

# Who were the 12 Disciples?

## BIBLE STUDY

### The Names of the 12 Disciples

We find the names of the disciples in the Gospel books of; Matthew 10:2-4, Mark 3:14-19 and Luke 6:13-16.

*You didn't choose me. I chose you. ([John 14:16](#))*

*Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew (Nathanael); Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus (James the Less), and Thaddaeus (Judas, son of James); Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him. ([Matthew 10:2-4](#), emphasis added)*

Now that we know the names of the apostles, let's take a deeper look into the life story of each man.

### Peter and Andrew

*And He said to them, "Follow Me, and I will make you fishers of men." ([Matthew 4:19](#))*

Peter and Andrew--Sons of John, were born in Bethsaida. They later settled in a home together in the town of Capernaum. They were fisherman and worked alongside James and John. They were companions and had probably known each other for years.

Peter and Andrew were early followers of John the Baptist. It was Andrew who first introduced his older brother Peter to Jesus when they were in the wilderness with John. (John 1:40-42) It is thought that they became spiritual followers of Jesus at this time. Once Peter was introduced to Jesus they left John and became followers of Christ.

### 1. Peter

Also known as Simon, Simon Peter, or Cephas (Rock), Peter was a gregarious, natural leader, and an obvious spokesperson for the twelve. Peter's name is mentioned far more in the New Testament than any other of the disciples. He was the older of the two brothers and the only married disciple. ([Luke 4:38](#)) His wife was known to travel with him when he was on mission. ([1 Cor. 9:5](#)) His assignment was to bring the Gospel to the circumcised. ([Gal. 2:7](#))

Peter is well known for denying Christ three times after Christ was arrested. After his own arrest many years later he requested to be crucified with his head down. He didn't believe he was worthy to be crucified in the same manner as his Lord. He died a martyr's death in Rome during the reign of Nero. Some speculate around the same time as Paul was being beheaded.

## 2. Andrew

An early disciple of [John the Baptist](#), Andrew, and John, the Son of Zebedee were present when John the Baptist said, "Behold, the Lamb of God!" ([John 1:35](#)) Andrew was the first to follow [Jesus](#) and his enthusiasm was evident as his desire to introduce his older brother to Jesus revealed what was already in his heart—a deep love for God.

He was not a dominant person next to his outspoken brother. He was a passionate preacher and shared the gospel boldly and was a significant contributor to the early church.

Andrew died a martyr's death. He faced crucifixion with boldness and courage. He [said](#), "Oh, cross most welcome and longed for! With a willing mind, joyfully and desirously, I come to you, being a scholar of Him which did hang on you, because I have always been your lover and yearn to embrace you."

## James and John—Sons of Zebedee

There is some evidence that Zebedee was a man of affluence. He was able to hire enough servants to help with his fishing business. ([Mark 1:20](#)). In Scripture, James is listed before his younger brother John, yet he remains somewhat obscure except for the fact he is part of [Jesus'](#) inner three. John is much more in the forefront of what is happening during the three years of training with Christ. James and John were both known for being men of intense passion and fervor. Because of this Jesus nicknamed them the Sons of Thunder. ([Mark 3:17](#))

## 3. James

James is the elder brother of John. He is a rather quiet part of the team of disciples in that we don't read much about him in Scripture. As part of [Jesus'](#) "inner three" he was permitted to be present along with Peter and John when Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead ([Mark 5:37](#)), he witnessed Jesus' transfiguration on the Mount of Olives ([Matthew 17:1](#)), and he was in the Garden of Gethsemane with Jesus. ([Mark 14:33](#)) James was the first disciple to be martyred (he was beheaded) and the only disciple to have their martyrdom recorded in Scripture. ([Acts 12:1-3](#))

## 4. John

Known as the “disciple [Jesus](#) loved,” he was also a part of the inner three. ([John 3:23](#)) He wrote a large portion of the New Testament—The book of John, 1, 2, and 3 John, and the book of Revelation. He wrote more about love than any other New Testament author. His close proximity to Jesus taught him much about love. He was [exiled](#) to the island of Patmos under Domitian, but after his death, John was allowed to return to Ephesus where he governed churches in Asia until his death at about A.D. 100.

## 5. Philip

*“The next day He purposed to go into Galilee, and He found Philip. And [Jesus](#) said to him, Follow Me.” ([John 1:43](#))*

What do we know about Philip? Almost nothing. Although a Jew, we only know him by his Greek name, Philip. A heart for evangelism, he was anxious to tell Nathanael the One foretold by Moses and the prophets had been found. ([John 1:45](#)) They were close companions and possibly studied the Old Testament together. Philip was stoned and [crucified](#) in Hierapolis, Phrygia.

## 6. Nathanael

Also known as Bartholomew, Nathanael came from Cana in Galilee. ([John 21:2](#)) He expressed some local prejudice about Nazareth. ([John 1:46](#)) [Jesus](#) recognized how sincerely his love for God was from the beginning when He said, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!” ([John 1:47](#))

Nathanael may have preached in [India](#) and translated the book of Matthew into their language. He was beaten, crucified, and beheaded. He died as a martyr while serving the people of Albinopolis, Armenia.

## 7. Matthew

Levi, the Son of Alphaeus, Matthew was a tax collector--the most despised people in all of Israel. They were known for taking extra money from the people of Israel to pay off the Romans and to pad their own pockets.

*Then it happened that as [Jesus](#) was reclining at the table in the house, behold, many tax collectors and sinners came and were dining with Jesus and His disciples; for there were many of them, and they were following Him. When the scribes of the Pharisee’s saw that He was eating with the sinners and tax collectors, they said to His disciples, Why is he eating and drinking with tax collectors and sinners? And hearing this, Jesus said to them, It is not those who are healthy that need a physician, but those who are sick; I did not come to call the [righteous](#), but sinners. ([Mark 2:16](#))*

*As Jesus went on from there, He saw a man called Matthew, sitting in the tax collector’s booth; and He said to him, Follow Me! And he got up and followed Him. ([Matthew 9:9](#))*

Matthew brought the gospel to Ethiopia and Egypt. Hircanus the king had him killed with a [spear](#).

## 8. Thomas

Usually nicknamed "Doubting Thomas," Thomas was also called Didymus, meaning The Twin (although a twin brother or sister is never mentioned in the [Bible](#).) He was an outspoken skeptic to the point of being known as a pessimist. No details are given about Thomas in the first three Gospels other than the mention of his name. John's first mention of Thomas is in [John 11:16](#). Lazarus had died and the disciples feared for the life of [Jesus](#) and themselves if they were to go back to Bethany. Thomas speaks up. *"Let us also go, that we may die with Him."* ([John 11:16 NASB](#)) Here we see the character quality of courage and loyalty to Christ, a quality not often attributed to Thomas.

His devotion to Christ is further displayed when Jesus told the disciples that He was going to go away and prepare a place for them. *"And you know the way where I am going. Thomas said to Him, Lord, we do not know where You are going, how do we know the way?"* ([John 14:4-5](#)) Thomas didn't want to be left behind. And then Thomas' love for Jesus and his desire to see and touch before he believed and then his declaration, *"My Lord and My God!"* ([John 20:28](#))

Tradition strongly suggests that Thomas started the Christian church in India. Some suggest being run through by a spear killed him, ironically, similar to Jesus being pierced by a spear.

## 9. James the Less

He is the son of Alphaeus ([Luke 6:15](#)). His mother's name is Mary ([Mark 15:40](#)) and he has a brother named Joseph ([Matthew 27:56](#)). Except for a few details about his family, there is nothing more mentioned about him in Scripture. Maybe this is why he is referred to as James the Less in [Mark 15:40](#). What is important to remember is although James was somewhat in the background, he was chosen by [Jesus](#) to be one of the [twelve disciples](#). He was trained and used by Christ in a powerful way to further the Kingdom of God. He was a valuable team member.

Tradition says he was crucified in Sinai or possibly stoned to death in Jerusalem.

## 10. Simon the Zealot

Simon was probably a political activist in his younger years. Why would [Jesus](#) choose someone with this background?

"It is amazing that Jesus would select a man like Simon to be an apostle. But he was a man of fierce loyalties, amazing passion, courage, and zeal. Simon had believed the truth and embraced Christ as his Lord. The fiery enthusiasm he once had for Israel was now expressed in his devotion to Christ." -[Twelve Ordinary Men](#)

There is some speculation about what happened to Simon. Tradition says that after preaching on the west coast of Africa, Simon went to England where he ended up being crucified in 74 AD.

## 11. Judas, son of James

The eleventh name on the list of disciples is Judas. Also known as Jude, Thaddeus, and [Lebbaeus](#), Judas lived in obscurity as one of the Twelve. He did ask Jesus a question in [John 14:22](#), "Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?" Judas seemed overly concerned with this question. Christ responded by saying He would reveal Himself to anyone who loved Him.

Most early tradition says that Judas, son of James, a few years after [Pentecost](#), took the gospel north to Edessa. There he healed the King of Edessa, Abgar. Eusebius the historian said the archives at Edessa contained the visit of Judas and the healing of Abgar (the records have now been destroyed). The traditional [symbol](#) of Judas is a club and tradition says he was clubbed to death for his [faith](#).

## 12. Judas Iscariot

*Jesus answered them, "Did I Myself not choose you, the twelve, and yet one of you is a devil?" Now He meant Judas the son of Simon Iscariot, for he, one of the twelve, was going to betray Him. ([John 6:70-71](#))*

The Traitor. Nothing is known about Judas' background. His encounter and call by Jesus is not recorded in Scripture. He was not from Galilee--that much is known. He obviously became a follower and stayed with Jesus for three years. He gave Christ three years of his life, but he certainly didn't give Him his heart, and Jesus knew this. Judas betrayed Jesus for thirty pieces of silver. ([Matthew 26:15](#))

"The other eleven apostles are all great encouragements to us because they exemplify how common people with typical failings can be used by God in uncommon, remarkable ways. Judas, on the other hand, stands as a warning about the evil potential of spiritual carelessness, squandered opportunity, sinful lusts, and hardness of the heart. Here was a man who drew as close to the Savior as it is humanly possible to be. He enjoyed every privilege Christ affords. He was intimately familiar with everything Jesus taught. Yet he remained in unbelief and went into a hopeless eternity." [Twelve Ordinary Men](#)