



Who were the Disciples

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The Disciples

Simon Peter:

- Often considered the leader of the disciples, Peter was a fisherman by trade. He is known for his bold personality and his confession of Jesus as the Messiah. After Jesus' resurrection, Peter played a prominent role in the early Christian community.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples, along with Andrew.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have been crucified upside down in Rome during the reign of Nero.
- Noted For: Leadership among the disciples, his confession of Jesus as the Messiah.

Andrew:

- Peter's brother and also a fisherman. Andrew was one of the first disciples to follow Jesus and is known for bringing his brother to Jesus.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples, alongside Peter.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have been crucified on an X-shaped cross (Andrew's Cross) in Greece.
- Noted For: Bringing his brother Peter to Jesus.

James, son of Zebedee:

- Along with his brother John, James was part of the inner circle of Jesus. He was present at key events like the Transfiguration. James was the first apostle to be martyred, as recorded in the book of Acts.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples.
- Death: Martyred by the sword, likely under Herod Agrippa I (as recorded in Acts 12:2).
- Noted For: Part of the inner circle of Jesus, present at the Transfiguration.

John, son of Zebedee:

- Often referred to as the "beloved disciple." John played a significant role in the early Christian community and is traditionally credited with writing the Gospel of John, three Epistles, and the Book of Revelation.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have died of natural causes in Ephesus, though he may have faced persecution.
- Noted For: The "beloved disciple," author of the Gospel of John, three Epistles, and Revelation.

Philip:

- Little is known about Philip from the Gospels, but he is often mentioned in the list of disciples. He played a role in the feeding of the 5,000.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples.
- Death: Tradition suggests he was martyred in Hierapolis.
- Noted For: Played a role in the feeding of the 5,000.

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Bartholomew (Nathanael):

- Sometimes referred to as Nathanael in the Gospel of John, Bartholomew is not extensively mentioned in the New Testament. Tradition holds that he later preached in India.
- Order of Calling: Not explicitly mentioned in the calling narratives.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have been flayed alive or crucified.
- Noted For: Limited information in the Gospels; tradition suggests he preached in India.

Matthew (Levi):

- A tax collector before following Jesus, Matthew wrote the Gospel of Matthew. He is also known for hosting a banquet for Jesus and inviting fellow tax collectors.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have been martyred in Ethiopia.
- Noted For: A tax collector before following Jesus, wrote the Gospel of Matthew.

Thomas (Didymus):

- Often remembered as "Doubting Thomas" because of his initial skepticism about Jesus' resurrection. He later affirmed Jesus as "My Lord and my God."
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have been martyred in India.
- Noted For: Remembered as "Doubting Thomas."

James, son of Alphaeus:

- Referred to as James the Less to distinguish him from James, son of Zebedee. Little information is available about him in the Gospels.
- Order of Calling: Not explicitly mentioned in the calling narratives.
- Death: Limited information, possibly stoned or clubbed to death.
- Noted For: Limited information in the Gospels.

Thaddaeus (Lebbaeus):

- Also called Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus is mentioned in the lists of disciples, but not much else is known about him from the Gospels.
- Order of Calling: Not explicitly mentioned in the calling narratives.
- Death: Traditionally believed to have been martyred with arrows.
- Noted For: Limited information in the Gospels.

Simon the Zealot:

- The title "Zealot" may suggest that Simon was associated with a political or religious movement known for its zeal. However, details about his background are limited.
- Order of Calling: Not explicitly mentioned in the calling narratives.
- Death: Limited information; tradition suggests he may have been martyred.
- Noted For: Title "Zealot" suggests possible association with a zealot movement.



Judas Iscariot:

- Known for betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. His actions led to Jesus' arrest and crucifixion. After betraying Jesus, Judas died by suicide.
- Order of Calling: One of the first disciples.
- Death: Died by suicide after betraying Jesus.
- Noted For: Betraying Jesus for thirty pieces of silver.

Matthias:

- Matthias' role in the New Testament is primarily associated with his selection to fill the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot, restoring the number of apostles to twelve. However, beyond this event, there are no specific details provided about his activities or contributions to the early Christian community in the biblical text.
- Order of Calling: Chosen by the remaining eleven apostles and other believers to replace Judas Iscariot, as described in Acts 1:15-26.
- Death: Details about Matthias' death are not recorded in the Bible, and there is limited information available from historical sources or tradition.
- Noted For: Being chosen to replace Judas Iscariot as one of the twelve apostles, fulfilling the requirement for the apostolic ministry to have twelve members.

Peter, John, James & Andrew Prominence

Peter, John, James, and sometimes Andrew, appear more prominently and receive more attention than the other disciples. These four are often referred to as the "inner circle" or the "core group" of Jesus' disciples. They were witnesses to key events in Jesus' life, such as the Transfiguration and the raising of Jairus' daughter. Peter is particularly highlighted as a leader among the disciples, and John is often referred to as the "beloved disciple."

It's important to note that the Gospel accounts were written by different authors and with different purposes, so the emphasis on certain disciples may vary. Peter's leadership role, for example, is highlighted in the Gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, while John's Gospel emphasizes the relationship between Jesus and the beloved disciple.

The prominence of these disciples in the narratives might reflect their closer connection to Jesus or their specific roles within the community. However, all the disciples played a crucial part in spreading the message of Jesus, and each had their unique contributions and experiences.

Those that Changed their Names

Some of the Apostles in the New Testament are known by multiple names, and in certain cases, their names were changed or adapted for significant reasons. Here are the notable examples and their contexts:

1. Simon to Peter

- **Original Name:** Simon (Hebrew: שִׁמְעוֹן, "Shim'on," meaning "he has heard")
- **Changed Name:** Peter (Greek: Πέτρος, "Petros," meaning "rock" or "stone")
- **Reason for the Change:**

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- Jesus gave Simon the name "Peter" as a symbolic gesture, indicating his role in the foundation of the Church. In Matthew 16:18, Jesus says, "And I tell you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build my church."
- The name change signifies a new identity and mission, underscoring Simon's transformation into a foundational figure of the early Christian community.

2. Saul to Paul

- **Original Name:** Saul (Hebrew: שאול, "Sha'ul," meaning "asked for" or "prayed for")
- **Changed Name:** Paul (Latin: Paulus, meaning "small" or "humble")
- **Reason for the Change:**
 - Saul of Tarsus was a Jewish Pharisee and persecutor of Christians before his dramatic conversion (Acts 9). After his conversion, he began using the name Paul, particularly in his missionary work among Gentiles.
 - The change reflects both a practical adaptation to his audience (Paul being a Roman name was more accessible in Gentile contexts) and a theological shift toward humility and his new identity as a servant of Christ.

3. Levi to Matthew

- **Original Name:** Levi (likely named after the Levitical priestly tribe, suggesting a Jewish heritage)
- **Changed Name:** Matthew (Greek: Ματθαῖος, "Matthaios," meaning "gift of Yahweh")
- **Reason for the Change:**
 - Levi, a tax collector, became one of Jesus's Apostles. He is referred to as "Matthew" in the Gospel that bears his name (Matthew 9:9).
 - The name change may symbolize his transformation from a despised tax collector to a follower of Jesus. It could also reflect a cultural or linguistic adaptation, as was common among Jews in Greco-Roman society.

4. Others with Dual Names

- **Bartholomew/Nathanael:** Bartholomew is often thought to be the same as Nathanael (mentioned in John 1:45-51). If so, Bartholomew ("son of Tolmai") may have been a patronymic, with Nathanael being his personal name.
- **Thomas/Didymus:** Thomas is Aramaic for "twin," and Didymus is the Greek equivalent. The dual names reflect linguistic variations rather than a name change.
- **Thaddaeus/Judas (son of James):** Known by multiple names in different Gospel accounts, possibly to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot.

Cultural and Theological Implications

- **Name Changes in the Bible:** Name changes often symbolize a transformation or divine calling (e.g., Abram to Abraham, Jacob to Israel). In the New Testament, this tradition continues, showing how following Jesus could redefine one's identity and purpose.
- **Practical Adaptations:** Apostles working in multicultural settings might adopt names suited to their audience, facilitating their mission.

These changes underscore the transformative impact of faith and divine calling on the lives of the Apostles.

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