



The 12 Apostles

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The 12 Apostles were a group of men hand-chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ to bear witness to the Word of God and to preach the Word to the multitudes of the world. In the Holy Gospel of St. Mark, he states that the Lord Jesus Christ “*appointed 12, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons*” (3:14-15). These men included “*Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James... Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him*” (Mark 3:16-19). In addition to these, with God’s guidance, the Apostles chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot. “*And they prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell’...and they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles*” (Acts 1:24-26).

The story of how the first four Apostles came to follow the Lord Jesus Christ can be found in the Holy Gospel of St Matthew 4:18. “*And Jesus, walking by the Sea of Galilee, saw two brothers; Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea; for they were fishermen. Then He said to them, ‘Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men.’ They immediately left their nets and followed Him. Going on from there, He saw two other brothers, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in the boat with Zebedee mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left the boat and their father, and followed Him.*” St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. James, and St. John had previously heard the teachings of St. John the Baptist which prepared them to accept the Lord Jesus Christ

immediately.

Simon became a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ the day that the Lord Jesus made him a “fisher of men.” The Lord Jesus Christ changed Simon’s name to Peter, which means “rock” (John 1:41-42). This man known as a “rock” later became one of the most influential of the Apostles, as he converted three thousand souls to Christianity after his first sermon (Acts 2). He was eventually martyred in Rome by being crucified upside down, for he did not feel that he was worthy to die in the same manner the Lord Jesus Christ died in.

St. Andrew was also a fisherman and the brother of St. Peter. St. Andrew was known to bring many people to the Lord Jesus Christ, as he also brought St. Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ after hearing St. John the Baptist call the Lord Jesus “*The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!*” (John 1:29). St. Andrew preached in what is known today as Russia and moved on to Istanbul, Turkey, and then to Greece. While in Patros, Greece, Andrew became a martyr.

St. James, who also became a “fisher of men,” was the first of the 12 Apostles to be martyred. He was beheaded in Jerusalem under the rule of Herod. However, while St. James was the first to become a martyr, his brother St. John was the last to die. St. John is believed to have died a peaceful death at an old age in Ephesus, after he completed the Holy Book of Revelations. St. John was the only one to stay with the Lord Jesus Christ through all His trials and tribulations, and was made the caretaker of St Mary by the Lord Jesus while He was on the Holy Cross (John 19:25-27).

St Philip, from Bethsaida, was present on that day in which St Peter and St Andrew met with the Lord Jesus Christ. As the word spread about the Lord Jesus being



The Lord appearing to St. Thomas and His disciples. Abu Sargah Church. Old Cairo



the Messiah, St. Philip became a follower as the Lord Jesus Christ said to him, *“Follow Me” (John 1:43)*. St. Philip preached in Asia Minor and was martyred at the age of 87 in Hieropolis.

St. Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael, was told the news of the Lord Jesus Christ being the Messiah by St. Philip. He also believed and followed the Lord Jesus Christ (John 1:45-51). St. Bartholomew preached with St. Philip in Asia Minor. They healed the wife of a Roman officer and she converted to Christianity. St. Philip was then crucified but St. Bartholomew escaped the murder. He continued to India to preach.

St. Thomas is known to be the one who doubted the Lord Jesus Christ and needed physical proof of His Resurrection (John 20:27). St. Thomas preached in Babylon, Persia, and made his way to India, where he also became a martyr.

St. Matthew, also called Levi, use to be a tax-collector in Capernaum before he became a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. *“As Jesus passed on from there, He saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office. And he said to him, ‘Follow Me.’ So he arose and followed Him” (Matthew 9:9)*. After receiving his commission, he remained in the Holy Land but is thought to have taken mission trips to Ethiopia as well.

St. James, the son of Alphaeus, was St. Matthew’s brother and known to be the younger St. James. He wrote the Holy Epistle of James and was possibly the first Bishop of the Syrian Church. He was eventually martyred by stoning in Jerusalem.

St. Thaddaeus, also known as Jude, is the brother of James. St. Thaddaeus preached to Armenia, Syria and northern Persia, and was later martyred in Kara Kalisa.

St. Simon the Cananite is the last of the original Apostles commissioned to preach. Tradition calls St. Simon to be the groom at the Wedding of Cana of Galilee. This may have been the time St. Simon decided to follow the Lord Jesus Christ.

St. Matthias is the **12th** Apostle, who was not directly chosen by the Lord Jesus Christ. The Apostles chose him to be the replacement for Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord Jesus Christ. He preached in Armenia.

The **12** Apostles are great examples of how all of us, as children of God, should strive to deny ourselves and take up the cross and follow the Lord Jesus Christ (Luke 9:23). St. John and St. James left their father to follow the Lord Jesus Christ. This can be an example in our lives to recognize that God is first in all that we do. Also, when the Lord Jesus Christ chose His disciples, He chose those who did not have formal educations and were simple. This shows how the Lord Jesus Christ came and died for the least of us, *“Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. I did not come to call the righteous, but the sinners, to repentance” (Mark 2:17)*. God turned the disciples into men of wisdom with the characteristics needed to be responsible for preaching His Word to the entire world. We should follow in these examples to take the Word to anyone and everyone we know. Just as the **12** Apostles each had their own ways of preaching, we too will have our own. Preaching may not be standing in front of thousands as St. Peter did, but it may be the simple and small events that happen in our daily lives. Setting the right example for friends and family, serving in the Church, and just acting in the manner a child of God should, can all be ways to preach the love of the Lord Jesus Christ for not just the righteous, but the sinners as well. ✠