

The Twelve

An Easter Sermon

Luke 6:12 In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God.

¹³ And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles:

¹⁴ Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew,

¹⁵ and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot,

¹⁶ and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

¹⁷ And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon,

¹⁸ who came to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured.

¹⁹ And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all.

(Luke 6:12-19)

Scatter the Sheep

They had become **his closest companions**. For over three years he had **led them**, **walked** with them, **broke bread** with them, **taught** them, done **healings** among them, and **prophesied** to them. The most important of all **these prophecies**

came not once, not twice, but three times to the Disciples in Luke's Gospel ([Luke 9:21-22; 43-45; 18:31-34](#)).¹ The third summarizes the others when it says, "But they understood none of these things. This saying was hidden from them, and they did not grasp what was said" ([18:34](#)). What saying? "See, we are going up to Jerusalem, and everything that is written about the Son of Man by the prophets will be accomplished. For he will be delivered over to the Gentiles and will be mocked and shamefully treated and spit upon. And after flogging him, they will kill him, and on the third day he will rise" ([31-33](#)).

Two things astonish me about this. The first is the extraordinary detail that Jesus puts into his prediction. He tells them where it will happen: *Jerusalem*. Why it must happen: *so that the predictions of the prophets will be accomplished*. And how it will happen: *through betrayal, mocking, torture, and murder, and finally, a specific description of the resurrection, including how long before it happens*.

The second thing that I find extraordinary comes in light of all this detail. They didn't understand what he was saying! They had walked with him for three years and some

¹ These are paralleled in [Matt 16:21-23; 17:22-23; 20:17-19](#) and [Mark 8:31-33; 9:30-32; 10:32-34](#). On the second prediction see [Wisdom 2:12, 17-20](#). Matthew adds a fourth: [Matt 26:32](#). John has yet a fifth prediction ([John 3:14](#)) and a sixth ([12:23-24](#)).

evidently knew him for much longer. Still, they were clueless. Looking back on it, it seems so completely obvious. And yet, looking forward to it, even this clearest of all biblical prophecies was hidden from their understanding. We of course know why; it was so that these things might come to pass exactly as predicted. If they had known, they never would have put him to death, and even the Disciples played a role in that. And yet, I still find it astonishing.

Finally, **the time would come** for the Lord Jesus to undergo **his great ordeal**. The Disciples and Jesus are now standing on the Mount of Olives, opposite the temple, across the Kidron Valley to the east. According to Matthew and Mark, Jesus gave them **another prediction**, one that would soon be fulfilled. “**You will all fall away because of me *this night*.**” The reason? “**For it is written, ‘I will strike the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock will be scattered’**” (**Matt 26:31**; cf. **Mark 14:27**; **John 16:32**; **Zech 13:7**). When that moment came and the soldiers arrested him, it was fulfilled. For it says, “**Then all the disciples forsook him and fled**” (**Matt 26:69**; **Mark 14:50**).

Three days ago this past week, many Christians considered this very story. For this was **Maundy-Thursday**, the day that commemorates the foot washing, the Last Supper,

and the betrayal and arrest of Jesus. Maundy comes from the Latin in **John 13:34** where Jesus told his disciples that very night, “**A new commandment [mandatum novum] I give to you, that you love one another.**” How extraordinary that Jesus would give them such a command and within minutes they would all flee his presence. It was the opposite of love. It was self-preservation.

What kind of men does this show the disciples to be? When you read the whole story, you learn pretty quickly that they weren't perfect. Neither were they brilliant, well-known, powerful, or wealthy. Rather, they were sinful, weak, impetuous, greedy, doubting, power hungry, but also kind, gentle, caring, ordinary, normal human beings. In other words, **nothing special!** The point is, if anything is true, these men were just like you and I. And this is good news, for it demonstrates the kinds of people that God loves to bring into his kingdom, upon whom he loves to lavish gifts, upon whom he loves to save. For God chooses the foolish things of this world to shame the wise. And he chose these twelve men to begin the greatest period of change the world has ever known. But we're getting ahead of ourselves.

Luke 6:12-19 Structure and Context

Last time, we looked at **Luke 6:1-12** and saw Jesus doing certain things on the **weekly Sabbath** that led to the initial hatred of him by the Pharisees. This will be important for setting up their later confrontations which **lead, eventually,** to the very event that we just spoke about—Jesus’ betrayal, trial, and crucifixion.

These stories, however, come as part of **a larger complex section** that is meant to be read as a single unit of thought:

- A. **the multitudes** come to hear Jesus near a lake of fish (5:1-3)
- B. **The call of some disciples** (Peter, John, James) (5:4-11)
- C. **Miraculous healing: The Leper** (5:12-15)
- D. And he withdrew himself into the wilderness, and prayed (5:16)
- C’. **Miraculous healing: The Paralytic** and accusations of the Pharisees “**he knew their thoughts**” (5:17-26)
- B’. **More disciples (Levi) called** (5:27-28)
- A’. **Multitudes having a feast: Accusatory question of the Pharisees (eating/drinking with sinners)** (5:36-39)
- O. The parables of the unshrunk cloth and new wine
- A’’. **Accusatory question of the Pharisees (eating on the Sabbath)** (6:1-5)
- A’’’. **Another Sabbath** arose (6:6)
- C’’’. **Miraculous healing: Withered hand** and Pharisees seek to kill him “**He knew their thoughts**” (6:7-11)
- D’’. He withdrew to a mountain to pray (6:12)
- B’’’. **Jesus calls disciples: the twelve** (6:13-16)
- A’’’. **A multitude** from everywhere comes to hear and be healed (6:17-19)²

² I’m combining Smith’s analysis last time with what is for her one large chiasm between 5:1 and 6:19. While hers is neater, mine is able to show a couple of parallels that hers can’t, namely knowing the “thoughts” and withdrawing to isolated places to pray. See **Christine Smith**, “**Luke 5:1-39 Chiasm**,” *A Little Perspective* (March 8, 2016 on website version) and **Christine Smith**, “**Luke 5:1-6:19 Chiastic Structure**,” *A Little Perspective* (Mar 9, 2016).

This large unit ends with **three short passages that we will look at today, verses** that take us back to the beginning of that unit that caps off this start of the ministry of Jesus in Galilee. These three short texts begin with a single verse about **Jesus going to a mountain to pray (Luke 6:12)**, which parallels Jesus going into the wilderness to pray (**5:16**); **Jesus calling his twelve disciples (6:13-16)**, which parallels Jesus calling Peter, John and James (**5:4-11**; and Matthew, **27-28**); and **a multitude from everywhere coming to hear Jesus and be healed (6:17-19)**, which parallels the multitudes coming to hear Jesus near the sea of Galilee (**5:1-3**).

For what I want to do today, it is important to say something about these three sections as they relate to something that both Luke and Matthew are doing in their Gospels. **In Matthew**, he tells the story of Jesus this way: Jesus is born, Joseph adopts Jesus, Herod tries to kill Jesus while he is still under two years of age, Jesus escapes to Egypt, there is a long period of silence between his birth and ministry, Jesus is baptized, Jesus goes into the wilderness to be tempted for forty days, Jesus comes back and performs many miracles, Jesus goes to the top of a mountain and preaches a great sermon on the law. This is deliberate typology and shows **Jesus as the greater Moses**. For **in Exodus**, we learn about Moses

birth, how he was adopted by the Pharaoh's daughter, how Pharaoh tried to kill him while he was a baby, how Moses grows up in Egypt, how there is a long period of silence between this and his ministry, how he then takes Israel through the baptismal waters of the Red Sea, then into the wilderness to be tempted (which turns out to last forty years), and goes up to Mt. Sinai to receive the law of God, all after performing many miracles in the sight of Pharaoh.

But **Luke is also giving us Moses typology**. For he also teaches us about Jesus' birth, his adoption, the long silent years, his baptism, his temptation, and his teaching and miracles. But when he comes to the mountain and law, his focus is a little different. Rather than go into the law with Sermon on the Mount only to much later have the disciples being called, as Matthew does, Luke has **the disciples being called first** and then portions of the Sermon on the Mount follow immediately after.

The effect of this creates a **one-several-many** (Jesus alone, the twelve, the multitudes) feature like we see later in Exodus when all the people are at the bottom of the mountain, while 70 elders are allowed to go halfway up, but then Moses goes up alone to the top of the mountain.

Luke 6:12—Jesus, the Greater Moses

So we read, “In these days he went out to the mountain to pray, and all night he continued in prayer to God” (Luke 6:12). Later in Luke, that same night on which Jesus was betrayed will remind us of this very moment, when he took three disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane on the Mt. of Olives to keep watch while he went and prayed to his father all night (Luke 22:40-46). Jesus was always going out alone to pray to God. He knew how vitally important this was. There was **no way he could have achieved his mission** without that constant interaction between him and his Father. For that mission meant separation from the Father whom he had known for eternity past. What would have been more difficult to endure than that?

But Jesus is also becoming **the new and greater Moses**. Moses has many times been called “**the man of prayer**,” and for good reason. He offered intercession for people on many occasions (*e.g.* Ex 8:12, 30, 32:11–13, 32, cf. Jer 15:1). He had prayer meetings with God on many occasions (Ex 3, 4, 5:22, 6:1, 10, 12, 28–30, Dt 3:23–25). He interceded with special cries in times of crises (Ex 5:22, Nu 11:11). He offered up prophetic prayer blessings (Dt 33:6–11). And he

wrote many songs of prayer (e.g. **Ex 15; 32; Ps 90**).³ And he often did it on mountains.

Luke 6:13-16—The Calling of the Twelve

After Jesus finishes praying, Luke takes us to **the calling of the twelve**. This has reminded many commentators of the way Moses “**set up twelve pillars, corresponding to the twelve tribes of Israel**” (**Ex 24:4**) after he had received the law on Mt. Sinai,⁴ but before he goes back up the mountain only to be forgotten by the people. He begins, “**And when day came, he called his disciples...**” (**Luke 6:13**). There were apparently **many of them**, for we learn later that there are seventy others that he sends out on missions (**Luke 10:1ff**). Most people think Jesus only had the twelve follow him, but this is anything but true. And we are only just at the beginning of his ministry.

But Luke continues, “**... and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles.**” Curiously, this has also reminded many of **the Easter-week event and events to follow**. “**That the Church is to be a missionary is ... clear. It is presaged in**

³ See **James Hastings** et al., *Dictionary of the Bible* (New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909), 745.

⁴ See **David W. Pao** and Eckhard J. Schnabel, “Luke,” in *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament* (Grand Rapids, MI; Nottingham, UK: Baker Academic; Apollos, 2007), 294–295.

Luke's Gospel: the twelve who represent the leaders of the post-Easter Church are named 'apostles'—delegates sent out on mission with full authority to represent Jesus (6:13)."⁵ What is the difference between an apostle and a disciple? A *disciple* is a person who follows and obeys a master. People today have taken the term "Christ follower" upon them. Hopefully they mean by this that they are a disciple of Jesus who want to obey their Lord. The word *apostle* can be a generic term meaning a messenger (as in Andronicus and Junia in **Rom 16:7**). But in this case, it is a specific group of men that are commissioned and sent out, personally and specifically by Christ, to 1. Preach the gospel, 2. Heal the sick, and 3. Lay the foundation of Christ's church.

Contrary to a segment of the church today, as exemplified by the 1997 movie *The Apostle* written, directed, and starring Robert Duval in which Euliss F. "Sonny" Dewey, a charismatic Pentecostal preacher, after falling out of grace with his church, and then murdering without intent his youth pastor who is having an affair with his wife, he turns over a new leaf, baptizes himself in a river and comes out as God's modern day self-appointed apostle. This breaks so

⁵ **Graham H. Twelftree**, *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke's View of the Church* (London; Grand Rapids, MI: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; Baker Academic, 2009), 177.

many biblical violations of what an apostle is that it is difficult to know where to begin. You can't be sent by yourself to give a message for someone else. You can't appoint yourself to be a messenger for someone else. **In the Bible, only the twelve are Apostles** in a special sense with the addition of Matthias who takes Judas' place and Paul who is an apostle abnormally born (**1Cor 15:8**), the Apostle to the Gentiles (**Rom 11:13**). This is because only these men knew Jesus in the flesh and had him call them personally to found his church. They are, as Ephesians says, "the foundation" (**Eph 2:20**). So who are they?

Matt 10:2-4	Mark 3:16-19	Luke 6:14-16
<p>Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;</p> <p>Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.</p>	<p>Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter);</p> <p>James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.</p>	<p>Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.</p>

We have **four lists in the New Testament** (**Matt 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16; Acts 1:13**), with the one in Acts being given to show us the one new Apostle, after Judas hangs himself. Matthew's list is divided into six sets of two by the word "and": Peter *and* Andrew, James *and* John, Philip *and* Bartholomew, etc. Luke's list has an "and" after every single Apostle, perhaps showing how they are all equal, like Knights of the Round Table.

Each list has **twelve names**. According to John (one of the twelve!) in Revelation, this is no coincidence. For, **"twelve" corresponds exactly to the number of sons of Jacob**, the number of tribes of Israel. **Just as** these twelve sons were remembered in various ways in the OT, such as the twelve stones that were placed as a marker in the Jordan River crossing (**Josh 4:3-4**) or twelve precious stones on the garment of the priest (**Ex 28:16-21**) or the twelve pillars erected by Moses at the foot of Mt. Sinai when the seventy were allowed to come up to mid-mountain (**24:4**); **so also** the twelve Apostles are remembered in twelve precious stones in the wall of the New Jerusalem (**Rev 21:10-14**). This is to show you that **the church is the full-blossom** of the seedling that was Israel. In other words, these twelve men represent the church of Jesus Christ: you and I sitting here

this very day. We all as Christians come from the same seed as they—namely, faith in Jesus Christ, true spiritual Israel.

Each list begins with *Simon*, who is *Peter*, son of Jonah. Simon is the same name as Simeon and means Harkening, as in an Obeyer. Jesus changes his name to Peter or Rock. He is listed first because *he was called first*, something we saw back in Luke 5.⁶ It is the Scripture (and not tradition) that leads us to conclude that Peter is *the prominent disciple* of the twelve. He was *their leader*, no question about it. It is upon Peter's confession that Christ builds his church, one of the three plays on the word "rock" in that passage (the other two being his confession and the rock of Mt. Hermon). Peter is the loudest, the most boisterous, the quickest to act of all the Apostles. Peter had character flaws. He was a proud man during Christ's earthly ministry. He denied the Lord three times. He fell asleep on his watch during the worst night in Christ's life. Peter was a sinner, saved by grace. He continued to be a sinner, even after Pentecost, for indwelling sin remains in our flesh until the day we die.

⁶ In John, Andrew is *mentioned* first, because he and another disciples heard John declare Jesus as the Lamb of God at his baptism and decided to follow him. But this is not the same as the official calling of the disciples, which began when Andrew told Peter who came to Jesus and Jesus changed his name.

It is quite probable that Peter, with Paul's help, was responsible for establishing and nurturing the church at Rome, though there is no reason to believe that Peter was so important that all others bowed to him as the first Pope. Just ask Paul who opposed Peter to his face in one instance when he was fallibly wrong ([Gal 2:11](#))! Or ask Peter himself, who saw himself as equal not as superior among the elders ([1Pet 5:1](#)). As most of you know, there is well established tradition that Peter was crucified in Rome. Jerome and Origen both tell us that he was crucified upside down, which follows a prophecy made about his death in John's Gospel ([John 21:19](#)). Peter chose this death because he did not deem himself worthy of the same death as his Lord. This took place in the late 60's AD.⁷

Andrew is Peter's brother. His name means "Manliness." He is not mentioned in the calling with Peter by Luke, though he is in the other Gospels. John tells us that he was the first of the Disciples to follow Jesus, after hearing his own teacher, John the Baptist, pronounce that he was the Messiah ([John 1:40](#)). Along with Philip, the brothers were from Bethsaida ([12:21](#)). I visited this city just a couple of weeks ago. It is situated less than two miles north of the Sea

⁷ On this and the other deaths, see [John Foxe](#), *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

of Galilee and about half a mile east of the Jordan River. Bethsaida would later be cursed by Jesus because they failed to believe that he was the Messiah.

Along with James and John, Peter and Andrew were **fishermen**, a quite ordinary profession. It is curious given their profession that their father was named Jonah (**Matt 16:17**). They were clearly **educated** men (Peter wrote two books), but their education was minimal as compared with someone like Luke who was a doctor. Andrew knew the Lord very well, perhaps even before his calling because we learn of one time where Philip wishes to bring some Greeks to see Jesus, but he goes first to Andrew who then goes with Philip to the Lord to ask his permission (**John 12:20-22**). Tradition tells us that Andrew eventually preached throughout Asia Minor and into Greece and *Foxe's Book of Martyrs* tells us that he was crucified on a cross in Edessa (which is a town in ancient Syria).⁸ Iconography has him standing in front of or on a giant X, for it is said that his cross was put into this shape because he also did not want to die the same way his Lord did. Curiously, this X happens to be the abbreviation for Christ (*Xristos*). Hence, St. Andrew's Cross.

⁸ Another source says it was in Patrae in Achaia.

James comes next. His name means Supplanter. Luke says nothing more about him here. But he is singled out by Matthew as the “son of Zebedee” in order to distinguish him from James the son of Alphaeus, another of the twelve. Similarly, regarding these two James’, he is sometimes called James the Greater to distinguish him from James the Lesser (a reference probably to age or size, rather than importance). Some traditions based on the parallel accounts of **Mark 15:40-41** and **Matthew 27:56** have **Zebedee married to Salome** and further state that **Salome was Mary’s sister**, which would make him the cousin of Jesus. This might explain why the mother of James and John wanted them to sit next to Jesus in his kingdom (**Matt 20:20-21**), and why the two were often very bold in their approaching of Jesus.

James is the **first of the Apostles to be martyred** in 44 AD at the sword of Herod Agrippa as recorded in **Acts 12:1-2**.⁹ James was a fiery sort of man, which is probably why he and his brother John were called by Jesus “sons of thunder” (**Mark 3:17**). You remember one time when these two men came to Jesus and said, “**Lord, do you want us to call down fire on them?**” (**Luke 9:54**). They just didn’t get what Jesus was all about yet. Prior to the Holy Spirit’s coming, their

⁹ According to Foxe, the ancient historian **Clemens Alexandrinus** says that **James was beheaded**.

zeal often got in the way of understanding (**Rom 10:2**). By the way, this James is most likely not the one who wrote the book of James, for his death is just a bit too early and the style of that book makes it much more likely that it was James, the Lord's brother (**Gal 1:19**) who wrote it.

John is James' brother and his name means Jehovah has been gracious. He is the author of the Gospel of John,¹⁰ the letters of John and the book of Revelation. John is the only one of the Apostles (including Matthias and Paul) to **not be martyred**, though they tried by boiling him in oil. He survived, only to be exiled to the Island of Patmos where he wrote the Apocalypse! Tradition has it that he is “**the disciple whom Jesus loved**,” though I think it probable that this person was more likely Lazarus. He was a young man at the time, having lived nearly to the end of the first century where he died, according to tradition, in Ephesus. His youth probably explains why he and his brother were **the Sons of Thunder**.

All three Gospels have the same four men listed first, though the order is changed in Mark.¹¹ They were clearly

¹⁰ I have maintained that the core of John was written almost as notes by Lazarus—the Beloved Disciple. But very clearly, John had the final hand in its composition, including first-hand information.

¹¹ Perhaps because they, like many of us, thought of Peter, James, and John as the three greatest.

the “[inner circle](#)” of the disciples as is evidenced on one occasion when these four alone go to Christ privately and ask him about the end of all things ([Mk 13:3](#)). These were ordinary boys/men whom the Lord Jesus loved and called to himself into his most sacred inner circle. Can you even imagine the privilege and responsibility?

The next four Apostles listed are the most well-known of those remaining, except of course for the nefarious Judas Iscariot. They are [Philip](#), [Bartholomew](#), [Matthew](#), and [Thomas](#). *Philip* was a townsman of Peter and Andrew at Bethsaida. His name means Lover of Horses; Warrior. He was a calculating man, but often forgot the power of Christ, even while walking with him! On one occasion after being asked how they were going to feed all the people he responded, “[Bread-cakes for two hundred days wages would not be sufficient for them](#)” ([John 6:7](#)). Philip is also the one who said to Jesus, “[Just show us the Father and we will be content.](#)” Foxe tells us Philip eventually made his way into Phrygia (eastern Greece) where he was scourged, thrown into prison, and crucified for his Lord in 54 A.D.

Bartholomew has another name in Scripture: [Nathanael](#) (see [John 1:45-49](#)). Bartholomew means Abounding in Furrows (troughs, channels, gullies), while Nathanael means Gift

of God. He is the one who said, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?” (John 1:46). He said this while talking to Philip. Yet, when he saw the Lord he said, “Look, truly an Israelite in whom deceit does not exist” (47). Was it sarcasm? In the face of wondering, he was granted great faith to see the purity and goodness of the Lord Jesus Christ. Foxe says that he eventually translated the Gospel of Matthew into the language of India and that he went there as a missionary. Of his death Foxe wrote, “He was at length cruelly beaten and then crucified by the impatient idolaters.” When I read about the deaths of so many of these Apostles the words of Jesus ring loudly in my ears, “Whoever does not carry his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple” (Luke 14:27). These men were willing to take that literally, something skeptics of the Bible cannot and will not account for.

Matthew means Gift of Jehovah. He was born in Nazareth, was a tax collector, probably fairly wealthy, and he loved to put on a good party. We’ve already seen his calling as the third disciple in Luke’s Gospel. He wrote the Gospel of Matthew. He was a humble man, soft spoken (the exact opposite of Peter), and clearly a very intelligent and well educated Jew. He eventually went to Ethiopia where he was martyred with a pike in the city of Nadabah.

Thomas is often called doubting Thomas. Hendriksen says, “He was ever afraid that he might lose his beloved Master. He expected evil, and it was hard for him to believe good tidings when they were brought to him.”¹² He was a twin (John 21:2), the word being *Didymus*, the other name which he is sometimes called, but Thomas also means a Twin. When Lazarus died, Thomas was so upset that rather than believe the Lord would raise him, he resigned himself to hopelessness and cried out “Let us go and die with him” (John 11:16). Thomas is the one who said, “Unless I see the nail marks in his hands and put my finger where the nails were, and put my hand into his side, I will not believe it” (John 20:25). “Yet when the risen Savior in all his tender, condescending love revealed himself to him it was he who exclaimed, “My Lord and my God!”¹³ (John 20:28). Thomas was killed in India by the spear of pagan priests.

Finally we come to the last four Apostles and the least known of the group except for Judas Iscariot. They are James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who is called the Zealot; Judas the sons of James, and Judas Iscariot who betrayed him.” There are differences here with Luke’s list and the others.

¹² William Hendriksen and Simon J. Kistemaker, *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11, New Testament Commentary (Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001), 330.

¹³ Hendriksen, *Matthew*, p. 453.

We know little about *James* (called by Mark: *James the Less*). That name could refer to his age or to his height, but we have no information. He is referred to in a few places where we learn that his mother's name was Mary, one of the women who accompanied Jesus and stood near the cross. But this was not Jesus' brother, though he had a brother named James, as this Mary is different from her. Foxe tells us that he translated *Matthew* into Greek. The traditions surrounding his death vary slightly, but all say he was stoned (perhaps after being thrown from the temple) and then had his brains dashed out with a club. Foxe says he was 94 when this happened.

Simon the Zealot is sometimes called *Simon the Cananaean*, for this is the term that we translate as zealot. This may refer to his political affiliation as a member of the Zealot party. This tells us something about Simon's former life in that they had a deep hatred for foreign rulers, demanded tribute, and did not shrink away from fighting even the Roman Government. Foxe tells us that Simon traveled as a missionary from Africa all the way to *Britain* and he says this is the place where he was crucified around 74 A.D.

Judas the son of James is called *Thaddaeus* by Matthew and Mark. Judas is the same as Judah and means "*Praise of Jehovah*." Thaddaeus can also mean "*One that praises*," though

it can mean **Sucking Plenty** or **Man of Heart**. He is perhaps the brother of James the Lesser. He perhaps speaks only one time in the Scripture. He asks the Lord, “**But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?**” (**John 14:22**). Hendriksen suggests that this may mean that he wanted Jesus to stop hiding and get into the limelight, to accept his celebrity status and embrace it. This is just one more example of the disciples not getting it. If true, Judas-Thaddaeus has become the victim of the cult of celebrity and had forgotten the rules of the cross. But he would not forget forever, for he was eventually **crucified as a missionary** in Edessa in the 70s A.D.

Matthew and Mark reverse the order of Judas/Thaddaeus and Simon. This is perhaps because Simon’s political past made him an excellent choice to accompany **Judas Iscariot**, the last of the twelve. For, Judas is the one who was given trust over the Apostolic money. **Judas is never portrayed in anything but the worst light** by the Scriptures. And for good reason, for it is he who regularly stole money from the treasury (**John 12:6**). It is he so had the audacity to ask Christ, “**Surely it is not I [who will betray you] Rabbi?**” (**Matt 26:14-16**). And it is he who did betray the Lord Jesus Christ

with the most unholy kiss (**Matt 26:49-50**) as if he were really a loyal disciple when really, he was a traitor. Judas was a sinner just like all the others. But unlike the others, he was forever a selfish man rather than a man of faith. His death was not at the hand of others, but at his own hand. **Judas hung himself** in shame of what he had done. But his shame was not that accompanied by repentance. For, Judas is referred in the Scripture as the man “**doomed to destruction**” (**John 17:12**).

Luke 6:17-19—The Multitudes Seek Healing

Once Luke gives us the names of the twelve, he returns us to the multitudes flocking after Jesus. This takes place “**on a level place.**” “**And he came down with them and stood on a level place, with a great crowd of his disciples and a great multitude of people from all Judea and Jerusalem and the seacoast of Tyre and Sidon...**” (**Luke 6:17**). This has also reminded scholars of Easter and post-Easter.

Luke 19:37 (the entry into Jerusalem) gives the disciples accompanying Jesus the same designation as **Acts 6:2** gives the early Jerusalem church. It thus clearly characterizes the disciples as “the model and prototype of the early Christian

Church.” In **Luke 6:17**, too, “the great company of his disciples” mentioned among Jesus’ followers (with the “Twelve”) appears at least “symbolically as a prophetic sign ... for the post-Easter community of disciples,” just as in a corresponding fashion “the great multitude of people” — anticipat[es] the post-Easter mission situation.¹⁴

I think it is an interesting providence that **the only two times I’ve preached these Gospel lists**, it was **Palm Sunday** and **Easter Sunday**. Why would God orchestrate this? Let’s continue.

This movement from the **top of a mountain** to a **level place** with the special chosen disciples in the middle reminds me of the multitudes at the bottom of Mt. Sinai, the 70 who went up to mid mountain to meet with God, and Moses on the top of the mountain meeting with the LORD. It then reminds me of Moses going down the mountain to the multitudes who had forgotten all about the God who had led them to freedom, all the more so because after our passage, Luke will give us details from Matthew’s Sermon on the Mount, the parallel to Moses giving the people the Law of God.

¹⁴ **Horst Robert Balz** and Gerhard Schneider, *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament* (Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–), 104.

But here, like the beginning of Luke 5, the people are coming “to hear him and to be healed of their diseases. And those who were troubled with unclean spirits were cured. And all the crowd sought to touch him, for power came out from him and healed them all” (6:18-19). Like Moses, the people would hear him. “You speak to us, and we will listen; but do not let God speak to us, lest we die” (Ex 20:19). But unlike Moses, Jesus healed the people of their diseases and their demonic spirits. Unbeknownst to the people, Jesus is God.

We’ve seen several times now links between our passage and the story of Moses. We’ve also seen links with our passage and the last stories of the Gospel, especially that night on which Jesus was betrayed and the predestined events that took place following it. One more curious link to those events and Moses can be seen by looking again at the structure and noticing that not only does the multitudes coming to Jesus here take us back to the beginning where the multitudes are coming to hear Jesus near a lake of fish, but that the center of the structure which we have now looked at a couple of times, with the unshrunk cloth and new wine, has on either side feasting and eating with sinners and the sabbath.

When we go back to the Torah, we discover that **the Passover, that event celebrated on Maundy-Thursday** was to take place on the fourteenth day of the first month—a *sabbath* (**Ex 12:16; Lev 23:5-7; Num 28:16-18**). It was to be a feast to the LORD to be kept forever (**Ex 12:14**). That night on which Jesus was betrayed was, in fact, Passover. But **Jesus, taking the bread and wine**, infused it with the newness of his kingdom and covenant, to give it the meaning it was always foreshadowing. “**This is my body, broken for you,**” “**This is the new covenant in my blood poured out for many for the remission of sins.**” The Disciples ate and feasted with Jesus, not knowing or understanding what was about to transpire.

We All Like Sheep

Later that same night, **the Disciples would each run away** from this same Lord with whom they had just broken bread. They fled so that the Scripture would be fulfilled. One, Peter, would even **deny his Master three times**, in fulfillment of prophecy. And so, each Disciple showed himself to be, ultimately, a sinner concerned more with his own well-being than with following the Lord to the end. **They forsook him**. And he was put to death on a cursed cross for crimes he never committed.

During his trial, **the multitudes** who were so eager to follow him and be healed by him, so keen on having their stomach's filled by bread, so enthusiastic to hear his marvelous teaching, so happy to usher him in as king on the donkey to shouts of Hosanna, **would also turn on him**. When his freedom was offered to them with the choice of him or the notorious prisoner Barabbas, they shouted in unison, "**Crucify him! Crucify him! Put Jesus to death. His blood be on us and on our children!**" As he hung there, the people walked by, staring up in confused and sometimes mocking gazes, the Apostles nowhere to be found.

And thus was fulfilled the saying, "*All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned-- every one-- to his own way; and the LORD has laid on him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth; like a lamb that is led to the slaughter, and like a sheep that before its shearers is silent, so he opened not his mouth*" (**Isa 53:6-7**). And **Jesus prayed to his Father**, "Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do." And he **died on that mountain**. And darkness descended upon the land. And Good Friday came and went. And in this way, our passage foreshadows in some very interesting ways, Holy Week and the events that followed.

Healing of All Disciples

Now, **the Apostles were devastated** by the events that had unfolded, including their own turning away from Jesus in the moment of his greatest need. What would they do? What could they do? **Despair**. They had not understood the prophecies. They believed their master was dead, the unfortunate victim of uncontrollable events.

As some of them arose on that early morning of the first day of the week, they were astonished to find a Roman guarded tomb empty, the embedded stone rolled uphill, uncovering the opening. The first to get there were the women disciples, not the Apostles. **Mary** and the other women had come to anoint the body with spices, but instead found themselves standing in disbelieving wonder as the men they talked to claimed Jesus was alive, raised from the dead. Then the Lord himself appeared, and they saw and understood.

The news quickly spread, but it seemed to the Apostles like an idle tale (**Luke 24:11**). The Apostles finally arrived, racing each other to the tomb, **Peter** and **the Beloved Disciple** practically knocking the linen cloths off the stone bench. Nothing else was there. No body. No Jesus.

They went back to the others, bewildered *but disappointed*. They were after even this, still blind. As they sat there sulking in the small room, suddenly, *a man appeared*, though the door was locked, for the disciples were afraid of the Jews. “*Peace be with you,*” the Risen One said. He showed them his hands and his feet. Nail marks. They were overwhelmed with joy. Jesus had turned their mourning into laughter. *He had healed their disbelief*. He had opened their minds and hearts to believe.

But unless one had seen it himself, the news was *difficult to digest*. Two more of them were walking about seven miles from Jerusalem, beside themselves with the rumors, curious but sad. *A man appeared* to them, asking what all the commotion was about. “*Are you the only man in these parts that hasn’t heard of the things that have happened in Jerusalem?*” “*What things?*” “*Concerning Jesus of Nazareth, a mighty prophet in deed and word whom the chief priests and rulers crucified. We had hoped he was the Messiah, but it is now the third day since this all happened.*” Jesus then opened their eyes and from Moses to the prophets, the Resurrected Lord told them all the things that were predicted of these very events. And their hearts burned within them.

Thomas was not there with the other ten that night (Judas had hung himself). Eight days later, inside another locked room, Jesus appeared and Thomas was with them. “Peace be with you.” He told 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” (John 20:27). Thomas made his great confession, “My Lord and my God!” (28). Jesus said to him, “Have you believed because you have seen me? Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (29).

These disciples spoke and ate and learned from Jesus for fifty days, until **he ascended** before their eyes **on the mountain**. They came down and went to Jerusalem and were immediately filled with the Holy Spirit. The fire of God burned from their mouths and they courageously began telling everyone they could about how we were all guilty of putting Jesus to death, but how, in the plan of God, this had to take place so that we who were estranged from God because of our sin could now be justified, put into a right relationship with God, through faith in his sacrifice.

These are the Disciples whom we have seen went to the four corners of the earth, each one willing to die for this truth. And die martyrs deaths they all did, save John who

was miraculously saved so that he could write the Apocalypse. That same Holy Spirit who gave them life was promised to all who believe in Jesus. Many more of those original disciples went abroad and testified to the good news of the resurrection of Jesus and of all who would believe upon him. And they died martyrs deaths just like the twelve ([Matthias](#), who took Judas' place was stoned in Jerusalem and beheaded). [Luke](#) was hanged on an olive tree in Greece. [Barnabas](#) was dragged out of a synagogue in Syria and stoned him to death. Mark, who was a spectator, privately interred his body. [Mark](#) himself was later dragged to pieces by the people of Alexandria. [Paul](#) was beheaded in Rome.

[As persecution intensified](#), the Christians only grew more emboldened. Nero burned down Rome and blamed the Christians. He contrived all manner of punishments for them, sewing up some in skins of wild beasts, only to be eaten by dogs. He then lit many of them on fire and lined them up like trees on his driveway. Erastus, Aristarchus, Trophimus, Barsabas, Ananias, and others of the seventy thus died now familiar horrible deaths.

And so it has been with us ever since. Why? [Because Jesus Christ is alone worthy of dying for, because Jesus Christ is God in human flesh.](#) Jesus, the Greater Moses, has taught

us. Jesus has healed us. Jesus has fed us. He has given his life for us, so that we might have eternal life.

Most of all, **Jesus has proven himself greater than death itself**. It could not hold him captive. This singular event changed the world, even as it changed his disciples and the multitudes of followers—Jews and Gentiles—for 2,000 years. In a mysterious, spiritual way, though the Apostles are the foundation, they are *our* foundation and we are the building that Christ has been erecting ever since, making us choice stones fit into a living temple. **The Apostles are us, sinners saved by grace**. We are multitude of followers, brothers and sisters in this timeless kingdom coming down from heaven. Their story is our story. **The Twelve have become uncounted myriads**, a great cloud of witnesses, an innumerable host, saved by grace. We are inextricably linked together through faith in the Son of God.

Our temple resides high up on the mountain of God, in heavenly places. Our Mediator has ascended, alone, to **intercede** on our behalf. Our temple is filled with the **prayers of the saints** through the intercessory work of our Great High Priest. Come, see what Jesus has done and follow the Master as his disciple, obedient wherever he should lead you. Hear his teaching. Hear his word. He is the Living, Resurrected

Word of God. Be fed by faith living food and living water from the one come down from heaven. Be healed of your diseases and sins that so entangle and distress you. They need no longer do that. For his alive. He is risen.

He is risen indeed.

Bibliography

Balz, Horst Robert and Schneider, Gerhard. *Exegetical Dictionary of the New Testament*. Grand Rapids, Mich.: Eerdmans, 1990–.

Foxe, John. *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*.

Hastings, James et al. *Dictionary of the Bible*. New York: Charles Scribner's Sons, 1909.

Hendriksen, William and Kistemaker, Simon J. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Luke*, vol. 11. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001.

_____. *Exposition of the Gospel According to Matthew*, vol. 9. New Testament Commentary. Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, 1953–2001.

Pao, David W. and Schnabel, Eckhard J. "Luke." *Commentary on the New Testament Use of the Old Testament*. Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Academic, 2007.

Smith, Christine. "[Luke 5:1-39 Chiasm](#)." *A Little Perspective* (March 8, 2016 on website version).

_____. [“Luke 5:1-6:19 Chiastic Structure.”](#) *A Little Perspective* (Mar 9, 2016).

Twelftree, Graham H. *People of the Spirit: Exploring Luke’s View of the Church*. London; Grand Rapids, MI: Society for Promoting Christian Knowledge; Baker Academic, 2009.