Apostles*

Matthew 10:1-4 (1) And when he had called unto him his twelve disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease.
(2) Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;
(3) Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James the son of Alphaeus, and Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus;
(4) Simon the Canaanite, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him.
After an intensive discipleship course and following His resurrection from the dead, the Lord fully commissioned the apostles (Matthew 28:16-2, Mark 16:15) to advance God's kingdom and carry the gospel message to the world, with the exception of Judas who took his own life.
These men became the pioneering leaders of the New Testament church. Interestingly, not one of the original 12 disciples was a scholar or rabbi. They had no extraordinary skills. Neither religious, nor refined, they were ordinary people, just like you and me. But God chose them for a purpose—to fan the flames of the gospel that would spread across the face of the earth and continue to burn bright throughout the centuries to follow. He selected and used each of these regular men to carry out His exceptional plan.
***(1) Peter** is one of the most prominent characters in the Gospels, a rough and tumble man whose emotions often got him into trouble, and yet he was clearly one of the favorites of Jesus Christ, who loved him for his big heart. Peter's true name was Simon. With his brother Andrew, Simon was a follower of John the Baptist. When Andrew introduced Simon to Jesus of Nazareth, Jesus renamed him Cephas, an Aramaic*

word meaning "rock." The Greek word for rock, "petros," and Peter became his new name. Peter, often a spokesman for the twelve, stands out in the Gospels. Whenever the disciples are listed, his name is first. Jesus included Peter in His inner circle, He took Peter, James, and John into the house of Jairus, where Jesus raised his daughter from the dead (Mark 5:35-43). Later, Peter was among those same disciples Jesus chose to witness His transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9). Those same three saw Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33-42). Most of us remember Peter for denying Christ three times during the night of Jesus' trial. Following His resurrection, Jesus took special care to rehabilitate Peter and assure him he was forgiven. Early in his ministry, Simon Peter preached only to Jews, but God gave him a vision in Joppa of a huge sheet containing all types of animals, warning him not to call anything made by God impure. Peter then baptized the Roman centurion Cornelius and his household and understood that the gospel is for all people. Peter was a fiercely loyal man. Like the other apostles, he left his occupation to follow Jesus for three years, learning from Him about the kingdom of heaven. Once he was filled with the Holy Spirit, Peter was a fearless missionary for Christ.
***(2) Andrew** abandoned John the Baptist to become the first follower of Jesus of Nazareth, but John didn't mind. He knew his mission was to point people to the Messiah. Like many of us, Andrew lived in the shadow of his more famous sibling, Simon Peter. However, Andrew led Peter to Christ, then stepped into the background as his boisterous brother became a leader among the apostles and in the early church. The Gospels don't tell us a great deal about Andrew, but he was a person who thirsted for truth and found it in the living water of Jesus Christ. Andrew went with Jesus and spent a day with him. Andrew quickly found his brother Simon and told him "We have found the Messiah" (John 1:41). He brought Simon to meet Jesus. Andrew is mentioned fourth in the list of*

disciples, indicating he stayed close to Jesus. Andrew made Jesus the most important thing in his life, and we should too.
***(3) James** son of Zebedee, often called James the Greater to distinguish him from the other apostle named James.*
He was a member of Jesus Christ's inner circle, which included his brother, John, and Peter. Not only did James and John earn a special nickname from the Lord—"sons of thunder"—they were privileged to be at the front and center of three supernatural events in the life of Christ. When Jesus called James and John they were fishermen with their father Zebedee on the Sea of Galilee. They immediately left their father and their business to follow the young rabbi. James was probably the older of the two brothers because he is always mentioned first. But James was not above making mistakes. When a Samaritan village rejected Jesus, he and John wanted to call down fire from heaven upon the place. This earned them the nickname "sons of thunder." The mother of James and John also overstepped her bounds, asking Jesus to grant her sons special positions in His kingdom. James' zeal for Jesus resulted in his being the first of the 12 apostles to be martyred. He was killed with the sword by order of King Herod Agrippa I of Judea, about 44 A.D. in a general persecution of the early church. Two other men named James appear in the New Testament: James, the son of Alphaeus, and James, the brother of the Lord, a leader in the Jerusalem church and author of the book of James.
***(4) John** brother to James, was nicknamed by Jesus as one of the "sons of thunder," but he liked to call himself "the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 21:20-24)." A previous relationship with Joseph Caiaphas allowed John to be present in the high priest's house during Jesus' trial. On the cross, Jesus entrusted the care of His mother, Mary, to the "disciple whom Jesus loved", who took her into his home (John 19:27). He was later exiled to the island of Patmos, where Jesus appeared to him fulfilling the prophecy in John 21:20-23. John*

apparently outlived all the apostles, dying of old age at Ephesus, about A.D. 98. John's Gospel is strikingly different from Matthew, Mark, and Luke, the three Synoptic Gospels, which means "seen with the same eye" or from the same viewpoint. John continually emphasizes that Jesus was the Christ, the Son of God, sent by the Father to take away the sins of the world. He uses many symbolic titles for Jesus, such as the Lamb of God, resurrection, and the vine. Throughout the Gospel of John, Jesus uses the phrase "I Am," unmistakably identifying Himself with Jehovah, the Great "I AM" or eternal God. John was one of the first disciples chosen. He was an elder in the early church and helped spread the gospel message. He is credited with writing the Gospel of John; the epistles 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John; and the book of Revelation. John was especially loyal to Jesus. Apparently he was the only one of the 12 apostles present at the cross. After Pentecost, John teamed up with Peter to fearlessly preach the gospel in Jerusalem and suffered beatings and imprisonment for it. Because John experienced the unconditional love of Jesus firsthand, he preached that love in his gospel and letters.

***(5) Philip** was one of the earliest followers of Jesus Christ. He fervently sought the Messiah and called others to do the same. He recognized Jesus was the promised Savior, even though he did not fully understand until after Jesus' resurrection. Some scholars speculate that Philip was first a disciple of John the Baptist, because he lived in the region where John preached. Although little is known about him after the ascension of Christ, Bible historians believe Philip preached the gospel in Phrygia, in Asia Minor, and died a martyr there at Hierapolis. Jesus issued a personal call to Philip: "Follow Me." (John 1:43). Leaving his old life behind, Philip answered the call. Philip learned the truth about the kingdom of God at the feet of Jesus, then preached the gospel after Jesus' ascension.*

(6) Nathanael also called Bartholomew *experienced a jarring first encounter with Jesus. When the Apostle Philip called him to come and meet the Messiah, Nathanael was skeptical, but he followed along anyway. The two may have been friends, for Nathanael scoffs, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" As Philip introduced him to Jesus, the Lord declared, "Here is a true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false." Immediately Nathanael wanted to know, "How do you know me?" Jesus got his attention when He answered, "I saw you while you were still under the fig tree before Philip called you." Well, that stopped Nathanael in his tracks. Shocked and surprised he declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." Nathanael garnered only a few lines in the Gospels, nevertheless, in that instant he became a loyal follower of Jesus Christ. Most Bible scholars believe Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same person. The name Bartholomew is a family designation, meaning "son of Tolmai." Nathanael means "gift of God." In the synoptic Gospels, the name Bartholomew always follows Philip in lists of the Twelve. In the Gospel of John, Bartholomew is not mentioned at all; Nathanael is listed instead, after Thomas, however, in that list there are seven names, not twelve. If interested, read (John 21:1-7) to learn why.*

(7) Levi also called Matthew *was a customs official in Capernaum who taxed imports and exports based on his own judgment. The Jews hated him because he worked for Rome and betrayed his countrymen. But when Matthew, the tax collector, heard two words from Jesus, "Follow Me," he left everything and obeyed. Like us, he longed to be accepted and loved. Matthew recognized Jesus was worth sacrificing everything. 2,000 years later, Matthew's eyewitness Gospel still sounds an irresistible call. On the same day Jesus invited Matthew to follow Him, Matthew threw a great feast in his home in Capernaum, inviting his friends so they could meet Jesus too. From that time on, instead of collecting tax*

money, Matthew collected souls for Christ. Despite his sinful past, Matthew was uniquely qualified to be a disciple. He was an accurate record keeper and keen observer of people. He captured the smallest details. Those traits served him well when he wrote the Gospel of Matthew some 20 years later. By surface appearances, it was scandalous and offensive for Jesus to pick a tax collector as one of His closest followers, since they were hated by the Jews. Yet of the four Gospel writers, Matthew presented Jesus to the Jews as their hoped-for Messiah, tailoring his account to answer their questions. Matthew displayed one of the most radically changed lives in the Bible in response to an invitation from Jesus. He did not hesitate, he did not look back. He left behind a life of wealth and security for poverty and uncertainty. He abandoned the pleasures of this world for the promise of eternal life. Matthew is an example of a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable unto God, which is your reasonable service (Romans 12:1).

(8) ***Thomas*** *is often referred to as "Doubting Thomas" because he refused to believe that Jesus had risen from the dead until he saw and touched His physical wounds. As far as disciples go, however, history has dealt Thomas a bum rap. After all, 11 of the apostles abandoned Jesus during His trial and death at Calvary. Thomas, like us, was prone to extremes. Earlier he had demonstrated courageous faith, willing to risk his own life to follow Jesus into Judea. There is an important lesson to be gained from studying Thomas: If we're truly seeking to know the truth, and we're honest with ourselves and others about our struggles and doubts, God will faithfully meet us and reveal himself to us, just as he did for Thomas. Thomas was not present when the risen Jesus first appeared to the disciples. When told by the others, "We have seen the Lord," Thomas replied that he would not believe unless he could actually touch Jesus' wounds. Thomas is singled out because he put his doubt into words. It is worth noting that Jesus did not scold Thomas for his doubt. In fact, Jesus invited Thomas*

to touch his wounds and see for himself. In response to Thomas' doubts, Jesus said that those who believe in Christ as Savior without seeing Him are blessed.
***(9) James the Less** is one of the most obscure apostles in the Bible. The only things we know for certain are his name and that he was present in the upper room after Christ ascended to heaven. James, son of Alphaeus, was known as James the Less. He is not to be confused with James the son of Zebedee, brother of the Apostle John. A third James appears in the New Testament. He was the brother of the Lord, a leader in the Jerusalem church, and writer of the book of James, but was not an Apostle. The title "James the Less" or "the Little," helps to distinguish him from the Apostle James, son of Zebedee. James the Less may have been younger or smaller in stature than Zebedee's son, as the Greek word for "the less", mikros, conveys both meanings. James the Less was hand-picked by Jesus Christ to be a disciple. Although his accomplishments remain unknown to us today, James may simply have been overshadowed by the more prominent apostles. Still, being named among the twelve was no small achievement. While James the Less is one of the least known of the 12 apostles, we can't overlook the fact that each of these men sacrificed everything to follow the Lord. In* Luke 18:28*, Peter said, "*Lo, we have left all, and followed thee." *They gave up family, friends, homes, jobs, and all things familiar to answer Christ's call. These ordinary men who did extraordinary things for God, set the example for us. They formed the foundation of the Christian church, initiating a movement that steadily spread across the face of the earth. For all we know, "Little James" was an unsung hero of faith. Evidently, he did not seek recognition or fame, for he received no glory or credit for his service to Christ. Perhaps the nugget of truth we can take from the obscure life of James is reflected in this Psalm: "*Not unto us, O LORD, not unto us, but unto thy name give glory" *(Psalm 115:1)*.

***(10) Simon the Zealot**, who doesn't like a good mystery? Well, the Scriptures introduce us to a riddle that scholars have yet to solve. One of those puzzling questions is the exact identity of Simon the Zealot, the Bible's own mystery apostle. Scripture tells us almost nothing about Simon. He is mentioned in three places, but only to list his name. In Acts 1:13 we learn that he was present with the apostles in the upper room after Christ had ascended to heaven. We have one tantalizing bit of information about him, which has led to ongoing debate among Bible scholars. In the King James Version (Matt 10:4, Mark 3:18), he is called Simon the Canaanite. In the English Standard Version, New American Standard Bible, New International Version, and New Living Translation he is called Simon the Zealot. Bible scholars argue over whether Simon was a member of the radical Zealot party or whether the term simply referred to his religious zeal. Those who take the former view think Jesus may have chosen Simon, a member of the tax-hating, Roman-hating Zealots, to counterbalance Matthew, a former tax collector of the Roman empire. Those scholars say such a move by Jesus would have shown His kingdom reaches out to people in all walks of life. Church tradition holds that he spread the gospel in Egypt as a missionary and was martyred in Persia.*

***(11) Thaddeus also called Jude** listed together with Simon the Zealot and James the Less, Thaddeus completes a group of the least known disciples. Thaddeus is characterized as a tender-hearted, gentle man who displayed childlike humility. Bible scholars agree there are four names used for him. In lists of the Twelve, he is called Thaddeus, a surname for the name Lebbaeus (Matthew 10:3), which means "heart" or "courageous." Church tradition holds that Thaddeus founded a church at Edessa and was crucified there.*

***(12) Judas Iscariot** who betrayed his Master with a kiss. For this supreme act of treachery, some would say Judas Iscariot made the greatest error in history. Down through time,*

people have had strong or mixed feelings about Judas. Some experience a sense of hatred toward him, others feel pity, and some have even considered him a hero. No matter how you react to him, one thing is certain, believers can benefit greatly by taking a serious look at his life. Judas Iscariot is remembered for one thing: his betrayal of Jesus Christ. His motive seemed to be greed, but some scholars speculate political desires lurked beneath his treachery. One of Jesus' original 12 disciples, Judas Iscariot traveled with Jesus and studied under Him for three years. He apparently went with the other 11 when Jesus sent them to preach the gospel, cast out demons and heal the sick. Judas felt remorse after he betrayed Jesus. He returned the 30 pieces of silver the chief priests and elders had given him. Even though the other apostles deserted Jesus and Peter denied him, Judas went so far as to lead the temple guard to Jesus at Gethsemane, and then identified Jesus by kissing Him. Although Judas attempted to undo the harm he had done, he failed to seek the Lord's forgiveness. Judas ended his life in suicide. Sadly, Judas, who had been given the opportunity to walk in close fellowship with Jesus, completely missed the most important message of Christ's ministry. No matter how you react to him, here are a few biblical facts about Judas Iscariot:
He made a conscience choice to betray Jesus - (Luke 22:48).
He was a thief with greed in his heart - (John 12:6).
Jesus knew Judas' heart was set on evil and that he would not repent - (John 6:70, John 17:12).
Judas' act of betrayal was part of God's sovereign plan - (Psalm 41:9, Zechariah 11:12-13), but Judas chose that part himself.
***Paul** who started as one of Christianity's most zealous enemies, was hand-picked by Jesus Christ to become the gospel's most ardent messenger. Paul traveled tirelessly through the ancient world, taking the message of salvation to the Gentiles. Paul towers as one of the all-time giants. When Saul of Tarsus, who was renamed Paul, saw the*

resurrected Jesus Christ on the Damascus Road, his conversion began there. He believed, repented, confessed, and when instructed to be baptized, he obeyed. He made three long missionary journeys throughout the Roman Empire, planting churches, preaching the gospel, and giving strength and encouragement to early Christians. Of the 27 books in the New Testament, Paul is credited as the author of 13. Paul was martyred for his faith in Christ by the Romans, about 64 or 65 A.D. He had a brilliant mind, a commanding knowledge of philosophy and religion, and could debate with the most educated scholars of his day. At the same time, his clear, understandable explanation of the gospel made his letters to early churches the foundation of Christian theology. God can change anyone, but He gives every person free will. God gave Paul the strength, wisdom, and endurance to carry out the mission Jesus entrusted him with. One of Paul's most famous statements is: "I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me," *(Philippians 4:13) , reminding us that our power to live the Christian life comes from God.*
***Matthias** was numbered with the eleven to a successor role. The most good a Christian can do unto men is to offer them the precious invitation of eternal salvation. Let them know they must heed, follow, and practice what faith contains. But what faith? Faith in Christ that is the effect of belief by hearing the word of God, followed by baptism that is the effect of that faith; Only those who first believed the testimony of God, and by faith repent of their sins, confess Jesus is the Son of God, and are baptized for remission of sins, have the full and explicit testimony of pardon. This is the purpose of the gospel of Christ carried forth by His chosen to redeem the lost. The gospel invitation is open, also prayer requests for other reasons, in either case come while we persuade with song.*

This message approved by

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a minister for Christ
The message 'Apostles' Revised; 12162017
Study Aids; People's New Testament
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