

A photograph of a large flock of sheep grazing in a field of tall, green grass. The sheep are scattered across the frame, with some in the foreground and others in the background. The sky is overcast and grey. Overlaid on the center of the image is the text "Twelve Ordinary Men" in a large, bold, black sans-serif font.

Twelve Ordinary Men

Twelve Ordinary Men

- All 12 men (exception Judas Iscariot) were men from Galilee
- Galilee consisted of small towns and villages
- It's people were not elite
- They were not known for their education
- They were the commonest of the common.
- They were fishermen and farmers.
- One was a tax collector (lowest of the low)
- One was a Zealot
- Four possibly as many as seven were fishermen
- Others probably craftsmen or tradesmen
- Their outstanding quality: Ordinariness!
- Jesus deliberately passed over those who were aristocratic and influential and chose men who were from the dregs of society.
- He personally selected them in spite of their faults.

Luke 24.25

“Foolish and
slow of heart...”

**Matt.
26.56**

“All the
disciples
forsook
Him and
fled.”

Twelve Ordinary Men

- The religious leaders of Jesus day (like the vast majority of religious celebrities even today) were blind leaders of the blind.
- They were blind to the miracles that Jesus did before their very eyes.
- They didn't regard Him as the Messiah but rather as an intruder.
- The chief priests and ruling council of Israel led the crowd in a cry for Jesus' blood from the very outset.
- He looked away from the self-righteous religious leaders and rather chose instead simple men of faith.
- What irritated the religious leaders was not the miracles but ***they could not tolerate being called sinners!***
- They hated Him for His message and ultimately executed Him. (Luke 4.18).

“As Jesus passed on there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And He said to him, “Follow Me.” So he arose and followed Him.

Matthew 9.9

None of the 12 were as notorious as a sinner as Matthew prior to being called.

He was evidently a humble self-effacing man...he only mentions his name 2 times in his Gospel.

Matthew, the Publican



Matthew, Tax Collector

- Legitimate tax collectors: Mt. 22.21; Rom. 13.7
 - “Render unto Caesar the things that are Caesars.”
 - “Render taxes to whom taxes are due...”
- 2 Kinds of Tax Collectors:
 - **Gabbai**
 - General tax collectors
 - Property tax, income tax, poll tax
 - Taxes were assessed by officials
 - Very little graft went on here
 - Similar to state, local, fed, tax assessments, today.

Matthew, Tax Collector

- Tax Collectors: ***The Mokhes*** (2 kinds)
 - ***The Great Mokhes***
 - Stayed behind the scenes
 - Hired collectors to collect taxes for him
 - Zacchaeus (chief tax collector) (Lk.19.2)
 - ***The Little Mokhes*** (Matthew)
 - He manned a tax office (Matt.9.9)
 - They were resented the most
 - No self-respecting Jew did this work
 - He was forbidden to sacrifice
 - He was forbidden in the temple
 - He was the worst of the worst

Matthew, Chosen by Jesus

Matt.9.9
Tax
Collector.

- Jesus said, “Follow Me.” He arose and followed Him instantly.
 - He abandoned his tax office
 - Irreversible—no going back
 - There were no shortage of money-grubbers waiting
- WHY, did he drop everything at once like that?
 - Materialist (by definition)—Little Mokhes
 - Tax collectors were the most despised people in Israel.
 - Lower than Herodians
 - Scorned more than even the Roman soldiers.
 - Tax collectors viewed socially on same level as harlots.
 - Matt. 21.32: “
- 3 Tax collectors are specifically mentioned in N.T.
 - Zacchaeus: Lk.19.2-10 (Forgiven).
 - Publican : Lk.18.10-14 (Forgiven) –Publican/Pharisee to pray
 - Matthew :
 - Luke 15.1: “all tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom before you.”

The last
credential we
might expect for
an apostle!

Matthew, Chosen by Jesus

- ***He Probably:***
- Tortured soul/guilt
- Had a spiritual hunger for truth
- Had seen/heard of Jesus and His miracles/work
- Knew the Old Testament (His gospel quotes 99 times)
- Pursued study of O.T. on his own house
- He understood the O.T. promises re: Messiah
- After his call, threw a great banquet in his home (Mk.2.15)
 - Luke 5.29-32: "Why are You eating w/sinners/tax collect
- Knew that inherent in Jesus' call was promise forgiveness

Matthew

- Early writings and traditions say that Matthew ministered to the Jews both in Israel and abroad for many years.
- It is also said that he was martyred by being burned at the stake.
- So, the man who walked away from a lucrative career w/o ever giving it a second thought remained willing to give his all for Christ to the very end!

Thomas, the Pessimist

“Then Thomas, who is called the Twin, said to his fellow disciples, “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”

John 11.16

“Doubting”

Thomas
Probably
somewhat of a
negative person.

Probably
anticipated the
worst of
everything.



Thomas

- John 11.1-2: Lazarus story (Mary and Martha) from Bethany
 - “Lord the man whom you love is sick...”
 - Come and heal him
 - Jesus said it is not unto death...”
 - Ultimate purpose was for Jesus glorification when He would raise him from the dead.
 - Jesus: “Let us go to Judea again.”
 - Disciples said, “lately the Jews sought to stone You, and are You going there again?”
 - Reluctant disciples; now is not a good time to go back!
 - Thomas speaks up: “Let us also go, that we may die with Him.”
 - Pessimistic: Yes, but also courageous and certainly not doubting! (Heroic pessimism).
 - Optimist: Let’s go, everything will work out ok; we will be fine.
 - Easier for optimist to be loyal—expects the best.

Thomas

- Thomas profound love for Jesus shows up again in **John 14**.
 - “I go to prepare a place for you, and where I go you know, and the way you know.”
 - V.5: “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?”
 - You’re leaving; We’ll never get to where You are going; we don’t even know how to get there;
 - It was a better plan for us to die with you!
 - Thomas was a man of deep love; he never wanted to be separated from his Savior and friend.
- **John 20**: his worst fears came to pass—Jesus died and he didn’t.
 - V.24: all but Thomas was in the upper room
 - Why? Pessimistic, melancholy, negative, alone, thinking the worst. He was probably in no mood to be in a crowd.
 - “Unless I see His hands, etc.
 - Mk.16.10-11: The others did not believe either until saw Jesus.

Thomas

- **John 20.26:** Jesus—"Reach your finger in here, look at My hands; reach your hand in here, and put it into My side."
 - The Lord was amazingly gentle with Thomas
 - Thomas had been grief stricken, brokenhearted, uncertainty
 - Jesus understands our weakness too; Heb.4.15!
 - He understands our doubt; our uncertainty;
 - He is patient with our pessimism.
 - V.28: "My Lord and My God!"
 - Let those who question the deity of Christ, meet Thomas.
- Ancient testimony says that Thomas carried the Gospel all the way to India.
- Early writers say that Thomas was martyred by being run through with a spear...how fitting for one whose faith came of age when he saw the spear mark in His Master's side and for one who longed to be reunited with his Lord!!

Lessons for Us

- Interesting that God used a publican like Matthew and a pessimist like Thomas.
 - Matthew was the vilest of sinners prior to Jesus
 - Thomas was a tender-hearted, moody, melancholy person.
- Both were transformed by Christ in the same way He transformed others.
- He can use anyone---personality, status, family background, are all immaterial to God.
- They all (except Judas) had one thing in common: their willingness to acknowledge their own sinfulness and their need for God and His grace.
- He met them with grace, mercy, kindness, compassion, and forgiveness and transformed their lives that would glorify Him.
- He does that for all who truly trust Him even today through the power of the Gospel.
- He sits at God's right hand today pleading our case before throne