

APOSTLES

By Mark Moore

The Need for 12 Apostles

- i) To judge the 12 tribes (Mt. 19:28, Lk. 22:30).
- ii) Their 12 names are written in heaven (Rev. 21:10, 12, 14).
- iii) The 13th Apostle was to the Gentiles (Romans 1:1; 11:13). This honor was bestowed upon Paul (1 Cor. 15:1-11; Rom. 11:13).

Standards for an Apostle:

- i) Be a witness to Jesus from His baptism to the Ascension (Acts 1:21-22).
- ii) Witness to the resurrection (1 Cor. 15:7-8).
- iii) Be chosen by the Lord (Acts 1:2; Lk. 6:12-16; Jn. 15:16).
- iv) Miraculous signs (2 Cor. 12:11-12).

In the *Patristic Greek Lexicon* (p. 9) by Lampe, six qualifications of an apostle are noted:

- i) Commissioned directly by Christ
- ii) Being a witness of the resurrection
- iii) Special inspiration
- iv) Supreme authority
- v) Accredited by miracles (NOTE: None of the other men in the Bible named as apostles ever worked miracles as far as the record goes, much less were they able to bestow these miraculous gifts as the apostles apparently could).
- vi) Unlimited commission to preach

Capital "A" or small "a"? (Or can we have Apostles today on the order of Peter and Paul?)

Most often when the N.T. uses the word *apostle* it means the 12 disciples Jesus chose to be his closest followers. And, to be technical, it would refer to the 12, minus Judas, plus Matthias, plus Paul. Obviously, that makes 13. But keep in mind that Paul was a special case. (Though, some scholars hold that the church was presumptuous in obtaining Matthias. God had prepared Paul to take Judas' slot. However, to hold this position is certainly to go beyond anything that Luke suggests).

What would help us is to see that the N.T. uses the word *apostle* in two senses. It mostly refers to the 12 disciples plus Paul, upon whom the church is built (Eph 2:20). In this sense there are no *modern-day* apostles. These men are unique. However, the N.T. also uses the word *apostle* in a secondary sense. Since the word itself means "one sent out" it can sometimes refer to anyone sent out on some mission. In this sense the word approximates our word missionary.

The count in the N.T. could be as large as 22 or as small as 12 or even 11. Think of it this way: If I were to ask how many preachers there were in Joplin, you might start to count the number of churches there are. But that number would really be way too small. You may arrive at the correct number of men with the title "preacher," but you would fall far short of the number of people who announce the good news of Jesus. In the same way, there were 14 men in the N.T. who held the office (and title), of Apostle. However, there are several others who are called apostle by virtue of the job they did. It was not an office they held but the function they

performed. That is to say that they were sent out as "commissioned" men from the church which they represented.

The Successors of the Apostles

While we don't want to establish some kind of unwarranted apostolic succession, the foundational torch of leadership in the book of Acts clearly passes from the apostles to the local elders of churches. The farther one reads in Acts the less emphasis is placed on the apostles as a group and more prominence is given to the elders. Even Paul, the Apostle, receives advice from the Jerusalem elders in regard to how he (Paul) can be well received by Jewish Christians.

Fate of the Apostles

Apostle	Place	Event	Date
Peter	Rome	Crucified upside down by Nero	65 A.D.
Paul	Rome	Beheaded by Nero	65 A.D.
James	Jerusalem	Beheaded by Herod Agrippa I	44 A.D.
Andrew	Edessa, Turkey	Crucified	No Date
Thomas	India	Four soldiers ran him through with spears	No Date
Philip	Heliopolis	Put to death by a Roman proconsul	54 A.D.
Matthew	Nadabah, Ethiopia	Stabbed to death	60 A.D.
Bartholomew	India	Killed	No Date
James, son of Alpheus	Jerusalem	Stoned and then clubbed to death	61 A.D.
Simon the Zealot	Britain	Killed for refusing to worship the sun god	74 A.D.
Matthias	Syria	Burned to death	No Date
John	Ephesus	Died a natural death after his exile on Patmos	95 A.D.
Judas, (or Thaddaeus or Labbaeus)		Executed by the Apostate nephew of King of Adgor of Syria	No Date
Judas Iscariot	Jerusalem	Committed Suicide (Acts 1:25)	33 A.D.

Miscellaneous Comments on the List of Apostles

1. The four lists of Apostles (Mt 10:2-4; Mk 3:16-19; Lk 6:14-16; Acts 1:13), each give the names in a different order. However, each list can be divided into three sections which always begin with Peter, Philip and James.
2. It is likely that James and John, the sons of Zebedee were cousins of Jesus. McGarvey (p. 225) substantiates this idea.
3. There are several men with more than one name: Simon is also called Peter; Judas is also called Lebbeaus and Thaddaeus; Bartholomew is most likely the Nathanael of John 1; and Thomas (Aramaic) is called Didymus (Greek), both names meaning "Twin."
4. The latter James, Simon and Judas appear to be brothers and perhaps also cousins of Jesus through Joseph's brother (cf. Edersheim I:522).
5. Judas Iscariot was apparently the only Apostle not from Galilee. His town, Kerioth, was in Judea (Joshua 15:25).
6. The idea of Apostolic succession has never been substantiated (see McGarvey, p. 223 for details).
7. Jesus himself was an "Apostle" (Hebrews 3:1).

A BRIEF SYNOPSIS OF THE TWELVE:

By Mark Moore

Simon (whom he named Peter)--Peter is mentioned first in every list. In the concordance, his name is mentioned about three times more than any other apostle, even John. The word Peter means "rock." Likewise, Cephas is the Aramaic word for "rock". He is clearly the most dominant apostle--not necessarily because the others respected him so much, but because he spoke loudly, quickly, and sometimes brilliantly. Here is a summary of some of the prominent events in Peter's life:

1. Walked on water, Mt. 14:28,29.
2. Good confession of Christ, Mt. 16:16.
3. Jesus said that Peter's confession was the rock on which the church would be built, Mt. 16:18.
4. Jesus gave Peter the keys to the kingdom, Mt. 16:19.
5. When Peter rebuked Jesus for wanting to go to Jerusalem, Jesus said, "Get thee behind me Satan" Mt. 16:22,23
6. It was Peter who asked Jesus "How often shall my brother sin against Me and I still forgive?" "70 X 7" came back His reply, Mt. 18:21.
7. When Jesus promised a reward to all who leave everything to follow Him, Peter was bold enough to ask, "Then what shall be our reward?" Mt. 19:27.
8. He swore that he would not deny Jesus, Mt. 26:33-40.
9. He denied Jesus three times before the cock crowed twice, Mt. 26:58-75.
10. It was Peter who brought attention to the withered fig tree that Jesus had cursed, Mk. 11:21.
11. Of the three sleeping apostles in Gethsemane; James, John and Peter, it was Peter whom Jesus addressed, Mk. 14:37.
12. When the woman with the flow of blood touched Jesus' garment and He asked, "Who touched me?" Peter said, "Lord, the multitudes are pressing on you." Lk. 8:45
13. Peter asked, "Lord, are you addressing this parable to us or to everyone?" Lk. 12:41.

14. When the 5,000 left and Jesus asked if the 12 would leave also, Peter said, "Lord to whom shall we go. You have the words of eternal life" John 6:68.
15. Peter tried to refuse Jesus washing his feet, Jn. 13:6-9.
16. He cut off Malchus' ear during Jesus' arrest, Jn. 18:10.
17. He asked Jesus to depart from him during the great catch of fish, Luke 5:8.
18. Jesus confronted Peter after the resurrection with the triple question: "Do you love me." John 21:15-21
19. Peter was the spokesman in the choosing of the 12th apostle, Acts 1:13-15.
20. He preached the first gospel sermon on the day of Pentecost, Acts 2:14ff.
21. Peter confronted Ananias and Saphira, Acts 5:3-9.
22. He had special healing power, Acts 5:15.
23. He preached to Cornelius, first Gentile household, Acts 10-11.
24. He was miraculously released from prison, Acts 12:3-18.
25. He spoke at the Jerusalem council, Acts 15:7.

Andrew--Andrew was Peter's brother. He was close to the inner circle (i.e. Peter, James, and John). But not quite there. He was invited in with the inner three in Mk. 13:3. And he apparently held considerable clout with Jesus for Philip brought a group of Greeks to Andrew in order for him to take them to Jesus. But he was always one short of prominence. Andrew holds an important lesson for us. Even though he never made it to the "big time" he performed a valuable ministry. Andrew was constantly bringing people to Jesus. Not only did he bring the Greeks to Jesus (John 12:22), but he also brought the lad with the loaves and fishes (John 6:8). But most important of all he brought to Jesus his own brother . . . Peter (John 1:40). If it had not been for Andrew, we would have never had a Peter.

James--James was the third most prominent apostle behind Peter, and his own brother John. He was a fishing partner with Peter, Andrew, James and John. It is likely that he and Andrew spent a lot of time together watching their more prominent brothers take the limelight. He and John started out as hot-heads. Thus Jesus gave them the nickname "Boenerges" which means, "Sons of Thunder." They demonstrated their fiery character in Luke 9:54 when they asked Jesus to call down fire from heaven on an unreceptive Samaritan village. James has the distinct honor of being the first apostle to die for his testimony for Christ. With his death, the era of the Apostles began to fade and the church looked more and more to the leadership of the elders.

John--He was called the beloved apostle. It is difficult to say who was more prominent, John or Peter. Both before and after the resurrection, they worked side by side. Together they went to prepare the upper room for the passover meal, Luke 22:8. Together they ran to the tomb to find it empty, John 20:3. They were together in the porch of the temple when they healed the lame man, Acts 3:1-11. And together they stood and defended themselves before the Sanhedrin, Acts 4:13-19. When the church needed their top delegates to examine a Gentile conversion in Samaria, they chose Peter and John. At one point, John would have liked to take prominence. He and James asked for the chief seats in the kingdom. It was John who complained to Jesus about another, not of their number, casting out demons and using Jesus name, Mk. 9:38. But something happened to the heart of John in the presence of Jesus that transformed him from Boenerges to the beloved Apostle. By the time he wrote his gospel, he no longer sought self-glory. From John we learn more about the personal lives of the apostles than any other book. And yet He doesn't mention by name either himself or his brother James. Perhaps this is why, when writing the book of Revelation he was the only Apostle not martyred. He died a natural death while in exile on the isle of Patmos.

Philip--He, like Andrew, had a passion for Christ. He brought others to know him. While

Andrew was bringing his brother, Peter; Philip was taking Christ to meet his brother, Bartholomew (also called Nathanael), John 1:43. Perhaps this is why these two men teamed up to bring the Greeks to Christ, John 12:21-22. They were from the same hometown, Capernaum. And yet, Philip had difficulty at times trusting in Christ. It was Philip whom Jesus tested at the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:5,7). And it was Philip, in John 14:8 who said to Jesus, "Show us the Father." He was the "Needing Nudging" apostle. He had good faith and a tremendous heart, but just needed a little push to get him where he needed to be.

Bartholomew--Also called Nathanael. The only narrative we have about Nathanael is in John 1:45-49. Jesus called him an Israelite with whom there is no guile. Nathanael then uttered the first confession of Christ: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel." O for more Bartholomews; men of pure hearts.

Matthew--Also called Levi. He was a hated tax-collector until Jesus called him, Matthew 9:9ff. He gave Jesus a tremendous banquet and invited all his sinner friends. We learn from Matthew a lesson about evangelism. Those who look antagonistic to the gospel may be your best prospects. Matthew was on the other side of the fence as far as religion goes. He was considered a traitor by the Jews. And yet, when he was called, he left immediately. And what is the first thing that he does? He goes and introduces all his "sinner" friends to Jesus. Furthermore, Matthew wrote a gospel that is distinctly Jewish. We learn more from him about the Jewish prophecies and ways than any other writer. Even though he was not allowed in the synagogue, he watched "through the window" with the greatest interest.

Thomas--Also called Didymus. He has received a "bum wrap." We have called him doubting Thomas. And yet all the other apostles also doubted until they saw Jesus bodily. He did, however, require proof. In John 14:5, when Jesus talked about going to the father, Thomas said, "Lord, we know not where you go, so how can we know the way." This introduced Jesus' famous saying, "I am the way and the truth and

the life." And Thomas believed that! He was prepared to follow Jesus, even to death. In John 11:16, when Jesus announces His plans to go to Bethany, where the pharisees wanted to kill him, the other disciples disparaged. A line that we would expect to come from Peter came from the lips of Thomas: "Let us also go, that we may die with him."

James the son of Alphaeus--Also called James the less (Mark 15:40). We have absolutely no information about James other than his name.

Simon the Zealot--Again we have no information about Simon other than his title, "Zealot." This was a political party that opposed Rome's control over Palestine (Josephus Wars IV, 3:9; 5:1-4; 6:3; VII, 8:1), although there is no clearly organized group until about 67-68 A.D. There hatred was fierce for Rome. In fact, much of their opposition was in the form of assassination and guerrilla warfare. It is highly probable that Simon joined Jesus under the belief and hope that Jesus would institute a physical kingdom which would overthrow Rome. He believed in a physical-political Messiah. Yet, somewhere along the line, as he followed Jesus, he learned that love conquered the world, not war. It is an amazing testimony to the power of Christ's love, that Simon and Matthew could be brought together. Under normal conditions, Simon would have slit his throat. But renewed by Christ, they both left their loyalties and submitted to Christ.

Judas the son of James--To distinguish this fine apostle from the traitor, he is always identified as "the other" Judas. He is also known as Lebbeaus and Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3). He is known for only one comment in John 14:21-24: "But Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world." He, like the other 11, was hoping for a physical/political reign of the Messiah. It was an honest and legitimate question.

"Early church tradition tells us that Thaddaeus was tremendously gifted with the power of God to heal the sick. It is said that a certain king of Syria by the name of Adgar was very ill. When he heard about Thaddaeus' power to heal, he called for Thaddaeus to come and heal him. On his way to the king, says the

He never made any keen insights, any dynamic demonstration of faith, or any written scripture. And yet, his name alone commends his character. Known as "the less," either because of stature, age or personality, he was resigned to a subordinate position. And yet, there he served faithfully throughout the entire earthly ministry of Jesus. It is a lesson, that we must serve Christ, not for popularity or gain, but because we are His servants.

legend, he healed hundreds of people throughout Syria. When he finally reached King Adgar he healed him and presented the gospel, and the king became a Christian. As a result, however, the country was thrown into such chaos that an apostate nephew of the king took Thaddaeus prisoner and martyred him. Thaddaeus' symbol, in old church history books, is a big club, because tradition says he was beaten to death with a club. If any part of this legend is true, it again reveals his courage--faithful to his Lord." John MacArthur Jr. *The Master's Men*, 1982, p. 71.

Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor--He is mentioned last in all lists of the apostles. In every place where he is mentioned he is identified either as the traitor or as one of the 12. It was unbelievable that one of the 12 would actually become a traitor. No one suspected him. When Jesus told the 12 that one would betray Him, they had as much reason to suspect themselves as they did to suspect Judas (John 13). Ostensibly, he was pure, talented, and faithful. For three years he followed with the other 11, even entrusted with the money bag. Only once do we even get a hint of his greed and avarice--in John 12:4, he objected to Jesus being honored with the oil of spiknard.

Why he chose to betray Jesus is still a mystery. We know this: (1) God foreordained him for this detestable task. (2) He freely chose to do it, even after Jesus showed him all love and gave him all opportunity to repent. (3) He was the only apostle from Judea, Kerioth to be exact. Often Judeans held Galileans in contempt. (4) He may have been disillusioned that Jesus would not fulfill his expectations of a

political Messiah. He may have even been trying to force Jesus to make a move.

He committed suicide by hanging himself on a tree. Either the rope or the branch broke and he fell down a precipice, spilling his innards on the way down.

Judas is the greatest example of lost opportunity. He had the tremendous privilege of walking three years with Jesus. He was surrounded with the other 11 apostles. Who could ask for more. His hypocrisy fooled even the apostles and was strong enough to harden his heart in the presence of Jesus. Guard your heart! Hypocrisy is imminent, destroying even the best and most talented.

