Discovering or Rediscovering
THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

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As a young man he taught at Friends Select School and Friends Central School, both in Philadelphia, and at the Brunswick School in Greenwich, Connecticut.

In 1940-41 he was Director of the Quaker International Center in Berlin, Germany and during World War II he was in ten camps and units of the Civilian Public Service, including work with mentally-defective children and service in a human guinea pig experiment for hepatitis.

After three years as Director of the Division of Education for International Understanding at UNESCO in Paris, France, he returned to the United States, spending most of his professional life at Brooklyn College of the City University of New York. There he specialized in curriculum, social studies teaching, and international education, speaking and writing widely in those fields.

Throughout his life he has been active in various Quaker groups, including membership on the committees of three Friends Schools and work with the American Friends Service Committee, the Friends Council on Education, and the Friends World Committee. He has written or edited 13 books on Quakerism, plus many other publications in that field. He has also spoken widely among Friends in the U.S.A. and abroad.

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The 12 Disciples

How important the 12 disciples were (and are) in understanding the life of Jesus and the rise of Christianity. Yet how little we know about that small and intimate circle of his friends and interpreters. Probably we are aware that they crossed and criss-crossed Galilee and Trans-Jordan with Jesus and we may be able to identify a few of them with specific scenes told in the New Testament.

But do we know much more? Can we even name all, or even most, of those important individuals?

Aware of his own ignorance about the 12, this writer has recently read several books by competent commentators on them and has decided to share with others some of what he learned.

Therefore this account is not a scholarly treaties replete with footnotes on original or secondary sources, and analyses of the meaning of certain words or phrases in Aramaic, Greek, or Latin. Instead, it is an attempt to write briefly and in a relatively popular style, what he has learned from those essayists and specialists.

Perhaps the first question some may ask is why such a group of disciples was formed. Of course we do not know what was in the mind of Jesus nearly 2000 years ago. But we do know that he was steeped in the traditions of Judaism and undoubtedly knew how important it was for Isaiah to have formed a group of disciples, some of whom were able to perpetuate his messages in writing.

Jesus may also have been cognizant of the brief period in which John the Baptist preached and been painfully conscious that his time on earth might be short, too.

Hence the need for followers and disciples to interpret his revolutionary and life-enhancing message and extend his influence far and wide.
Whether he had any idea that his life and messages would eventually be put into writing, we do not know. Probably that did not concern him.

The only direct answer to that question about the formation of a group of disciples is found in Mark 3:14 where it is recorded that:

He appointed twelve to be with him, and to be sent out to preach and to have authority to cast out demons. . . .

A related question may be why he selected 12. Again we have no definite answer but many authorities claim that that number probably was selected to correspond with the 12 tribes of Israel. Some think that 12, rather than three or four more, was enough to guarantee considerable diversity yet to remain a close fellowship. Of course the early church had 70 apostles in place of 12.

Meanwhile you may have been mulling over the question as to whether you could name the 12. Possibly you have tried to do so—some of you correctly, others not too well. There are minor differences in the record, especially in the order in which they are placed. But the commonly accepted list starts with Peter, the most prominent; and includes James, John, Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James, the son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus, Simon and Judas Iscariot. Usually Matthias is named as the successor to Judas.

The more one reads about them, the more motley that group appears. Readers may well have wondered how Jesus chose that select group. There is no indication of the bases for selection so we are free to speculate on how and why he picked them.

Certainly they seem to have been unpromising material by today’s standards—or even those of the first century A.D. There were no great speakers or writers, no heads of tribes or leaders of political parties or factions. So far as we know,
they were not particularly attractive physically. And they were certainly not men of wealth or social position.

Actually they seem to have been just common, ordinary people.

In his volume on *All the Apostles of the Bible*, Herbert Lockyer has given us a particularly helpful summary of the background of these 12 men, supplemented here by information from a few other sources.

By location, the largest group came from Bethsaida—Peter, Andrew, James, John, Mark, and Matthew, although four of them seem to have lived in nearby Capernaum. Nathanael or Bartholomew resided in Cana, and Thomas, James the Less, Jude, and Simon lived in Galilee. John resided in Jerusalem and later in Ephesus. Judas Iscariot was the only one from Judea.

Vocationally most of them were fishermen as were many of the men at that time. An exception was Matthew, who was a tax collector and money changer. On several of the disciples we have no such data.

Politically, scholars are relatively certain that at least four had been identified at some time with the nationalistic group known as Zealots. They were James—the son of Alphaeus, Simon, Thaddeus, and Judas Iscariot.

Probably most of the 12 were illiterate. But Matthew was an exception to that rule as he was apparently well-educated.

Several were related to Jesus or to each other. Thus Simon and Andrew were brothers, as were James and John, and James the Less and Matthew. It is possible that Philip and Bartholomew were also brothers. James and John were cousins of Jesus if we accept the commonly-held view that their mother was a sister of Mary, the mother of the Lord.

Some writers believe that Bartholomew was of royal decent, either going back to the royalty mentioned in Second Samuel or in connection with the Ptolemies of Egypt. If so, that would have added a significantly different background for that disciple.
Thus there were commonalities in that small fellowship, but also considerable diversity.

Shunning the known for the unknown, how did Jesus determine the men with whom he would associate so closely for a few precious months?

Obviously a few of them were people he knew—and trusted. Some were followers of John the Baptist and therefore in general agreement with the ideas of Jesus. Others he may have selected intuitively. Probably he chose them on the basis of the purity of their lives, their openness to his message, and their potential as leaders, including their ability to communicate with others. Perhaps you would like to add other points to that list of qualifications.

For months they lived together, walked together, ate together, went fishing together, and prayed together. Gradually they must have formed a close fellowship, a loving community, a school of apostles. Their months together must have been both a testing time and a training time.

And they grew! Under the leadership of Jesus and with his example, their understanding must have deepened, their faith heightened, and their outreach broadened. So, too, their self-respect and their regard for others.

Over the coming months those unknown men became well-known. Those inconspicuous individuals became conspicuous. Those ordinary men became extra-ordinary. Those insignificant disciples significant. Eventually they were to be catapulted from obscurity to fame. Such was the radical transformation they underwent.

But it is important to remember that they were human beings and therefore had their difficulties. Because he was a Judean and the others were all Galileans, they may have treated Judas at times with disdain. Two of them are recorded as currying favor with Jesus, asking to be seated at his right and left. At least one, and possibly others, still clung to the hope—and expectation—that he would overthrow the hated Romans and establish a political kingdom
on earth. At the time of his arrest in the Garden of Gethsemane, all the disciples deserted him, although all but one of them returned after the Resurrection.

Eventually, however, the disciples became imaginative interpreters and effective emissaries of his message. And in the end they became martyrs for his—and their—cause.

What little we know about that remarkable group of men is largely recorded in the four gospels of our New Testament, in the book of Acts, and in a few of the epistles or letters.

But there are also a number of other sources which corroborate what is said in the gospels, extend what is told there, or sometimes contradict the New Testament accounts. For example, there are the writings of Josephus—the Jewish historian, and the records of Hegesippus—the Christian writer. There is the fascinating account of Eusebius in *The Ecclesiastical History* and Jerome’s biography of Jesus in *Concerning Illustrious Men*, as well as his *Homily of Matthew*. And in recent years scholars have learned much about the time of Jesus and his disciples from the Dead Sea Scrolls.

Most of us will never read such source materials but we can profit from the treasures revealed in them and passed on to use by scholars and popularizers.

Over the centuries millions of people have been helped in their understanding and appreciation of the disciples by the works of famous painters. Three of the best known are Leonardo da Vinci’s The Last Supper, Albrecht Duerer’s The Four Apostles, and Olivier’s Jesus and His Disciples, portraying them in a boat on the Sea of Galilee.

Millions of people have also been inspired by many forms of music in which the disciples, along with Jesus, have been explained and extolled. One of the most famous composers who included such themes in his motets, magnificats, and hymns was Johann Sebastian Bach, of which the Passion According to St. Matthew and the Passion According to St. John are probably the best known.
How much we all wish there had been better records of the life of Jesus and his disciples. How much we would revel in them and be enriched by them.

Against this introductory background, let us try to sketch each of the 12 disciples for a gallery of apostolic portraits.

**Peter**

In the lists of the disciples in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts, Peter’s name always appears first. That is not just a coincidence; he was certainly the most important of that band of early followers of Jesus—and possibly the most interesting.

It was he who was chosen second for that group, after his brother Andrew. It was in his house and with his family that Jesus often stayed. Throughout the three years of Jesus’ ministry, Peter seems to have been with him constantly and all accounts place him in the inner circle of the three closest companions of the Master. True, he did betray the Lord in the Garden of Gethsemane but he was courageous enough to admit that horrendous mistake and to try to make amends for it. It was Peter who was the first among the disciples to appear at the open tomb and it was he who arranged for a successor to Judas Iscariot. At the day of Pentecost it was Peter who was the spokesman for the disciples and after that he travelled widely to spread the Gospel. He died a martyr to the cause and upon him the Christian Church was supposedly founded.

What a man! What a life!

Some readers may wonder how we know so much about this disciple—far more than the others. The answer is relatively simple. As Peter travelled, he was often accompanied by a young man named Mark who served as his assistant and his interpreter. So close did they become that Peter even referred to Marcus or Mark as “my son.” (I Peter 5:13).
Mark never met Jesus but he knew a great deal about him because of his work with Peter. Apparently Peter always spoke in Aramaic, his native language, and Mark would often translate his sermons into Greek—the common language of that period in that area. Thus he filed in his mind the incidents in the life of Jesus that Peter narrated. Because of constant repetition, Mark knew the key words which Peter used.

Probably he stored in his mind many pertinent phrases and striking sentences. Possibly he could repeat, verbatim, incident after incident which Peter had told repeatedly.

Recording what he remembered on rolls of papyrus, Mark preserved for us our first and most authentic account of the life of our Lord. That summary seems to have occurred around 75 A.D.

By snatching those recollections from oblivion, Mark presented the world with an invaluable document. Upon that account the other writers of the gospels drew heavily, adding or subtracting from Mark’s narrative. Thus Luke, as a biographer and dramatist, concentrated on the life of Jesus. Matthew stressed the fact that Jesus was the promised Messiah of the ancient prophesies and a champion of the ecclesiastical institution. John also drew upon that collection of reminiscences, giving the fourth gospel a mystical and theological interpretation.

In addition to the insight we have into the life of Jesus and of Peter as contained in the Gospel of Mark, we have the Book of Acts, the first part of which is really an account of the acts of Peter. Then there are the First and Second Letters of Peter, epistles addressed to the exiles of the dispersion in several parts of the Near East. Directly they tell us little of the life of Jesus; indirectly they reflect Peter’s understanding of the gospels as applied to the problems of the early Christian communities and to the potential glories of The Good Life.
But what was Peter really like, you may ask. We have no detailed description of him, no profile, not even sketches by contemporary artists. But we can catch fleeting glimpses of him from the various writings we have inherited and we can conjecture what he was like from what he told about himself through his interpreter—Mark.

Of course the answer to that question depends in part upon which period we are talking about, as GROWTH was probably his greatest characteristic. Remnants of his early impulsive and easily-changing moods must have remained with him throughout his life, as our youthful traits so often do with all of us. But he surely became more steady, stable, and serene in his later years as he grew under the guidance of God and under the example of Jesus Christ. How else would he have become the dynamic and striking leader that he was in his later years—the chief of the early Christian movement until the appearance of Paul.

Certainly in his earlier years there were noticeable contradictions in his character. Perhaps that is one reason so many people admire him; he is beloved because he was so human—so like us.

For example, he was both cowardly and courageous.

The worst example of Peter's cowardice was when Jesus and the disciples walked out to the Mount of Olive. There Jesus told them, at least indirectly, of the impending events and said that they would scatter as the sheep sometimes did at the disappearance of their leader. Then Peter protested, declaring:

Though they all fall away because of you, I will never fall away. (Matthew 26:33).

Yet it was only a short time later that he denied that he even knew Jesus.

However, his courage is demonstrated later when he told about that incident himself, admitting his horrendous action.
Particularly in his younger years, Peter was also impetuous and impulsive. But he was also stable, cautious, and even humble.

One memorable instance of his impetuous action took place after the feeding of the 5000. Escaping the crowd, the disciples climbed into a boat and began to row to the other side of the lake. But the wind was against them and they feared that they would never reach the other side. Then Jesus appeared to them, walking on the water. Challenged by that act of faith, Peter scrambled into the water and tried to walk on it. But, after his first steps, he failed. How impulsively he must have acted; how certain he must have been that he could match the miracle of his Master.

Yet he could be self-denying as well as self-assertive.

On one occasion Jesus had been hard-pressed by the people who had come to hear him. Weary, he apparently wanted to escape the multitudes so he asked his disciples to return to their boats in which they had been fishing without success. Once out on the lake, Jesus asked Peter to let down the nets again. To that Peter protested; he knew more about fishing than Jesus and that was a useless command. "Master, we have toiled all night and took nothing," he declared. Nevertheless he and the others let down their nets and their boats were soon filled to overflowing with fish. Peter was astonished, embarrassed, and remorseful. He accused himself of being a doubter, saying, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord." (Luke 5:8).

Much could be written about this incredible man but here we will limit ourselves to a few more paragraphs. To do so let us flip the pages of the Gospels of Mark and John, letting our fingers wander over a few pertinent passages and our eyes select some relevant verses which tell us about Peter's name, his closeness to Jesus, and his role as the chief leader of the early Christian Church.

Many readers will be aware that Peter was also known as Simeon or Simon and wonder about those various appela-
tions. The answer is found in John 1:42 which tells about Andrew bringing his brother Simon (Simeon being the original Hebrew form and Simon a Gentile modification) to Jesus. Meeting him, the Master said:

So you are Simon, the son of John? You shall be called Cephas (which means Rock).

The significance of that change of names is explained briefly and cogently in William Barclay’s *The Master’s Men* where he says:

When Andrew brought his brother Simon to Jesus, Jesus said, “Thou art Simon, the son of Jona; thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation a stone. As we shall see, Cephas and Peter are different forms of the same name. And there is a most interesting point here. Jona means a dove and Cephas and Peter mean a rock. So what Jesus is saying to Peter is, “Up until now you have been like a fluttering, timorous dove; but if you take me as a Master, and if you give me your life, I will make you a rock.”

Moving quickly through the Gospel of Mark, we see Jesus walking through the grainfields on Sunday, plucking grain, to the amazement of his fellow Jews who considered that action sacrilegious. To them he says, “The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.” We see him healing a man with a withered hand and a daughter at the point of death. He feeds the 5000 and walks on water. Then he heals a man who was deaf and had a speech impediment. On another occasion he places a child in the midst of the disciples and reminds them how much can be learned from children about The Kingdom. Asked which was the greatest commandment, he tells them that there are two. The first is that people should love the Lord with all their hearts, their
souls, their minds, and their strength. And the second—to love their neighbors as themselves. He is anointed with precious oil by a woman, and his disciples question him about accepting that gift. He replies that she has done “a beautiful thing.” Then there is the Last Supper, the Crucifixion, and the Resurrection.

Peter seems to have been at all those as well as many other events.

Originally he was probably a Zealot, one of the fanatical nationalists and he became a champion of the efforts to retain the Jewish character of the movement which Jesus represented. Nevertheless he became, later, a champion for the widening of that movement to include Gentiles.

Surely Peter was one of the most interesting and important men who have ever lived.

James

Despite the fact that James was one of the first disciples to be chosen by Jesus and one of the three men who were considered his closest companions, very little is known about him. That is even more curious when one realizes that in the Gospel of Mark, James is placed second and in other accounts third in the list of the 12.

Hence it is disappointing and tantalizing not to have more information on that important follower of Jesus.

Our scanty knowledge includes the fact that James lived in Capernaum or in its suburb on the lake, Bethsaida. He was the son of Zebedee and the older brother of John, with whom he is almost always linked. We know that John became a follower of John the Baptist but there is no evidence that James joined him in that decision. James was a fisherman and some think that Peter, Andrew, James, and John were partners in that business. Apparently Zebedee
was a successful business man as he was able to employ servants to assist him. There is also the possibility that James was a first cousin of Jesus.

At that time Galileeans were considered impulsive and quick-tempered and James seems to fit into that category or stereotype. Many of them were also ambitious for power and position. Two events with which James was connected tend to bear out those characteristics.

One occurred as Jesus and his disciples were journeying toward Jerusalem. En route, James and John asked a favor of Jesus, urging him to place them on his right and left hand in glory. For that request for preferential treatment, Jesus chided the two brothers, commenting on an important aspect of his view of life. In part he said,

\[
\ldots \text{whoever would be great among you must be servant and whoever would be first among you must be slave of all. For the Son of man also came not to be served but to serve.}\ldots
\]

(Mark 10: 43-45)

Some of the edge is taken off that seemingly ambitious move on the part of James and John when one reads on in that account. Jesus continued his reply by asking them if they would drink the cup which he would eventually drink, and their reply was in the positive.

As an aside, it is interesting to note that Matthew mentions the same incident but reports that it was the mother of James and John who made that request. Perhaps that was his way of blaming her rather than the two brothers for asking a special favor of Jesus.

Upon another occasion, after the Transfiguration, Jesus was passing through Samaria en route to Jerusalem and his reception there was so hostile that James and John said to Jesus:
Lord, wilt thou that we bid fire to come down from heaven and consume them? (Luke 9:54)

But Jesus rebuked them. His way was different, replacing anger and wrath with understanding and love.

But let us not be too harsh on James. He must have been devoted to the Master. Otherwise, why would he have been included in the inner circle? Why would he have been with Jesus when he moved aside to pray in the time of his great agony? Why would James have been a co-worker with Peter in the spread of the Gospel and eventually been killed for his faith?

Legend has it that James eventually went to Spain and the Spanish have long considered him their patron saint (Saint Iago). But there is little proof of that surmise.

But we do know that James was beheaded in 42 A.D. by Herod Agrippa I, the king of Palestine—the first of the 12 to give up his life for his beliefs.

John

During the life of Jesus, John seems to have been constantly or frequently at his side. And even though we do not have many details of John’s life, we are certain that he was one of the three who were closest to the Lord. On the Cross Jesus committed his mother to John’s care and there is evidence that he carried out that charge faithfully. In later life he was the companion and ally of Peter and a pillar of the newly formed Christian Church. He lived longer than any of the other disciples, dying somewhere around 100 A.D.

In view of that brief sketch of John, one might expect to find several accurate and vivid accounts of him. But that is not so. He seems to be often in the shadow of Jesus and
then of Peter, constantly referred to obliquely but seldom mentioned specifically.

Nevertheless, he has been accorded a high position in the esteem of Christians. Emil Kraeling may have summed that up best in his book on *The Disciples* where he said:

> Although the church conceded to Peter the first place in its government, it accorded to John the first place in its affections.

If the order in which the disciples are mentioned in the Gospels is a gauge of their importance, John receives top billing. In Acts he is placed second, in Mark third, and in Matthew and Luke fourth. So there is general agreement as to John’s importance among the 12.

Even though his life is shrouded in mystery, there are some facts which we do know about him.

His parents were Zebedee, the successful fisherman, and Salome, who may have been a sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. Hence, he and Jesus may have been first cousins. He was the younger brother of James. They lived in Capernaum or Bethsaida and were a cut above others socially and economically.

If John was not a Zealot or fierce nationalist, he was close in his thinking to that fiery group. He was a follower of John the Baptist with whose views he was apparently in accord.

Very early he attached himself to Jesus, becoming one of the first four in that intimate group. From then on he is rarely mentioned directly, but often by inference.

He attended the local synagogue with Jesus, went to the house of Simon Peter where a number of important events in the life of Jesus occurred, and attended the wedding at Cana of Galilee. It is possible that his family owned a home in Jerusalem and likely that the interview of Nicodemus with Jesus took place there. So one might continue to enumerate
the close connection of John with the many events in the short, public life of Jesus.

Toward the end he was one of the three disciples on the Mount of Transfiguration and with Peter and James as Jesus withdrew from the group to prepare himself in prayer for his crucifixion. On Easter morning it may well have been John who was with Simon Peter after the Resurrection.

After the death of his brother James, John seems to have taken his place as the leader of the Christians in Jerusalem. Later, he travelled widely in the Near East and became a pillar of the church, especially in Ephesus.

For a time he seems to have been exiled on the island of Patmos, a penal colony off the coast of Turkey. But he returned eventually to Ephesus.

As mentioned earlier, he was the last of the 12 to die, somewhere around 100 A.D.

The lack of clarity on many points, to which we have already referred, also exists in relationship to his authorship of various documents. He may have been the author of the fourth gospel; if not, he certainly supplied its writer with much of its content. Some scholars, but not all, attribute the book of Revelation as well as three epistles, to him. Then there are some ancillary accounts, such as the Apocrypha of John.

The most curious comment one can make about John is that there can be two seemingly contradictory descriptions of him.

The first would portray him as an intolerant, ambitious young man with an explosive temper. Hence he and his brother were sometimes called The Sons of Thunder.

There are two incidents which support that view of John. One was the situation where they (or their mother) asked for preferential treatment at the right and left hand sides of Jesus when his kingdom was established. The other was an event described in Mark where John discovered a man, who was not a disciple, casting out demons, and he forbade him
to do so. But John was admonished by Jesus for that action, commenting that:

He that is not against us, is for us. For truly I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward. (Mark 9:38 ff.)

The second account would picture John as a caring and compassionate companion of Jesus. Many believe that that individual was the one referred to frequently as The Beloved Disciple. If he is established as the author of John, then his humility explains the lack of references to him. Then there is the touching scene of Jesus on the Cross committing the care of his mother to that disciple.

Probably those two seemingly contradictory sketches are of John as a young man before he met Jesus and as an older and more mature man after meeting the Master. It may well be that he changed radically through his association with Jesus. Under the hands of the Master Potter the common clay was turned into a sturdy, beautiful vessel. He was transformed. Call it growth or call it grace, it seems to have happened.

Andrew

And what can we say about Andrew? First let us fill in some of his background and then comment on his outstanding characteristics.

Andrew was born in Bethsaida in Galilee and lived later in Capernaum by the sea. He was known by his Greek name and was a brother of the better-known Simon Peter.

As a young man Andrew was a fisherman who became deeply attached to John the Baptist, the homely, rough
outdoorsman and forerunner of Jesus. From John, Andrew learned that another and greater prophet was to appear. So Andrew waited.

But not for long. Soon Jesus appeared, walking along the sea of Galilee. There he saw two brothers casting their nets into the sea and he said to them:

Follow me and I will make you fishers of men. Immediately they left their nets and followed him. (Matthew 5:19-20).

That statement seems so stark and simple. Yet it represents a revolutionary change in the life of Andrew. From then on he was to forsake all that he had known and set out on a new and lifelong adventure as one of the 12 disciples and as an interpreter of the life and message of Jesus. That adventure was to bring him hardships, hazardous journeys, and persecution. But it was also to bring him self-fulfillment, satisfaction, and joy.

Even though we know little about Andrew, we do know that he was self-effacing or humble. Despite the fact that he was the first to join Jesus, he was not one of the inner circle. And even though he was to become less important than Peter, he did not seem to begrudge him his prominence. Apparently he was not jealous or resentful; instead he seems magnanimous and selfless. How rare that trait is in human beings. How endearing it makes Andrew to all of us.

He was also an introducer. For instance, John's account says that Andrew was first chosen by Jesus as a disciple and that Peter was then introduced by his brother to the Master.

At the famous feeding of the 5000, it was Andrew who introduced the boy who had the five barley loaves and a couple of fish to Jesus.

And it was Andrew who introduced the Greeks to Jesus. Coming to Philip in their effort to meet the Master, he did not know what to do with them. So he consulted with
Andrew who was certain that they should meet with Jesus, which they did. Like the other disciples, he took seriously the injunction of Jesus to go into all the world and preach the gospel. Probably he journeyed to Scythia, the country north of the Black Sea and between the Danube and Tanais rivers—or a part of what is now the Soviet Union. He may well have gone, also, to Greece and Macedonia. Legend also says that his body was taken in 337 A.D. to Constantinople for burial and a part of it sent to Scotland.

In any case, the Scotch, the Greeks, and the Russians have taken Andrew as their patron saint.

So, although little is known about him, Andrew should be esteemed for his selflessness, his loyalty, and his devotion.

### Philip

In Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts Philip is mentioned, but it is only in John that he became a distinct personality.

In dealing with that disciple, however, one has to be careful as there may have been another Philip who was prominent in the early church. Hence it is difficult to differentiate between them. In fact, some scholars think that they were actually the same person.

Like Peter and Andrew, Philip came from Bethsaida, located on the east side of the Jordan river as it enters the Sea of Galilee. Hence he was probably a fisherman.

It is curious that his name is Greek, meaning a lover of horses. No one knows why he received that appellation, but it is thought that he may have been named for Philip the Tetrarch who had recently raised the status of Bethsaida to that of the capital of the province.

Without doubt, Philip was a follower of John the Baptist. Then he was accosted by Jesus who commanded or
invited him to “Follow me.” As the others had attached themselves voluntarily to Jesus, Philip became the first disciple whom Jesus recruited.

After that event, Philip immediately sought out his friend Nathanael, saying to him:

We have found Him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. (John 1:45).

Nathanael was sceptical, saying, “Can any good come out of Nazareth?” But Philip replied simply, “Come and see.” That short and simple statement may reveal much about Philip. Rather than arguing with his friend, he invited him to see Jesus for himself, convinced that Nathanael would then believe. It was a wise and successful approach.

When invited by Jesus to follow him, it may have been Philip who said, “Lord, let me first go and bury my father.” To which Jesus answered, “Follow me and leave the dead to bury the dead.” Surely that comment was not intended as an insensitive counsel but as an attempt to indicate to Philip the priorities of the moment.

The next occasion where we see Philip was at the feeding of the 5000. When the crowd grew large, Jesus apparently began to worry how they would be fed. Turning to Philip, he asked how that could be done. We assume that Philip was in charge of the commissariat of the disciples or that he was a practical man who had already begun to calculate how the crowd could be fed. Others think that as a Greek-speaking individual from that region, he might be expected to have some idea of where food could be obtained, mindful that Jews baked only enough bread for the day’s supply.

In any case, it was then that the boy with the loaves and fishes appeared and, by a miracle of sharing, the multitude was fed.
A third account of Philip occurred in Jerusalem when some converts to Judaism, known as “proselytes,” came to him, saying, “We wish to see Jesus.” Possibly that was because Philip spoke Greek and they felt most comfortable with him as the one most likely to lead them to his Master.

Some writers indicate that that was the beginning of his lifelong effort to reach out to the Greeks in Asia Minor and possibly other parts of the Mediterranean world.

The final incident involving Philip was after the Last Supper in the Upper Room where Peter, Thomas, Judas (not Iscariot), and Philip were talking with Jesus about the Father. At one point he said to Jesus: “Lord, show us the Father and we shall be satisfied.”

The mild rebuke and challenging statement from Jesus, then, was:

Have I been with you so long and yet you do not know me, Philip? He who has seen me, has seen the Father; how can you say, “Show us the Father?” Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority; but the Father who dwells in me does his works. Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father in me, or else believe me for the sake of the works themselves. (John 14:8-11).

Some interpret that incident as revealing the mystical tendency of Philip and the desire of Jesus to bring him back to a more practical realistic approach.

After Pentecost, Philip carried out the injunction of Jesus to preach and teach the gospel far and wide. He spent years in Asia Minor and he may have gone to Carthage in North Africa. There are some who claim also that he traveled to Gaul (now France), although the evidence in that respect is scanty and the word Gaul may have been confused with a section of Asia Minor.
There is a legend that Philip died as a martyr in Hiemapolis. Some claim, too, that he was the author of a Gospel of Philip and also an apocryphal Acts of Philip.

From what little we can glean from references to Philip, he was a faithful follower of Jesus, a man who apparently did not need to be in the limelight and who frequently deferred to others. He seems to have had a questioning mind. Instead of exclusiveness, his life was marked by inclusiveness in respect to the Greeks and Gentiles.

Bartholomew

A few of the disciples about whom we have already written, and a few about whom we will write later, were flamboyant and dramatic. Probably they were more aggressive than the others, too. In addition there were often contradictory characteristics in their lives which made them interesting to outsiders—and possibly insiders.

In today’s world we would think of them as the stars of the cast or the headliners. They would make excellent “copy” for reporters.

It seems likely that that was true even in the time of Jesus. Consequently we have considerable information on a few of the disciples and little or almost none on others.

Bartholomew was one of those inconspicuous individuals even though he must have had a powerful impact on those whom he met, and through them on thousands or even millions of others.

There is even confusion about his name. Bartholomew appears in all the lists of disciples, including Matthew, Mark, Luke and Acts. But the fourth Gospel never mentions him, although the name of Nathaniel does appear in John. Since Bartholomew was a second or distinguishing name, many scholars think that his first name was Nathaniel so that those two men may have been the same person.
Another conjecture about the name Bartholomew is that he was of royal birth. That theory was propounded by Jerome, the famous translator of the bible into Latin and a church historian living in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D. He cited the fact that Bartholomew may have been the son of Talmai, a living descendant of the royalty cited in the book of Second Samuel. A similar suggestion was that Bartholomew was connected with the Ptolemies of Egypt and therefore of royal descent. If one believes that Jesus chose his disciples in part because of their diversity, these theories could have special credence.

We do know, however, that it was Philip who brought Bartholomew to Jesus and that those two men travelled together after the death of the Master.

On first meeting Jesus, Bartholomew is said to have asked, “Can any good come out of Nazareth,” revealing the prejudice against the people of that city at that time.

But the reaction of Jesus was positive, in keeping with his ability to see the good or the potential good in everyone. Of Bartholomew or Nathanael he is reputed to have said, “Behold an Israelite in whom there is no guile.” (John 1:47).

Won over by the life and teachings of Jesus, Bartholomew was able to say later, “Thou art the Son of God; thou art King of Israel.”

Apparently Bartholomew later exerted a tremendous influence in his quiet, devoted, determined way. Accounts differ as to where he travelled but those places may have included Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, and Armenia. Even today Armenians contend that the gospel was first brought to their area by Thaddeus and Bartholomew and those men are venerated as the founders of the Christian Church in that part of the world.

Perhaps Bartholomew represents the nameless millions who have dedicated their lives to the Jesus way of life and lived devotedly without fanfare or publicity.
Matthew

Then there was Matthew. And what a fascinating person he was.

Unfortunately there are so many different accounts of his life, his travels into various parts of the world, his association with the Gospel of Matthew, and his death that it is difficult to describe him with any degree of accuracy.

We do know that his name was Matthew, that his father was Alpheus, and that he came from Caperneum. Authorities agree, also, that he had another name—Levi. Apparently he had a brother who was one of the 12 disciples as his father’s name was also Alpheus.

Vocationally we are aware that Matthew was a publican, a tax-collector, a customs officer, and a money-changer. In earlier times in that part of the world such persons were sent out from Rome and they were hated by the Hebrews not only because they represented a foreign authority, but because they were unmerciful in gouging the people. But in the time of Jesus such officials were selected from the local people. Consequently they were hated even more than the Romans. That was because the Hebrews felt that no one should pay tribute to anyone but God and because one of their own was extracting such funds from them and becoming rich in the process. Such tax collectors were therefore considered traitors, quislings, collaborators.

Probably Matthew’s customs post was near the Damascus Road, a major trade artery to other parts of the Middle East. Also, it is likely that it was near the seashore, making it possible for Matthew to take time off from his duties to see and hear Jesus.

Not only was Matthew wealthy; he was also well-educated, speaking Aramaic, Greek, and Latin.

Through the ages many people have found it extremely difficult to understand why Jesus would choose such an individual as a disciple. This was no simple, uneducated
fisherman; this was a hated and despised representative of a foreign regime and a wealthy and well-educated man.

One can only surmise that Jesus saw in Matthew more than others did. Apparently he was aware of his potential and decided that Matthew would add another dimension to the inner circle which was being formed.

The account in the gospel of Mark 2:13 is crisp but does not give us much insight into that baffling question. It simply says:

> He (Jesus) went out again beside the sea; and all the crowd gathered about him, and he taught them. And as he passed on, he saw Levi, the son of Alphaeus, sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, “Follow me,” and he rose and followed him.

In Luke 5:29 there is a suggestion of the sacrifice that entailed. There Luke declared:

> And he left everything and rose and followed him.

Later in that chapter Luke described the feast which Levi and Matthew prepared for Jesus, inviting a large company of tax collectors and other social outcasts. And Jesus attended that feast.

Aghast that he should do such a thing, the disciples questioned him about eating with publicans and sinners. No, they did more; they chastised him.

The reply to his shocked disciples, as recorded in Luke in Chapter 5:32 is:

> I have not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Such was the mission of Jesus, seeing the potential in people and releasing it.

The other side of the coin is what Matthew saw in Jesus. For that we have no clue in the New Testament. What a field
day psychologists and psychiatrists could have in figuring that out. Probably they would play around with Matthew’s sense of guilt, his “readiness” for a new life, and the powerful tug of the personality and message of Jesus.

But there is still another aspect of the life of Matthew which is shrouded in mystery. That is the question as to whether Jesus sensed a special role which Matthew could eventually play—that of interpreting his life and message to a wide audience through the written word.

For a long time biblical scholars contended that the Gospel of Matthew was not written by that disciple. They pointed to the fact that Matthew was present at most of the scenes described by Mark and would surely have presented a more personal account of those events.

But a few scholars have recently reconsidered that judgement, expressing the strong possibility that the book of Matthew was written by Matthew and that Jesus even foresaw that possibility in selecting him. Those scholars postulate that Matthew agreed in large part with the account by Mark but wanted to stress much more than he had done the teachings of Jesus. Hence the inclusion of many of his messages or sermons, primarily the Sermon on the Mount.

The claim that Jesus might have chosen Matthew with this interpretive role in mind is fostered by the fact that Jesus was well aware of what had happened to Isaiah and that his work had been carried on by faithful interpreters, including writers. Those scholars also point to the fact that Jesus had witnessed the demise of John the Baptist after only a very short career and was aware that something similar might happen to him.

Here is what Edgar J. Goodspeed, an eminent authority on the Bible wrote in his book *The 12: The Story of Christ’s Apostles*:
The more you think of it, the more likely it seems that Matthew wrote the Gospel that bears his name. He would feel Mark's inadequacy on the side of Jesus' teaching and seek to remedy it. . . . Whatever doubts or difficulties may beset us as to its authorship, no more probable author of it can be suggested. Indeed, it is hard to see why the name of an otherwise obscure figure like Matthew the tax collector should ever have been given it, unless he was identified with its origin.

Probably we will never know the answers to those questions but they are extremely interesting ones for speculation and scholarship.

Shrouded in mystery, also, are the travels of Matthew after the death of Jesus, as well as the truth about that disciple's death.

Some authorities claim that Matthew travelled to Ethiopia, Macedon, Syria, and Persia. Others are not sure of those facts. Unclear, also, is the place and nature of his death, although many people believe he was killed or died in Salerno, Italy, where they claim that he was buried in the cathedral there.

Despite our lack of knowledge about this interesting and important disciple, he matters profoundly. In his volume on *The Master's Men*, William Barclay included this summary of his life:

> It would be impossible to overestimate the debt we owe to this once despised disciple.
Thomas gets short shrift in the first three books of the New Testament where he is merely mentioned as one of the disciples. Only in John does he come into his own where he is described in Chapters 11, 14, 20, and 21.

Hence we do not know much about that captivating character. Obviously he was a fisherman from Galilee. One of his two names was Didymas which means "twin," but no one knows about the other part of that pair. Some have even surmised that Jesus was the counterpart of Thomas, but that is rejected by most scholars.

If you mention the name Thomas to most Christians, they will immediately associate him with the term "Doubting Thomas." That connection is both fair and unfair. It is fair because he kept demanding proof of events and ideas. But it is unfair because Thomas was a firm believer once he was confronted with what he considered proof.

Thomas first appears in John when Jesus learned about the illness of Lazarus and decided to visit him in Bethany, a village close to Jerusalem. Because the Jewish authorities had already determined that Jesus was to die, the disciples felt it was dangerous for Jesus to go to Bethany. Despite the doubts of the other disciples about that decision, Thomas agreed with Jesus, saying, "Let us also go, that we may die with him." (John 11:16)

Some may say that Thomas' comment was a fatalistic counsel but many feel it was a remark based on his trust and faith in his Master.

Then there is the scene at the Lord's Supper in the Upper Room where Jesus tried to prepare his disciples for what was imminent. To them he said, "Whither I go you know and the way you know." But Thomas probably expressed the doubts and forebodings of others when he spoke up, saying, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" To which Jesus uttered his famous
reply, "I am the way, the truth, and the life." (John 14:6).

After the Crucifixion, Thomas disappeared. That event was probably too much for him and he wanted to be alone. So he was not present when Jesus reappeared. Disbelieving what he heard and dumbfounded by what had occurred, Thomas demanded proof. His comment was:

Unless I see in his hands the print of the nails, and place my finger in the mark of the nails, and place my hand in his side, I will not believe. (John 20:25).

Eight days later the disciples were gathered together and Jesus came and stood with them, saying, "Peace be with you." And to Thomas he said:

Put your finger here, and see my hands; and put out your hand and place it in my side; do not be faithless, but believing. (John 20:27).

Prostrating himself before Jesus, Thomas cried out, "My Lord and my God." The Doubting Thomas thus became The Believing Thomas.

To that questioning but loyal follower, Jesus then uttered these challenging words:

Have you believed because you have seen me?
Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe. (John 20:29)

The story of the remainder of his life after that event eludes us. Tradition says he travelled widely, even to India and China. It is curious that Vasca da Gama founded a church in India in 1500 called The Christians of St. Thomas but authorities do not agree that Thomas went there and died there.

No matter where he travelled or where he died, he is an appealing figure with whom many of us can identify.
James, the Son of Alphaeus

How often today we use the same name for several boys or several girls in a school, community, or even a family. That seems to have been true in the days of Jesus, also, as we have references to several individuals by the name of Mary, John, or James.

So the writers of the Bible tried to differentiate between or among them by adding some special designation. Hence the ninth disciple is often referred to as James, the son of Alphaeus; James, the Younger; or James, the Less.

Unfortunately the story of his life has never been chron­icled. His name appears in all of the gospels and in the book of Acts but nothing more.

Because the disciple Matthew had a father named Alphaeus, it is assumed that Matthew and James were brothers. Lending credence to that association is the fact that both were from Capernaum on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee.

If they were brothers, that family was certainly highly honored by having two members in the inner circle of Jesus of Nazareth.

And if those two were members of that honored group, it is a most curious and dramatic situation as they had apparently taken very different paths ideologically and politically.

Matthew had given in to the power and position of a tax collector, thus opening himself to the charge of being a collaborator with the hated regime of the Romans. On the other hand it is likely that James had become a Zealot or flaming patriot, although some people think he deserted that group when he became alarmed by their bloodshed.

In any case Matthew and James, sons of Alphaeus, became followers of Jesus and reconciled not only to God but to each other. What better example could there be of the way of life of Jesus of Nazareth?
Although he has gone down in history as an obscure figure, he must have fought the good fight, followed the course, and kept the faith as one of the disciples of his Lord.

Thaddeus

Names! Names! Names! How confusing they can sometimes be. A case in point is the name of the disciple whom we have called Thaddeus in the heading of this section.

He is listed variously as Thaddeus, Lebbæeus, and Judas—the brother of Jesus, some even say a twin. Pages and pages have been written on those names and the order in which that disciple is listed in the four gospels and in the book of Acts. Suffice it to say that they apparently refer to the same individual.

Thaddeus certainly must have been an unusual person or Jesus would not have selected him as a disciple. Nevertheless we know almost nothing about him.

The only time he appears by name is in the description of The Last Supper. There he posed an important question, asking Jesus:

Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us and not to the world? (John 14:22)

The reply was:

If a man loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. He who does not love me does not keep my words; and the word which you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me.

These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. But the Counselor, the Holy Spirit, whom
the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things. . . . Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. . . . Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. (John 14: 23-27.)

How much that brief encounter with Thaddeus makes us want to know more about him. But our curiosity about him is not likely to be satisfied.

In this volume on The Disciples Emil G. Kraeling discusses at considerable length the legend of Thaddeus as told by the Syrians and recorded by the early Biblical scholar, Eusebius, and in the Greek Acts of Thaddeus.

According to that story Abgar, the king of Edessa had a disease which the medical men in his realm could not cure. Hearing of the healings done by Jesus, he sent a courier to invite Jesus to Edessa. Jesus replied that he could not come but he would eventually send a substitute. Hence Thaddeus was despatched there after the Ascension. With his power as a disciple, he cured the king and converted the city’s inhabitants. Abgar then commanded that silver and gold be given to Thaddeus but he refused to accept those gifts as unfitting for a disciple of the Lord.

A similar story applies to the work of Thaddeus in Armenia.

Fact or fiction, these stories are believable as they fit easily into what we know about the way in which the original 12 dispersed to various parts of the Mediterranean world, healing the sick and interpreting the life and messages of their Master.

Thaddeus may also be thought of as typical of the millions of men and women throughout the centuries who have served as humble and faithful followers of Jesus of Nazareth.
Simon the Zealot

In discussing this disciple we again come up against the difficulty with names. Already we have had Simon Peter; now we are confronted with another man with the same first name. Hence he is often called Simon the Canaanite (or Cananaean) or Simon the Zealot, to differentiate him from Simon Peter.

Unfortunately there is not a single word, deed, or event recorded in the four gospels about him. A few writers have asserted that he was the bridegroom in the wedding at Cana which Jesus attended and where he turned the water into wine. But that is unlikely.

However, the fact that he was a Zealot gives us some indication of his character and his beliefs. As suggested earlier, that was the last of the Jewish parties to emerge—or reemerge. During that particular period of history its followers were vehemently opposed to the census demanded by the Romans and their administrators. Believing only that their God should reign, they resisted the occupation of their land by foreigners and tried faithfully to retain the purity of their faith.

But even within that party there were major differences. Some were fanatical, to the point of being assassins or terrorists; others were middle-roaders; a few were primarily idealists. We are not sure to which group Simon the Zealot belonged but probably to one of the more flexible branches.

With that background it is fascinating to see Simon the Zealot in the same fellowship with Matthew the Tax Collector. One had compromised with the occupying forces and cooperated with them; the other brooked no compromise and yielded to no cooperation with those foreign forces.

Yet they were bound together—and with the other disciples—in a small and intimate fellowship by their common devotion to Jesus and their loyalty to his cause.
Various authorities have speculated about the travels of Simon the Zealot, mentioning such widespread areas as Mesopotamia, Persia, Syria, Egypt, Northwest Africa, Spain, and even Britain. Absolute proof of such travels is not forthcoming but it is possible when one realizes the extent of the Roman outreach in those days, dependent in large measure on their incredible system of roads and on their magnificent sailing vessels.

Legend says that Jude and Simon were martyred together and their remains sent to Rome. Ever since then, Armenian Christians have claimed Simon the Zealot as one of their evangelizers and saints.

**Judas Iscariot**

Of all the disciples the name of Judas is undoubtedly the best known. How unfortunate that is because he represents the worst rather than the best in the way of life that Jesus preached and practiced.

The story of Judas is a sad and sordid one but it needs to be told as it is an integral part of the life of the Master. The account of Judas is the biography of a man who gambled with history—and lost. Faced with the opportunity of becoming known as a saint, he became known instead as a sinner.

Because of his betrayal of the Lord, he epitomizes for all time treachery, deceit, overweening ambition, and shame. Over the centuries poets, painters, and hymn writers have pilloried him as despicable or detestable. And even though families are likely to name their boy babies John or James or the name of some other disciple, none names them Judas.

In his book on *The Master's Men* William Barclay wrote a superb summary of the life of Judas, saying:
Judas was the man whose tragedy was that he refused to accept Jesus Christ as he was, and sought to make Jesus Christ what he wanted him to be.

Certainly there is tragedy in the life of Judas, but there is also mystery. Why did Jesus choose him as a trusted disciple? Was the heinous deed of Judas inevitable or could he have been salvaged at some point by Jesus and/or the 11 chosen companions? As an act of supreme love could Jesus have forgiven Judas? Did he? Those are questions we will address briefly later in this account.

Except for the vivid descriptions of the betrayal of Jesus by this disciple, there is little else in the Gospels about him. Probably much more was known but was omitted after the dramatic events leading to the Crucifixion occurred. The less said about Judas the better, the writers must have thought.

We do know that his given name was Judas and his second name Iscariot, which it is assumed is a corruption of the word Kerioth, the name of a small town south of Hebron. His father was Simon Iscariot and was a member of the tribe of Judah.

Hence Judas was the only one of the 12 who hailed from the south. Since there was considerable rivalry between the Jews of the north and the south, some people think that Judas might have been treated at times with suspicion if not hostility by the other 11.

Nor are we sure when or where Judas joined the ranks of the disciples. Some say it could have been when Jesus visited John the Baptist at the Jordan. Others maintain that it was probably on the return trip from that event as Jesus went back to Judea. Still others surmise that it was at the Lake of Tiberius. Probably the exact place and time do not matter.

It's generally agreed that Judas was a Jewish nationalist although people differ as to how much violence he con-
doned. On the one hand are those who say that Judas accepted Jesus more as a political leader than a personal friend. On the other hand a few still contend that he was merely a misguided patriot.

In any case, he was trusted enough to become the treasurer of the group. In that capacity he administered some of the funds given to Jesus and his disciples, including some rather large sums donated by wealthy women.

The Gospel of John contains more on Judas than the others and John is particularly hard on that disciple. In John 6 he tells about the movement after the feeding of the 5000 to make Jesus king by force. Discouraged that they were not supported by Jesus, some of his followers turned away from him and Jesus asked the disciples if they, too, would desert him. After Peter protested his loyalty, Jesus is reported by John to have said:

Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil. (John 6:70)

Then, in the description of the scene where Mary of Bethany anoints the feet of Jesus and wipes his feet with her hair, John again attacks Judas. He reports that Judas protested that gesture of friendship as a costly and unwise move. Here is what John records:

But Judas Iscariot, one of his disciples (he who was to betray him) said, “Why was this ointment not sold for 100 denarn and given to the poor?” This he said not that he cared for the poor but because he was a thief. . . . (John 12: 4-6)

Whatever his motives, Judas soon was plotting against Jesus. It may well have been that he thought that Jesus, faced with extermination, would use some mighty miracle to save himself and establish his kingdom here on earth.
In any case, Judas plotted with the scribes and elders and, according to Luke, with the soldiers.

Then came that much-beloved scene of Jesus with his disciples at the feast of the Passover, known to Christians as The Last Supper. No one knows for sure about the seating arrangements at that intimate gathering but it may have been that Judas was given a place of honor near Jesus.

The accounts of what transpired there vary but there is a strong indication that Jesus knew at that time of the impending betrayal and shared that knowledge with his disciples.

In the account of Matthew Jesus said, "Truly I say to you, one of you will betray me." (Matthew 26:20). Then those present began to ask, significantly, if they were the ones; even then Judas was not suspect. Mark asserts that as they were eating together, Jesus warned that, "Truly, I say to you, one of you will betray me, one who is eating with me." (Mark 14:17). And he goes on to point out that it is to be the one who has just dipped bread in the same dish with Jesus. In Luke the statement appears from Jesus, "...woe to that man by whom he (the Lord) is betrayed." Luke 22:22. In John the comment by Jesus is "He who ate my bread has lifted his heel against me." (John 13:18).

Once that memorable meal was over, Jesus and some of his disciples withdrew to the Garden of Gethsemane where the betrayal took place. The accounts of that dramatic scene differ in their details but the result is the same, with Jesus being carried away, eventually to his crucifixion.

Having betrayed Jesus, Judas seems to have recanted and even attempted to return the 30 pieces of silver he had been paid for that dastardly deed.

Over the centuries people have continually asked why the betrayal and its resulting events took place. And many answers have been given to that imponderable act.

There are those who feel this was to fulfill the prophesies in the Old Testament about the death of Jesus. Some contend that Judas was a dupe of the devil tricked into this
incredible situation. Others believe that Judas really believed that Jesus would somehow extricate himself from his confrontation with the authorities and establish himself as the ruler of the world. Still others maintain that this was the final test of the qualifications of Jesus as the Supreme One. These and other related questions obviously arise in the minds of those who read or hear of this transaction, possibly the most dramatic and far-reaching event in world history.

Of course Judas has been much maligned—and understandably so. But the feeling still lingers that he merits some understanding, some friendship, even some love. Wasn’t that the heart of the message of Jesus? And were the disciples without fault? Could Jesus somehow have used his power to dissuade Judas from that treacherous act? Could Jesus even have forgiven him? Was Judas, perhaps, included in that powerful prayer from the Cross, “Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do”?

The rest of the story is anticlimactic. There was no trial of Judas; no witnesses were called. Instead, he hanged himself.

Then Mattias was chosen by the disciples to take his place.

Is it possible that there is a little of Judas in each of us? Such a thought could give us pause.
Some Books on the 12 Disciples


