. He was fishing with six other disciples (Peter, James, John, Nathanel and 2 others that are unnamed) on the Sea of Tiberias after Jesus' resurrection when Jesus appeared to them. The second miraculous catch of fish happened and Jesus cooked them breakfast. It seems as though these men had gone back to their old job in the absence of clear direction from Jesus after his resurrection. **Hometown:** Unknown. Traditionally somewhere in Galilee.

Married: Unknown.

Age: Unknown. Probably young. Most sources say Peter or James were probably the oldest of the 12, being between 20 and 25 years old. It is quite possible that he was still in his upper teens or low twenties.

Post-ascension ministry: There are many different accounts but they generally seem to agree that he first travelled through the near east: Turkey and Iran (Persia in those days) before reaching India sometime between 49AD and 52AD. He is generally credited with being the first to take the gospel to India, and beginning the church which then became the Orthodox church in India. His time in India is surrounded with legend with claims that he ministered to kings, built many great buildings, and evangelised a great many people. Historical evidence does seem to indicate that the orthodox churches in India (including southern India) are old enough to make the spread of the gospel there in the first century plausible. Certainly Christianity is one of the oldest religions in India - older than Islam.

Death: Most traditional accounts claim that he was martyred in India sometime about 72AD, possibly at Mylapore near Chennai. There is a tomb in Chennai which is claimed to be the tomb of Thomas. A catholic church, San Thome Basilica, was built over this tomb in the 16th century. Other traditional accounts claim that he was martyred in Persia. Still others claim that he died a natural death in Edessa. The last account is an account from the explorer Marco Polo from the

13th century: he claimed that Thomas was accidentally killed by an arrow near Chennai - he claimed that the arrow was shot by a man hunting peacocks.

Name: James son of Alphaeus

Father's name: Alphaeus

Town of Origin: Unknown.

Other names/nicknames: Possibly 'James the Less' or 'James the Younger.' This is a result of a possible correlation with the James referred to in Mark 15.40 who may or may not also be the James (the son of Mary) referred to in Luke 24.10 and (more probably) Mark 16.1.

Meaning of nickname: The Less would probably have referred to a younger age or a shorter height - not importance or status.

Profession: Unknown

Hometown: Unknown.

Married: Unknown.

Age: Unknown. Probably young. Most sources say Peter or James were probably the oldest of the 12, being between 20 and 25 years old. It is quite possible that he was still in his upper teens or low twenties.

Best remembered for: Being one of the 12.

Relatives: Possibly the brother of the apostle Matthew (Levi) who is also referred to as the son of Alphaeus. Otherwise unknown. Some dubious traditional sources claim he was a member of Jesus' family - usually his brother, half-brother or cousin.

Social status: Unknown.

Personality: Unknown.

General facts: None known.

Post-ascension ministry: Very little known.

Death: Tradition maintains that he was martyred by crucifixion in Lower Egypt at Ostrakine.

Name: Jude, also know by several other names: Judas (not Iscariot) and Thaddeus. In lists of the Twelve, he is called Thaddeus, a surname for the name Lebbaeus (Matthew 10:3, [KJV](#)), which means "heart" or "courageous." He wrote the book called Jude in the New Testament.

Marital Status: Unknown

Home town: Unknown

Profession: Unknown

Age: 16-18

Relatives: Father - Alphaeus , Brother - James the Less

Social Status: Unknown

Personality: A man of unwavering conviction

Death: He was crucified at Edessa, A.D. 72 while on a missionary trip to Persia, according to tradition.

THEY LAID THEIR LIVES DOWN

As elders we feel that, as a church, we are called to be followers of Christ, and that's what the disciples were. They learned Jesus' trade, which was to seek and save the lost.

We don't know much about these four disciples. When it comes to Peter, James and John we see them often encouraged and rebuked and a lot of scripture is around them. It's been difficult finding things about these four men, we've had to look at church history in a big way for this one, to see how they influenced the world.

What's significant about all four of these disciples is that they laid their lives down for the Gospel.

A FEW SCRIPTURES OF EACH OF THESE DISCIPLES

John 14:8-11

Philip said to him, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us." Jesus said to him, "Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, 'Show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

Philip's request is valid (hoping for a physical manifestation) because Jesus is teaching them this. Again Philip voices the general attitude and thoughts we all have about Jesus being god. But Jesus says He Himself is a revelation of the Father, and obedience to further revelations from God by the coming of the Holy Spirit will lead to further revelations of the Father.

Too many of us may have given our hearts to the Lord but we're saying, "God, where are you?" and we see him as an imagery being. If we know Jesus, we know the Father. If you want a revelation of God then go back to your first love - Jesus. Don't lose sight of Jesus, make sure you keep your eyes on him and makes sure you have a fresh revelation of him.

John 20:19-29

On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being locked where the disciples were for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, "Peace be with you." When he had said this, he showed them his hands and his side. Then the disciples were glad when they saw the Lord. Jesus said to them again, "Peace be with you. As the Father has sent me, even so I am sending you." And when he had said this, he

breathed on them and said to them, "Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you withhold forgiveness from any, it is withheld."

Now Thomas, one of the Twelve, called the Twin, was not with them when Jesus came. So the other disciples told him, "We have seen the Lord." But he said to them, "Unless I see in his hands the mark of the nails, and place my finger into the mark of the nails, and place my hand into his side, I will never believe."

Eight days later, his disciples were inside again, and Thomas was with them. Although the doors were locked, Jesus came and stood among them and said, "Peace be with you." Then he said to Thomas, "Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand, and place it in my side. Do not disbelieve, but believe." Thomas answered him, "**My Lord and my God!**" Jesus said to him, "Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed."

Thomas had been doubting that Jesus had been raised. See how Thomas answers Jesus - "**My Lord and my God!**" He had a revelation of who Jesus is. We also see that Jesus met Thomas where he was, in his doubting. If we're desperate enough, Jesus will reveal himself to us. We want that revelation of Jesus as a church.

While we don't see anything of James the son of Alpheus in the bible, we know that he laid his life down - his business and everything that he was doing - to follow Jesus and impact this world. That's good enough, he is still a hero.

In the book of Jude we see an amazing doxology of Jesus and how much he loves Jesus. In Jude 3 we see him defend the Gospel, he can unpack it and he is desperate for people not to lose sight of their first love, to go back to the basics. Jude 20 - 21 he encourages them to be full of the Spirit and 20 - 23 he describes a love for the lost.

Jude 1:24-25

Now to him who is able to keep you from stumbling and to present you blameless before the presence of his glory with great joy, to the only God, our Saviour, through Jesus Christ our Lord, be glory, majesty, dominion, and authority, before all time and now and forever. Amen.

Jude 3

Beloved, although I was very eager to write to you about our common salvation, I found it necessary to write appealing to you to contend for the faith that was once for all delivered to the saints.

Jude 20-21

But you, beloved, building yourselves up in your most holy faith and praying in the Holy Spirit, keep yourselves in the love of God, waiting for the mercy of our Lord Jesus Christ that leads to eternal life.

Jude 22-23

And have mercy on those who doubt; save others by snatching them out of the fire; to others show mercy with fear, hating even the garment stained by the flesh.

SEEKING AND SAVING THE LOST IS THE FOCUS

We need to have hope in the Gospel. It's not a second plan. It's what Jesus laid his life down, why Jesus came to this earth. It was to give us hope and salvation. We need to go back to that and we need to figure out (Luke 9:19). Seeking and saving the lost is the main call. This is what we were created for and why we were born again.

THIS IS THE GROUP WHERE MOST OF US FIT

Today we're dealing with four ordinary people - four men chosen by Jesus to follow him. These were men with a revelation of Jesus and sent out from the first church to preach the Gospel and lay their lives down, to places we're even scared to go to.

This is where most of us fit in - we're not front runners. These guys are the unsung heroes, the nameless and faceless who never made the front page. But they counted for God and were noticed by God. They fulfilled the call on their lives and therefore are not inconsequential or irrelevant. **Whether we are noticed or not, we must fulfil our destiny in God.**

Many people are waiting for God to tell them what His call in their life is - should they pursue Accounting or becoming a Pastor? Let's be set free - we all, if you believe in Jesus, have a call of God on our lives. Seek and save the lost - it's as simple as that. We don't need to wait for writing on the wall, we already know what we're called to. Writing on the wall only happened once in the Bible. Only once a donkey spoke in the Bible. We're all trying to look for some extraordinary way where God will speak to us but we miss the essence of what becoming a disciple is, to seek and save the lost.

It's time for the priesthood to rise up and take hold of God's call to seek and save the lost. These were four ordinary men who understood that and did it.

Jesus loves ordinary. He called ordinary people. He calls ordinary people! We need to get back to a place where we're happy to be ordinary - when we have bigger views of ourselves and think we're greater than we should be, God humbles us. What God wants is ordinary men and women who are in love with Jesus, that is the clincher. That's what makes us different as Christians, our love for Jesus, and that we seek and save the lost wherever we are. We need to be satisfied that we're ordinary.

These disciples sat and saw Peter and John's story and might have thought, "What do we have to do to be recognised? Why can't we be significant and preach to 3,000 people?" That's not

recorded in the Bible and that's possibly because they didn't really do that. A true revelation of who Jesus is means we'll lay our lives down for the Gospel and seeking and saving the lost.

THE SAD STATE OF AFFAIRS TODAY

In our culture, we're all too impressed by leaders. We default to Christian entertainment and turn Christianity into a spectator sport. At best we are happy to respond to the call for partnership from the tele-evangelists, where the only response is "send me your money, buy my merchandise and watch me do it for you!"

Seeking and saving the lost isn't the responsibility of elders only. In society we get fed with a Gospel that is about, "Come lay the money at my feet and I'll go preach the Gospel." That's a misconception of what Jesus has told us to do. All of us are called to preach the Gospel wherever we are - we're all called to take hold of God's call in our lives. Church on Sunday is not our Christianity. We need to mobilise and get hold of this Gospel and get passionate about seeking and saving the lost.

We don't like seeking - we want people to walk past and then we'll preach to them. But over and over again you see Jesus was led by the Spirit, going to places, where he healed and preached. Throughout Acts we see it too. We need to be filled with the Spirit - none of the apostles could do what they did without being filled with the Spirit.

Jesus sees value in relationship and not function. What makes you great is not if you are a certain type of person (an extrovert, charismatic ...etc) or if you have an amazing skill set (can sing, preach ...etc) but that you are a faithful Christ-follower, using the talents and living the call God has given you.

HUMAN NATURE

Acts 4:13

Now when they saw the boldness of Peter and John, and perceived that they were uneducated, common men, they were astonished. And they recognised that they had been with Jesus.

God wants ordinary people in his Kingdom. He doesn't want people who think they're greater than they are. Ordinary people have pioneered the Gospel into places many of us are scared to go to. Any of these well known people in Christian history were all ordinary people who met Jesus and that changed everything for them.

Many of us compare ourselves with others and feel inferior. Too often we look at the worship leaders or the preachers or whoever has the platform and say, "That's Christianity and I want that." No, you don't - what has God called YOU to do? That's what you do.

Society, the world and church culture has put a significance on being a pastor or the visible gifts – as if these are the only gifts that are important. This is not the case! We are *all* called! We all need to rely on Jesus and the power of the Holy Spirit! We can't let envy and unhealthy ambition rule our lives. The world tells us that we need to be the hero, this is not the case!

If we understand what Jesus did and desperate for the Holy Spirit, God is going to break mindsets. The devil wants you to believe that you can't do what God has called you to do and others are better than you at what it is God is calling you to do. We can't be envious of each other and talk of how one is better than the other – that's the way the world talks; that's its value system. Get over comparing yourself with others. We need to get on with what God's called us to do.

1 Corinthians 3:1-9

But I, brothers, could not address you as spiritual people, but as people of the flesh, as infants in Christ. I fed you with milk, not solid food, for you were not ready for it. And even now you are not yet ready, for you are still of the flesh. For while there is jealousy and strife among you, are you not of the flesh and behaving only in a human way? For when one says, "I follow Paul," and another, "I follow Apollos," are you not being merely human? What then is Apollos? What is Paul? Servants through whom you believed, as the Lord assigned to each. I planted, Apollos watered, but God gave the growth. So neither he who plants nor he who waters is anything, but only God who gives the growth. He who plants and he who waters are one, and each will receive his wages according to his labor. For we are God's fellow workers. You are God's field, God's building.

QUESTIONS

1. Do I suffer from an over-inflated or under-inflated opinion of myself?
2. Do I understand that what makes me great, is that I'm a follower of Jesus!
3. Do I know my God-given call, and am I fulfilling it?