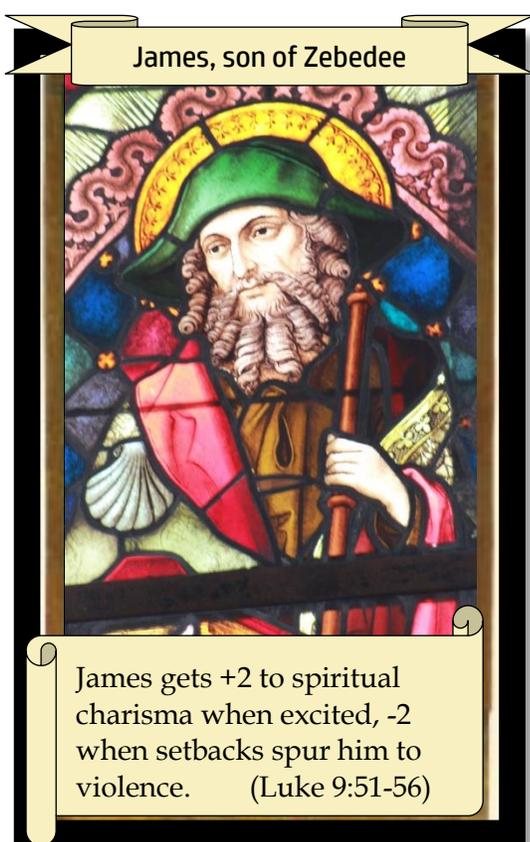


LEARNING TO FOLLOW JESUS WITH THE TWELVE APOSTLES

WHO ARE THE APOSTLES?

The word “apostle” means “one who is sent.” Some moments were shared by all the apostles. Other conversations and moments happened with specific Apostles. As we get to know the Twelve, we will be focusing more on their unique moments with Jesus.

Quick Glance with the Twelve Apostles Trading Cards



Born: c. 3 AD in Bethsaida, Galilee

Name(s): James is a form of Jacob, which means, “heel grabber” or “usurper.” Jesus nicknamed James and his brother John ‘Boanerges,” which means “Sons of Thunder.” He is also called “James the Greater” or “James the Great” to distinguish him from James, son of Alphaeus and James the brother of Jesus (James the Just).

Major Moments: Called with John at the sea; Healing Peter’s Mother-in-Law; Raising Jairus’s Daughter; Transfiguration; Who Sits on Jesus’s Right and Left in Glory?; Fire on Samaritan Town; Jesus at Mount of Olives; Gethsemane; Miraculous Catch of 153 Fish

Death: 41 or 44 AD in Jerusalem – first apostle to be martyred and the only one whose death is recorded in scripture. Herod (probably Herod Agrippa) ordered him to be executed by sword.

See Him in Art: He is associated with a scallop shell or cockle shell. He is also often depicted with a pilgrim’s hat.

BACKGROUND & CALLING

James and John were the children of Zebedee and Salome. James was probably the older brother since he is always named first. Zebedee was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee and was

likely a man of some means since he had hired boatmen in addition to his sons working for him. They fished in partnership with Simon Peter. Salome is listed as one of the pious women who also followed Christ, unlike Zebedee. She was probably one of the many women disciples who provided for Jesus' mission from their own financial resources (see Luke 8:3; Mark 5:1; Matthew 27:56). At the beginning of Jesus' ministry, he and his family lived near Capernaum.

In Mark 3:17, in a list of the twelve apostles, Mark notes that Jesus nicknamed James and John "Sons of Thunder." This is not mentioned anywhere else and there is no information in the Bible about what this means or why Jesus gave them this nickname.

-CALL STORIES (MATTHEW 4:21-22/MARK 1:16-20 & LUKE 5:1-11)

Jesus called James & John from their boats by the Sea of Galilee

Jesus got into one of Simon Peter's boats and granted him a large catch of fish. James and John were amazed, left everything, and followed Jesus.

LIFE & TIMES WITH JESUS

James is part of a special group within the apostles (Peter, James, and John) who are there for important events like the Transfiguration, the miracle with Jairus's daughter, and Jesus's time of prayer in Gethsemane.

Jesus **Heals Peter's Mother-in-law**

(Mk 1:29-31; Lk 4:38)

Jesus **Restores Jairus's Daughter to Life**, witnessed only by Peter, James, and John

(Mk 5:21-43; Lk 8:40-56)

Transfiguration, witnessed only by Peter, James, and John

(Mt 17:1-13; Mk 9:2-8; Lk 9:28-36)

James and John (or their other) ask Jesus **Who Will Sit at Jesus's Right and Left in Glory?** Jesus rebukes them and the other apostles are angry at James and John.

(Mt 20:20-28; Mk 10:35-45)

Calling Down Fire on a Samaritan Town (Luke 9:51-56)

⁵¹ When the days drew near for Jesus to be taken up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. ⁵² And he sent messengers ahead of him. On their way they entered a village of the Samaritans to make ready for him; ⁵³ but they did not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem.

⁵⁴ When his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" ⁵⁵ But he turned and rebuked them. ⁵⁶ Then they went on to another village.

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. This story has a LOT of back story. It comes at the beginning of Jesus's long journey from Galilee back to Jerusalem. As he has already told his disciples, he is going there to die. This passage is the second time that Jesus has sent his followers ahead of him – not just to arrange food and lodging for their journey, but to exorcism demons, cure diseases, and proclaim the kingdom of God (see Luke 9:1-6). Preaching to Samaritans presents a problem, though.

The Samaritans and the Jews used to be one people. After King Solomon died around 931 BC, Israel divided into two kingdoms: Judah and Israel. Jerusalem was the capital of Judah and Samaria was the capital of Israel. Then, during the Babylonian exile in 587 BC, some were exiled to Babylon when Jerusalem was destroyed and others were left behind. The Jews were the ones who were exiled and the Samaritans were the ones left behind. They developed different traditions, maintained slightly different versions of scripture, and grew to hate and distrust one another. Samaritans built their own Temple on Mt. Gerizim in the mid-5th century BC while Jews rebuilt the Temple in Jerusalem when they returned from exile around 531-516 BC. Many years later, the Maccabees (Jews) led a rebellion against the Seleucid Empire that had conquered them. They were able to restore independent control of Judea. In addition to independent rule, they were concerned with religious restoration. John Hyrcanus, a Jewish high priest, led a siege against the Samaritan Temple and destroyed it in 128 BC. This was important to him and many others because there are many Bible verses that say that God wants worship to be centralized at the Temple in Jerusalem and not elsewhere (see Dt 12:5-6, 1 Kgs 5:16-19, 1 Kgs 12:25-30, Zech 14:16). Not surprisingly, the Samaritans didn't see it that way.

As soon as they heard Jesus was headed for Jerusalem, all of that history and anger and pain would have flooded back. So often, when we come with a good word from God and with the best of intentions, we are not received like we expect to be. People who have been hurt by the church often carry deep wounds and scars for years. How do we best approach people in situations like this? How can we respectfully honor stories of pain, heartache, and tragedy? How do we know when to listen with compassion

and when to speak a fresh word of hope? What would you have said to the Samaritans if you were sent with the messengers?

2. James and John were definitely not feeling compassionate that day. All they heard from the Samaritans is that they rejected Jesus and, to them, that meant they deserved God's judgment and wrath.

In 2 Kings 1:1-16, the king of the northern kingdom Ahaziah injured himself so he asked messengers to inquire of Baal-zebub (a foreign god or the devil, depending on who you ask) if he would ever walk again. When the messengers went out, Elijah met them with a word from God denouncing Ahaziah because he did not turn to God for help. The Lord said that he would never leave his bed – he would die. The messengers related this to the king and the king sent them back to bring Elijah to him. So, 50 messengers plus a messenger captain went to bring Elijah in. Ahaziah tried this 3 times. The first two times, Elijah said, "If I am a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty" and fire came down from heaven and consumed them. The third time, the messenger captain pleaded for his life and the life of the other messengers, and God told Elijah to go and see the king.



So, James and John did not pull this "command fire to come down from heaven" thing out of the air. They saw Jesus as a great prophet in the tradition of Elijah, standing up against evil and corruption. James and John wanted a violent, decisive Jesus. They wanted Jesus to answer their frustration with dramatic retribution. But Jesus rebuked them, which is the verb that is used for casting out demons. In the strongest possible terms, Jesus tells them that violence is not the answer for people who believe differently from us. Our history tells a different story with countless wars where both sides scream, "God is on our side." In religious conflict, whether it's within Christianity or with other religions, what should we do? What does it mean to be a peacemaker when others oppose and offend us? What do we do with the anger that comes from having our sincerest beliefs trampled on?

On **Mount of Olives**, Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask Jesus when the buildings of the Temple will be thrown down. Jesus warns them of things to come. (Mk 13:3-8)

The agony of **Gethsemane**, witnessed by Peter, James, and John. (Mt 26:36-46; Mk 14:32-42)

Jesus appears to seven apostles and grants them a **Miraculous Catch of 153 Fish**. John is the first to recognize Jesus. (Jn 21:1-14)

THE EARLY CHURCH

The book of Acts mentions that James was there for the Ascension and for the meeting to find a replacement apostle for Judas Iscariot.

As mentioned earlier, James is the only apostle whose death is recorded in scripture (see Acts 12:1-5). King Herod, probably Herod Agrippa I, began persecuting the early church and violently captured some members of the church. This included James and Simon Peter. Herod had James put to death by sword. This was around 41 or 44 AD in Jerusalem.

LEGENDS

There are several Spanish legends about James because there is a tradition in the church that James evangelized in the Iberian Peninsula before returning to Jerusalem and being martyred. Legend has it that after he was killed, angels took his body and placed it in a boat without a rudder, which sailed to what is today northwestern Spain where his relics were discovered in the 9th century. As the story goes, a knight was riding along the high cliffs on horseback. As soon as he saw the boat on the shore, his horse leapt into the sea with the knight still holding on. It is said that St. James came to their rescue and saved both knight and horse. When they came out of the water, they were covered in scallop shells. To this day, James is associated with scallop shells.

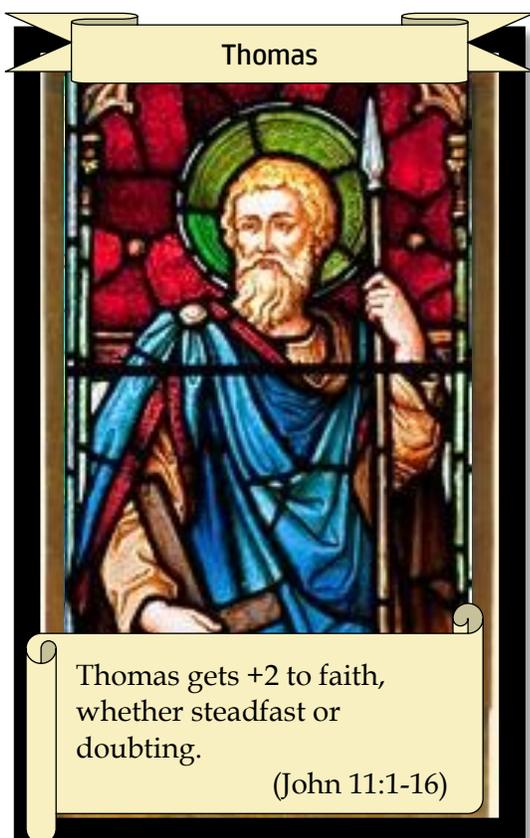
James's remains were then interred at Compostela and a pilgrimage journey was established called the "Camino de Santiago" or the "Way of St. James." Since the early Middle Ages, it has been the most popular pilgrimage made by Western European Catholics. In the 12th century, "The Order of St. James of the Sword" was founded to help protect pilgrims, to defend Christianity, and to battle Moors in the Iberian Peninsula. This is the cross that was used by their order.



PRAYER

God of wonder, we pray to you as people who walk with your Apostle James. We thank you for all the miracles and blessed teachings that we have received from your Holy Word and from our brothers and sisters in faith. We ask you for boldness to share the good news that we have received. Yet, we must also ask you to curb our tongue and curb our tempers when the word that we want to share might not be the word that can be heard. Help us to shake the dust off our feet and simply walk on, trusting that the right word will come at the right time. Teach us to release our frustration and to remain in your holy grace. Amen.

Quick Glance with the Twelve Apostles Trading Cards



Born: 1st century AD in Galilee

Name(s): Thomas is a transliteration of the Aramaic word for “twins.” (Aramaic had its own alphabet so “Thomas” was made by swapping in similar sounding letters from the Greek alphabet.) He was also called Didymus, which is the Greek word for “twin,” Doubting Thomas, and rarely Judas Thomas.

Major Moments: Lazarus, Jesus is the Way, Doubting Thomas, Miraculous catch of 153 fish

Death: Died 72 AD in Chennai, India by spear

See Him in Art: He is often shown placing his finger in Christ’s wounds, with a spear, or with a builder’s square.

BACKGROUND & CALLING

Why was Thomas called, “the twin”? Was he born a twin at birth or was it a nickname? We will never know. There are some writings that didn’t make it into the Bible (the “Gospel of Thomas” and the “Acts of Thomas”), which call this disciple “Judas Thomas.” If that was his fuller name, some scholars have suggested that he might be Judah, the brother of Jesus. Others think that he might have looked very similar to Jesus and that’s why they called him the twin.

Outside of these questions, we don’t know a lot about Thomas. There is a legend that Thomas worked as a builder before he was called. Thomas’s call story isn’t recorded in scripture, though. In the first three Gospels, Thomas is found only in lists of apostles. It is only in the Gospel of John that Thomas speaks.

LIFE & TIMES WITH JESUS

Thomas was present for the major events with Jesus like the feeding miracles, the Last Supper, and some Resurrection appearances. He also had a few particular moments with Jesus:

Lazarus (John 11:1-16)

Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. ² Mary was the one who anointed the Lord with perfume and wiped his feet with her hair; her brother Lazarus was ill. ³ So the sisters sent a message to Jesus, "Lord, he whom you love is ill."

⁴ But when Jesus heard it, he said, "This illness does not lead to death; rather it is for God's glory, so that the Son of God may be glorified through it." ⁵ Accordingly, though Jesus loved Martha and her sister and Lazarus, ⁶ after having heard that Lazarus was ill, he stayed two days longer in the place where he was.

⁷ Then after this he said to the disciples, "Let us go to Judea again." ⁸ The disciples said to him, "Rabbi, some Jews were just now trying to stone you, and are you going there again?"

⁹ Jesus answered, "Are there not twelve hours of daylight? Those who walk during the day do not stumble, because they see the light of this world. ¹⁰ But those who walk at night stumble, because the light is not in them." ¹¹ After saying this, he told them, "Our friend Lazarus has fallen asleep, but I am going there to awaken him."

¹² The disciples said to him, "Lord, if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right." ¹³ Jesus, however, had been speaking about his death, but they thought that he was referring merely to sleep.

¹⁴ Then Jesus told them plainly, "Lazarus is dead. ¹⁵ For your sake I am glad I was not there, so that you may believe. But let us go to him." ¹⁶ Thomas, who was called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

REFLECTION QUESTIONS:

1. In the Gospel of John, the death and reviving of Lazarus is one of the last miracles to happen before the events of Palm Sunday. John's Gospel offers seven major miracles of Jesus's ministry (which are called "signs"): water into wine at Cana, healing the son of the royal official, healing the paralyzed man at Bethesda, feeding 5,000 people, walking on water, healing the man who was blind since birth, and raising Lazarus from the dead. The sign of Lazarus is considered the climax of Jesus's deeds of power. What does Lazarus's death and revival teach us? Why does Jesus let him die? Does this foreshadow Jesus's resurrection? Show Jesus as more powerful than death itself? Express Jesus's compassion for those he loves? Point us to hope that Jesus can bring new life to our lives no matter how final things seem?

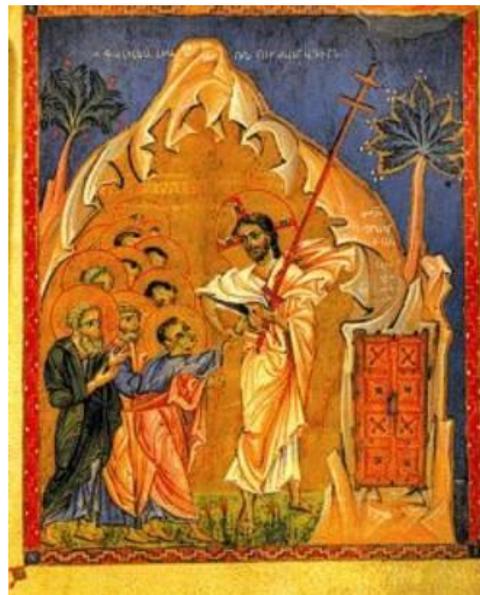
2. Jesus wants to go back to Judea even though he and his disciples are in danger. His disciples don't seem to understand the significance of what is happening. They start to make excuses for reasons that they don't need to go after all ("if he has fallen asleep, he will be all right"). Jesus seems ready to go, with or without his closest disciples. But this time, it's not Peter – Thomas rallies the troops. It is Thomas who says that no matter the risk to Jesus or to the whole group, they should be by Jesus's side. They should witness what Jesus will do. They should be loyal. They should have faith. Most of us have never and will never be in a situation where someone wants to kill us for our faith. So, it can be difficult for us to connect to passionate declarations of faith like Thomas's here. We might ask ourselves: would I be willing to die for my faith? That's a question we may never know the answer to. But, what we can more easily answer is this: am I willing to *live* for my faith? Am I open to the ways that Christ leads me? Am I willing to change, to give things up, to challenge myself for the sake of my loving savior?

-JESUS IS THE WAY (JOHN 14:1-14)

During the Last Supper after the washing of feet, Jesus continues to teach his disciples. He wants to let them know that he is going to prepare a place for them in his Father's house. He promises them that he will come again and take them to himself so that they can be with him. Then he says, "you know the way to the place where I am going." Thomas says, "Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?" Jesus says to him, "I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me."

-DOUBTING THOMAS (JOHN 20:4-29)

Jesus appears to all the disciples except Thomas. Thomas says he will not believe unless he sees the mark of nails and puts his finger in them and touches Jesus's side. Jesus returns and allows Thomas to touch him. Thomas replies, "My Lord and my God!"



-THE MIRACULOUS CATCH OF 153 FISH (JOHN 21:1-14)

This is the third resurrection appearance of Jesus. Seven Apostles were at the Sea of Tiberias in Galilee and they decided to go fishing together. They didn't catch anything all day or all night. Just after the dawn, Jesus appeared to them standing on the beach. They didn't recognize him. He knew that they had no fish and asked them to cast the net on the right side of the boat. Then it was so full of fish that they weren't able to haul it back up – 153 fish! The Beloved Disciple (never explicitly named) recognized Jesus. Peter swam to Jesus and the rest of the Apostles dragged the boat and net into shore. They all shared a beach barbecue breakfast and they all knew it was the Lord.

THE EARLY CHURCH

The book of Acts mentions that Thomas was there for the Ascension and for the meeting to find a replacement apostle for Judas Iscariot.

The Church has traditionally held that each of the Apostles had their own mission field. They came together and drew lots to find out where God wanted each of them to go. Thomas is said to have preached the Gospel in India. Legend has it that he sailed there in 50 AD and found a Jewish community there that he preached to and baptized. There is another legend that says that he met the biblical magi (3+ kings) and converted them, too.

Another tradition says that Thomas went first to the Parthians (modern day northeastern Iran) and then he and Bartholomew evangelized India.



Yet another tradition says that Thomas went to Paraguay, lived among the people there, and performed miracles.

There is a book called “The Passing of Mary” that was attributed to Joseph of Arimathea (a rich disciple of Jesus, possibly a member of the Sanhedrin, who provided the tomb for Jesus’s burial). In this writing, it says that all of the apostles except Thomas were miraculously brought to Jerusalem to be there for the Virgin Mary’s death. After she was entombed, Thomas was brought to her tomb and he was the only one who witnessed the Virgin Mary being taken into heaven. As she was being taken up, she is said to have dropped her girdle as evidence of the miracle. Quite the opposite of our doubting Thomas story, this time Thomas is the one with the miraculous vision and it is the other apostles who are skeptical. They are skeptical, that is, until they see the empty tomb and the girdle.

There is another legend that when he was living in India, he told a king that he could build him a palace that would last forever. The king agreed and provided Thomas with money. Thomas took the grant money and gave it to the needy so that he could help to build the king’s heavenly dwelling.

It is difficult to determine how the church in India grew, but there is some evidence as far back as the early 3rd century of a church in India that claims to have been founded by the Apostle Thomas. The evidence gets more certain by the 6th century. Certainly, they are an ancient church. If you are interested in learning more about them, they call themselves “Saint Thomas Christians.”

The Apostle Thomas is said to have written several works, including: “the Acts of Thomas,” “the Gospel of Thomas,” and “the Infancy Gospel of Thomas.” Both of these were probably written later in the 2nd century. Few scholars believe that Thomas actually wrote them.

Thomas is said to have died in 72 AD in Chennai, India. He is said to have angered an Indian King because he had converted much of the royal family. King Misdeus is said to have led Thomas outside and commanded four of his soldiers to execute him by spear on a hill nearby.

PRAYER

God of the faithful, we pray to you as people who walk with your Apostle Thomas. We ask this day that you help us to remember that faith is not something that we can earn or control or grow by ourselves. Faith is a gift from you that teaches us to trust you. Grant us the commitment to pray, to listen, and to follow so that we may be open and ready for everything you have prepared for us. Amen.

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