

Confirmation 2020-21

Session 20 – 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 3:14 appointed twelve, *whom he also named apostles*, to be with him, and to be **sent out** to proclaim the message,¹⁵ and to have authority to cast out demons.

A similar treatment was used by Matthew:

Matthew 10:1 Then 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.

Matthew (10:1-7)	Mark (3:13-19)	Luke (6:12-16)
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter
Andrew	Andrew	Andrew
James son of Zebedee	James son of Zebedee	James son of Zebedee
John	John	John
Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas
Matthew	Matthew	Matthew
James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus	James son of Alphaeus
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Judas son of James
Simon	Simon	Simon
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

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 Ascension (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 (with arms outstretched) at the time of the 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 authorities sentenced him to death by crucifixion at Vatican Hill. Following the apocryphal Acts of Peter, he was crucified head down. Tradition also locates his burial place where the Basilica of Saint Peter was later built, directly beneath the Basilica's high altar.

Andrew - Eusebius in his *Church History* 3.1 quoted Origen as saying that Andrew preached in Scythia. The Chronicle of Nestor adds that he preached along the Black Sea and the Dnieper river as far as Kiev, and from there he traveled to Novgorod. Hence, he became a patron saint of Ukraine, Romania, and Russia. Andrew is said to have been martyred by crucifixion at the city of Patras (*Patræ*) in Achaea, in AD 60. Early texts, such as the Acts of Andrew known to Gregory of Tours, describe Andrew as bound, not nailed, to a Latin 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* (X-shaped cross, or "saltire"), now commonly known as a "Saint Andrew's Cross" — 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, 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 to preach the Gospel, traveling as far as the Malabar Coast which is in modern-day Kerala State, India. According to Syrian Christian tradition, Saint Thomas was allegedly martyred at St.Thomas Mount in 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.

James – aka James the Just; James the brother of Jesus; James the Less - was a brother of Jesus, according to the New Testament. Catholics and Eastern Orthodox, as well as some Anglicans and Lutherans, teach that James, along with others named in the New Testament as "brothers" of Jesus, were not the biological children of Mary, but were possibly cousins of Jesus, or half-brothers from a previous marriage of Joseph. James the Just was "from an early date, with Peter, a leader of the Church at Jerusalem and from the time when Peter left Jerusalem after Herod Agrippa's attempt to kill him, James appears as the principal authority who presided at the Council of Jerusalem.

Hegesippus 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 in AD 62 or 69.

Thaddeus (aka Jude) - Tradition holds that Saint Jude preached the Gospel in Judea, Samaria, Idumaea, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Libya. According to tradition, Saint Jude suffered martyrdom about 65 AD in Beirut, in the Roman province of Syria, together with the apostle 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 and placed in a crypt in St. Peter's 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, Simon joined Jude in Persia and Armenia or Beirut, Lebanon, where both were martyred in 65 AD. This version is the one found in the

Golden Legend. He may have suffered crucifixion as the Bishop of Jerusalem.

One tradition states that he traveled in the Middle East and Africa. Christian Ethiopians claim that he was crucified in Samaria, while Justus Lipsius writes that he was sawn in half at Suanir, Persia. However, Moses of Choren writes that he was martyred at Weriosphora in Caucasian Iberia. Tradition also claims he died peacefully at Edessa.

Another tradition says he visited Roman Britain. In this account, in his second mission to Britain, he arrived during the first year of Boadicea's rebellion (60 AD). He was crucified 10 May 61 AD by the Roman Catus Decianus, at Caistor, modern-day 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, February 28.

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?