

## The Recruitment of the Twelve Apostles and Their Relationship to Jesus and to Each Other

For those not thoroughly familiar with all of the canonical Gospels of the New Testament it may seem as though Jesus of Nazareth simply walks up to certain co-religionists that he has chosen at random and says, “Come, follow me”<sup>1</sup>—to which imperative they dutifully obey. This impression is especially suggested by the Gospel narratives of Mark and Matthew. However, when one juxtaposes the first two Synoptic Gospels with that of Luke and the later “spiritual Gospel” of John, a chronological pattern emerges, and it becomes evident that Jesus’s twelve choices for members of his inner circle are not at all random. Furthermore, a thorough reading of John, as well as knowledge of the first century A.D. Jewish practice of discipleship and the relationship between a *rabbi* (teacher, master) and his *talmidim* (students, disciples) reveals that Jesus’s relationship with the Twelve, and they with each other, is actually much closer than many modern readers of the New Testament might be aware. In fact, their feelings for one another, and for their leader, are strongly indicative of men who have served together in dangerous and meaningful situations for a considerable period—for example, shipmates or soldiers. Even in the case of believing churchgoers, who have heard Gospel passages read at their weekly services for many years, this nexus might go unnoticed. It will be the purpose of this paper, then, to demonstrate that Jesus’s closet disciples, i.e., “the Twelve,” went through a “vetting” process of sorts, and that the majority were familiar with each other prior to their call by the Carpenter from Nazareth<sup>2</sup>. Additionally, it will be shown that the Twelve and their leader were very close in a very human way; they were “tight” as we would say in the Military—which

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<sup>1</sup> Mark 1:17. Unless otherwise noted, quoted New Testament passages are from the class text, *The Oxford Study Bible*.

<sup>2</sup> Mark 6:3

is why Judas's betrayal and their collective flight during Jesus's arrest were so painful to the group. Indeed, the subsequent actions of the Twelve, the courage they demonstrate, and the traditions surrounding their efforts to make disciples of "all nations"<sup>3</sup> may well have been largely motivated by their desire to redeem themselves in the eyes of their teacher.

The Synoptic Gospels give the impression that Peter is Jesus's first "recruit," though Luke tips off the reader that Peter knew Jesus before his call to discipleship. Luke, the meticulously researching physician<sup>4</sup>, begins to put the series of events leading to the appointment of the Twelve in chronological order when he mentions the cure of Peter's mother-in-law *prior* to the formal call of the Galilean fishermen, Peter, Andrew, James, and John. Luke's Gospel, from the start a researched work of literature, composed after that of Mark and probably later than Matthew, the latter two Gospels clearly drawing upon the oral tradition in parts, is probably closer to the actual chain of events in the story of the Carpenter from Nazareth. However, it is John, the latest of the Gospels, that "fills in gaps" in the "Jesus narrative"<sup>5</sup>.

In the first chapter of John we learn it is Peter's brother, Andrew, along with another "disciple," probably John the evangelist himself, were originally disciples of John the Baptist.<sup>6</sup> It

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<sup>3</sup> Matthew 28:19

<sup>4</sup> See Luke 1:1-4, Acts 1:1-2, Colossians 4:14.

<sup>5</sup> *Jerusalem Bible* NT 3, *NKJV Study Bible* 1487, 1546, 1587. Luke, in a sense, builds upon Mark and Matthew, adding additional details: about one-third of Luke's gospel is unique (*NKJV Study Bible* 1588). John, on the other hand, adds things "left unsaid" by the earlier evangelists. If the Apostle John is indeed the author of this work—and this writer believes that he was the principal source, if not the actual author, as well as possibly being one of the sources Luke drew upon (Luke 1:2)—then this last of the Canonical Gospels represents a work composed by an old man in his waning years wanting to set things right, a "summing up" of sorts akin to Somerset Maugham's *The Summing Up* (1938) and *The Clearing House* (1946), the postmortem collection of some of John Buchan's better writings.

<sup>6</sup> Some scholars, perhaps most, including this writer's 10th grade religion teacher, Brother Thomas Frey, CSC, believe that this other disciple was John himself (McBirnie 79). Others conjecture that this was Philip; in Franco Zeffirelli's 1977 miniseries *Jesus of Nazareth*, it is Philip who is portrayed in conjunction with Andrew as the Baptist's disciples when Jesus appears. However, given John's penchant

is then Andrew who plays the crucial role of initiating the Apostles' recruitment when he goes to his brother, Simon and announces, "We have found the Messiah" (1:41). Shortly thereafter, he introduces Simon to Jesus, at which point Jesus renames Andrew's brother "Peter," meaning "the Rock" (1:42). It is sometime after this that Peter and Andrew and their business partners, the Sons of Zebedee, James and John (Luke 5:10), are called to be Jesus's disciples (Mark 1:19-20, Matthew 4:18-22). John, of course, already knew Jesus, and had no doubt introduced his brother James to the remarkable rabbi he had encountered (John 1:35-40). These four men ultimately form the foundation of the Apostleship, with Peter, James, and John, composing an inner triad of Apostles closest to Jesus.<sup>7</sup>

The next three future Apostles mentioned as being called to Jesus's ranks are Matthew (Levi), Philip, and Bartholomew (Nathanael). Whether Matthew the tax collector was recruited first (Mark 2:13-14, Matt. 9:9, Luke 5:27-28) and then Philip and Bartholomew (John 1:43-50) or vice-versa is a moot point, though the specifics of their call was no doubt important enough to the evangelists that they needed to be described in some detail. After these three disciples, the authors of the Gospels make no mention of the details surrounding the call of the five other men who ultimately made up the Apostles. It should also be noted that at this point these initial seven "recruits" are simply disciples, of which Jesus had many<sup>8</sup>—they have not yet been chosen at "The Twelve." It is not until the reader of the Synoptic Gospels is given a listing of The Twelve that he or she learns of the all the members of Jesus's inner following (Mark 3:13-19, Matthew 10: 1-4, Luke 6:13-19). It should be noted, though, that Mark and especially Luke imply that

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for remaining incognito throughout his gospel (e.g., identifying as the disciple "whom Jesus loved"), he is probably the best choice.

<sup>7</sup> Peter, James, and John are chosen by Jesus to be present at some of his most profound moments in the Gospels: the raising of Jairus's daughter, the Transfiguration, and Jesus's agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (McBirnle 59).

<sup>8</sup> Implied in Luke 6:13. Also see Luke 10:1 and Acts 1:21-22, 6:2-6.

Jesus's choices were made after some careful forethought; the men he chose were not random picks:

During this time he went out one day into the hill-country to pray, and spent the night in prayer to God. When day broke he called his disciples to him, and from among them he chose twelve and named them apostles: Simon, to whom he gave the name Peter, and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot who turned traitor. (Luke 6:13-16)

The notion of Jesus carefully choosing his closest followers is further borne out when we look at the connections between these men and probable reasons *why* he selected them.

Galilee of the first century of the Common Era was not the mere rural backwater that many modern readers of the New Testament believe. In that they share the same general opinion of the region that the chief priests and Pharisees project in the New Testament:

The Pharisees retorted, 'Have you too been misled? Has single one of our rulers believed in him, or any of the Pharisees? As for this rabble, which cares nothing for the law, a curse on them.' . . . 'Study the scriptures and you will see that the Prophet does not come from Galilee.' (John 7:49-52)

They were astonished at the assurance shown by Peter and John, considering they were uneducated laymen (Acts 4:13)

Here, some of the Jewish religious leaders, the arrogant "whitewashed tombs" Jesus refers to in Matthew 23:27, are clearly engaging in some regional prejudice, looking down their noses as it were at their northern coreligionists. In the Act of the Apostles, the Jews assembled in Jerusalem from all over the Near East are astounded that the "backward" Galileans preaching to them at

Pentecost could speak other languages (Acts 2:5-13, Vander Laan “Rabbi and Talmidim”)<sup>9</sup>. However, Galilee during the time of Jesus was arguably the most devoutly “Jewish” region of Syria-Palestine. Nor was the region completely populated by a “rabble” of largely illiterate country bumpkins unlearned in the Torah. Galileans “were actually more educated in the Bible and its application than most Jews” (Vander Laan “Rabbi and Talmidim”). The Galilee was intersected by a “busy international trade route, the *Via Maris* (Way of the Sea)” and contained some of rather cosmopolitan towns with Greek and Roman influences, such as Beth Shan (*Beit She’an*), the Scythopolis of Jesus’s time. The region surrounding the Sea of Galilee in the first century was home to people of varying backgrounds: members of the Zealot party, pagans of various sorts, Roman soldiers from the garrison at Capernaum, Hellenized Jews, and some of the most devout secular Jews in all of Israel: As the Gospels point out, Jesus and his Apostles carried his message of the Good News to all of these folk (Vander Laan “To Be a Talmid,” *Dust of the Rabbi* 15-18).

In this strongly religious region, Jewish boys and, as a majority of scholars believe, girls began study of the Torah at age 4-5 at *Beth Sefer*—the equivalent of elementary school<sup>10</sup>—with emphasis being placed reading, writing, and memorization scripture. By the time this level of education was completed, many students would have known extensive portions of the “Five

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<sup>9</sup> “4: It is not clear whether other *tongues* meant languages (vv. 6, 8, 11) or ecstatic speaking (v. 13)” (*Oxford Study Bible*, notes 1395). All of the Apostles, in addition to the Hebrew used in the synagogue, were fluent in Aramaic, the *lingua franca* of the greater part of the ancient Near East. A number, such as Philip and Matthew, would have conversant in Greek, which was spoken from Asia Minor to Crete to Cyrene; a few probably possessed a working knowledge of Latin. Arabic speakers would have gotten the gist of what was being said in Aramaic, a related Semitic tongue—but may the Apostles message may have sounded garbled enough to where hearers may have indeed though the speakers were drunk! (Acts 2;13)

<sup>10</sup> One might then well assume that among these female students at one point was the very devout Mary, the mother of Jesus.

Books of Moses”. Classes were held at the local synagogue and conducted by a teacher (rabbi) hired by the community for the purpose (Vander Laan “Rabbi and Talmidim”).

After *Beth Sefer*, the best male students, while learning a trade (usually their father’s), continued their study in *Beth Midrash*, essentially the secondary level. Memorization continued to be stressed while the young men studied the prophets and their writings, “began to learn oral interpretations of the Torah,” and how “to make their own applications and interpretations, much like a catechism class might in some Churches today”<sup>11</sup> (Vander Laan “Rabbi and Talmidim”). A very few of the most outstanding *Beth Midrash* students would then seek permission to study and follow one of the numerous respected rabbis of first century Galilee, “often leaving home to travel with him for a lengthy period of time.” These students then became *talmidim*, which roughly translates as “disciples.” (Vander Laan “Rabbi and Talmidim”). If a rabbi thought the prospective *talmid* knew his scripture and could cut the mustard, as it were, he would say, “Come. Follow me.” As *talmidim*, these students did not merely follow a rabbi to glean the information he possessed as, say, modern college student would in order to achieve a grade; rather, they would observe their rabbi, attempting to imitate his everything he did, committing to memory what he said—and, in some, cases writing it down (Vander Laan *Dust of the Rabbi* 17; “Rabbi and Talmidim”). If the New Testament is any indicator, this is what the Apostles did. In fact, discipleship “was a core value in Galilean society” and Jesus’s home region “was where the [Jewish] world came to become disciples of the great rabbis” (Vander Laan *Dust of the Rabbi* 11-12, 16). Obviously, according to the Gospels, a good many of the Apostles did not make this ‘second cut’ because they ended up in nonreligious professions, e.g. Peter, Andrew, James, John,

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<sup>11</sup> Those of us who attended Catholic schools in the last century are familiar with this process (!).

Thomas, Matthew (Levi)<sup>12</sup>—until, that is, they became followers of Jesus. All of the Apostles were literate, some in more than one language, and probably knew the scriptures and tenants of Judaism fairly well, though they were *not* the “best of the best.” Which leads us to the question as to *why does Jesus choose these second stringers?*<sup>13</sup>

For one thing, Jesus may well have known, or known of, the Apostles and “what they were made of” before he called them. The Galilean towns closely associated with Jesus’s ministry were geographically very close: Capernaum, Chorazin, and Bethsaida are all within five miles of each other; Capernaum, Jesus’s adopted hometown, is less than two day’s journey by foot from Nazareth and Cana<sup>14</sup> (roughly 20 miles), and Magdala, the original home of Jesus’s well-known female disciple less than 10 miles away.<sup>15</sup> Populations of these places were relatively small. Bethsaida, located on the northeastern shore of the Sea of Galilee, whose name, appropriately enough, meant “fishing tent” or “fishing village,” had a population of only 600-800 souls during Jesus’s time. Chorazin, noted for its communities of rabbis and their disciples, was home to maybe 2000 (Vander Laan “In the Dust of the Rabbi”). The folk this region lived in extended family units and knew each other or were related in some way. This is supported by a key passage in Mark 6 where, upon Jesus’s return to Nazareth, it states, “Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? Are not his sisters here with us?” (6:3). Even if one accepts the Catholic view that these “brothers” and “sisters” were cousins rather than literal siblings, this verse demonstrates the intimate relationships of the folk populating these relatively small Jewish communities of first century Galilee. Proximity of

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<sup>12</sup> I suppose that in the case of Simon the Zealot being an anti-Roman revolutionary terrorist *might* qualify as a profession.

<sup>13</sup> Saul of Tarsus, i.e., Paul, in contrast, was a “starter,” a member of the “A-team.” He studied under the highly respected rabbi and Pharisee, Gamaliel, in Jerusalem (See Acts 5:34-39, 22:3-4).

<sup>14</sup> Site of Jesus’ first public miracle (John 2:1-11)

<sup>15</sup> See Map 13, 3:X-Y, *Oxford Study Bible*

distance and blood lines, as shall be shown, played an important role in Jesus's recruitment of the Twelve Apostles. In most cases there is a reasonably intimate connection between the members of Jesus's "band of brothers."

Most superficial readers / listeners of the Gospels are aware that there are two sets of brothers among the Apostles, Peter and Andrew, the sons of Jonah (John); and James and John, the sons of Zebedee. However, a close reading and comparison of the Synoptic Gospels reveals that Matthew, a.k.a., Levi, a tax collector for the Romans, and James the son of Alphaeus ("James the Less") are also brothers. This connection made manifest in the early chapters of Mark's Gospel:

As he went along [in Capernaum], he saw Levi son of Alphaeus at his seat in the customhouse, and said to him, 'Follow me'; and he rose and followed him. (Mark 2:14)

The Twelve he appointed were: Simon, whom he named Peter; the sons of Zebedee, James and his brother John, . . . Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the man who betrayed him. (Mark 3:16-19).

Given the pattern of introduction between Jesus and the other two sets of siblings, it seems logical that either Matthew / Levi or James the son of Alphaeus ("James the Less") became familiar with Jesus, perhaps during his initial journey through Galilee; then, one or the other brother introduced his sibling the itinerant rabbi. In his work *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*, Dr. William S. McBirnie points out that both men were from Capernaum, the home of the four fisherman brothers<sup>16</sup>, and from which Jesus conducted much of his early ministry. He suggests

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<sup>16</sup> Peter and Andrew, James and John. Dr. McBirnie also believes that Salome, mentioned in Mark 15:40 and 16:1, was probably the mother of James and John and *the sister of Mary*, the mother of Jesus, therefore making "Boanerges" (the Sons of Thunder) first cousins of Jesus. (See McBirnie 58, 79; Matthew 20:20-22.)



that both Matthew and James had probably heard Jesus preach and displayed an interest in his teachings. No doubt, Matthew's call, an event described in all three Synoptic Gospels, was not an instantaneous affair (McBirnle 138). Dr. McBirnle also mentions a later tradition purporting that James son of Alphaeus was initially a member of the Zealot Party, a group bent on driving the Romans from Palestine, and may well have been estranged from his brother Matthew due to the latter's collaboration with the Romans. McBirnle further conjectures that James, like Simon the Zealot, though an ardent nationalist, was ultimately put off by the Zealots' "policy of bloodshed" (McBirnle 139-140). It is reasonable to suggest that both men found an answer to their inner turmoil in the Carpenter from Nazareth. Perhaps the reconciliation of the Roman collaborator and his brother the patriot was part of Jesus's plan (?) It was then may have been James who introduced his fellow zealot, Simon, to Jesus. According to Biblical scholar Ray Vander Laan, Simon quite possibly hailed from Gamla, the local center of the Zealot movement and a mere day's walk northeast of Capernaum (*Dust of the Rabbi* 47, 53).

Vander Laan also reminds us that Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip all grew up in Bethsaida (also see John 1:43-44), a short distance (roughly five miles) around the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee from Capernaum, where the four brothers later established their fishing business in conjunction with their respective fathers. Philip, though mentioned in the listing of the Twelve Apostles in the Synoptic Gospels and The Acts of the Apostles, is conspicuous in John's Gospel, where he is specifically mentioned on four occasions. It would then be reasonable to assume that John and Philip were good friends, and it was John who introduced to Philip to Jesus. As explained in John's initial chapter—in one of the more wryly humorous but also very moving scenes in the New Testament—Philip, subsequent to his call, introduces Nathanael (Bartholomew) to Jesus:

Philip went to find Nathanael and told him, ‘We have found the man whom Moses wrote in the law, the man foretold by the prophets: it is Jesus son of Joseph, from Nazareth.’ ‘Nazareth!’ Nathanael exclaimed. ‘Can anything good come from Nazareth?’ Philip said, ‘Come and see.’ When Jesus saw Nathanael coming towards him, he said, ‘Here is an Israelite worthy of the name; there is nothing false in him,’ Nathanael asked him, ‘How is it you know me?’ Jesus replied, ‘I saw you under the fig tree before Philip spoke to you.’ ‘Rabbi,’ said Nathanael, ‘you are the Son of God; you are the king of Israel.’ Jesus answered, ‘Do you believe because I told you I saw you under the fig tree? You will see greater things than that.’ (John 1:45-50)

It may well be that Jesus knew of Nathanael, who was from Cana (John 21:2), just to the north of Nazareth, *even before* he saw him under the fig tree. Furthermore, it appears that Philip and Bartholomew were close friends, perhaps even before they were called. In the Synoptic Gospels they are mentioned together, either in conjunction or succession, and legend has it that after the dispersal from Jerusalem following Pentecost, they preached the Good News together in Asia Minor until Philip’s martyrdom (McBirnie 102-103, 111).

As for Thaddeus, a.k.a., Judas son (or brother?) of James, there may be a further familial connection leading to his choice as an Apostle. Dr. McBirnie believes that he was the son of James the son of Zebedee (McBirnie 151). This may have been theoretically possible as at 18 young Jewish men, according to the *Mishnah* (applicable during Jesus’s time) were ready for the “bridal chamber,” i.e., were eligible for marriage. (Vander Laan *Dust of the Rabbi* 26) On the other hand, some have conjectured that the revered Apostle Jude Thaddeus<sup>17</sup> may have been—if one takes the Catholic position that “brothers” and “sisters” refer to extended family members—a cousin of Jesus:

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<sup>17</sup> “Saint Jude,” patron saint of the impossible and lost cause, is one of the most highly venerated saints of the Catholic Church. Few Catholic churches or schools do not have a statue commemorating St. Jude somewhere on their premises.

Is he [Jesus] not the carpenter, surely, the son of Mary, the brother of James and Joses and **Judas** and Simon? Are not his sisters with us? (Mark 6:3. **Bold** my emphasis.)

There seems the distinct possibility, then, that Jesus's choices for his closest disciples was based to considerable extent on human knowledge and judgment, and not just the presumably divine *a priori* knowledge he demonstrates a various times in the Gospels, and that John attests to in 2:25: "and [he] had no need of evidence from others about anyone, for he himself could tell what was in people." Ultimately, though, Jesus, for whatever combination of reasons, saw or deduced something in his fellow Galileans that others had not. Which brings us to the only oddball of the group, the only one of the original Twelve that was not from Galilee, the much reviled and conjectured about Judas Iscariot.

"Iscariot" means "man from Kerioth," a village in Judea in the a few miles south of Hebron, a place that was known for its sympathy for the Zealot movement (McBirnie 177, Vander Laan *Dust of the Rabbi* 47). It is probably an eternal, unanswerable question as to *why* Jesus chose Judas to be his follower. Was a betrayer necessary to fulfill his redemptive act of self-sacrifice? Did Jesus, as alluded to above, see into Judas's soul and perceive a fatal failing from the start. Evidently the other Apostles—except John, at least in retrospect<sup>18</sup>—thought him trustworthy enough to be their purse-keeper and were surprised by his betrayal (McBirnie 177-178). Was this "odd man out" simply a "miscarried patriot" as Thomas De Quincey suggests in his essay on the Apostle (McBirnie 176-177)—the same image that actor Ian McShane (as Judas) projected in Zeffirelli's *Jesus of Nazareth*, or was he a repository of the Savior's secret knowledge as the Gnostics wanted people to believe, or merely the avaricious thief and betrayer

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<sup>18</sup> See John 12:4-6

as the “disciple who Jesus loved” describes? Was the poor fellow just misunderstood? Though the evangelists seem to leave no room for doubt as to how they felt about him, Judas, for many, remains an enigma. With Judas, like the Third Reich’s infamous Deputy Führer Rudolph Hess, “one never knew.”<sup>19</sup>

Besides the inner strength Jesus seemed to perceive in the men he chose to carry his message of hope “to all nations,” there were some very practical reasons for his choosing the “B team.” Though did not come from the social elite or the ranks of the best *talmidim*, the men he chose were physically tough. Peter and Andrew, James and John, probably Thomas (McBirnie 115, John 21:2-3), and possibly Philip, who was originally from Bethsaida, were fisherman; men inured to hard work, heat, and inclement weather, including the capriciously dangerous lake conditions of the Sea of Galilee (Vander Laan *Dust of the Rabbi* 71) One, Simon the Zealot, may have been, for a time, an active anti-Roman guerilla. James the Less, Dr. McBirnie suggests, may have given himself over to rigorous asceticism following his break with the Zealots (140, 146). In the three years they followed Jesus, the Twelve certainly proved their physical stamina as they trudged on foot from the Phoenician towns around Tyre and Sidon east to the Decapolis, and from Caesarea Philippi north of the Sea of Galilee down through Samaria and up into the Judean Hills to Jerusalem<sup>20</sup>—a stamina they would need as they surged out of Jerusalem on their Apostolic mission following Jesus’s Ascension, suffering—right from the start—physical abuse at the hands of persecutors:

. . . they [the Sanhedrin] sent for the apostles and had them flogged; then they ordered them to give up speaking in the name of Jesus and discharged them. The apostles went out from the Council rejoicing

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<sup>19</sup> See *Nuremburg: Infamy on Trial*, p. 430. Joseph E. Perisco (1994).

<sup>20</sup> For a record of the extent of Jesus and the Apostles’ marches refer to Matt. 14: 21, Mark 7:31; Matt. 16:13, Mark 8:27; John 4: 1-6; Matt. 19:1; Luke 18: 31, 35.

that they had been found worthy to suffer humiliation for the sake of the name. (Acts 5:40-41)

In addition to their physical resilience, the Apostles, because of their backgrounds, related to the problems and issues of the common people, who represented the vast majority folk to whom they were to carry the Good News: They could speak in terms the commoners understood. And yet some, such as Matthew, knew the language of officialdom and understood the ins-and-outs of that world, but could also speak to the gritty underbelly of society, the people that needed Jesus's message of hope the most (McBirnle 129-130, Mark 2: 13-17). Simon the Zealot and probably James the Son of Alphaeus could relate to those Jews of a nationalistic bent, as well as peasants suffering under the heel Roman taxation. Philip<sup>21</sup>, a Hellenized Jew, at least to some extent (McBirnle 94-95), was Jesus's link to Jewish converts and probably some of the first pagans to be introduced to the Good News. In John's Gospel, Philip introduces a group of interested Greeks to Jesus:

Among those who went up to worship at the festival were some Gentiles. They approached Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee and said to him, 'Sir, we should like to see Jesus. Philip went and told Andrew, and the two of them went to tell Jesus (12:20-22).

It is these men, together with Matthias, Judas's replacement—an early disciple (Acts 1:21-26, McBirnle 183)—that were, in effect, capable of being the “all things to all men” that Paul in essence describes in 1 Corinthians 9:19-23.

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<sup>21</sup> “Philip” is a Greek name; it means “a lover of horses.” Besides being the name of Alexander the Great's famous father, Philip of Macedon, it was also the name of the Tetrarch, a son of Herod the Great, in whose realm Bethsaida fell, the town receiving some substantial patronage from that ruler (McBirnle 94).

All the attributes listed above made the Twelve well suited and prepared to carry Jesus' message throughout the Roman Empire and beyond—which, according to very ancient traditions, they indeed did. The information on this chart below is based on the information in Dr. McBirnie's work *The Search for the Twelve Apostles*. Some of the information is based on educated guesswork, though a good deal, as in the cases of Peter, John, and Thomas built upon on more solid, long-standing historical tradition.

<b>Apostle</b>	<b>Region Evangelized</b>	<b>Fate</b>
<b>Peter</b>	Greece (See 1 Corinthians 9:5), Italy	Crucified in Rome (upside down), <i>circa</i> A.D. 67
<b>Andrew</b>	Scythia (north of the Black Sea), Greece	Crucified (on an X-shaped cross), Patras, Greece
<b>James so of Zebedee</b>	Judea, possibly Spain (?)	Beheaded in Jerusalem on the order of Herod Agrippa I, <i>circa</i> A.D. 44.
<b>John</b>	Asia Minor	Died of natural causes, Ephesus, <i>circa</i> A.D. 100
<b>Philip</b>	Scythia, Asia Minor	Crucified at Hierapolis in Asia Minor, near Laodicea and Colossae
<b>Bartholomew (Nathanael)</b>	Asia Minor, Armenia	Martyred by being skinned alive and then beheaded, Albanopolis, modern day Derbend in Azerbaijan, <i>circa</i> A.D. 68.
<b>Matthew (Levi)</b>	Persia, "Ethiopia," Egypt	Martyred in Egypt
<b>Thomas</b>	Babylon, India	Martyred near Mylapore, now a suburb of Chennai (Madras), India, and the ostensive site of his tomb.
<b>James the son of Alphaeus</b>	Syria, Judea	Stoned to death in Jerusalem
<b>Jude Thaddeus</b>	Syria, Armenia	Martyred in Ardaze, Armenia <i>circa</i> A.D. 50 (according to one source, killed with a halberd)
<b>Simon the Zealot</b>	Egypt, North Africa, [Spain and Britain?] Syria,	Martyred by being sawn in half; tradition has it that he

	Mesopotamia, Persia	was martyred in the company of Jude Thaddeus
<b>Matthias</b>	Armenia, Colchis, Sebastopol (Crimea), Judea	Stoned to death in Jerusalem

According to tradition, all of the Apostles, save one, died a violent death in the course of proclaiming the Good News of their Master. During their Apostolic mission they suffered privation, inclement weather, beatings, danger from bandits, and, as their listed ends demonstrate, danger from civil and religious authorities. Why would they subject themselves to this, one might ask?

In spite of Jesus' sage teachings, his miracles that they observed, and the miracles and exorcisms they performed in his name, one of the Twelve betrayed him—and the rest ran away at the time of his arrest. One, their designated leader (Peter), vehemently denied even knowing Jesus following the Nazarene's arrest (John 18: 15-18, 25-27)<sup>22</sup>. In his *The Closing of the Western Mind*, historian Charles Freeman writes:

One can only imagine the psychological devastation of the disciples. Those close to him has spent months with him, sharing dangers of the road and the tension of the opposition, dealing with the crush of crowds and the emotional power of his teachings, a range of experiences unlike any they could have undergone before, His execution brought much more than the shock and emptiness of any sudden and unexpected death of a close companion. With the loss went the destruction of all their hopes for the coming promised kingdom. The ritual humiliation inherent in crucifixion, the stripping naked and very public death agony, was particularly devastating. (102-103)

The answer to this query concerning the Twelve's return and rededication to Jesus's message lies, again, in the Galilean tradition of discipleship and the closeness men develop for

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<sup>22</sup> This is one of the handful incidents portrayed in all four Gospels. See Mark 14:66-72, Matthew 26:69-75, Luke 22:55-62.

one another when serving together in stressful and often dangerous situations for an extended period. In John 15:12-15, Jesus states:

This is my commandment: love one another, as I have loved you. There no greater love than this, that someone should lay down his life for his **friends**. You are my **friends**, if you do what I command you. No longer do I call you servants, for a servant does not know what his master is about. I have called you **friends**, because I have disclosed to you everything that I have learned from my Father. You did not choose me: I chose you. [**Bold** my emphasis.]

The actual Hebrew root word that has been translated as “friends” is *haverim* (singular *haver*), but the term means much more than someone who is a “friend” in the modern American English sense. As Ray Vander Laan points out in *In the Dust of the Rabbi*, *haverim* “denotes a relationship that is stronger than death itself. The word can be used in reference to a close-knit group of people, or to disciples and their rabbi who are deeply committed to each other and to their common goals” (17). The term is more akin to “comrade,” a term used by soldiers for each other centuries (and not just by communists!).<sup>23</sup> The disciples lived, ate, traveled, healed, and learned together in conjunction with Jesus for three years. They were, at times, sent out in pairs. (Luke 9:1-6). Like soldiers and sailors that serve together, especially in combat, they grew “tight.” Even a superficial perusal of the citations of U.S. Congressional Medal of Honor recipients informs one of individuals who committed acts of extreme self-sacrifice, not for country or to destroy the enemy, but to save the lives of their *comrades*. A cursory review of Medal of Honor Recipients from the Vietnam War reveals that no less than 51 soldiers, Marines, and Navy hospital corpsman were awarded America’s highest award for valor by throwing themselves atop hand grenades (!). During the War in Iraq, Marine Jason Dunham and Navy Seal

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<sup>23</sup> “Comrade” comes from the same Latin root as “camera,” i.e., the word for “box.” It arises from the Spanish term for the billets (quarters) that soldiers of the same unit share, resulting in close-knit ties.



Michael Monsoor were ultimately awarded the MOH for performing the same act of selfless heroism (2004 and 2006 respectively). Doubtless, this same sort of selfless idealism and loyalty is what led the Twelve to sacrifice both their comfort and their very lives in spreading their Master's teachings "in Jerusalem and throughout Judea and Samaria, and even in the farthest corners of the earth" (Act 1:8). They believed in something far greater than themselves. But not right away.

When the threat of death at the hands of the Jerusalem religious establishment looms over Jesus's head, Thomas announces, "Let us also go and die with him" (John 11:16). Later, at the time of Jesus's arrest and in front of an armed assemblage, the always impulsive Peter uses his sword to slice off the ear of the high priest's servant (John 18:10). Yet, when Jesus is taken into custody, they run like proverbial rabbits (or "bug out" to use a term from the Korean War). Believers might argue that this "betrayal" was part of the Divine Plan, for following Jesus's Resurrection and Ascension, as evidenced in the Acts of the Apostles and the numerous historical legends concerning the Twelve, the Apostles demonstrate indomitable commitment and courage. One might well deduce that this was, in part, due to the guilt they felt over their temporary failure—and perhaps for not discerning Judas's treachery earlier. In the military this would be termed "survivor guilt." As a result, the Apostles then felt obligated to "make things right" for the sake of their rabbi, even at the cost of their own lives. This feeling, this sense of remorse, coupled with their love of the Master and his teachings, is evidenced in by Peter's angst during his final conversation with Jesus in John's Gospel:

After the meal Jesus said to Simon Peter, 'Simon son of John, do you love me more than these others do?' He answered, 'Yes Lord you know I love you' Jesus said to him 'Feed my lambs'. A second time he said to him, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' He replied, 'Yes, Lord, you know I love you.' Jesus said to him, 'Look after my sheep'. Then he said to

him a third time, 'Simon son of John, do you love me?' Peter was upset that he asked him the third time, 'Do you love me?' and said, 'Lord, you know everything; you know I love you'. Jesus said to him, 'Feed my sheep. (John 21:15-17, *Jerusalem Bible* translation)

Jesus then goes on to indicate that Peter will suffer martyrdom, following this allusion with the words rabbis always used to those they deemed worth of discipleship: 'Follow me'. (21:18-19). Indeed, Peter and the other Apostles go on to demonstrate that they do love their Master, tending to his sheep, and following in his path to the end of their days.

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## Images



Some of the ruins of Bethsaida, Israel, on the northeast shore of the Sea of Galilee. Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Philip may have played in its streets as boys (Vander Laan, “In the Dust of the Rabbi”).



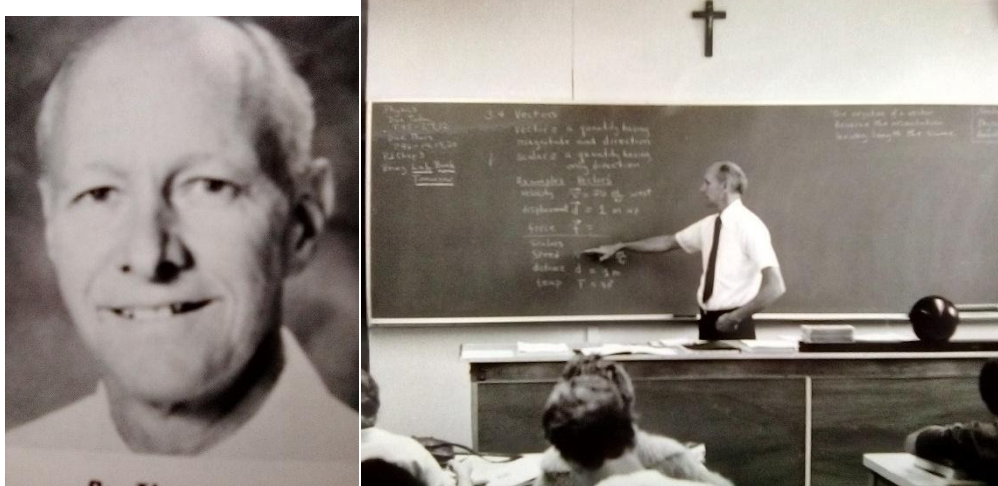
Ruins of ancient Capernaum, Jesus’s adoptive “hometown” during his ministry, located on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Here Peter, Andrew, James, and John had their fishing business, and the Roman Army maintained a garrison. Here Jesus cured the servant of one of the Centurions stationed there. (Matthew 8:5-13, Luke 7:1-10).



Above: Theatre and temple precinct at Beit She'an (Scythopolis), Israel, in the Galilee. These ruins of this cosmopolitan town serve as evidence that Galilee was not the backward place that the Jerusalem religious leaders believed it was.



Statue of the Apostle Jude, Patron Saint of the Impossible and Lost Causes, in the south stairwell of St. Lucy's School, Long Beach, CA. (See footnote 17, page 10)



The good and beloved Brother Tomas Frey, CSC (Holy Cross Order) whose lectures on the Apostles were, in part, the inspiration for this paper.