

THE CHRISTADELPHIAN
TIDINGS
of the Kingdom of God

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All the Apostles in the Bible

Introduction, <i>Peter Hemingray</i>	315
Simon, Who is Called Peter, <i>Tobias Knowles</i>	319
James and John, <i>Allen Laben</i>	323
Matthew: "The Gift of God", <i>Randy Davenport</i>	327
Andrew, <i>F. E. Mitchell</i>	330
Judas, the Betrayer, <i>Ted Sleeper</i>	334
James, the Lord's Brother, <i>Clive Drepaul</i>	341
Paul, Apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, <i>Joe Hill</i>	344
Barnabas and Silas, <i>Ethan Bearden</i>	352
Titus, <i>Ron Hicks</i>	356
Apostles — Little Known, but Vital, <i>Peter Hemingray</i>	359
Bartholomew (Nathaniel)	
James the Son of Alpheus	
Simon the Zealot	
Phillip the Apostle	
Matthias	
Andronicus and Junias (Junia)	
Apollos	
Epaphroditus	
The Apostles in the Gospel of John, <i>Bill Link</i>	366
These Who Have Turned the World Upside Down, <i>Steve Cheetham</i>	370
What Happened to the Apostles?, <i>Ken Sommerville</i>	374

The CHRISTADELPHIAN TIDINGS of the Kingdom of God

Peter Hemingray, Editor

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Welcome to the latest special issue, which focuses on those individuals of the early church identified as apostles in the pages of the New Testament.

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Apostles in the Bible

Introduction

Introduction

This special issue is designed to strengthen the commitment of all of us to behaving like an apostle – one who is sent with a vitally important message, which is of riches in the Kingdom beyond any present day valuation.

What is an Apostle?

Although the word is quite common in our language, it is not really an English one, but a Greek word — *apostolos* — in an English dress. It was not a term of frequent occurrence in Greek literature, but it has some interesting associations in terms of classical Greek. Herodotus used it in his record of an incident when the king of Sardis sent a herald to Miletus, so that an apostle in this sense may be a herald, one who takes a message from someone to a particular individual or people. The word is best defined in classical Greek as a messenger, but more than a messenger, an ambassador, or an envoy. It is related to *apostoleus*, a magistrate who had to fit out a squadron for service, while a kindred word is *apostolē*, a sending off, or away, a mission, a dispatching. In the Greek Septuagint version of the Old Testament, we find only one example, where it is usually translated “sent”:

“And it was so, when Ahijah heard the sound of her feet, as she came in at the door, that he said, Come in, thou wife of Jeroboam; why feignest thou thyself to be another? for I am sent to thee with heavy tidings” (1Kgs 14:6).

Thus the Greek *apostolos* is composed of *apo*, from, or away from; and *stolos*, an equipment, an expedition, whether by land or sea, but generally used for sending or going on a journey, or for whosoever goes, or is sent, on a journey. It also carries with it the idea that an important message is associated with the sending: as in an ambassador, who is one charged with representing the authority of the person who sends. The word was therefore a very suitable one to apply to men who were given the commission to make in turn disciples of all the nations, to go into all the world and preach the gospel to the whole creation (Matt 28:19; Mark 16:15). It is also the term that is used for those who are charged with carrying the message of Jesus, as they changed from those who are taught (disciples) to those who teach (apostles). To say an apostle simply means “one who is sent” is incorrect in how the New Testament uses it, as we shall see. It is an example of the way the authors of the New Testament, through inspiration, took classical Greek words and used them in a way quite different to their prior use.

The application of the term “apostles” varies in different parts of the New Testament. In the Gospels, it generally refers to the twelve disciples (except probably in Luke 11:49, where it seems to be prophetic). Note the term is not used in the Gospel of John, except as noted below. In the earlier chapters of the Acts it refers to the Twelve who were personally chosen by Jesus of Nazareth to be his special companions, substituting Matthias for Judas Iscariot. They were the leaders of the church during its earliest days. Later, the term was applied to Paul and Barnabas,

and, by implication, to James, the Lord's brother (Gal 1:19). Besides these, the term is applied to Andronicus and Junia, fellow prisoners with Paul, who he says were of note among the apostles (Rom 16:7). In another connection it is applied to certain officers in the early church, being placed before pastors and teachers (1Cor 12:28; Eph 4:11). The term is therefore somewhat elastic in use. In addition, in three cases the Greek word is used, but most translations use other terms:

*"Truly, truly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is **he who is sent** greater than he who sent him"* (John 13:16).

*"As for Titus, he is my partner and fellow worker in your service; and as for our brethren, they are **messengers** of the churches, the glory of Christ"* (2Cor 8:23).

*"I have thought it necessary to send to you Epaphroditus my brother and fellow worker and fellow soldier, and your **messenger** and minister to my need"* (Phil 2:25).

Only Young's Literal Translation uses "Apostle" in all these cases, but it is difficult to see why Titus in particular, as well as Epaphroditus, cannot be considered to be Apostles, so they will here be so treated.

Apostle — the various meanings¹

- a) In the New Testament, "Apostle" always denotes a man who is sent, and sent with full authority. Thus the Greek gives us only the form of the NT concept. We can say this quite exclusively because throughout the NT the word is used only of men, although according to the course of things women might also have been called apostles. Yet this would have been a self-contradiction, since women had very restricted legal competence in Judaism. Above all, they could not appear as witnesses.
- b) In John 3:16 "Apostle" is simply a rendering of the legal term in its sense of one who is lawfully charged to represent the person and cause of another. *"Verily, verily, I say unto you, The servant is not greater than his lord; neither **he that is sent** [apostle] greater than he that sent him"* (John 13:16).
- c) Apostle — commissioned representative of a congregation. *"Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the **messengers** [apostles] of the churches, and the glory of Christ"* (2Cor 8:23).
- d) Finally, apostle is a comprehensive term for "bearers of the NT message." The name is first borne by the circle of the twelve, i.e., the original apostles (including Matthias brought in as a replacement in Acts 1:26). Their sending by Jesus is presupposed.

This last use dominates the presentation of Luke, in his Gospel and especially Acts. The twelve are here almost a closed college alongside that of the other disciples. Among them the figure of Peter is pre-eminent (2:37; 5:29). In all these cases the term is absolute and self-explanatory; and it is always plural.

Yet the name is also applied to the first Christian missionaries or their most prominent representatives, including some who did not belong even to the

wider groups of disciples. Even in Acts we find this usage at least in 14:4, 14, where Paul and Barnabas are called apostles without any sense of impropriety on the part of the author. Thus, although the twelve are apostles for Luke, they are not the only apostles. Paul especially is an apostle, in this sense, and he constantly uses the word of himself, especially in the salutations to his epistles. James, the Lord's brother, may also be mentioned: like Paul he joined the community only after the death of Jesus.

- e) In Heb 3:1 Jesus himself is called apostle. *“Wherefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider the Apostle and High Priest of our profession, Christ Jesus.”* Here the only possible meaning of apostle is that in Jesus there has taken place the definitive revelation of God by Jesus.

The twelve Apostles – an introduction

Below is a table of the twelve, together with their names in the various gospels.

Gospel of Matthew [Matt 10:1–4]	Gospel of Mark [Mark 3:13–19]	Gospel of Luke [Luke 6:12–16]	Gospel of John
Simon, who is called Peter	Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter)	Simon, whom he named Peter	Peter
Andrew, his brother	Andrew	Andrew his brother	Andrew (identified as Peter's brother)
James the son of Zebedee	James the son of Zebedee	James	identified only as one of the “sons of Zebedee”
John, his brother	John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, meaning “sons of Thunder”)	John	identified as one of the “sons of Zebedee”, thought to be the “disciple whom Jesus loved” [13:23; 20:2]
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew or Nathanael
Thomas	Thomas	Thomas	Thomas (also called Didymus) [11:16; 20:24, 21:2]
Matthew, the tax collector	Matthew/Levi	Matthew/Levi	not mentioned
James the son of Alphaeus	James the son of Alphaeus	James the son of Alphaeus	not mentioned

Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Judas the son of James	“Judas not Iscariot” [14:22]
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Simon who was called the Zealot	not mentioned
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot

Others mentioned as Apostles are as follows:

Person called apostle	Where in Scripture
Paul	Numerous Places
Barnabas	Acts 14:14
Andronicus and Junia	Rom 16:7
Silas or Silvanus	1Thess 1:1, 2:6
Timothy	1Thess 1:1, 2:6
Epaphroditus	Phil 2:25
Apollos	1Cor 4:9
Titus	2Cor 8:23

Many of these individuals, along with some of the twelve apostles/disciples of Jesus, have almost nothing recorded other than their name, but we can be sure the very fact they are mentioned as apostles says a great deal for their zeal and mission. Many, also, of these individuals are subject to separate articles in this special issue, so we will not introduce them here. However, we cannot ignore the contributions of the apostles not elsewhere dealt with, so we will cover them, somewhat briefly, in one later article. Timothy, although on our list, is being currently dealt with in a series of articles by Bro. Ryan Mutter, so we will defer to those articles.

Other sources

The literature of our community is rather scant in its consideration of the apostles as a group. Some years ago, Bro. Arthur Hall wrote a little book entitled “The Twelve — The Lord’s Men”. There is also a little book called “His Twelve Disciples” by Bro. M.D. Southgate. These two hard to find books, together with scattered articles in the various magazines, represent all I can find. It is therefore partially to fill this void this special issue was put together. It is important to remind ourselves, in these turbulent times, of the lives of the apostles, and their commitment to both spreading the gospel and giving guidance to the nascent ecclesias.

Peter Hemingray

Notes:

1. The basis of this section is to be found in “Theological Dictionary of the New Testament” by Kittel et al.

Simon, Who is Called Peter

The first, Simon, who is called Peter — Lessons in Leadership.

The importance of knowing Simon¹ is vital to understanding him as an apostle, and understanding his role in the first century ecclesia. To take lessons from his life and role without a correct understanding of his personality and his characteristics, would be a mistake. The context of such understanding in any real life situation can change your conclusions about the motive and reasons behind the actions. So I will focus on his character as we discuss his vital role as leader, first of the twelve apostles, and then of the early church.

To begin with, we need to put Simon Peter in a position to which we can relate. I know I often find it difficult to empathize when I'm studying the lives of Biblical men and women. I tend to see them as dynamic characters in an interesting book, rather than as real humans who lived lives with the same principles and goals as we have.

The problem we face looking from our perspective, and making conclusions before thinking about the information we have been given about Peter, is that we remove ourselves from the thick of the action, and create our own conclusions based on a few small scenarios. This is the mistake Jack Zavada made on the *christianity.about.com* website; and without seeming presumptive, it is the same mistake that many Christadelphians who have studied Peter also seem to have made. Jack described Peter as, "...a rough and tumble man whose emotions often got him into trouble... His aggressiveness made Peter a natural spokesman for the twelve. Often, however, he spoke before he thought, and his words led to embarrassment."

People see Peter as a spontaneous lightning bolt, an irrational, hyperactive disciple, the 'big brother' to the sons of thunder. Now, a lot of things Jesus did do not make immediate sense to us; like giving the money bag to the man most likely to abuse the privilege; but choosing an "irrational, hyperactive, ask questions later" type character to "feed his sheep", the sheep he lived for every day, and for which he sacrificed everything, does not seem to add up at all.

Peter was a family man; he ran a business with his cousins, he was married, and his home life was shared with his brother and his wife's mother. Before we even get past these introductory details, the character profile does not seem to fit. A man who is not in control of his mouth or his actions would not last long in a family business, let alone in a small, cosy house with his mother-in-law.

The character of Peter

I believe the first real picture we get into Peter's true character is shown at his calling. Jesus saw him fishing with his brother, and asked him to be one of his disciples. Immediately, right then and right there, Peter left his nets, and followed Jesus. Peter knew his business and income were not an eternal method of providing for his family, and he trusted Jesus, and was fiercely loyal to him from this moment on.

Consider the result of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law in Matt 8. Peter, and a large amount, if not all of his business, had closed as they have committed them-

selves to the service and discipleship of Christ. He would have already been feeling some pressure on his responsibility as a husband to provide for his household, and then his mother-in-law falls sick with a fever, a life threatening situation in those times. Jesus intervenes and heals her, and I don't think it's a mistake that it tells us that *"she arose, and ministered unto them"* (Matt 8:14). This would have meant a huge amount to Peter, and we'll see, that from this moment onwards, his appreciation of Jesus, and his loyalty and love for him was on an immeasurable scale.

There is the situation where he wanted to be with Jesus more than anything else, and walked across water to be with him. Then in Mark 8:29 he declares his belief in Christ and his role as the Messiah; but the intensity of his devotion to Jesus, and a small picture into the closeness of their friendship is portrayed in vs. 32 after Jesus has told him about how he will be killed. Peter can't bear the thought of what Jesus has told him is going to happen, and the literal translation is that he physically takes hold of Jesus, and forbids him to go any further. There is nothing irrational or overzealous about this. This is a man, who loves his friend, and doesn't want to see harm come to him. There is an attribute of a shepherd being portrayed, but as Jesus explains, Peter's feelings on a human level will interfere with the greater purpose that is being fulfilled. Jesus would have loved to remain with his disciples too, you can see this by the language of his prayer in John 17, and seeing Peter visibly upset would have only exacerbated this normal human emotion.

Peter was utterly loyal and completely confident in his friendship with Jesus. He could not have loved Jesus more, because he was prepared to die for him (John 15:13). Many would contest this due to the three denials. But if we consider the situation in the Garden when the mob comes to take Jesus, even if every disciple had weapons, it wouldn't take a mighty general to explain that their chances would have been close to nil. Peter knew that as he drew his sword and took a deadly swing at one of the high priest's men, it meant that it was open season for them to retort with the same.

"Then Simon Peter having a sword drew it, and smote the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. Then said Jesus unto Peter, Put up thy sword into the sheath: the cup which my Father hath given me, shall I not drink it?" (John 18:10-11).

It was the unexpected response of Jesus that put Peter into a helpless position so far as human efforts were concerned, and this is what I believe lead to his fear in the courtyard. The fear stemmed from his not knowing what to do. His reaction to this circumstance was for self-preservation, because in his mind, the only way of saving Jesus had gone, and he at that immediate time, did not recall or perhaps understand the greater work that was being completed.

Hopefully looking at these few early situations from a fresh perspective leaves the picture of the rash, act-without-thinking, aggressive Peter, far in the back of your minds; and instead, a much more realistic picture, of a natural leader, devoted to family, compulsively attracted to Christ, a man whose intense passion for his master, and naturally protective personality — both more than appropriate on a

human level. These characteristics had to raise his mind, and look to things further than the present, and further than the loyalty of a mortal friendship.

This change in the life of Peter, brought about by a massive blow to his expectations, was what caused him to become a true rock in the early ecclesia.

When we look at 'natural born' leaders in today's world, they are strong willed, motivated, and confident in their abilities. Their resolve in turn instils focus and determination in their employees that either the corporate chain, or the local territory's food chain, put in their hands.

The wisdom of this world is foolishness with God (1Cor 3:19) and it is the will of God that the ignorance of foolish men should be put to silence (1Pet 2:15). It is very evident from these statements, and the example of Christ's choice of ecclesial leader in Peter, that just because somebody would be seen to be a leader in the things this mortal life, their position does not carry over to the things which are eternal. It is so often the case that the wisest advice, and the strongest encouragement, comes from the feeblest of the elderly, or the freshest of spiritual newborns.

This is not to say that a natural ability, useful for progression in secular areas of this life, is worthless to God. Some would suggest the opposite in the example given in the parable of the talents (the pun in English is quite ironic). What it does mean to say however, is that we cannot by our natural abilities earn a position of leadership in the ecclesia, rather it is the role of a servant we are all required to contribute. Unfortunately due to the extent of the liberalities taken by some, there would probably be retort if I did not point out that our contributions need to be within certain bounds when expressed publicly; the very obvious example is that for the sake of maintaining the symbol of Christ's headship, women and men's contributions are different in an ecclesia. (This may seem to be a tangent, however Peter gives direct advice towards it in regard to exhibiting true leadership within marriage, reflecting into the ecclesia — 1Pet 3.)

The advice of Peter

Over his two epistles, Peter gives much valuable advice to us.

To those who lead for their own gain (2Pet 2:3-4). This might be through covetousness, or a desire to have greater position and honour amongst the brethren; saying what they need to say to acquire their brethren's admiration and receive in turn an ego boost. Basically it says in vs. 4, it isn't worth it, because James 3:1 applies directly. They will be judged more strictly.

To the elders (beginning of 1Pet 5). Feed the flock, not because you feel like you have to, or because it satisfies you to do so, but because you willingly desire to help feed the flock. Don't do your role by acting as though you are the master, controlling and being a subjugator, but instead, undertake your role as an example, in humble service, demonstrating a pattern that is useful to follow.

To the youthful, be obedient to the elder (Christ). Live your own life for other people, in a way that is truly humble. Because a proud person repels from God, but a humble person receives humility.

Peter certainly backed his advice for the elders with the example that he showed. But in regard to his own role as the rock, which Christ used to build his ecclesia on, it is very interesting to see just how he went about it.

1Pet 2 describes the way Peter saw the whole rock metaphor, and it shows exactly why Christ chose him. There is nothing about himself in there, but instead, he directs the audience to look at the cornerstone, and model themselves on that. This is the sign of a true and humble spiritual leader. Someone who is willing to sacrifice their life, literally, or in the giving of time and energy to encouraging their fellow brethren and sisters. You'll notice his positive direction towards those who are disobedient in vs. 7, encouraging them, because this new spiritual house is capable of reshaping stones that may not have been the right fit the first time around.

A true leader, even one selected by Christ, doesn't point at himself and say, "copy me", they direct the attention to the real head of our worldwide ecclesia and say, "attain to that way of life". They gently correct, and regularly count the sheep to ensure none are missing.

Peter demonstrated that this is a role that all who have received the free gift are required to undertake. There are always sheep in the flock that need feeding, and there are plenty of desolate ones that need to belong to the flock of Christ.

"Be always ready to give an answer of the hope that is in your heart" (2Pet 3:9-10). "For the Lord is not slack concerning his promise and the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night." (1Pet 3:15).

"...are you my friend? Feed my sheep" (John 21:17) — Jesus

Tobias Knowles (Southern Vales, Adelaide, AUS)

Notes:

1. Simon undoubtedly was his birth name, but he was named Peter by Jesus himself: see John 1:42.



Peter, Judas Iscariot, John
(From Michelangelo's Last Supper)

James and John

James and John — Inseparable Brothers

There are the four places where Jesus' apostles are named: Matt 10:2-4, Mark 3:16-19, Luke 6:13-16 and Acts 1:13. Though the order of the list changes each time, three things remain the same. The list always starts with Peter, ends with Judas Iscariot (except for Acts 1:13, since by that time Judas had died), and though the grouping and order of the other apostles change, the Gospels and Acts all list James and John together.

James and John: here were two inseparable brothers who served together in the Lord's service. Together they were called by Jesus to be among his 12 disciples (Mark 1:19-20), named "*Sons of Thunder*" (Mark 3:14-17), struck out in judgment (Luke 9:49, 9:54) and as a result received rebuke and instruction (Luke 9:50, 9:56), were select witnesses to Jesus' miracles (Mark 1:29, 5:37), petitioned Jesus for special favor (Mark 10:35-41) (and received more instruction as a result), were present at Jesus' transfiguration (Matt 17:1), heard the details of the Olivet Prophecy (Mark 13:3-4), were drawn aside with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33), pulled the miraculous draught of fishes and saw the risen Lord (John 21:1,6; Acts 1:13). Together they witnessed Jesus' ascension into heaven and saw thousands of people answer the call of the gospel; however, although these two brothers were associated so closely in their lives, they met very different ends.

John was the last of the apostles to die. After the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, it seems he joined the Ephesian ecclesia before being exiled by the Roman government to the prison island of Patmos (Rev 1:9).

In contrast, James was the first apostle to die for his faith. In 44 AD, just prior to the feast of Passover, James was killed at the order of King Herod Agrippa I, grandson of Herod the Great, in an effort to appease his Jewish populous (Acts 12:1-2). James was not the first follower of Christ to lose his life for his faith (Stephen's death is recorded in Acts 7:58-60. Acts 9:1 speaks of Saul's "*threatenings and slaughter against the disciples of the Lord*"), but he was the first apostle to do so. Herod Agrippa's sword shattered any illusion that the apostles were immune to violence and persecution. Even though James, along with his brother John, was particularly close to Jesus, this did not mean they would be free from persecution. Jesus had warned that his followers would face hardship, opposition and even death (Matt 10:16-26).

While James faced his hardship in the form of an early, violent end to his life, John's hardship was stretched over the following 50 years as he witnessed waves of persecution and the rise of apostasy within the ecclesia. However, though the forms of their trials differed, both were prophesied by Jesus some 14 years before when Jesus told James and John that they "*shall indeed drink of the cup that I drink of*" (Mark 10:39). By the end of their lives, James and John did drink of that cup, but both men had to learn that this cup of Christ's sufferings must come before a crown of glory. Though the nature of the drink differed between the two brothers, the principle they needed to learn was the same.

We first meet James and John in the gospel of Matthew while fishing in the Sea of Galilee: "*And going on from thence, [Jesus] saw other two brethren, James the son of*

Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them. And they immediately left the ship and their father, and followed him” (Matt 4:21-22). Their response to Jesus’ call was instantaneous and without hesitation — a virtue in this case, but as we see in three separate instances, the immediate, zealous responses of James and John were often not tempered with knowledge. James and John were quick to act on how they thought things should go and had to learn the principle that “*zeal is not good without knowledge*” (*Prov 19:2, Holman’s Christian Standard Bible*).

Shortly after their calling, Jesus gives us some insight into their character in calling them “Boanerges” or “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:13-17). The Greek is here a transliteration of a compound Hebrew word that refers to someone who “quivers violently with emotion”, or as Jesus says, like thunder. This can be either a good thing or bad (Strong, Gesenius). James and John had to learn to control their intense zeal, temper it with knowledge and use it to do God’s will. We are shown three times in the gospels where they failed to do this.

The three failures

The first instance is in Luke 9:49-50. John told Jesus “*Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us.*” Their reaction was instantaneous when they saw something they thought was amiss — they “forbade” or prevented this man from continuing in his task. James and John showed zeal — but as Jesus points out in the next verse — it was not tempered with knowledge. He rebuked them directly. “*Forbid him not*” said Jesus, “*for he that is not against us is for us*” (Luke 9:50). Mark’s account adds this “*for there is no man which shall do a miracle in my name, that can lightly speak evil of me*” (Mark 9:39).

The account is reminiscent of one in Num 11:25-29 in which there was a report of two men prophesying in the camp. When Joshua heard it, he responded in a manner similar to James and John. “*My Lord Moses,*” Joshua cried, “*forbid them*” (Num 11:28). Likewise, Jesus’ reaction in the gospels is an echo of Moses words, “*Enviest thou for my sake? would God that all the LORD’s people were prophets, and that the LORD would put his spirit upon them!*” (Num 11:29) Just like zealous Joshua was too quick to judge and had to be corrected by Moses, James and John had to learn from Jesus that zeal must be combined with knowledge.

James and John had a second opportunity to learn this lesson as Jesus and the disciples journeyed down to Jerusalem. Only recorded in Luke 9:51-56, we are told that when James and John learned that the Samaritans would not receive Jesus, they turned and say to Jesus in Luke 9:54, “*Lord, wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?*” Having been on the wrong side of an Old Testament precedent in the prior situation (where James and John embodied the zealous but misguided words of Joshua to Moses), here James and John cite the actions of Elijah. (Interestingly, this is the only place where the Samaritans are portrayed in a negative light — consider Luke 10:25-37, 17:11-19, Acts 1:8, 8:4-25.)

This reference seems appropriate for the context as well. We are told in the beginning of Luke 9 that James and John witnessed Jesus’ transfiguration where they saw

Moses and Elijah — having failed to follow the example of Moses previously, could they redeem themselves by following the example of Elijah in calling down fire (2Kgs 1:1-18)? And having just seen Jesus' transfiguration, they certainly understood that Jesus had access to this kind of power!

Jesus taught them again that it is not good to have zeal without knowledge, *“But he turned, and rebuked them, and said, Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them”* (Luke 9:55-56). They failed to understand that the precedent of Elijah was not just one of fire and judgment, but one of preparing people's hearts for the Lord. It was the later example that James and John were supposed to follow.

Likewise, they failed to understand the nature of Jesus' ministry. Reading from Isaiah in the synagogue in Nazareth, Jesus summarized his role this way: *“He hath sent me to heal the brokenhearted, to preach deliverance to the captives, and recovering of sight to the blind, to set at liberty them that are bruised, to preach the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Luke 4:18-19). Jesus purposely ended his citation of Isaiah Isa 61:1-2 prior to the description of God's righteous judgment, *“the day of vengeance of our God”* (Is 61:2b). The purpose of his earthly ministry was to *“proclaim the acceptable year of the Lord”* (Isa 61:1a). When he returns he will bring *“the day of vengeance of our God”* (Isa 61:2b).

Jesus taught them that their role was to call men to repentance and warn of the judgment to come (compare with Luke 9:5, 10:13-16 and 17:20-36). But if they were rejected, the response is to move on, even as Jesus *“went to another village”* (Luke 9:56).

The final time that Jesus redirected James and John's zeal is recorded in Matt 20:20-23 and Mark 10:35-41. In both accounts, Jesus gave his clearest statement yet about what awaited him once they reached Jerusalem: *“Behold, we go up to Jerusalem; and the Son of man shall be delivered unto the chief priests, and unto the scribes; and they shall condemn him to death, and shall deliver him to the Gentiles: And they shall mock him, and shall scourge him, and shall spit upon him, and shall kill him: and the third day he shall rise again”* (Mark 10:33-34, cp. Matt 20:18-19).

On the right hand and the left hand

But James and John heard only what they wanted to hear. The danger of uninstructed zeal is that it can cause us to completely miss the plain truth, and here James and John respond to the pronouncement of Jesus' crucifixion with a question about securing a position of preeminence in the Kingdom.

Mark's gospel records the following *“And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire. And he said unto them, What would ye that I should do for you? They said unto him, Grant unto us that we may sit, one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left hand, in thy glory”* (Mark 10:35-37).

James and John weren't trying to be insensitive to Jesus' revelation about his upcoming crucifixion — they just interpreted what Jesus had said to mean what they wanted to hear! James and John thought that Jesus was clearly talking about the final conflict that would usher in the kingdom and that now would be the perfect time to ensure

they secured places next to Jesus in that new order! Their statement came out of zeal for the kingdom and a desire to be close to their Master in his glory; but again, it was misguided. This time, James and John were wrong on three counts.

- 1) First, as Jesus showed in his response, James and John didn't know what they were asking for. They enthusiastically responded that they would be able to drink of the cup and partake in the baptism of Jesus' death, but failed to understand what that would involve (Mark 10:38-39).
- 2) Second, James and John failed to realize that they would not achieve preeminence through petition. Jesus told them in *Mark 10:40* "*But to sit on my right hand and on my left hand is not mine to give; but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared.*" This was a lesson he had taught his disciples before in a parallel episode in Mark 9:31-37. Both instances start with Jesus proclaiming that he is going to be killed and rise again (Mark 9:31, Mark 10:33-34) and are followed by a question of obtaining positions of greatness (Mark 9:33-34, Mark 10:35-37). In Mark 9, the question arises among all the disciples "*they had disputed among themselves, who should be the greatest*" (Mark 9:34). In Mark 10, the question of preeminence comes specifically from James and John — they had failed to learn the lesson Jesus taught in the earlier episode "*If any man desire to be first, the same shall be last of all, and servant of all*" (Mark 9:35).
- 3) The third issue created by their question is seen in Mark 10:41. Their unguided zeal upsets the other disciples, "*And when the ten heard it, they began to be much displeased with James and John*" (Mark 10:41). All the disciples had heard Jesus' lesson in the prior chapter and here James and John were looking for special favor, pushing themselves ahead of the rest.

James and John, the Sons of Thunder, showed zeal for the Truth but needed to have it tempered with knowledge. Their temperament led them to be quick to judge and speak, where they needed to be reminded three times of the importance of service, love, mercy and understanding.

The lessons learnt?

And it seems that both learned this lesson.

In Acts 12:1-2, James became the first of the apostles to lay down his life in his service to Jesus, drinking of the cup and partaking in the baptism of Jesus' suffering. James had learned that service would lead to salvation and that the cross came before the crown.

John also drank of that cup and learned to live a life of devoted service and sacrifice for the Truth, where his zeal, while undiminished, became guided with knowledge. We see in his care for Mary (John 19:25-27), deference to Peter (John 20:4-5) and especially in his epistles that John learned the lessons Jesus taught him about tempering judgment with mercy, understanding the Father's plan and importance of love for our brethren.

The two Sons of Thunder bookend the apostolic ministry and give us an example of the need for zeal and heart-felt enthusiasm for the Truth. They also serve as a warning of how that zeal must be combined with knowledge.

Allen Laben (Baltimore, MD)

Matthew: “The Gift of God”

Matthew: His calling

Due to the fact of where Matthew worked and lived (in Capernaum), it is a good possibility that he may have seen Jesus or even met him before his calling. In both Mark 2:14 and Luke 5:27, 29 Matthew is referred to as Levi. We know that Jesus was accustomed to changing people’s name to reflect the purpose of the work they would perform in the Lord. Many of the Apostles had their names changed to emphasize who they were to become. When Levi worked as a “publican” or a “Tax Collector” most likely he would have **joined** (the meaning of his name) himself very closely with the Roman government. Jesus changes his name to Matthew in order that he could use his God given talent as a writer and so likewise become Matthew (“the Gift of God.”)

I find The Calling of Matthew quite intriguing. There is no dialog between Levi and Jesus at all; it was just a simple *“Follow Me. And he arose, and followed him.”* There was no hesitation on the part of Matthew at all. We might take a second and think about our own Calling. Was it like this? Luke 9:62 comes to mind when I think of his response. *“And Jesus said unto him, No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God.”*

It appears that Levi was ready to make that change and put his hand to the plough and not look back, but serve the Lord with all his might. I can imagine that Matthew already understood the principle, *“Thou shalt Love the Lord thy God with all thy heart, and with all thy soul, and with all thy strength, and with all thy mind; and thy neighbor as thyself.”* Even knowing all this, he knew it was necessary to take the next step. This is where the gospel of Luke adds the comment *“And he left all, rose up and followed him.”* At that very moment, he left everything behind. The first thing he had to do was walk away from a very lucrative job as a Tax Collector and eventually put everything behind in order to be an Apostle of the Lord Jesus Christ. This was the first test of his faith.

His identity

As it was already mentioned that Matthew’s name before his calling was Levi. In Mark 2:14 Levi’s father is identified as Alpheus and that is all we are told about his family. Another apostle, James the son of Alpheus, had a father with the same name. It is doubtful that the two were brothers or we would have been given some other Scripture to back this up¹. As a speculative thought, I wonder if Levi was born into the tribe of Levi? It was common in the Jewish world to name the young men according to what tribe that born into, especially if they were exceptional children. If indeed Levi was a Levite by birth, his life and career up to this point was a reflection of how far the children of Israel had removed themselves from the principles that God had laid down for them to follow in the Laws that were given to Moses.

Living in North America all my life, I find it hard to comprehend the occupation of a publican during the time period in which Matthew lived. The Roman practice of placing the burden of tax collection on individuals or groups was later referred to as Tax Farming or Revenue Leasing. In essence, these individuals or groups paid the taxes for a certain area and for a certain period of time and then attempted to cover their outlay by collecting money or saleable goods from the people within that area. If this

occupation does not merit the title of “licensed extortioner” I don’t what does. One of the spiritual pit falls of the occupation would be to let greed get the best of you. If the economy was doing well you could see how easy it would be to take advantage of those passing through your tax office if you had an “Evil Eye”. John the Baptist gave this advice to the publicans what they should do.

“Then came also publicans to be baptized, and said unto him, ‘Master, what shall we do?’ And he said unto them, ‘Exact no more than that which is appointed you’ ” (Luke 3:12-13).

John’s response to the publican’s was simple and Godly advice. *“Do good to all men, especially those of the household of faith”* and don’t be greedy. Be content with the things that God hath given you.

The only modern day example that I can share that even comes remotely close to Matthew’s occupation is one of a trip that my wife and I took to the Bahamas. It was in the spring of 2001, we took a trip to Treasure Key, one of the barrier islands. When traveling to foreign countries you must pass through customs when entering and leaving the country. They want to know the purpose of your visit, and so forth. Entering is sometimes easier than leaving. When departing they want you to declare any and all goods that you have purchased during you stay. I had heard of the trafficking of illegal goods in the 70s, 80s, and the 90s in the Bahamas although I had never been to the Island’s. The customs agent that waited on us was in his sixties and had probably worked in this position for quite some time. My guess was that he had traded for some of the jewelry that he was wearing, turning a “blind eye” to goods that passed through his gate. The Rolex watch, the 18K gold chain around his neck, and the gold ring that weighted down his right hand, I doubt came from his paycheck as a “customs agent.”

This is the impression that I have in mind of how the Jewish people felt about “publicans” during the time in which Matthew worked. They were viewed as crooks, swindlers, and classified with some of the worst “sinners”. Who would want a job like that? It is possible that Levi chose this career because the Levitical Priesthood had fallen apart, and he noticed there was money to be made if you were a savvy-minded businessman and one could put up with the public humiliation. It also appears that the “publicans” had formed a society of their own, maybe something like a Guild. Based on some of the comments from the scribes and the Pharisees it was necessary for them to band together in order to survive those troublesome times.

“And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many publicans and sinners came and sat down with him and his disciples” (Matt 9:10).

His hospitality

There are only two publicans named in the New Testament, Matthew and Zacchaeus. Both of these men, it appears, experienced very lucrative careers as tax collectors. Both men also had a sense of hospitality. Both men gladly received Jesus into their house, fed him and his disciples and treated them like honored guests. (Luke 19:1-9.) Here is a curious thought! Who washed Jesus’ feet when he entered the house as a guest? We know from our history studies that it was customary for someone to wash the feet of the houseguest. The only thing that I could compare that to today, would be to ask

your guest if they need to freshen up and to offer them something to drink. In today's world, we might refer to this behavior as having good manners and being hospitable.

The motive of both Matthew and Zacchaeus in dining with Jesus was to learn more about him and to see if he truly was the Messiah. We are told that many publicans were looking for the Messiah based on Luke 7:29. *“And all the people that heard Him (Jesus), and the publicans, justified God, being baptized with the baptism of John.”* Maybe this is how Matthew and Zacchaeus knew about Jesus. We might contrast Luke 7:36-50 where *“one of the Pharisees”* invited Jesus to dine with him. Remember this is where Jesus chastised Simon, the Pharisee, for not washing his feet, nor greeting him with a Holy Kiss, nor anointing his head. Where was his hospitality? It appears that he had an agenda, and it did not seem to be on a spiritual plane. This is when we are introduced to a woman referred to by Simon as “a sinner”. Some translations call her a harlot, and some mention that this could possibly be Mary Magdalene. Either way, it is interesting that her vision of Jesus was very clear. Jesus emphasized the point that all men are sinners and this woman had sinned much, (vs.47) *“her sins, which are many.”* Although this was true, because of her great Faith, her sins were forgiven and Jesus tells her *“Thy faith hath saved thee”*. I wonder if this woman came to Matthew's house when he held the feast just before he set off on his mission work as Jesus disciple/apostle. This is another probing thought. Are we **hospitable**?

Good advice

Matt 18 has always been one of my “Go To” chapters whenever I am in the midst of conflict, or if a friend is seeking advice about conflict that they are dealing with. The chapter revolves around being converted and developing a child-like spirit if we desire to enter into the Kingdom of God. One aspect the Matthew dwells on is offences and how to repair the breach. This is where I can see how his career as a Publican became a useful tool in writing this gospel message. No doubt Matthew had encountered rebuke, offences, conflict and many other negative responses when he told them what the tax was going to be if they wanted to pass through his collection booth. Matt 18:15-17 provides us with simple spiritual advice on how to handle trespasses. None of the other Gospel writers seem to address this matter in this way. Matthew gives us a step-by-step recipe to follow that only requires us to be honest, loving, humble and forgiving. If we choose to skip one of these critical steps for reconciliation the results can be disasters. Matthew concludes his thoughts with the remark:

“But if he neglect to hear the church, let him be unto the as an heathen man and a publican” (Matt 18:15).

Thank you Matthew for this thought. He knew what it was like to be treated like a publican by the world, and now he knows how Jesus treated the heathen and the publicans. Forgive them 70 times 7 is the advice that Jesus gave Peter just minutes later. I can hardly wait to ask Matthew about some of his other encounters as a tax collector that helped prepare him for his new life as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

Randy Davenport (Orlando, FL)

Notes:

1. [Editor]: It is normally assumed, both within and outside our community, that in fact the two were brothers.

Andrew

We are so accustomed to the idea that Jesus called his disciples to help him with his preaching, that it comes as a surprise to realize that, although this was one of the reasons for their call, it was not the first one. Mark informs us that “*he ordained twelve, that they should be **with him**, and that he might send them forth to preach, and to have power to heal sicknesses, and to cast out devils*” (Mark 3:14,15). It is clear, therefore, that he valued their companionship, and that there was something that the disciple could give to his Lord.

It is a valuable thought that the twelve, in spite of their limitations, could help Jesus with their fellowship, and that their presence made it easier for him to face the immense difficulties which he overcame. In fact, their association was a partnership in which the devotion of the disciples, misdirected as it sometimes was, repaid in some measure his services to them.

The development of the band of men who were afterwards to carry the gospel throughout the world was one of the supreme achievements of Jesus. The insight with which he realized their good points, and the skill with which he developed these qualities until they came to full fruition, are among the noblest manifestations of his grace. His care for them is instanced by many occurrences in the Gospel stories which show his peculiar ability to bring the best out in them.

“What seek ye?”

Although there are not many references to Andrew in the Gospels, the few that exist are eloquent of his development under the hand of Jesus. We first read of him as a follower of John the Baptist (John 1:35, 40), and are told that in company with another disciple he was standing by on the day when Jesus passed by, and John the Baptist was led to exclaim, “*Behold the Lamb of God!*” (vs.36).

As Jesus moved away Andrew and his companion followed him. To their surprise Jesus turned round and addressed them: “*What seek ye?*”; to which, in their apparent embarrassment they could only reply: “*Master... where dwellest thou?*”. They received the gracious reply: “*Come and see*”.

Taking Jesus at his word, they went with him and spent the rest of the day with him. What transpired during their visit we are not told, except that it is clear that Andrew became convinced that Jesus was the Messiah. The result of it, however, gives us our first clue to his character. He had heard during the day things which had convinced him that Jesus was even greater than his previously adopted leader, John the Baptist. The news to him was glorious. It was such as could not remain locked up in his own breast. He must share it. With whom should he share it? Why not begin at home?

His brother Peter was a warmhearted- man, and these tidings would seem good to him also. Andrew, therefore, “*first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messiah*” (John 1:41). To his joy Peter responded, and he brought him to Jesus.

Doubtless Andrew in later years performed many services for Jesus, but never one greater than his first. Who shall measure the gain to the Christian movement because Andrew's work started at home?

There seems to have been a wide difference between Peter and Andrew. The former was a brilliant man, able to sway multitudes by his eloquence, and from time to time to have intuitions which led him to speak words which, once said, could never be forgotten: *"Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God"*, said he (Matt 16:16), and Jesus replied that man had not told him that, but God.

There is no evidence that Andrew had these gifts. He seems to have been cast in a quieter mold, and the call of Peter shows his ability as a quiet introducer of the gospel message. If he could not emulate the public deeds of his brother, he was not jealous of him. In his own way he could yet with quiet charm reason privately the value of the things which he had learned of Jesus. This phase of his character has been well expressed by the poet:

*"A brother's heart had Andrew, joy beyond,
All joy to him the promised Christ to find,
But heavenly joy may not be duty blind:
He cannot rest, his bliss is incomplete,
Till Simon sits with him at Jesus' feet,
His brother then by more than natural bond".*

Although Andrew and Peter had thus become acquainted with Jesus and had accepted his Messiahship, it does not appear that they realized at this stage the full nature of the demands he was to make on them. They continued to ply their trade of fishing in the Sea of Galilee, until the day when Jesus came to them and said, *"Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men"* (Mark 1:17). The preliminary work of Jesus had had its due effect on them, and Mark is able to say that straightway they left their nets, and followed him (vs. 18).

A return visit

In the same chapter Mark recounts how Jesus returned the visit previously paid to him by Andrew, and went to the house jointly occupied by the disciple and his brother in Capernaum (vs. 29). He arrived at an opportune time, for Peter's mother-in-law was in need of his aid, being ill with fever. The healing hand of Jesus was soon applied, however; and so effective was it that she was able to help in the entertainment of the guests, who included James and John. Tidings of what had happened spread quickly into the city, and as the sun was setting a large concourse of people, many of them ill and diseased, surrounded the door. Jesus did not fail them. A fountain of healing was opened, and many had cause to be thankful for the friendship which had been formed between Jesus, Andrew and Peter.

Another side of the character of Andrew is shown by a later event, which is described in John 6. On the slopes of a mountain near the sea of Tiberias Jesus and his disciples were surrounded by a huge company of men and women, anxious to see him perform some sign. As was his wont, Jesus had a care for the physical needs of those who followed him, and turning to Philip he asked where bread

could be obtained to feed the people. Being a native of the neighboring city of Bethsaida, Philip might be expected to know where food could be bought. Philip failed to perceive that Jesus was testing him, and exclaimed that much more would be required than the resources of the disciples could afford. Andrew was standing by, however, and his watchful eye had seen the lad with his five loaves and two fishes. He drew attention to the supply, perhaps wondering whether Jesus would perform a miracle; but, as if half afraid of his temerity, immediately added, "*but what are they among so many?*" (John 6:9). His desire to be helpful, however, was not in vain, for his suggestion was the means of providing for the feeding of the whole company by Jesus.

In this case Andrew appears as a man standing by looking for an opportunity to be of use. Such men and women of tactful helpfulness are of the utmost value to any cause or company, and we may be sure that the quality which Andrew displayed on this occasion was often manifested in the day-to-day life of Jesus and his colleagues. The poet again has drawn attention to this side of the disciple's character:

*"Quick eye had Andrew. He it was amid
The thronging multitudes that marked the lad,
And what his basket, and how much it had.
Two fishes small, and loaves of barley five,
Rewarded eye to trivial things alive.
In that poor basket, what rich mercy hid!"*

Almost the last incident in which Andrew appears as a leading figure is also recounted for us by John (12:20-22). A number of Greeks had come to Jerusalem for the Passover, and, having heard of Jesus, desired to meet him. Approaching Philip they said to him, "*Sir, we would see Jesus*". This apparently simple request put Philip in a difficulty. He and all his colleagues had observed the heavy strain which was imposed upon Jesus by his constant labors. Their leader was at every man's beck and call, and no sincere enquirer was ever sent empty away. Solitude, even for prayer, was denied him, except in the hours of night. Devoted to him as they were, the disciples could not but be concerned at his heavy burden, and be desirous of sparing him as much as possible. If, therefore, the desire of the Greeks was idle curiosity, Philip would wish to keep them from Jesus; on the other hand, if their request was sincere and serious, he knew that Jesus would not thank him for failing to introduce them to him. In his difficulty to whom did Philip turn? Andrew was the one who he thought would be able to help him. To Andrew he went, and after discussion the two of them told Jesus. The narrative does not say that Jesus saw the Greeks, but the nature of his discourse makes it almost certain that he did so. What he said about the death of the wheat was calculated to appeal to men who, being Greeks, would probably have some acquaintance with the Greek nature religions.

In this incident Andrew exhibits both his particular qualities; as a tactful helper, and an introducer of men to Jesus, he enriches the occasion.

The encouragement of lowliness

In many ways Andrew is the most encouraging of the disciples from the standpoint of the ordinary follower of Christ. None of us can hope to achieve the power of Peter, or to acquire that full sympathy with the Savior which John came to enjoy. When, however, we think of Andrew, it is immediately apparent that his qualities are, in some degree at least, within our reach. Rejoicing, as he did in the Master beyond compare, we can surely find the means to convey the secret of our rejoicing to others, not perhaps in public words, or even in words at all, but by the quiet confidence and joyousness of our lives. Moreover, who, having known the fellowship of Jesus, can fail to have the desire to find some small sphere in his service, in which he can tactfully help forward the work, either of the individual, or of the body of believers as a whole? However humble we may be, we can find comfort and encouragement in the example of Andrew.

F.E. Mitchell. Reprinted from The Testimony, January 1938 p.3

Who Baptised The Apostles? Answered By Dr. Thomas.

THE answer to this question is emphatically, John the baptizer. The apostle Andrew is styled by the apostle John, one of John's disciples (John 1:35, 37, 40). This testimony is decisive as to him; but how are we to get at the certainty that the twelve were all baptized of John? We reply, that John's baptism divided the Jews into two classes — the first class comprised "all the people that heard, and the publicans;" the other, "the Pharisees and lawyers." The former class were very numerous; for "Jerusalem, and all Judea, and all the region round about Jordan, were baptized of John in Jordan, confessing their sins." Referring to the completion of this work, Luke says, "Now when all the people were baptised, and it came to pass that Jesus also being baptised, and praying, the heaven opened." The other class being composed of the "upper ten thousand," were "respectable" and few. They were "the righteous," who, in their own estimation, needed no physician, having no occasion for repentance. As a class, they despised the people as cursed, knowing not the law. They regarded a baptism of repentance for remission of sins as quite unsuited to them; so that "they rejected the counsel of God against themselves, being not baptised of John;" while the people, on the contrary, who thought more humbly of themselves, "justified God, being baptised with His baptism" (Luke 7:29, 30).

The Christadelphian, 1880, p. 433

Judas, the Betrayer

Who was Judas?

From the outset there are several remarkable things about Judas Iscariot, son of Simon (as John invariably calls him). His name, “Judas”, is the Greek form of Judah, which means “Praise” — a remarkably inappropriate name.

While we may not be absolutely sure, “Iscariot” would seem to be equivalent to “Ish-Kerioth”, “a man of Kerioth”. The most likely Kerioth is a city east of Judah, not far south of Jerusalem. (See Josh 15:25). If indeed this is a correct understanding of his name, then Judas becomes the only apostle called from the Judean area, all the others being from the Galilean area. This, in turn, forms a noteworthy parallel to (and parable of) the later and larger rejection of Christ: It was from Judea that the massive campaign to subvert Christianity first arose.

“Son of Simon”, as in John 6:71, 13:16 (KJV¹) is perhaps the most astonishing piece of gospel information, suggesting a surprising interconnection of people. To appreciate the suggestion to be offered, consider the following parallel passages: Mark 14:3-8, John 12:1-8, and John 11:1-3. Notice the following points of similarity:

- The two incidents happen in the same place, Bethany.
- In both cases a woman does the anointing.
- In both cases the woman uses spikenard ointment, “very costly”.
- The anointing in each case gives rise to the same statement about selling the ointment for 300 denarii and giving it to the poor.
- This comment elicits the same response from Jesus.
- Each event takes place the same at the same time (during the week prior to the Passover).

It is hard to resist the conclusion that Mark and John are describing the very same incident. And, if this is indeed true, the conclusions that follow are particularly astonishing! “*The House of Simon the Leper*” was the home in which Lazarus and his two sisters, Mary and Martha, lived (John 11:1-3). More to the point, Lazarus, Mary, and Martha were, at the very least, closely related to Simon.

Connecting this with John’s usual way of identifying Judas as “son of Simon”, one is led to a most unexpected discovery: Mary, Martha, Lazarus, and Judas are all related! No wonder Jesus had such a special interest in Judas! The depth of this concern, as Judas gradually marked out the path he would eventually take, we will now look at...

Judas, the disciple

“And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles...and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor” (Luke 6:13,16).

“Traitor” is the name forever linked with Judas, like the epitaph engraved on the memory of another traitor: Jeroboam, the son of Nebat, “*who caused Israel to sin.*” (Is there here a greater similarity than might first appear?)

The implication of this selection is profound. Judas must have had the potential to be an excellent apostle, one capable of faithfully witnessing to the death and resurrection of his Lord. Otherwise we must imagine a deceptiveness inconsistent with Jesus' character. Would Jesus choose a man whose only purpose was to act the part of traitor? Wouldn't this label Jesus' efforts to save Judas as mere playacting? While the potential for betrayal was there, so too must have been the potential for good.

But is that really any different from any of us?

It is likely that at this time Judas was also chosen to be treasurer. John mentions Judas had the treasurer's bag (John 12:6). And, as Jesus was at this moment hard at work organizing his little band of disciples, this surely was the appropriate time to commit this important work to one of them. But why not Matthew? Surely this was the obvious choice? As a tax collector by profession, he was accustomed to financial matters. Was his past life with all its unsavory associations a memory Matthew preferred not to revive? Whatever the details, this one fact remains: Jesus deliberately committed to Judas the vital responsibility of handling their finances.

The conclusion is hard to resist: Jesus deliberately committed to Judas this vital role. Would Jesus deliberately commit to Judas the very object of his future downfall? Again, this seem quite inconsistent with our Master's character. Judas, therefore, must have been a man of considerable ability. When happened to Judas? Why was this potential never realized? What was missing?

For a man like Judas, one can only wonder whether the first impressions of apostleship were very encouraging: *"sheep in the midst of wolves"*, *"deliver you up to the councils and will scourge you in synagogues"*, *"he who loses his life for my sake shall find it"* (Matt 10:16, 17, 39). These last words must have seemed particularly difficult to digest.

The crisis

It was inevitable that a crisis should arise in the ministry of Jesus. What the people wanted just did not match where Jesus was headed. They looked for the Lion of the tribe of Judah to vanquish their enemies: he came as the Lamb.

The crisis happened as Jesus' work had moved into its final year. It was Passover time, not more than a week or two since John the Baptist's tragic death. This man, John, had given the people so much hope that his humiliating end must have brought great discouragement to the people. So they now came in great numbers to their only other source of hope, like lost sheep in search of a shepherd.

When Jesus saw them, he was deeply moved by their plight. In his compassion he healed them and taught them, and when at last they would not leave him, he fed them, more than 5000 at one time. The death of John followed by this astonishing miracle was more than the people could bear: *"This is of truth that prophet that should come into the world!"* The very thought electrified the multitude: 'Here is our king! Let's anoint him now!'

"When Jesus therefore perceived that they would come to take him by force, to make him king, he departed again into a mountain himself alone" (John 6:15).

Another gospel (Matt 19:23) tells us that *“he went up...to pray.”* The pressures on Jesus to succumb to this old temptation were immense! There was no other place he could go except to his Father at a time like this.

But the pressure on his little band of disciples was even greater. Why else were they following him, if he was not their Heaven-sent King and Redeemer? And what better moment than this to have their master enter his kingly glory. Were not the multitudes totally behind him? Who on earth could resist this man who could command even the physical elements to obey him? It was no light expression of words used by one of these disciples later when by the Spirit he recalled that frightening moment: *“and straightway Jesus constrained his disciples to get into a ship...”* (Matt 19:22). These twelve faithful men were in such danger of being carried away by the same false expectations that Jesus compelled them to leave with an urgency they had perhaps never before experienced.

It was without doubt a deeply troubled set of men that reluctantly launched their boat that evening, the dark tossing sea an apt mirror of their own tumultuous thoughts. Why had he refused the crown? Was he, or was he not, the king they looked for? When he came to them that night they found reassurance in his presence, but not peace. All they had ever thought about him, now seemed disrupted; on the morrow it would be shattered!

The turning point

As he spoke those life-giving words the next day to the multitude that sought him, and later to the people in the Capernaum synagogue, the crowds, which had just clamored for his anointing, stumbled: *“Many of his disciples, when they heard this, said, ‘This is a hard [harsh or stern] saying, Who can hear it?’ ”*

Was Judas one of these? Did he, with these others, feel deceived by Jesus? Misled? Betrayed? Because Jesus was refusing to be the one they thought he should be?

“When Jesus knew in himself that his disciples murmured at it, he said unto them, ‘Does this offend you? ...But there are some of you that do believe not’ ” (John 6:61,64).

Is this the one thing Judas lacked — an unreserved commitment to trust Jesus fully and to follow his master wherever he may go? At this critical moment when the whole work of Christ was on a thin edge, the contrast between Peter and Judas could not have been greater.

“Will you also go away?”

Peter, despite his doubts, saw no other choice but to believe: *“Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that you are that Christ, the Son of the living God”* (John 6:68-69).

Yet Judas, because of his doubts, just could not believe.

“Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil (accuser)? He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon: for it was he who would betray him, being one of the twelve’ ” (John 6:71).

“From that time many of his disciples went back and walked no more with him” (John 6:66).

This was the turning point for Judas too. He had seen enough to know that Jesus did not fit the Messianic mold he wanted or expected. So why didn't he leave? What did he expect to accomplish by staying? Was he afraid of the ridicule? Or was there some other motive now coming to birth in the hidden recesses of his mind? Was this also the time when his thoughts began to turn towards the bag in his possession?

A deeply troubled disciple

Judas was deeply troubled. His Lord didn't seem to understand where he was going. He was all the prophets had said...and more! And yet, he had refused his rightful crown at the very moment when he could have seized on the fervor of the populace and electrified the whole nation into action! That disastrous Passover one year ago led Jesus not only to drive away many of his supporters in bitter disappointment, but ever since Jesus has talked more of dying than reigning: After feeding 5000 (John 6), Peter's confession (Luke 9:21-22), transfiguration (Luke 9:43-45), going up to Jerusalem (Luke 18:31-34), last week before crucifixion (John 12:27-33), during anointing by Mary (Matt 26:11-12), and at last supper (Matt 26:26-28, Mark 14:22-24, Luke 22:19-20).

And worse, Jesus connected his death with someone betraying him.

“...when Jesus had finished all these sayings, he said to his disciples, ‘You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified’ ” (Matt 26:1-2).

That was it. Judas had had enough. He had no choice now. He must act before another disaster destroy altogether this movement to release Israel from Roman domination!

The last straw

There is a noticeable tension between Judas and Jesus during this last week. Judas must have been very conscious of Jesus' remarks about a betrayer. His dispute with Jesus over Mary's waste of precious ointment served only to bring the matter to a head (Matt 26:6-14 and John 12:3-8).

What was Judas thinking as he quietly slipped out to make his seemingly ruthless deal with the rulers? Did he feel he just had no other course open to him? 'If betrayal will set this man on the right path, then betrayal it will be!' Putting together Luke 22:3-6 and Matt 26:14-16, we see the betrayal in action:

“Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray him to them. ‘What are you willing to give me if I deliver him to you?’ And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray him to them in the absence of the multitude.”

The last meal

“One of you twelve will betray me!” How this moment must have deeply pained Jesus. Each disciple, searching within themselves said, “Lord, is it I?” Judas also asked this, curiously, addressing him as “Rabbi”, not as “Lord” (i.e. Master). Was Judas already distancing himself from Jesus? (Matt 26:20-25)

As the disciples sat together at that last meal, Jesus reached out to Judas one last time with a token of friendship and affection. *“He that dippeth his hand with me in the dish, the same shall betray me”* (Matt 26:23).² How many unspoken words must have passed as their eyes met! Whatever Judas saw in the searching look of his Master, we cannot know, but for Judas the moment of decision had come: *“And after the piece of bread, Satan entered him”* (John 13:27).

Jesus saw that terrible moment when the sin of betrayal became master of Judas’ heart. Every line in Judas’s face revealed the rapidly hardening heart. Reclamation was no longer possible. The power of darkness and evil was now in control. “What you do, do quickly!” And without a word Judas rises suddenly and leaves his Master’s presence into the darkness of that night.

The betrayal

Judas knew exactly where to find Jesus. Jesus had often resorted to the little garden beyond the brook Kidron. So, fortified with soldiers from the chief priest and Pharisees, he came to Jesus.

“Jesus therefore knowing all things that should come upon him, went forward and said to them, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ They answered him, ‘Jesus of Nazareth.’ Jesus said to them, ‘I am he.’ And Judas, who betrayed him, also stood with them” (John 18:4-5).

How ironical the words! Judas, having walked in the counsel of the ungodly, now stood with the sinners. Perhaps it is to Judas’ credit that he never sat in the seat of the scornful as the chief witness against the man he had just betrayed.

Why the betrayal?

Why did Judas betray his Master? This has been the source of much speculation: Love of money? Jealousy? Felt that Jesus had betray the nation? A mixture of these?

There is one suggestion that has not only an attractiveness about it, but a consistency that rings true: Judas, being himself bitterly disappointed with Jesus’ refusal of the crown (and with it the kingdoms of this world), betrayed his Lord in order to force him into an open declaration of his kingship and power. If Jesus would not willingly take the right path, Judas would make him take it.

Not only is this motive a consistent extension of the crisis recorded in John 6, but Judas also unknowingly fulfills the role of the wilderness adversary in perpetrating the second and third temptations all over again. (See Luke 4:13). Finally, it is consistent with the reactions of unbelieving men to unfulfilled promises of God: They take the responsibility for fulfillment into their own hands, devising fleshly stratagems foreign to the purpose of God.

The end

Matthew pieces together the final hours of Judas' life. *"Now the chief priests, the elders, and all the council sought false testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Even though many false witnesses came forward, they found none. But at last two false witnesses came forward"* (Matt 26:59-60).

They found none? How could this possibly be? Would these men arrest Jesus if they didn't have the required witnesses all set to accuse him? Would they have threatened their whole flimsy case by leaving out this vital link? What had gone wrong? Where was their key witness?

We may not be able to answer this question conclusively, but Judas' conspicuous absence from these proceedings is remarkable. Why wasn't the man with the damning, inside information there? Would not the witness of Judas have clinched the case beyond all question?

The evidence builds that Judas had no intention of following through with the evil scheme of these evil men. Indeed, the final piece of evidence is hard to put aside:

"Then Judas, his betrayer, seeing that he was condemned, was remorseful and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and elders, saying, 'I have sinned by betraying innocent blood.' And they said, 'What has that to do with us? You see to it!'" (Matt 27:3-4).

Why this great concern for Jesus? If all he really wanted was quick and easy money — what would he care? Besides, Judas knew all along Jesus was innocent of the charges, so why now the concern? Finally, why the remorse when Judas discovered his actions had actually gotten Jesus condemned? Had something gone terribly, horribly wrong with all his well-laid plans? Was the man who he wanted to be king, now going to be violently removed from this role after all?

Whatever the true explanation, Judas could see only one path open to him: *"and he departed, and went and hanged himself"* (Matt 27:5).

Lesson of the uncommitted disciple

Judas never was committed. He never was prepared to follow his Master wherever he might lead. Rather, he kept his own ambitions and desires...and tried to shape Jesus accordingly. A true disciple doesn't shape his master to suit himself; he is shaped by his master. Nor does a true disciple lead his Lord; he follows, ever seeking to imitate the one who knows better.

Acts 1:25 sums up Judas' whole life: *"...that he might go to his own place."* Judas had always been going to his own place, never to his Master's.

The path of failure

Could we betray Jesus? If we found Jesus leading us in a direction that we hadn't expected? Not leading us where we had wanted to go? Could we turn away in our heart and become a subversive force among our brethren? Judas did, but it did not happen all at once. His downhill path to failure was at first a slow one, one that he may not even have been aware of.

It began when he perceived his Master's direction was not what he thought it would be. Then, instead of sitting at his Master's feet to learn of this better way, he became:

- First a source of grumbling, complaining and discontent.
- Then, with his hands in the moneybag, he became a disciple who was faithless and untrustworthy in the little things.
- Finally, he graduated into faithlessness in a big way, selling the very life of his own Lord and Master to his enemies.
- How easily this could become us: 'This is not what I thought my new life in Christ would be like! It's not going in the direction I thought it would! This whole thing is not so exciting anymore.' In other words, like Judas, the path of failure...
- Begins with dissatisfaction: dissatisfaction with our lot as a brother or sister in Christ, dissatisfaction with our ecclesia, dissatisfaction with the whole course of our new life.
- Then comes the grumbling: Grumbling about other disciples ("they think they are so holy"); grumbling about the things they (or the ecclesia) do; grumbling about the hard demands of Jesus' way of life.
- Faithlessness in small things quickly follows. For Judas it was his hands in the moneybag. For us it might be failure to faithfully fulfill ecclesial duties. Or slightly altering the commands of the Master so we can justify our actions. Or, perhaps using our association with the brethren for material gain an advantage.
- Uncontrollably, this path rushes headlong into faithlessness in big things: For Judas, it was selling the very life of his Lord to his enemies. For us, forsaking our Lord's own meal table, often. Outright strife and quarreling. Dereliction in ecclesial duties.
- Then the final Step: Departure from The Faith — a rejection of our Master and Lord. For Judas this ended in physical suicide; for us it is the oblivion of spiritual suicide.

Lord, is it I? No fate is ever sealed until one makes that final, dreadful, suicidal choice. But never forget this: Even betrayal can be forgiven. Remember Peter... and remember to whom we belong:

"Through the LORD's mercies we are not consumed, because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning; Great is Your faithfulness. "The LORD [is] my portion," says my soul, "Therefore I hope in Him!" (Lam 3:22-24)

Ted Sleeper (San Francisco Peninsula, CA)

Notes:

1. [Editor]: Note, however, that almost all modern translations have "son of Simon Iscariot" in both places.
2. [Editor]: I believe the evidence is strong that Judas was in a favored place to the left of Jesus, resting along with John, who was to the right of Jesus, on one of the normal three place couches.

James, The Lord's Brother

We are fully justified in regarding James as an apostles, for Paul writes *“But other of the apostles saw I none, save James the Lord's brother”* (Gal 1:19). There is much we do not know about James but we do know his attitude towards his brother, Jesus, underwent a dramatic, revolutionary change.

Introduced as the eldest of the Lord's four brothers (Mark 6:3), James went from initial speculative neutrality to open hostility: and then to resolute certainty as regards belief in his brother, the Son of God.

The change in James

As the beginning of his public ministry, Jesus had the support of James and the rest of the family. *“After this [water to wine miracle at Canaan Galilee] he went down to Capernaum, he and his mother and his brother, and his disciples...”* (John 2:12). However, this support officially evaporated and we read:

“Jesus' brothers said to him, ‘Leave Galilee and go to Judea, so that your disciples there may see the works you do. No one who wants to become a public figure acts in secret. Since you are doing these things, show yourself to the world.’ For even his own brothers did not believe in him” (John 7:3-5 NIV)

Notice the challenging words of his brothers, ending with the writer's statement, *“For neither did his brother believe in him”*. Worse yet they considered him *“besides himself”* (Mark 3:21).

At the embryonic Jerusalem Ecclesia, after Jesus' death, resurrection and ascension, James and the rest of the family are present, *“These all continued with one accord in prayer and supplication, with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with his brethren”* (Acts 1:14).

A notable event clearly had occurred which transformed James into a determined apostle for the cause of Christ. It is recorded by Paul in catalogue of resurrection appearances, *“After that, he was seen of James, then of all the apostles”* (1Cor 15:7). In this context James is paired with the apostles along with another converted apostle — Paul. There are no further details in the New Testament of this Resurrection Appearance, but one thing is certain: the mind of James was changed from one of disbelief, to one who life was both renewed and forever changed by the presence of his Brother — his Lord.

James, the new Apostle

The upkeep of the truth in Jerusalem and its spread to the Roman world needed men of singular commitment: James and Peter for stability at home; Paul for evangelizing in the empire. So as the Jerusalem Ecclesia struggled under violent persecution (Stephen and John's brother were killed, Peter was imprisoned) James rose to the occasion.

“But he [Peter], beckoning unto them with the hand to hold their peace, declared unto them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he

said, Go shew these things unto James, and to the brethren. And he departed, and went into another place” (Acts 12:17)

Peter miraculously released, requested that “*Go shew these things unto James*”. Likewise Paul before his ministry began met with James as we discussed above.

These three apostles, James, Peter and Paul, met again at the Jerusalem conference (Acts 15) when the shrewd presiding of James averted a split between the fledgling Antioch Ecclesia at the established Ecclesia over a doctrinal issue!

“And after they had held their peace, James answered, saying, Men and brethren, hearken unto me: Simeon hath declared how God at the first did visit the Gentiles, to take out of them a people for his name. And to this agree the words of the prophets; as it is written, After this I will return, and will build again the tabernacle of David, which is fallen down; and I will build again the ruins thereof, and I will set it up: That the residue of men might seek after the Lord, and all the Gentiles, upon whom my name is called, saith the Lord, who doeth all these things. Known unto God are all his works from the beginning of the world. Wherefore my sentence is, that we trouble not them, which from among the Gentiles are turned to God: But that we write unto them, that they abstain from pollutions of idols, and from fornication, and from things strangled, and from blood. For Moses of old time hath in every city them that preach him, being read in the synagogues every sabbath day” (Acts 15:13..21).

James clearly was presiding over this conference, which was so vital in ensuring that the gospel could be delivered to the Gentiles without requiring the onerous imposition of all the requirements of the Law, which the Judaizers wanted. The decision of the conference, as declared by James, was conciliatory, but it gave Paul what he wanted. The influence of James was that which defused the crisis at this important time. We can see James as a wise, perhaps mild, but tolerant and practical man! Does not our community still need brothers of this caliber?

James, the pillar of the early church

James was clearly the acknowledged leader of the early church in Jerusalem:

- When Paul came to Jerusalem with his collection for the poor, it was by James and the Elders he was received (Acts 21:18).
- Paul’s first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion was to James and Peter (Gal 1:19)
- Fourteen years later, James, Peter, and John are the “*Pillars of the Church*” (Gal 2:9)
- He clearly had enormous influence over the early Jewish Christians outside Jerusalem as well as indeed, as we can read in his epistle “*James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad, greeting*” (James 1:1).

His epistle indeed shows faith in action, and quoting now “The Christadelphian Expositor”, we see this in five aspects:

- Faith can triumph over trials,
- Faith can govern action towards other,
- Faith can discipline the tongue
- Faith can purify character
- Faith can create confidence in God.

Why, incidentally did Jesus not put his mother in the care of James? We cannot be certain of the reason. John (beloved disciple) was at the cross, the only male. James was not and not yet converted! Whatever the reason, we clearly see that relationships within the Truth can be far stronger than “flesh and blood” ones. Perhaps, a few of our natural kin are in doubt regarding the Truth we embrace, perhaps even hostility. But there is hope that they, like James, can be transformed by our constant and consistent presentation of a crucified Jesus, just as was James who saw his brother Jesus alive after his death on the cross.

The death of James

So James disappears from the New Testament, and like most the apostles, his ultimate fate is not recorded. However, Josephus, a contemporary historian, records that, during the brief interval between the death of Festus, and the arrival of Albinus, the next Roman governor, Ananus the high priest sees his opportunity to dispatch the leader of the Jerusalem Christians,

So Ananus, being that kind of man, and thinking that he had got a good opportunity, — because Festus was dead and Albinus not yet arrived, held a judicial council; and he brought before it the brother of Jesus, who was called Christ; James was his name, — and some others, and on the charge of violating the Law he gave them over to be stoned. (*Antiquities of the Jews*; 20; 9,1.)

And so James passes from the scene, faithful to the last.

Clive Drepaul (Brooklyn, NY)

James—The Lord’s Brother

The references in the New Testament to the brothers James, Joses, Jude and Simon, and sisters (whose names are unknown) of Jesus have led to much discussion. Some suggest that the terms “brother” or “brethren” could denote near relationship such as cousin. We understand, however, that the Greek originals translated “brothers” and “sisters” are unambiguous and that they bear the meanings normally associated with them. There is no necessity to believe that the “brothers and sisters” were later children of Joseph and Mary. In fact the available evidence suggests that it was not so.

The records which exist relating to the last days and death of James, suggest that he was a much respected “figure in the Church” by which time he had become known as “the Just One”, a name probably won by years of devoted service. It might not be too far wide of the mark to suggest that James was born about 20 B.C.

The Christadelphian, 1967 p. 534.

Paul, Apostle of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles

The apostle Paul is one of the most important people to have ever lived. Paul's transformation from sinner to saint is a pattern for us all. His call and preaching efforts make up over half of the book of Acts. His epistles make up nearly half of the New Testament. It is difficult to imagine how any of us would have been able to understand the gospel without Paul's efforts. As the apostle to the Gentiles (Rom 11:13; 1Tim 2:7; 2Tim 1:11), his mission was nothing less than to deliver the Gentiles as an acceptable and holy offering to God: *"That I should be the minister of Jesus Christ to the Gentiles, ministering the gospel of God, that the offering up of the Gentiles might be acceptable, being sanctified by the Holy [Spirit]"* (Rom 15:15).

On the other hand, Paul is also the most misunderstood of the apostles. His epistles are full of polemics, with Paul defending his one true gospel against bad doctrine and bad behavior. Even his good partner Barnabas¹ found himself opposed to Paul on more than one occasion (e.g., Acts 15:36-39). Surprisingly, Peter and Barnabas and other Jewish believers in Antioch were persuaded by some brethren who came from James (the Lord's brother and 'Recording Brother' for the Jerusalem Ecclesia) that Paul's policies concerning Jewish and Gentile believers eating together was mistaken (Gal 2:11-14). Peter would later write,

"And account that the longsuffering of our Lord is salvation; even as our beloved brother Paul also according to the wisdom given unto him hath written unto you; as also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things; in which are some things hard to be understood, which they that are unlearned and unstable wrest, as they do also the other scriptures, unto their own destruction" (2Pet 3:15-16).

Paul's background

Acts and the epistles enable us to construct a fairly detailed resume for *"Saul, who also is called Paul"* (Acts 13:9).

Born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia: *"I [Paul] am verily a man which am a Jew, born in Tarsus, a city in Cilicia"* (Acts 22:3; cf. 21:39; 23:34).

A free born Roman citizen:

"And as they bound him with thongs, Paul said unto the centurion that stood by, Is it lawful for you to scourge a man that is a Roman, and uncondemned? When the centurion heard that, he went and told the chief captain, saying, Take heed what thou doest: for this man is a Roman. Then the chief captain came, and said unto him, Tell me, art thou a Roman? He said, Yea. And the chief captain answered, With a great sum obtained I this freedom. And Paul said, But I was free born. Then straightway they departed from him which should have examined him: and the chief captain also was afraid, after he knew that he was a Roman, and because he had bound him" (Acts 22:25-29).

A tentmaker: *"After these things Paul departed from Athens, and came to Corinth; and found a certain Jew named Acquila...with his wife Priscilla...and came to them. And because he was of the same craft, he abode with them, and wrought;*

for by their occupations they were tentmakers” (Acts 18:1-3). This occupation allowed Paul to move around freely. He could easily find work in any of the cities he visited. This particular trade put him in contact with lots of people, making it easy for him to share the gospel.

A Hebrew of the Hebrews:

“If any other man thinketh that he hath whereof he might trust in the flesh, I more: Circumcised the eighth day, of the stock of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew of the Hebrews” (Phil 3:4b-5; cf. Rom 11:1; 2Cor 11:22).

A Pharisee, son of a Pharisee:

“...brought up in this city [Jerusalem, Acts 21:15, 17] at the feet of Gamaliel, and taught according to the perfect manner of the law of the fathers, and was zealous toward God, as ye all are this day” (Acts 22:3; cf. Gal 1:13-14).

“My manner of life from my youth, which was at the first among mine own nation at Jerusalem, know all the Jews; which knew me from the beginning, if they would testify, that after the most straitest sect of our religion I lived a Pharisee” (Acts 26:4-5; cf. Acts 23:6; Phil 3:5-6).

Concerning zeal, persecuting the church: Luke depicts Saul’s persecution of the way, including Paul’s defense before the Jews and then before Agrippa:

“Saul, yet breathing out threatening against the disciples of the Lord, went unto the high priest, and desired of him letters to Damascus to the synagogues, that if he found any of this way, whether they were men or women, he might bring them bound unto Jerusalem” (Acts 9:1-2).

“I [Paul] persecuted this way unto the death, binding and delivering into prison both men and women” (Acts 22:4; see also vv. 5, 17-20; Acts 7:57-8:3; 26:9-11).

Paul’s persecution of the ecclesia before his call is a recurring theme in his epistles: *“For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God”* (1Cor 15:9). *“For ye have heard of my conversation in time past in the Jews’ religion, how that beyond measure I persecuted the church of God, and wasted it”* (Gal 1:13). *“Concerning zeal, persecuting the church”* (Phil 3:6). The burden of this terrible sin weighed heavily on Paul’s conscience. It made him feel inadequate to be an apostle. He could not forget the damage he had inflicted owing to a religious zeal caused by his own ignorance and unbelief.

On the other hand, Paul’s transformation from persecutor to preacher prompted the Judaeen ecclesias to glorify God in him:

“Afterwards I came into the regions of Syria and Cilicia; and was unknown by face unto the churches of Judaea which were in Christ: But they had heard only, that he which persecuted us in times past now preacheth the faith which once he destroyed. And they glorified God in me” (Gal 1:21-24).

Paul's call out of darkness into light

Saul was transformed on the road to Damascus, when Jesus appeared to him in a light from heaven (Acts 9:1-22; 22:4-21; 26:12-23). As if dead and in the grave, he was without sight and didn't eat or drink for three days, after which scales, as it were, fell from his eyes and he was baptized. Immediately he preached Christ in the synagogue, that he is the Son of God. He was called to preach the gospel to Gentiles, to be the apostle to the Gentiles.²

The calling of a prophet: arguing that his gospel came by revelation directly from Jesus Christ (Gal 1:10-24), Paul writes, *"But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother's womb he called me by his grace, to reveal his Son in me, that I might preach him among the heathen; immediately I conferred not with flesh and blood"* (Gal 1:15-16). Here Paul uses the same language as Jeremiah's calling to become a prophet unto the nations: *"Before I formed thee in the belly I knew thee; and before thou camest forth out of the womb I sanctified thee, and I ordained thee a prophet unto the nations"* (Jer 1:5; cf. Isa 49:1-8). As Isaiah prophesied, Paul was to be a light unto the Gentiles (Acts 13:46-48; 26:22-23; cf. Isa 42:6; 49:6; 60:3).

One born out of due time: Listing the resurrection appearances of Christ, Paul writes,

"And last of all he was seen of me also, as of one born out of due time. For I am the least of the apostles, that am not meet to be called an apostle, because I persecuted the church of God. But by the grace of God I am what I am: and his grace which was bestowed upon me was not in vain; but I laboured more abundantly than they all: yet not I, but the grace of God which was with me. Therefore whether it were I or they, so we preach, and so ye believed" (1Cor 15:8-11).

Having seen the glorified Lord, Paul was born again. This birth was premature because it happened before the time had come for the nation of Israel to repent.³ Paul becomes a type of the future salvation of God's chosen people, when *"they shall look upon him whom they have pierced, and shall mourn for him"*.

A pattern for all believers: More generally, Paul's life-changing experience provided evidence for the essence of his gospel and established a pattern for all believers: if I Paul, the worst of all sinners, can obtain mercy and be saved through Jesus Christ, then anyone who believes in him can do the same:

"And I thank Christ Jesus our Lord, who hath enabled me, for that he counted me faithful, putting me into the ministry; who was before a blasphemer, and a persecutor, and injurious: but I obtained mercy, because I did it ignorantly in unbelief. And the grace of our Lord was exceeding abundant with faith and love which is in Christ Jesus. This is a faithful saying, and worthy of all acceptation, that Christ Jesus came into the world to save sinners; of whom I am chief. Howbeit for this cause I obtained mercy, that in me first Jesus Christ might shew forth all longsuffering, for a pattern to them which should hereafter believe on him to life everlasting" (1Tim 1:12-16).

The signs of an apostle: Paul was filled with the Holy Spirit: *"And Ananias went*

his way, and entered into the house; and putting his hands on him said, Brother Saul, the Lord, even Jesus, that appeared unto thee in the way as thou camest, hath sent me, that thou mightest receive thy sight, and be filled with the Holy [Spirit]" (Acts 9:17). "Then Saul, (who is also called Paul,) filled with the Holy [Spirit]" (Acts 13:9). Beyond this, he had the power to convey the Holy Spirit to others, which only the apostles could do: "And when Paul laid his hands upon them, the Holy [Spirit] came on them; and they spake with tongues, and prophesied" (Acts 19:6; cf. 2Tim 1:6; Acts 8:14-25).

He spoke with tongues and had the gift of prophecy: "I thank my God, I speak with tongues more than ye all" (1Cor 14:18). "Though I speak with the tongues of men and of angels, and have not charity, I am become as sounding brass, or a tinkling cymbal. And though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries, and all knowledge; and though I have all faith, so that I could remove mountains, and have not charity, I am nothing" (1Cor 11:1-2).

Paul had an abundance of revelations, and wrought the signs of an apostle:

"It is not expedient for me doubtless to glory. I will come to visions and revelations of the Lord. I knew a man in Christ above fourteen years ago... of such an one will I glory: yet of myself I will not glory, but in my infirmities... And lest I should be exalted above measure through the abundance of revelations, there was given to me a thorn in the flesh, the messenger of Satan to buffet me, lest I should be exalted above measure... Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in necessities, in persecutions, in distresses for Christ's sake: for when I am weak, then am I strong... Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds" (2Cor 13:1-12; cf. Acts 14:3; Rom 15:19).

Paul emphasizes that the signs of an apostle include not only signs, wonders, and mighty deeds, but also infirmities, reproaches, necessities, persecutions, and distresses for Christ's sake.⁴ It is difficult to identify Paul's "thorn in the flesh"; but it seems to have been a recurring health condition that incapacitated the apostle whenever it surfaced.

Paul's preaching and epistles

We cannot go into the details of Paul's missionary journeys or his epistles in this short biography. He preached the gospel from Jerusalem and Antioch in the east to Rome (Acts 13-28) and possibly Spain (Rom 15:22-29) in the west. He summarizes his life as a preacher in poignant language:

"Are they ministers of Christ? (I speak as a fool) I am more; in labours more abundant, in stripes above measure, in prisons more frequent, in deaths oft. Of the Jews five times received I forty stripes save one. Thrice was I beaten with rods, once was I stoned, thrice I suffered shipwreck, a night and a day I have been in the deep; In journeyings often, in perils of waters, in perils of robbers, in perils by mine own countrymen, in perils by the heathen, in perils in the city, in perils in the wilderness, in perils in the sea, in perils among false brethren; In weariness and painfulness, in watchings often, in hunger

and thirst, in fastings often, in cold and nakedness. Beside those things that are without, that which cometh upon me daily, the care of all the churches” (2Cor 11:23-28; cf. 2Cor 4:1-18).

Paul ministered unto the saints in four ways: he visited them directly when he could; and when he wasn't free to go himself, he sent surrogates to minister on his behalf,⁵ he wrote epistles to them as an apostle of Jesus Christ by the will of God,⁶ and he prayed for them incessantly.⁷

Paul's epistles fall into four major groups, differentiated by time, topics, and recipients:

Years	During	Epistles	Primary Topic
c. 50	2nd Missionary Journey	1Thessalonians, 2Thessalonians	Return of Jesus Christ
c. 55	3rd Missionary Journey	1Corinthians, Galatians, 2Corinthians, Romans	Paul's Gospel to the Gentiles
c. 60	1st Imprisonment	[Hebrews] ⁸ , Colossians, Philemon, Ephesians, Philippians	Nature and Sacrifice of Christ
c. 65	Intermediate Freedom and 2nd Imprisonment	1Timothy, Titus, 2Timothy	Ecclesial Leadership

Although Paul wrote to address specific issues of his day, his epistles are surprisingly relevant today. The epistles are full of arguments against the false doctrines of the Jewish Christian counter mission:

Topic	Jewish Christian Counter Mission	Paul's Gentile Christian Mission
Kingdom	Kingdom already established; believers reigning already; brethren had quit work, and were living off the ecclesia as "kings", rich and sated; the common purse led to poverty, calling themselves Ebionites (the poor); they thought of themselves as spiritual beings, spending all day in prayer, meditation, visions, healings & miracles or signs; they thought they were already changed, already immortal, that the resurrection had already happened, that there would be no physical	Kingdom not yet; challenges them to reconsider; lots of negative comments about the kingdom, encouraging better behavior, emphasizing that they had not already inherited the kingdom; still awaiting the coming of Jesus; certain events must take place first: Phase I-the current persecution, mystery of unlawfulness already at work, the future being held up / delayed; man of sin not yet revealed; Phase II-the man of sin is revealed, in the temple, making

Kingdom (cont.)	resurrection of dead corpses; they needed to be comforted when someone died; cf. the Church of Christ today	himself God; Phase III-Lord Jesus Christ returns, destroys man of sin, persecutors, and those who believe a lie; raises the dead, judgment, life or death; words like “first fruits” and “earnest” show that early events had begun to occur; exhortations to work for their food, as Paul taught and did
Wisdom	Words of wisdom, Jewish Halakhah (way of walking) inferred from exposition of Scripture by sages, scribes, and midrashim; the oral law, rabbinic tradition, “traditions of the elders”, taught words of man’s wisdom; Gentile believers must convert to Judaism, be circumcised, keep the food laws, the calendar laws, the whole law; cf. today’s “orthodox” Christians, whose faith is based on tradition	Wisdom of God, Christ crucified, the cross; foolishness of preaching; not beyond what is written (the Bible and only the Bible), like the Foundation Clause of the BASF; concerning food and days, let each be persuaded in their own mind; led to Paul’s negative statements about the law and to his emphasis on love being the fulfillment of the law, love is the touchstone; crucified with Christ, buried with Christ, raised in newness of life, Christ living in us
Knowledge	Words of knowledge; knowing God thru visions of His heavenly throne; Merkabah (cherubim chariot of God) mysticism; Hekhalot (palaces) literature (levels of nested heavenly temples; cf. the levels of modern video games); worshiping of angels, dangerous and difficult to combat; led brothers and sisters to become ascetics regarding sex and food; cf. modern “gnostics” like Masons, Oral Roberts, Mormons; cf. the vows of Roman Catholic priests and nuns	Knowledge of God via Jesus Christ; God invisible, God can’t be seen except in Christ; Paul takes over his opponents’ terms and glosses them by adding editorial explanations, putting them into a proper context emphasizing Jesus Christ, love, etc., resulting in long, complicated sentences; Jesus Christ greater than the angels; negative statements about angels; marriage is okay

Meeting	Tongues, visions, angel worship; emphasis on spirit gifts; like Pentecostal churches today	Focus on the better gifts, especially prophecy (= teaching); orderly service; love is a more excellent way; manifest the fruit of the spirit
Christ	Jesus was an ordinary man, born to Joseph and Mary in the usual way; Christ was an angel/spirit who possessed Jesus at his baptism and left him on the cross; docetism: Christ didn't die, he was an impassible spirit being, only Jesus died; they worshipped Christ as one of the many angels, but they "cursed Jesus" because he wasn't worthy of worship; Jesus was David's seed; a prophet, like Elijah & Elisha, like Moses; cf. Unitarians today	"Jesus Christ" was not two distinct beings, but one; the Son of God; born of a woman; God manifest in the flesh; the image of God; died on the cross; raised in bodily form; ascended to heaven, at the right hand of God; more than just David's son; more than just an Elijah & Elisha prophet; more than just the prophet like unto Moses; greater than the angels; the one mediator between God and man; misunderstanding of the New Testament later led to the doctrine of the Trinity
Gospel	Another gospel that is really not another (Gal 1:6-9; 2Cor 11:4); cf. the many Christian denominations today, e.g., the prosperity gospel	Paul's gospel; Gentiles included in Christ as Gentiles; one God of both Jews and Gentiles; the one faith
Target Audience	Started out being addressed primarily to Jews and proselytes, but then "taken on the road" to Gentiles, especially when the Jerusalem leadership learned about Paul's practices, which seemed to disregard the law	Gentiles; Paul the Apostle to the Gentiles; epistles to Gentile ecclesias and their leaders; he had to defend his gospel against the false ideas of the Jewish Christian missionaries; this is the reason most of the New Testament is polemical
Leadership	Claimed authority from the Jerusalem ecclesia; came in the name of the twelve apostles (Cephas/Peter and John the son of Zebedee) and the Lord's family (his brother James, later Jude); itinerant missionaries; cf. Roman Catholics today	From the Antioch ecclesia; Paul, Timothy, Titus, Barnabas, Apollos, and Priscilla & Aquila; set up local ecclesial leadership like our Arranging Boards; warnings against itinerant preachers who don't teach the truth

An example to be followed

Paul uses himself as a powerful exhortation for us all, that we should be followers of him as he was of Christ:

“Be ye followers of me, even as I also am of Christ. Now I praise you, brethren, that ye remember me in all things, and keep the ordinances, as I delivered them to you” (1Cor 11:1-2).

“Brethren, I count not myself to have apprehended: but this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind, and reaching forth unto those things which are before, I press toward the mark for the prize of the high calling of God in Christ Jesus. Let us therefore, as many as be perfect, be thus minded: and if in any thing ye be otherwise minded, God shall reveal even this unto you... What things also you learned and you received, and you heard and you saw in me, these things perform you; and the God of peace shall be with you” (Phil 3:13-15; 4:9).

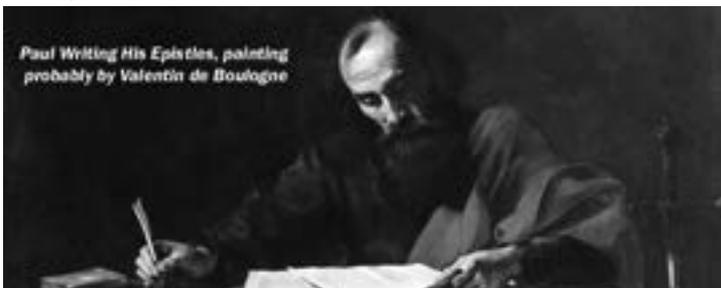
“For I am now ready to be offered, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: Henceforth there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, shall give me at that day: and not to me only, but unto all them also that love his appearing” (2Tim 4:6-8).

What a remarkable man was the apostle Paul! What a wonderful example for us to follow! It will be a delight to meet him in the kingdom. The grace of the Lord Jesus Christ be with us all. Amen.

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Notes:

1. Acts 9:27; 11:22-26; 11:27-30; 12:25-15:35; 1Cor 9:6; Gal 2:1, 9.
2. Acts 9:15-16; 22:21; 26:16-23; Gal 2:2, 7-9; Eph 3:1-13; cf. Acts 28:30-31; 1Cor 15:1-4.
3. Cf. Lev 26:40-46; Deut 30:1-10; Ezek 20:33-44; Hos 2:14-23; Zech 12:9-13:6; Acts 3:19-21; Rom 11:12, 15, 23-32.
4. Cf. Matt 5:11-12; Acts 2:22, 43; 5:12; ct. Matt 24:24; Mark 13:22; 2Thess 2:9.
5. E.g., 1Cor 4:17; 2Cor 12:17-18; Phil 2:25-30; 1Thess 3:1-5; 2Tim 4:12; Philemon 4.
6. See Rom 1:1, 7; 1Cor 1:1-2; 2Cor 1:1; Gal 1:1-2; Eph 1:1; Col 1:1-2; 1Tim 1:1-2; 2Tim 1:1-2; Tit 1:1-4.
7. E.g., Rom 1:9; Eph 1:15-16; Phil 1:3-4; Col 1:3, 9; 1Thess 1:2-3; 2Thess 1:11; 2Tim 1:3
8. I believe that Hebrews was written by Epaphras and is “the epistle from Laodicea” referred to in Col 4:16 (cf. Col 1:3-8; 4:12-13, 15a; Philemon 23). Paul endorses Epaphras and exhorts the two ecclesias to exchange epistles, the one he wrote to Colosse and the one Epaphras wrote to Laodicea, as both are relevant to their common circumstances.



Barnabas and Silas

Where do we begin when a friend we love is not in the Truth? Where do we begin when it is someone we dislike? Where do we begin when an individual, any new brother or sister, accepts the Truth?

Barnabas — Where do I begin?

Barnabas may have been asking that same question when approaching Paul for the first time after his conversion. The first time we meet Barnabas is in Acts 4:31-37:

*“And when they [the apostles] had prayed, the place where they were assembled was shaken. And they were all filled with the Holy Spirit, and they spoke the Word of God with boldness. And the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul. And not one said that any of the things which he possessed was his own. But they had all things common. And the apostles gave witness of the resurrection of the Lord Jesus with great power. And great grace was on them all. For neither was anyone needy among them, for as many as were owners of lands or houses sold them and brought the prices of the things that were sold, and they laid them down at the apostles’ feet. And distribution was made to every man according as he had need. And **Joses, who was surnamed Barnabas by the apostles (which is, being translated, The son of consolation), a Levite, a Cypriot by race, a field being his, selling it, he bore the proceeds and placed them at the apostles’ feet”** (Acts 4:31-37).*

Barnabas was a caring man, a giving man, ready to give up all he had in the service of the Lord Jesus Christ, and we see much of this nature displayed as we continue. Bro. W. H. Boulton suggests that Paul and Barnabas might have been students together in Tarsus (*Paul the Apostle*, pp. 27-28). Barnabas’ first recorded meeting with Paul (Acts 9:27) took place many years after their time in Tarsus. There is a strong possibility that they met or knew of each other before the meeting that is recorded in Acts. Barnabas, like Paul, was not an immediate convert of Christ, at least not until the apostles had reached him as recorded in Acts 4. It is possible that prior to this conversion he was of a similar mindset as was Saul prior to his own. He may have watched his former schoolmate persecuting the Christians with fervor and thought to himself:

“Where can I begin with him?”

There is a simple beauty in the way God works in our lives, always the way He intends, and if Barnabas and Paul had been classmates, then it made Barnabas the perfect candidate to assist Paul in his time of need. The first time Barnabas meets his new brother was after Paul’s life had been threatened. Forced to flee from Damascus, surely depressed and distraught at the resistance, the one thing Paul needed was a friendly face.

In Barnabas’ eyes, this answered his question. He began years ago, at a school for Levites, establishing a connection that would, through God, blossom into a wonderful friendship.

And what can we learn from this? How we conduct ourselves is essential. Barnabas surely had no idea that someone he knew from his schooling would become his travel brother, just as we have no idea who in our lives will become someone just as important. True, we do not know exactly how, or if they knew each other at all, but Barnabas has a connection with Paul that not many others in the ecclesia did and that was enough to create a bond between the two. Barnabas had the same mind, the same speaking abilities, and the same training in such fields that he could empathize with Paul and encourage him.

Barnabas was opposite Paul in many ways. Paul carried the weight of a sullied reputation among the Jews and Gentiles alike. Barnabas was an imposing man, likely good looking and displaying authority. We know this from Acts:

“This one heard Paul speaking; and Paul, looking intently at him, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, said with a loud voice, Stand up on your feet! And he leaped and walked. And seeing what Paul did, the crowd lifted up their voice, saying in Lycaonian, The gods have come down to us, becoming like men. And they called Barnabas Jupiter, and Paul Mercury, because he was the chief speaker. And the priest of Jupiter, being before their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, wishing to sacrifice with the crowds” (Acts 14:9-13).

It is never stated explicitly why the Lycaonians chose to label Barnabas as Jupiter. According to Roman mythology, however, Jupiter was king of the Roman gods. The pagans must have seen Barnabas as a good representation of their lightning hurling idol. And while this does not mean he had a dangerous demeanor or blasphemous attitude, it may speak to his physical nature. Barnabas was strong, thankfully both in body and in spirit. This event in the life of Barnabas brings to mind an often misunderstood element to his character. Paul was the chief speaker, and it seems that the assistants of Paul often are overshadowed by such a powerful orator. This, however, does not mean that Barnabas was in any way a bad speaker. In fact, it seems Barnabas was a well-regarded member of the brethren and his words were highly respected.

Many years prior to their ministry together, and sometime after their first encounter, Paul was yet again called on by Barnabas to accompany him to Antioch. Barnabas’ recommendation of Paul allowed for him to be more widely accepted in the ecclesia. Again, this would never have been possible if their friendship had not already been built. It is likely the Barnabas saw and remembered this zealous Saul from their youth, and felt that his energy was now ready to be directed towards helping, not hindering, Christ’s message. In a way, Barnabas acted as the training wheels that Paul would need to begin his journey — a brother with similar life experiences, and a warm heart.

Barnabas is a great example of the strength we should have when we approach a new brother or sister. He showed Paul love and acceptance in the face of adversity. Paul did not seek out Barnabas, nor did the church send Barnabas to help Paul, rather Barnabas sought Paul of his own accord. Barnabas had no misgivings about his former classmate’s intentions, despite the fearsome reputation Paul had attained.

‘Where do I begin?’ is no longer a cry of helplessness, but of excitement and anticipation of the journey ahead. ‘Where do we begin?’ is a cry of joy, like a family planning a vacation. ‘We will begin in Antioch...’ and from there Paul and Barnabas spread and spoke the truth to all who would hear. His willingness to forgive made him the perfect partner for a budding apostle.

Barnabas stood by Paul as a teacher and guide when Paul needed more direction. Paul quickly rose in leadership and came into his own, and Barnabas stepped back as Paul stepped forward and, before long, the two would separate.

It was Barnabas’ forgiving nature that tore the two apart. When Barnabas asked if they could bring a young man, Mark, with them on a repeat journey to several ecclesias, Paul said no, because Mark had failed them in their time of need. As Bro. Boulton points out (pp. 73-74), it is pointless to state whether Paul was too harsh or if Barnabas was too forgiving; in truth, it was God’s hand at work. Barnabas was a strong speaker and a leader and God separated them so that both could grow and spread the truth separately to more brethren.

Silas — How can I help you?

In the wake of separation, Paul chose to bring with him a brother by the name of Silas. If Barnabas was the brother to introduce Paul to the ecclesias, Silas’ role was to prove to the new believers that what Paul and the other apostles were preaching to them was the truth. Silas is first introduced in Acts:

*“Then it pleased the apostles and elders, with the whole church, to send chosen men from them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas; Judas, whose last name was Barsabas; and **Silas, chief men among the brothers**. And they wrote these things by their hand: The apostles and elders and brothers send greeting to the brothers, from the nations in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia. Because we have heard that certain ones who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, Be circumcised and keep the law! (to whom we gave no such command); it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have given up their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. Therefore we have sent Judas and Silas, who will also announce to you the same things by word” (Acts 15: 22-27).*

Silas was one of the chief men in the brotherhood, hand chosen to travel with Paul and Barnabas. Yet, for all his prominence in the ecclesia, Silas often comes in second in Scripture. When paired with another of the apostles, Silas only ever is mentioned first with regards to Timothy. It may be that the writers of the New Testament just wanted to put the apostles in alphabetical order but, to counter that point, remember that Barnabas and Paul quickly switched to Paul and Barnabas when the leadership roles were reversed. This leads us to a theory as to why Silas is so often mentioned second. You see, while Barnabas specialized in early development (similar to Paul), Silas was a confirmer or reinforcer of the Truth. He came behind or after a brother had introduced the Truth, and proved that what they had been saying was accurate, or at the very least believed by the whole ecclesia.

“And when they had read it, they rejoiced at the comfort. And Judas and Silas, also being prophets themselves, exhorted the brothers with many words and confirmed them. And remaining for a time, they were let go in peace from the brothers to the apostles. But it pleased Silas to remain there” (Acts 15:31-34).

Keep in mind, we live in a beautiful age of easy contact. If we want to make sure we have a clear understanding of the Truth, we can refer to a number of solid works by brethren and compare thoughts via email and phone. But in an age where first principles were **just** being introduced, how were the ecclesias to believe that anything Paul was preaching was what the rest of the churches believed? They would look forward to other teachers, those that would come later or, as often in Silas' case, would stay behind. In this case, Judas and Silas would confirm what Paul and Barnabas had said was true and when Judas and Silas taught the same principles, it would have been absolutely clear that what had been said before was truth.

This is not a role to be taken lightly. As we know, after he had left a town, Paul had to deal with brethren coming through that town preaching something completely different. It was essential that Silas, and brethren like him, would come to the ecclesia preaching the same message, without it being polluted.

Silas was also a supporter. On several occasions, even while traveling with Paul, Silas would stay behind to make sure that the ecclesias would be able to function without his presence. It is important to note that he was not asked to stay but in many occasions made the independent choice. He stayed behind to work with an ecclesia, to make sure they truly understood what Paul had preached.

It is likely that Silas comes first in regards to this young brother, Timothy, because Silas was so good at building up what Paul had started. He became a Barnabas figure to Timothy while Paul continued on to Athens. He prepared Timothy, just as Barnabus had prepared Paul, to eventually go on missionaries of his own.

Once Silas reaches Athens and travels to Macedonia to meet Paul, his name disappears from the records. After this point, Luke (the writer of the Acts) begins referring to the group in the first person plural (we), implying that he had joined the traveling ministry. Silas would have been a valuable asset to the group, strengthening and reaffirming their faith. And it was in these times that Paul would truly need some support. Shipwrecks, prison (again), beatings, harsh debates all would take their toll on Paul and he did not need another leader like himself by his side. He needed someone to confirm what he was saying was true and right. Silas provided this.

If we are to take anything from these two brothers, it should be this: God chooses who He will to get the job done. He knows what we need, who we need, when we need them. These two wonderful brethren were picked by God because He knew how they could help build His servant Paul. No, they were not the focus, but then neither was Paul. He was a messenger, an apostle, an ambassador for Christ, just as they were, just as we are.

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Titus

*“Whether any do enquire of Titus, he is my partner and fellowhelper concerning you: or our brethren be enquired of, they are the **messengers** [Apostles] of the churches, and the glory of Christ” (2Cor 8:23).*

Who was Titus?

Titus is clearly a most important individual in the spreading of the gospel: and indeed he is referred to as an *apostolos* in the passage above, so he is included in our survey of The Apostles. Even a cursory read of Paul’s letter to Titus reveals that the circumstances and issues being addressed are very familiar to the brotherhood in these last days — travelling near and far to spread the gospel of salvation; establishing administrative arrangements and procedures in new ecclesias; ensuring a proper doctrinal foundation for ecclesial growth and godly behavior; making clear distinctions between the ecclesia and the world; handling controversies with antagonists of the Gospel; and more besides. To put the point in contemporary language, it’s as though the great apostle was writing a CBMA handbook, or an ecclesial guide or manual for the ecclesial elders, and indeed for all of us, to have within easy reach — inspired guidelines, not only for Titus the great preacher and ecclesial administrator, but for us too in these far off days. The timelessness of Scripture is revealed yet again. We are, or should be, the modern Titus’s being guided on how we should handle our great tasks in the Master’s service.

Who, then, was Titus? Well, it’s perhaps puzzling to find that the name of one so respected by the apostle Paul does not appear in the Acts of the Apostles. It’s possible that he was the person recorded as Justus in Acts 18:7, a name prefixed by Titus in some early manuscripts. But such surmising is not especially fruitful. Much more important to note is that Titus appears many times in Paul’s correspondence, especially in his letters to the Corinthian and Galatian ecclesias, reflecting the important role played by Titus in that early preaching to the Gentiles.

Scripture reveals that Titus was a Gentile disciple (Gal 2:3). He was very likely a native of Antioch in Syria, the great center of early Gentile Christianity. It was also likely that he met Paul there, and was taught the Truth by him, becoming his *“true child in the common faith”* (Titus 1:4). He accompanied Paul and Barnabas on the journey to Jerusalem for the council meeting on the *“Gentile controversy”* (Gal 2:1). Being a Gentile, Titus *“was not compelled to be circumcised”* (Gal 2:3). Subsequently, Titus probably accompanied Paul on some of his missionary travels into the Gentile world, including to Galatia.

Messenger to Corinth

Into the able and discreet hands of his friend, Paul entrusted his first letter to the Corinthians, with its stern rebuke of serious abuses affecting morality. While Timothy was sent to Corinth about the same time, his terms of reference seem to have been related to reconciliation rather than controversy (1Cor. 16:10–11). The role of Titus would make considerable demands upon him for tact and firmness of decision in persuading the vain and unpredictable Corinthians to accept the admonitions of Paul.

The mission to the Corinthians¹

The Apostle Paul was very anxious about the reception of his first letter to the Corinthians, especially as Titus failed to keep his appointment at Troas on the journey to Macedonia. He says that he had *“no rest for his spirit, because he found not Titus his brother”* (2Cor 2:12–13). Further on in his journey, however, Titus met Paul with good tidings of the success of his mission. In a reference to this in the second letter to Corinth, we are permitted a glimpse into the close relationship existing between the older and younger man, and the strong character of the young disciple himself.

“Nevertheless God, that comforteth those that are cast down, comforted us by the coming of Titus; And not by his coming only, but by the consolation wherewith he was comforted in you, when he told us your earnest desire, your mourning, your fervent mind toward me; so that I rejoiced the more” (2Cor 7:6–7).

Titus thus played an especially important role at the time of the crisis in the Corinthian ecclesia. As we see, Titus is reported as bringing reassuring news to Paul in Macedonia that the troubles within the Corinthian ecclesia were being resolved. Titus, clearly a fine ambassador and diplomat in the Lord’s service, with a concern and affection for the Corinthian ecclesia (2Cor 8:16), was delighted to bring Paul such comforting news (2Cor 7:13–16). Titus later returned to Corinth, commissioned by Paul to complete the organization of the welfare collection system there (2Cor. 8:6). In appreciation, Paul describes Titus to the Corinthians as *“my partner and fellow worker in your service”* (2Cor 8:23). Paul especially commends Titus for not *“taking advantage”* of the Corinthians in any way (2Cor 12:18).

Several years later, Paul, following his release from imprisonment, took Titus with him to Crete (Titus 1:5). He apparently left him there to assist with the growth and organization of the Cretan ecclesia. This ecclesia was finding itself in a very difficult and generally hostile social environment (1:10), in which Titus needed the greatest support.

The Cretan populace was notoriously unsteady, insincere and quarrelsome; they were given to greed, falsehood and drunkenness in no ordinary degree, and the Jews who had settled among them appear to have exceeded the natives in immorality. Among such a people it was no easy office which Titus had to sustain when commissioned to carry forward the work Paul had begun; that of setting in order the *“things that are wanting”* in the ecclesias. This involved the *“stopping the mouths of unruly and vain talkers”*; *“speaking the things which become sound doctrine”*; and *“rejecting heretics”*.

“For there are many unruly and vain talkers and deceivers, specially they of the circumcision: Whose mouths must be stopped, who subvert whole houses, teaching things which they ought not, for filthy lucre’s sake. One of themselves, even a prophet of their own, said, The Cretians are always liars, evil beasts, slow bellies. This witness is true. Wherefore rebuke them sharply, that they may be sound in the faith” (Titus 1:10–13).

Of a practical and willing turn, Titus was doing well, manfully striving to overcome the obstacles before him. It called for a no nonsense approach, to inculcate and

organize an orderly, disciplined and useful Christian life in all ages and classes. It appears that Titus received Paul's letter in Crete soon after the great apostle had left the island. Subsequently, Paul encouraged Titus (3:12) to join him at Nicopolis, on the west coast of the Aegean Peninsula, when relieved in Crete by either Artemas or Tychicus. Later still, 2Tim. 4:10 refers to a visit by Titus to Dalmatia (modern Croatia). Non-Biblical sources (Eusebius) assume his later return to Crete, describing him as a bishop or elder until his old age.

Paul, therefore, knew Titus well. (It is argued by Bro. John Carter that Titus was, in fact, the natural brother of Luke.)² Although he was not a constant and close companion, as were Timothy, Luke, and Silas, he clearly relied on him greatly, including sensitive and difficult assignments. Paul appreciated his fellowship and assistance — especially in dealing with the turmoil in the Corinthian ecclesia, and now with the difficult social and ethical environment in Crete — and was anxious to encourage him. Paul had no need to remind Titus of basic doctrinal truths which he and Timothy, the recipients of the Pastoral Epistles, knew well.

Searching questions for ourselves

It would be difficult to find such examples of ardent and constant friendships employed on so wide a scale and to such noble ends as appears in the Christian career of the Apostle Paul. Such a contemplation prompts some searching questions in regard to our own chosen associates. Who are these companions? What are the links which bind us to them? What benefits do we derive from them, and through them confer on others? Our companions receive our influence and reflect our feelings and habits of thought. Through them we leave our impress on society and they regulate in measure our attitudes in the home, the work-a-day world and in the ecclesia.

However broad our views of life and its associations, if our main interests center around anything less noble than Jesus Christ, our discipleship will fail of its best. Loyal allegiance to the Son of God is the one link that should unite us, the one strong bond that will give strength and meaning to lasting friendships and lead us to *“adorn the doctrine of God our Saviour in all things”* (Titus 2:10). May it be our aim so to testify and minister that we may be good stewards of God's manifold grace, ambassadors through whom God Himself may entreat men and women to be reconciled to Him.

“For the grace of God that bringeth salvation hath appeared to all men, Teaching us that, denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly, in this present world; Looking for that blessed hope, and the glorious appearing of the great God and our Saviour Jesus Christ; Who gave himself for us, that he might redeem us from all iniquity, and purify unto himself a peculiar people, zealous of good works” (Titus 2:11-14).

This article based in part on an article by Ron Hicks (Washington DC), which appeared in the Lampstand.

Notes:

1. Some of this is from *The Christadelphian*, 1983, p 409
2. See *The Christadelphian*, 1960, p 296

Apostles — Little Known, but Vital

Introduction

Apostles - of the Twelve

Bartholomew or Nathaniel

James the son of Alphaeus

Simon who was called the Zealot

Philip the Apostle

Mathias, selected to replace Judas Iscariot

Persons called Apostle

Andronicus and Junia

Rom 16:7

Epaphroditus

Phil 2:25

Apollos

1Cor 4:9

Some of the apostles listed in the opening article are known only by their recorded name in the New Testament. These individuals are often overlooked, but the context in which they are named indicates their vital importance in the first century ecclesias. It is perhaps surprising so little is recorded about several of the twelve apostles, but we can often deduce much from

the context and their names. Thus we will deal with them in two groups: first the little known of the twelve apostles, including Matthias, selected by the other disciples to replace Judas Iscariot, and then the others designated as Apostles later in the New Testament.

Bartholomew (or Nathaniel)¹

We must assume these two names represent the same individual for these reasons:

- 1) Bartholomew is not itself a first name. Bar means son of, and Bartholomew probably means son of Tolmai. Bartholomew must, therefore, have had a first name.
- 2) The first three Gospels never mention Nathanael, and the fourth Gospel never mentions Bartholomew. In the two passages where Nathanael is mentioned in the fourth Gospel he is in the company of apostles and is spoken of in a way that makes it very likely that he was an apostle (John 1:43-51; 21:2).
- 3) In the lists of the twelve in the first three Gospels and in Acts the, names of Philip and Bartholomew always occur together, as if it was natural to speak of them together; and in the fourth Gospel we learn that it was Philip who brought Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:45). Since, then, Philip is closely connected with Bartholomew and Nathanael, Bartholomew and Nathanael are the same person.

Our knowledge of Nathanael comes from two passages in the Fourth Gospel. Nathanael came from Cana in Galilee (John 21:2). He was a friend of Philip, and when Philip discovered Jesus he went straight to Nathanael and communicated his discovery to him. It was Philip's belief that in Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph, he had discovered the Messiah to whom all the Law and the prophets pointed. Nathanael was skeptical, and found it hard to believe that so great a figure could emerge from a place like Nazareth. Philip did not waste time and breathe in argument; he invited Nathanael to come and meet Jesus for himself. Jesus greeted Nathanael with the words: "*Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile!*" Nathanael asked how Jesus knew who he was. Jesus answered that before Philip had called him he had seen him under the fig tree.

The point of this saying is that for many people in Palestine the fig tree was a kind of private room. It was the custom to have a fig tree at the door of the cottage. In Palestine the houses of the poorer people usually had only one room; and often, when they sought quietness to pray and to meditate, they sought privacy beneath the shade of the fig tree. In effect Jesus was saying to Nathanael, "Nathanael, I saw you at prayer, in your private devotion in the only secret place you have, there I saw into the secret and private places of your heart; and I know the seeking that is there." It is as if Jesus, like God himself, understood Nathanael's thought afar off. (See Psa 139:2.) To Nathanael it seemed an amazing thing that anyone should have the Divine power to read the secrets of his heart. "Rabbi," he said in awed amazement, "thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel." Thereupon Jesus promised Nathanael even greater things; he promised him that he would be a witness of the ultimate triumph and glory of the end (John 1:43-51). Meager as our information about Nathanael is, it is nonetheless true that when we put it together, the character of Nathanael clearly emerges.

- 1) Nathanael was a searcher of the Scriptures and a seeker after truth. The way in which Philip put his announcement is the proof of that: "We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write" (John 1:45). The clear implication is that Philip and Nathanael had spent long hours poring over the words of Scripture, searching for information as to what the Messiah must be like and as to when he should come.
- 2) Nathanael was a man of complete sincerity. He was an Israelite indeed in whom there was no guile (John 1:47). The proof of that is his willingness to be convinced. At first he was unwilling to believe that any good thing could come out of Nazareth, but when he was confronted with Jesus, his prejudices and his presuppositions vanished, and he believed.
- 3) Nathanael was a man of prayer. It was under the fig tree that Jesus saw him (John 1:48). The implication of the story is that Nathanael spent many an hour there.
- 4) Nathanael was a man of staying power. He was still there with the apostles after the agony of the Cross (John 21:2). "Thou art the King of Israel," he had said. The man whom he called king found a cross for his throne, but Nathanael still believed.

James the son of Alphaeus

James, the son of Alphaeus, is the apostle about whom we know the least. The New Testament tells us nothing but his name (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13), and even legend and tradition are almost silent about him. When we study closely all that the New Testament says and implies about this James, we may come to five conclusions.

- 1) James is identified as the son of Alphaeus. The first three Gospels all tell us about the call of Matthew (Matt. 9:9; Mark 2:14; Luke 5:27, 28). For our present purposes it is the accounts of Mark which is the most significant. Matthew says: "And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me." There is no doubt that

Matthew and Levi are the same person. Since that is so, the name of Matthew's father was also Alphaeus; and Matthew and this James, most likely, would have been brothers.

- 2) In the lists of Matthew and Mark the last four apostles to be named are James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot (Matt 10:3-4; Mark 3:18-19). In Luke's lists in his gospel and Acts the last four disciples are James the son of Alphaeus, Simon Zelotes, Judas the brother of James and Judas Iscariot (6:15-16; Acts 1:13). It is therefore certain that Judas the brother of James and Thaddaeus are the same person.
- 3) Since these four are so consistently named together, there must have been some common factor which bound them into a group. Simon, we know, was a Zealot, a fanatical Jewish patriot; Judas Iscariot, it is probable, was also such a patriot. There is thus a considerable amount of evidence that Thaddaeus was also a Zealot. So then, Simon, Thaddaeus or Judas, and Judas Iscariot were all most probably Zealots. It must, then, be a reasonable deduction that the fourth member of this unaltering group shared the sympathies of the other three. It must be regarded as probable that James, the son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, Thaddaeus or Judas, and Judas Iscariot were bound together by the bond of intense and fanatical patriotism, and it may well be that all four had once belonged to the Zealot party. So we have our fact and our reasonable deduction. Matthew and James the son of Alphaeus were brothers. James was very probably a Jewish nationalist of the fieriest type, and both were members of the apostolic company.

So it could be that the fact that Matthew and James were both members of the twelve is one of the great illustrations that Jesus came not only to reconcile men to God, but also to reconcile them to each other.

Simon the Zealot

Simon the Zealot is a man about whom we know so little that even his name produces problems. The New Testament tells us nothing but his name, and in the KJV the designation by which he is called differs from place to place. In Matthew and Mark he is Simon the Canaanite (Matt 10:4; Mark 3:18); in two other places he is Simon who is called Zelotes (Luke 6:15; Acts 1:13). In the Luke passages there is no difficulty, for Simon is called by the Greek word zelotes, which means a zealot. The problem lies in the Matthew and Mark passages. There the Greek manuscripts have two readings. The later manuscripts, which the KJV followed, read Kananites, which the KJV translates Canaanite. That is quite certainly wrong. The Greek for Canaan is Chanaan, and the adjective from it is Chananaios. The reading of the best and most ancient manuscripts is Kananaios, which is the word that the RV and most modern versions transliterate correctly Cananaean: note the NIV has "Zealot". This word is derived from the Hebrew verb kana, which means to be jealous; and it was used for those who were jealous for the Law; zelotes is precisely the same word in Greek; it also means one who is jealous. And in this case the jealousy is of those who were jealous for the sanctity and the honor of the Law. Cananaean is the correct reading, and Cananaean and Zealot are the same word, the first in Hebrew, the second in Greek.

It is this which gives us our key to Simon. We know nothing about him personally, but if he was a Zealot, we know very well what kind of beliefs he once held and what kind of man he once was, for we have ample evidence to form a picture of the Zealots and their characteristic beliefs. They were fanatical Jewish nationalists, who had a heroic disregard for the sufferings involved in the struggle for what they regarded as the purity of their faith.

The constitution of the twelve presents us with a situation which is nothing less than a miracle in personal relationships. Within that society there was Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot — Matthew who had accepted the political situation, and who was profitably engaged in help to administer it, and Simon who would have assassinated any Roman whom he could reach and would have plunged a dagger into any Jew who dared to co-operate with the Romans.

After the crucifixion Simon was still there (Acts 1:13). Here is the proof that Simon had come to see that the dagger must abdicate for the Lord. Simon had dedicated his life to reformation by power politics, and yet he had come to accept the way of sacrificial love.

Philip the Apostle

The apostle who was the first to be called (John 1:43) is often confused with Philip the evangelist: it is hoped the latter will be the subject of a character study in an upcoming issue.

We only have four records of his appearance in the New Testament (apart from his presence in all the lists of the twelve apostles). Each help us to understand the character of this apostle. Even if he had never again appeared in our record, he would forever be known as the first to whom it was said *“follow me”*!

- 1) After his call by Jesus, Philip's first action was to find Nathanael and to tell him of this Jesus whom he had discovered and who had discovered him. He told Nathanael that they had found him of whom Moses and the prophets spoke. But Nathanael was skeptical. *“Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth?”* he asked. Philip did not argue; he answered, *“Come and see”* (John 1:45-46). This incident tells us two things about Philip. First, he had the missionary instinct. The moment he had found Jesus Christ for himself, he was determined to share Christ with others. Second, Philip had the right approach to the skeptic. He did not argue; he may have been well aware that Nathanael could have sunk him in any battle of argument. He simply said, *“Come and see!”* Argument often only obscures; confrontation sweeps away a man's defenses.
- 2) The next time we meet Philip is at the feeding of the five thousand. It is to Philip that Jesus addresses the question, *“Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* And Philip answers, *“Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them that every one of them may take a little”* (John 6:5-7). It has been suggested that the answer of Philip comes so immediately and so unhesitatingly that he must already have been calculating in his own mind how this multitude could be fed. Maybe Philip was calculating the irreducible

minimum necessary to give every person in the crowd a bite! A denarius was a working man's pay for a day. It is as if Philip said, "A year's pay would not buy enough to give this crowd a bite apiece!"

- 3) The next time we meet Philip is in the last days of Jesus' life. Certain Greeks had come to Jerusalem, and they came to Philip with a request to see Jesus. They probably came to Philip because Philip is a typically Greek name, and because they thought that their best chance of establishing contact with Jesus was through a man with such a name. Philip's reaction was to go to Andrew and to tell him; and only then did Andrew and Philip bring the Greeks to Jesus (John 12:20-22). Here we see Philip as the man who disliked responsibility, but he knew his own weakness, and in that he was a wise man.
- 4) The last time we meet Philip is in the Upper Room. Jesus was talking about the Father and how he was going to the Father. Philip was a man for whom faith was difficult. "Lord," he said, "*shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us.*" Philip received what is maybe the greatest answer Jesus ever gave anyone: "*He that hath seen me hath seen the Father*" (John 14:8-9). For Philip, to believe involved to see. But Philip did not bottle up and restrain his questioning mind. He took his question to Jesus; and Philip that night learned that if we want to see what God is like we must look at Jesus — and that is the central truth of the Christian religion.
- 5) And so Philip disappears off the scene. We learn of his subsequent activities elsewhere than in the Bible, but it is clear his faith endured to the end.

Matthias

Matthias, of course, was elected to take the place of Judas Iscariot. The mode of election of the twelfth apostle was somewhat remarkable. First, "*they appointed two*" who had the needful qualifications, Matthias and Joseph Barsabbas. It is remarkable that apparently there were only two who were deemed qualified. To decide between these two there was now recourse to the drawing of lots, and Matthias was selected. Nothing more is known about these two men except what can be inferred from Joseph's double cognomen: Barsabbas–Justus. The first name here identifies a zealot for Sabbath keeping, and the second one who was a dedicated observer of the Law of Moses, as also was Judas Barsabbas (Acts 15:22). In view of the Judaist tensions and contentions which beset the early church before very long, it may well be imagined what awkward situations would have arisen if such as one as Joseph had joined the Twelve.

There are those who express doubts about this selection process. After all, it is argued, this method was one of human choice before the outpouring of the Holy Spirit. Ought not Peter and the rest to have waited for a lead from heaven in this matter? And since, before long, Paul was so emphatically an apostle — the "youngest" of the Twelve, should not the selection of Matthias be invalid? However, these arguments have to give way before the clear witness of the inspired text in the rest of Acts: "*Peter stood up with the eleven*" (2:14); "*the twelve called the multitude unto them*" (6:2). Nor is it likely that Luke would have been guided to narrate this selection procedure in such detail if indeed it was a mistake from the start.

His name, Matthias, means Gift of Yah, and also Given to Yah, the secondary sense being seen in his wholehearted service to his God. It is to be hoped that all parties concerned participated with the understanding of the appropriateness of Matthias. Maybe their names will not be found in New Jerusalem with the Twelve, but we can be sure Matthias was deserving of his selection.

Andronicus and Junia (Junias)*

In Paul's commendation of the saints he sought to commend (Rom 16:6) were Andronicus and Junia. He gives a four-fold sketch of these fellow-laborers "*My kinsmen — My fellow-prisoners — Who are of note among the apostles — Who also were in Christ before me.*" Kinsmen is a title Paul gives to six persons in this chapter, and it probably implies that they were members of the same nation — Jewish as Paul was. My fellow-prisoners is a phrase suggesting that at some time or another they shared imprisonment with Paul: Paul's "*fellow-captives in Christ's war.*"

"*Who are of note among the apostles*", can mean one of two things: either they were distinguished as apostles themselves, being included in "all the apostles" (1Cor 15:7), or Andronicus and Junia were the most highly esteemed by the apostolic circle, being honored above others for their toil and character.

"*Who also were in Christ before me.*" When these two apostles were converted to Christ we are not told, but from them Paul had heard of such a transaction. Andronicus was one of the traveling evangelists or missionaries who preached the Gospel from place to place, and was likely one of the most prominent and successful of these itinerant envoys of the Early Church. Together with Junia, they must have made a powerful team in the spreading of the gospel.

*Whether Junia/Junias was a male or female has been the subject of much debate, with the Ancients as well as modern scholars being evenly divided. If indeed Junia was female, it is attractive to regard the pair as husband and wife, in the fashion of Priscilla and Aquila.

Apollos

When Paul wrote about the apostles who were made a spectacle unto the world and to angels and to men, he includes Apollos along with himself in the wider apostolate (1Cor 4:6,9). This cultured and educated Jew of the Alexandrian race (Acts 18:24), came into contact with Paul while he was in Ephesus during his third missionary journey. Luke gives us a full account of the remarkable ability of Apollos to expound the Scriptures, and how, after his private tuition from two godly souls, Aquila and Priscilla, he mightily convinced the Jews of the Messiahship of Jesus (Acts 18:24-28). Paul seems to allude to Apollos' eloquence, wisdom, and letter of commendation in defense of his own position as an apostle with authority (1Cor 3:1-8,22). The last glimpse we have of Apollos is when he is recommended along with Zenas the lawyer to Titus (Titus 3:13), who was then on a missionary journey through Crete and was probably the bearer of this epistle addressed to him by Paul (Titus 1:5).

There has been a tendency to represent Paul and Apollos as rivals based on Paul's stricture regarding the folly of partisanship: "Are you for Paul or Apollos?" But the hearts of these two workers were almost certainly knit together in a bond nothing could break. That there must have been something refreshing about the unique ministry of Apollos may be gathered from the way both Luke and Paul compared him to water. Luke, thought of Apollos as "boiling hot" in earnest spirituality, for this is what the word fervent means. Paul, the great missionary statesman, spoke of Apollos' words as cool streams upon a burned-up garden, "Apollos watered" (Acts 18:25; 1Cor 3:6). The drooping converts of Corinth, so spiritually parched, were being revived under the preaching of Apollos. His fellow-apostle, Paul, rejoiced in having gained such a capable partner. Within the ecclesia today there are many drooping, withering plants in dire need of watering, but their case is forlorn if the ecclesia lacks those like Apollos, who can water God's garden.

Epaphroditus

One cannot read the epistles of Paul, without realizing what a genius for friendship he had.

All we know of Epaphroditus, the Macedonian, is recorded in two vivid passages in Paul's letter to the Philippian church, but from these brief sketches we gain a good deal of insight into the life and character of this brother who was so precious to Paul the aged (Phil 2:25; 4:18).

Paul shows for us the true character of Epaphroditus, who was certainly one of the most loyal and devoted servants of the Lord mentioned in the Pauline epistles.

- 1) He was a brother: in all likelihood Epaphroditus was a convert of Paul, but he certainly created for himself a singular place in Paul's affection. With deep feeling he could speak of him as "My Brother".
- 2) My companion in labor: Epaphroditus was among Paul's best helpers, being among those gifts of our Lord to his ecclesia, which Paul describes as helps (1Cor 12:28).
- 3) My fellowsoldier: *"for he nearly died for the work of Christ, risking his life to complete your service to me he was sick unto death"* (Phil 2:30 RSV). He considered his life worth nothing, but sought to finish his race to aid Paul
- 4) Your messenger (apostle) and minister: a brother honored with the apostolic gifts, so he could indeed minister to the beginning ecclesias.

He was therefore an example for us: he struggled through sickness, but never lost his zeal for the Truth.

Peter Hemingray (Detroit Royal Oak)

Notes:

1. The source I have found the most helpful about the twelve Apostles is William Barclay's little book "The Master's Men", long out of print.

The Apostles in the Gospel of John

John's gospel is different

Matthew, Mark and Luke are called the “Synoptic” gospels, because the events of Jesus’ life and ministry are seen from roughly similar perspectives. The Gospel of John is different. There is no account of the birth of the Savior, but an account of the spiritual rebirth of those who “received him.”

“But as many as received him, to them gave he the right to become children of God, even to them that believe on his name: which were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God” (John 1:12-13).

John alone omits Jesus’ words about the bread and wine at the Last Supper, but alone records Jesus’ teaching about bread from Heaven:

“I am the living bread which came down out of heaven: if any man eat of this bread, he shall live for ever: yea and the bread which I will give is my flesh, for the life of the world . . . He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood hath eternal life; and I will raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is meat indeed, and my blood is drink indeed. He that eateth my flesh and drinketh my blood abideth in me, and I in him” (John 6:51, 54-56).

The Synoptic gospels all record Jesus’ saying that we must take up the cross and follow him. John does not, but illustrates the principle in reporting the new commandment:

“This is my commandment, that ye love one another, even as I have loved you. Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends” (John 15:12-13).

John’s account of the life of Christ is less comprehensive than the Synoptics, but invites us to a deep contemplation of the events recorded. John highlights Jesus’ involvement in the spiritual development of the apostles, his authority as Lord and Master, his love in calling them friends (15:13-15). John alone recounts the foot-washing:

“So when he had washed their feet, and taken his garments, and sat down again, he said unto them, ‘Know ye what I have done to you? Ye call me, Master, and, Lord: and ye say well; for so I am. If I then, the Lord and the Master, have washed your feet, ye also ought to wash one another’s feet. For I have given you an example, that ye also should do as I have done to you.’” (John 13:12-15).

John alone records the prayer of Jesus on the way to Gethsemane (John 17). Verses 6-19 of this prayer are for the disciples; the remainder (17:20-26) is for us. The focus and goal of the gospel is given in the last verses of John 20:

“And many other signs truly did Jesus in the presence of his disciples, which are not written in this book: But these are written, that ye might believe that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of God; and that believing ye might have life through his name” (John 20:30-31).

In this article we consider some of the unique aspects of John’s gospel in its portrayal of the apostles. We do so bearing in mind that John wrote his gospel so that we may believe, and in hope that our belief can spring up to eternal life through Jesus’ name.

	Peter	Andrew	James	John	Phillip	Nathanael	Thomas	Matthew	James Ben Alphaeus	Thaddeus	Simon Zelotes	Judas Iscariot
Matt	25	2	5	3	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	5
Mark	23	4	12	10	1	1	1	2	1	1	1	3
Luke	29	1	7	7	1	1	1	3	1	1	1	4
John	38	4	1	5	11	5	8	0	0	1	0	8
Acts	56	1	4	10	1	1	1	1	1	1	1	2

Table 1: Number of verses mentioning apostles, by book.

Nathanael is referred to as “Bartholomew” in the Synoptics; James and John are not mentioned by name in John, although it is normally assumed that the “beloved Disciple” is John. Thaddeus is “Judas son of James” in Luke and “Judas, not Iscariot” in John

The first five

John’s gospel begins with John the Baptist, “sent from God” (1:6), bearing witness of Christ (1:15). Two of his disciples see him gazing at Jesus, hear his words “Behold, the Lamb of God”, and follow him (1:36-40). One is identified as Andrew, brother of Peter; the other is not named. It is likely that this other is John, the author of the gospel, who refers to himself only as “the disciple whom Jesus loved,” and whose delicacy is such that the only reference to himself and his brother is as “the sons of Zebedee” (21:2). The two accompany Jesus to his lodging “and abode with him that day.” Nothing is recorded of that day, but its profound effect is evident in what follows: Andrew finds his brother Peter and says “We have found the Messiah!”

Natural incredulity yielded to the evident conviction and enthusiasm of brother and friend, and Peter himself went to meet Christ (1:42). Once again we are told little of the encounter, except that Jesus “looked at him” — not a glance but a gaze, a steady and fixed look¹ — and said that Peter would be known as Cephas, “the Stone.” No words of Peter’s are recorded; no response is given, but further explanation is deemed unnecessary. From this time on, Peter is a disciple and an apostle.

It seems safe to assume that Philip was a friend of Peter, John and Andrew; that Jesus heard of him through them (1:44). Jesus sought Philip (1:43) and said “Follow me.” As with Peter, there is no record of a direct response. But that Philip joined the previous three is evident from his words to Nathanael: “We have found him of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write. . . .”

In these three episodes, the sparseness of the record speaks volumes. A skilled musical composer uses silence artfully; the best painters can shape impressions with few strokes of the brush. So it is with the gospel of John. Think of those who, sent to arrest Jesus, returned empty-handed (7:45-46). Challenged for their failure they could only say “Never man spake like this man.” It was explanation enough. Such is the effect of the Master. His sheep know his voice (do we?) and forsaking all, follow him (10:3-4,16).

The record of Nathanael's first encounter with Christ is more detailed than that of the previous four, but still tantalizingly spare (1:45-51). Jesus speaks first, greeting Nathanael as *"an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile."* Nathanael, taken aback, responds *"How do you know me?"* Jesus' response, that he had seen Nathanael when he was under the fig tree before Philip's call, was enough to convince Nathanael: *"Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel."*

Jesus' next words, alluding to Jacob's ladder, are often laid together with his reference to Nathanael as without "guile." Jacob's name and history bear witness to something less than a guileless character. It is supposed that Nathanael was contemplating the life of Jacob when Jesus saw him, and that this awareness of his inmost thoughts was the basis of Nathanael's conviction. This may be the case — if it please God, some day we will meet Nathanael, and ask him personally! But regardless of the explanation, the power of Jesus' presence and words is manifest, as on so many other occasions. *"Whom seek ye?"* he said to the mob sent to arrest him (18:4-5). *"Jesus of Nazareth"* they replied. His simple response *"I am he"* had the power of a blow: *"they went backward, and fell to the ground"* (18:6).

So Nathanael became a disciple of the Lord, joining Peter and Andrew, John and Philip. There is no further specific reference to him, except as among the seven on the remarkable morning which began with Peter saying *"I go a fishing"* (21:3). Nathanael shared the breakfast of bread and freshly cooked fish prepared by the Lord himself (21:12-13). That blessed morning surely prefigures another day, described by the Lord this way:

"Blessed are those servants, whom the Lord when he cometh shall find watching: verily I say unto you, that he shall gird himself, and make them sit down to meat, and shall come and serve them" (Luke 12:37).

Thomas

Table 1 highlights a difference between John and the Synoptics. Philip, Nathanael and Thomas are only mentioned in lists of names in the Synoptics, but John gives glimpses of their experiences and spiritual development. John tells us it was Philip that Jesus tested, asking where they could buy bread to feed the 5000 (6:5-7); that it was Philip to whom certain Greek proselytes came *"saying, 'Sir, we would see Jesus'"* (12:20-21); that it was Philip who said *"Show us the Father,"* prompting Jesus' response *"Have I been so long time with you, and dost thou not know me, Philip? he that hath seen me hath seen the Father; how sayest thou, 'Shew us the Father?'"*

Similarly, all that we know about Thomas, we know from the Gospel of John. He is best known as the "Doubting Thomas" (20:19-29) who would not believe the risen Lord had met with the other apostles. Luke's account of that very meeting (Luke 24:36-49) says those present *"were terrified and affrighted, and supposed that they beheld a spirit"*; that Jesus showed them his hands and feet and urged them to *"handle me, and see"* and that still *"they believed not for joy."* Perhaps we have been too hard on Thomas, who was not present and desired the same proofs. A week later Jesus gave those same proofs to Thomas, and his response was unqualified conviction *"My Lord and my God!"* Jesus said to him *"Because thou hast seen me, thou hast*

believed: blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed" (20:29). If there is reproach in the words, it is mild reproach; the emphasis is on the blessedness of those who, having not had their doubts so convincingly set aside, still believe.

The picture of Thomas as dithering and irresolute does not fit with our first introduction to the man in John 11. Jesus and disciples had withdrawn to Peræa, the region "beyond Jordan" (John 10:40) after repeated attempts on his life (8:59; 10:31,39). Word came from Bethany, "Lord, behold, he whom thou lovest is sick." Lazarus was dying, and Jesus knew it. He must return to raise him "for the glory of God, that the Son of God may be glorified thereby." The disciples all opposed the return to dangerous territory: all but one, that is. Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (11:16). The words may have been imperfectly thought out, like Peter's unmeasured assertion that he would die rather than deny Jesus (echoed by 10 other disciples: Matt 26:35). But they are not the words of a coward, a ditherer, a doubter, and they received no rebuke from Jesus. They were the words of a loyal follower.

In light of this the epithet "Doubting Thomas" seems unfair. Yet some point to the thrice repeated phrase "Thomas, called Didymus," offering the explanation that Didymus means "the Twin" in Greek, and commentary to the effect that this means he was a "double-minded man, unstable in all his ways." There is a simpler explanation. "Thomas" also means "the Twin" in Hebrew; John's gospel was written to a predominantly Gentile audience and thus includes the name by which he was known among Gentiles.

The disciple Jesus loved²

Our consideration of the apostles in the gospel of John could not be complete without mention of John himself. He is "the disciple whom Jesus loved" mentioned as "reclining in Jesus' bosom" at the Last Supper (13:23), the one to whom Jesus committed his mother's care from the cross (19:25-27), the one who outran Peter to the empty tomb (20:1-5).

What an extraordinary title: "The disciple whom Jesus loved!" Jesus' love for all his disciples was the basis of the new commandment; it is the most comprehensive love imaginable. But that love for all does not disallow a special affection for John, or for Lazarus and his sisters (11:5) or for a rich young ruler caught in the web of materialism (Mark 10:21). These descriptions do not detract from the comprehensiveness of Jesus' love; they enhance our appreciation of the humanity of our Master.

The disciple whom Jesus loved was specially privileged to know the love of Christ. Writing as an old man, he could say "we know and have believed the love which God hath in us . . . we love, because he first loved us." (1John 4:16-19). His gospel reveals the very personal nature of Christ's dealings with the disciples, and with those that believe on Him through their word.

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Notes:

1. Same word as used of the Baptist in 1:36, and notably in Luke 22:61 of Jesus' look at Peter from across the courtyard of the high priest's house.
2. It has been argued that "The Disciple who Jesus loved" is Lazarus, but the normal assumption is that it is John himself, as assumed here.

These Who Have Turned the World Upside Down

Cowering in a house in Jerusalem, their remaining hope was to escape the sword. Jesus had been crucified and buried along with their hopes of seeing his Kingdom established. The eleven who remained were scared. But soon, these same men would turn the world upside down. Soon they would spread God's word the across the Roman world. How could that be possible?

To answer this, we need to look at the first Apostle, Jesus. (Heb 3:1)

As the word Apostle implies, Jesus was a messenger, a representative of God, sent to preach, heal and save. What we forget is that Jesus wasn't sent into the world as a grown man. For 30 years he had to learn and grow spiritually. At the age of 12, his mission was unfolding before him, *"I must be about my Father's business"*. His spiritual development came in large part from Joseph, Mary, and the elders in his family. Some of his 'Uncles' would also raise other apostles who would follow Jesus. This example of helping and guiding the younger members in our own ecclesia is sometimes lost. We assume their spiritual growth just happens on its own. This is a dangerous assumption.

Suffering

Jesus was raised by believers that God brought into the realm of His son's life to teach him. Through stories, lessons, observations and questions, Jesus grew. His mentors showed him right from wrong, gave him examples in living their daily lives that would help him. By watching, Jesus would learn to love good and hate evil. They taught him the boundaries set up by His heavenly Father for proper thoughts and actions.

"Though he were a Son, yet learned he obedience by the things which he suffered" (Heb 5:8).

This verse is not talking about Jesus suffering in the Garden of Gethsemane and on the cross. This is talking about his life, **all** the "**days** of his flesh" (vs. 7). It describes his determination not to submit to the flesh and the suffering that resulted from it. He "learned" by watching, hearing, putting into practice things he saw.

"My son, don't despise Yahweh's discipline, neither be weary of His reproof: for whom Yahweh loves, He reproveth; even as a father reproveth the son in whom he delights." (Prov 3:11-12, WEB¹)

Everything about his childhood indicates that his heavenly Father was active in raising His son and ensuring His son was taught and instructed by those around him. It seems Jesus would do the same to teach his apostles, his "*little children*"? (Matt 18:3)

In Hebrews, Paul writes of Jesus; *"For in that he himself has suffered being tempted, he is able to help those who are tempted"* (Heb 2:18 WEB). In other words, the lessons and methods used to raise and teach Jesus as he suffered and learned to deal with the flesh, would be shared with his disciples. This passage shows his determination in passing them on.

It's pretty easy to see that Jesus was always teaching the Apostles, letting them observe him, answering their questions, and challenging them with his own questions. Jesus mentored them on a daily basis.

Learning our ABC's

The Apostle Peter reflects on this idea of mentoring and guiding when he writes *"For even hereunto were ye called: because Christ also suffered for us, leaving us an example, that ye should follow his steps"* (1 Pet 2:21)

The word "example" used above is a rare word which means; "A writing copy, including all the letters of the alphabet, given to beginners as an aid in learning to draw them". This is describing the means that children use to learn the alphabet and write sentences. The Greek letters would be traced until the form and pattern of each one was memorized. Like little children, the Apostles had to learn their spiritual ABC's. The Apostles had to learn to pattern themselves after Jesus in order to form his character. Jesus was their teacher, their mentor. His examples were being burned into their minds, one letter at a time. We see this mentoring throughout his ministry. The gospels are full of vignettes of him taking them aside to teach.

Jesus and Peter alone discussing the tax imposed on them; *"Notwithstanding, lest we should offend them, go thou to the sea, and cast an hook, and take up the fish that first cometh up; and when thou hast opened his mouth, thou shalt find a piece of money: that take, and give unto them for me and thee"* (Matt 17:26).

Jesus and four disciples; *"And after six days Jesus taketh with him Peter, and James, and John, and leadeth them up into an high mountain apart by themselves: and he was transfigured before them"* (Mark 9:2)

Jesus and the twelve; *"And Jesus going up to Jerusalem took the twelve disciples apart in the way, and said unto them..."* (Matt 20:17).

A good example of the process of mentoring is found in Luke when we put a few verses together.

- 1) *"And it came to pass afterward, that he went throughout every city and village, preaching and showing the glad tidings of the kingdom of God: and the **twelve were with him**,"* (Luke 8:1). Notice the emphasis on the twelve being with him. Now let's go forward one chapter.
- 2) *"Then he called his twelve disciples together, and gave them power and authority over all devils, and to cure diseases"* (Luke 9:1). By having watched Jesus, the 12 Apostles were ready to go out on their own and heal and preach the kingdom. But it didn't stop with the 12 Apostles. Let move one another chapter in Luke.
- 3) *"After these things the Lord appointed other seventy also, and sent them two and two before his face into every city and place, whither he himself would come"* (Luke 10:1).

And just as important, they reviewed and shared with Jesus what was accomplished and the problems they encountered.

"And the seventy returned again with joy..." (Luke 10:17).

“And the apostles gathered themselves together unto Jesus, and told him all things, both what they had done, and what they had taught. And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat” (Mark 6:30-31).

The emerging pattern is that they were taught by Jesus, and then they were sent out to put these lessons into practice. Once the twelve were successful, seventy more that had been trained were sent out. It's clear that they were watching, learning from Jesus example and using that to help them preach.

*“For we cannot but speak the things which we have **seen** and **heard**” (Acts 4:20).*

*“That which was from the beginning, which **we have heard**, which **we have seen** with our eyes, which **we have looked upon**, and our hands have handled, of the Word of life;” (1John 1:1).*

After Jesus' Resurrection they are sent into the whole world to preach. (Acts 1:8) But how could eleven men turn the world upside down? By mentoring others, the same way Jesus guided them.

Barnabas takes Paul, Paul and Barnabas take John Mark. Paul trains Timothy. And each of those who were trained, eventually trains others. Like roots on a tree, the Ecclesia's grow, the word spreads across the Empire. Paul sums this up when he writes: *“Those things, which ye have both learned, and received, and heard, **and seen in me, do**”!* (Phil 4:9).

Perhaps a little formula will put things in perspective.

1x = 10,000: What this expression means is that we tend to be a community of Bible Students and not mentors! As a community we are skilled in teaching, Bible marking, writing verse-by-verse expositions, instructing each other in first principles, etc. What we are not very good at is being Mentors, or “Fathers”. Paul explains the above formula in this verse;

“For though you have ten thousand tutors in Christ, yet not many fathers. For in Christ Jesus, I became your father...” (1Cor 4:18 WEB).

Paul wants you to be the “x” in the formula. Paul wants us to be fathers to others in the Truth. These weren't empty words, Timothy wasn't just another student, Paul thought of him as a son.

“But you know the proof of him, that as a child serves a father, so he served with me in furtherance of the Good News” (Phil 2:22 WEB).

“Unto Timothy, my own son in the faith:” (1Tim 1:2).

And the person we mentor does not necessarily have to be young! When Paul wrote this to Timothy, *“Let no man despise thy youth;”* Timothy could have been in his thirties! In Rom 16:21 Timothy is now described as Paul's *“work fellow”*. Then Timothy starts to train others;

“The things which you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit the same to faithful men, who will be able to teach others also” (2 Tim 2:2 WEB).

Do these things –a few practical examples

My greatest lessons growing up were from Brothers and Sisters who would pull me aside and help me, set examples for me to follow, take me along on visits to other Ecclesias, and challenge me to do better. My Grandfather, Bro. Bill Thompson gave me a great love for books. He would suggest them as topics for classes or just books we would discuss. He would teach me how to use study tools, how to slow down my delivery when giving a talk, remind me to take a deep breath before speaking. But the key is, he would take time. In a calm, loving way he would help me.

It was normal for members of my Ecclesia to suggest a verse or thought to me after a class I taught that would help me the next time. This still happens to this day. Sometimes it wasn't words but actions. On Truth Corp in 1978, I remember handing out pamphlets alongside Bro. Don Snobelen who had a bad hip. Don was semi-retired, yet everyday he was out alongside a bunch of teenagers preaching the truth, talking to anyone who would listen, never complaining about the pain. Don taught me that “laboring in the vineyard” wasn't just for young people.

At one of my first lectures in another city, Bro. Harry Whittaker showed up. He should have been the one speaking and not me. Afterwards he took me aside and in a fatherly way shared some thoughts and advice that was helpful to me. These brothers and sisters didn't need a podium to teach others, and neither do we.

My work in the Lord

Paul sums this all up very nicely in Corinthians.

*“Am I not an apostle? Haven't I seen Jesus Christ, our Lord? Aren't you my work in the Lord? If to others I am not an apostle, yet at least I am to you; for **you are the seal** of my apostleship in the Lord” (1Cor 9:1-2 WEB).*

Paul and Peter followed the “tracings” or the “ABCs” left by Jesus as a pattern that they followed. Those who followed Paul had a similar “seal” or inscription in Paul that they could trace and follow. One generation following another in greater numbers.

In those earlier passages from Luke when teams of Jesus followers were trained and sent out in increasing numbers, we find this verse: *“And sent messengers before his face: and they went,... to make ready for him” (Luke 9:52).*

We may not be Apostles, but in our extended families and Ecclesia's we need to be 'Fathers', preparing the next generation, so we can all “make ready for him”.

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Notes:

1. WEB is short for World English Bible, which is a free updated version of the ASV (American Standard Version).

What Happened to the Apostles?

We know Jesus chose His apostles for the most important mission in history. *“And he said unto them, Go ye unto all the world, and preach the gospel to every creature. He that believeth and is baptized shall be saved; but he that believeth not shall be damned”* (Mark 16:15-16). But other than the New Testament accounts of the lives and the preaching of a few of the apostles, where did they all go and how did their lives end?

There are a few passages in Scripture that give an indication of what was going to happen to some of them. The other accounts of their lives and fates that have come down to us from non-scriptural sources cannot be verified. There is a certain credibility in the reports of most of them having died as martyrs, in the fact that the New Testament does give a clear indication of that likelihood.

The following is intended to be a brief summary of what is known, what is not known and what has been passed down regarding the twelve apostles listed in Matthew: *“Now the names of the twelve apostles are these...”* (Matt 10:24).

Peter, Andrew, James the son of Zebedee, John the son of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, Mathew, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Canaanite, Judas Iscariot. We have also included Mathias and Paul. Mathias because he succeeded Judas and Paul because of his prominence in the New Testament.

But where are Luke and Mark? Many of us (who can't remember the Sunday school song “There Were Twelve Disciples”) would put them on our list but they were not of the twelve that journeyed with Jesus throughout his ministry. They were disciples.

The difference between an apostle and a disciple

What is the difference between an apostle and a disciple? Simply put, all Jesus followers were disciples but apostles were those he specifically sent forth to preach. We in this age are Jesus' disciples, but we are not apostles in the same sense the subjects of this article were. Think about it this way. Under the law, all priests were Levites but all Levites were not priests...only those who were the sons of Aaron. Jesus definitely sent Paul forth to preach, and good cases can be made for including some others under the designation of “apostles” as elsewhere in this issue, but the names we listed will serve our purposes adequately.

Scriptural indications of the apostles' future fates

General prophetic warnings were given by Jesus to the effect that his followers were going to be subjected to persecution, beatings and, as we know in the case of Stephen, martyrdom. Mark 13:8-13 is a good example. *“...ye shall be beaten... brother shall betray the brother to death, and the father the son; and children shall rise up against their parents, and shall cause them to be put to death...ye shall be hated of all men...”*

Jesus' conversation with two of his apostles serves as a prophetic warning in a specific example. In Matt 20:20-23 we have the exchange between the mother of

Zebedee's children, who were the apostles James and John, asking Jesus to grant that her two sons "*may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on thy left, in thy kingdom.*" Jesus responded with this question to James and John: "*Are ye able to drink the cup that I shall drink of, and to be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with? They say unto him, We are able. And he saith unto them, Ye shall drink of my cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with...*" The baptism Jesus was about to be subjected to was the cross and all it entailed; extreme torture, suffering, humiliation and death. Jesus' assurance that James and John were going to face similar trials was prophetic of their fates and reasonable indicators of what awaited all the apostles.

James, John's brother, is the only apostle on our list whose martyrdom is recorded in Scripture. Acts: 12:2 is the brief statement that Herod: "*...killed James the brother of John with the sword.*" James' death fulfils the Lord's warning in the extreme.

But what happened to the rest of them?

The problem with early records

The trustworthiness of the stories that come down to us suffer from their profusion, their mutual contradictions, and their obvious mistakes (in geography for example) and finally from the wide-spread tendency towards creative writing. But that does not mean they are all false. Not by any means. They suffer in our minds from the same affect that that one lie has on all the truths we have ever spoken. It brings everything under the same cloud. We see in this example an exhortation to our own integrity.

We suggest, therefore, that we read what follows from the premise that, in the main, there does appear to be a consistency in the accounts that the apostles died in witness for their faith. The following is not being brought forward in any attempt to prove or disprove anything, but in the hope that there is much to be gained in inspiration and encouragement for our own walk towards the Kingdom of God.

What do the early records tell us about the apostles and their deaths?

This brief summary will not address the Scriptural accounts of the apostles lives already covered in the preceding articles.

- 1) **Peter.** There are reasons to think Peter went to Syria, Babylon, Corinth and Rome. Not necessarily in that order. Paul in Gal. 2:11 said: "*But when Peter was come to Antioch (in Syria)...*" That is all that is said. How long he was there we do not know. Peter's closing sentences include: "*The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you, and so does Marcus my son*" (1Pet 5:13). This certainly looks like Peter was writing from Babylon¹. However this salutation has also been pointed to as support for Peter being in Rome because Babylon has been taken to mean Rome (Rev 16:19, 17:5 etc.). There are many historical sources that place Peter in Rome. Tertullian states that Peter was crucified in Rome by Nero. Eusebius, who died in A.D. 339, was a friend of Constantine and is supposed to have had access to all the documentation that existed. He compiled a "*History of the Church.*" Eusebius maintained that Peter was crucified on June 29 A.D. 67. Peter was supposed

to have requested that he be crucified upside down. Most accounts say that this was at Peter's request, but that he gave no reason.

- 2) **Andrew, Peter's brother.** Nothing is said in Scripture about Andrew after the resurrection. Legendary accounts place him in Philippi, Macedonia (near Greece) in 69 A.D. Andrew was making many converts which was bound to raise tensions. Rome was extremely sensitive to any kinds of organizations meeting for any reason. The Roman Empire was a conquered empire. Uprisings and revolts were always fomenting. Conspiracies and assassinations were common in the capital city itself. An example of how far reaching Rome's concerns in this area are is seen in Emperor Trajan's (circa 98 A.D.) response to a letter from Pliny, a Roman official who was sent to govern the province of Bythnia. A large fire occurred in the city of Claudiopolis and it gave rise to the suggestion that the citizens organize a fire department. Pliny wrote to Trajan for his permission to proceed and Trajan turned him down. The following is an excerpt from Trajan's response to Pliny. "...but we must remember that it is societies like these (in this case a volunteer fire department) which have been responsible for political disturbances in your province, particularly in its cities. If people assemble for a common purpose, whatever name we give them and for whatever reason, they soon become a political club." This injunction against all clubs regardless of their purpose comes up repeatedly. We point this out to illustrate that, along with Christians being persecuted for their religious beliefs, as an organized entity they were automatically under suspicion regardless of their religion. We can readily understand the town clerk's concern in Acts 19:40 when he spoke to end the riot in Ephesus "*For we are in danger of being called into question for this day's uproar...*" Being "called into question" by your Roman overlords was not going to be a pretty prospect for any of them. Rome did not like upset. According to one tradition Andrew met his death in the following way. He had miraculously healed the Roman appointed governor's wife, but he viewed it as an alienation of affection. The Roman governor was going to put an end to Andrew's growing Christian church. Andrew was arrested and tied to a cross. He was not nailed to the cross so that his death would take much longer and be more painful. Ultimately he was cut down but died shortly thereafter.
- 3) **James, John's brother, a son of Zebedee.** As already noted, his murder by Herod is recorded in Acts 12:2. One wonders why a chosen apostle would be cut down so early in the beginnings of early Christianity. But there is no profit in speculation. An aside if I may. Fifty plus years ago when a young brother and sister who were extremely active in preaching were killed in a tragic auto accident the brotherhood was in shock. Questions were raised. My father, Bro. John Sommerville, concerned that I might be hearing unprofitable questions, wrote me pointing to the example of James's early death as an example of these kinds of unexplained tragedies. His point was that our lack of knowing why is no call for unprofitable speculation. It was wise counsel. We are under no obligation to answer every cause.
- 4) **John.** The Scriptures give us a good account of John through his writings. Iranaeus in various passages of his own writings agreed with the generally

accepted tradition that John lived up to the time of Emperor Trajan. Tertulian stated that John miraculously survived being immersed in boiling oil after which he was banished to the Isle of Patmos where he received and wrote "Revelation." He is supposed to have been the only apostle that died a natural death, although if the tradition of his being boiled in oil is accurate he certainly was persecuted. That this could have occurred is not incredible in any way when we consider the miraculous deliverances from snake bite, prisons and near drownings etc. that Paul experienced.

- 5) **Philip.** As we have already learned, there was a lot more to Philip's life than most of us had thought. According to tradition he preached in Asia Minor (essentially Turkey today) in Carthage, and finished his life in Hierapolis, Syria. Carthage was a city in Tunisia which is northern Africa on the Mediterranean coast across from the Sicilian boot of Italy. It is 1,500 miles from Jerusalem as the crow flies. If this tradition is correct it is another example of the far flung regions to which the gospel was spread. He is thought to have baptized 3,000 Gentiles and 1,500 Jews before going to Syria. Philip is supposed to have been crucified upside down like Peter in A.D. 90, probably during the persecution under Emperor Hadrian. The circumstances that allegedly preceded his death are disturbingly similar to Andrew's. The Roman governor in Hierapolis became upset when Philip cured his wife of an eye disease. Whether or not this was the case we do know that the apostles had the Holy Spirit and were able to miraculously heal people.
- 6) **Bartholomew.** His name only shows up four times in the New Testament. Once in the accounts of Matthew, Mark and Luke when the apostles are listed and again in Acts 1:13 when all the apostles except Judas are gathered in the upper room. There has also been raised the possibility that Bartholomew was also called Nathanael which would give a little more background. C. Bernard Ruffin cites both Eusebius and Jerome as believing Bartholomew went to India. Evidently a scholar by the name of Pantanaeus was sent to India by Demetrius, bishop of Alexander, around A.D. 180. When Pantanaeus got to India he found a copy of the gospel of Matthew, written in Hebrew, which had been brought there by the apostle Bartholomew. The idea of Matthew being written in Hebrew may sound strange at first: however there is a long history of Jewish settlements in India that go back as far as 2,500 years. Jews were forced into exile from Israel at various stages in their history and because so little is known about what happened to them we refer to them as "The Lost Ten Tribes of Israel." (One wonders if they will make up a large part of Elijah's ministry when he returns.). Under Israeli law Jews from anywhere in the world have the right to return and live in their ancestral land. In the October 20, 2013 issue the Jewish newspaper "Haaretz" reported that 2,000 Jews from the Bnei Menashe community in India were now living in Israel and 5,000 more were waiting to immigrate. The number of Jews in India today may exceed 2,000,000. According to traditions, the local ruler Astriagas became upset over the number of people Bartholomew was baptizing and began a persecution of the budding Christian community. Bartholomew was beaten with clubs, skinned alive and finally beheaded. It is because of this

tradition that Michelangelo's painting "The Last Judgment" depicts in grizzly detail Bartholomew holding aloft in his right hand a knife, and in his left his empty, rumpled skin.

- 7) **Thomas.** Nothing is said about Thomas in the Bible after he is listed as present in the upper room after Jesus' ascension. However there are copious accounts of his preaching activities in the legendary accounts that have come down to us. Thomas is believed to have been active in Osorene which is north of Palestine (eastern Turkey today), Iran, Armenia and India. Evidently there is a Syriac document circa 200 A.D. known as "The Acts of Thomas" which is a historical fiction novel supposedly based on Thomas' preaching work in India. In this case however there may be more substantial reasons to believe Thomas preached in India. Portuguese traders and missionaries were astounded to arrive in India in the 16th Century and find a large, active community of Christians who firmly believed that their community had been originally founded by Thomas. There were ancient books written in Syriac, songs, and a large amount of oral tradition. Thomas is supposed to have met his death July 3, A.D. 72. He is thought to have died from stab wounds received at the hand of Brahman priests who feared that his preaching threatened Hinduism.
- 8) **Matthew.** There is little consistent said about Matthew after the resurrection. There is speculation he may have gone to Ethiopia. However, all the accounts agree in two essential elements: he preached and died for his master. And this educated, formerly affluent disciple, became the first man to write down the teachings of Jesus.
- 9) **James the son of Alphaeus.** Like several of the apostles, not much is recorded about them in the New Testament period. It is thought that he stayed in Jerusalem and according to a tradition he was stoned to death by a mob of irate Jews.
- 10) **Thaddaeus.** He is listed in Matt.10:3 as "*Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus*". However he was listed in some ancient versions of Matthew as Jude. (He is not considered to be the author of the Epistle of Jude.) Jude, Judas, and Judah are the same name and were one of the most common names extant in Israel which sets the stage for confusion. The reference in Luke to "*Judas son of James (NIV)*" almost certainly refers to the same individual. If Thaddaeus and Jude (Judas) are the same person he is the one referred to in John 14:22 where John carefully identifies the Judas he is referring to as "*not Iscariot*". Nothing more is said about Thaddaeus. Briefly summarizing from C Bernard Ruffin's work we learn that Eusebius' and the "Apostolic History of Abdias" related the following. Thaddaeus and Simon the Canaanite (Zealot) teamed up towards the end of their ministry and were preaching in the city of Suair in Persia (Iran). The miracles they performed and the conversions that followed caused those with a vested interest in the local deities to violently oppose them. A mob was incited to violently attack the two apostles. They began to stone them. One man ran up and thrust Thaddaeus through with a spear. Simon was seized and sawn in pieces. How accurate this is we have no way of determining; however it does call to our minds Heb. 11:37; "*They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, and were slain with the sword...*"

- 11) **Simon the Zealot (Canaanite KJV).** Again, virtually nothing about him in the Bible. As noted, one tradition holds that he died with Thaddaeus.
- 12) **Judas Iscariot:** We know all we need to know about his life and the manner of his death from the Bible. When the full enormity of what he had done sunk into his mind and conscience he repented and tried to return the bribe he had taken from the chief priests. *“he cast down the pieces of silver in the temples, and departed, and went and hanged himself. And the chief priests took the silver pieces.....and they took counsel together and bought with them the potter’s field, to bury strangers in”* (Matt 25:5-7). However, we read *“Now this man purchased a field with the reward of iniquity; and falling headlong, he burst asunder in the midst, and all his bowels gushed out”* (Acts 1:18). So presumably Judas hung himself, and when he was cut loose from the rope he fell to the ground and burst asunder. The potter’s field was purchased with his ill-gotten funds and so it is credited to his account. Three and one half years in the presence of God’s son, witnessing his miracles and hearing his words was worth 30 pieces of silver to Judas. I believe it was Bro. Harry Tennant who posed this question to us in his lecture one day: “How much are you willing to sell Jesus for?” How do we value our priorities?
- 13) **Mathias.** He was Judas’ replacement chosen as recorded in Acts 1. Nothing more is said about him in Scripture. It is possible he preached in Armenia. Tradition holds that he stoned to death by a hostile crowd of Jews after returning to Jerusalem around A.D. 51 which, if so, would make him the second apostle to die.
- 14) **Paul:** We know from Scripture that Paul was in Rome and it is there that he is believed to have met his death. Paul had come so close to death so many times as he recounts in 2Cor 11:23-27. There was a horrific persecution of Christians in Rome by the emperor Nero from about A.D. 65 until Nero’s deposition and suicide in A.D. 68. The Roman historian Tacitus tells us that Nero had self-acknowledged Christians arrested. Then, on their information, large numbers of others were condemned. (“...children shall rise up and cause their parents to be put to death”) Some were dressed in animal skins to be torn to pieces by dogs. Some were crucified and others were turned into human torches. Paul is supposed to have been beheaded about A.D. 66.

What do we take away from these accounts?

Willingness to die for what one believes is agreed on all hands to be the ultimate proof of the sincerity of one’s convictions. Martyrdom does not prove those convictions as being correct as the recent proliferation of suicide bombers etc. shows. However there is no questioning the sincerity of the beliefs of those who are willing to die in the furtherance of their cause. The apostles believed that Jesus Christ is the resurrected Son of God. And if you believe that fact you believe what Jesus preached...all of it.

Perhaps there is one question we could profitably consider for ourselves. Can we imagine a situation, a circumstance, where we would be willing to die rather than disown and dishonor our Lord? If you have invested enough time to read these

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articles, spend three minutes now with your eyes closed and imagine a scenario, a trial, a confrontation, a change in the laws and the liberal climate in the lands in which we live, perhaps brought on by terrorist threats and war, that could force you to have to renounce your Christadelphian faith...or face extreme consequences. How did you do? How would I do?

We pray we will never be tested as the apostles and other martyrs in God's name were tested.

Ken Sommerville (Simi Hills, CA)

Sources:

There are no original records extant today. Almost all of the extra-scriptural information comes from the legends and traditions that writers and historians in the first four hundred years after Christ collected and, for the most part, brought forward with no means of verification.

We are indebted to the following for most of the information in this article.

- C.Bernard Ruffin "The Twelve...The Lives of the Apostles After Calvary" Our Sunday Visitor Publishing Division, Our Sunday Visitor Inc. Huntington Ind. 1997. The author frames his many historical citations and allusions in a very readable treatment of the subject.
- Encyclopedia Britannica. 1957 edition. Excellent summaries on most of the apostles referencing their sources.
- Robert L. Wilken: "The Christians as the Romans Saw Them" Yale University Press, New Haven and London 1984. A good insight in to how the Roman's viewed the Christians documented with actual copies of correspondence between Roman officials.
- And of course the ubiquitous internet.

Notes:

1. [Editor]. I am not sure why Christadelphian's (and others) generally assume Rome was referred to here. The use of Babylon as a cipher for Rome was much later.