

JUDAS

TO BRINGS
TO



The Search for the
TWELVE APOSTLES

William S. McBirnie Ph.D.

The Search for the TWELVE APOSTLES

CHAPTER XIV : JUDAS ISCARIOT

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Preface and Introduction

The High Adventure of Some Kinds of Research

(A Preface)

In seeking the information contained in this book, my search for the stories of the Twelve Apostles took me to many famous libraries such as those in Jerusalem, Rome, and that of the British Museum in London. For years I have borrowed or purchased every book I could find on the subject of the Twelve Apostles. A five-foot shelf cannot hold them all.

Three times I have journeyed to the island of Patmos and to the locations of the Seven Churches of the Book of the Revelation. One whole (and fruitless) day was given to a backroads journey into the high, snowy mountains of Lebanon, up among the famous Cedars and elsewhere, to check out a rumor that St. Jude had originally been buried in some small Lebanese village nearby. He was not.

I have personally viewed the many sepulchres which reputedly contain the bones of the Twelve; not that I consider them as having spiritual value, but because I wanted to learn, as an historian, how they came to be where they are, hoping that local tradition could be found in the places where the bones are interred that had escaped the history books. This search took me from Trier, Germany, to Rome, Greece, and to almost every Middle Eastern country.

The Vatican very graciously granted me special permission to photograph in all the churches in Rome and elsewhere in Italy. Some of the bodies or fragments of the bodies of the Apostles are preserved in that historic land.

Particularly memorable was the awesome descent far beneath St. Peter's Basilica to photograph the bones of the Apostle Peter where they rest in an ancient Roman pagan cemetery. One simply cannot imagine, without seeing it, so vast and heavy a church building as St. Peter's sitting squarely over a cemetery filled with beautifully preserved family tombs dating back to the first

century before Christ!

Seven times I went to Petra in Jordan, and three times to Antioch in Turkey. I also visited Babylon and made four journeys to Iran in search of the history of the Apostles' missions there. Of course, there were some disappointments. For example, the body of St. John is today nowhere to be found. I entered his tomb in Ephesus long ago. Recently after many centuries of neglect, the authorities have sealed it and covered it with a marble floor. Though St. John's body has disappeared some parts of the bones of all the other Apostles are believed to exist, and I have seen them.

Travelers to the "Bible Lands" so often pass within a few yards of genuine relics of the Apostles and never know it. I had made twenty-six journeys to Jerusalem before learning that the head of St. James the Elder, several arm bones of James the just, and part of the skull of John the Baptist are held in veneration in two churches there! And, I might add, with some strong historical records as to their authenticity.

This is not, however, a book about bones! It is about living people who were described by St. Paul as the Founders of the churches (See Ephesians 2:19, 20). We are interested in Apostolic bones because they are possible clues as to the whereabouts of the ministry and places of martyrdom of the Twelve.

Now let me face head-on a typically Protestant attitude of skepticism concerning Apostolic remains in churches and shrines. I used to suppose that these so called "relics" were pious frauds, the result of the fervid and superstitious piety of the Middle Ages. Perhaps some are, but after one approaches the whole question with a skeptical mind, and then, somewhat reluctantly, is forced to admit the strong possibility of their genuineness, it is an unnerving but moving experience.

I suppose the practice of venerating Apostolic bones is repugnant to one who, as an evangelical Christian, sees no heavenly merit in praying before the sarcophagi in which they rest. Besides, it does no good to a literal mind to see the gaudy and tasteless trappings with which the shrines are usually festooned.

But the more one reads of the history of the Apostles, and what became of their relics, and the more steeped one becomes in the history and strange (to us) behavior of our Christian ancestors in the Ante-Nicene and Post-Nicene

eras, the more the careful preservation of Apostolic relics seems to be perfectly in character. To many of those who lived in those times who could not read, an Apostolic relic was a visual encouragement to faith!

Let it be clearly understood, this book is an adventure in scholarship, not dogmatism. I am keenly aware that absolute proof of every detail recorded here is not possible. But when a researcher checks many sources against each other, when he visits the places mentioned for himself, and when he finds many new documents which are not in books, or not commonly found, then he develops a "feel" for the probable or possible.

This book has been an ever growing labor of love. I became more emotionally committed to the task as the years progressed. On several occasions during the laborious research, arduous journeys, and interminable writing and rewriting, I have had occasion to compare notes with scholars who have written about some of the Apostles, and have found not only a gracious willingness to discuss my conclusions but to accept some of them instead of those they had hitherto held.

How does one express an adequate word of appreciation to the many who were so kind in their cooperation, without whom this study could not have been completed? My secretary, Mrs. Fred Pitzer, made this project her own and has saved it from worse faults than those it still may have. My students at the California Graduate School of Theology in Glendale have assisted, and quotations from their research appear often. The same is true of Mr. and Mrs. Robert Schonborn, and of Dr. Miriam Lamb, who is head of research for our Center for American Studies. Mrs. Florence Stonebraker, Betty Davids and Richard Chase assisted, with Italian translations by Mrs. Marie Placido.

In Jerusalem the libraries of the American School of Oriental Research, the Coptic Church, the Patriarchate of the Armenians (Church of St. James), the Ecole Biblique of the Dominicans, were most helpful in opening their archives for research. In Rome the full cooperation of Monsignor Falani opened many otherwise closed doors. How kind they all were, and many others as well!

Naturally, any errors are not theirs, but mine. Hopefully, if there are any egregious mistakes, some kind correspondent will write to me so that any future editions may be corrected. A final word about the style of this book: At first I thought to write it for scholars, tearing apart the documentation of every

source quoted. But that makes for so dull a book that I was afraid few would read it. I found to my dismay that most "critical" scholars could hardly care less about the post-Biblical story of the Apostles.

Then, I thought to write it as a narrative with few quotations and little attention to my sources. But in that case scholars would ignore the book as having no proper foundation and being without concern for critical and historical problems. As the Senior Minister of a busy church, I considered writing for pastors. These ministers might appreciate a homiletical boost for a series of sermons on the Apostles that might attract the people we are all trying to persuade to attend the church. I have not abandoned this approach altogether, but I did not do much sermonizing in this book.

It even occurred to me that the historical novel might also provide a viable format. But I tend to think as a historian and as a preacher, I lack the imagination to write a novel. Besides, what this book has to offer is analysis, fact and hopefully, truth.

So the book is in the form of an interpretation or critical analysis of every bit of knowledge I can find on the subject of the Twelve Apostles. Mostly I wrote it to become more familiar myself with the Apostles and to share that knowledge, and some conclusions drawn from it, with as many people as I can; scholars, church members, young people, historians, ministers, and all those who feel as I do, that we need to find ways to make the Apostolic age become more alive for us today.

I earnestly hope the reader will find it as interesting and enlightening to read as I found it to write.

William STEUART McBirnie

Introduction

What follows in this book is that which can be known from an exhaustive and critical study of the Biblical, historical and traditional records of the Apostles. The author has tried to reduce the legendary to the probable or likely, justifying it with the known historical facts concerning the state of the world in the first century and the documents of subsequent church history, local history, and relevant secular writings.

There is a great deal more information about the Apostles available than the casual student might guess. Ten years ago this writer produced a monograph called *What Became of the Twelve Apostles?* Ten thousand copies were distributed. In that publication I made the following observations:

"Someday a critical scholar needs to take a good look at the mass of legend which has come to us from early medieval times, and even from the last days of Roman power. He needs to try to separate the historical germ from the great over-growth of pure fantasy which one finds in those stories. In a word, a higher criticism of medieval legends needs to be made, and that criticism needs to be carried over into early church history. "I find myself disappointed in the writings of recent church historians who seem to pass over the era of the early church and say only what has been said in a hundred other books on church history written during the past four centuries. It has been so long since I have seen a new fact in a book of church history about the Apostolic Age and the Age of the Church Fathers, that I would be mightily surprised if I saw one! But perhaps someday someone will find the probable basis of truth amidst the legendary; and upon this, with perhaps the discovery of new manuscripts, we shall be able to piece together a better history than we now possess."

Since no one else seems to have done the work of producing a critical study of the Twelve, it has become a challenge to me to do so, for the sake of a renewed interest in the Apostolic church to which I hope this study can contribute.

The source of our material in that earlier publication was mostly that obtainable by anyone who would take the trouble to look into the standard books on the subject, such as church histories, sermonic literature, encyclopedias, etc., plus the observations of a few journeys to Rome, Athens and the Holy Land.

But that book was frustratingly limited and incomplete, not to mention its obvious lack of original research. Recently, the writer completed his twenty-seventh journey to the Middle East. Ten years of further study and research have revealed much light on the lives of the Twelve Apostles. Most of these insights have come in very small packages, a bit here, a bit there. Ten years ago I had not even considered writing a subsequent book to the former monograph, but the importance and volume of the material since gleaned from the many personal visits to the places of the ministries and deaths of the Apostles, plus their burial sites or tombs, has increased the conviction that this enlarged study must be offered.

Here for the first time in any one volume the preponderance of information concerning the histories of the Apostles is now assembled.

No scholar would dare suggest that anything he has written is the last word on any subject, nor indeed that his writings are the complete story. Yet these ideals have been the goals toward which we have moved.

INSIGHTS INTO THE APOSTOLIC AGE

There are several insights which the reader should have firmly and constantly in mind as the following chapters unfold. The early Christians did not write history as such.

(1) Interest in the Apostles has waxed and waned in various periods of Christian history. For that reason at certain times more information has been available than at others. New discoveries of historical information are made, then lie dormant in out of print books until a reawakening of interest at a later time brings them to light.

At first, in the Apostolic Age, the Apostles themselves and their converts were too busy making history to bother writing it. Hence, their records are fragmentary. Further, until the Ante-Nicene Fathers, history as such was not written at all. Even The Acts by St.Luke was not a general history but a polemic written to show the emergence of a Gentile Christian movement from

its Jewish matrix, with divine authority and approval. Surely St. Luke wanted to defend and validate the ministry of St. Paul, his mentor. His themes, the Acts of the Holy Spirit, the inclusion in God's redemption of the Gentiles, the gradually diminishing role of Jews in the churches, the universality of Christianity, were all the concerns of Luke. It probably did not occur to him that he was writing the prime source of church history. Hence, to a historian of the early church, Luke is both the welcome source of his main knowledge and of his despair at its fragmentary nature.

There were periods of silence in early Christian history.

(2) After Luke and the other Biblical writers (such as St. Paul who left us a considerable knowledge of early Apostolic activities) there is for a time, silence. It is as if the Christian movement were in a tunnel, active, but out of sight for a period.

This is not as strange as it may seem. First, the early Christians did not really have a sense of building a movement for the ages. To them the Return of Christ might well be expected during their generation. They certainly spoke of it often, so they must have looked for the Return of Christ daily - at first.

To see this, study carefully the difference in tone between First and Second Thessalonians. In his First Epistle to the Thessalonians, Paul seemed to dwell at great length upon the imminence of the Second Coming. In the Second Epistle he rebukes those who are over-eager by reminding big readers of certain events which must precede or accompany the Second Coming.

It was as if he had looked again at the enormous task of world evangelism and had seen that it would take more than one generation. It was not that St. Paul lost his faith in the Second Coming, but that he balanced his faith with practicality. In any case, the early Christian movement was in a tunnel and out of sight as far as the recording of history is concerned. They were doing not writing.

The Apostles were not considered prime subjects for biography by the early Christians.

(3) The Twelve Apostles were important in the thinking of the early Christians, but were not considered to be more than leaders, brothers and dearly beloved friends at first. We look upon them as the founders of

churches. It took some time for their spiritual descendents to see them as the Fathers of the whole church movement. Their authority at first was in the anointing of the Holy Spirit, not in ex cathedra pronouncements on doctrine.

True, the first council of Apostles in Jerusalem gave authoritarian pronouncements concerning the admittance of the Gentile converts into the Christian movement. Yet this did not seem to have the ecclesiastical authority then that we attach to it now. We could, in fact, wish there had been more such pronouncements; say, concerning heresy, forms of church government, social matters, etc. But there was nothing much that came collectively from the Apostles. They simply proclaimed individually what they had heard from Jesus Christ.

As they went forth into various parts of the world they carried, no doubt, the authority of their Apostolate, but they were not the church. They founded congregations which were churches. Ecclesiasticism in the highly organized and authoritarian forms it later took was almost unknown to them. The Apostles were evangelists and pastors, not ecclesiastics. Their histories, then, are the histories of evangelists, not of prelates. History does not deal as much with evangelists as with rulers. Hence, we have little knowledge about their careers before or subsequent to the dispersion of the Jerusalem Church in A.D.69, and by this time most of them had left Jerusalem to go on their various missions and many had died.

Secular history largely ignored Christianity in the early centuries.

(4) Almost all history in the first few centuries of the Christian era which has survived is secular, military or political. Josephus did not pay much attention to Christianity though he mentions the death of St. James. Roman history, except for the writings of Pliny the Younger, hardly notices Christianity until long after the Apostolic Age. It remains for churchmen such as Hegesippus and Eusebius to give us further details of the travels and history of the Twelve.

The early Christians were humble folk, with some exceptions. Who writes a history of the meek? Therefore we are left with little information about Christianity in general secular history, except for valuable insights as to the world in which the Apostles lived. The average reader, however, would be amazed at how very much knowledge we do have on that portion of the human story. Roman history is already well known and more knowledge is

daily pouring in from the archeologists who dig into the artifacts of that great epic.

To the avid student of Roman affairs the world of the Apostles is as familiar as the world of a hundred years ago. This does not itself tell us about the actual story of each Apostle but it certainly tells us what was possible or even likely, as well as what was unlikely or impossible.

The Roman world was, during the Apostolic Age, a relatively safe world in which its citizens traveled widely and often. Read in the book of Romans, written by Paul in Corinth, the many names of people whom he knew in Rome, a city which at that time he had not visited. Read the travels of Cicero, sixty years before Christ. Recall the Roman invasions of Britain by Caesar, five decades before the birth of Jesus, and of Claudius in A.D.42.

The Roman Empire was a family of nations with a common language under the protection of one government, with roads leading everywhere, from Britain to Africa, from what is now Russia to France, from India to Spain. St.Paul himself, in the book of Romans, expressed a desire to evangelize Spain which had been conquered by Rome long before Caesar took it over in 44 B.C.

In the era of the Apostles there was a wide area of civilization awaiting them, civilized, united, and tied together by transportation and tongue. On that vast stage, and beyond it, we can easily visualize the farflung Apostolic labors. But Roman historians pretty well ignored Christianity in its early days. The "Search for the Twelve" was at first political or ecclesiastical.

(5) Long after the Apostolic Age there arose a conflict between the Greek and Roman divisions of Christianity as to what they called "Primacy". The Pope claimed it and so did the leader of the Eastern churches. An issue, for example, was one of Christian art. One group, the Romans, used images in the round as the objects of religious veneration. The Eastern Greeks preferred ikons; images-on-the-flat. There were other differences, including the removal of the capital of the Roman Empire from Rome to Byzantium, but mainly it was a political power struggle which led to the great schism that divided eastern and western Christianity, as the Roman Empire itself was divided.

At this time, and even before, as the schism was building, both sides sought Apostolic identification with their own religious institutions.

So a great search was made for the relics of the Apostles. Emperor Constantine wanted to construct what he called, "The Church of the Twelve Apostles" in Constantinople. In this structure he intended to house the remains (such as bones or parts of bodies) of the Apostles. He succeeded in securing the remains of St.Andrew, and also St.Luke and St.Timothy. (The latter two, while not of the Twelve, were close to them.) Apparently Constantine felt he must leave the bones of St.Paul and St.Peter in Rome though he may have had designs on the bones of St.Peter."

He gladly built a basilica to honor the bones of St.Paul in Rome. But, one may speculate, the Roman church was also reluctant to part with the bones of St.Peter. Constantine apparently did not press the matter, but he built a church over St.Peter's resting place, hoping perhaps to later move his body to Constantinople. In any case, he did not live long enough to collect all the relics of the Apostles for his Church of the Twelve Apostles. That church building remained

(Constantine celebrated the thirtieth anniversary of his accession in the summer of 335. Probably the most significant ceremonies at Rome that year were those accompanying the solemn translation of the bones venerated as relics of the Apostles St Peter and St.Paul from the catacombs of St.Sebastian, where they had been venerated since 258, to the basilicas built to honour them at the traditional sites of their martyrdoms, at the Vatican and on the Ostian Way." (Constantine The Great, John Holland Smith, p 288; also cf. *Liber Pontificalis*, ed. Duchesne, vol. 1, pp.172ff.)

unfurnished except for his own tomb. (Some evidence exists that he sought to place the Apostles' bodies around him in twelve niches while his own body would be in the midst as "The 13th Apostle"!) Eusebius tells the story in "The Last Days of Constantine."

"All these edifices the emperor consecrated with the desire of perpetuating the memory of the Apostles of our Saviour before all men. He had, however, another object in erecting this building (i.e., the Church of the Apostles at Constantinople): an object at first unknown, but which afterwards became evident to all. He had, in fact, made a choice of this spot in the prospect of his own death, anticipating with extraordinary fervour of faith that his body would share their title with the Apostles themselves, and that he should thus even after death become the subject, with them, of the devotions which should be performed to their honour in this place, and for this reason he bade men assemble for worship there at the altar which he placed in the midst. He

accordingly caused twelve coffins to be set up in this church, like sacred pillars in honour and memory of the apostolic band, in the centre of which his own was placed, having six of theirs on either side of it. Thus, as I said, he had provided with prudent foresight an honourable resting-place for his body after death, and, having long before secretly formed this resolution, he now consecrated this church to the Apostles, believing that this tribute to their memory would be of no small advantage to his own soul. Nor did God disappoint him of that which he so ardently expected and desired." (A New Eusebius, J. Stevenson, p. 395)

"Planning the Church of the Apostles, Constantine had dreamed of resting there forever in the midst of the Twelve, not merely one of them, but a symbol of, if not a substitute for, their Leader. During the months of the church's construction, his agents had been busy in Palestine collecting alleged relics of the apostles and their companions, to be laid up in the church with his body, awaiting the general resurrection." (Constantine the Great, John Holland Smith, pp. 301-302).

"At Easter in A.D.337 the emperor dedicated the Church of the Holy Apostles in Constantinople, but soon thereafter he was overcome by a fatal ailment. He visited the baths at Helenopolis in vain, and then proceeded to confess his sins in the Church of the Martyrs. At Ancyrona near Nicomedia, he prepared his will, leaving the empire to his three sons, and in the presence of a group of local bishops he was baptized by the bishop with whom he had fought so often, Eusebius of Nicomedia. To this prelate was entrusted the will, with instructions to deliver it to Constantius, Caesar of the east. Wearing the white robe of a neophyte, Constantine died on Pentecost, May 22.

"... Upon Constantius's arrival the coffin was carried to the Church of the Holy Apostles and placed among the sarcophagi dedicated to the Twelve. In the presence of a vast throng the bishops conducted an elaborate funeral with a requiem eucharist.

... His body rested, however, not in any Flavian mausoleum or with any of the great pagan emperors before him but, by his own choice, among the memorials of the twelve apostles." (Augustus to Constantine, Robert M. Grant, p.277).

The project was started but not completed. However, an official search was made for the locations of the bodies of the Apostles, and this official search was possibly the precipitating cause for the inventory which was made for the Apostolic remains or relics.

After this time there arose the practice of the veneration of relics. The superstitious awe which these relics evoked was carried to extremes. The bodies of the Apostles, the bodies of other "saints", and the various holy relics such as fragments of "the true cross" came into great demand. Healings were claimed by merely touching or kissing these relics and naturally they came to be considered of great value by both the churches and governments of the Middle Ages.

As for a knowledge of the lives of the Apostles, this search for relics both helped and harmed a true history. The major relics, including the bodies or portions of bodies of the Apostles, give us some hints of the places of the death and burial and hence by tradition or association, the locale of their ministries. We perhaps have successfully traced the history of some of these Apostolic remains or relics in the following chapters, up to their locations today.

On the other hand we must recognize that some of these Apostolic relics may not be genuine, since wishful thinking or simple mistakes may have led the devout of other, less critical ages than ours, to go astray. This was especially so since there was great church prestige, political preferment, and often much money involved in securing what were believed to be genuine Apostolic relics.

Partisans in the great church schism between the east and west undoubtedly sought to associate their possession of Apostolic relics as proof of the blessing of the Apostles and God upon them, as witness the fact that they had the original and often miracle-working relics in their exclusive possession. Fortunately that competition has ebbed with the centuries. In quite recent times Pope Paul VI has returned to Greece the head of St. Andrew, to be housed in a new church in the place of his martyrdom in Patras, Greece, under the care of the Greek Orthodox Church. This was a highly conciliatory gesture on the part of the Pope since St. Andrew, having been martyred in Greece, is meaningful to the Greek Orthodox Church. It reduces by one the Apostolic relics in Rome, but increases the chances of unity between Rome and Athens very markedly, for whatever that may prove to be worth to those involved.

If one can cut through the maze of the history of relics and trace the presence of fact back to the genuine tradition of Apostolic associations in the places of their original martyrdoms and burials, then there is great hope that this may open up the way to confirm or even discover more light on the

histories of Apostolic labors. This we have here attempted to do where possible. Admittedly this task and its results are open to scholarly criticism and interpretation.

The motivations of the Apostles are now more clearly understood.

(6) One great truth about the Apostles is unassailable. It has been strengthened by every bit of tradition and history we have studied. That is, most of the Apostles took seriously the great commission of Jesus (as recorded in Matthew 28) and went forth to "Judea, Samaria, and the uttermost parts of the world" to evangelize the nations with the Christian gospel. The story of the Apostles is thus mainly the story of evangelism in the early church. They set an example for all subsequent Christians that is clear, unmistakable and unswerving. They challenged commoners and kings alike. They did not become salaried ecclesiastics but often worked with their hands to support themselves, so that by any and all means they might share the good news in Jesus. Most, like St. Paul, sought to preach Christ, "not building upon other men's foundations, but going to the regions beyond."

There was an Apostolic strategy of missions.

(7) The lives of the Apostles, especially that of St. Paul, reveal an unusual and brilliant concept of missionary strategy. They always went first to the great cities located on the trade routes. From these centers their disciples and converts then traveled out to the towns beyond and there established churches which in turn established still others. The Apostles knew the secret of strategic locations and of delegating responsibility to others, thus multiplying themselves more rapidly than is the case in many modern missionary enterprises.

THE APOSTLES WERE CHURCHMEN

Above all, they founded congregations. Some modern day evangelism is so apart from the churches that the churches must feed the evangelistic effort, rather than for the evangelistic effort to build the converts firmly into the churches or to give impetus to new churches. This was never the Apostolic principle, which is why Apostolic evangelism lasted and some modern "populist" evangelism soon passes away.

The Apostles enjoined upon their converts the responsibility to become the church. Surely this is one lesson that needs to be re-learned today. It was St.

Paul who wrote, Jesus loved the church and gave himself for it (Ephesians 5:25).

WHY THE TWELVE?

The Apostles of Jesus Christ are heroes whose portraits, as Christians have come to know them, are "larger than life." The Roman and Greek Catholic bestowal of the title, "Saint", upon each of the Twelve (and thereafter upon a flood of others) was partly responsible for making them into demigods. But long before the time the New Testament was collected into one volume (the Canon) the figures of the Twelve had assumed commanding respect. John, in The Revelation of Jesus Christ, speaks of the New Jerusalem which is to have the names of the Twelve inscribed in its foundations. (Incidentally, that inclusion settles the issue of whether Matthias was, after the defection of Judas Iscariot, truly considered by the other Apostles as one of the Twelve.)

Why did Jesus choose only twelve chief Apostles? Obviously to correspond to the twelve tribes of Israel. He, Himself, as the new and eternal high priest, would stand for the priestly thirteenth tribe, Levi. The function of the Apostles was to bear witness to the resurrection of Jesus and of His teachings. For this reason, as the election of Matthias to replace Judas confirms, an Apostle had to have been long with Jesus and a witness to his teachings.

Paul stoutly maintained that he also was an Apostle, since his conversion, call, and instruction came directly from Jesus, and the signs of an Apostle were his in abundance. Yet there is no evidence that he was ever admitted to that inner circle of the original Twelve. Some of the original Twelve probably never did fully trust him, and even Peter confessed that he did not always understand "our beloved brother, Paul" (2 Peter 3:15).

THE BOOK OF ACTS AND THE TWELVE

In a most important sense, the book of The Acts of the Apostles, the earliest Christian book of history, is the story of how Christianity, at first a sect within Judaism, was opened to the Gentiles, and how in a short time it became mainly a faith of the Gentiles. From start to finish, The Acts shows Christianity as a minority movement among the Jews, soon rejected by most Jews, becoming Gentilized as the illustrious Paul became the European leader of the Christian movement. Peter remained for a time as the most prominent

Jewish-Christian leader, but Christianity after the first century gradually died down among the Jews.

The Acts carefully records how Peter, obviously at first against his will, became a grudging Apostle to some Gentiles, yet all the while endeavoring to keep Christianity as Jewish as possible. The plan of the book of The Acts is as logically and carefully laid out as a lawyer's brief. It proves conclusively that Christianity was intended to, and slid, lose its exclusively Jewish character. It was to be much more than a sect or another party within Judaism, such as were the Pharisees, Sadducees, or Essenes.

Those who expect The Acts to be the complete early history of Christianity are doomed to disappointment. It is that only incidentally and in a fragmentary way.

Its main argument is that God, Himself, tore Christianity loose from its Jewish foundations and made it universal. To do this He used Peter at first, then Paul. The other Apostles played only incidental roles in the story of The Acts, since it is not a history of the Apostles but a history of the emergence of Gentile Christianity.

As valuable and as liberating as this emphasis is, the Bible student is soon, and perhaps unconsciously, caught up in the personal ministry of Paul. Peter, though prominent at first, is later ignored, as The Acts unfolds for the reader the story of Paul and his friends, Timothy, Luke, Barnabas, Silas and others.

The Acts, having shown Peter and the rest of the Twelve as having launched the Christian movement, and as having blessed the admission of believing Gentiles into the churches, then portrays again and again the fact that only some Jews around the Roman world accepted Christ. As others rejected Christ, in each instance Paul is shown as turning to the Gentiles who seemed much more willing to receive the gospel than the majority of the Jews.

This historical insight is necessary to know if we are to understand why we have a great deal of information about John and Peter, and even more about Paul, but know really very little of the other Apostles.

Roman and Greek Christianity early became dominant over Judaistic Christianity. Western Christians of the Roman Empire, treasured and preserved the writings of these three Apostles who worked among the Gentiles. The other Apostles did not write much, with the exception of

Matthew. But Matthew's personality does not come through clearly in his gospel. The writings, if any, of the remainder of the Twelve are lost.

Mark was the helper and writer for Peter, but Mark was not considered an Apostle but an Apostolic assistant, as were Timothy, Titus, Epaphroditus, Luke, Barnabas, Silas, Acquilla, Priscilla and Erastus. Luke wrote about Paul in The Acts, and about the Apostles and Jesus in his gospel. But Luke was not himself an original Apostle. Hence, the New Testament as we have it is the product of Matthew, an Apostle, Peter, an Apostle, John, an Apostle, and Paul, an Apostle. Other New Testament authors such as Mark and Luke, were not Apostles, but assistants, and Jude and James were not of the original followers of Jesus, but brothers of the Lord, who did not believe until after the Resurrection of Christ.

As for the history of the Apostles after the first few years in Jerusalem, except for brief references to them in The Acts, we must look into the Epistles, the book of The Revelation of Jesus Christ, the histories and traditions or legends of the early, post-Apostolic Christian writers, and to the local traditions of the Christian movement in the places where the Apostles labored or died. It is this latter research than has had the least historic treatment and which we will attempt to explore, along with those early Christian traditions and Scriptural accounts which are fairly well (but not universally) known.

LEGEND, MYTH AND TRADITION

The word legend is today in better standing than it was a short time ago. 'Legendary' has often been a word of ill repute for it has meant "mythical" to most people. The word "tradition" stands far higher in the estimation of historians. Scholars today, thanks to literary criticism, historical research, and archeological observations, have more confidence in the existence of a residue of fact amongst the legends and traditions about well-known historical or Biblical figures. Blown up and fanciful they may be, but legends and traditions are often the enlargements of reality, and traditions may not be exaggerations at all, but actual fact. We have attempted to squeeze some of the water out of those legends which exist about the Apostles and find the elements of the reasonable and possible which are in traditions. Dogmatism is impossible in our subject, but surely a fuller knowledge of the lives of all the Apostles can now be acquired than has hitherto been generally known.

THE RELEVANCE TODAY

But why should the Christian reader, or the reading public, be interested in the histories of the first Apostles of Jesus Christ?

For one thing, any increase of knowledge about the Apostles will greatly illumine the power-filled early days of Christianity, and perhaps help to recover the secret of the primitive dynamic of the early Christians.

Christians today know, or can know, more about many things than any other generation of believers. Archeology is a relatively modem science. Textual criticism has secured a clearer Biblical text than was ever available before. Yet, unfortunately, much of the power and spirit of New Testament era Christianity is obviously missing in today's churches.

The general public needs to see afresh the dedication of the earliest Christian leaders, and to feel the modern relevance of their timeless methods and ideals. Christianity needs a self-renewal, as do all institutions. From where will this renewal come? That dynamic momentum which early Christians bequeathed, and which has still not entirely run down, was surely, in part, the personal and direct heritage of the Twelve Apostles and their Christian contemporaries.

The least that a study of this kind should contribute to all Christians is to direct our attention back to the days of a purer, unencrusted, tradition-free Christianity. There is much about the lives of the Twelve Apostles that can speak to us existentially today. Indeed, to discover what the Apostles did, or what it is claimed that they did, is to rediscover their motivation and the life-strategy which they followed.

HOW THIS STUDY BEGAN

In a sense this book has taken thirty years of comprehensive and intensive study to write. In 1944 the author finished a Bachelor of Divinity at Bethel Theological Seminary, St.Paul, Minnesota, with a major in church history which included over sixty semester credit-hours and a thesis on the same subject. In 1952 the author submitted another dissertation on the same subject and was graduated with a Doctorate in Religious Education from Southwestern Baptist Theological Seminary, Fort Worth, Texas.

Since that time, he has read continually in the subject of ecclesiastical history and has traveled repeatedly to Europe (39 times) and the Middle East (27 journeys) in search of Biblical and ecclesiastical information. This rich

experience has been a labor of love and has been highly rewarding in terms of the discovery of new facts and fresh insights. It is a false supposition that all useful historic knowledge is to be found only in books, though many hundreds have been read by this writer about the Twelve Apostles. There is much additional information about them to be gleaned only by travel to places the Apostles once knew, and by conversation with people who now live there, who know of traditions not widely found in the books which are readily available to scholars. No one book, to my knowledge, has ever been written that includes all known facts about the Apostles until now.

For example: in October, 1971, the writer was an official guest in Iran for the celebration of the 2,500 year memorial to Cyrus the Great. Upon this occasion the opportunity arose to interview the leaders of several of the very ancient Christian movements of Iran who trace their spiritual descent back to the visits to Persia in the first century of at least five of the Apostles of Jesus! Not only was new information obtained, but a wider understanding of the Eastern thrust of early Christianity beyond the borders of the Roman world about which we Christians of the Western tradition know very little. This has been our great loss. The following observations are an illustration of an area of Christian history about which few American Christians know:

"...Iran had known Christianity from the earliest times of Apostolic preaching. When Christianity was first preached in this part of the world, that is to say, beyond the frontiers of East Roman Empire, namely in the easternmost regions of Asia Minor, north-eastern regions of Ancient Syria and Mesopotamia, the Apostles and their immediate successors did not know any boundary between East Syria, Mesopotamia, Armenia and Persia. In fact, the peoples of these countries lived in such a state of close association that the first Christians all belonged to the same stream of evangelization, they shared the same Christian traditions handed down to them by the first Apostles and their disciples.

"Thus, beginning from the first century, the Christian faith had been preached in Edessa, in the kingdom of Osrohene. It penetrated also Armenia and Persia in the same century. As Tournebize has said: 'From Osrohene the faith undoubtedly had shown forth quite early to the East; between Edessa and Armenia the distance was not big.' Long before Bar Hebraeus, the alliances and frequent interpenetrations between Parthians, Persians, Edessenians and Armenians had justified the following remark of the famous monophysite patriarch: Parthians or Persians, Parthians or Edessenians, Parthians or

Armenians, all are one." (The Armenian Christian Tradition in Iran, A Lecture, Interchurch Centenary Committee, p.1).

Later, in November of 1971, the writer led a group of people from all over America on a historic journey which was entitled, "The Search For the Twelve Apostles." On this expedition, through Europe and the Middle East, many more of the recorded facts in this book emerged. It can possibly be said that no other group in modern or ancient times has hitherto made so comprehensive a study into the lives and burial places of the Apostles in the actual locations indicated by history or tradition as have been associated with the Apostles.

Possibly there is yet more light to be thrown on the subject of the Twelve Apostles. One thinks, for instance, of the vast archives of ancient and as yet untranslated documents in the Greek Orthodox monasteries, or the Vatican Library in Rome. We do not pretend to the scholarship, linguistic ability, or the sheer time which would be necessary to dig for the needles in these huge haystacks. We must await the happy day when others more able will accomplish these tasks.

But within the limits of present scholarship, original research, and the critical examination of history and traditions, we have, we hope, amassed all that is known, or which reasonably can now be learned about the Apostles. We can anticipate with joy that further scholarship which will add to the body of information here presented.

CHAPTER FOURTEEN

JUDAS ISCARIOT

ON the night in which He was betrayed by Judas, Jesus offered a prayer which is recorded in John's gospel:

"Those that Thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition;" (John 17:12). Of all the characters who march across the stage of Bible history there is none so tragic nor so despicable as that of Judas Iscariot. A poet described him as:

"The base Judean who flung a pearl away Richer than all his tribe."

There is something horrible about the way he betrayed Christ with a kiss. One preacher has described it as:

"The hiss of a kiss."

Not the least of all the darksome aspects of his life is the way he died. There is a mystery of horror about this character which makes him typical of all the dastardly traitors of all the ages. Even Jesus said of him:

"It would have been good had he never been born."

Thomas De Quincey, in his essay on Judas Iscariot, has tried to picture Judas as merely a miscarried patriot. He describes him as one who actually loved Jesus and only hung himself because his scheme for forcing Jesus into political leadership against Rome misfired, and Jesus Himself was accidentally put to death. The only trouble with this and other recent attempts to white-wash the character of Judas is that Jesus Himself rejected his

interpretation before Judas even betrayed Him. Jesus said, "Have I not chosen you twelve, and yet one of you is a devil" (John 6:70).

And again:

"The Son of Man goeth as it is written of Him; but woe unto that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed. It had been good for that man if he had not been born" (Matt.28:24).

The name Judas Iscariot is a corruption of Judas of Kerioth.

Kerioth was a small town some few miles south of Hebron. Judas was the only one of the Apostles who was not a Galilean, but a Judean. His father's name was Simon (John 13:2).

Today the name of Judas is a synonym of scorn and loathing. No mother ever names her child Judas. Yet when Judas bore the name, it was an honorable one. One of the greatest patriots of the Jewish nation was Judas Maccabeus. One of the brothers of Jesus Christ was named Judas, though we call him today "Jude," which is a shortened form of the name Judas. Indeed, the name Judas is merely a form of Judah. Judas, then, was named for his tribe, the Tribe of Judah.

We think of Judas as being the arch-traitor. Even today a goat used to lure sheep to their destruction in the slaughter house is known as a "Judas goat." A plant which grows in the East which looks attractive but which is bitter to taste is called the "Judas tree." Yet, the Disciples did not originally think of him in this light. They were perfectly willing to trust him because apparently he seemed trustworthy. They freely elected him treasurer of their band. Not only this but they were astounded when the revelation of his treachery was made.

When Jesus affirmed that someone would betray Him, the Disciples began to ask, "Is it I?" Not, "Is it Judas?"

Judas probably became a disciple of Christ when Jesus took one of His preaching tours through Judea. At least it is probable that he first met Jesus at this time, though his call to become a disciple may have been received at the Sea of Tiberius, as is recorded in Matthew 4:18-24.

From the time of his call to be a disciple until the Passion Week, we have no specific references to Judas which describe any activities of himself alone. John's gospel records a few things, mostly in retrospect to show that the character of Judas was black from the beginning. (It was almost a year before His crucifixion when Jesus said that Judas was a devil. However long Judas may have deceived the Apostles, he did not, of course, deceive Jesus.

About the time of the Passion Week we begin to read more of his sinister character. At the anointing of Jesus by Mary, Judas asked:

"Why was not this ointment sold for three hundred shillings and given to the poor? This he said, not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief, and had the bag, and bare what was put therein" (John 12:5,8).

Jesus also mentioned Judas' coming defection when He said:

"He that eateth bread with me hath lifted up his heel against me" (John 13:18).

This is a quotation from the Old Testament referring to a reference in the Book of Psalms. It seemed by these veiled references that Jesus was giving Judas as much opportunity as he could to repent, as if to inform him that He knew all along that Judas was going to betray Him, but still was announcing that the door of mercy was open.

There are many difficulties to reconcile in the life of Judas.

First of all we must seek the answer to "why did Judas become a disciple?" Some have said that he intended to betray Jesus all along because he saw in Jesus a threat to the Jewish nation. Others suggest that he was sincere for a while, but then saw that Jesus was not going to fulfill His destiny as a political deliverer and therefore sought to get out, currying favor with the priests, as well as earning what pitiful funds he could as the price of his betrayal. Some have even suggested that Judas was ordained by God to be a traitor because of the prophetic references in the Old Testament. This, however, must be rejected, for surely God condemns no one in advance to be anything, for every man is free to be what he will.

Perhaps the most significant thing that can be said of Judas was that in feeling sorrow for his crime of betrayal, he did not seek to atone for his sin to the One whom he had wronged, but went to his accomplices in crime, the priests, and there sought to set himself aright. And because those whom he had

served in his selfishness failed him at the end, he went out and hanged himself.

The life of Judas is one of unrelieved tragedy. In fact, there is no more tragic spirit in all the world's history. Judas is the greatest failure the world has ever known. His life is a lesson which points vividly to the pitfalls of out spiritual pilgrimage.

An excellent summary of the last days of Judas is given in ISBE:

"After the betrayal, Mark, Luke and John are silent as regards Judas, and the accounts given in Matthew and Acts of his remorse and death vary in detail. According to Matthew, the actual condemnation of Jesus awakened Judas' sense of guilt, and becoming still more despondent at his repulse by the chief priests and elders, 'he cast down the pieces of silver into the sanctuary, and departed; and he went away and hanged himself.' With the money the chief priests purchased the potter's field, afterward called 'the field of blood, and in this way was fulfilled the prophecy of Zechariah (11:12-14) ascribed by Matthew to Jeremiah (Matt.27:2-10). The account given in Acts 1:18-20 is much shorter. It mentions neither Judas' repentance nor the chief priests, but simply states that Judas "obtained a field with the reward of his iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out" (verse 18). The author of Acts finds in this the fulfillment of the prophecy in Ps.89:25. The Vulgate rendering, "When he had hanged himself, he burst asunder," suggests a means of reconciling the two accounts.

According to a legendary account mentioned by Papias, the death of Judas was due to elephantiasis (cf Hennecke, Neutestamentliche Apokryphen, 5). A so-called 'Gospel of Judas' was in use among the gnostic sect of the Cainites.

It is significant that Judas alone among the disciples was of southern extraction; and the differences in temperament and social outlook, together with the petty prejudices to which these generally give rise, may explain in part though they do not justify, his after treachery - the lack of inner sympathy which existed between Judas and the rest of the Apostles. He undoubtedly possessed a certain business ability, and was therefore appointed keeper of the purse. But his heart could not have been clean, even from the first, as he administered even his primary charge dishonestly. The cancer of this greed spread from the material to the spiritual. To none of the disciples did the fading of the dream of an earthly kingdom of pomp and glory bring greater disappointment than to Judas. The cords of love by which Jesus gradually

drew the hearts of the other disciples to Himself, the teaching by which He uplifted their souls above all earthly things, were as chafing bonds to the selfishness of Judas. And from his fettered greed and disappointed ambition sprang jealousy and spite and hatred. It was the hatred, not of a strong, but of an essentially weak man. Instead of making an open breach with his Lord, he remained ostensibly one of His followers: and this continued contact with a goodness to which he would not yield (cf Swete on Mark 14:10), and his brooding over the rebukes of his Master, gave ready entrance for 'Satan into his soul.' But if he 'knew the good and did not do it' (cf John 13:17), so also he was weak in the carrying out of his nefarious designs. It was this hesitancy, rather than a fiendish cunning, which induced him to remain till the last moment in the upper room, and which prompted the remark of, Jesus "What thou doest, do quickly" (John 13:27). Of a piece with this weakmindedness was his attempt to cast the blame upon the chief priests and elders (cf Matt.27:3,4). He sought to set himself right, not with the innocent Jesus whom he had betrayed, but with the accomplices in his crime; and because that world which his selfishness had made his god failed him at the last, he went and hanged himself. It was the tragic end of one who espoused a great cause in the spirit of speculation and selfish ambition, and who weighed not the dread consequences to which those impure motives might lead him (cf also Bruce, "Training of the Twelve;" Lathan, "Pastor Pastorum;" Stalker, "Trial and Death of Jesus Christ"). C.M. Kerr" (ISBE, Volume III, p 1765-66).

There is little material about Judas in any of the common apocryphal sources. In a work, "The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy," it relates that Judas was demon-possessed even when he was a child. Men all through history have sought to psychoanalyze the mind of Judas. J.G. Tasked in, "The Dictionary of Christ and the Gospel" quotes two verdicts on Judas. Lavater said of Judas, "Judas acted like Satan, but like a satan who had it in him to be an apostle." Pressense said of Judas, "No man could be more akin to a devil than a perverted apostle."

A current guidebook on Jerusalem states:

"Haceldama (Field of Blood) is a name given to the so called 'potter's field' that was bought with the 30 pieces of silver that Judas had earned for betraying Jesus. Judas, repenting of his deed, flung the money at the feet of the priests who were unwilling to accept it because it was 'blood money.' After Judas had killed himself the money was used to buy a field to serve as a burial place for strangers (Matt.27:3-10). Today the Greek Convent of St. Onipruis marks the site which is riddled with rock-hewn tombs full of the skulls and

bones of pilgrims who, through the ages, have been buried in potter's field-the, Field of Blood. The traditional hiding place of the Apostles during Jesus' trial is shown within the convent in a rock-hewn tomb that has been appropriately named the 'Cave of the Apostles'," ("This Is Jerusalem," Herbert Bishko, p.44).

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THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

Who are the Twelve Disciples?

Their Backgrounds

- * The twelve disciples were from the Galilee region except for Judas Iscariot, who was from Judea.
- * Their occupations ranged from fisherman to tax collectors and revolutionaries.
- * Some were married. (see Mark 1:29-31; 1 Corinthians 9:3-6)
- * Some were well-versed in Scripture. (see John 1:46)

Their Purpose

- * After being baptized by John the Baptist and spending 40 days in the wilderness, Jesus started teaching and many people started following him.
- * After a night of prayer and meditation, Jesus chose twelve men out of all those who were following him.
- * These twelve men would be Jesus' main focus of instruction.
- * These disciples were selected to let the world know of God's love, that God sent Jesus to redeem the world. (see John 1:23)

Their Mission

* These are the twelve men who, for the most part, would prove to be valuable companions to Jesus.

* Their instruction and conversations would become the teachings, knowledge, and instruction for the church that would later grow and spread.

* Jesus knew their personalities, both strong and weak.

* Jesus knew that these men would disappoint him, desert him, deny him, and betray him.

* Jesus knew that these men, once filled with the Holy Spirit, would be the first witnesses of the Gospel, carrying God's message of redemption to Judea, Samaria, and the ends of the earth.

* The twelve tribes of Israel were blessed in order to be a blessing to all nations. In a similar way, these twelve men, along with all disciples of Jesus who follow their lead, were to bless all nations. (see Galatians 3:8) Followers of Christ are commanded to go out and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father, The Son, and the Holy Spirit.

SIMON PETER

Other Names

- * Simeon bar Jona (Simon, son of Jona) •
- * Cephas ("rock" or "a stone")
- * Simon Peter
- * Simon

General Information

- * Son of Jona and born in Bethsaida. (John 1:42-44)
- * Lived in Capernaum. (Matthew 8:5-14)
- * Fisherman. (Matthew 4:18)
- * Brother of Andrew. (Matthew 4:18)
- * Partner with James and John. (Luke 5:10)
- * Married. (Matthew 8:14)
- * One of the pillars of the Jerusalem church. (Galatians 2:9)

- * Boldly preached, healed, and ministered to Jews and Gentiles after Pentecost. (Acts 2-12)
- * Imprisoned by Herod for preaching and rescued by an angel of the Lord. (Acts 12:3-19)
- * Wrote 1 and 2 Peter.

Personality and Character

- * Impulsive (Matthew 14:28), yet cowardly (Matthew 14:30; 26:69-74)
- * Hot tempered (John 18:10), yet tenderhearted. (Matthew 26:75)
- * Insightful (Matthew 16:16), yet dense. (Matthew 16:21-23)
- * Courageous and solid after Pentecost. (Acts 5:27-30)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Was called to be a fisher of men. (Matthew 4:19)
- * Left everything to follow Jesus. (Luke 5:11)
- * One of the three disciples in the core group of disciples. (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33)
- * Simon said Jesus is the Christ, Son of the living God. Jesus names him Peter (rock) and said, "Upon this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hell will not prevail against it." (Matthew 16:16-19)
- * Was reprimanded because he refused to accept that Jesus had to die. (Matthew 16:23)
- * Witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration (where Jesus' divinity was revealed). (Mark 9:2-8)
- * Was sent to prepare the upper room for the Last Supper. (Luke 22:8)
- * Jesus predicted that Peter would deny knowing him three times. (Luke 22:31-34)
- * Was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-46)
- * Jesus instructed Peter after his resurrection. (John 21:15-19)

Key Lesson

God can forgive sins and strengthen the faith of those who love him.

Stories

Papias (second-century Christian) recorded that Mark served as Peter's scribe and wrote the Gospel of Mark based on Peter's testimony. According to some stories, Peter asked to be crucified upside down. Peter may have been crucified during the reign of Nero in Rome. Symbols for Peter are sometimes keys, representing the keys to the kingdom of heaven. (Matthew 16:19)

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JAMES, SON OF ZEBEDEE

Other Names

- * Son of Zebedee
- * Boanerges (Son of Thunder) "James the Elder"
- * "James the Great"

General Information

- * Son of Zebedee. (Matthew 4:21)
- * Son of Salome. (Matthew 27:56; Mark 16:1)
- * Fisherman with his father and his brother. (Matthew 4:18-22)
- * Brother of John. (Matthew 4:21)
- * Partner with Peter. (Luke 5:10)
- * One of the pillars of the Jerusalem church. (Galatians 2:9)
- * Put to death by the sword by Herod Agrippa 1. The only one of the twelve disciples who died for his faith that was recorded in Scripture. (Acts 12:2)

Personality and Character

- * Vengeful and fiery. (Luke 9:54)
- * Selfish and conceited. (Mark 10:35-37)
- * Committed to Christ and courageous to the end. (Acts 12:2)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Was called to be a fisher of men. (Matthew 4:19)

- * Left everything to follow Jesus. (Luke 5:11)
- * One of the three disciples in the core group of disciples. (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33)
- * Jesus named him and John "Sons of Thunder." (Mark 3:17)
- * Was rebuked with his brother John for requesting God to rain fire on a Samaritan village. (Luke 9:54, 55)
- * Witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration (where Jesus' divinity was revealed). (Mark 9:2-8)
- * Jesus responded to James's and John's request to sit at his right and left in the Kingdom. (Mark 10:35-43)
- * Was with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane. (Matthew 26:36-46)
- * Witnessed the miraculous catch of fish on the Sea of Galilee after Jesus' resurrection. (John 21:2-7)

Key Lesson

Stand firm in the face of persecution.

Stories

Some claim he was the first bishop in Spain. Symbols of James sometimes include the bishop's hat and the sword, which is in reference to his martyrdom.

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JOHN

Other Names

- * Sun of Zebedee
- * Boanerges (Son of Minder)
- * "The Beloved Disciple" (The disciple whom Jesus loved)
- * "The Evangelist"
- * "The Revealer"

General Information

- * Son of Zebedee. (Matthew 4:21)
- * Son of Salome. (Matthew 27:56; Mark 16:1)
- * Fisherman with his father and his brother. (Matthew 4:18-22)

- * Brother of James. (Matthew 4:21)
- * Partner with Peter. (Luke 5:10)
- * One of the pillars of the Jerusalem church. (Galatians 2:9)
- * Healed and preached. (Acts 3-4; 8)
- * Exiled to the island of Patmos. (Revelation 1:1,9)
- * Wrote the Gospel of John, 1, 2, and 3 John, and Revelation.

Personality and Character

- * Vengeful and fiery. (Luke 9:54)
- * Judgmental. (Mark 9:38)
- * Selfish. (Mark 10:35-37)
- * Bold, loving and compassionate after Pentecost. (Acts 4:13; 1 John 4)

Encounters with Jesus

- * One of the three disciples in the core group of disciples. (Mark 5:37; 9:2; 13:3; 14:33)
- * Suggested that driving out demons could only be performed by those who follow Jesus and his disciples. (Mark 9:38)
- * Witnessed Jesus' Transfiguration (where Jesus' divinity was revealed). (Mark 9:2-8)
- * Was sent to prepare the upper room for the Last Supper. (Luke 22:8)
- * Reclined next to Jesus during the Last Supper. (John 13:23)
- * Was given the responsibility at the cross to take care of Mary, Jesus' mother. (John 19:26, 27)
- * Ran ahead of Peter to see Jesus' empty tomb and expressed faith by "seeing and believing." (John 20:2-8)
- * Witnessed the miraculous catch of fish on the Sea of Galilee after Jesus' resurrection. (John 21:2-7)

Key Lesson

God's love, evident in Jesus Christ, saves, transforms, and unites all believers.

Stories

Some stories suggest that John was released from exile on the island of Patmos and returned to Ephesus (Turkey today).

Stories suggest that John died in Ephesus around AD 100.

Symbols of John sometimes include the eagle (Revelation 4:7) and a book.

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ANDREW

Other Names

* "Protokletos" (First Called)

General Information

* Son of Jona. (John 1:42)

* Born in Bethsaida (John 1:44)

* Lived in Capernaum with Peter. (Mark 1:29)

* Fisherman. (Matthew. 4:18)

* Brother of Simon Peter. (Matthew 4:18)

* Disciple of John the Baptist. (John 1:35-40)

* Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4;

Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16)

* The name Andrew derives from Greek, meaning "manly."

Personality and Character

* Enthusiastic about Christ. (John 1:35-42)

* Inquisitive. (John 1:35-38)

* Resourceful. (John 6:8,9)

Encounters with Jesus

* First to follow Jesus. (John 1:35-40)

* Called to be a fisher of men. (Matthew 4:19)

* Sent out on a mission to the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. (Matthew 10:5-8)

* Informed Jesus that several Greeks wanted to see him. (John 12:20-22)

* Told Jesus of the boy with five loaves of bread and two fish. (John 6:8, 9)

* Was present when Jesus appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection. (John 20:19-25)

- * Was present for the Great Commission when Jesus sent his disciples to all nations. (Matthew 28:16-20)
- * Witnessed Jesus being taken up into heaven. (Acts 1:8,9)

Key Lesson

Go out and eagerly share the good news about Jesus Christ.

Stories

Some suggest that Andrew preached in Greece, Asia Minor, and Russia
 A seventh-century story suggests that Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross by a Roman proconsul.
 The symbol for Andrew is sometimes the X-shaped cross.

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MATTHEW

Other Names

- * Levi
- * Levi the son of Alphaeus

General Information

- * Son of Alphaeus. (Mark 2:14)
- * From Capernaum. (Mark 2:1-17)
- * Tax collector in Galilee. (Matthew 9:9)
- * Possible brother of James son of Alphaeus. (Mark 3:18)
- * Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4;

Acts 1:13)

- * Wrote the Gospel of Matthew
- * The name Matthew derives from Hebrew, meaning "gift of God."

Personality and Character

- * Penitent. (Matthew 9:9; 10:2)

* Hospitable. (Matthew 9:10)

Encounters with Jesus

* Matthew left his tax collector booth to follow Jesus. (Matthew 9:9)

* Matthew invited Jesus over to dine with him and his corrupt friends. (Matthew 9:10)

* Sent out on a mission to the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. (Matthew 10:5-8)

* Was present at the Last Supper (Matthew 26:20)

Key Lesson

Jesus Christ is for everyone, even sinners and outcasts.

Stories

Some stories suggest that Matthew ministered to Persia, Macedonia, Syria, Parthia, Media, and Ethiopia bringing the good news to kings.

Some stories suggest that Matthew died a martyr.

The symbol for Matthew is sometimes a bag of coins in reference to his occupation as a tax collector before he encountered Jesus.

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THOMAS

Other Names

* Didymus (Twin)

* Judas Thomas

* "Doubting Thomas"

General Information

* He was a twin. (John 20:24)

* Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16)

* Inquisitive. (John 14:5)

- * Doubtful. (John 20:24, 25)
- * Courageous. (John 11:16)
- * Faithful. (John 20:24-29)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Courageously encouraged disciples to go to Bethany. (John 11:16)
- * Asked Jesus how to know where Jesus was going. (John 14:5)
- * Doubted Jesus' resurrection saying he would have to touch his wounds in order to believe. (John 20:25)
- * Affirmed that Jesus was Lord and God. (John 20:28)
- * Witnessed the miraculous catch of fish and ate breakfast with Jesus after his resurrection. (John 21:2-7)

Key Lessons

Jesus can overcome doubts and lead believers to faithfulness.

Stories

Stories suggest that Thomas traveled to India and founded the Christian church there.

Some suggest Thomas was killed by a spear for his faith, and was buried in India.

Some say Thomas was a carpenter.

Symbols for Thomas include the spearhead and the T-square.

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JAMES, son of ALPHAEUS

Other Names

- * James the son of Alphaeus
- * "James the Younger"
- * "James the Less"

General Information

- * Son of Alphaeus. (Mark 3:18)

- * Possible brother of Matthew (Levi) the tax collector, also the son of Alphaeus. (Mark 2:14)
- * Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matt. 10:3; Acts 1:13)
- * James the son of Alphaeus is often confused with James the brother of Jesus (who wrote the book of James) or James the brother of Joseph.

Personality and Character

- * Unknown.

Encounters with Jesus

- * Selected as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Luke 6:14-16)
- * Sent out on a mission to the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand, heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. (Matthew 10:5-8)
- * Was present at the Last Supper. (Matthew 26:20)
- * Was present when Jesus appeared to the disciples after the Resurrection. (John 20:19-25)

Key Lesson

All followers of Jesus can still accomplish the work of God without being in the limelight.

Stories

Some suggest that James, son of Alphaeus, belonged to the revolutionary group known as the Zealots. Some say that James was arrested by the Jews, thrown off the Temple, and then beaten to death by a club.

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THADDAEUS

Other Names

- * Jude
- * Juda the son of James
- * Lebbaeus

General Information

- * Son of James. (Luke 6:16)
- * Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Acts 1:13)
- * The Aramaic meaning of both Thaddaeus and Lebbaeus is the same, "beloved" or "dear to the heart."
- * The name "Judas" derives from the Hebrew name Judah, meaning "praise."
- * Jude is sometimes confused with Judas the brother of Jesus, Judas Barsabbas, and Judas Iscariot.

Personality and Character

- * Inquisitive. (John 14:22)
- * Confused. (John 14:22)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Selected as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Acts 1:13)
- * Sent out on a mission to the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. (Matthew 10:5-8)
- * Asked Jesus how he would reveal himself to his followers and not to the world. (John 14:22)
- * Was present at the Last Supper. (Matthew 26:20)

Key Lesson

Jesus will reveal his truths to believers who follow him.

Stories

Some suggest that Thaddaeus belonged to the revolutionary group, the Zealots.

Some scholars believe that Thaddaeus authored the book of Jude, although most believe the author is Judas the brother of Jesus.

The symbol for Thaddaeus is sometimes a gold ship with silver sails before a red horizon, which is a reference to the ship he took on missionary journeys.

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SIMON the ZEALOT

Other Names

- * Simon the Cananaean

General Information

- * Was a Zealot. (Matthew 10:4; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13)
- * Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Acts 1:13)
- * The name Simon derives from the Hebrew name Shimon, meaning "hearing."
- * The word "Cananaean" derives from an Aramaic word meaning "zealous one."

Personality and Character

- * Patriotic. (Matthew 10:4)
- * Loyal. (Mark 3:18)
- * Passionate. (Luke 6:15)
- * Sacrificial. (Acts 1:13)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Selected as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Acts 1:13)
- * Sent out on a mission to the Jews to preach "the kingdom of heaven is at hand," heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead, and cast out demons. (Matthew 10:5-8)
- * Was present at the Last Supper. (Matthew 26:20)
- * Was present for the Great Commission and Jesus' Ascension into heaven. (Matthew 28:16)

Key Lesson

One should be willing to sacrifice his or her politics to follow Jesus.

One story suggests that Simon was the bridegroom at the wedding in Cana.

Some stories suggest that Simon was a missionary to Persia.

The symbol for Simon is sometimes a book resting on a fish, which is a reference to Simon fishing for people.

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JUDAS ISCARIOT

Other Names

- * "Judas the Betrayer"
- * Judas the son of Simon

General Information

- * Judas was the treasurer for the group of disciples; was a thief. (John 12:5,6; 13:29)
- * Judas betrayed Jesus, felt remorse, threw the blood money in the temple and hanged himself: The chief priest used the money to purchase the potter's field, fulfilling prophecy. (Matthew 27:3-10)
- * Judas purchased the Field of Blood and fell headlong and "burst open..." (Acts 1:18-20)
- * Judas was replaced by Matthias who was added to the eleven apostles. (Acts 1:26)

Personality and Character

- * Greedy. (Matthew 26:14-16)
- * Deceitful. (Matthew 26:25)
- * Treacherous. (Matthew 26:47-50)
- * Remorseful. (Matthew 27:3-5)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Selected as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:4; Luke 6:15)

- * Jesus referred to Judas as the devil. (John 6:70,71)
- * Criticized Mary for anointing Jesus with expensive perfume. (John 12:4-8)
- * Conversed with Jesus during the Last Supper. (Matthew 26:23-25; John 13:27,28)
- * The devil entered his heart at the Last Supper. (John 13:2)
- * Betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver. (Matthew 26:14-16; 47-51)

Key Lesson

Not all who claim to follow Jesus are faithful to him and his goals.

Stories

Judas was possibly from Kerioth in Judea.

Some scholars suggest that Judas was a member of the Zealot sect known as the Sicarii, who were dagger-bearing assassins.

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PHILIP

Other Names

- * None

General Information

- * Born in Bethsaida. (John 1:44)
- * Well versed in Scripture. (John 1:45, 46)
- * Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Luke 6:14-16)
- * The disciple Philip is often confused with Philip the evangelist found in Acts.
- * The name Philip derives from Greek, meaning "he who loves horses."
- * Philip probably spoke Greek. (John 12:20,21)

Personality and Character

- * Practical. (John 6:7)
- * Helpful. (John 12:20, 21)
- * Literal and confused. (John 14:8)

Encounters with Jesus

- * The third disciple Jesus called. (John 1:43)
- * Brought Nathanael (Bartholomew) to Jesus. (John 1:45,46)
- * Jesus tested him regarding the feeding of the multitude. (John 6:5-7)
- * Informed Jesus that several Greeks wanted to see him. (John 12:20-22)
- * Asked Jesus to show him the Father. (John 14:8,9)
- * Was present at the Last Supper. (Matthew 26:20)

Key Lesson

All the knowledge in the world does not compare to the truth found in Jesus.

Stories

Tradition suggests that Philip lived and preached in Scythia (Ukraine today). Some stories suggest that Philip was crucified on a tall cross at Hierapolis of Phrygia (Turkey today).

Symbols for Philip sometimes include loaves of bread (John 6:5-7) and a tall cross.

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BARTHOLOMEW

Other Names

- * Nathanael

General Information

- * Born and/or raised in Cana of Galilee. (John 21:2)
- * Well versed in the Hebrew Scriptures. (John 1:46)
- * Listed as one of Christ's twelve disciples. (Matthew, 10:2-4;

Acts 1:13)

- * The name Bartholomew derives from Greek, meaning "son of Tolmai."
- * The name Nathanael derives from the Hebrew, meaning "God has given"

Personality and Character

- * Skeptical. (John 1:46)
- * Honest. (John 1:47)
- * Faithful. (John 1:49)

Encounters with Jesus

- * Jesus told Nathanael that he was an honest Israelite and informed him that he saw him sitting under the fig tree. (John 1:47,48)
- * Nathanael said that Jesus was the "Son of God" and "King of Israel (John 1:49)
- * Jesus enlightened Nathanael with what to expect (John 1:50,51)
- * Witnessed the miraculous catch of fish and ate breakfast with Jesus after his resurrection. (John 21:2-7)

Key Lesson

Believers are called to test all things with Scripture and remain true to its principles.

Stories

Some suggest that Bartholomew ministered to Asia Minor and India and the Armenian church claims Bartholomew as their founder. Tradition suggests that Bartholomew was flayed alive in Armenia. The symbol for Bartholomew is sometimes a blade.

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