

THE 12 APOSTLES

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In Christianity, the disciples were the students of Jesus during his ministry. The term disciple originally referenced the Twelve Apostles. But the gospels refer to a varying numbers of disciples over time. In One reference there were over 70 disciples. After the resurrection the reference to the original 12 disciples dropped and they became known as Apostles. Over time, the reference of Apostles was considered sacred to the original 12, so much so, that even Peter disputed the reference being used with Paul.

In the Book of Acts, the Apostles themselves have disciples. The word disciple is used today as a way of self-identification for those who seek to learn from Christianity as a whole.

The term disciple is derived from the New Testament Greek word *discipulus* meaning "a learner". While the word Apostle means "messenger, he that is sent".

A disciple is one who learns from a teacher or more appropriately a student. An apostle is sent to deliver those teachings to others. The reference of Apostle is more closely related to the teacher in that the teacher directly sends the learned student out to repeat what he has learned.

Somewhat like a professor at a University teaching students how to write a thesis and the students become doctoral graduates and later in some cases professors themselves.

The word disciple appears two hundred and thirty two times in the four gospels and the Book of Acts.

The word Apostle in the Greek is *apostolos* and means "someone sent out" with a message or as a delegate. Part of what the Apostles did in their efforts to get the word of Jesus out into the world was to write a series of letters to churches and others. These letters became known as the books of Matthew Mark, Luke and John, named after each of the Apostles and later canonized in the Bible. These 4 books as a whole are referred to as the Gospels. Gospel means "good news" in Old English.

The books of the Apostles are often referred to as the Synoptic Gospels, specifically, Matthew, Mark and Luke. The term "synoptic" is a Greek term and means "seeing together," the word is used specifically in analyzing and understanding the similarities and differences between the first three gospels and John.

John differs significantly from the synoptic gospels in theme, content, time duration, order of events, and style. About 8% of it is parallel to the other gospels, and even then, there is no word-for-word parallelism that occurs in John as it does in Matthew Mark and Luke.

The Twelve Apostles were men whom Jesus of Nazareth had chosen himself, named, and trained in order to send them on a specific mission.

The Gospels give varying names of the twelve. The three Synoptic Gospels name the Apostles accordingly.

Matthew 10:1-4

1. And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.

2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

(Andrew: The brother of Simon/Peter, was a former disciple of John the Baptist.)

3. Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

Mark 3:16-19

16. And Simon he surnamed Peter;

17. And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

18. And Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Canaanite,

19. And Judas Iscariot, which also betrayed him: and they went into an house.

Luke 6:13-16

13. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles;

14. Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew,

15. Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes,

16. And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

The individual that the Gospel of John names as Nathanael has traditionally been identified as the same person that the other Gospels call Bartholomew son of Talemai.

Matthew: was a tax collector.

Thomas: Also known as Judas Thomas Didymus

James, son of Alphaeus: Generally identified with "James the Less", and also identified by Roman Catholics with "James the Just".

Thaddeus: In some manuscripts of Matthew, the name "Lebbaeus" is used in place of Thaddeus. He is traditionally identified with Jude.

Simon the Zealot: Some have identified him with Simeon of Jerusalem.

Judas Iscariot: The disciple who later betrayed Jesus.

After Judas Iscariot betrayed Christ and then in guilt committed suicide before Christ's resurrection leaving eleven apostles.

According to Acts 1, in the days following the Ascension of Jesus, Peter proposed to the assembled disciples, who numbered about one hundred and twenty, that they choose one to fill the place of Judas in the apostolate:

Acts 1:15-26

15. And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and said, (the number of names together were about an hundred and twenty,)

16. Men and brethren, this scripture must needs have been fulfilled, which the Holy Ghost by the mouth of David spake before concerning Judas, which was guide to them that took Jesus.

17. For he was numbered with us, and had obtained part of this ministry.

18. Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out.

19. And it was known unto all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue, Aceldama, that is to say, The field of blood.

20. For it is written in the book of Psalms, Let his habitation be desolate, and let no man dwell therein: and his bishoprick let another take.

21. Wherefore of these men which have companied with us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us,

22. Beginning from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us, must one be ordained to be a witness with us of his resurrection.

23. And they appointed two, Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed Justus, and Matthias.

24. And they prayed, and said, Thou, Lord, which knowest the hearts of all men, shew whether of these two thou hast chosen,

25. That he may take part of this ministry and apostleship, from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.

26. And they gave forth their lots; and the lot fell upon Matthias; and he was numbered with the eleven apostles.

So, between the ascension of Christ and the day of Pentecost, the remaining apostles elected a twelfth apostle by casting lots, this was a traditional Jewish way to determine the Will of God.

The lot fell to Matthias, who then became the twelfth apostle. There is no mention of Matthias among the lists of disciples in the three synoptic gospels.

The Gospel of Luke differs slightly, listing a "Judas, son of James" and not listing a "Thaddeus."

Luke has "Simon the Zealot" in place of "Simon the Cananean". Its unclear whether these two Simons refer to the same person.

The Gospel of John, unlike the Synoptic Gospels, does not offer a formal list of apostles, though it does refer to the Twelve in a number of places.

John 6:67

Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?

John 6:70-71

70. Jesus answered them, Have not I chosen you twelve, and one of you is a devil?

71. He spake of Judas Iscariot the son of Simon: for he it was that should betray him, being one of the twelve.

The other three Gospels, Matthew, Mark and Luke contain a complete list of the twelve apostles and contain no reference to a "Nathanael." So all the Gospel accounts do not agree as to the names of the twelve.

The sons of Zebedee refers to James and John, while Judas (not Iscariot) probably refers to the same Jude, son of James, as the Gospel of Luke's account.

Missing from the Gospel of John is James, son of Alphaeus, Matthew, and Simon the Canaanite/Zealot.

In his writings, Saul, later known as Paul, though not one of the Twelve, described himself as an apostle.

Romans 1:1

Paul, a servant of Jesus Christ, called to be an apostle, separated unto the gospel of God,

Romans 11:13

For I speak to you Gentiles, inasmuch as I am the apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify mine office:

Galatians 2:8

(For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

He also described some of his companions as apostles (Barnabas, Silas, Apollos, Andronicus and Junia) and even some of his opponents as super-apostles

2nd Corinthians 11:5

For I suppose I was not a whit behind the very chiefest apostles.

2nd Corinthians 12:11

I am become a fool in glorying; ye have compelled me: for I ought to have been commended of you: for in nothing am I behind the very chiefest apostles, though I be nothing

As the Catholic Encyclopedia states: "It is at once evident that in a Christian sense, everyone who had received a mission from God, or Christ, to man could be called 'Apostle'"; thus extending the original sense beyond the original Twelve.

Since Paul claimed to have received the Gospel through a revelation of Jesus Christ.

Galatians 1:12

For I neither received it of man, neither was I taught it, but by the revelation of Jesus Christ.

Paul claimed he was appointed by the resurrected Jesus himself during his Road to Damascus vision; specifically he referred to himself as the Apostle to the Gentiles.

Acts 9:3-19

3. And as he journeyed, he came near Damascus: and suddenly there shined round about him a light from heaven:

4. And he fell to the earth, and heard a voice saying unto him, Saul, Saul, why persecutest thou me?

5. And he said, Who art thou, Lord? And the Lord said, I am Jesus whom thou persecutest: it is hard for thee to kick against the pricks.

6. And he trembling and astonished said, Lord, what wilt thou have me to do? And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the city, and it shall be told thee what thou must do.

7. And the men which journeyed with him stood speechless, hearing a voice, but seeing no man.

8. And Saul arose from the earth; and when his eyes were opened, he saw no man: but they led him by the hand, and brought him into Damascus.

9. And he was three days without sight, and neither did eat nor drink.

10. And there was a certain disciple at Damascus, named Ananias; and to him said the Lord in a vision, Ananias. And he said, Behold, I am here, Lord.

11. And the Lord said unto him, Arise, and go into the street which is called Straight, and enquire in the house of Judas for one called Saul, of Tarsus: for, behold, he prayeth,

12. And hath seen in a vision a man named Ananias coming in, and putting his hand on him, that he might receive his sight.

13. Then Ananias answered, Lord, I have heard by many of this man, how much evil he hath done to thy saints at Jerusalem:

14. And here he hath authority from the chief priests to bind all that call on thy name.

15. But the Lord said unto him, Go thy way: for he is a chosen vessel unto me, to bear my name before the Gentiles, and kings, and the children of Israel:

16. For I will shew him how great things he must suffer for my name's sake.

17. And Ananias went his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy Ghost.

18. And immediately there fell from his eyes as it had been scales: and he received sight forthwith, and arose, and was baptized.

19. And when he had received meat, he was strengthened. Then was Saul certain days with the disciples which were at Damascus.

Acts 9:26-27

And when Saul was come to Jerusalem, he assayed to join himself to the disciples: but they were all afraid of him, and believed not that he was a disciple.

But Barnabas took him, and brought him to the apostles, and declared unto them how he had seen the Lord in the way, and that he had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus.

After the death and resurrection, Paul was often obliged to defend his apostolic authority.

1st Corinthians 9:1

Am I am not an apostle? am I not free? have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord? are not ye my work in the Lord?

Paul proclaimed that he had seen and was anointed by Jesus while on the road to Damascus; but James, Peter and John in Jerusalem accepted his apostleship to the Gentiles (specifically those **not** circumcised) as of equal authority as Peter's to the Jews (specifically those circumcised).

Galatians 2:7-9

7. But contrariwise, when they saw that the gospel of the uncircumcision was committed unto me, as the gospel of the circumcision was unto Peter;

8. (For he that wrought effectually in Peter to the apostleship of the circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles:)

9. And when James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that was given unto me, they gave to me and Barnabas the right hands of fellowship; that we should go unto the heathen, and they unto the circumcision.

The Apostles "James, Peter and John, agreed that Paul and Barnabas should go to the Gentiles, and they to the Jews." **Galatians 2:9**

Paul, considered himself inferior to the other Apostles because he had persecuted Christ's followers .

1 Corinthians 15:9

For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God.

It is argued that Paul and Peter disagreed on the extent of Paul's authority as an Apostle, with Peter maintaining Paul was not one of those chosen by Jesus, or by him chosen after his death.

Nevertheless, the Roman Catholic Church and Eastern Orthodox Church consider Paul an Apostle; they honor Paul and Peter together on June 29.

Paul sometimes replaces Matthias in classical depictions of "The Twelve Apostles," although he has also been called the "Thirteenth Apostle" because he was not a member of the original Twelve (unlike the replacement Matthias) but he is still considered an apostle.

Of the thirteen letters traditionally attributed to Paul and included in the New Testament canon, there is little or no dispute that Paul actually wrote at least seven, those being Romans, First Corinthians, Second Corinthians, Galatians, Philippians, First Thessalonians, and Philemon.

Hebrews, which was ascribed to him in antiquity. More problematic is Ephesians, a very similar letter to Colossians, but which reads more like a manifesto than a letter. It is almost entirely lacking in personal reminiscences. Its style is unique; it lacks the emphasis on the cross to be found in other Pauline writings.

Other New Testament usages of the term "apostle"

The writer of the Letter to the Hebrews refers to Jesus as the "apostle and high priest of our professed faith" and of rank greater than that of Moses.

Hebrews 3:1

Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus;

Barnabas is referred to as an apostle.

Acts 14:14

Which when the apostles, Barnabas and Paul, heard of, they rent their clothes, and ran in among the people, crying out,

Andronicus and Junia

In Romans 16:7 Paul states that Andronicus and Junia were "of note among the apostles".

Romans 16:7

Salute Andronicus and Junia, my kinsmen, and my fellow-prisoners, who are of note among the apostles, who also were in Christ before me.

There are two interesting questions here. First, was Junia female? Second, there is the question of whether the phrase means they were well-known to the apostles, or were apostles themselves. Taken together, these raise the possibility of a female apostle.

Silas also performs the functioning of an apostle as Paul's companion in Paul's second missionary journey.

Timothy is referred to as an apostle in I Thessalonians 1:1 and 2:6 along with Silas and Paul. However, in II Corinthians 1:1, he is only called a "brother" when Paul refers to himself as "an apostle of Christ".

2 Corinthians 1:1

Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God, and Timothy our brother, unto the church of God which is at Corinth, with all the saints which are in all Achaia:

Timothy performs many of the functions of an apostle in the commissioning of Paul in 1 Timothy, but in those epistles Paul refers to him as his "son" in the faith.

1 Timothy 1:2

Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith: Grace, mercy, and peace, from God our Father and Jesus Christ our Lord.

Apollos is included as "us apostles" along with Paul and probably "Cephas" (Peter)

1 Corinthians 3:4-6

4. For while one saith, I am of Paul; and another, I am of Apollos; are ye not carnal?

5. Who then is Paul, and who is Apollos, but ministers by whom ye believed, even as the Lord gave to every man?

6. I have planted, Apollos watered; but God gave the increase.

Titus is not referred to directly in title as an apostle, but his commission as one is strongly implied in Titus 1:5.

Titus 1:5

For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldest set in order the things that are wanting, and ordain elders in every city, as I had appointed thee:

Also, he is called a "son" in the faith, just as is Timothy, who was included in the designation of "apostles" in I Thessalonians.

The Twelve Apostles were, according to the Synoptic Gospels and Christian tradition, disciples (followers) whom Jesus of Nazareth had chosen, named, and trained in order to send them on a specific mission.

After the Apostle Judas Iscariot had betrayed Jesus, the remaining Apostles filled the vacancy by electing by lot Matthias, a companion of theirs ever since they had followed Jesus so that by the time of the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost they actually numbered twelve again.

The word "disciple" refers to a "learner" or "follower." The word "apostle" refers to "one who is sent out." While Jesus was on earth, the twelve were called disciples.

The 12 disciples followed Jesus Christ, learned from Him, and were trained by Him. After Jesus' resurrection and ascension, Jesus sent the disciples out (Matthew 28:18-20; Acts 1:8) to be His witnesses.

They were then referred to as the twelve apostles. However, even when Jesus was still on earth, the terms disciples and apostles were used somewhat interchangeably, as Jesus trained them and sent them out.

Matthew 28:18-20

18. And Jesus came and spake unto them, saying, All power is given unto me in heaven and in earth.

19. Go ye therefore, and teach all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost:

20. Teaching them to observe all things whatsoever I have commanded you: and, lo, I am with you always, even unto the end of the world. Amen.

The original twelve disciples / apostles are as follows.

Matthew 10:2-4

2. Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3. Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;

4. Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.

The twelve disciples / apostles were ordinary men whom God used in an extraordinary manner. Among the 12 were fishermen, a tax collector, and a revolutionary. The Gospels record the constant failings, struggles, and doubts of these twelve men who followed Jesus Christ.

Today, Catholicism and Judaism consider their Cardinals, Priest, Pastors, Preachers, Bishops, Teachers and all those who are leaders in the faith to be Apostles. While this may technically be true, the title is not used without much trepidation.

The term disciple is much more widely accepted with in the faith as all who follow the teachings of Jesus Christ. I will end this discourse with a review of the deaths of the apostles.

The Death of the Original Twelve Disciples

Christian tradition suggest that all but one Apostle was martyred. John lived into old age while in exile on the isle of Patmos. Only the death of James, (son of Zebedee, Johns brother) and Judas Iscariot is described in the New Testament. The details of the other deaths are subject to legend, the most consistent versions of the deaths I chronicle below.

1. Judas Iscariot, originally one of the Twelve, died after the death of Jesus. Matthew 27:5 says that he hanged himself, and Acts 1:18 says that he fell, burst open, and his "bowels gushed out.
2. James, son of Zebedee was beheaded in 44 A.D., first of the twelve to die. He died in Judæa a mountainous southern part of the Land of Israel.
3. Matthew was killed by a halberd on January 24 60 A.D. near Hierapolis or Ethiopia. A halberd (also called halbert or Swiss voulge) is a two-handed pole weapon. The halberd consists of an axe blade topped with a spike mounted on a long shaft.
4. Peter, crucified upside-down in Rome circa 64 A.D.
5. Thomas was killed by a spear. Died 72 A.D. near Chennai, India
6. Philip was crucified in 80 A.D. in Hierapolis. Hierapolis was the ancient city on top of the Pamukkale hot springs located in south-western Turkey near Denizli.
7. Matthias was stoned and beheaded in 80 A.D.
8. Simon the Zealot was also known as Simon the Canaanite and was crucified in 107 AD place of death disputed. Possibly Pella, Armenia; Suanir, Persia or Edessa
9. John, son of Zebedee, died of natural causes due to old age, last of the twelve to die, only one of the twelve to die naturally. He died in exile on the isle of Patmos 110 A.D.
10. Andrew, Peter's brother, was crucified. mid-late 1st Century AD/CE, in Patras, on an X shaped cross. Patras is Greece's fourth largest city after Athens.

11. Bartholomew was Flayed (Flaying is the removal of skin from the body) then crucified in Armenia. The Republic of Armenia, is a landlocked mountainous country in Eurasia between the Black Sea and the Caspian Sea in the Southern Caucasus. It borders Turkey to the west, Georgia to the north, Azerbaijan to the east, and Iran.

12. James, son of Alphaeus, beaten to death by a club after being crucified and stoned. Year of death unknown and location was presumed to be either Egypt or Jerusalem

13. Jude was crucified 1st century AD, in Persia. identified as both Jude of James and Thaddeus in the New Testament. He is also called Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus, or Judas Thaddaeus.