

The Twelve – A Study of the Apostles

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What is Discipleship?

“Go therefore and make disciples of all nations. . .” That was His last word, His great commission. We are far from the mark if we think of our relationship with Jesus Christ in terms of anything less than full discipleship. He didn’t say “Go and make churchgoers,” or “Go and make congregation members.” Of course His disciples of the twentieth century will go to church and they will be congregation members. But they must become His disciples first of all. And they must live their Christian faith in terms of a personal discipleship with their Lord and Redeemer. (John H. Baumgaertner)

1. A disciple is a person who has a relationship with the Master
 - A. Mark 3:14
 - B. Matthew 13:10-11
 - C. Matthew 26:38
 - D. Matthew 28:7,10
 - E. Matthew 12:49

2. A disciple is a person who is under the total authority of the Master
 - A. Luke 14:26
 - B. Luke 14:33
 - C. Matthew 10:24 and Matthew 16:24

3. A disciple is a person who learns from the Master
 - A. Three characteristics of our “learning”
 1. Matthew 16:24
 2. Matthew 11:29
 3. John 8:31
 - B. Five characteristics of his “teaching”
 1. Luke 11:1
 2. Mark 4:33-34
 3. Matthew 16:20
 4. Matthew 16:21
 5. Mark 8:33

4. A disciple is useful to his Master
 - A. Luke 10:2
 - B. Luke 10:3
 - C. Luke 10:1
 - D. Luke 10:4
 - E. Luke 10:9-11
 - F. Luke 10:16-19

The Difference between “Disciples” and “Apostles”

The New Testament has numerous references to people called “disciples” and “apostles.” We have to ask ourselves, “What is a disciple? What’s an apostle? What’s the difference, if any, between disciples and apostles?”

Disciples

“Disciple” is derived from the Greek word, μαθητής (math-ay-tas’), which means *learner, pupil, student* or follower. The Biblical usage involved not just learning, but also agreement and acceptance of the teacher as a leader. While the New Testament most often refers to the disciples of Jesus Christ, there is also some mention of John the Baptist (Matthew 9:14) and the Pharisees (Matthew 22:16) having disciples. Followers of Christ were not called “Christians” until the founding of the church at Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:26). Before then, Christians were called “disciples of Jesus Christ.” The apostles began as disciples (Matthew 10:1). There were far fewer apostles than disciples. All apostles were disciples, but not all disciples became apostles.

Apostles

“Apostle” is derived from the Greek word, ἀπόστολος (ap-os’-tol-os), which means *messenger* or *ambassador*.

The Twelve Apostles, with Matthias replacing the traitor Judas Iscariot, were called to serve as the foundation of the Christian church. All of them, with one possible exception (see John), were martyred

Others were appointed as apostles at later times and other purposes, including Paul, the apostle to the Gentiles, and Barnabas (Acts 14:14). Lesser-known people are also referred to as apostles, including Andronicus and Junias (Romans 16:7), Timothy and Silas (I Thessalonians 2:6) and James, the Lord’s brother (Galatians 1:19).

As might be expected, Satan, that Old Serpent, used corrupt and evil men as his own “apostles” -“For such men are false apostles, deceitful workmen, masquerading as apostles of Christ. And no wonder, for Satan himself masquerades as an angel of light. It is not surprising, then, if his servants masquerade as servants of righteousness. (2 Corinthians 11:13-15)

Consider This: What did Paul say were the proofs of an apostle?
See 2 Corinthians 12:12

The Twelve - An Introduction

The apostles were chosen during the second year of Christ’s ministry after he had prayed all night. Although Jesus was surrounded by enemies who were plotting his death, he was more concerned about the future. He chose men to spread the good news of the redemption which he was about to win. The apostles were perhaps not the men we would have chosen to represent the Lord. The men called to discipleship were simple rather than powerful, uneducated rather than intellectuals, full of selfish ambition rather than humble. The Lord’s standards are obviously different from our own.

The names of the Twelve are listed in four places in the New Testament. The lists do not agree with each other as far as the sequence of names is concerned. They agree only in placing Peter first in the listings, even though it was his brother Andrew, who was called first by the Lord.

Jesus does not indicate why he determined the number of apostles should be twelve. The number, however, had significance in the history of God’s people. Jacob had twelve sons who became the leaders of the twelve tribes of Israel. The number twelve was considered important enough that between the Ascension of Jesus and Pentecost, the church replaced Judas with a new apostle.

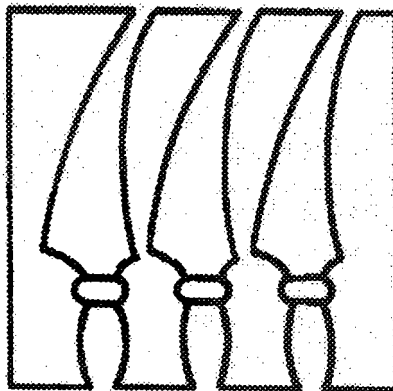
The basic qualifications by which the church distinguishes the apostles from the other followers include:

- 1) these men were called by Jesus;
- 2) they followed him during his entire public ministry;
- 3) they witnessed in public, especially after Pentecost, about the Resurrection and work of Jesus;
- 4) they were eyewitnesses to the Lord's works and words.

Mark 3:16-18	Matthew 10:2-4	Luke 6:14-16	Acts 1:13
Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Simon Peter	Peter
James, son of Zebedee	Andrew	Andrew	James
John	James, son of Zebedee	James	John
Andrew	John	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Matthew	Thomas	Matthew	Bartholomew
Thomas	Matthew	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus	James, son of Alphaeus
Thaddeus	Thaddeus	Simon Zelotes	Zelotes
Simon the Canaanite	Simon the Canaanite	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	

John's gospel has no complete listing of the disciples, but John does mention the disciples. He calls some of them by names not used in the other accounts.

Nathanael, Known Also as Bartholomew



The details of Bartholomew or Nathanael's call to discipleship are recorded in John 1:43-51. He was brought to Jesus by his friend Philip.

It is generally believed that Nathanael and Bartholomew are the same individual. The Synoptic gospels (Matthew, Mark and Luke) do not mention a Nathanael as a disciples. John's gospel makes no mention of Bartholomew.

Notice that Bartholomew's name is coupled with Philip's name in the listings of Matthew and Luke. It is found next to Philip in the list of Mark. This would seem to agree with the gospel of John, where the evangelist describes Philip as an old friend who brought Nathanael to Jesus.

Bartholomew means "son of Tolmai (Tolmai)" which was ancient Hebrew name. It appears in 2 Samuel 3:3 where it is listed as the given name of the King of Geshur who was the father of a wife of David, Maacah. Just as we sometimes refer to close friends by their family name rather than their given name, so it appears that only John lists this disciple by his given name. The other three gospel writers apparently designated him by his family name, Bar-Tolmai.

Characteristics of This Disciple

Nathanael means "gift of God." John's account tells us that he was from Cana in Galilee, a small village about 5 miles northeast of Nazareth. He might well have been present when Jesus performed his first miracle in that town. One obscure legend even suggests that he was the bridegroom at that wedding; another pictures him as the former boyfriend of the bride who didn't quite make it. Thankfully we can ignore such reports.

When Philip suggested that Jesus was the Messiah, Nathanael honestly expressed his doubts. He failed to see how such a great one could come from a town such as Nazareth. Bartholomew reminds us of the many very nice people we meet who straightforwardly tell us that they don't believe in Jesus as their Savior. Maybe they had a bad experience with a church or a pastor or some church members. Perhaps they are confused about religion in general. Like Nathanael, they need to see Jesus. We won't be able to change their minds, but we can invite them to "come and see."

Other than his call to be a disciple Nathanael/Bartholomew is not mentioned frequently in the biblical record. He is mentioned with the other apostles after the resurrection in the account recorded in John 21, in particular verse 2. His innocence and simplicity won high praise from the lips of the Savior when Philip brought him to Jesus.

Outside of Scripture,¹ we hear little of this man. There is no mention of him in ecclesiastical literature before Eusebius, who records in his *Church History* that Pantaenus of Alexandria, the teacher of Origen, visited India in the second century and found there a Hebrew copy of the *Gospel According to Matthew*. He was told that Bartholomew had been to India before him and had left this gospel. We should note that "India," at the time, meant everything from Arabia to the east. Other traditions suggest that Bartholomew preached in Mesopotamia, Persia, Egypt, Armenia, Phrygia and the shores of the Black Sea.

Even church tradition cannot agree on his death. He supposedly died in Albanopolis (Urbanopolis) in Armenia. Some say he was beheaded and others insist that he was skinned alive and crucified head down at the command of King Astyages for having converted King Polymios.

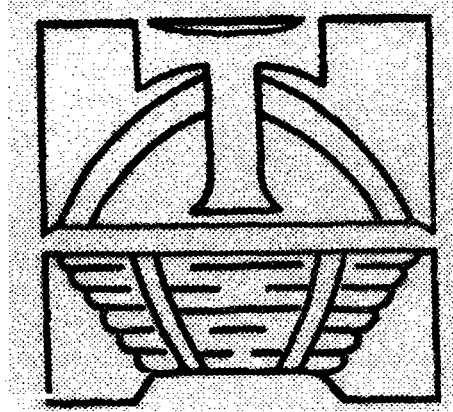
In Michaelangelo's "Last Judgment" he is pictured as flayed and holding in his hand his own skin. Due to this account of his death, the symbol for Bartholomew/Nathanael is a skinning knife or a series of them. Sometimes the knives are pictured together with a "skin."

¹ It is natural that we would have a curiosity about the doings and deaths of the apostles. What happened to these men beyond the sacred record has generally been lost to us. It would be natural for the early Christian Church to know more about the history of the Twelve than the New Testament tells us. Consequently quite a library developed in the centuries after the first century. This collection of apocryphal material is at once interesting and marred by self contradictions and useless wonders.

Yet it has been pointed out that "Tradition, however an unfaithful and uncertain preserver of character and events it may be, is rarely an inventor." Although the mass of traditional documents pretending to be the acts or gospels of the apostles were written long after the first century, still it is possible that they might provide some small glimpse of truth.

An apocryphal gospel of Bartholomew came into existence in the early centuries of the Christian Church. There are similar apocryphal (technically the New Testament apocryphal works are called "Pseudepigrapha" or "false writings") accounts for all the apostles. A listing of these works can be found in Appendix #1. A brief apocryphal work is provided in Appendix #2 as example of the information that might be in such works.

Philip



Philip, a Jew with a Greek name, was a native of Bethsaida on the Sea of Galilee. He appears to be one of the disciples with John the Baptist when the Baptizer pointed to Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:36). The next day as Jesus was about to set out for Galilee, he met Philip and called him to discipleship with the words, "Follow me" (John 1:43). Philip obeyed the call and a little later brought Nathanael to Jesus, as we saw above.

In addition to the listing of disciples, only John tells us anything about this man. Philip appears three other times in John's gospel. Before the miraculous feeding of the 5,000 Jesus tested Philip (John 6:5-7). When some Greeks in Jerusalem approached Philip and expressed their desire to see Jesus, Philip reported this to Andrew and then the two of them brought the news to Jesus (John 12:20-22). Finally, when Jesus spoke to his disciples about knowing and seeing the Father, Philip had a request to see the Father (John 14:6-9).

Characteristics of This Disciple

The three episodes from John sketch a portrait of a man who was a bit naive and somewhat shy. They also show us Philip as a serious-minded man.

Philip is an individual who is so much like us, Mr. or Ms. Average Christian. He generates neither great contempt nor great admiration. Yet we do appreciate the way in which he obeyed Jesus' call and then shared what he had found. We can also learn something from Philip when he was faced with the doubts of his friend Nathanael. He just said bluntly, "Come and see." He sets the example for us when we talk church and religion with our friends.

Philip's matter-of-fact approach, however, shows its limits when faced with the hungry crowd and Jesus' question. Jesus tested Philip and Philip failed miserably. On that occasion he was too practical for his own good. So often in the work of the church, it is the practical approach that keeps us from doing what we could do and what we must do. We calculate and we concentrate on how few we are and how little we have and how little we are willing to give - the result - we determine that maybe we shouldn't even bother to try.

Consider This: Proverbs 29:18

Where there is no vision, the people perish . . . (KJV)

Where there is no revelation, the people cast off restraint . . . (NIV)

The work of the Kingdom of God calls for faith and courage, determination and imagination. Above all, it demands a strong belief in the grace and power of God.

When the Greeks spoke to Philip, he wasn't sure if it was a good idea for these "foreigners" to see Jesus. He didn't immediately seize the opportunity to share Jesus. We quickly reflect Philip's hesitancy when visitors are welcomed in church, not with warmth and friendliness, but with glances that say, "What are you doing here?"

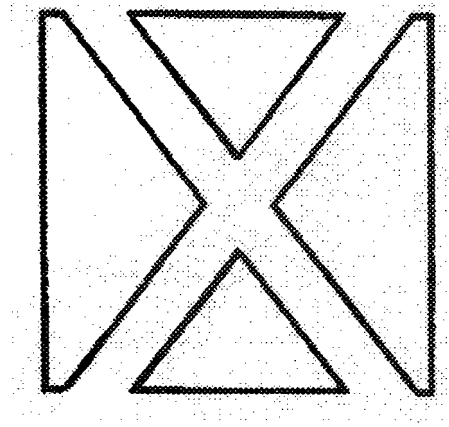
Once again when Philip asks “show us the Father, and we shall be satisfied,” he wanted proof. His practical mind was getting in the way.

Outside of Scripture, there is some confusion about Philip. This is the result of there being two Philip’s in the sacred record, the other being Philip the Deacon and Evangelist. The second-century traditions seem to mix the two men up. Bishop Polycrates of Ephesus, writing in the last decade of the second century, speaks of Philip as one of the “great lights” of the Church. He then proceeds to speak of the two Philips as if they were one individual.

The apocryphal “Acts of Philip” are purely legends and fables. They speak of his death at Hieropolis in Phrygia because of his protests against the idolatry of the city. Reportedly he was severely flogged, imprisoned and later crucified.

His symbol incorporates the cross on which he supposedly gave up his life. It also shows the basket that reminds us of his reply to Jesus when Jesus fed the 5,000. Sometimes the basket has loaves of bread in it. Other symbols incorporate a cross and a staff.

Andrew



Andrew, the brother of Simon Peter, was a fisherman on the Sea of Galilee. He and Peter were the sons of Jonas or John (John 1:42; 21:15).

Andrew was the first of the disciples called by Jesus. As was the case with Philip, he also was from Bethsaida (John 1:44) and had been a disciple of John the Baptist. When he heard John declare for a second time that Jesus was the Lamb of God, Andrew left his former teacher and followed after Jesus. He then brought his brother to Jesus (John 1:35-42). Andrew and his brother had a home in Capernaum (Mark 1:21,29) and this town became the headquarters for much of Jesus’ public ministry.

The apparent discrepancy between John’s account and that found in Matthew 4:18ff and Mark 1:16ff, where the two brothers appear to have been called together, is no real problem. John records the first introduction of the brothers to Jesus. The other evangelists record Jesus’ formal call to follow him in his ministry, coming in the second year of Jesus’ public ministry.

Characteristics of This Disciple

Andrew was never a disciple who pushed himself into the forefront. In temperament and personality he was almost the direct opposite of his brother Peter. But in his own unassuming way, he was active in bringing people to Jesus. The biblical record concerning Andrew revolves around three incidents. In each one he brought someone to Jesus.

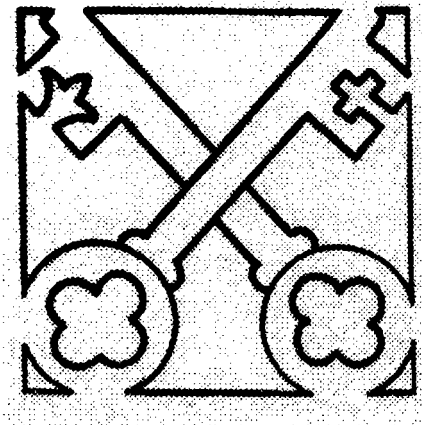
- 1) He started close to home by bringing his brother Peter to Jesus (John 1:35-42)

- 2) At the feeding of the 5,000, he brought the boy with five barley loaves and two fish to Jesus. He knew that Jesus would do the rest (John 6:8-9).
- 3) Andrew introduced a group of Greek “foreigners” to Jesus. They had first gone to Philip, but Philip wasn’t sure what he should do. Andrew welcomed them and was willing to bring these “outsiders” to see the Lord (John 12:20-22).

Andrew was a humble and helpful worker in God’s Kingdom. He was always ready to serve without selfishness and without seeking his own glory. “Let me have a church of Andrews of simple loving men [and women], content to bring others to Jesus.”

Outside of Scripture, the early church reported that Andrew preached the gospel in Asia Minor, in Greece and beyond. He is reported to have raised 39 dead sailors who washed ashore from a shipwreck and often he is portrayed as a kind of magician whose simplest words made mighty big things happen. A fourth century account reports that he was crucified at Patras in Greece about the year 60 AD. When the wife of the governor was converted by Andrew’s preaching, so the story goes, the governor in anger ordered him crucified. He was crucified on an X-shaped cross which had two ends planted in the ground. Tied to that cross, he preached for three days before he died. Accordingly this cross is known as the “St. Andrew’s Cross.” This cross is used as Andrew’s symbol.

Peter



His given name was Simon. Originally from Bethsaida of Galilee where he and his brother Andrew were in the fishing business, he also had a home in Capernaum. Their partners in this enterprise were another pair of brothers, James and John.

Jesus announced that Simon would be called Cephas, which is the Aramaic word that equals the Greek word Petros from which Peter comes. Simon gradually became known as Peter, although Jesus continued to call him Simon when talking to him, for example, Matthew 17:25, Mark 14:37, Luke 22:31.

There has been a long debate regarding Jesus’ purpose in renaming Simon as Cephas. The controversy in particular centers around the words of Jesus, “And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church, and the gates of Hades will not overcome it” (Matthew 16:18). It is helpful to note that in the original text “Peter” is petros and “rock” is petra. The Lord makes it clear that Peter is not the rock on which he will build his church. Jesus is saying that there is something about Peter and the confession he just made that Jesus would use in building his church. Petros means a loose rock or stone. Petra means a rocky cliff or a ledge of rock. The truth Peter confessed is the solid rock on which Jesus builds his church. Everyone who shares Peter’s confession are living stones (Peters) that are assembled by the Lord in the construction of his church.

Jesus did not name Peter to be the head of his church on earth and it is clear from the rest of Scripture that Peter was not the Lord’s infallible spokesman in matters of morals and doctrine. It should be noted that a

study of European history reveals the doctrine of the “Primacy of Peter” was not established until centuries after Peter died. It was not something Peter promoted. Its establishment was a tactic in a political struggle between church authorities. Neither the “Primacy of Peter” nor the idea of “Papacy” originate in the Bible.

As we have already heard, Peter became a disciple of Jesus when his brother Andrew brought him to Jesus. Jesus made this fisherman, a “fisher of men.”

Peter quickly became the leader of the Twelve, but he never exalted himself. He is the most vividly described and the most frequently mentioned of the disciples. As a result we get to know Peter better than the others. We see his repeated successes portrayed alongside his frequent failures.

Characteristics of This Disciple

Peter is a man of extremes. He has been described as “consistently inconsistent.” He made the great confession in Matthew 16:16. But when Jesus revealed that he would go to Jerusalem to be killed, Peter tried to prevent him from going. Jesus responded strongly, pointing out this attitude was not a reflection of God’s interests (Matthew 16:23). (Parallel accounts in Mark 8:27-9:1 and Luke 9:18-27)

When Jesus predicted that his followers would fall away, Peter insisted that he would remain true. Jesus then responded by telling Peter that he would deny Jesus three times before the rooster had crowed twice. Later Peter discovered the painful truth. (Matthew 26:31-35 and 69-75; Mark 14:32-42 and 66-72; Luke 22:40-46 and 55-62) In love Jesus did not leave Peter a fallen man but restored him to discipleship (John 21:15-19). At Pentecost it was Peter who delivered the sermon and the Lord blessed his efforts with the conversion of 3,000 people (Acts 2:14-41).

Even after all these experiences Peter had even more to learn. The ascended Savior had to teach Peter that the gospel message was not limited to the Jews when he was sent to the house of Cornelius (Acts 10:1-11:18). Still later Paul had to chastise Peter for his actions which were an offense to Gentile Christians (Galatians 2:11-16).

Peter’s chief strengths were his love for his Savior. He also had a tender conscience which was quick to repent when faced with Jesus holiness and his own sinfulness (Luke 5:8-11).

Other information we have about Peter:

- Galileans were on the frontier of the Jewish state. They often exhibited an independent, take-matters-into-your-own-hands attitude. We see this mentality in Peter when he draws his sword and cuts off the ear of Malchus. The Synoptic Gospels only report that one of the disciples did this. John records that it was Peter (John 18:10).
- Peter had an accent which was easily recognized by Jews from other parts of Palestine (Mark 14:70).
- Peter was married. His mother-in-law is referred to in Matthew 8:14. 1 Corinthians 9:5 indicates that Peter took his wife along on some of his missionary journeys.
- Peter was allowed to join Jesus and he walked on water until he was distracted (Matthew 14:29).
- Peter, along with James and John, witnessed the Transfiguration of Jesus (Matthew 17:19). These three also were present when Jesus raised the daughter of Jairus from the dead (Mark 5:37) and they were to watch with Jesus as he prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:32-34).
- Peter and John prepared the place where Jesus celebrated his last Passover feast with his disciples before the Crucifixion (Luke 22:7-13).

- Peter, along with others, discovered the Resurrection (John 20:1-10).

His chief weakness was pride. He tended to boast about the very things that he failed to carry out. He often had a hard time separating God's concerns from his own, human concerns.

In Peter we see the grace of God in action as he restores one who fell so often and so hard. God uses Peter to remind us of the Lord's love and mercy and his ability to use our shortcomings for his purposes - turning failure into success.

Peter grew old in the service of his Lord and his church. As persecutions began to roll over Christian communities, they scattered. The fleeing believers spread the gospel far and wide. Peter wrote to them. His two epistles strengthened these persecuted believers, reminding them of what they had received from Jesus. He encouraged them by pointing them to what was beyond their suffering.

Outside of Scripture: Scripture records that Peter after his miraculous release from prison "left for another place" (Acts 12:17). Thereafter the only mention of Peter in Acts is at the Jerusalem Council (Acts 15:7-11). Traditions mention a variety of places in which he preached, ending with Rome where he supposedly became the first bishop of Rome.

That Peter would be martyred is suggested by the resurrected Savior's words to Peter in John 21:18. According to the traditions of the early Church, Peter was crucified during the reign of the Roman emperor Nero about 65 A.D. Even here we see this man did things in his own way. He supposedly objected to being crucified in the same manner in which Jesus had been crucified. The Romans obliged by crucifying him upside down. If this is factual, we can well imagine the Romans thought this was a big joke. Peter viewed it as final confession of his faith.

The symbol for Peter is a pair of crossed keys, one silver and one gold. Jesus announced to Peter that he was giving him the keys to bind and loose sins (Matthew 16:19). This authority, however, is not given to Peter alone. Peter represented all the disciples when Jesus spoke to him. Looking at the entire record of Scripture, it becomes clear that Jesus gave the same authority to the rest of the disciples and to the whole Christian church on earth. This is what we call the Ministry of the Keys in our catechism. Peter and the other disciples did not have the power to determine whether sins were forgiven or not. The Lord Jesus gave them the privilege of announcing what God had already done.

Sometimes Peter is depicted with a rooster. This is a reminder that Peter denied his Lord, heard the rooster crow and then went out and wept bitterly.

James

James - this is the English equivalent of the Hebrew name Jacob - was the son of Zebedee and Salome (Matthew 20:20; 27:56; Mark 15:40; 16:1). He the brother of John and was an early disciple of Jesus. James is sometimes called James "Major," James the Greater, because there was another James among the Twelve. The designation "Great" can have a variety of meanings possible - he might have been bigger than the other James or older or better known.

He can also be distinguished from the other James by parentage, James, the son of Zebedee. Since this James is never recorded as saying anything apart from his brother, he has been called the "Silent Disciple."

He was a fisherman, along with John, on the Sea of Galilee. He was from Bethsaida (Mark 1:16-24) and probably lived in Capernaum (Mark 1:21,29). When Jesus called him into discipleship, he left his father Zebedee, as well as his business. Since they had a fishing boat and hired servants, it appears that James was from a wealthy family (Mark 1:19-20).

James is considered part of the "inner circle" of Jesus' disciples, along with John and Peter.

Characteristics of This Disciple

Jesus called James and John, *Boanerges*, “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). This was probably a reference to their bold and aggressive personalities. They had an “attitude” which we can see in their desire to call down fire from heaven to destroy the people in a Samaritan village who had refused to allow Jesus and his disciples to pass through on their way to Jerusalem (Luke 9:51-56).

It comes as no surprise that there is too much bad feeling in our world today, even within the Christian church. When we don’t like what people say or do, we get upset with them. We may finally get so irritated with sinners that we might give up on them. “Let them burn in hell, if they don’t want to go to heaven.” Jesus encourages us not to give up. Let God take care of judgment in his own time.

On one occasion James, together with his brother, drew the anger of the other disciples. They approached Jesus and asked for prominent positions in his kingdom. (Matthew’s account has their mother asking Jesus for positions of power.) They insisted that they were ready and willing to endure whatever hardships necessary. It was against this background of human ambition that Jesus explained the proper goal in his kingdom. It was not authority over others, rather service to them. (Mark 10:35-45; Matthew 20:20-28)

Once again the disciples remind us that there can be too many petty quarrels and arguments in the church. Pride and selfishness can turn people off and drive them away. People expect the church to be a fellowship of Christian love. Unfortunately, we sometimes let our “bad side” show too clearly.

James can be admired for his commitment to Jesus and his willingness to suffer for the sake of the kingdom. James proved true to his claim that he was able to suffer by becoming the first martyr among the apostles. He was “put to death with the sword” (Acts 12:2) by King Herod Agrippa I about 44 AD. At the same time James was ambitious for the wrong things. His mind was on the things of men rather than the thing of God.

Being a disciple of Jesus means following him where humans don’t normally want to go. It is natural for us to think of ourselves and to look for personal gain. Jesus calls us to think of others first and to seek their good above our own.

The symbol for James is three seashells. They represent his travels as an apostle. Other symbols for this apostle - the pilgrim’s hat, a gourd bottle or a staff- also portray his travels. Scallop shells were supposed to be the symbol of pilgrimage and represented the apostle’s zeal and missionary spirit. Pilgrims used shells for cups, spoons and dishes.

John

Since he was the brother of the James we have just considered, everything that we have said about James’ family background is also true of John.

John was one of the great writers of the New Testament. Although he was not a college graduate as Paul was, the Lord used John to provide us with five books. He wrote the fourth gospel - one which supplements the accounts recorded in the other three. He wrote three epistles to scattered Christians and he was permitted the vision of heaven recorded in the Revelation.

In his gospel John never mentions himself by name. Instead John refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” John was a part of the inner circle, as we have already noted. But the relationship was even closer.

Characteristics of This Disciple

Not only was John one of the closest friends of Jesus, he was also apparently one of the bravest. When Jesus was arrested, all but two of the disciples fled in fear. Peter tried to be brave, but he was crushed by the pressure. John, however, entered the quarters of the high priest and remained with Jesus from the “trial” until the end. When Jesus was crucified, only John was found at the foot of the cross. It was there that Jesus provided

for his mother (John 19:26-27). From Good Friday until the end of her life, whenever that might have been, Mary lived with John's family.

After the Resurrection, John and Peter are among the first to hear from Mary Magdalene that the tomb was empty. The two men headed for the tomb. John was apparently in better shape than Peter, arriving at the spot first.

During his many years of service and witness, John faced persecution. Finally he was banished to the island of Patmos off the coast of Asia Minor. It was there that he received the vision recorded in Revelation (Revelation 1:9).

The words written by John at the end of this gospel (John 20:20-23) have generated a great deal of discussion. After telling Peter that a less than pleasant end was in store for him, did Jesus indicate that John would not face a violent end?

John, who joined together with James, has his faults as we have already seen. There is another account in which John appears by himself. John was upset when a man was casting out demons. He tried to stop this individual because he wasn't one of the Twelve. (Luke 9:49-50) Jealousy is an envious monster that so easily affects people, even one such as John.

Outside of Scripture: According to the reports of the early church fathers, John died during the reign of emperor Trajan, who rule began in 98 AD. The fathers also point out that John was the only apostle who escaped a violent death, ending his days in Ephesus. Long after he was unable to preach a full sermon and had to be carried to his pulpit, he had just one message, "Little children, love one another."

Church history does confirm that John had as disciples in his old age, three men who became famous in the early church - Polycarp, Papias and Ignatius. All three men wrote affectionately of John and testified that he was loving, patient and humble to the end of his life.

John's symbol - a snake in a cup - indicates the attempt to kill him with poisoned wine. Tradition says John made the sign of the cross on the cup, and Satan, in the form of a dragon (winged snake), flew from it, and John drank the cup unharmed. The cup is also a reminder of Jesus' words, "You will drink the cup I drink" (Mark 10:39).

Matthew

One of Matthew's parents is recorded in Scripture, his father Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). Although many would like to make him the brother of James the Less, there is nothing to support such a claim other than the fact that their fathers had the same name.

Also called Levi ("joined"), Matthew ("gift of the Lord") was a Jewish tax collector at Capernaum. Publicans were despised by the Jews because they worked for the hated Roman government and took money from their own people, often even more than the Romans required in taxes. They were counted among the worst of the "open sinners." In the eyes of society they were on the same level with prostitutes.

Since Jesus was using Capernaum as his headquarters during his public ministry, Matthew had undoubtedly heard about Jesus and his miracles. Perhaps he had even witnessed the Savior in action.

Matthew was sitting in his tax-collecting booth when Jesus called him to follow. Not only did Matthew follow Jesus, he also prepared a banquet in his honor. To this festive meal Matthew invited the outcasts of society - other publicans and open sinners. (Mark 2:13-17; Matthew 9:9-13; Luke 5:27-32) If Jesus wanted to be popular with the people, choosing a publican as a disciple would not have been a good move. The Savior, however, was not concerned about popularity, rather he was concerned about souls.

Characteristics of This Disciple

We know very little about Matthew, but what we do see is a man who responded immediately to Jesus' call. Moreover, he was anxious to share the good news. He wanted to reflect some of that same compassion

which Jesus had shown to him. Matthew reached out to those who were spiritually sick and in need of the Great Physician.

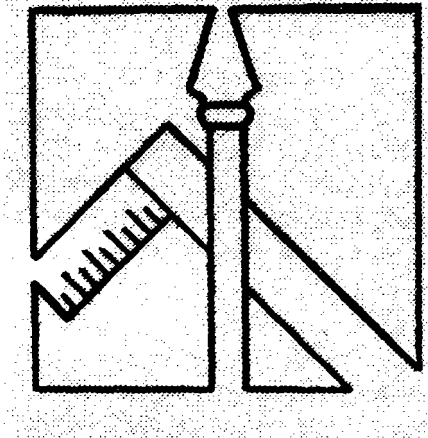
Although we don't hear much about his activity as a disciple, the Lord used Matthew to write one of the gospel accounts. Since Matthew was a Jew, he wrote with other Jews in mind. His gospel spends much time discussing the Old Testament prophecies and pointing out how Jesus fulfilled them.

Outside of Scripture: It is generally supposed that for eight years after the ascension of Jesus, Matthew proclaimed the gospel in Judea. The early Christian church believed that Matthew continued his ministry by preaching in Ethiopia and Arabia. Still others suggest he worked in Palmyra and among cannibals on the shores of the Black Sea.

An ancient writer reported that Matthew died a martyr's death in Ethiopia. He was killed with a halberd (a pike or long spear that was fitted with an ax head) in Nadabah.

The symbol for Matthew reflects his former occupation. The three moneybags (purses) remind us that he had been a tax collector before he became a gatherer of souls in the Savior's Kingdom: Sometimes the symbol for Matthew is an ax, the instrument of his beheading. Other symbols for this apostle depict a book, indicating his authorship of a gospel.

Thomas



Thomas was also known as Didymus. From Hebrew and Greek words, both names meaning a twin. Some have gone to great lengths to determine who his twin was. Because his name is paired with that of Matthew, there are those who suggest that they may have been twins. It is best to say that we don't know who Thomas' twin was.

Although he is not as well known as some of the other disciples, most people are familiar with the expression "Doubting Thomas," an expression which has described this man since the first Easter.

We don't have information about Thomas' call to discipleship. He simply appears in the listings of the Twelve. We do learn something of the man from the three times he appears in the gospel records.

Characteristics of This Disciple

Thomas was not a coward. He demonstrates his courageous nature when the other disciples were trying to keep Jesus from going to Bethany to raise Lazarus from the dead. People in that area had tried to stone Jesus the last time he was there (John 11:8). Now when Jesus insisted on returning, it is Thomas who boldly exhorts his companions, "Let us also go, that we die with him" (John 11:16).

At a time when there are many who allow Jesus only a limited role in their lives - Sunday morning Christians, Christmas and Easter Christians - Thomas expresses his willingness to die with Christ. Years later he apparently did just that.

It was Thomas who, in response to Jesus' announcement that they knew where he was going, said, "Lord, we don't know where you are going; so how can we know the way?" Jesus used that question to point to himself as the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:5-6). Note that Thomas is honest. He doesn't understand what Jesus was talking about and he says so. In so doing, he also gets to hear Jesus' explanation.

The most famous incident involving Thomas comes on the first Easter Sunday when Jesus appeared to his disciples behind locked doors. Thomas was absent. His reaction to the news that Jesus had risen from the tomb earned him his nickname for all times, "Doubting Thomas." (John 20:24-29) Jesus gives Thomas a second chance a week later and Thomas responds, "My Lord and my God!"

Thomas may have been a bit slow, but he was no fool. Like so many today, he wanted indisputable proof and he got it. Like Judas, Thomas' reaction has earned him contempt as others review what happened. It is interesting that there is no condemnation of Thomas in the Bible, only Jesus' urgent plea to stop doubting and believe. Thomas is proof that the questioning, probing, even doubting mind can find the answers it is looking for only in one place - the living Savior Jesus Christ.

Outside of Scripture: Tradition records that Thomas traveled to the east and spread the gospel through Parthia, Persia and India. One tradition has the Savior appearing to Thomas and sending him to India. To get there he hired himself as a slave to an Indian merchant and sailed to India. There he entered the service of King Gondophares.

In India he met his death near Bombay, where he was martyred. Death came via a spear or lance which was stabbed through his body while he was kneeling in prayer.

Thomas legends are numerous in India. There are Thomas Churches and Thomas Christians.

Thomas' symbol shows a spear and a carpenter's square. The spear or lance suggests the instrument which led to his death. Some say the carpenter's square in the symbol refers to Thomas building a church at Malipar in India with his own hands. Others contend the square is a reference to an ancient story that Thomas built a palace for King Gondophares in India.

James

We have already met one James, the brother of John, and the son of Zebedee. This James is a lesser known member of the Twelve - he is known by a variety of nicknames in order to distinguish him from the other James. James the Lesser, describing his stature among the disciples or his physical stature, or James the Younger or James, the son of Alphaeus, are the usual designations.

This James was the son of Alphaeus. From a comparison of John 19:25 and Mark 15:40 it would seem that Mary the wife of Clopas was the mother of James and that Clopas was Alphaeus. James' mother was probably one of the Marys who went to the tomb on Easter morning.

Alphaeus was also the name of Matthew's father. Nowhere, however, are we told that Matthew and James were brothers.

Characteristics of This Disciple

There is little known about James the Less. He appears on all the lists of the Twelve, but there are no accounts which speak of him as an individual. As a result, some have referred to him as "the forgotten follower." Since no believer is ever "forgotten" by the Lord, it would seem more fitting simply to call him an "unsung saint." When it gets down to what is really important, what more needs to be said than "he was a disciple of Jesus."

It has been suggested that this James might be the author of the New Testament epistle of the same name. There are a number of candidates for that position. Although James could be considered, it seems more likely that the author was James the brother of Jesus and the leader of the church at Jerusalem.

Outside of Scripture, an item about James that has been passed down through tradition is the report that he may have traveled to Spain to preach to the Jews in bondage there. It is said that he then traveled back to Jerusalem where he was stoned to death for preaching Jesus to the Jews.

The symbol for James the Less is the saw. According to some traditions James was sawed in half; other insist the head of James was cut from his body with a saw after his death. The latter tradition says he was killed by a fuller's pole when Simeon the Fuller gave him a blow to the head. As a result, the fuller's pole sometimes is incorporated into his symbol.

Judas (Jude) Thaddaeus Lebbaeus

Although a number of the disciples are known by two 1 names, this is the only one who has three names given in the sacred record.

He is called "Judas the son of James" (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13), but there is no indication as to whether this is one of the other James mentioned in Scripture.

To distinguish him from the other Judas, John carefully adds the remark "not Iscariot" (John 14:22). John wants it clearly understood that this Judas remained devoted to Christ. He must have been of a very different character than the other Judas, for his other names Thaddaeus and Lebbaeus mean something like "dear heart." Apparently both Matthew and Mark avoided the name Judas because of the betrayer who had the same name. Matthew uses Lebbaeus only as an interpretation of Thaddaeus. In addition, some translators have rendered Judas as the form "Jude." Once again it seems that this is done to avoid any connection with Judas Iscariot.

Characteristics of This Disciple

There are very few references to Judas Thaddaeus in the New Testament beside those that list him as an apostle. In John 14:22 when the apostles were sharing the last Passover with Jesus, Judas Thaddaeus asked Jesus, "But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?" Jesus said to Judas and the other disciples, "If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him." Jesus revealed himself and his mission only to the humble in heart. He wanted them to know that he and his Father would stay close to them and would guide and protect them. Jesus was comforting Judas Thaddaeus and the other apostles, because he knew that the next day he would no longer be with them physically, but would be put to death.

This Judas was a faithful servant of the Lord, for he is listed with the other faithful (Acts 1:13). The Lord blessed those who used his gifts wisely, for they were given to the apostles to establish the early Church throughout the earth. As an apostle loved and prayed for by his Master, Judas was faithful to his responsibilities.

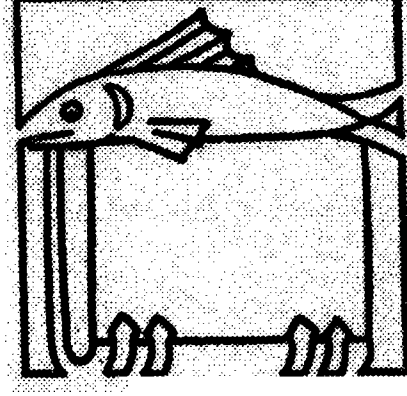
Although some have suggested that Judas Thaddaeus is the writer of the Book of Jude, it seems more likely that the author of this short epistle was Jude "the brother of the Lord."

Outside of Scripture, the history of the Church in Armenia claims that it was the Apostles Judas Thaddeus and Nathanael who preached to their country. Armenia eventually became the first country to claim Christianity as its national religion in 301 A.D. But even with this national claim of Christianity, the Armenian government was at first violently opposed to the preaching of Judas Thaddeus and Nathanael and was responsible for putting both to death.

See the attached "Acts of Thaddeus" in Appendix #2 for an account of his work in the Kingdom of Edessa.

The ship in Judas Thaddeus' symbol represents the many missionary journeys which church traditions suggest he took. Sometimes he is symbolized with a club. Legends say he was martyred when he was beaten with a heavy club.

Simon the Canaanite (Zealot)



Yet another faithful disciples about whom very little has been recorded in Scripture is Simon the Canaanite (Mark 3:18; Matthew 10:4) or Simon the Zealot (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). The two words “Canaanite” and “Zealot” mean the same thing. “Canaanite” is a Hebrew designation and “Zealot” is a Greek term. As a result the NIV in its translation has “Zealot” in all four places.

Characteristics of This Disciple

J.B. Phillips in his translation of the New Testament in each of the four lists calls Simon “Simon the Patriot.” The term designates him as a member of a political party. A “zealot” was a patriotic Jew willing to rebel against the Roman government. Their goal was to deliver Judea from the Roman servitude and drive the Roman legions from the country. This party had been organized by a rabid revolutionary, Judas of Galilee, about 20 years before Jesus began his public ministry. It had become an underground movement that was ruthless and violent. Its terrorist program of murder and sabotage did not free the country but resulted in acts of revenge by the Roman officials.

Perhaps Simon initially came to Jesus because he saw in Christ the power his group needed to successfully drive the Romans out. For many Jews, the Messiah was no longer a spiritual Savior but an earthly Conqueror. Since a zealot was a fanatic and eventually resorted to violence, Simon would have left this cause when he gave up all to follow Jesus. Jesus preached a message of nonviolence (Matthew 5:39, 43-44; 26:52). Simon was transformed by the Jesus and his message. He was still a Patriot who was willing to work and fight, but now the fight was against the forces of Satan and the kingdom for which he worked belonged to God.

Throughout history the church has suffered from fanaticism. At first the church was persecuted, then it became the persecutor. Misguided fanatics, rather than helping, have done great harm to the cause of Christ. Our political concerns dare never overshadow our Savior nor cloud his message.

There is little that we can be certain of when it comes to Simon. This much we do know - Simon, along with the other apostles witnessed the miracles and teachings of Jesus and the miracle of his Resurrection. They were with him at the Last Passover and in the Garden of Gethsemane. They were present at the time Jesus appeared to Thomas. All but Judas Iscariot were listed as receiving the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and all were sent out as witnesses of the Gospel of Christ throughout the earth (Acts 1:8, 13; 2:1-4).

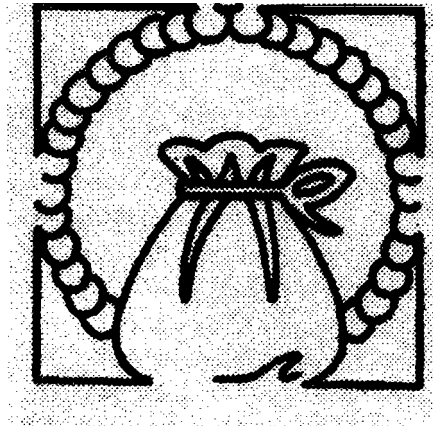
Outside of Scripture, it is claimed that Simon was a determined missionary who preached principally in Mesopotamia, including Parthia and Babylon. Eusebius in his *Church History* names Simon as one of the

missionaries “beyond the Ocean to the isles called the Britannia Isles.” This happened after preaching in Egypt and Africa.

The traditions of the early church report he met a martyr’s death in Persia, where he and others were sawed in half.

Simon is represented by a fish - he was a fisher of men - resting on top of a book which indicates the gospel he preached. Sometimes he is represented by a saw because one tradition says he was cut in two during a time of persecution.

Judas Iscariot



Judas Iscariot was from the village of Kerieth in Judea. He was the only apostle who was not a Galilean. Judas’ name means “Praise.” It is thought because of this, that his unknown mother and his father, Simon Iscariot, were faithful Jews.

Judas was probably drawn to Jesus by the preaching of John the Baptist. His heart was prepared to receive the teaching of Jesus because John pointed the way to the coming kingdom and the Messiah. Along with the other apostles, Judas had been called to walk in the footsteps of Jesus and to share in his sufferings and self-denials. Judas, with the others, preached the kingdom, healed the sick, and cast out demons by the power of God’s Holy Spirit. Judas was privileged to be constantly with his Savior for three and a half years. He witnessed the purity of Jesus’ life and his loyalty and obedience to his Heavenly Father.

Characteristics of This Disciple

The other disciples and Jesus recognized in Judas a very good business sense and they placed him in charge of their treasury. Jesus and his full-time followers didn’t have time to work at secular jobs. They needed to devote their entire time to preaching the kingdom, and so some of Jesus’ followers voluntarily donated money for their financial support (Luke 8:1-3). Judas was probably very trustworthy at first in his responsibilities with the treasury and in his duties to go forth and preach the kingdom.

All of the apostles had the same privileges and special guidance of the Holy Spirit, all were tested as to their loyalty to Jesus, and all but Judas were submissive to their testing. Judas had certain expectations of what his Lord would do to bring about the kingdom. Judas’ love and devotion to Jesus was tested more and more, and soon the seed of pride and self-will took root. In time it took over his entire character.

The more time went on, the more Judas became entrenched in his own will. Judas, no doubt, thought of the treasury as a means to also bring about his plans. He hoarded the purse of money as if it were his own. He became obsessed with the idea of money. Six days before Jesus was crucified, Judas was so concerned about money that he rebuked the Lord for allowing Mary to pour her precious ointment upon his head. He exclaimed, “What a waste! This ointment might have been sold for a year’s wage and given to the poor!” How wrong it was for Judas to have criticized this sweet sacrifice of Mary. And how doubly wrong to criticize his Master in

front of all his followers. He even got some of the others to join in the criticism. But Jesus rebuked him back saying, "Leave her alone for she anoints me for my burial!" Judas' pretended zeal for the poor was really greed for his purse (Matthew 26:7-12; John 12:3-8). The love of money ensnared Judas and his love for his Lord was in question (1 Timothy 6:10).

The final event of Judas' life proved that he no longer lived to serve his Lord Jesus, but he now lived to serve himself and his schemes. He no longer was inspired by his Lord Jesus, but was now inspired by the prince of evil, Satan (John 13:2). After the incident with Mary, Judas went to the chief priests who had already been plotting to rid themselves of Jesus, and he said, "What will you give me if I deliver Jesus to you?" They contracted to pay him 30 pieces of silver. This was prophesied in Zechariah 11:12-13.

From this point on, Judas sought an opportunity to betray Jesus (Matthew 26:14-16). So when the night of the Passover had come, Jesus said to the Twelve, "It is the one to whom I will give this piece of bread when I have dipped it in the dish." Then, dipping the piece of bread, he gave it to Judas Iscariot. Even with all of the clues, the others still did not know of Judas' treachery (John 13:26-29). When someone shared a meal with another it represented a vow of trust and friendship. Judas did not belong at the Last Supper.

It was after this that Jesus told Judas to leave and be about his evil business. Judas left and went straight to the chief priests. Jesus was in the Garden of Gethsemane when Judas led a multitude of priests, servants and elders to his Master. Judas came to Jesus and said, "Greetings, Rabbi," (Matthew 26:49) and then he kissed Jesus. Even then Judas thought of Jesus as his Master and probably thought of this whole event as a way to get Jesus to take control. But the group seized Jesus and led him away to be crucified. When Judas saw that he was wrong and that his plans had failed, he went back to the chief priests the next morning and said, "I have sinned for I have betrayed innocent blood." And they said, "What is that to us? That is your responsibility!" (Matthew 27:4-5). Judas threw down the pieces of silver, ran away and hanged himself.

Did Judas repent of his crime? From what we know, it doesn't appear so. In Acts we are told that another was selected "to take over this apostolic ministry, which Judas left to go where he belongs" (1:25).

The final determination concerning Judas is in the Lord's hands. All we can do is examine Judas' actions and apply lessons from his experiences to our own characters. Never did he cry out to his Master, "Oh, Lord, forgive! I am sorry, I was so wrong!" No, instead he went to his accomplices in crime, the chief priests who could grant no forgiveness. His pride kept him from facing his brethren and seeking their forgiveness and their help to recover from his sins. When the Apostle Peter sinned by denying the Lord three times, he humbly returned to his brothers and repented. Judas acted pridefully to the end. In his mind he thought the only way out was to kill himself, for to turn back would have meant admitting to all that he was wrong. He didn't think of the special assistance of the Holy Spirit that he was provided. He selfishly ended his covenant to deny himself, take up his cross and follow Jesus. Instead, he committed suicide.

In the case of Judas, Jesus offered many opportunities for Judas to repent. Jesus was of a gentle and generous spirit toward Judas right up to the very last act when Judas betrayed Jesus with a kiss. Judas still had a choice at that point to seek forgiveness from his Master.

We should take to heart the lesson of this gentle manner of Jesus when dealing with those who oppose us. We must keep in mind that we are not the judges of our brethren's hearts. Both Peter and Judas opposed the Lord, but Jesus was loving and patient with them. He worked with them to help bring them back into harmony with God. God allowed Peter to stray far from faith for a time only to show Peter the lesson of his frail flesh. Some of our fellow Christians may stray far from the Lord as well, and, yet, there is still hope to the end.

Judas Iscariot had every opportunity to be purified by the truth and be useful in the work of the Lord, but instead he became a servant of Satan. Jesus said that of the twelve apostles given to him by his Heavenly Father, "None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction" (John 17:12). Jesus also said, "But woe to that man who betrays the Son of Man! It would be better for him if he had not been born" (Matthew 26:24; John 6:70). Judas gave up his privilege as a faithful follower of Jesus: one who would be worthy to be called one of the twelve Apostles of the Lamb. Though we learn lessons from the life of Judas Iscariot, we cannot claim him as one who is a firm foundation to the Church. Instead, the honored place he would have held as being part of the Messiah's work was filled by another.

The symbol for Judas is a bag and thirty pieces of silver. The moneybag reminds us that Judas was the treasurer of the disciples and that he helped himself to its contents (12:6). The thirty pieces of silver was his payment for betraying the Lord. Another symbol shows thirty coins above a rope in the form of a “J.” Sometimes the symbol is totally blank indicating the traitor deserves no remembrance.

Matthias

In Acts 1:15-26 we have recorded a meeting of Jesus’ followers and the decision to choose a substitute apostle to take the place vacated by Judas Iscariot. “Therefore it is necessary to choose one of the men who have been with us the whole time the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from John’s baptism to the time when Jesus was taken up from us. For one of these must become a witness with us of his resurrection” (1:21-22). The individual must have been with Jesus throughout his public ministry. The reason for having a replacement is clear - the need to witness.

Among the 120 followers who waited in Jerusalem, there were only two who met the requirements: Barsabbas, known also as Justus, and Matthias. Having prayed for guidance from the Spirit, they voted and Matthias was elected. We are not absolutely certain how this drawing of lots was carried out. One method which the Jews used at the time of Jesus was to write names on pebbles or pieces of broken pottery. The names were then placed in a container and shaken until one name flew out. The expression “the lot fell” would seem to suggest this method. However, the expression “he was added” can also be translated “he was chosen by vote.” Whatever the method, the group was confident that the Lord would make his will known. Matthias was chosen to replace Judas in the Twelve. That is the first time we hear of him and it is also the last time the Bible mentions him.

Outside of Scripture: The information concerning the life and death of Matthias is vague and often contradictory. According to Nicephorus, he preached the gospel in Judea and then went to Ethiopia where he was crucified. The Synopsis of Dorothea says Matthias preached the gospel to barbarians and cannibals in the interior of Ethiopia and that he went to Cappadocia where he died at Sebastopolis. Still another tradition maintains he was stoned at Jerusalem by the Jews and then beheaded because of his allegiance to Christ. To commemorate his martyrdom, Matthias’ symbol consists of an open Bible with a double-bladed ax across it.

Appendix #1: Apocrypha of the New Testament

Apocryphal Gospels

The Protoevangelium of James
The Gospel of Pseudo-Matthew
The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Saviour
The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary

Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles

Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul
Acts of Paul and Thecla
The Acts of Barnabas
The Acts of Philip

Apocryphal Gospels (Judaistic/Heretical)

The Gospel of Peter
The Gospel of Thomas

Apocryphal Acts of the Apostles (Gnostic)

Acts and Martyrdom of St. Matthew the Apostle

Pilate Literature and Other Apocrypha Concerning Christ

The Report of Pontius Pilate
The Gospel of Nicodemus (Acta Pilati)
The Letter of Pontius Pilate
The Giving Up of Pontius Pilate
The Death of Pilate
The Narrative of Joseph

Not Yet Classified

The Gospel of the Nativity of Mary
The History of Joseph the Carpenter
The Avenging of the Saviour
Acts and Martyrdom of the Holy Apostle Andrew
Acts of Andrew and Matthias
Acts of Peter and Andrew
Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas
Consummation of Thomas the Apostle
Martyrdom of the Holy and Glorious Apostle Bartholomew
Acts of the Holy Apostle Thaddaeus
Acts of the Holy Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian
Revelation of Moses
Revelation of Esdras
Revelation of Paul
Revelation of John,
The Passing of Mary

You can find all of the above documents at www.newadvent.org-/fathers/

Appendix #2 Acts of the Holy Apostle Thaddeus, One of the Twelve

LEBBAEUS, who also is Thaddaeus, was of the city of Edessa-and it is the metropolis of Osroene, in the interior of the Armenosyrians-an Hebrew by race, accomplished and most learned in the divine writings. He came to Jerusalem to worship in the days of John the Baptist; and having heard his preaching and seen his angelic life, he was baptized, and his name was called Thaddaeus. And having seen the appearing of Christ, and His teaching, and His wonderful works, he followed Him, and became His disciple; and He chose him as one of the twelve, the tenth apostle according to the Evangelists Matthew and Mark.

In those times there was a governor of the city of Edessa, Abgarus by name. And there having gone abroad the fame of Christ, of the wonders which He did, and of His teaching, Abgarus having heard of it, was astonished, and desired to see Christ, and could not leave his city and government. And about the days of the Passion and the plots of the Jews, Abgarus, being seized by an incurable disease, sent a letter to Christ by Ananias the courier, to the following effect:

--To Jesus called Christ, Abgarus the governor of the country of the Edessenes, an unworthy slave. The multitude of the wonders done by thee has been heard of by me, that thou healest the blind, the lame,

and the paralytic, and curest all the demoniacs; and on this account I entreat thy goodness to come even to us, and escape from the plottings of the wicked Jews, which through envy they set in motion against thee. My city is small, but large enough for both.

Abgarus enjoined Ananias to take accurate account of Christ, of what appearance He was, and His stature, and His hair, and in a word everything.

And Ananias, having gone and given the letter, was carefully looking at Christ, but was unable to fix Him in his mind. And He knew as knowing the heart, and asked to wash Himself; and a towel was given Him; and when He had washed Himself, He wiped His face with it. And His image having been imprinted upon the linen, He gave it to Ananias, saying:

Give this, and take back this message, to him that sent thee: Peace to thee and thy city! For because of this I am come, to suffer for the world, and to rise again, and to raise up the forefathers. And after I have been taken up into the heavens I shall send thee my disciple Thaddaeus, who shall enlighten thee, and guide thee into all the truth, both thee and thy city.

And having received Ananias, and fallen down and adored the likeness, Abgarus was cured of his disease before Thaddaeus came.

And after the passion, and the resurrection, and the ascension, Thaddaeus went to Abgarus; and having found him in health, he gave him an account of the incarnation of Christ, and baptized him, with all his house. And having instructed great multitudes, both of Hebrews and Greeks. Syrians and Armenians, he baptized them in the name of the Father, and Son, and Holy Spirit, having anointed them with the holy perfume; and he communicated to them of the undefiled mysteries of the sacred body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ, and delivered to them to keep and observe the law of Moses, and to give close heed to the things that had been said by the apostles in Jerusalem.

For year by year they came together to the passover, and again he imparted to them the Holy Spirit. And Thaddaeus along with Abgarus destroyed idol-temples and built churches; ordained as bishop one of his disciples, and presbyters, and deacons, and gave them the rule of the psalmody and the holy liturgy. And having left them, he went to the city of Amis, great metropolis of the Mesechaldeans and Syrians, that is, of Mesopotamia-Syria, beside the river Tigris.

And he having gone into the synagogue of the Jews along with his disciples on the Sabbath-day, after the 559 reading of the law the high priest said to Thaddaeus and his disciples: Men, whence are you? and why are you here?

And Thaddaeus said: No doubt you have heard of what has taken place in Jerusalem about Jesus Christ, and we are His disciples, and witnesses of the wonderful things which He did and taught, and how through hatred the chief priests delivered Him to Pilate the procurator of Judaea. And Pilate, having examined Him and found no case, wished to let Him go; but they cried out, If thou let him go, thou art not Caesar's friend, because he proclaims himself king. And he being afraid, washed his hands in the sight of the multitude, and said, I am innocent of the blood of this man; see ye to it. And the chief priests answered and said, His blood be upon us and our children. And Pilate gave him up to them. And they took Him, and spit upon Him, with the soldiers, and made a great mock of Him, and crucified Him, and laid Him in the tomb, and secured it well, having also set guards upon Him. And on the third day before dawn He rose, leaving His burial-clothes in the tomb. And He was seen first by His mother and other women, and by Peter and John first of my fellow disciples, and thereafter to us the twelve, who ate and drank with Him after His resurrection for many days. And He sent us in His name to proclaim repentance and remission of sins to all the nations, that those who were baptized, having had the kingdom of the heavens preached to them, would rise up incorruptible at the end of this age; and He gave us power to expel demons, and heal every disease and every malady, and raise the dead.

And the multitudes having heard this, brought together their sick and demoniacs. And Thaddaeus, having gone forth along with his disciples, laid his hand upon each one of them, and healed them all by calling

upon the name of Christ. And the demoniacs were healed before Thaddaeus came near them, the spirits going out of them. And for many days the people ran together from different places, and beheld what was done by Thaddaeus. And hearing his teaching, many believed, and were baptized, confessing their sins.

Having therefore remained with them for five years, he built a church; and having appointed as bishop one of his disciples, and presbyters, and deacons, and prayed for them, he went away, going round the cities of Syria, and teaching, and healing all the sick; whence he brought many cities and countries to Christ through His teaching.

Teaching, therefore, and evangelizing along with the disciples, and healing the sick, he went to Berytus, a city of Phoenicia by the sea; and there, having taught and enlightened many, he fell asleep on the twenty-first of the month of August. And the disciples having come together, buried him with great honor; and many sick were healed, and they gave glory to the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, for ever and ever. Amen.