

# Unpacking the Book

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## Lesson #22: The Apostles

### I. Introduction

#### A. The List

1. Matt. 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19, Luke 6:13-16, Acts 1:13
  - a. Simon (Peter)
  - b. Andrew
  - c. James (son of Zebedee)
  - d. John
  - e. Philip
  - f. Bartholomew (also referred to as Nathanael)
  - g. Thomas
  - h. Matthew (also referred to as Levi)
  - i. James (son of Alphaeus or sometimes James the less/younger)
  - j. Thaddeus (also referred to as Lebbaeus, Judas son of James, or Jude)
  - k. Simon (the Canaanite)
  - l. Judas Iscariot
2. Not a part of the original 12: Saul (Paul), Barabas, Luke, John Mark and Lazarus.

#### B. The title: “Apostle”

Greek term “apostoles” means “one sent forth” or a delegated “messenger.” It is used in two ways in the New Testament.

1. It is used as a designation for the specific 12 men selected by Christ. He gave these men unique ministries, unique empowerment, and a clear responsibility to lay the foundations of His church. They were allowed to see the Lord after His resurrection.
2. This term was also used in a broader sense to designate certain early church leaders who were “sent forth” in the book of Acts.

Barnabas is an example – Acts 13:3.

3. Note that these same men were also referred to as Christ's disciples.

### C. Their Faith

Though they accepted Christ's claim of Messiahship, they wavered in their faith. Clearly they did not expect His resurrection. Between His resurrection and His ascension, Christ spent more time with them "opening their mind to scripture." (Luke 24:45, Acts 1:2)

After Pentecost, they were different men! Note the preaching of Peter (Acts 2:14-41); the confidence of Peter and John before the Sanhedrin (Acts 4); their ministry of healing (Acts 5:12-16) etc.

## II. The Men

### A. Peter

Background: Native of Bethsaida (John 1:44). Brother of Andrew. Married (Mark 1:30, 1 Cor. 9:5). Lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:21, 29).

Ministry:

1. Part of the inner circle of three (Peter, James and John). This special relationship began with their invitation to join Jesus as He healed Jairus' daughter in Mark 5:37. They were witnesses at the Transfiguration (Matt. 17:1) and were with Christ in the garden the night He was arrested (Matt. 26:37).
2. Leader of the 12 – a spokesman. See John 6:66-69 and Matt. 16:16  
A man with a special connection to Christ:
  - a. With zeal tries to protect Jesus (John 18:10-11)
  - b. Follows Christ into the courtyard where he was being questioned. Deny's Christ three times.
  - c. Had his heart broken by a look from his Lord (Luke 22:61-62)
  - d. Was at the cross (1 Peter 5:1), ran to the tomb (John 20:1-10)
  - e. Received a threefold personal commission (John 21:1-23)
3. The issues associated with Matt. 16:18  
"Thou art Peter and upon this rock I will build my church."
4. Prominent in the early church (Acts 1-12)
5. Historians believe Peter traveled extensively spreading the gospel, was ultimately imprisoned in Rome and martyred there. Tradition says he was crucified upside down.
6. Author of two New Testament Books: 1 and 2 Peter

B. Andrew

Background: Fisherman. Brother of Peter. From Bethsaida. Was a disciple of John the Baptist. When he became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah, brought his brother to Christ (John 1:25-42). He is associated with his friend Philip (John 6:6-9, 12:20-22).

Ministry: After Acts 1:13, he is not mentioned again in the New Testament.

C. James (son of Zebedee)

Background: Fisherman. Brother of John (Matt. 17:1). These brothers may be cousins of Jesus. James and John were in partnership with Andrew and Peter. His mom (Salome) was one of the women who financially supported the ministry of Jesus (Mark 15:41). Part of the inner circle with Peter and John. Along with his brother was named “Boanerges” or “sons of thunder.”

Ministry: He was the first martyr among the apostles. (Acts 12:2)

D. John

Background: Fisherman. Brother of James (son of Zebedee). Originally a disciple of John the Baptist. He was part of the “inner circle.” He is self described as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.”

Ministry:

1. His experiences were common to all apostles.
2. He wrote five New Testament books: Gospel of John, 1, 2, 3 John and the book of Revelation.

E. Philip

Background: Also from Bethsaida, a close friend of Peter and Andrew. Not to be confused with Philip, the evangelist of Acts 6.

Ministry: Brought Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:45). Brought the Greeks to Christ (John 12:20-23). Last mentioned in Acts 1:13 in the upper room. Tradition says he took the gospel to Asia Minor.

F. Bartholomew (Nathanael)

Background: We have no information on his background

Ministry: By himself, he is only mentioned once in the New Testament (John 1:45-46). Tradition says he traveled as far as India with the gospel.

G. Thomas

Background: Called “Didymus” – he was a twin.

Ministry: Seems to shift between extremes – willing to die for Christ (John 11:16) vs. not willing to acknowledge His resurrection until he verifies it (John 20:24-25).

According to tradition, he spread the gospel throughout Persia and India.

#### H. Matthew

Background: A Jewish tax collector in the employ of the Roman government. He responds quickly to Christ's call (Luke 5:27) and hosts a dinner in his honor.

Ministry: No further notices of him are in the New Testament. He may have been author of the gospel that bears his name.

#### I. James (the son of Alphaeus)

Background: Is usually identified with James the less (brother of of Joses, son of Mary – Matt. 27:56) but nothing else is known about him. Legend has him dying a martyr in Jerusalem.

#### J. Thaddaeus (Lebbaeus)

We have no biblical information on him. He is the author of the New Testament book, Jude. He was likely a missionary to Armenia and may have died by being shot full of arrows.

#### K. Simon (the Canaanite)

Background: A member of the party called "the Zealots." Nothing else is known about him.

#### L. Judas Iscariot

Background: "Iscariot" means a "man of Kerioth." Was the treasurer of the disciples (John 12:6, 13:29). Satan took him over (Mark 14:10) and he sold the Lord out for 30 pieces of silver. In his shame, he committed suicide (Matt. 27:5, Acts 1:18). He is always mentioned last in the lists of the apostles.

### III. So what?

Consider the Lord's choice for His apostles... why these men?

Consider 1 Cor. 1:26-28