**Confirmation at Zion Lutheran Church**

**Apostles**

**Background Information**

ἀπόστολος (apostle) noun - one sent, messenger, emissary

You’ve probably heard the word *apostles* in the church. It’s a word commonly used in the New Testament, especially in Acts and the letters that follow in the Bible sometimes called *epistles*. An epistle is a treatise often written in letter form that is meant to be read to a specific audience and has a specific religious or moral point of view. Apostle and epistle go hand in hand because, as far as the Bible is concerned, an epistle is written by an apostle.

**What you need to know**

Although the authors of the New Testament were not as careful as we might be with terminology today, sometimes disciple and apostle are synonymous terms. For example, according to Mark's Gospel, very early on in Jesus ministry, after calling his twelve disciples, Mark wrote that Jesus,

Mark 3:14appointed twelve, *whom he also named* **apostles**, to be with him, and to be **sent out** to proclaim the message, 15and to have authority to cast out demons.

A similar treatment was used by Matthew:

Matthew 10:1Then Jesus summoned his twelve **disciples** and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to cure every disease and every sickness. 2These are the names of the twelve **apostles**: first, Simon, also known as Peter, and his brother Andrew; James son of Zebedee, and his brother John; 3Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; 4Simon the Cananaean, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed him.

5These twelve Jesus sent out with the following instructions: "Go nowhere among the Gentiles and enter no town of the Samaritans, 6but go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7As you go, proclaim the good news, 'The kingdom of heaven has come near.'

More accurately, a disciple is one who is learning the discipline of their master, an understudy, one who follows a teacher. Jesus called twelve disciples and on a couple of occasions, he sent them out with a message that the kingdom of God had come near. Technically, they were apostles at that time, since they were sent out, but then did they return to disciple status when they returned? Certainly after the Resurrection, and at the Ascension, the eleven remaining disciples plus Matthias, who was selected by lot to complete the twelve, were called apostles from that point on. However, after the Resurrection, apostleship was not limited to the original disciples.

Just who were the twelve disciples takes a little digging. The following table will clear it up and indicate where the listing is found.



**About the Lutheran Study Bible (LSB)**

There is nothing specific about the Apostles in the Lutheran Study Bible beyond what is listed in the table above.

**Into the Story**

Generally speaking, the original disciples were the original apostles during Jesus' public ministry. But after his Crucifixion, Judas Iscariot committed suicide, and to complete the Twelve, the disciples cast lots with a couple of the men who had accompanied the Lord Jesus from the beginning to the Ascension. The lot fell on a man by the name of Matthias, and so he was added to the ranks of the apostles.

Their mission was clarified at the Ascencion (Matthew 28:16-20 and Acts 1:6-11). In obedience to the command of Jesus, the apostles stayed in Jerusalem devoting themselves to prayer as they awaited the coming of the Holy Spirit.

The Apostles, filled with the Holy Spirit, eventually spread out and began preaching and teaching and performing signs and miracles, essentially continuing the ministry of their Lord Jesus. Initially, their ministry was limited to the Jews, however, this quickly got them into trouble. The Jews were hostile toward them, and the Romans just wanted to maintain peace with the Jews and so persecutions began to happen at the hands of the Jews and the Romans.

Peter stayed in Jerusalem and became the leader of what became known as the Jerusalem Council. Without a book of theology or instruction on how to be the church, this Jerusalem Council became the authority.

We will talk about the apostle Paul and his theology next week, but Paul, previously known as Saul, the bloodthirsty persecutor of the Christians, had an encounter with the risen Jesus Christ and converted to Christian and became the apostle to the Gentiles. Paul and his ministry were controversial because the original apostles could not see taking the Gospel to the Gentiles although there is plenty of Old Testament scripture passages indicating that that was God's plan all along.

Though the Jerusalem Council was wary of Paul, they heard him out, and then Peter was given a vision that nothing that the LORD had created was unclean, and he interpreted that as the LORD's invitation to take the Gospel to the Gentiles.

The life of the apostles was fraught with hard work, terrible conditions, and persecutions. The following list is what the tradition of the Church says happened to the original apostles.

**Simon Peter** - Early Church tradition says that Peter probably died by [crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion) (with arms outstretched) at the time of the [Great Fire of Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Great_Fire_of_Rome) in the year 64. This took place three months after the disastrous fire that destroyed Rome for which the emperor (Nero) wished to blame the Christians. Traditionally, [Roman](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) authorities sentenced him to death by [crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion) at [Vatican Hill](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Vatican_Hill). Following the [apocryphal](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Apocryphal) [Acts of Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Peter), he was crucified head down. Tradition also locates his burial place where the [Basilica of Saint Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Peter%27s_Basilica) was later built, directly beneath the Basilica's high altar.

**Andrew** - [Eusebius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eusebius) in his [*Church History*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Church_History_%28Eusebius%29) 3.1 quoted [Origen](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Origen) as saying that Andrew preached in [Scythia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Scythia). The [Chronicle of Nestor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Primary_Chronicle) adds that he preached along the [Black Sea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Black_Sea) and the [Dnieper](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Dnieper_River) river as far as [Kiev](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kiev), and from there he traveled to [Novgorod](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Veliky_Novgorod). Hence, he became a [patron saint](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patron_saint) of [Ukraine](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Ukraine), [Romania](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Romania), and [Russia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Russia). Andrew is said to have been [martyred](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_martyrs) by [crucifixion](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Crucifixion) at the city of [Patras](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Patras) (Patræ) in [Achaea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Achaea), in AD 60. Early texts, such as the [Acts of Andrew](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acts_of_Andrew) known to [Gregory of Tours](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Gregory_of_Tours), describe Andrew as bound, not nailed, to a [Latin cross](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Christian_cross) of the kind on which Jesus is said to have been crucified; yet a tradition developed that Andrew had been crucified on a cross of the form called [*crux decussata*](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saltire) (X-shaped cross, or "saltire"), now commonly known as a "[Saint Andrew's Cross](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saltire)" — supposedly at his request, as he deemed himself unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus had been.

**James** – aka James the Great’ James the son of Zebedee - James preached the gospel in Spain, as well as in the Holy Land. The Chapel of St. James the Great, located to the left of the sanctuary, is the traditional place where he was martyred when King Agrippa ordered him to be beheaded (Acts 12:1–2). His head is buried under the altar, marked by a piece of red marble and surrounded by six votive lamps.

**John** - traditionally believed that John was the youngest of the apostles and survived them. He is said to have lived to an old age, dying at Ephesus sometime after AD 98.

**Philip** – After the Resurrection, Philip and Bartholomew preached in Greece, Phrygia, and Syria. According to this account, through a miraculous healing and his preaching Philip converted the wife of the proconsul of the city of Hierapolis. This enraged the proconsul, and he had Philip, Bartholomew, and Mariamne all tortured. Philip and Bartholomew were then [crucified upside-down](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Cross_of_St._Peter), and Philip preached from his cross. As a result of Philip's preaching, the crowd released Bartholomew from his cross, but Philip insisted that they not release him, and Philip died on the cross.

**Bartholomew** - Bartholomew preached the Gospel in India, then went to Greater Armenia. According to legends he was skinned alive and beheaded so is often depicted holding his flayed skin or the curved flensing knife with which he was skinned.

**Thomas** - Thomas is believed to have traveled outside the [Roman Empire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Empire) to preach the Gospel, traveling as far as the [Malabar Coast](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Malabar_Coast) which is in modern-day [Kerala](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kerala) State, [India](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/India). According to Syrian Christian tradition, Saint Thomas was allegedly martyred at [St.Thomas Mount](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St.Thomas_Mount) in [Chennai](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chennai) on 3 July in AD 72, and his body was interred in Mylapore.

**Matthew** - Matthew preached the Gospel to the Jewish community in Judea, before going to other countries. Ancient writers are not in agreement as to which these other countries are. The Catholic Church and the Orthodox Church each hold the tradition that Matthew died as a [martyr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr).

**James** – aka James the Just; James the brother of Jesus; James the Less - was a brother of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), according to the [New Testament](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/New_Testament). [Catholics](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Catholic_Church) and [Eastern Orthodox](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Eastern_Orthodox), as well as some [Anglicans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Anglican) and [Lutherans](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lutheran), teach that James, along with others named in the New Testament as "[brothers](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Brothers_of_Jesus)" of [Jesus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Jesus), were not the biological children of Mary, but were possibly cousins of Jesus, or half-brothers from a previous marriage of [Joseph](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Joseph). James the Just was "from an early date, with [Peter](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Saint_Peter), a leader of the Church at Jerusalem and from the time when Peter left Jerusalem after [Herod Agrippa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Herod_Agrippa)'s attempt to kill him, James appears as the principal authority who presided at the Council of Jerusalem.

[Hegesippus](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hegesippus_%28chronicler%29) cites that "the Scribes and Pharisees placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple and threw down the just man, and they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall. And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head". He died as a [martyr](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Baptism_of_blood) in AD 62 or 69.

**Thaddeus (aka Jude)** - Tradition holds that Saint Jude preached the Gospel in [Judea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Judea), [Samaria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaria), [Idumaea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Idumaea), [Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria), [Mesopotamia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Mesopotamia), and [Libya](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Libya). According to tradition, Saint Jude suffered [martyrdom](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Martyr) about 65 AD in [Beirut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beirut), in the Roman province of [Syria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Syria_%28Roman_province%29), together with the apostle [Simon the Zealot](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Simon_the_Zealot), with whom he is usually connected. The axe that he is often shown holding in pictures symbolizes how he was killed. Sometime after his death, Saint Jude's body was brought from Beirut to [Rome](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Rome) and placed in a crypt in [St. Peter's Basilica](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/St._Peter%27s_Basilica) which was visited by many devotees. Now his bones are in the left transept of St. Peter's Basilica under the main altar of St. Joseph, in one tomb with the remains of the apostle Simon the Zealot.

**Simon** – The most widespread tradition is that after evangelizing in [Egypt](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Egypt), Simon joined Jude in [Persia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Parthian_Empire) and [Armenia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Armenia_%28antiquity%29) or [Beirut](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Beirut), [Lebanon](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lebanon), where both were martyred in 65 AD. This version is the one found in the [Golden Legend](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Golden_Legend). He may have suffered crucifixion as the Bishop of Jerusalem.

One tradition states that he traveled in the [Middle East](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Middle_East) and [Africa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Africa). Christian [Ethiopians](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/People_of_Ethiopia) claim that he was crucified in [Samaria](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Samaria), while [Justus Lipsius](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Justus_Lipsius) writes that he was [sawn in half](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Death_by_sawing) at [Suanir](https://en.wikipedia.org/w/index.php?title=Suanir&action=edit&redlink=1), [Persia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Persia). However, [Moses of Chorene](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Moses_of_Chorene) writes that he was martyred at Weriosphora in [Caucasian Iberia](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Kingdom_of_Iberia_%28antiquity%29). Tradition also claims he died peacefully at [Edessa](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Edessa%2C_Mesopotamia).

Another tradition says he visited [Roman Britain](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Roman_Britain). In this account, in his second mission to Britain, he arrived during the first year of [Boadicea](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Boudica)'s rebellion (60 AD). He was crucified 10 May 61 AD by the Roman Catus Decianus, at [Caistor](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Caistor), modern-day [Lincolnshire](https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lincolnshire), Britain.

**Essay Questions**

*In your own words, answer all the questions below in 100-150 words each and return them to Pastor Jesse by email at* *pastor@zionohio.org* *no later than next Sunday.*

1. Because the New Testament does not continue much past Jerusalem and the travels of just a few of the original apostles, we don’t know much of the rest of the story that can be verified historically. What I have copied and pasted above is from Wikipedia. Nevertheless, the traditions that surround the apostles are breathtaking. To what do you ascribe their willingness to die for the sake of the Gospel of Jesus Christ? Do you envy them or feel sorry for them, or something else?
2. Do you think that it is possible today to be so powerfully inspired? If yes, what could you imagine that thing to be?
3. Do you feel any sense of responsibility for the continuation of the Gospel? How could you see being used by God to spread the Good News of the Gospel?