# The Chosen Twelve

The night preceding the morn on which the Twelve Apostles were called and ordained was spent by the Lord in solitary seclusion; He had "continued all night in prayer to God."1 Then, when day had come, and while many people were gathering to hear more of the new and wonderful gospel of the kingdom, He called to come closer some who had theretofore been devotedly associated together as His disciples or followers, and from among them He chose twelve, whom he ordained and named apostles.2 Prior to that time none of these had been distinguished by any special delegation of authority or appointment; they had been numbered with the disciples in general, though, as we have seen, seven had received a preliminary call, and had promptly responded thereto by abandoning wholly or in part their business affairs, and had followed the Master. These were Andrew, John, Simon Peter, Philip, Nathanael, James, and Levi Matthew. Prior to this eventful day, however, none of the Twelve had been ordained or set apart to their sacred office.

The three Gospel-writers who make record of the organization of the Twelve place Simon Peter first and Judas Iscariot last in the category; they agree also in the relative position of some but not of all the others. Following the order given by Mark, and this may be the most convenient since he names as the first three those who later became most prominent, we have the following list: Simon Peter, James (son of Zebedee), John (brother of the last-named), Andrew (brother of Simon Peter), Philip, Bartholomew (or Nathanael), Matthew, Thomas, James (son of Alpheus), Judas (also known as Lebbeus or Thaddeus), Simon (distinguished by his surname Zelotes, also known as the Canaanite), and Judas Iscariot.

## TWELVE CONSIDERED INDIVIDUALLY.

*Simon*, named as the first apostle, is more commonly known as *Peter*—the appellation given him by the Lord on the occasion of their first meeting, and afterward confirmed.3 He was the son of Jona, or Jonas, and by vocation was a fisherman. He and his brother Andrew were partners with James and John, the sons of Zebedee; and apparently the fishing business was a prosperous one with them, for they owned their boats and gave employment to other men.4 Peter's early home had been at the little fishery town of Bethsaida,5 on the west shore of the Sea of Galilee; but about the time of his first association with Jesus, or soon thereafter, he, with others of his family, removed to Capernaum, where he appears to have become an independent householder.6 Simon Peter was a married man before his call to the ministry. He was well to do in a material way; and when he once spoke of having left all to follow Jesus, the Lord did not deny that Peter's sacrifice of temporal possessions was as great as had been implied. We are not justified in regarding him as unlettered or ignorant. True, both he and John were designated by the council of rulers as "unlearned and ignorant men,"7 but this was spoken of them as indicating their lack of training in the schools of the rabbis; and it is worthy of note, that the members of that same council were amazed at the wisdom and power manifested by the two apostles, whom they professed to despize.

In temperament Peter was impulsive and stern, and, until trained by severe experience, was lacking in firmness. He had many human weaknesses, yet in spite of them all he eventually overcame the temptations of Satan and the frailties of the flesh, and served his Lord as the appointed and acknowledged leader of the Twelve. Of the time and place of his death the scriptures do not speak; but the manner thereof was prefigured by the resurrected Lord,8 and in part was foreseen by Peter himself.9 Tradition, originating in the writings of the early Christian historians other than the apostles, states that Peter met death by crucifixion as a martyr during the persecution incident to the reign of Nero, probably between A.D. 64 and 68. Origen states that the apostle was crucified with his head downward. Peter, with James and John, his associates in the presidency of the Twelve, has ministered as a resurrected being in the present dispensation, in restoring to earth the Melchizedek Priesthood, including the Holy Apostleship, which had been taken away because of the apostasy and unbelief of men.10

*James* and *John*, brothers by birth, partners in business as fishermen, brethren in the ministry, were associated together and with Peter in the apostolic calling. The Lord bestowed upon the pair a title in common—Boanerges, or Sons of Thunder11—possibly with reference to the zeal they developed in His service, which, indeed, at times had to be restrained, as when they would have had fire called from heaven to destroy the Samaritan villagers who had refused hospitality to the Master.12 They and their mother aspired to the highest honors of the kingdom, and asked that the two be given places, one on the right the other on the left of Christ in His glory. This ambition was gently reproved by the Lord, and the request gave offense to the other apostles.13 With Peter these two brothers were witnesses of many of the most important incidents in the life of Jesus; thus, the three were the only apostles admitted to witness the raising of the daughter of Jairus from death to life;14 they were the only members of the Twelve present at the transfiguration of Christ;15 they were nearest the Lord during the period of His mortal agony in Gethsemane;16 and, as heretofore told, they have ministered in these modern days in the restoration of the Holy Apostleship with all its ancient authority and power of blessing.17 James is commonly designated in theological literature as James I, to distinguish him from the other apostle bearing the same name. James, the son of Zebedee, was the first of the apostles to meet a martyr's violent death; he was beheaded by order of the king, Herod Agrippa.18 John had been a disciple of the Baptist, and had demonstrated his confidence in the latter's testimony of Jesus by promptly turning from the forerunner and following the Lord.19 He became a devoted servant, and repeatedly refers to himself as the disciple "whom Jesus loved."20 At the last supper John sat next to Jesus leaning his head upon the Master's breast;21 and next day as he stood beneath the cross he received from the dying Christ the special charge to care for the Lord's mother;22 and to this he promptly responded by conducting the weeping Mary to his own house. He was the first to recognize the risen Lord on the shores of Galilee, and received from His immortal lips encouragement of his hope that his life would be continued in the body, in order that he might minister among men until the Christ shall come in His glory.23 The realization of that hope has been attested by revelation in modern days.24

*Andrew*, son of Jona and brother of Simon Peter, is mentioned less frequently than the three already considered. He had been one of the Baptist's followers, and with John, the son of Zebedee, left the Baptist to learn from Jesus; and having learned he went in search of Peter, solemnly averred to him that the Messiah had been found, and brought his brother to the Savior's feet.25 He shared with Peter in the honor of the call of the Lord on the sea shore, and in the promise "I will make you fishers of men."26 In one instance we read of Andrew as present with Peter, James and John, in a private interview with the Lord;27 and he is mentioned in connection with the miraculous feeding of the five thousand,28 and as associated with Philip in arranging an interview between certain inquiring Greeks and Jesus.29 He is named with others in connection with our Lord's ascension.30 Tradition is rife with stories about this man, but of the extent of his ministry, the duration of his life, and the circumstances of his death, we have no authentic record.

*Philip* may have been the first to receive the authoritative call "Follow me" from the lips of Jesus, and we find him immediately testifying that Jesus was the long expected Messiah. His home was in Bethsaida, the town of Peter, Andrew, James, and John. It is said that Jesus found him,31 whereas the others concerned in that early affiliation seem to have come of themselves severally to Christ. We find brief mention of him at the time the five thousand were fed, on which occasion Jesus asked him "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" This was done to test and prove him, for Jesus knew what would be done. Philip's reply was based on a statement of the small amount of money at hand, and showed no expectation of miraculous intervention.32 It was to him the Greeks applied when they sought a meeting with Jesus as noted in connection with Andrew. He was mildly reproved for his misunderstanding when he asked Jesus to show to him and the others the Father—"Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip?"33 Aside from incidental mention of his presence as one of the Eleven after the ascension, the scriptures tell us nothing more concerning him.

*Bartholomew* is mentioned in scripture by this name only in connection with his ordination to the apostleship, and as one of the Eleven after the ascension. The name means son of Tolmai. It is practically certain, however, that he is the man called Nathanael in John's Gospel—the one whom Christ designated as "an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."34 He is named again as among those who went fishing with Peter after the resurrection of Christ.35 His home was in Cana of Galilee. The reasons for assuming that Bartholomew and Nathanael are the same persons are these: Bartholomew is named in each of the three synoptic Gospels as an apostle, but Nathanael is not mentioned. Nathanael is named twice in John's Gospel, and Bartholomew not at all; Bartholomew and Philip, or Nathanael and Philip, are mentioned together.

*Matthew*, or *Levi*, son of Alpheus, was one of the seven who received a call to follow Christ before the ordination of the Twelve. He it was who gave a feast, for attending which Jesus and the disciples were severely criticized by the Pharisees,36 on the charge that it was unseemly for Him to eat with publicans and sinners. Matthew was a publican; he so designates himself in the Gospel he wrote;37 but the other evangelists omit the mention when including him with the Twelve. His Hebrew name, Levi, is understood by many as an indication of priestly lineage. Of his ministry we have no detailed account; though he is the author of the first Gospel, he refrains from special mention of himself except in connection with his call and ordination. He is spoken of by other than scriptural writers as one of the most active of the apostles after Christ's death, and as operating in lands far from Palestine.

*Thomas*, also known as Didymus, the Greek equivalent of his Hebrew name, meaning "a twin," is mentioned as a witness of the raising of Lazarus. His devotion to Jesus is shown by his desire to accompany the Lord to Bethany, though persecution in that region was almost certain. To his fellow apostles Thomas said: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."38 Even as late in his experience as the night before the crucifixion, Thomas had failed to comprehend the impending necessity of the Savior's sacrifice; and when Jesus referred to going away and leaving the others to follow, Thomas asked how they could know the way. For his lack of understanding he stood reproved.39 He was absent when the resurrected Christ appeared to the assembled disciples in the evening of the day of His rising; and on being informed by the others that they had seen the Lord, he forcefully expressed his doubt, and declared he would not believe unless he could see and feel for himself the wounds in the crucified body. Eight days later the Lord visited the apostles again, when, as on the earlier occasion, they were within closed doors; and to Thomas the Lord said: "Reach hither thy finger, and behold my hands; and reach hither thy hand, and thrust it into my side." Then Thomas, no longer doubting but with love and reverence filling his soul, exclaimed "My Lord and my God." The Lord said unto him: "Thomas, because thou hast seen me, thou hast believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed."40 Of Thomas no further record appears in the New Testament aside from that of his presence with his fellows after the ascension.

*James*, son of Alpheus, is mentioned in the Gospels only in the matter of his ordination to the apostleship; and but once elsewhere in the New Testament by the appellation "son of Alpheus."41 In writings other than scriptural he is sometimes designated as James II to avoid confusing him with James the son of Zebedee. There is acknowledged uncertainty concerning the identity of James the son of Alpheus as the James or one of the James's referred to in the Acts and the Epistles;42 and a plenitude of controversial literature on the subject is extant.43

*Judas* is called *Lebbeus Thaddeus* by Matthew, *Thaddeus* by Mark, and *Judas the brother of James* by Luke.44 The only other specific reference to this apostle is made by John, and is incident to the last long interview between Jesus and the apostles, when this Judas, "not Iscariot," asked how or why Jesus would manifest Himself to His chosen servants and not to the world at large. The man's question shows that the really distinguishing character of the apostleship was not fully comprehended by him at that time.

*Simon Zelotes*, so designated in Acts,45 and as *Simon called Zelotes* in Luke's Gospel, is distinguished by both Matthew and Mark as the *Canaanite*. The last designation has no reference to the town of Cana, nor to the land of Canaan, neither is it in any sense of geographical signification; it is the Syro-Chaldaic equivalent of the Greek word which is rendered in the English translation "Zelotes." The two names, therefore, have the same fundamental meaning, and each refers to the Zealots, a Jewish sect or faction, known for its zeal in maintaining the Mosaic ritual. Doubtless Simon had learned moderation and toleration from the teachings of Christ; otherwise he would scarcely have been suited to the apostolic ministry. His zealous earnestness, properly directed, may have developed into a most serviceable trait of character. This apostle is nowhere in the scriptures named apart from his colleagues.

*Judas Iscariot* is the only Judean named among the Twelve; all the others were Galileans. He is generally understood to have been a resident of Kerioth, a small town in the southerly part of Judea, but a few miles west from the Dead Sea, though for this tradition, as also for the signification of his surname, we lack direct authority. So too we are uninformed as to his lineage, except that his father's name was Simon.46 He served as treasurer or agent of the apostolic company, receiving and disbursing such offerings as were made by disciples and friends, and purchasing supplies as required.47 That he was unprincipled and dishonest in the discharge of this trust is attested by John. His avaricious and complaining nature revealed itself in his murmuring against what he called a waste of costly spikenard, in the anointing of the Lord by Mary but a few days before the crucifixion; he hypocritically suggested that the precious ointment could have been sold and the proceeds given to the poor.48 The crowning deed of perfidy in the career of Iscariot was his deliberate betrayal of his Master to death; and this the infamous creature did for a price, and accomplished the foul deed with a kiss. He brought his guilty life to a close by a revolting suicide and his spirit went to the awful fate reserved for the sons of perdition.49

## GENERAL CHARACTERISTICS OF THE TWELVE.

A survey of the general characteristics and qualifications of this body of twelve men reveals some interesting facts. Before their selection as apostles they had all become close disciples of the Lord; they believed in Him; several of them, possibly all, had openly confessed that He was the Son of God; and yet it is doubtful that any one of them fully understood the real significance of the Savior's work. It is evident by the later remarks of many of them, and by the instructions and rebuke they called forth from the Master, that the common Jewish expectation of a Messiah who would reign in splendor as an earthly sovereign after He had subdued all other nations, had a place even in the hearts of these chosen ones. After long experience, Peter's concern was: "Behold, we have forsaken all, and followed thee; what shall we have therefore?"50 They were as children to be trained and taught; but they were mostly willing pupils, receptive of soul, and imbued with a sincere eagerness to serve. To Jesus they were His little ones, His children, His servants, and His friends, as they merited.51 They were all of the common people, not rabbis, scholars, nor priestly officials. Their inner natures, not their outward accomplishments, were taken into prime account in the Lord's choosing. The Master chose them; they did not choose themselves; by Him they were ordained,52 and they could in consequence rely the more implicitly upon His guidance and support. To them much was given; much of them was required. With the one black exception they all became shining lights in the kingdom of God, and vindicated the Master's selection. He recognized in each the characteristics of fitness developed in the primeval world of spirits.53

## DISCIPLES AND APOSTLES.

Discipleship is general; any follower of a man or devotee to a principle may be called a disciple. The Holy Apostleship is an office and calling belonging to the Higher or Melchizedek Priesthood, at once exalted and specific, comprizing as a distinguishing function that of personal and special witness to the divinity of Jesus Christ as the one and only Redeemer and Savior of mankind.54 The apostleship is an individual bestowal, and as such is conferred only through ordination. That the Twelve did constitute a council or "quorum" having authority in the Church established by Jesus Christ, is shown by their ministrations after the Lord's resurrection and ascension. Their first official act was that of filling the vacancy in their organization occasioned by the apostasy and death of Judas Iscariot; and in connection with this procedure, the presiding apostle, Peter, set forth the essential qualifications of the one who would be chosen and ordained, which comprized such knowledge of Jesus, His life, death, and resurrection, as would make the new apostle one with the Eleven as special witnesses of the Lord's work.55

The ordination of the Twelve Apostles marked the inauguration of an advanced epoch in the earthly ministry of Jesus, an epoch characterized by the organization of a body of men invested with the authority of the Holy Priesthood, upon whom would rest, more particularly after the Lord's departure, the duty and responsibility of continuing the work He had begun, and of building up the Church established by Him.

The word "apostle" is an Anglicized form derived from the Greek *apostolos*, meaning literally "one who is sent," and connoting an envoy or official messenger, who speaks and acts by the authority of one superior to himself. In this sense Paul afterward applied the title to Christ as one specially sent and commissioned of the Father.56

The Lord's purpose in choosing and ordaining the Twelve is thus enunciated by Mark: "And he ordained twelve, that they should be with him, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils."57 For a season following their ordination the apostles remained with Jesus, being specially trained and instructed by Him for the work then before them; afterward they were specifically charged and sent forth to preach and to administer in the authority of their priesthood, as shall be hereafter considered.

## NOTES TO CHAPTER 16.

**1. Judas Lebbeus Thaddeus.**—This Judas (not Iscariot) is designated in the authorized version of Luke 6:16, and Acts 1:13, as "*the brother* of James." That the words "the brother" are an addition to the original text is indicated by italics. The revised version of these passages reads in each instance "*the son* of James," with italics of corresponding significance. The original reads "Judas of James." We are uninformed as to which James is referred to, and as to whether the Judas here mentioned was the son, the brother, or some other relative of the unidentified James.

**2. The Meaning of "Apostle."**—"The title 'Apostle' is likewise one of special significance and sanctity; it has been given of God, and belongs only to those who have been called and ordained as 'special witnesses of the name of Christ in all the world, thus differing from other officers in the Church in the duties of their calling' (Doc. and Cov. 107:23). By derivation the word 'apostle' is the English equivalent of the Greek *apostolos*, indicating a messenger, an ambassador, or literally 'one who is sent'. It signifies that he who is rightly so called, speaks and acts not of himself, but as the representative of a higher power whence his commission issued; and in this sense the title is that of a servant, rather than that of a superior. Even the Christ, however, is called an Apostle with reference to His ministry in the flesh (Hebrews 3:1), and this appellation is justified by His repeated declaration that He came to earth to do not His own will but that of the Father by whom *He was sent*.

"Though an apostle is thus seen to be essentially an envoy, or ambassador, his authority is great, as is also the responsibility associated therewith, for he speaks in the name of a power greater than his own—the name of Him whose special witness he is. When one of the Twelve is sent to minister in any stake, mission or other division of the Church, or to labor in regions where no Church organization has been effected, he acts as the representative of the First Presidency, and has the right to use his authority in doing whatever is requisite for the furtherance of the work of God. His duty is to preach the Gospel, administer the ordinances thereof, and set in order the affairs of the Church, wherever he is sent. So great is the sanctity of this special calling, that the title 'Apostle' should not be used lightly as the common or ordinary form of address applied to living men called to this office. The quorum or council of the Twelve Apostles as existent in the Church to-day may better be spoken of as the 'Quorum of the Twelve,' the 'Council of the Twelve,' or simply as the 'Twelve,' than as the 'Twelve Apostles,' except as particular occasion may warrant the use of the more sacred term. It is advized that the title 'Apostle' be not applied as a prefix to the name of any member of the Council of the Twelve; but that such a one be addressed or spoken of as 'Brother ——,' or 'Elder ——,' and when necessary or desirable, as in announcing his presence in a public assembly, an explanatory clause may be added, thus, 'Elder ——, one of the Council of the Twelve,'"—From "The Honor and Dignity of Priesthood," by the author, *Improvement Era*, Vol. 17, No. 5, pp. 409-410.

**3. "Of Alpheus;" or "Son of Alpheus."**—In all Bible passages specifying "James son of Alpheus" (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13) the word *son* has been supplied by the translators, and therefore properly appears in *Italics*. The phrase in the Greek reads "James of Alpheus." This fact must not be given undue weight in support of the thought that the James spoken of was not the son of Alpheus; for the word *son* has been similarly added in the translation of other passages, in all of which *Italics* are used to indicate the words supplied, e.g. "James *the son* of Zebedee" (Matt. 10:2; see also Mark 3:17). Read in this connection Note 1 on the opposite page.

## FOOTNOTES:

[457]Matt. 10:1-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 6:12-16.

1Luke 6:12.

2Luke 3:13; compare John 15:16; see also Acts 1:22.

3John 1:42; compare Matt. 16:18.

4Mark 1:16-20; Luke 5:10.

5John 1:44; 12:21.

6Matt. 8:14; Mark 1:29; Luke 4:38.

7Acts 4:13.

8John 21:18, 19.

92 Peter 1:14.

10Doc. and Cov. 27:12. Page 768 herein.

11Mark 3:17.

12Luke 9:54. See also Mark 9:38, for instance of John's impulsive zeal.

13Mark 10:35-41; compare Matt. 20:20-24.

14Mark 5:37; Luke 8:51.

15Matt. 17:1-2; Luke 9:28-29.

16Matt. 26:36, 37.

17Doc. and Cov. 27:12. Page 768 herein.

18Acts 12:1, 2.

19John 1:35-40; see page 140.

20John 13:23; 19:26; 20:2.

21John 13:23, 25.

22John 19:25-27.

23John 21:7, 21-23.

24Doc. and Cov. Sec. 7; compare B. of M., 3 Nephi 28:1-12.

25John 1:35-40.

26Matt. 4:18, 19.

27Mark 13:3.

28John 6:8.

29John 12:20-22.

30Acts 1:13.

31John 1:43-45.

32John 6:5-7.

33John 14:8, 9.

34John 1:45-51; see page 141.

35John 21:2, 3.

36Page 194.

37Matt. 10:3.

38John 11:16.

39John 14:1-7.

40John 20:24-29. Page 689 herein.

41Acts 1:13. Note 3, end of chapter.

42Acts 12:17; 15:13-21; 21:18; 1 Cor. 15:7; Gal. 1:19; 2:9, 12; and the Epistle of James.

43Concerning the James's mentioned in the New Testament, the opinion of Bible scholars is divided, the question being as to whether two or three individuals are indicated. Those who hold that there were three men of this name distinguish them as follows: (1) James the son of Zebedee and brother of John the apostle; all scriptural references to him are explicit; (2) James the son of Alpheus; and (3) James the brother of the Lord (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3; Gal. 1:19). If we accept this classification, the references given in the previous footnote on this page apply to James the Lord's brother. Both the Oxford and Bagster Bible "Helps" treat James the son of Alpheus and James the Lord's brother as one person, the expression "son of" being understood in its general sense only (see page 280). The Bagster designation is: "James II, apostle, son of Alpheus, brother or cousin to Jesus." (See Note 3, end of chapter.) The Nave "Student's Bible" states (page 1327) that the question as to whether James the Lord's brother "is identical with James the son of Alpheus is one of the most difficult questions in the biographical history of the Gospels." Faussett (in his "Cyclopedia Critical and Expository") supports the contention that but one James is meant; and other acknowledged authorities treat the two as one. For detailed consideration of the subject the reader is referred to special works.

44Note 1, end of chapter.

45Acts 1:13; compare Luke 6:15.

46John 6:71; 12:4; 13:26.

47John 12:6; 13:29.

48John 12:1-7; compare Matt. 26:6-13; Mark 14:3-9.

49Matt. 27:5; compare Acts 1:18; see also John 17:12; Doc. and Cov. 76; 31-48; 132:27.

50Matt. 19:27.

51Matt. 10:42; John 21:5; 13:16. compare verse 13; 15:14, 15.

52John 15:16.

53Pages 8 and 17.

54Doc. and Cov. 18:27-33; 20:38-44; 107:1-9, 23, 24, 39.

55Acts 1:15-26.

56Heb. 3:1; see Note 2, end of chapter.

57Mark 3:14, 15.

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