



## Who Are The Apostles? Week #6: The Account of Philip & Bartholomew

### Apostle:

- Those who had witnessed the resurrected Christ.
- Those who were commissioned by Him to spread the gospel into the world.
- Those who had the Holy Spirit work miraculous power through them.

**Apostles, symbols of** In Christian art, symbols assigned to each of the apostles:

- **Andrew:** X-shaped cross because he was crucified on one;
- **Bartholomew:** knife because he was flayed alive with one;
- **James the Greater:** scallop shell, pilgrim staff, or a gourd bottle because he is the patron saint of pilgrims;
- James the Less: fuller's pole because he was killed with one;
- **John:** cup with a winged serpent because he drank poison after making a sign of the cross;
- Judas Iscariot: bag because he kept money in it;
- Jude: club because he was martyred with it;
- **Matthew:** hatchet or halberd because he was killed with it;
- Matthias: battleaxe because he was beheaded with it;
- Paul: sword because he was beheaded with one;
- Peter: bunch of keys because Christ gave him the keys of the kingdom;
- Simon: a saw because he was sawn to death;
- **Phillip:** long staff surmounted with a cross because he suffered death by being suspended by the neck from a pillar;
- Thomas: lance with which he was pierced through at Mylapore, India.<sup>1</sup>

**Andrew** bar-Jonas

**Peter** (Simon bar-Jonas)

**James** bar-Zebedee ("James the Greater")

**John** bar-Zebedee ("the Beloved Disciple")

**Philip**

**Nathanael** or **Bartholomew**

**Thomas**

**Matthew** or **Levi** (Son of Alphaeus. James the Less brother?)

**James** bar-Alphaeus (James the Less)

**Thaddaeus** or **Lebbaeus** or **Judas** bar-James (Jude)

**Simon** the Zealot

**Judas** Iscariot

The order of the list is significant. All the lists of the twelve break them into three groups of four (John does not list them, but tells of their calling in the same groupings). This is clearly consistent with their status within the group.

### PATRONAGE:

- A patron was a person who, by their wealth and/or political power, was in a position to bestow favors, protection, and an umbrella of benevolence upon their clients.
- A client was one who received this benevolence and in return owed an obligation of service and loyalty to the patron.

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<sup>1</sup> Kurian, G. T. (2001). In *Nelson's new Christian dictionary: the authoritative resource on the Christian world*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.



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### Matthew 10:2-4

<sup>2</sup> The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; <sup>3</sup> **Philip and Bartholomew**; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; <sup>4</sup> Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

### Mark 3:16-19

<sup>16</sup> He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); <sup>17</sup> James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); <sup>18</sup> Andrew, and **Philip, and Bartholomew**, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot,<sup>[a]</sup> <sup>19</sup> and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him.

### Luke 6:13-16

<sup>13</sup> And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: <sup>14</sup> Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and **Philip, and Bartholomew**, <sup>15</sup> and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, <sup>16</sup> and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

### John 1:43-51

**Jesus Calls Philip and Nathanael** [Bartholomew-Mark 3:18]

<sup>43</sup> The next day Jesus decided to go to Galilee. He found Philip and said to him, "Follow me." <sup>44</sup> Now Philip was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. <sup>45</sup> **Philip found Nathanael** and said to him, "**We have found him** of whom Moses in the Law and also the prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph." <sup>46</sup> Nathanael said to him, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" Philip said to him, "Come and see." <sup>47</sup> Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward him and said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" <sup>48</sup> Nathanael said to him, "How do you know me?" Jesus answered him, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." <sup>49</sup> Nathanael answered him, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" <sup>50</sup> Jesus answered him, "Because I said to you, 'I saw you under the fig tree,' do you believe? You will see greater things than these." <sup>51</sup> And he said to him, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending on the Son of Man."

- Philip was a disciple of John the Baptists?
- Note that Jesus went to find Philip and said "Follow me" (He was AT the Sea of Galilee when He called the top 4)
- Philip's quick positive response shows what?  
[He was like Simeon, "waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25). He knew the Old Testament promises. He was ready. He was expectant. His heart was prepared. And he received Jesus gladly, unhesitatingly, as Messiah. No reluctance. No disbelief. It mattered not to him what kind of one-horse town the Messiah had grown up in. He knew instantly that he had come to the end of his search.]

### Acts 1:13-14

<sup>13</sup> And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James.<sup>14</sup> All these with one accord were devoting themselves to prayer, together with the women and Mary the mother of Jesus, and his brothers.

### Philip:

- Why a Greek name? (Lover of Horses)
- He was Jewish (all 12 Disciples were) so why wasn't that name listed?
- ALWAYS listed as the 5<sup>th</sup> Disciple
- Leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Triad?
- Why always connected to Bartholomew?



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- From Bethsaida in Galilee (Like Andrew and Peter)
- Philip & Nathanael (Bartholomew) and Thomas were all fishermen from Galilee.  
John 21, after the resurrection, when the apostles returned to Galilee and Peter said, "I am going fishing" (John 21:3), the others who were there all answered, "We are going with you also." According to John 21:2, that group included "Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples." The unnamed "two others" were most likely Philip and Andrew, because elsewhere they are always seen in the company of the men who are named in that passage.
- Was Philip a facts-and-figures guy—a by-the-book, practical-minded, non-forward-thinking type of individual. Pragmatist? Realist? (See notes on Hellenism) OPPOSITE OF PETER?
- Appears he was also a disciple of John the Baptist

### John 6:1-15

#### Jesus Feeds the Five Thousand

*6 After this Jesus went away to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, which is the Sea of Tiberias. <sup>2</sup> And a large crowd was following him, because they saw the signs that he was doing on the sick. <sup>3</sup> Jesus went up on the mountain, and there he sat down with his disciples. <sup>4</sup> Now the Passover, the feast of the Jews, was at hand. <sup>5</sup> Lifting up his eyes, then, and seeing that a large crowd was coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread, so that these people may eat?" <sup>6</sup> **He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he would do.** <sup>7</sup> Philip answered him, "Two hundred denarii<sup>[a]</sup> worth of bread would not be enough for each of them to get a little." <sup>8</sup> One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, <sup>9</sup> "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish, but what are they for so many?" <sup>10</sup> Jesus said, "Have the people sit down." Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, about five thousand in number. <sup>11</sup> Jesus then took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated. So also the fish, as much as they wanted. <sup>12</sup> And when they had eaten their fill, he told his disciples, "Gather up the leftover fragments, that nothing may be lost." <sup>13</sup> So they gathered them up and filled twelve baskets with fragments from the five barley loaves left by those who had eaten. <sup>14</sup> When the people saw the sign that he had done, they said, "This is indeed the Prophet who is to come into the world!"*

*<sup>15</sup> Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the mountain by himself.*

- This happened near Philip's hometown [Bethsaida]
- Why did Jesus see a need to 'test' Philip?
- What area of growth was He after?
- He did not ask for a plan but specifically WHERE....FOOD....PEOPLE EAT  
He broke it down for Philip.
- Philip's first response was to do the math. (Denarius = Day's wage)
- He did not see into the spiritual.
- Philip was already worrying about the HOW.
- Even after seeing all the miracles Jesus already has done, his faith had not kicked in.
- All Philip could see was the impossible.  
[One denarius would buy twelve wheat biscuits. Barley's cheaper. So with one denarius we could buy twenty barley biscuits. If we get the small biscuits and break them in half ... Nah, it simply can't be done. He had already figured out that four thousand barley cakes would never be enough to go around. His thoughts were pessimistic, analytical, and pragmatic—completely materialistic and earthbound.]
- Either way, Philip lost the opportunity to see the reward of faith; and the action of Andrew (which probably indicated some meager degree of faith) was honored. As Jesus taught them elsewhere,



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“If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, ‘Move from here to there,’ and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you” (Matthew 17:20).

- Philip needed to learn that lesson. *Everything* seemed impossible to him. He needed to set aside his materialistic, pragmatic, common-sense concerns and learn to lay hold of the supernatural potential of faith.

### John 12:20-26

#### Some Greeks Seek Jesus

<sup>20</sup> Now among those who went up to worship at the feast were some Greeks. <sup>21</sup> So these came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida in Galilee, and asked him, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus.” <sup>22</sup> Philip went and told Andrew; Andrew and Philip went and told Jesus. <sup>23</sup> And Jesus answered them, “The hour has come for the Son of Man to be glorified. <sup>24</sup> Truly, truly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the earth and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it bears much fruit. <sup>25</sup> Whoever loves his life loses it, and whoever hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. <sup>26</sup> If anyone serves me, he must follow me; and where I am, there will my servant be also. If anyone serves me, the Father will honor him.

- Philip gets Andrew – was this what the leader of the 2<sup>nd</sup> Triad was supposed to do?
- Since Andrew and Philip both went to tell Jesus....
- The LAST Passover...Jesus as the Lamb
- Did Jesus meet with the Greeks?
- Why did Philip need Andrew? Was he afraid of making a mistake? A by the book person?

#### Hellenistic Jews:

Greek civilization had spread through the Mediterranean after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C., and many people in the Middle East had adopted the Greek language, Greek culture, and Greek customs. They were known as “Hellenists” (cf. Acts 6:1). Perhaps Philip came from a family of Hellenistic Jews.

### Acts 6:1-7

*Now in these days when the disciples were increasing in number, a complaint by the Hellenists arose against the Hebrews because their widows were being neglected in the daily distribution.* <sup>2</sup> *And the twelve summoned the full number of the disciples and said, “It is not right that we should give up preaching the word of God to serve tables.* <sup>3</sup> *Therefore, brothers, pick out from among you seven men of good repute, full of the Spirit and of wisdom, whom we will appoint to this duty.* <sup>4</sup> *But we will devote ourselves to prayer and to the ministry of the word.”* <sup>5</sup> *And what they said pleased the whole gathering, and they chose Stephen, a man full of faith and of the Holy Spirit, and Philip, and Prochorus, and Nicanor, and Timon, and Parmenas, and Nicolaus, a proselyte of Antioch.* <sup>6</sup> *These they set before the apostles, and they prayed and laid their hands on them.*

<sup>7</sup> *And the word of God continued to increase, and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests became obedient to the faith.*

- In Jerusalem lived many Jews who had been born elsewhere before immigrating.
- These “Hellenistic” Jews had grown up less strictly and were looked down on by the homegrown “Hebrew” Jews.
- Apparently many Hellenistic Jews responded to the gospel of Jesus because it promised them first-class status.
- They were disappointed to find the same biases operating within the community of believers in Jesus.<sup>2</sup>

<sup>2</sup> Snider, J. (1996). [Word in life bible discovery guide: acts](#) (pp. 36–39). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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- More popular amongst the upper-class nobility (wanting Jerusalem to have a gymnasium and Greek theater = polis, Hellenistic city)
- Gymnasiums also operated as Greek schools
- Greek Education = Greek Citizenship
- Greek sports usually played in the nude
- Agricultural community = Mosaic system
- More common in Jewish communities outside of Palestine
- Temple priesthood was pro-Hellenist (under Seleucids-right after Alexander the Great)
- In order to do business, Jews needed to learn Greek
- The Torah was translated into Greek
- Jewish synagogue schools, as a result of competition with the gymnasium, adopted Greek ways. In fact, the development of the scribal tradition is partly due to this interaction; the movement was away from the oligarchical system of the temple era and toward a democratic instruction of the whole people.
- Acts shows that the kerygma (preaching) developed differently for Jewish and gentile audiences.  
Jewish: On OT fulfillment and the  
Gentile: On the active permeation of history by the one true God, who unlike dead idols involved himself in the affairs of man.
- The NT is written in Greek [*koine* Greek]

### John 14:1-31

#### I Am the Way, and the Truth, and the Life

**14** “Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God;<sup>[a]</sup> believe also in me. <sup>2</sup>In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you?<sup>[b]</sup> <sup>3</sup>And if I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself, that where I am you may be also. <sup>4</sup>And you know the way to where I am going.”<sup>[c]</sup> <sup>5</sup>Thomas said to him, “Lord, we do not know where you are going. How can we know the way?” <sup>6</sup>Jesus said to him, “I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me. <sup>7</sup>If you had known me, you would have known my Father also.<sup>[d]</sup> From now on you do know him and have seen him.”

<sup>8</sup> Philip said to him, “Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us.” <sup>9</sup>Jesus said to him, “Have I been with you so long, and you still do not know me, Philip? Whoever has seen me has seen the Father. How can you say, ‘Show us the Father’? <sup>10</sup>Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father is in me? The words that I say to you I do not speak on my own authority, but the Father who dwells in me does his works. <sup>11</sup>Believe me that I am in the Father and the Father is in me, or else believe on account of the works themselves.

<sup>12</sup> “Truly, truly, I say to you, whoever believes in me will also do the works that I do; and greater works than these will he do, because I am going to the Father. <sup>13</sup>Whatever you ask in my name, this I will do, that the Father may be glorified in the Son. <sup>14</sup>If you ask me<sup>[e]</sup> anything in my name, I will do it.

Philip hoped perhaps, in all devoutness, for the privilege of some special revelation (reminiscent of the request of Moses, Ex 33:18); but Jesus teaches him that he himself, the incarnate Son, is the all-sufficient revelation of the Father to mankind (Jn 14:8–31).<sup>3</sup>

Philip knew from the Old Testament that Moses had seen the glory of God and that Isaiah had a vision of the glory of God. I don't think that we should interpret Jesus' answer as a rebuke. He tells Philip that He has performed many miracles. Although Philip had not seen the glory of God as Moses or Isaiah did, he had seen Jesus and had witnessed His words and His works. Everything that Philip wished to see, he had seen in Jesus Christ. He had seen God. In Christ there is a much greater revelation of God than anything in the Old Testament. Philip had the

<sup>3</sup> Elwell, W. A., & Beitzel, B. J. (1988). [Philip](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 2, p. 1676). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.



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greatest revelation of God because he had seen Him incarnate in flesh and been with Him—in His presence—for three years! Remember that the writer to the Hebrews says that Jesus is the brightness of the Father’s glory and the express image of His person (see Heb. 1:3). “He that hath seen me hath seen the Father” does not mean you are seeing the identical Person, but you are seeing the same Person in power, in character, in love, and in everything else. You have seen all you would see in God the Father because “God is a Spirit: and they that worship him must worship him in spirit and in truth” (John 4:24). “No man hath seen God at any time; the only begotten Son, which is in the bosom of the Father, he hath declared him” (John 1:18). It is Jesus Christ whom we see. We are going to spend all eternity with Him. For those of us who love Him, the goal of our lives is to come to know Him.<sup>4</sup>

### Jesus Promises the Holy Spirit

<sup>15</sup> “If you love me, you will keep my commandments. <sup>16</sup> And I will ask the Father, and he will give you another Helper,<sup>[1]</sup> to be with you forever, <sup>17</sup> even the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees him nor knows him. You know him, for he dwells with you and will be<sup>[2]</sup> in you.

<sup>18</sup> “I will not leave you as orphans; I will come to you. <sup>19</sup> Yet a little while and the world will see me no more, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. <sup>20</sup> In that day you will know that I am in my Father, and you in me, and I in you. <sup>21</sup> Whoever has my commandments and keeps them, he it is who loves me. And he who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and manifest myself to him.” <sup>22</sup> Judas (not Iscariot) said to him, “Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?” <sup>23</sup> Jesus answered him, “If anyone loves me, he will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him. <sup>24</sup> Whoever does not love me does not keep my words. And the word that you hear is not mine but the Father’s who sent me. <sup>25</sup> “These things I have spoken to you while I am still with you. <sup>26</sup> But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in my name, he will teach you all things and bring to your remembrance all that I have said to you. <sup>27</sup> Peace I leave with you; my peace I give to you. Not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your hearts be troubled, neither let them be afraid. <sup>28</sup> You heard me say to you, ‘I am going away, and I will come to you.’ If you loved me, you would have rejoiced, because I am going to the Father, for the Father is greater than I. <sup>29</sup> And now I have told you before it takes place, so that when it does take place you may believe. <sup>30</sup> I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming. He has no claim on me, <sup>31</sup> but I do as the Father has commanded me, so that the world may know that I love the Father. Rise, let us go from here.

### The Lesson of Philip:

- He followed Jesus. Knew that Jesus was the Messiah the OT spoke of.
- What are the signs that Philip could not wrap his mind around Jesus?  
He was comfortable in his own methodology.  
Were there trust issues?  
Uncomfortable making a mistake?  
Did not want to come off as ‘unknowledgeable’?  
Too much of a Hellenist? (Was he \$? Did he think he was more enlightened than the others?)  
Was he used to working WITH someone and did not like to stand alone?  
Did he hate the limelight? Did he feel called on the carpet by Jesus?  
Was Jesus trying to grow individual courage in him?  
Was he too smart...having a hard time operating on a Spiritual level?
- **Imperfect understanding**
- What are signs that I cannot wrap my mind around who Jesus is?
- What stands in the way of me really seeing Jesus?

<sup>4</sup> McGee, J. V. (1997). *Thru the Bible commentary* (electronic ed., Vol. 4, pp. 460–461). Nashville: Thomas Nelson.



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How did his life end?

- Including Philip of the twelve Apostles, who sleeps at Hierapolis with his two daughters who grew old as virgins and another daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit and rests at Ephesus. (Eusebius of Caesarea. (1953). *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*. (R. J. Deferrari, Ed. & Trans.) (Vol. 19, pp. 188–190). Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.

- Martyred 8 years after James

- **HEROS (1)** (Ἡρώς), reputed first bishop of Hierapolis, originally a pagan of Hierapolis, who received Philip the apostle into his house when the people threatened to stone him, and being converted was consecrated by Philip bishop of Hierapolis. (Nicetas Paphlago, *Oratio ix.*, on St. Philip, in Patr. Gr. cv. 192; Le Quien, *Oriens Christ.* i. 833.)<sup>5</sup>

- **Papias** (c. 60–c. 130) Bishop of Hierapolis in Phrygia who is reported by Irenaeus to have been a “man of long ago,” who was a companion of St. John the Evangelist and Polycarp and to have known Aristion and the daughters of Philip the apostle. His work, *Expositions of the Oracles of the Lord* in five books, survives only in quotations and contained many oral traditions of the first century, including traditions regarding the writings of the Gospels.<sup>6</sup>

- Eusebius of Caesarea:

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Now, the acknowledged writing of Clement is well known and the works of Ignatius and Polycarp have been mentioned; and of Papias five treatises are in circulation which bear the title, ‘Interpretation of the Oracles of the Lord.’<sup>2</sup> And Irenaeus makes mention of these as the only ones written by him, speaking as follows: ‘These things, too, Papias, an ancient man, who was a hearer of John and a companion of Polycarp, attests in writing in the fourth of his books, for five books were composed by him.’<sup>7</sup> Such are the words of Irenaeus. Papias himself, however, according to the preface of his treatises, makes it clear that he was never a hearer or eye-witness of the holy Apostles, but he shows that he received the doctrines of the faith from those who knew them, and he does so in these words: ‘I shall not hesitate to set down for you together with my interpretations all that I have ever learned well from the presbyters and recall well, being confident of their truth. For, unlike most, I did not take pleasure in those who say much, but in those who teach the truth, and not in those who relate the commandments of others, but in those who relate the commandments given to the faith’ by the Lord and derived from the truth itself; but if ever anyone came who had carefully followed the presbyters, I inquired as to the words of the presbyters, what Andrew or what Peter said, or what Philip or what Thomas or James or what John or Matthew or any other of the disciples of the Lord, and what Aristion<sup>8</sup> and the presbyter John, the Lord’s disciples, were saying. For I did not suppose that information from books helped me so much as that from a living and abiding voice.’

His mentioning the name of John twice is worth noting here. The first of these he reckons along with Peter and James and Matthew and the other Apostles, meaning clearly the Evangelist, but the other John, after expanding his statement, he places outside the number of the Apostles, placing Aristion before him, and he distinctly calls him a presbyter. Thus, by these words is proved the truth of the story of those who have said that two persons in Asia bore the same name, and that there were two tombs in Ephesus and each of these even today is said to be John’s. We must give attention to this, for it is probable that the second (unless you would prefer the first) saw the Revelation which passes under the name of John.<sup>8</sup> And Papias, who is now being explained by us, confesses that he had received the words of the Apostles from their followers, but says that he himself was a hearer of Aristion and the presbyter John. At any rate, he mentions them many times and presents their traditions in his writings. Let us at least say this much to good purpose. But it is worth while to add to the words of Papias already quoted other expressions of his

by which he describes certain marvels and other matters which probably reached him through tradition. Now, it has already been pointed out above that **Philip the Apostle lived at Hierapolis with his daughters, but it must now be noted that Papias, who was a contemporary of theirs, reveals that he received a marvelous story from the daughters of Philip, for he relates that a resurrection of a corpse took place in his time, and again that another miracle took place in connection with Justus surnamed Barsabas, who drank a deadly poison and through the grace of the Lord suffered no harm.**<sup>7</sup>

- The church has preserved many traditions about his later ministry and death. Some say that he preached in France; others that he preached in southern Russia, Asia Minor, or even India. In A.D. 194, Bishop Polycrates of Antioch wrote that “Philip, one of the twelve apostles, sleeps at Hierapolis.” However, we have no firm evidence to support these claims.<sup>8</sup>

<sup>5</sup> Davidson, L. (1877–1887). *Heros (1)*. In W. Smith & H. Wace (Eds.), *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines* (Vol. 3, pp. 5–6). London: John Murray.

<sup>6</sup> Kurian, G. T. (2001). In *Nelson’s new Christian dictionary: the authoritative resource on the Christian world*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson Publishers.

<sup>7</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea. (1953). *Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5*. (R. J. Deferrari, Ed. & Trans.) (Vol. 19, pp. 202–204). Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.

<sup>8</sup> Packer, J. I., Tenney, M. C., & White, W., Jr. (1997). *Nelson’s illustrated manners and customs of the Bible* (p. 535). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.



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### **Bartholomew/Nathanael:**

Nathanael, as we shall see in the chapter that follows, was at first nonplused. “Nathanael said to him, ‘Can anything good come out of Nazareth?’ ” (John 1:46). Bethsaida was slightly north of Nazareth, but both were in Galilee, not far from each other. Nathanael himself came from Cana (John 21:2), a village just north of Nazareth. Nazareth by all measures would have been a more significant place than Cana, so there may have been some local rivalry reflected in Nathanael’s skepticism.

**NOTATION:** In the top 6 of the Disciples - **That friendships provide the most fertile soil for evangelism. When the reality of Christ is introduced into a relationship of love and trust that has already been established, the effect is powerful.**

### **NotES:**

**PHILIP [FILL ihp]** (*lover of horses*) — the name of four men in the New Testament:

1. One of the twelve apostles of Christ (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14) and a native of Bethsaida in Galilee (John 1:44; 12:21). According to the Gospel of John, Philip met Jesus beyond the Jordan River during John the Baptist’s ministry. Jesus called Philip to become His disciple. Philip responded and brought to Jesus another disciple, named Nathanael (John 1:43–51) or Bartholomew (Mark 3:18). Philip is usually mentioned with Nathanael.

Before Jesus fed the five thousand, He tested Philip by asking him how so many people could possibly be fed. Instead of responding in faith, Philip began to calculate the amount of food it would take to feed them and the cost (John 6:5–7).

When certain Greeks, who had come to Jerusalem to worship at the Feast of Passover, said to Philip, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus” (John 12:21), Philip seemed unsure of what he should do. He first told Andrew, and then they told Jesus of the request. Philip was one of the apostles who was present in the Upper Room following the resurrection of Jesus (Acts 1:13).<sup>9</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Youngblood, R. F., Bruce, F. F., & Harrison, R. K., Thomas Nelson Publishers (Eds.). (1995). In *Nelson’s new illustrated Bible dictionary*. Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson, Inc.



## Who Are The Apostles? Week #6: The Account of Philip & Bartholomew

### PHILIP—THE BEAN COUNTER

*Philip answered Him, "Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little."*

—JOHN 6:7

In the four biblical lists of the twelve apostles, **the fifth name on every list is Philip**. As we noted in chapter 2, this apparently signifies that Philip was the leader of the second group of four. As far as the biblical record is concerned, Philip plays something of a minor role compared to the four men in group one, but he nonetheless is mentioned on several occasions, so he emerges from the larger group of twelve as a distinct character in his own right.

*Philip* is a Greek name, meaning "lover of horses." He must also have had a Jewish name, because all twelve apostles were Jewish. But his Jewish name is never given. Greek civilization had spread through the Mediterranean after the conquests of Alexander the Great in the fourth century B.C., and many people in the Middle East had adopted the Greek language, Greek culture, and Greek customs. They were known as "Hellenists" (cf. Acts 6:1). Perhaps Philip came from a family of Hellenistic Jews. Custom would have dictated that he have a Hebrew name as well, but for whatever reasons, he seems to have used his Greek name exclusively. So we know him only as Philip.

Don't confuse him with Philip the deacon, the man we meet in Acts 6 who became an evangelist and led the Ethiopian eunuch to Christ. Philip the apostle was a completely different individual.

The apostle Philip "was from Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter" (John 1:44). Since they were all God-fearing Jews, Philip probably grew up attending the same synagogue as Peter and Andrew. Because of the relationship that existed between them and the sons of Zebedee, Philip was possibly acquainted with all four. There is good biblical evidence that Philip, Nathanael, and Thomas were all fishermen from Galilee, because in John 21, after the resurrection, when the apostles returned to Galilee and Peter said, "I am going fishing" (John 21:3), the others who were there all answered, "We are going with you also." According to John 21:2, that group included "Simon Peter, Thomas called the Twin, Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, the sons of Zebedee, and two others of His disciples." The unnamed "two others" were most likely Philip and Andrew, because elsewhere they are always seen in the company of the men who are named in that passage.

If all seven of these men were professional fishermen, they were most likely all friends and close coworkers a long time before they followed Christ. This shows what a close-knit group the apostles were, with at least half of the group—including all the core members—having come from one small region, most likely engaged in the same occupation, and probably having known and befriended each other long before they became disciples.

In a sense that is somewhat surprising. We might have expected Jesus to take a different approach in choosing the Twelve. After all, He was appointing them to the formidable task of being apostles, proxies for Him after He departed the earth, men with full power of attorney to speak and act on His behalf. You might think He would scour the whole earth to find the most gifted and qualified men. But instead, He singled out a small group of fishermen, a diverse yet common group of men with unexceptional talents and average abilities who already knew each other. And He said, "They will do."

All He really required of them was availability. He would draw them to Himself, train them, gift them, and empower them to serve Him. Because they would preach *Jesus'* message and do miracles by *His* power, these rugged fishermen were better suited to the task than a group of glittering prodigies trying to operate on their own talent might have been. After all, even these men behaved like prima donnas at times. So perhaps one of the reasons Christ selected and called this particular group is that for the most part they already got along well with one another. In any case, after already choosing Peter, Andrew, and John, Jesus located and called Philip, a native of the same little village from which Peter and Andrew originally hailed.



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What do we know about Philip? Matthew, Mark, and Luke give no details at all about him. All the vignettes of Philip appear in the Gospel of John. And from John's Gospel, we discover that Philip was a completely different kind of person from either Peter, Andrew, James, or John. In John's narrative, Philip is often paired with Nathanael (also known as Bartholomew), so we can assume the two of them were close comrades. But Philip is singularly different from even his closest companion. He is unique among all the disciples.

Piecing together all that the apostle John records about him, it seems Philip was a classic "process person." He was a facts-and-figures guy—a by-the-book, practical-minded, non-forward-thinking type of individual. He was the kind who tends to be a corporate killjoy, pessimistic, narrowly focused, sometimes missing the big picture, often obsessed with identifying reasons things can't be done rather than finding ways to do them. He was predisposed to be a pragmatist and a cynic—and sometimes a defeatist—rather than a visionary.

### HIS CALL

We first meet Philip in John 1, **the day after Jesus had first called** Andrew, John, and Peter. You will remember that Jesus had called those first three in the wilderness, where they were sitting at the feet of John the Baptist. John pointed them to the Messiah, and they left John to follow Jesus.

John writes, "The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee, and He found Philip and said to him, 'Follow Me'" (John 1:43). Apparently, Philip was also in the wilderness with John the Baptist, and before returning to Galilee, Jesus sought him out and invited him to join the other disciples.

Peter, Andrew, and John (and likely James as well) had more or less found Jesus. To be precise, they had been directed to Him by John the Baptist. So this is the first time we read that Jesus Himself actually sought and found one of them.

That is not to say He didn't sovereignly seek and call the rest. In fact, we know that He had chosen them all before the foundation of the world. In John 15:16, Jesus told them, "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you." But in the descriptions of how they first encountered Christ, this language is unique to the call of Philip. **He is the first one whom Jesus physically sought out, and the first one to whom Jesus actually said, "Follow Me." ??????**

It is interesting, incidentally, to note that at the *end* of His earthly ministry, Jesus had to say, "Follow Me" to Peter (John 21:19, 22). Peter apparently still needed that encouragement after his failure on the night of Jesus' betrayal. But Philip was the first to hear and obey those words. From the outset, Jesus actively sought Philip. He found him. He invited him to follow. And He found in Philip an eager and willing disciple.

It is obvious that Philip already had a seeking heart. Of course, a seeking heart is always evidence that God is sovereignly drawing the person, for as Jesus said, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him" (John 6:44); and again, "No one can come to Me unless it has been granted to him by My Father" (v. 65).

Philip's seeking heart is evident in how he responded to Jesus. "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote; Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph'" (John 1:45). **Obviously, Philip and Nathanael, like the first four disciples, had been studying the Law and the Prophets and were seeking the Messiah.** That is why they had all gone to the wilderness to hear John the Baptist in the first place. So when Jesus came to Philip and said, "Follow Me," his ears, his eyes, and his heart were already open, and he was prepared to follow.

Notice something interesting about the expression Philip used with Nathanael: "*We have found Him.*" As far as Philip was concerned, he had found the Messiah rather than being found by Him. Here we see the classic tension between sovereign election and human choice. Philip's call is a perfect illustration of how both exist in perfect harmony. The Lord found Philip, but Philip felt he found the Lord. Both things



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were true from the human perspective. But from a biblical perspective, we know that God's choice is the determinative one. "You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you" (John 15:16).

Still, from a human perspective—from *Philip's* point of view—this was the end of his search. By God's grace, he had been a faithful and true seeker. He was devoted to the Word of God, and he believed the Old Testament promise of a Messiah. Now he had found Him—or rather had been found by Him.

Philip not only had a seeking heart, but he also had the heart of a personal evangelist. His first response upon meeting Jesus was to find his friend Nathanael and tell him about the Messiah.

I am convinced, by the way, **that friendships provide the most fertile soil for evangelism. When the reality of Christ is introduced into a relationship of love and trust that has already been established, the effect is powerful.** And it seems that invariably, when someone becomes a true follower of Christ, that person's first impulse is to want to find a friend and introduce that friend to Christ. That dynamic is seen in Philip's spontaneous instinct to go find Nathanael and tell him about the Messiah.

The language Philip used betrayed his amazement at discovering who the Messiah was. The One of whom Moses wrote, and the One foretold by the prophets, was none other than "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph," a lowly carpenter's son.

Nathanael, as we shall see in the chapter that follows, was at first nonplused. "Nathanael said to him, 'Can anything good come out of Nazareth?'" (John 1:46). Bethsaida was slightly north of Nazareth, but both were in Galilee, not far from each other. Nathanael himself came from Cana (John 21:2), a village just north of Nazareth. Nazareth by all measures would have been a more significant place than Cana, so there may have been some local rivalry reflected in Nathanael's skepticism.

But Philip was undaunted: "Come and see" (1:46). The ease with which Philip believed is remarkable. In human terms, no one had brought Philip to Jesus. He was like Simeon, "waiting for the Consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him" (Luke 2:25). He knew the Old Testament promises. He was ready. He was expectant. His heart was prepared. And he received Jesus gladly, unhesitatingly, as Messiah. No reluctance. No disbelief. It mattered not to him what kind of one-horse town the Messiah had grown up in. He knew instantly that he had come to the end of his search.

That is frankly out of character for Philip, and it reveals to what a great degree the Lord had prepared his heart. His *natural* tendency might have been to hold back, doubt, ask questions, and wait and see. As we are about to discover, he was not usually a very decisive person. But thankfully, in this case, He was already being drawn to Christ by the Father. And as Jesus said, "All that the Father gives Me *will* come to Me" (John 6:37, emphasis added).

### THE FEEDING OF THE FIVE THOUSAND

Our next glimpse of Philip occurs in John 6, at the feeding of the five thousand. We referred to this episode in chapter 1. We took a closer look at it in chapter 3 when we studied the character of Andrew. We return now for another look at the feeding of the five thousand, this time through Philip's eyes. And here we discover what Philip as a natural man was like. We already know he was a student of the Old Testament. We know he interpreted it literally and believed in the Messiah. So when the Messiah came to him and said, "Follow Me," he embraced Jesus immediately and followed Him without hesitation. That was Philip's spiritual side. His heart was right. He was a man of faith. But often he was a man of *weak* faith.

Here his personality begins to show through. John describes how a great multitude had sought out Jesus and found Him on a mountainside with His disciples. As we saw in chapter 1, to say this was a crowd of five thousand doesn't do justice to the size of the multitude. John 6:10 says there were five thousand *men* in the crowd. There must have been several more thousand women and children. (Ten or twenty thousand would not be impossible). In any case, it was a huge throng, and according to Matthew 14:15, evening was approaching. The people needed to eat.

John 6:5 says, "Then Jesus lifted up His eyes, and seeing a great multitude coming toward Him, He said to Philip, 'Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?'"



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Why did He single Philip out and ask him? John says, “This He said to test him, for He Himself knew what He would do” (v. 6).

Philip was apparently the apostolic administrator—the bean counter. It is likely that he was charged with arranging meals and logistics. We know that Judas was in charge of keeping the money (John 13:29), so it makes sense that someone was also charged with coordinating the acquisition and distribution of meals and supplies. It was a task that certainly suited Philip’s personality. Whether officially or unofficially, he seems to have been the one who was always concerned with organization and protocol. He was the type of person who in every meeting says, “I don’t think we can do that”—the master of the impossible. And apparently, as far as he was concerned, almost everything fit into that category.

So Jesus was testing him. He wasn’t testing him to find out what he was thinking; Jesus already knew that (cf. John 2:25). He wasn’t asking for a plan; John says Jesus also already knew what He Himself was going to do. He was testing Philip so that Philip would reveal to himself what he was like. That is why Jesus turned to Philip, the classic administrative personality, and asked, “How do you propose to feed all these people?”

Of course, Jesus knew exactly what Philip was thinking. I believe Philip had already begun counting heads. When the crowd started moving in, he was already doing estimates. It was late in the day; this was a huge crowd; they were going to be hungry. And eating in those days was no easy thing. There were no fast-food franchises on that mountainside. So by the time Jesus asked the question, Philip already had his calculations prepared: “Philip answered Him, ‘Two hundred denarii worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little’ ” (John 6:7). He had apparently been thinking through the difficulties of the food supply from the moment he first saw the crowd. Instead of thinking, *What a glorious occasion! Jesus is going to teach this crowd. What a tremendous opportunity for the Lord!*—all pessimistic Philip could see was the impossibility of the situation.

Philip had been there when the Lord created wine out of water (John 2:2). He had already seen numerous times when Jesus had healed people, including several creative and regenerative miracles. But when he saw that great crowd, he began to feel overwhelmed by the impossible. He lapsed into materialistic thinking. And when Jesus tested his faith, he responded with open unbelief. *It can’t be done.*

From a purely human perspective, he was absolutely right. A denarius was one day’s wages for a common laborer (cf. Matthew 20:2). In other words, between all the disciples—at least twelve of them and probably many more—they had no more than eight months’ worth of a single day-laborer’s wages to meet their own needs. That is not a large sum, considering all that had to be done to care for the disciples’ own food and lodging. With such a small amount, they couldn’t afford even a meager snack for so many people. Philip was probably thinking, *One denarius would buy twelve wheat biscuits. Barley’s cheaper. So with one denarius we could buy twenty barley biscuits. If we get the small biscuits and break them in half ... Nah, it simply can’t be done.* He had already figured out that four thousand barley cakes would never be enough to go around. His thoughts were pessimistic, analytical, and pragmatic—completely materialistic and earthbound.

One of the supreme essentials of leadership is a sense of vision—and this is especially true for anyone whose Master is Christ. But Philip was obsessed with mundane matters and therefore overwhelmed by the impossibility of the immediate problem. He knew too much arithmetic to be adventurous. The reality of the raw facts clouded his faith. He was so obsessed with this temporal predicament that he was oblivious to the transcendental possibilities that lay in Jesus’ power. He was so enthralled with common-sense calculations that he didn’t see the opportunity the situation presented. He *should* have said, “Lord, if You want to feed them, feed them. I’m just going to stand back and watch how You do it. I know You can do it, Lord. You made wine at Cana and fed Your children manna in the wilderness. Do it. We will tell everyone to get in line, and You just make the food.” That would have been the right response. But Philip was convinced it simply couldn’t be done. The limitless supernatural power of Christ had completely escaped his thinking.

On the other hand, Andrew seemed to have a glimmer of the possible. He found one little boy with two pickled fish and five barley crackers and brought him to Christ. Even Andrew’s faith was challenged by the colossal size of the logistical problem. He said to Jesus, “There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are they among so many?” (v. 9). **Either Andrew had some faint ray**



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of hope that Jesus would do *something* (because he brought the boy to Jesus anyway), or he was influenced by Philip's pessimism, and by this act supported the claim that the situation was impossible.

Either way, Philip lost the opportunity to see the reward of faith; and the action of Andrew (which probably indicated some meager degree of faith) was honored. As Jesus taught them elsewhere, "If you have faith as a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move; and nothing will be impossible for you" (Matthew 17:20).

Philip needed to learn that lesson. *Everything* seemed impossible to him. He needed to set aside his materialistic, pragmatic, common-sense concerns and learn to lay hold of the supernatural potential of faith.

### THE VISIT OF THE GREEKS

John 12 gives us another insight into Philip's character. Again, we see his overanalytical temperament. He was concerned too much about methods and protocol. He lacked boldness and vision. It made him too timid and too apprehensive. And when he has another opportunity to step out in faith, he misses it again.

John 12:20–21 says, "Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus.'" These were either God-fearing Gentiles or full-fledged proselytes to Judaism who were coming to Jerusalem to worship God at the Passover. This was the final Passover of the Old Testament economy, during which Jesus Himself would be slain as the true Lamb of God. He was on His way to Jerusalem to die for the sins of the world.

These Greeks were very interested in Jesus. They sought out Philip in particular. Perhaps because of his Greek name, they thought he was the best contact. Or maybe they had learned that he was more or less the administrator of the group, the one who made all the arrangements on behalf of the disciples. Again we see that whether Philip held that position officially or by default, he seems to have been the one in charge of operations. So these men approached him to arrange a meeting with Jesus.

Philip, being the typical administrative type, probably carried around in his head a full manual of protocols and procedures. (In fact, if he was like many administrators I have known, he might have had an actual written policy manual, which he fastidiously devised and insisted on following to the letter. He strikes me as that kind of by-the-book type of person.) Somehow these Greeks knew he was the policy person, so they asked him to arrange a meeting with Jesus.

**It was not a difficult or complex request. And yet Philip seems to have been unsure what to do with them.** If he checked the manual on Gentiles and Jesus, he might have noticed that Jesus said on one occasion when He sent the disciples out, "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 10:5–6). On another occasion, Jesus said, "I was not sent except to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matthew 15:24).

Was that principle meant to prohibit Gentiles from ever being introduced to Jesus? Of course not. Jesus was simply identifying the normal priority of His ministry: "to the Jew first and also to the Greek" (Romans 2:10). It was a general principle, not an ironclad law. Greeks and other Gentiles were expressly included among those to whom He ministered. Jesus Himself had originally revealed that He was the Messiah to a Samaritan woman. Although the focus of His ministry was to Israel first and foremost, He was, after all, the Savior of the world, not just Israel. "He came to His own, and His own did not receive Him. But as many as received Him, to them He gave the right to become children of God, to those who believe in His name" (John 1:11–12).

But people like Philip don't appreciate general rules of thumb; they want every rule to be rigid and inviolable. There was no protocol in the manual for introducing Greeks to Jesus. And Philip wasn't prepared to do something so unconventional.

Nonetheless, Philip had a good heart. So he took the Greeks to Andrew. Andrew would bring anyone to Jesus. So "Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus" (John 12:22).



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Obviously, Philip was not a decisive man. There was no precedent for introducing Gentiles to Jesus, so he enlisted Andrew's help before doing anything. This way no one could fault Philip for not going by the book. After all, Andrew was *always* bringing people to Jesus. Andrew would get the blame if anyone objected.

We may safely assume that Jesus received the Greeks gladly. He Himself said, "the one who comes to Me I will by no means cast out" (John 6:37). John 12 doesn't record anything about Jesus' meeting with the Greeks except the discourse Jesus gave on that occasion:

Jesus answered them, saying, "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor." (12:23–26)

**In short, He preached the gospel to them and invited them to become His disciples.**

Was it the right thing to bring those Greeks to Jesus? Absolutely. Jesus Himself welcomes all comers to drink freely of the water of life (Revelation 22:17). It would have been wrong to turn those men away. Philip seemed to know that in his heart, even if his head was obsessed with protocol and procedure.

### THE UPPER ROOM

Our final glimpse of Philip comes just a short time later, in the Upper Room with the disciples on the occasion of the Last Supper. It is significant to note that this was the last night of Jesus' earthly ministry—the eve of His crucifixion. The formal training of the Twelve had officially come to an end. And yet their faith was still pathetically weak. This was the same evening when they sat around the table arguing about who was the greatest, rather than taking up the towel and basin and washing Jesus' feet. Many of the most important lessons He had taught them appear to have gone unheeded. As Jesus said, they were "foolish ... and slow of heart to believe" (Luke 24:25).

This was true of Philip in particular. Of all the foolish, impetuous, heartbreakingly ignorant statements that occasionally escaped the lips of the disciples, none was more disappointing than Philip's remark in the Upper Room.

That night Jesus' heart was heavy. He knew what lay ahead for Him on the following day. He knew His time with the disciples was at an end, and although they still seemed rather ill-prepared from a purely human perspective, He was going to send the Holy Spirit to empower them as His witnesses. His earthly work with them was nearly finished. He was sending them out as sheep in the midst of wolves (cf. Matthew 10:16). So He was eager to comfort them and encourage them about the Holy Spirit, who would come to empower them.

He urged them not to be troubled in their hearts and promised them He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:1–2). He further promised to return to receive them to Himself so that they could be where He was going (v. 3). Then He added this: "And where I go you know, and the way you know" (v. 4). Obviously, the *where* was heaven, and the *way* there was the way He had outlined in the gospel.

But they were slow to catch his meaning, and Thomas probably spoke for them all when he said, "Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?" (v. 5).

Jesus said to him, "I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me" (John 14:6). By now His meaning certainly ought to have been clear. He was going to the Father in heaven, and the only way there for them was through faith in Christ. Of course, that is one of the key biblical texts about the exclusivity of Christ. He was expressly teaching that no one can go to heaven who does not trust Him and embrace Him alone as Savior. He is the way—the *only* way—to the Father.

Then Jesus added an explicit claim about His own deity: "If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him" (John 14:7). He was stating in the clearest possible language that He is God. Christ and His Father are of the same essence. To know Christ is to know the Father, because the different Persons of the Trinity are one in their very essence. Jesus *is*



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God. To see Him is to see God. They had both seen Him and known Him, so in effect, they already knew the Father as well.

It was at this point that Philip spoke up: “Philip said to Him, ‘Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us’ ” (v. 8).

“*Show us the Father*”? How could Philip say such a thing, immediately on the heels of what Jesus had just told them? This is profoundly sad. You would think that by the time Philip got to this point, so long a time after he had begun to follow Jesus, he would know better. All that time, he had heard Jesus teach. He had witnessed untold numbers of miracles. He had seen people healed of the worst kinds of diseases and deformities. He had been there when Jesus cast out demons. He had spent time in intimate fellowship with Christ, day in and day out, twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week, for many months. If he had truly known Christ, he would have known the Father also (v. 7). How could he now say, “Show us the Father”? Where had he been?

“Jesus said to him, ‘Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, “Show us the Father”?’ ” (v. 9). What did Philip think had been going on for the past two or three years? How could Philip of all people, who had responded with such enthusiastic faith at the beginning, be making a request like this at the end? Where was his faith?

Jesus asked him, “Do you not believe that I am in the Father, and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority; but the Father who dwells in Me does the works. Believe Me that I am in the Father and the Father in Me, or else believe Me for the sake of the works themselves” (vv. 10–11). Jesus was saying in essence, “I am to the Father what you are to Me. I am the Father’s apostle. I am His *shaliyah*. I act with His full power of attorney.

“More than that, I am one with the Father. I am in the Father and the Father is in Me. We share the same divine essence.”

Notice the appeal: “Do you not believe?... *Believe*”! Philip had already embraced Jesus as Messiah. Christ was urging him to take his faith to its logical conclusion: Philip was already in the presence of the living and eternal God Himself. He did not need to see any greater miracles. He did not need any more dramatic proof. “Show us the Father”? What was he saying? What did he think Jesus had been doing?

For three years Philip had gazed into the very face of God, and it still was not clear to him. His earthbound thinking, his materialism, his skepticism, his obsession with mundane details, his preoccupation with business details, and his small-mindedness had shut him off from a full apprehension of whose presence he had enjoyed.

Philip, like the other disciples, was a man of limited ability. He was a man of weak faith. He was a man of **imperfect understanding**. He was skeptical, analytical, pessimistic, reluctant, and unsure. He wanted to go by the book all the time. Facts and figures filled his thoughts. So he was unable to grasp the big picture of Christ’s divine power, Person, and grace. **He was slow to understand, slow to trust, and slow to see beyond the immediate circumstances. He still wanted more proof. [FEAR!]**

If we were interviewing Philip for the role to which Jesus called him, we might say, “He’s out. You can’t make him one of the twelve most important people in the history of the world.”

But Jesus said, “He’s exactly what I’m looking for. My strength is made perfect in weakness. I’ll make him into a preacher. He’ll be one of the founders of the church. I will make him a ruler in the kingdom and give him an eternal reward in heaven. And I will write his name on one of the twelve gates of the New Jerusalem.” Thankfully, the Lord uses people like Philip—lots of them.

Tradition tells us that Philip was greatly used in the spread of the early church and was among the first of the apostles to suffer martyrdom. By most accounts he was put to death by stoning at Heliopolis,



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in Phrygia (Asia Minor), eight years after the martyrdom of James. Before his death, multitudes came to Christ under his preaching.

Philip obviously overcame the human tendencies that so often hampered his faith, and he stands with the other apostles as proof that “God has chosen the foolish things of the world to put to shame the wise, and God has chosen the weak things of the world to put to shame the things which are mighty; and the base things of the world and the things which are despised God has chosen, and the things which are not, to bring to nothing the things that are, that no flesh should glory in His presence” (1 Corinthians 1:27–29).<sup>10</sup>

**Hellenism.** That unique blend of Greek cultural, philosophical and ethical ideals which after Alexander the Great had a profound effect on the development of culture throughout the Mediterranean world. While the antecedents of the movement occur long before, the Hellenistic Age is seen by most to have begun in 323 BC, with the death of Alexander, and to have continued until either 30 BC, when Rome conquered Egypt, or (more likely) AD 300+. **Rome itself was culturally conquered by Hellenism.**

### ***Historical Development***

*The Antecedents.* The Hellenistic spirit can be traced as far back as the Archaic period (750–500 BC), which was a **time of growing population and prosperity**. The *polis* or city-state became the center of political and social life. As a result, the era became increasingly **characterized by a strong individualism and realistic approach to life**. This cultural factor must be seen in the light of the major development of that period, the growing specialization of war. The Greeks developed a **new approach, that of the *hoplite* or infantrymen**. **Previously, warfare had been under the province of the aristocracy and was fought by individual champions. The Greeks introduced the idea of the finely molded unit and taught peasants how to fight. This made the art of warfare a Greek specialty, and their mercenaries were known throughout the ancient world.**

Some city-states, such as Sparta, specialized in military matters while others, like Athens, moved in the direction of political reform, evolving a democratic form of government from the “tyrannies” of earlier times. The result was that Sparta ambitiously extended her influence, conquering and colonizing neighboring lands, while Athens seemed to be characterized by internal squabbles and atrophy. However, in the 5th century BC. Athens had settled her problems and became a major force in the wars against the Persians. These were also the times of Greek alliances; the Peloponnesian league of the 6th century was followed by the Delian league of the 5th.

*The Classical Period.* These political developments provided the basis for the evolution of a vigorous, dynamic **new spirit that was to characterize art, drama, and philosophy**. Sculpture and painting were revitalized, and the stylized figures of the past were replaced by the realistic forms associated with the classical period. The Greek tragedy developed vigorously. Schools of philosophy flourished, notably Pythagoras’, whose mathematical approach set the stage for the marriage of science and ideas so crucial to Greek philosophy; and Parmenides’, who wedded physics to metaphysics. After a period of war between Athens and Sparta, Pericles transformed both architecture (by building the Parthenon in Athens) and government (by adding a new dimension to Athenian democracy, allowing even foreigners to participate). During this time, the Greeks developed the idea that was to transform their way of life: **that human intellect or reason was the highest good and the path to happiness. From this nucleus arose the sciences, the arts, and the Hellenistic philosophies.**

The Great Peloponnesian War (431–404 BC) accelerated the cultural changes. The political and economic tensions produced first the Sophists, who exalted rationalism and rhetoric, then Socrates and Thucydides, both of whom stressed a rigorous cross-examination of all truth-claims. The war ended with the defeat of Athens by Sparta, but during the next few decades Sparta began to decline from lack of good leadership, while Athens

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<sup>10</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). *Twelve ordinary men: how the Master shaped his disciples for greatness, and what He wants to do with you* (pp. 119–133). Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group.



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restored its democracy and built a Second Athenian League. Yet even this was only temporary, and the common Greek tendency to individualism and dissension soon led to its failure as well.

It remained for Philip of Macedonia to pick up the pieces. Through a series of wars he succeeded in finally uniting the Greek city-states. His untimely assassination left his son, Alexander, the task of spreading his kingdom throughout the then-known world.

Philosophy during this period became the handmaiden of politics. **Plato was primarily a statesman-philosopher who never ceased in his search for a “philosopher-king” who could unite Greece.** The death in 399 BC. of his mentor, Socrates, turned Plato from active politics and he established his Academy, primarily a school of political philosophy which sought to use truth to reform the state. His most famous pupil, Aristotle, became the tutor of young Alexander and thereby achieved his master’s dream. Platonic idealism and Aristotelian realism were to become the two poles of Greek thought for generations to come.

*The Hellenistic Age.* Alexander the Great was more than a military conqueror. He made Hellenistic culture the norm throughout his realm. **He taught conquered people the Greek language** and customs, and he built new Greek cities like Alexandria in Egypt (34 in all), which became bastions of Hellenism. His major accomplishment was not so much territorial as cultural; after him Hellenism controlled the Western world for centuries. It was Alexander who spearheaded the triumph of the Attic *koine* (common) dialect over the other Greek dialects, and this became the primary force in the Hellenization of the East. The *koine* dialect was to be the basis for the acceptance of Hellenism by subject peoples. The first period after his death would be characterized by the dissolution of Alexander’s empire and an emerging balance of power between the forces of Ptolemy, who controlled Egypt and Palestine; Seleucus, who ruled Babylon and Asia Minor; and Antipater (followed by Antigonus), who reigned over Macedonia and the Hellespont.

In the East the next century was typified by intermittent skirmishes between the Ptolemies and Seleucids, with the result that Palestine became a buffer state between the two. An important difference is that the Ptolemies had a unified kingdom and so were not interested in change; under their rule Palestine was autonomous both culturally and religiously. However, the Seleucids controlled many different groups and so tried to unite them by forcing Hellenization on them. This finally led to the successful revolt of the Jews under the Maccabees and the disintegration of both empires. **In the West, Rome became progressively involved in Greek affairs and by 149 BC. controlled the Greek lands politically, while they themselves were overtaken by Greek ideals culturally.**

During this period there was a growing middle class, which was brought about partly because Alexander’s conquests led to a vast dispersion of Greeks into the conquered lands. The redistribution of wealth this engendered was based upon a Greek education and an acceptance of Hellenistic ideals. The term “civilized” came to be identified with the Greek way of life. **Education was controlled by the idea of sound rhetoric, so that style triumphed over truth.** Greek drama turned to comedy, which stressed realism in human emotions, and Hellenistic art grew even more naturalistic than in the classical period.

Philosophy also developed, with at least three schools arising to dominate Greek thought for the next few centuries. Interestingly, **all three centered on practical ethics rather than the classical quest for truth and knowledge.** The Cynics, founded by Diogenes, stressed a total self-sufficiency which left the individual in a social vacuum but taught him how to deal with human misery. The two most influential schools were the Epicureans and the Stoics. Epicurus sought freedom from anxiety or fear and taught that peace of the soul could only be derived from a disciplined, moderate experience of pleasures. The result was a retreat from society into one’s own selfhood. Stoicism, founded by Zeno and named after the *stoa* (porch) in Athens where he taught, was similar to cynicism in its emphasis on self-sufficiency, but it combined this with a stress on the brotherhood of man. Every person was to strive after virtue and live above the vicissitudes of life. This last philosophy had become the center of Hellenism by the time of Christ.

**Hellenism and Judaism.** Judaism was virtually the only culture that resisted the encroachment of Hellenism. Therefore the power of this movement can be seen in the degree to which it permeated Judaism.

**The pull of Hellenism was always felt primarily by the upper class nobility, and it was strongest in Jewish communities of the dispersion.** However, under the Seleucids **the temple priesthood was pro-Hellenist, so this added a religious dimension to the economic pressure upon the wealthy.** From the beginning Palestine



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was split into two factions, the urban nobility, who tried to make Jerusalem another *polis* or Hellenistic city-state by adding such things as gymnasia and Greek drama; and the agricultural, poor peasants who saw in Hellenism a threat to the very existence of the Mosaic system.

Jews had to learn *koine* Greek to make business transactions and participate in legal matters. Archaeology shows that almost all inscriptions in Palestine from the 3rd century BC. were in Greek, and the translation of the Torah into Greek in the Septuagint shows the permeation of the language in the Jewish communities outside of Palestine (diasporate communities). The gymnasium was the school in Hellenistic cities, and Greek education was the key to citizenship. Alexandria (Egypt) in this regard became the intellectual center of the Greek world, and its influence on the strong Jewish community in that city was considerable. Well-to-do Jews in lands of the dispersion and in Jerusalem itself were expected to procure a gymnasium education. Many followed the Greek practice of participating naked in sports, as can be seen from the literature of the intertestamental period, which is strongly antagonistic a century later (due to Jewish aversion to such public display). Jewish synagogue schools, as a result of competition with the gymnasia, adopted Greek ways. In fact, the development of the scribal tradition is partly due to this interaction; the movement was away from the oligarchical system of the temple era and toward a democratic instruction of the whole people.

Jewish literature and philosophy became permeated by Hellenistic patterns. This is seen in 1 and 2 Maccabees, which reflect Greek historiography, and Hellenistic influence can be seen in virtually every Jewish work of this period. The major exponent, of course, was Philo of Alexandria, whose allegorical interpretation of the OT was designed to make Jewish teachings palatable to the Hellenistic world and vice versa. This attitude was quite common. The symbolism of Jewish apocalyptic was influenced by a combination of Hellenistic and oriental (primarily Persian) themes, and even the hyper-conservative Essene movement used thought-forms which had been molded via Judaism's penetration by Hellenistic and Persian ideas. The stress on "eternal knowledge" and "revealed mystery" and the dualistic combination of salvation history and anthropology are evidence of this. Of course, the influence was not all one way. The development of Greek philosophy was strongly influenced by Semitic forms, especially Phoenician; and the strong Jewish piety was very attractive to the Greek mind.

It is accurate to say that even the Judaism of Palestine in the 1st century BC. was a Hellenistic Judaism. The universality of the *koine* Greek, the infiltration of Greek learning and thought-patterns, the presence of Jewish literature in Greek, and the permeation of Hellenistic rhetorical devices, even into the very literature of the opposition movement, shows the power of Hellenism in Palestine.

**Hellenism and Christianity.** Some scholars have attempted to stratify early Christianity into periods typified by Palestinian, Hellenistic-Jewish, and Hellenistic outlooks. However, as the evidence above has shown, this is by no means an easy task, since even Judea was penetrated by Greek thought-patterns. To be sure, the reactionary stance against Hellenism in Judaism is paralleled by the Hellenist-Hebrew conflict of Acts 6 and by the opposition of the Judaizers to Paul and the gentile mission. However, from the very earliest stages the influence of Hellenism on the church can be traced. Moreover, it becomes virtually impossible to know whether a phrase is drawn from Palestinian or from Hellenistic sources, due to the mutual penetration of both into diasporate communities as well as Palestine itself, and to the bilingual nature of the church from the beginning.

This does not mean that there were no differences at all. The Hellenistic background of Stephen allowed him to see the logical implications of Christ for the land and the temple (cf. Acts 6; 7) while the more conservative Jerusalem church did not. Also, a study of the speeches in Acts shows that the kerygma (preaching) developed differently for Jewish and gentile audiences. The first centered on OT fulfillment and the second on the active penetration of history by the one true God, who unlike dead idols involved himself in the affairs of man.

The very fact that the NT was written in *koine* Greek makes the influence very direct. Strongly Jewish-oriented works, such as Hebrews or James, are written in polished Greek, and even the Gospels, which record the life of Jesus in a Jewish setting, reflect Hellenistic historiography (e.g., an interest in the theological meaning of the historical events). Most obviously Hellenistic, of course, are ideas found in the epistles stemming from the gentile mission. Early hymns like Colossians 1:15–20 use terminology from the Hellenistic environs to describe the incomparable superiority of Jesus over pagan ideals. The stress on the universal mission, while



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based on the teachings of Jesus, developed during the gentile mission; the primitive church interpreted it in keeping with Jewish proselyte theology, which was that the Gentiles became Christians after becoming Jews.

**Further Developments.** Two Hellenistic schools of thought evolved during the time of the early church, coming to full fruition only later. One was Gnosticism, which seemed to develop simultaneously from Babylonian mythology, Persian dualism, Egyptian mysticism, and Jewish Christian theology. In fact, Gnosticism has been called one of the earliest syncretistic movements. In the past it has been common to regard the movement as a Christian development, since the sources for most information about it were early church fathers writing against these “heresies.” However, it is now more common to recognize the movement as a broader Hellenistic conception which arose out of the general intellectual and metaphysical milieu of the late 1st century AD. The stress on knowledge (*gnosis*) as the saving way of escape in the dualistic battle between good and evil, defined in terms of the spiritual versus the material, and the central place of the “savior” as the means of leading the soul into the higher realms of salvation are both Hellenistic in their essence. While many have seen these ideas in the NT, it seems more likely that the movement was just in its beginning stages and was not fully developed until the 2nd century. However, this “incipient” or “proto” Gnosticism is definitely opposed in later writings like Colossians, the pastoral Epistles, or 1 John.

The second aspect of Hellenistic thought is the mystery religions, which appeared early in the Hellenistic period, as in the Greek cults of Eleusis or Dionysus. These eastern cults became popular in the West only after the spread of Christianity. These popular movements, for example, the Isis (Egyptian) and Mithraic (Persian) cults, were primarily oriental and exotic, appealing to the Greek sense of myth and ritual. They primarily taught that every person had a divine essence trapped inside the flesh which could be released only through solemn initiatory rites and communion with the deity around which the particular cult revolved. While the details of the rites differed, the meaning and significance was much the same. Salvation was found by participation in the mystery rites of the cults, which for the most part resembled ancient fertility rites centering on the renewal of vegetation in the spring. The popularity of these groups shows the highly syncretistic nature of Hellenism, which adapted itself to new ideas and worked them into the Greek way of life.

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See HELLENISTIC JUDAISM; STOICS, STOICISM; EPICUREANS; JUDAISM; GREECE, GREEKS; GNOSTICISM.

**Hellenistic Judaism.** Branch of Judaism which maintained the Jewish way of worship but accepted Greek cultural and linguistic peculiarities. It originated from four factors: (1) the forced dispersion of the Jews into Greek-speaking lands under the Assyrians (2 Kgs 17; 18) and Babylonians (2 Kgs 24; 25). Other forced deportations took place under Ptolemy I (to Egypt, 300 BC) and Pompey (to Rome, 63 BC); (2) unsettled conditions in Palestine, especially in the latter stages of the Hasmonean period, which led many Jews to prefer an uncertain future in foreign lands to the assured deprivations at home, with wars, persecutions, and hard taxation; (3) economic opportunities abroad, which led Jews to take advantage of agricultural and commercial opportunities in nearly every country of the known ancient world; and (4) the growing proselyte movement, which reached its peak at the time of Christ (Mt 23:15).

Estimations of population density in the Roman Empire vary, but most scholars favor 10 million. This means that one of every 20 people in the empire was Jewish! The areas of greatest density were Rome, Egypt, and Parthia, but the economic strength was negligible. While some rose to positions of power (e.g., Daniel or Nehemiah), the majority were farmers or belonged to the lower middle class. While they were not paupers, they were neither wealthy nor influential.

**Hellenistic Judaism in Palestine.** The historical origins of Hellenism and its impact on main-line Judaism are not only chronicled in the dispersion movements of the people but are also to be found in the strong influence of Hellenism in Palestine itself. After the Greek takeover of Palestine (332 BC) the power turned from the priests to the scribes, and the religious emphasis thereby shifted from cultus to Torah. This introduced the dialogue method of interpretation into Jewish life, and inevitably Greek logic entered the picture. Originally, the subtle encroachment of Hellenistic ideals took the form of cultural borrowing, that is, the Jews copied their more sophisticated cultural (but not religious!) practices. Problems began when cities and especially the upper classes (called “Hellenes”) began to emulate Greek practices in political as well as cultural areas. The



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gymnasiums became popular, a thing abhorrent to the orthodox Jew who hated nakedness and display. Theater and drama were also considered depraved.

These caused bitter debates among Palestinian Jews, many of whom refused to separate the cultural from the religious. The situation came to a head when the Ptolemies, who wished to purge strong nationalistic ties, elected pro-Hellenists to the high priestly office. Onias III, Jason, and Menalaeus (175–163 BC) built gymnasiums, encouraged Greek dress, and forced “reform” upon Palestine. This led first to rebellion, then to the “abomination,” the desecration of the temple, by Antiochus Epiphanes, and finally to the successful revolt by Matthias and his sons that eventually freed Palestine from Greek rule. For a time the strong surge of puritanism controlled the land, but even here the Hellenistic thought patterns were so ingrained that they could not be eradicated (for the most part, the people did not even realize this, for they were imbedded in external practices).

However, later in the period of the Maccabees and Hasmoneans the strong influence of Hellenism was again felt. When that period came to an end and the Herodian dynasty was inaugurated, the forces of change intensified. To solidify the break with the Hasmonean past, Herod brought in diasporate Jews from Egypt and elsewhere to take over the high priesthood, a situation that continued into the time of Christ. For all these reasons Hellenistic Judaism had a strong influence within the borders of Palestine itself.

***Relations Between the Diaspora and Palestinian Judaism.*** Historically, the unity between the Hellenistic Jews of the diaspora and those in the homeland varied, depending on the political situation and the orthodoxy of the Jews in the particular area. There are records of communities which combined the worship of Yahweh with the Greek pantheon, but for the most part these were isolated and had no influence on Hellenistic Judaism. Diasporate Jews followed the Torah publicly as well as privately.

As noted, Hellenistic Jews accepted the Greek culture but at the same time regarded themselves as aliens and believed that Palestine was their true homeland. They identified strongly with the traumas of their fellow Jews, and their literature contains a strong expectation of deliverance for their homeland from the foreign oppressors. The Promised Land and temple worship were the centers of their religious longing, and they did not consider themselves significantly different from the Palestinian Jews. Five factors especially contributed to the unity:

**1.** The presence of the temple in Jerusalem bound them to Palestine. They believed that God was present in the Holy of Holies, and so God could only be worshiped there. While there was the Temple of Onias at Heliopolis in Egypt, it was only built for the military force there and had no influence even among the Jews of Egypt. Diasporate worship centered in the synagogue; but sacrifices, the core of Jewish cultic life, could only be offered in the temple. Of course, the legal regulations were softened for Jews of the Diaspora, who could hardly make it to Jerusalem for each festival. Nevertheless, many often tried to send a sacrifice when they could not take it themselves.

**2.** The temple tax united the Jews. While Jews outside Israel did not have to support the land of Palestine, the half-shekel temple tax, which went for the public sacrifices, was an obligation upon all Jews. From written records of the large amounts gathered in various communities, it was faithfully met. In fact, when the amount greatly exceeded the needs, the excess was applied to the maintenance of Jerusalem, which was thought to be part of the temple area. The feeling of unity engendered by this is seen in the temple prayers, which included the “exile Jews” in other lands.

**3.** The pilgrimages to the three major feasts (Passover, Pentecost, Tabernacles) tied Hellenistic Jews to Israel. Exodus 23:17; 34:23, and Deuteronomy 16:16 commanded every Jewish male to “appear before the Lord” at these three feasts. Of course, it was impractical, even within the confines of Palestine, and so the requirement was not rigidly enforced; but Jews from every land streamed to the feasts each year, as may be seen in the famous Pentecost passage (Acts 2:9–11). Often young Jews would remain in Jerusalem for a time to study the Torah under a famous rabbi, as did Saul of Tarsus (later the apostle Paul) under Gamaliel.

**4.** Many diasporate families actually settled down in Jerusalem. Acts 2:5 says, “Now there were dwelling in Jerusalem Jews, devout men from every nation under heaven.” Acts 6:9 speaks of synagogues “of the Freedmen ... and of the Cyrenians, and of the Alexandrians...” In fact, while it was impractical for all Hellenistic Jews to return to their homeland, it was the desire of every devout diasporate Jew to do so.



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5. Another unifying influence was the envoys or traveling rabbis who acted as emissaries from the homeland to the Hellenistic Jews of the diaspora. These were often the most famous scholars of the period, such as Gamaliel or Akiba. These men, called sages, traveled in pairs and functioned in every way like local rabbis—preaching, teaching, settling legal disputes, or collecting contributions. Their influence was enormous, and they more than any other force solidified the authority of the Sanhedrin in Jerusalem over the Jewish communities in other lands.

**Religious Practices.** Jews of the dispersion were generally quite orthodox. It was Hellenistic Jews who instigated the trial against Stephen (Acts 6:9–15) and who started the riot against Paul for allegedly bringing Greeks into the temple (Acts 21:27–36). While their cultural practices followed Hellenistic customs, their religious life was Jewish to the core. The center, of course, was the synagogue. The great synagogue at Alexandria was reputedly so large that flags had to be waved to tell the congregation when to say the Amen. A typical service is described in Acts 13:15, with prayers, readings from the Law and the prophets, respectively, then an address. The service was designed for the public rather than for specialists like the priests (unlike temple worship), and laymen were asked to deliver the readings or the address (as was the case with Jesus and Paul). The most important difference within Hellenistic Judaism was the use of Greek in the worship service rather than Hebrew or the Aramaic Targums. As a result, it had an important social role in the community. In fact the head of the synagogue functioned with the elders as the “ruler” of the community (there being no distinction between religious and civic matters), especially in lands which allowed the Jewish community to govern its own internal affairs (common Roman practice). His assistant, the “attendant” of Luke 4:20, not only managed the practical affairs of the synagogue but also functioned as town “manager.”

### **The synagogue at Herodium.**

The synagogue, because of its unique function, came to be used for many purposes within Hellenistic Judaism. Civic business was conducted there, and in most communities it also functioned as the school. In addition, the public tribunals met in the synagogues. There are scriptural examples of public floggings given there (Mt 10:17; Acts 22:19), and Acts 9:1, 2 tells of Paul procuring letters to the diasporate synagogues so that the tribunals there would allow Paul to extradite Christians to Jerusalem.

Education naturally centered around the study of the Torah, which was not just the prerogative of priests and rabbis but was a community responsibility. Here there was little difference between the diaspora and Judea except for the refusal to teach or use Greek in the schools of the homeland. The child began studying the written Scriptures at the age of five or six and then added the oral law at the age of ten. At 12 or 13 he finished school and after bar mitzvah entered the adult world. Adults would continue studying Torah, but mainly would confine themselves to the oral law.

Another area peculiar to the diasporate communities was the training of proselytes and God-fearers; the difference between the two groups was often that the latter had not undergone circumcision and so could not be considered a legal part of the covenant people. A perusal of the Book of Acts shows that the God-fearers provided the nucleus of the converts in most of the cities Paul evangelized. Gentiles were particularly susceptible to Judaism and Christianity due to the deterioration of faith in the pagan religions. The religious conviction and moral strength of both had great appeal. So the Hellenistic synagogues became missionary centers.

Finally, we might mention here the development of the guilds. As was common in the ancient world, the various guilds (e.g., the tentmakers or weavers) became mini-communities. We know that in the synagogue of Alexandria, each guild sat in a different section, and this may well have been the universal practice.

**Differences with Palestinian Jews.** As already intimated, the distinctions should not be overstated, for Hellenistic Judaism was far more Jewish than Hellenistic, and Hellenistic influence can certainly be demonstrated in Palestine itself. The major differences are seen in the daily life, business practices, and the mind-set of diasporate Judaism. Naturally, after the first generation there was a tendency to accept the external way of life of the nation within which they lived, so long as it did not interfere with their religious convictions. For example, some Jews would favor the games or plays, the artistic tastes and ways of expression observed in the lives of their neighbors. In Alexandria, some even sought a Greek education, a necessary prelude to citizenship. However, the majority of Hellenistic Jews probably refused to succumb even this far and



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remained in their isolated communities. The aristocracy naturally was more inclined to Hellenization. The average diasporate Jew had contact with Greek-speaking neighbors only on the commercial plane. At the same time, however, Hellenistic Judaism was forced out of its cocoon by a widespread anti-Jewish movement about the time of Christ. Jews in Palestine remained aloof from an active propagandizing of pagans; for example, there was very little polemic against idolatry in Judaea. They connected the disappearance of idolatry with the appearance of the kingdom of God and refused to get involved in an active way against pagan ways. In the diaspora conditions were different; Jews were forced to defend their ways and then to develop an active polemic.

This propaganda was couched in terms of Greek philosophy and led to a vigorous output of Hellenistic Jewish literature. The Septuagint was probably produced, not only to provide a Bible for Greek-speaking Judaism, but also to show that Judaism and Greek thought were not mutually exclusive. The writings of Philo went even further, attempting to couch Jewish theology in Hellenistic thought-forms. Scholars list four types of literature: (1) Historical works (e.g., Josephus) that sought to show the meaning of Jewish history in contrast to pagan; (2) theological and philosophical writings that presented Jewish beliefs in Greek forms (e.g., Wisdom of Solomon); (3) Jewish poetry that employed Greek stylistic traits; (4) apologetic works that answered pagan charges and then went on to ridicule pagan ways. However, it is important to modify this by noting that it was the intelligentsia rather than *hoi polloi* (the people) who produced these works. The common Jews remained isolated from much of this, even in diasporate communities.

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See HELLENISM; JUDAISM; PHILO JUDAEUS; ALEXANDRIA.

**Bibliography.** W. Foerster, *Palestinian Judaism in NT Times*; M. Hadas, *Hellenistic Culture: Fusion and Diffusion*; M. Hengel, *Jews, Greeks, and Barbarians*; M. Hengel, *Judaism and Hellenism*, 2 vols; M. Stone, *Scriptures, Sects, and Visions*; V. Tcherikover, *Hellenistic Civilization and the Jews*.

**Hellenists.** Name used in Acts 6:1; 9:29; and possibly 11:20 for a distinct branch of the early church that was characterized by Greek modes of thinking. Their actual identification is disputed, and the following possibilities have been propounded: (1) Greek-speaking Jews rather than Aramaic-speaking Jews (but “Hebrews” as in 6:1 was seldom used in a linguistic sense); (2) proselytes or “Greeks” as opposed to true Jews (the list of deacons in 6:5 makes this doubtful, for it is unlikely that they were all proselytes); (3) diasporate Jews living in Palestine (fits 6:1–6 but not the other passages); (4) pro-Hellenist sect within Judaism (this does not fit the whole tenor of the passages); (5) Gentiles who joined the church at an early date (this does not really fit the context of all three passages); (6) a general not specific term and simply referring to one who either speaks Greek or follows Greek customs (or both). This is the best answer, as a study of the contexts will illustrate.

In 6:1 the group was probably made up of Hellenistic Jews then living in Palestine. This is seen in the deacons chosen in 6:5 (Luke used Greek names for all of them, probably not because they were Greek but to symbolize the desire of the apostles to unify the separate groups; most Jews in the ancient world had three names—a Jewish, a Greek, and a Roman name—and used one or the other depending on the occasion) but especially in the synagogues mentioned in 6:9. Hellenistic Jews differed sufficiently in their background and worship habits (especially in the use of Greek in the service) that there would be separate synagogues for them (there were seven such in Jerusalem alone). This created a potentially divisive situation for the early church, and the schism here was the result. The “Hebrews” would naturally tend to allocate the common pool to those they knew, and so the very separation between the groups would add to the problem.

In 9:29 the “Hellenists” are members of the same group. Paul, a diasporate Jew himself, would naturally go to his old compatriots on his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion. In 11:20 the manuscript evidence is equally divided between “Hellenists” and “Greeks.”

As “Hellenist” is used in 11:20, it designates the Greek-speaking populace of Antioch, therefore Gentiles in general. This is different from the usages in 6:1 and 9:29.

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**HERMIONE (1)**—Sept. 4, daughter of Philip the apostle, according to Bas. *Men.* probably the deacon being meant (Acts 21:8). She lived at Ephesus until Trajan’s time with a sister named Eutycha. The emperor, making an expedition against the Persians, came to Ephesus, where, hearing of her fame as a Christian prophetess, he tortured her, but released her when she predicted his

<sup>11</sup> Osborne, G. R. (1988). [Hellenism](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, pp. 955–961). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.



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triumph over the Persians. She is said to have been martyred under Adrian. The whole story is devoid of any really ancient authority. Cf. however a learned note on the subject of the residence of the apostle Philip in Asia Minor, in Dr. Lightfoot's *Commentary on the Colossians*, p. 45. See also articles on "Philip the Apostle" and "Philip the Evangelist" in *Dictionary of the Bible*. (Bas. Men.; Acta SS. Boll. Sept. ii. 185; Dodwell, *Dissert. Cyprian*. xi. 17–28.)<sup>12</sup>

**ACTS OF PHILIP** A noncanonical, likely fourth or fifth centuries AD collection of embellished stories about the life of the Apostle Philip. This work was never widely authoritative in the early church period nor could it have been, based on its late date; the Gelasian Decree could reference this work when it labels an "Acts of Philip" apocryphal (i.e., "not accepted").

### Composition and Origin

Most of the episodes of the *Acts of Philip* were probably composed in Greek in the fourth or fifth centuries AD.

Surviving versions of *Acts of Philip* are in Greek, Syriac, and Latin. The two most important are Vaticanus graecus 824, which includes nine "acts" plus an account of Philip's martyrdom; and Xenophonos 32, which overlaps considerably with Vaticanus graecus 824 and includes additional episodes.

It is not known whether the stories in *Acts of Philip* reflect earlier oral traditions or whether its stories were invented by various author(s). Amsler has suggested that a conflict between the apostles and a Viper cult in the *Acts of Philip's* last section may relate to tensions between Christians and the Cybele cult in Hierapolis at the time of writing (Amsler, "Apostle Philip," 433). Bovon has suggested that the first section of the *Acts of Philip* (Act 1) may reflect a conflict between a minority Christian group and the wider church (Bovon, "Women," 111). The strict asceticism of other sections may indicate that they were written by Encratite or Apotactite groups (Amsler, *Acta Philippi*, 493–520).

Although the stories included in the *Acts of Philip* are not found in the New Testament, some of them may have been inspired by New Testament texts.

### Contents

The longest versions of *Acts of Philip* consist of 15 chapters, or "acts," as well as an embellished account of Philip's martyrdom. The longest versions of the *Acts of Philip* seem to include stories by several different authors.

Highlights include:

- a gruesome tour of hell (Act 1)
- the conversion of the city of Athens (Act 2)
- a debate between Philip and a Jewish leader (Act 6)
- encounters with dragons in the wilderness (Act 9)
- a leopard and goat who convert, speak, walk on their hind feet, and request the Eucharist (Act 12)
- an account of Philip's martyrdom in Hierapolis (Hierapolis is only identified in some manuscripts)

It is difficult to determine whether the *Acts of Philip* has Philip the Evangelist (see Acts 8:4; 21:8) or Philip the apostle in view; by the time the stories in *Acts of Philip* were composed, the two figures could easily have been merged (Amsler, *Acta Philippi*, 429–31).

### Theological Viewpoint

Some of the stories in the *Acts of Philip* promote an ascetic lifestyle. Characters are repeatedly urged to renounce wealth, adopt a vegetarian diet, practice celibacy even within marriage, and to pursue other forms of self-control. These ascetic acts are sometimes presented as essential conditions for salvation.

The work also depicts Philip as being accompanied on his missionary journey by Mariamne—a female apostle who shares in Philip's evangelistic and healing ministry. Several female characters, including Mariamne, choose to wear men's clothes.

Many of these elements are not unique to this book. Ascetic teaching, women wearing men's clothing, supernatural appearances of Jesus, and an abundance of resurrections and other miracles are also found in other apocryphal acts. In addition, other ancient texts include converted, talking animals, and tours of hell (Spittler, *Animals; Himmelfarb, Tours of Hell*).

### Related Articles

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<sup>12</sup> Stokes, G. T. (1877–1887). [Hermione \(1\)](#). In W. Smith & H. Wace (Eds.), *A Dictionary of Christian Biography, Literature, Sects and Doctrines* (Vol. 2, p. 928). London: John Murray.



## Who Are The Apostles? Week #6: The Account of Philip & Bartholomew

For further information on the *Acts of Philip* and other works like it, see this article: Apocryphal Acts. For information on extreme asceticism, known as encratism (which often includes a vow of celibacy in marriage), and why the early church fathers opposed it, see this article: Asceticism. For information on the process of canonization, see this article: Canon, New Testament.

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- . “Women Priestesses in the Apocryphal Acts of Philip.” Pages 109–21 in *Walk in the Ways of Wisdom: Essays in Honor of Elisabeth Schüssler Fiorenza*. Edited by Shelly Matthews, Cynthia Briggs Kittredge, and Melanie Johnson-DeBaufre. Harrisburg, Pa.: Trinity, 2003.
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JULIA A. SNYDER<sup>13</sup>

### Philip the Apostle

In the Synoptic Gospels (Matthew, Mark, and Luke) Philip is mentioned only in the lists of the apostles, and nothing more is said of him. However, he plays a slightly larger role in the Gospel of **John**. In that book he is the first to become a disciple by direct invitation, when **Jesus** told him, “Follow me” (John 1:43). It was Philip who brought his friend **Nathanael** to Jesus (John 1:45ff.), and it was he to whom the Greeks came when they wanted to meet Jesus (John 12:21ff.), perhaps because he had a Greek name.

Jesus tested Philip’s understanding of his teachings at the feeding of the five thousand, when he asked him, “Where shall we buy bread for these people to eat?” Philip answered, “Eight months’ wages would not buy enough bread for each one to have a bite” (John 6:5–7). At the Last Supper, Philip said to Jesus, “Show us the Father and that will be enough for us” (John 14:8). Jesus challenged his understanding by replying, “Don’t you know me, Philip, even after I have been among you such a long time? Anyone who has seen me has seen the Father.”

Some scholars believe that Philip was originally a disciple of **John the Baptist**, as were **Andrew** and probably **Peter**. He is also believed to have lived in Bethsaida.

Nothing more is known of Philip. He is not to be confused with Philip the Evangelist, an important church leader reported in the book of Acts.<sup>14</sup>

- **PHILIP THE APOSTLE** (Φίλιππος, *Philippos*). One of Jesus’ twelve disciples and later an apostle (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; John 1:43; Acts 1:13).
- **Biblical Accounts**
- Although the Synoptic Gospels list Philip as one of Jesus’ twelve disciples, John is the only canonical Gospel in which Philip engages in a dialogue with Jesus and other disciples. In all three Synoptic Gospels and Acts, Philip is listed fifth among the Twelve (Matt 10:2–4; Mark 3:14–19; Luke 6:13–15; Acts 1:13). John does not include a list of the Twelve—despite mentioning them in John 6:67, 70–71; 20:24—but Philip is included among Jesus’ close disciples in his Gospel.
- Philip plays a much larger role in the Gospel of John than in the Synoptic Gospels. Following his own call to follow Jesus, Philip is instrumental in the calling of Nathanael (John 1:43–51). In John 6:5–7, **Jesus, perhaps in order to test Philip, asks him where they might obtain food to feed the multitude gathered to listen to Jesus near Bethsaida—Philip’s hometown** (Morris, *John*, 303). In John 12:21–22, when some Greeks ask Philip for an audience with Jesus, Philip goes first to Andrew, who then notifies Jesus of the Greeks. (This may show a hierarchy among the disciples, suggesting that Andrew was over Philip.) These Greeks may have come to Philip because he and Andrew are the only members of the Twelve with Greek names (Morris, *John*, 525). In John 14:8–9, Philip asks Jesus to show the Father to him and the other disciples.
- **Philip the Apostle and Philip the Evangelist in Church History**

<sup>13</sup> Snyder, J. A. (2016). *Acts of Philip*. In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>14</sup> Losch, R. R. (2008). In *All the People in the Bible: An A–Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture* (p. 344). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



## Who Are The Apostles? Week #6: The Account of Philip & Bartholomew

- Papias, in the second-century, claims that Philip the apostle lived in Hieropolis with his seven daughters, although according to Acts 21:7–8, it is Philip the evangelist who had at least four unmarried daughters; he was likely the Philip that Papias intended to reference (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 3.39.8–10; Matthews, *Philip*, 23–34; see also Bishop, “Which Philip?” 154–59). Additionally, the Acts of Philip—a noncanonical fourth- or fifth-century AD text—retells the supposed deeds and also the martyrdom of Philip the Apostle (Matthews, *Philip*, 162–66). For additional Philip traditions, see Christopher R. Matthews, *Philip: Apostle and Evangelist: Configurations of a Tradition*.
- **Selected Resources for Further Study**
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■ RONALD D. ROBERTS<sup>15</sup>

### Chapter 31

Now, the time and the manner of the death of Paul and of Peter, and in addition the place of the disposition of their corpses after their departure from this life, we have already shown. The date of the death of John has also already been mentioned,<sup>2</sup> and the disposition of his body is indicated by a letter of Polycrates (he was Bishop of the diocese of Ephesus), on writing which to Victor, Bishop of Rome, he makes mention both of John and Philip the Apostle, and the latter’s daughters as follows: ‘For in Asia also great luminaries have fallen asleep, who will rise again on the last day of the advent of the Lord, when He shall come with glory from heaven and shall search out all the saints **including Philip of the twelve Apostles, who sleeps at Hierapolis with his two daughters who grew old as virgins and another daughter who lived in the Holy Spirit and rests at Ephesus**. And there is also John,<sup>6</sup> who leaned upon the bosom of the Lord, who was a priest wearing the mitre, and a martyr and a teacher, and he sleeps at Ephesus.’<sup>8</sup> So much concerning their deaths. And in the dialogue of Gaius, which we mentioned a little before, Proclus,<sup>10</sup> against whom he composed the disputation, thus speaks about the death of Philip and his daughters, agreeing with what has already been set forth: ‘After him the four daughters of Philip, prophetesses, were at Hierapolis in Asia. Their grave is there, and likewise that of their father.’ So much does he say. And Luke, in the Acts of the Apostles, mentions the daughters of Philip as then living in Caesarea of Judaea together with their father and as having been deemed worthy of the gift of prophecy, using exactly the following words: ‘We came into Caesarea, and having entered the house of Philip who was one of the seven, we remained with him. He had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses.’

Thus, after having described the matters that have come to our knowledge about the Apostles and apostolic times and concerning the sacred writings which they have left us, including those which are disputed, yet are read publicly by many in a great many churches, and those entirely spurious works at variance with apostolic orthodoxy, let us now proceed with the narrative in order.<sup>16</sup>

<sup>15</sup> Roberts, R. D. (2016). [Philip the Apostle](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>16</sup> Eusebius of Caesarea. (1953). [Ecclesiastical History, Books 1–5](#). (R. J. Deferrari, Ed. & Trans.) (Vol. 19, pp. 188–190). Washington, DC: The Catholic University of America Press.



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### NATHANAEL/BARTHOLOMEW

#### **Nathanael**

Nathanael was listed by **John** as one of the twelve apostles, although he is not mentioned in the Synoptic Gospels. Because he is linked with **Philip** and the Synoptics link **Bartholomew** with Philip, tradition has identified Nathanael with Bartholomew. Most scholars today, however, believe that they are separate individuals.

Nathanael appears only twice in the Bible. In the first incident, Philip, who was apparently his friend, told him that he had found the Messiah, **Jesus** of Nazareth. Nathanael's comment has become a classic derision of a community: "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46). As he approached Jesus, he was hailed as a true son of Israel. Jesus said he had seen him studying under the fig tree before Philip came to him. Because of this premonition, Nathanael believed Jesus and followed him. The expression "under the fig tree" was a common metaphor for rabbinical study, implying that Nathanael was literate and a student of the Scriptures.

Nothing more is known about Nathanael until after the Resurrection, when he is listed among those who saw Jesus approaching them by the Sea of Galilee. He survives as a symbol of a Jew who was dedicated to God and who saw beyond mere intellectual pursuits to the need for the spiritual salvation offered by Jesus.<sup>17</sup>

**GOSPEL OF BARTHOLOMEW** A noncanonical, pseudonymous work associated with the apostle Bartholomew. This work was never widely authoritative in the early church period and is directly rejected in the sixth-century church document *Decretum Gelasianum*. No copies of the work exist, although some scholars identify it with the extant *Questions of Bartholomew*.

#### **Overview**

Although the *Gospel of Bartholomew* is a lost text—no known copies of the work exist—Jerome (AD 347–420) mentions it and several other noncanonical writings in his preface to his *Commentary on Matthew*. It is unclear whether Jerome is drawing from Origen in this text. Additional mentions of the *Gospel of Bartholomew* include:

- The *Decretum Gelasianum*, attributed to Pope Gelasius I in AD 492–96, who includes it in a list of books not accepted by the church (von Dobschütz, "Decretum").
- It may be referenced by pseudo-Dionysius Areopagita and Epiphanius the monk.
- The *Book of Hierotheos* contains a short quotation from it.
- The Venerable Bede mentions the text from Jerome's writing.

#### **Related Texts and Dating**

Although there are no extant copies of the *Gospel of Bartholomew*, there are several existing texts associated with Bartholomew's name, including the *Questions of Bartholomew* and the *Book of the Resurrection*. It is possible that the *Gospel of Bartholomew* is connected to one or both of these works. Some scholars identify the *Gospel of Bartholomew* with *Questions of Bartholomew*, while others believe

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<sup>17</sup> Losch, R. R. (2008). In *All the People in the Bible: An A–Z Guide to the Saints, Scoundrels, and Other Characters in Scripture* (p. 313). Grand Rapids, MI; Cambridge, U.K.: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company.



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the *Gospel of Bartholomew* may even be part of the *Book of the Resurrection*. The Bartholomew tradition likely goes back to the third or fourth century AD (Schneemelcher, “Coptic”).

### Related Articles

For further details on pseudepigraphy, see this article: Pseudepigraphy in the Early Christian Period. For information on the process of canonization, see this article: Canon, New Testament.

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DRAKE WILLIAMS<sup>18</sup>

**BARTHOLOMEW THE APOSTLE** (Βαρθολομαῖος, *Bartholomaios*). One of Jesus’ 12 disciples.

### The Name *Bartholomew*

The name *Bartholomew* is an Aramaic patronym meaning “son of Tolmai/Talmi” or “son of Ptolemy” (“bar” is Aramaic for “son of”). A patronym could function as a person’s proper name; other biblical examples are Barnabas and Barabbas. However, patronyms more often served as surnames that specified people by using the name of their father (e.g., Peter is called Simon Barjona in Matt 16:17).

The New Testament mentions Bartholomew’s name only four times—once in each of the four lists of Jesus’ apostles (Matt 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:14; Acts 1:13). The Synoptic Gospels list him immediately after Philip, perhaps suggesting that the two were somehow affiliated. His name also follows Philip’s in the book of Acts, though not immediately.

### Bartholomew and Nathanael

As early as the ninth century, Christians identified the disciple named Bartholomew in the Synoptic Gospels as the disciple named Nathanael in John’s Gospel, since John does not mention Bartholomew and the Synoptic Gospels do not mention Nathanael. Support for identifying Bartholomew with Nathanael includes:

- John 1 records Philip introducing Nathanael to Jesus and portrays the two as friends. Philip and Bartholomew’s names appear next to one another in the Synoptic Gospels’ lists of apostles, suggesting an affiliation.
- Because patronyms like Bartholomew were more commonly used as surnames, this view suggests the disciple’s full name is Nathanael Bartholomew.

If Bartholomew is not Nathanael, we have no other biblical information regarding Bartholomew. However, if he is Nathanael, then the Gospel of John provides further information about him. The name Nathanael means “given by God” and occurs six times in the New Testament, restricted to the first and last chapters of the Gospel of John. According to John 21:2, Nathanael was from Cana in Galilee. He became a follower of Jesus after Philip announced that he had found the one written about in the Law and the Prophets. When Nathanael expressed hesitation that the Messiah would originate from Nazareth, Philip invited him to “come and see” (John 1:43–46). Upon seeing Nathanael, Jesus pronounced him a genuine Israelite characterized by sincerity. When Nathanael inquired how Jesus

<sup>18</sup> Williams, D. (2016). [Gospel of Bartholomew](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Klippenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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might know anything about him, Jesus replied that he had seen Nathanael beneath a fig tree. In response to Jesus' knowledge of his solitary whereabouts, Nathanael declared, "Rabbi, you are the Son of God; you are the King of Israel," and became a disciple of Jesus (John 1:47–51).

### Bartholomew in Tradition

The 13th-century Syrian Christian Bar Hebraeus identified Bartholomew as Jesus Bartholomew rather than Nathanael. According to the church historian Eusebius (AD 260–340), Bartholomew eventually took the gospel to India (others report that he took the gospel as far as Armenia). Eusebius also records that Bartholomew was responsible for the Gospel of Matthew, originally written in Hebrew. According to the noncanonical *Martyrdom of Bartholomew*, he was killed by drowning (though another tradition has him crucified).

JEFFREY E. MILLER<sup>19</sup>

**MARTYRDOM OF BARTHOLOMEW** Also known as the *The Passion of Bartholomew*. A noncanonical text that claims to contain an account of the Apostle Bartholomew's work in India and subsequent death by beheading at the command of a king. This work was never widely authoritative in the early church period, but may parallel some early church tradition.

The India in view by the text, according to its introduction, stretches from Ethiopia in the west to Media in the north to the ocean (presumably the Indian Ocean). According to church father Eusebius, Bartholomew preached the gospel in India and left with them the Gospel of Matthew in the Hebrew language (Eusebius, *Ecclesiastical History* 5.10.3).

In addition to the *Martyrdom of Bartholomew*, there are also other traditions of Bartholomew's martyrdom suggesting he died by crucifixion (Lipsius, *Acts*, 27) or by being skinned alive (Litfin, *After Acts*, n.p.).

The extant Greek text of *Martyrdom of Bartholomew*, first published by Tischendorf, is from a Venetian manuscript of the 13th century (Roberts, "Martyrdom," 357). The *Martyrdom of Bartholomew* shares much in common with the account of Bartholomew in the *Pseudo-Abdias*, from which it may or may not be translated (Roberts, *Anti-Nicene Fathers*, 357). It also shares some similarities with the "Consummation of Thomas the Apostle" in the *Acts of Thomas*.

### Related Article

For information on the process of canonization, see this article: Canon, New Testament.

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Tischendorf, C. von. *Evangelia Apocrypha*. Leipzig: Mendelssohn, 1853.

JOHN D. BARRY WITH CARRIE SINCLAIR WOLCOTT<sup>20</sup>

**Bartholomew, The Apostle.** Disciple of Jesus included in all four lists of the 12 apostles (Mt 10:2–4; Mk 3:16–19; Lk 6:14–16; Acts 1:13), though not otherwise mentioned in the NT. Nothing is told about him in any of the lists. Because the name means "Son of Tolmai," it has been speculated that he was known by another name in addition to his "patronymic" name. In the lists in Matthew, Mark, and Luke (the synoptic Gospels), Bartholomew is named immediately after Philip, suggesting the possibility that the Nathanael

<sup>19</sup> Miller, J. E. (2016). [Bartholomew the Apostle](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Kloppenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.

<sup>20</sup> Barry, J. D., & Wolcott, C. S. (2016). [Martyrdom of Bartholomew](#). In J. D. Barry, D. Bomar, D. R. Brown, R. Kloppenstein, D. Mangum, C. Sinclair Wolcott, ... W. Widder (Eds.), *The Lexham Bible Dictionary*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.



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brought by Philip to Jesus (Jn 1:45–50), who seems to be linked with some of the disciples (Jn 21:2), was Bartholomew. It thus seems possible that the apostle Bartholomew is referred to in the fourth Gospel by another name; it is not certain, however, that John’s references to Nathanael were intended to identify him as one of the twelve.

Eusebius (d. AD 340?), an early church historian, recorded an early tradition that Pantaenus, the first head of the catechetical school in Alexandria (AD 180?), went to India and there found Christians who knew of the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew letters. According to Eusebius, Bartholomew had preached to them and had left the Gospel of Matthew with them. In other traditions, Bartholomew was an evangelistic partner of Philip and Thomas and suffered martyrdom in Armenia.

A number of spurious and apocryphal writings have been ascribed to Bartholomew, though certainly none of them is genuine. In the fourth century Jerome mentioned a *Gospel of Bartholomew* which is also noted by a few other writers. There are also references to the so-called *Questions of Bartholomew* (extant in Greek, Latin, and Slavonic fragments) and to a *Book of the Resurrection of Jesus Christ by Bartholomew* (extant in Coptic). Other references were made to *Acts of Bartholomew* and *Apocalypse of Bartholomew*, both otherwise unknown.

ROBERT W. LYON<sup>21</sup>

### 7

#### NATHANAEL—THE GUILILESS ONE

*Nathanael answered and said to Him, “Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!”*

—JOHN 1:49

Philip’s closest companion, Nathanael, is listed as Bartholomew in all four lists of the Twelve. In the Gospel of John he is always called Nathanael. *Bartholomew* is a Hebrew surname meaning “son of Tolmai.” *Nathanael* means “God has given.” So he is Nathanael, son of Tolmai, or Nathanael Bar-Tolmai.

The synoptic Gospels and the book of Acts contain no details about Nathanael’s background, character, or personality. In fact, they each mention him only once—when they list all twelve disciples. John’s Gospel features Nathanael in just two passages: in John 1, where his call is recorded, and in John 21:2, where he is named as one of those who returned to Galilee and went fishing with Peter after Jesus’ resurrection and before the ascension.

According to John 21:2, Nathanael came from the small town of Cana in Galilee, the place where Jesus did His first miracle, changing water into wine (John 2:11). Cana was very close to Jesus’ own hometown, Nazareth.

As we saw in the previous chapter, Nathanael was brought to Jesus by Philip immediately after Philip was sought and called by Christ. Philip and Nathanael were apparently close friends, because in each of the synoptic Gospels’ lists of the twelve apostles, the names of Philip and Bartholomew are linked. In the earliest church histories and many of the early legends about the apostles, their names are often linked as well. Apparently, they were friends throughout the years of their journey with Christ. Not unlike Peter

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<sup>21</sup> Lyon, R. W. (1988). [Bartholomew, The Apostle](#). In *Baker encyclopedia of the Bible* (Vol. 1, p. 265). Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Book House.



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and Andrew (who were so often named together as brothers) and James and John (who likewise were brothers), we find these two always side by side, not as brothers, but as close companions.

Virtually everything we know about Nathanael Bar-Tolmai comes from John's account of his call to discipleship. Remember, that event took place in the wilderness, shortly after Jesus' baptism, when John the Baptist pointed to Christ as the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). Andrew, John, and Peter (and possibly James as well) were the first to be called (vv. 35–42). The next day, having purposed to go to Galilee, Jesus sought out Philip and called him, too (v. 43).

According to verse 45, "Philip found Nathanael." They were obviously friends. Whether this was a business relationship, a family relationship, or just a social relationship, Scripture does not say. But Philip obviously was close to Nathanael, and he knew Nathanael would be interested in the news that the long-awaited Messiah had finally been identified. In fact, he couldn't wait to share the news with him. So he immediately pursued him and brought him to Jesus.

Apparently Nathanael was found by Philip in or near the same place where Philip was found by the Lord Himself. The brief description of how Nathanael came to Jesus is full of insight into his character. From it, we learn quite a lot about what kind of person Nathanael was.

### HIS LOVE OF SCRIPTURE

One striking fact about Nathanael is obvious from how Philip announced to him that he had found the Messiah: "Philip found Nathanael and said to him, 'We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote'" (John 1:45). Obviously, the truth of Scripture was something that mattered to Nathanael. Philip knew Nathanael, so he knew Nathanael would be intrigued by the news that Jesus was the One prophesied by Moses and the prophets in Scripture. Therefore, when Philip told Nathanael about the Messiah whom he had found, he did so from the standpoint of Old Testament prophecy. The fact that Philip introduced Jesus this way suggests that Nathanael *knew* the Old Testament prophecies.

This probably indicates that Nathanael and Philip were students of the Old Testament together. In all likelihood, they had come to the wilderness to hear John the Baptist together. They had a shared interest in the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. Philip obviously knew the news of Jesus would excite Nathanael.

Notice that he didn't say to him, "I found a man who has a wonderful plan for your life." He didn't say, "I found a man who will fix your marriage and your personal problems and give your life meaning." He didn't appeal to Nathanael on the basis of how Jesus might make *Nathanael's* life better. Philip spoke of Jesus as the fulfillment of Old Testament prophecies, because he knew that would pique Nathanael's interest. Nathanael, as an eager student of the Old Testament, was already a seeker after divine truth.

Incidentally, it appears that all the apostles, with the exception of Judas Iscariot, were to some degree already true seekers after divine truth before they met Jesus. They were already being drawn by the Spirit of God. Their hearts were open to the truth and hungry to know it. They were sincere in their love for God and their desire to know the truth and receive the Messiah. In that sense they were very different from the religious establishment, which was dominated by hypocrisy and false piety. The disciples were the real thing.

Most likely, Philip and Andrew had pored long hours over the Scripture together, searching the Law and the Prophets to discern the truth about the coming of the Messiah. And the fact that they were so well trained in Scripture no doubt explains why they were so quick to respond to Jesus. In Nathanael's



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case, this would become especially evident. He was able to recognize Jesus clearly and instantly because he had a clear understanding of what the Scripture said about Him. Nathanael knew what the promises said, so he recognized the fulfillment when he saw it. He knew Him of whom Moses and the prophets had written, and he recognized Jesus as that One after the briefest of conversations with Him. Nathanael sized Him up quickly and received Him on the spot. The reason that was possible was because Nathanael had been such a diligent student of Scripture.

Philip told him, “[It is] Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.” “Jesus” was a common name—*Y’shua* in its Aramaic form. It is the same name rendered “Joshua” in the Old Testament. It meant, significantly, “Yahweh is salvation” (“for He will save His people from their sins”—Matthew 1:21). Philip was using the expression “son of Joseph” as a kind of surname—“Jesus Bar-Joseph,” just as his friend was “Nathanael Bar-Tolmai.” That is how people were commonly identified. (It was the Hebrew equivalent of modern surnames like Josephson or Johnson. People throughout history have been identified this way—with surnames derived from their fathers.)

There must have been a certain amount of surprise in the voice of Philip. It was as if he were saying, “You’ll never believe this, but Jesus, son of Joseph, the carpenter’s son from Nazareth is the Messiah!”

### HIS PREJUDICE

Verse 46 then gives us a further insight into Nathanael’s character. Although he was as a student of Scripture and a searcher for the true knowledge of God; although he had strong spiritual interests and had been faithful, diligent, and honest in his devotion to the Word of God; he was human. He had certain prejudices. Here is his response: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

He *might* have said, “As I read the Old Testament, Micah the prophet says Messiah comes out of Bethlehem [Micah 5:2], not Nazareth.” He could have said, “But Philip, Messiah is identified with Jerusalem, because He’s going to reign in Jerusalem.” But the depth of his prejudice comes through in the words he chose: “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”

That was not a rational or biblical objection; it was based on sheer emotion and bigotry. It reveals what contempt Nathanael had for the whole town of Nazareth. Frankly, Cana wasn’t such a prestigious town, either. To this day it is utterly unexceptional. Unless you are looking for the shrine built on the supposed location where Jesus turned water to wine, you probably won’t want to go there. Cana was off the beaten track, while Nazareth was at least at a crossroads. To travel from the Mediterranean to Galilee, people traveled through Nazareth. One of the main routes going north and south between Jerusalem and Lebanon passed through Nazareth. No one ever “passed through” Cana; Cana was a side trip from everything. So the lack of anything attractive in Nazareth doesn’t fully explain Nathanael’s prejudice. His remark probably reflects some kind of civic rivalry between Nazareth and Cana.

Nazareth was a rough town. Its culture was largely unrefined and uneducated. (It is still much the same today.) It isn’t a particularly picturesque place. Although it has a nice setting on the slopes of the hills in Galilee, it is not a very memorable town, and it was even less so in Jesus’ time. The Judaeans looked down on all Galileans, but even the Galileans looked down on the Nazarenes. Nathanael, though he came from an even more lowly village, was simply echoing the Galileans’ general contempt for Nazareth. This was the same kind of regional pride that might cause someone from, say, Cleveland, to speak with disdain about Buffalo.



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Here again we see that God takes pleasure in using the common, weak, and lowly things of this world to confound the wise and powerful (cf. 1 Corinthians 1:27). He even calls people from the most despised locations. He can also take a flawed person who is blinded by prejudice, and He can change that person into someone used to transform the world. In the end the only explanation is the power of God, so all the glory goes to Him.

It was inconceivable to Nathanael that the Messiah would come out of a tacky place like Nazareth. It was an uncultured place, full of evil, corrupt, and populated with sinful people. Nathanael simply did not anticipate that anything good could come from there. And he was oblivious to the rather obvious fact that he himself had come from an equally contemptible community.

Prejudice is ugly. Generalizations based on feelings of superiority, not on fact, can be spiritually debilitating. Prejudice cuts a lot of people off from the truth. As a matter of fact, much of the nation of Israel rejected their Messiah because of prejudice. They did not believe their Messiah should come out of Nazareth, either. It was inconceivable to them that the Messiah and all His apostles would come from Galilee. They mocked the apostles as uneducated Galileans. The Pharisees taunted Nicodemus by saying, “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee” (John 7:52). They did not like the fact that Jesus spoke against the religious establishment from Jerusalem. And from the religious leaders down to the people sitting in the synagogues, it was to some degree their prejudice that caused them to reject Him. This happened even in Jesus’ own hometown. They derided Jesus as Joseph’s son (Luke 4:22). He was without honor even in His own country, because he was nothing but a carpenter’s son (v. 24). And the entire synagogue in Nazareth—His own synagogue, where He had grown up—were so filled with prejudice against Him that after He preached a single message to them, they tried to take Him to a cliff on the edge of town and throw Him off to kill Him (vv. 28–29).

Prejudice skewed their view of the Messiah. The people of Israel were prejudiced against Him as a Galilean and a Nazarene. They were prejudiced against Him as an uneducated person outside the religious establishment. They were particularly prejudiced against His message. And their prejudice against Him shut them off from the gospel. They refused to hear Him because they were cultural and religious bigots.

John Bunyan understood the danger of prejudice. In his famous allegory *The Holy War*, he pictures the forces of Immanuel coming to bring the gospel to the town of Mansoul. They directed their assault on Mansoul at the Ear-gate, because faith comes by hearing. But Diabolus, the enemy of Immanuel and His forces, wanted to hold Mansoul captive to hell. So Diabolus decided to meet the attack by stationing a special guard at Ear-gate. The guard he chose was “one old Mr. Prejudice, an angry and ill-conditioned fellow.” According to Bunyan, they made Mr. Prejudice “captain of the ward at that gate, and put under his power sixty men, called deaf men; men advantageous for that service, forasmuch as they mattered no words of the captains, nor of the soldiers.” That is a very vivid description of precisely how many people are rendered impervious to the truth of the gospel. Their own prejudice renders them deaf to the truth.

Men’s ears are closed to the gospel by many kinds of prejudice—racial prejudice, social prejudice, religious prejudice, and intellectual prejudice. Prejudice effectively caused the majority of the Jewish nation to remain deaf to the Messiah. Satan had stationed at the Ear-gate of Israel Mr. Prejudice and his band of deaf men. That is why when Jesus “came to His own, ... His own did not receive Him” (John 1:11).

John Bunyan used the imagery of deafness. The apostle Paul used the metaphor of blindness: “If our gospel is veiled, it is veiled to those who are perishing, whose minds the god of this age has blinded, who



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do not believe, lest the light of the gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them” (2 Corinthians 4:3–4). Rendered deaf and blind by prejudice against the truth, they missed the message. It’s still that way today.

Nathanael lived in a society that was prejudicial by temperament. In reality, all sinful people are. We make prejudicial statements. We draw prejudiced conclusions about individuals, classes of people, and whole societies. Nathanael, like the rest of us, had that sinful tendency. And his prejudice caused him at first to be skeptical when Philip told him the Messiah was a Nazarene.

Fortunately, his prejudice wasn’t strong enough to keep him from Christ. “Philip said to him, ‘Come and see’ ” (v. 46). That is the right way to deal with prejudice: Confront it with the facts. Prejudice is feeling-based. It is subjective. It does not necessarily reflect the reality of the matter. So the remedy for prejudice is an honest look at objective reality—“come and see.”

And Nathanael went. Fortunately, his prejudiced mind was not as powerful as his seeking heart.

### HIS SINCERITY OF HEART

The most important aspect of Nathanael’s character is expressed from the lips of Jesus. Jesus knew Nathanael already. He “had no need that anyone should testify of man, for He knew what was in man” (John 2:25). So His first words upon seeing Nathanael were a powerful commendation of Nathanael’s character. Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him and said of him, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!” (John 1:47).

Can you imagine a more wonderful thing than to have words of approval like that come out of the mouth of Jesus? It would be one thing to hear that at the end of your life, along with, “Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your lord” (cf. Matthew 25:21, 23). We often hear eulogies at funerals that extol the virtues of the deceased. But how would you like Jesus to say that about you from the very start?

This speaks volumes about Nathanael’s character. He was pure-hearted from the beginning. Certainly, he was human. He had sinful faults. His mind was tainted by a degree of prejudice. But His heart was not poisoned by deceit. He was no hypocrite. His love for God, and His desire to see the Messiah, were genuine. His heart was sincere and without guile.

Jesus refers to him as “an Israelite indeed.” The word in the Greek text is *alethos*, meaning “truly, genuinely.” He was an authentic Israelite.

This is not a reference to his physical descent from Abraham. Jesus was not talking about genetics. He was linking Nathanael’s status as a true Israelite to the fact that he was without deceit. His guilelessness is what defined him as a true Israelite. For the most part, the Israelites of Jesus’ day were not real, because they were hypocrites. They were phonies. They lived life with a veneer of spirituality, but it was not real, and therefore they were not genuine spiritual children of Abraham. Nathanael, however, was real.

In Romans 9:6–7, the apostle Paul says, “For they are not all Israel who are of Israel, nor are they all children because they are the seed of Abraham.” In Romans 2:28–29, he writes, “He is not a Jew who is one outwardly, nor is circumcision that which is outward in the flesh; but he is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is that of the heart, in the Spirit, not in the letter; whose praise is not from men but from God.”

Here was an authentic Jew, one of the true spiritual offspring of Abraham. Here was one who worshiped the true and living God without deceit and without hypocrisy. Nathanael was the authentic



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item. Jesus would later say, in John 8:31, “If you abide in My word, you are My disciples indeed.” The Greek word is the same—*alethos*.

Nathanael was a true disciple from the start. There was no hypocrisy in him. This is very unusual, and it was particularly rare in first-century Israel. Remember, Jesus indicted the entire religious establishment of His day as hypocrites. Matthew 23:13–33 records an amazing diatribe against the scribes and Pharisees in which Jesus calls them hypocrites from every possible angle. The synagogues were full of hypocrites, too. From the highest leaders to the people on the street, hypocrisy was a plague on that culture. But here was a true, nonhypocritical Jew. Here was a man whose heart was circumcised, cleansed of defilement. His faith was authentic. His devotion to God was real. He was without guile, not like the scribes and Pharisees. He was a truly righteous man—flawed by sin as we all are—but justified before God through a true and living faith.

### HIS EAGER FAITH

Because his heart was sincere and his faith was real, Nathanael overcame his prejudice. His response to Jesus and the narrative that follows reveal his true character. At first, he was simply amazed that Jesus seemed to know anything about him. “Nathanael said to Him, ‘How do You know me?’ ” (John 1:48).

We have to assume that Nathanael was still questioning whether this Man could truly be the Messiah. It was not that he questioned Philip’s judgment; Philip was his friend, so he surely knew enough about Philip to know that Philip—the indecisive process-person—wouldn’t have made any hasty judgment. It was certainly not that he questioned Scripture or that he was prone to skepticism. It was just that this man from Nazareth did not seem to fit the picture of the Messiah in Nathanael’s mind. Jesus was the son of a carpenter, a no-name, non-descript man from a town that had no connection to any prophecy. (Nazareth did not even exist in the Old Testament.) And now Jesus had spoken to him as if he knew all about him and could even see inside his heart. Nathanael was just trying to come to grips with it all.

“How do You know me?” He might have meant, “Are You just flattering me? Are You trying to make me one of Your followers by paying me compliments? How could You possibly know what is in my heart?”

“Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you.’ ” (v. 48). This put a whole different spin on things. This was not flattery; it was omniscience! Jesus wasn’t physically present to see Nathanael under the fig tree; Nathanael knew that. Suddenly he realized he was standing in the presence of Someone who could see into his very heart with an omniscient eye.

What was the significance of the fig tree? It was most likely the place where Nathanael went to study and meditate on Scripture. Houses in that culture were mostly small, one-room affairs. Most of the cooking was done inside, so a fire was kept burning even in the summer. The house could get full of smoke and stuffy. Trees were planted around houses to keep them cool and shaded. One of the best trees to plant near a house was a fig tree, because it bore wonderful fruit and gave good shade. Fig trees grow to a height of only about fifteen feet. They have a fairly short, gnarled trunk, and their branches are low and spread as far as twenty-five or thirty feet. A fig tree near a house provided a large, shady, protected place outdoors. If you wanted to escape the noise and stifling atmosphere of the house, you could go outside and rest under its shade. It was a kind of private outdoor place, perfect for meditation, reflection, and solitude. No doubt that is where Nathanael went to study Scripture and pray.

In effect, Jesus was saying, “I know the state of your heart because I saw you under the fig tree. I knew what you were doing. That was your private chamber. That is where you would go to study and pray.



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That's where you would go to meditate. And I saw you in that secret place. I knew what you were doing." It was not only that Jesus saw his *location*, but that He saw his *heart* as well. He knew the sincerity of Nathanael's character because He saw right into him when he was under the fig tree.

That was enough for Nathanael. He "answered and said to Him, 'Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!' " (v. 49).

John's whole Gospel was written to prove that Jesus is the Son of God (John 20:31). John's first words are a powerful declaration of Jesus' deity ("In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.") Every point in his Gospel is designed to prove that Jesus is the Son of God—sharing the same essence as God—by highlighting His miracles, His sinless character, the divine wisdom of His teaching, and His attributes, which are the very attributes of God. John is writing to show the many ways in which Jesus manifested Himself as God. And here in the first chapter he gives the testimony of Nathanael that this Jesus is the omniscient Son of God. He is of the very same essence as God.

Remember, this is the very same truth Nathanael's friend Philip still hadn't quite grasped two years later, because he said to Jesus in the Upper Room, "Show us the Father" (John 14:8–9). What Philip didn't get until the end, his friend Nathanael understood at the very start.

Nathanael knew the Old Testament. He was familiar with what the prophets had said. He knew whom to look for. And now, regardless of the fact that Jesus came from Nazareth, His omniscience, His spiritual insight, His ability to read the heart of Nathanael was enough to convince Nathanael that He was indeed the true Messiah.

Nathanael's familiarity with the Old Testament messianic prophecies is clearly seen in his reply to Jesus ("You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!"). Psalm 2 clearly indicated that the Messiah would be the Son of God. Many Old Testament prophecies spoke of Him as "King of Israel," including Zephaniah 3:15 ("The LORD has taken away your judgments, He has cast out your enemy. The King of Israel, the LORD, is in your midst; You shall see disaster no more") and Zechariah 9:9 ("Rejoice greatly, O daughter of Zion! Shout, O daughter of Jerusalem! Behold, your King is coming to you; He is just and having salvation, lowly and riding on a donkey, a colt, the foal of a donkey"). Micah 5:2, the same verse that predicted His birth in Bethlehem, referred to him as "The One to be Ruler in Israel, whose goings forth are from of old, from everlasting"—identifying Him not only as King but also as the Eternal One. So when Nathanael saw proof of Jesus' omniscience, he instantly recognized Him as the promised Messiah, the Son of God and King of Israel.

Nathanael was like Simeon, who lifted up the infant Jesus and said, "Lord, now You are letting Your servant depart in peace, according to Your word; for my eyes have seen Your salvation which You have prepared before the face of all peoples, a light to bring revelation to the Gentiles, and the glory of Your people Israel" (Luke 2:29–32). He recognized Jesus instantly as the One he had been waiting for. Nathanael, a careful student of Scripture, was a true Jew who waited for the Messiah and knew that when He came He would be Son of God and King. He was never one of the half-committed. He came to full understanding and total commitment on day one.

"Jesus answered and said to him, 'Because I said to you, "I saw you under the fig tree," do you believe? You will see greater things than these.' And He said to him, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, hereafter you shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of Man' " (John 1:51). He affirmed Nathanael's faith and promised that he would see even greater things than a simple



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show of Jesus' omniscience. If one simple statement about the fig tree was enough to convince Nathanael that this was the Son of God and the King of Israel, he had not seen anything yet. From here on out, everything he would see would enrich and enlarge his faith.

Most of the disciples struggled just to come to the place where Nathanael stood after his first meeting with Christ. But for Nathanael, the ministry of Christ only affirmed what he already knew to be true. How wonderful to see someone so trustworthy and trusting from the very beginning, so that for him the whole three years with Jesus was just an unfolding panorama of supernatural reality!

In the Old Testament, Jacob had a dream in which "a ladder was set up on the earth, and its top reached to heaven; and there the angels of God were ascending and descending on it" (Genesis 28:12). Jesus' words to Nathanael were a reference to that Old Testament account. *He* was the ladder. And Nathanael would see the angels of God ascending and descending upon Him. In other words, Jesus *is* the ladder that connects heaven and earth.

That's all we know about Nathanael from Scripture. Early church records suggest that he ministered in Persia and India and took the gospel as far as Armenia. There is no reliable record of how he died. One tradition says he was tied up in a sack and cast into the sea. Another tradition says he was crucified. By all accounts, he was martyred like all the apostles except John.

What we *do* know is that Nathanael was faithful to the end because he was faithful from the start. Everything he experienced with Christ and whatever he experienced after the birth of the New Testament church ultimately only made his faith stronger. And Nathanael, like the other apostles, stands as proof that God can take the most common people, from the most insignificant places, and use them to His glory.<sup>22</sup>

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<sup>22</sup> MacArthur, J. F., Jr. (2002). *Twelve ordinary men: how the Master shaped his disciples for greatness, and what He wants to do with you* (pp. 135–148). Nashville, TN: W Pub. Group.



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**THE APOSTLES**

At the beginning of His ministry, Jesus selected 12 men to travel with Him. These men would have an important responsibility: They would continue to represent Him after He had returned to heaven. Their reputation would continue to influence the church long after they were dead.

So the selection of the Twelve was a great responsibility. “And it came to pass in those days, that he went out into a mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose 12, whom he also named apostles” (Luke 6:12–13).

Most of the apostles came from the area of Capernaum, which was despised by polite Jewish society because it was the center of a part of the Jewish state (only recently added) and was known in fact as “Galilee of the Gentiles.” Jesus Himself said, “And thou, Capernaum, which art exalted into heaven, shalt be brought down to hell” (Matt. 11:23). Yet Jesus molded these 12 men into strong leaders and articulate spokesmen of the Christian faith. Their success bears witness to the transforming power of Jesus’ lordship.

None of the Gospel writers have left us any physical descriptions of the Twelve. Nevertheless, they give us tiny clues that help us to make “educated guesses” about how the apostles looked and acted. One very important fact that has traditionally been overlooked in countless artistic representations of the apostles is their youth. If we realize that most lived into the third and fourth quarter of the century and John into the second century, then they must have been only teenagers when they first took up Christ’s call.

Different biblical accounts list the Twelve in pairs. We are not sure whether this indicates family relationships, team functions, or some other kind of association between them.

- I. **ANDREW**
- II. **BARTHOLOMEW (NATHANAEL?)**
- III. **JAMES, SON OF ALPHEUS**
- IV. **JAMES, SON OF ZEBEDEE**
- V. **JOHN**
- VI. **JUDAS (NOT ISCARIOT)**
- VII. **JUDAS ISCARIOT**
- VIII. **MATTHEW**
- IX. **PHILIP**
- X. **SIMON PETER**
- XI. **SIMON ZELOTES**
- XII. **THOMAS**
- XIII. **JUDAS’S REPLACEMENT**

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**ADDITIONAL INFORMATION AND INSIGHTS**

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**Where is Peter Buried?**

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**I. Andrew.** The day after John the Baptist saw the Holy Spirit descend upon Jesus, he identified Jesus for two of his disciples and said, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36). Intrigued by this announcement, the two men left John and began to follow Jesus. Jesus noticed them and asked what they were seeking. Immediately they replied, “Rabbi, where dwellest thou?” Jesus took them to the house where He was staying and they spent the night with Him. One of these men was named Andrew (John 1:38–40).

Andrew soon went to find his brother, Simon Peter. He told Peter, “We have found the Messiah ...” (John 1:41). Through his testimony, he won Peter to the Lord.

*Andrew* is our English rendering of the Greek word *Andreas*, which means “manly.” Other clues from the Gospels indicate that Andrew was physically strong and a devout, faithful man. He and Peter owned a house together (Mark 1:29). They were sons of a man named Jonah or John, a prosperous fisherman. Both of the young men had followed their father into the fishing business.

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**SEA OF GALILEE.** *This freshwater lake is also referred to in the New Testament as the “Sea of Tiberias” (John 21:1) and the “lake of Gennesaret” (Luke 5:1). Several of the apostles worked as fishermen along its shores. It measures up to 10 km. (6 mi.) wide and 24 km. (15 mi.) from north to south. Along the shores of the lake were many towns such as Capernaum (in the background),*



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*where Christ conducted much of His ministry. In His time, these towns formed an almost continuous belt of settlements around the lake.*

Andrew was born at Bethsaida on the northern shores of the Sea of Galilee. Though the Book of John describes Andrew's first encounter with Jesus, it does not mention him as a disciple until much later (John 6:8). The Book of Matthew says that when Jesus was walking along the Sea of Galilee He hailed Andrew and Peter and invited them to become His disciples (Matt. 4:18–19). This does not contradict John's narrative; it simply adds a new feature. A close reading of John 1:35–40 shows that Jesus did not call Andrew and Peter to follow Him the first time they met.

Andrew and another disciple named Philip introduced a group of Greek men to Jesus (John 12:20–22). For this reason, we might say that Andrew and Philip were the first foreign missionaries of the Christian faith.

Tradition says that Andrew spent his last years in Scythia, north of the Black Sea. But a small book entitled the *Acts of Andrew* (probably written about A.D. 260) says that he preached primarily in Macedonia and was martyred at Patras.

Roman Catholic tradition says that Andrew was crucified on an X-shaped cross, a religious symbol that is now known as St. Andrew's Cross. It was believed that he was crucified on November 30, so the Roman Catholic church and Greek Orthodox church observe his festival on that date. Today he is the patron saint of Scotland. The Order of St. Andrew is an association of church ushers who make a special effort to be courteous to strangers.

**II. Bartholomew (Nathanael?).** We lack information about the identity of the apostle named Bartholomew. He is mentioned only in the lists of apostles. Moreover, while the synoptic Gospels agree that his name was Bartholomew, John gives it as Nathanael (John 1:45). Some scholars believe that Bartholomew was the surname of Nathanael.

The Aramaic word *bar* means "son," so the name *Bartholomew* literally meant "son of Thalmi." The Bible does not identify Thalmi for us, but he may have been named after the King Thalmi of Geshur (2 Sam. 3:3). Some scholars believe that Bartholomew was connected with the Ptolemies, the ruling family of Egypt; this theory is based upon Jerome's statement that Bartholomew was the only apostle of noble birth.

Assuming that Bartholomew is the same person as Nathanael, we learn a bit more about his personality from the Gospel of John. Jesus called Nathanael "an Israelite ... in whom is no guile" (John 1:47).

Tradition says Nathanael served as a missionary in India. The Venerable Bede said that Nathanael was beheaded by King Astriagis. Other traditions say that Nathanael was crucified head-down.

**III. James, Son of Alphaeus.** The Gospels make only fleeting reference to James, the son of Alphaeus (Matt. 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15). Many scholars believe that James was a brother of Matthew, since Scripture says that Matthew's father was also named Alphaeus (Mark 2:14). Others believe that this James was identified with "James the Less"; but we have no proof that these two names refer to the same man (cf. Mark 15:40).

If the son of Alphaeus was indeed the same man as James the Less, he may have been a cousin of Jesus (cf. Matt. 27:56; John 19:25). Some Bible commentators theorize that this disciple bore a close physical resemblance to Jesus, which could explain why Judas Iscariot had to identify Jesus on the night of His betrayal (Mark 14:43–45; Luke 22:47–48).

Legends say that this James preached in Persia and was crucified there. But we have no concrete information about his later ministry and death.

**IV. James, Son of Zebedee.** After Jesus summoned Simon Peter and his brother Andrew, He went a little farther along the shore of Galilee and summoned "James the son of Zebedee and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets" (Mark 1:19). Like Peter and Andrew, James and his brother responded immediately to Christ's invitation.

James was the first of the Twelve to suffer a martyr's death. King Herod Agrippa I ordered that James be executed with a sword (Acts 12:2). Tradition says this occurred in A.D. 44, when James would have been quite young. (Although the New Testament does not describe the martyrdom of any other apostles, tradition tells us that all except John died for their faith.)

The Gospels never mention James alone; they always speak of "James and John." Even in recording his death, the Book of Acts refers to him as "James the brother of John" (Acts 12:2). James and John began to follow Jesus on the same day, and both of them were present at the transfiguration of Jesus (Mark 9:2–13). Jesus called both men the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).



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The persecution that took James's life inspired new fervor among the Christians (cf. Acts 12:5–25). Undoubtedly, Herod Agrippa had hoped to quash the Christian movement by executing leaders such as James. "But the Word of God grew and multiplied" (v. 24).

Strangely, the Gospel of John does not mention James. John was reluctant to mention his own name, and he may have felt the same kind of modesty about reporting the activities of his brother. Once John refers to himself and James as the "sons of Zebedee" (John 21:2). Otherwise he is silent about the work of James.

Legends say that James was the first Christian missionary to Spain. Roman Catholic authorities believe that his bones are buried in the city of Santiago in northwestern Spain.

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**CATACOMB FRESCO.** *Dating from A.D. 200–220, this fresco is one of the oldest catacomb paintings yet discovered. It depicts the events of John 21, when seven disciples (i.e., Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, the sons of Zebedee, and two other disciples) feasted on bread and fish.*

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**V. John.** Fortunately, we have a considerable amount of information about the disciple named John. Mark tells us he was the brother of James, son of Zebedee (Mark 1:19). Mark says that James and John worked with the "hired servants" of their father (Mark 1:20).

Some scholars speculate that John's mother was Salome, who observed the crucifixion of Jesus (Mark 15:40). If Salome was the sister of Jesus' mother, as the Gospel of John suggests (John 19:25), John may have been a cousin of Jesus.

Jesus found John and his brother James mending their nets beside the Sea of Galilee. He ordered them to launch out into the lake and let down their nets to catch fish. They hauled in a tremendous catch—a miracle that convinced them of Jesus' power. "And when they had brought their ships to land, they forsook all, and followed him" (Luke 5:11). Simon Peter went with them.

John seems to have been an impulsive young man. Soon after he and James entered Jesus' inner circle of disciples, the Master labeled them "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). The disciples seemed to relegate John to a secondary place in their company. All of the Gospels mentioned John after his brother James; on most occasions, it seems, James was the spokesman for the two brothers. When Paul mentions John among the apostles at Jerusalem, he places John at the end of the list (Gal. 2:9).

John's emotions often erupted in his conversations with Jesus. On one occasion, John became upset because someone else was ministering in Jesus' name. "We forbade him," he told Jesus, "because he followeth not us" (Mark 9:38). Jesus replied, "Forbid him not ... For he that is not against us is on our part" (Mark 9:39–40). On another occasion, James and John ambitiously suggested that they should be allowed to sit on Jesus' right hand in heaven. This idea antagonized the other disciples (Mark 10:35–41).

Yet John's boldness served him well at the time of Jesus' death and resurrection. John 18:15 tells us that John "was known unto the high priest." A Franciscan legend says that John's family supplied fish to the high priest's household. This would have made him especially vulnerable to arrest when the high priest's guards apprehended Jesus. Nevertheless, John was the only apostle who dared to stand at the foot of the cross, and Jesus committed His mother into his care (John 19:26–27). When the disciples heard that Jesus' body was no longer in the tomb, John ran ahead of the others and reached the sepulcher first. However, he allowed Peter to enter the burial chamber ahead of him (John 20:1–4, 8).

If John indeed wrote the fourth Gospel, the letters of John, and the Book of Revelation, he penned more of the New Testament than any of the other apostles. We have no sound reason to doubt John's authorship of these books. (See "Outline of the Books of the Bible.")

Tradition says that John cared for Jesus' mother while he was pastor of the congregation in Ephesus, and that she died there. Tertullian says that John was taken to Rome and "plunged into boiling oil, unhurt, and then exiled on an island." This was probably the island of Patmos, where the Book of Revelation was written. It is believed that John lived to an old age and that his body was returned to Ephesus for burial.

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**THE LAST SUPPER.** *Leonardo da Vinci (1452–1519) began work in 1496 on what many art critics consider to be his greatest masterpiece. Christ is shown at the center of the table. He has just revealed that one of them would betray Him. The disciples murmur among themselves, wondering which of them would do this (Luke 22:21–23). Judas, the second figure left of center, sits silently and clutches the disciples' purse (cf. John 12:4–6).*

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**VI. Judas (Not Iscariot).** John refers to one of the disciples as “Judas, not Iscariot” (John 14:22). It is not easy to determine the identity of this man. Jerome dubbed him *Trionius*—“the man with three names.”

The New Testament refers to several men by the name of Judas—Judas Iscariot (*see below*), Judas the brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55; Mark 6:3), Judas of Galilee (Acts 5:37), and “Judas, not Iscariot.” Clearly, John wanted to avoid confusion when he referred to this man, especially because the other disciple named Judas had such a poor reputation.

Matthew refers to this man as Lebbeus, “whose surname was Thaddeus” (Matt. 10:3). Mark refers to him simply as Thaddeus (Mark 3:18). Luke refers to him as “Judas the son of James” (Luke 6:16; Acts 1:13). The KJV incorrectly translates Luke as saying that this man was the *brother* of James.

We are not sure who Thaddeus’s father was. Some think he was James, the brother of Jesus—making Judas a nephew of Jesus. But this is not likely, for early church historians report that this James never married. Others think that his father was the apostle James, son of Zebedee. We cannot be certain.

William Steuart McBirnie suggests that the name Thaddeus was a diminutive form of *Theudas*, which comes from the Aramaic noun *taad*, meaning “breast.” Thus, Thaddeus may have been a nickname that literally meant “one close to the breast” or “one beloved.” McBirnie believes that the name Lebbeus may be derived from the Hebrew noun *leb*, which means “heart.”

The historian Eusebius says that Jesus once sent this disciple to King Abgar of Mesopotamia to pray for his healing. According to this story, Judas went to Abgar after Jesus’ ascension to heaven, and he remained to preach in several cities of Mesopotamia. Another tradition says that this disciple was murdered by magicians in the city of Suanir in Persia. It is said that they killed him with clubs and stones.

**VII. Judas Iscariot.** All of the Gospels place Judas Iscariot at the end of the list of Jesus’ disciples. Undoubtedly this reflects Judas’s ill repute as the betrayer of Jesus.

The Aramaic word *Iscariot* literally meant “man of Kerioth.” Kerioth was a town near Hebron (Josh. 15:25). However, John tells us that Judas was the son of Simon (John 6:71).

If Judas indeed came from the town of Kerioth, he was the only Judean among Jesus’ disciples. Judeans despised the people of Galilee as crude frontier settlers. This attitude may have alienated Judas Iscariot from the other disciples.

The Gospels do not tell us exactly when Jesus called Judas Iscariot to join His band of followers. Perhaps it was in the early days when Jesus called so many others (cf. Matt. 4:18–22).

Judas acted as the treasurer of the disciples, and on at least one occasion he manifested a penny-pinching attitude toward their work. When a woman named Mary came to pour rich ointment on the feet of Jesus, Judas complained, “Why was not this ointment sold for 300 pence, and given to the poor?” (John 12:5). John comments that Judas said this “not that he cared for the poor; but because he was a thief” (John 12:6).

As the disciples shared their last meal with Jesus, the Lord revealed that He knew He was about to be betrayed, and He singled out Judas as the culprit. He told Judas, “That thou doest, do quickly” (John 13:27). However, the other disciples did not suspect what Judas was about to do. John reports that “some of them thought, because Judas had the bag, that Jesus had said unto him, ‘Buy those things that we have need of against the (Passover) feast ...’” (John 13:28–29).

Scholars have offered several theories about the reason for Judas’ betrayal. Some think that he was reacting to Jesus’ rebuke when he criticized the woman with the ointment. Others think that Judas acted out of greed for the money that Jesus’ enemies offered him.<sup>6</sup> Luke and John simply say that Satan inspired Judas’s actions (Luke 22:3; John 13:27).

Matthew tells us that Judas in remorse attempted to return the money to Jesus’ captors: “And he cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed, and went and hanged himself” (Matt. 27:5). A folk legend says that Judas hanged himself on a redbud tree, which is sometimes called the “Judas tree.” In most modern works, Judas is portrayed as a zealot or extreme patriot who was disappointed at Jesus’ failure to lead a mass movement or rebellion against Rome. There is, as yet, little evidence for this viewpoint.

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**CHALICE OF ANTIOCH.** *This large silver cup (19 cm. or 7 1/2 in. high) was discovered in 1916 at Antioch. At first, many scholars thought this was the actual cup used at the Last Supper. However, subsequent study of the artwork on the cup leads authorities to believe it dates no later than the fourth or fifth centuries A.D. The plain metal lining may be a substitute for an original glass vessel.*



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In 1954, Warner Brothers Studios produced a feature-length film about the story of this cup, entitled "The Silver Chalice," starring Paul Newman and Jack Palance.

**VIII. Matthew.** In Jesus' day, the Roman government collected several different taxes from the people of Palestine. Tolls for transporting goods by land or sea were collected by private tax collectors, who paid a fee to the Roman government for the right to assess these levies. The tax collectors made their profits by charging a higher toll than the law required. The licensed collectors often hired minor officials called *publicans* to do the actual work of collecting the tolls. The publicans extracted their own wages by charging a fraction more than their employer required. The disciple Matthew was a publican who collected tolls on the road between Damascus and Accho; his booth was located just outside the city of Capernaum and he may have also collected taxes from the fishermen for their catches.

Normally a publican charged five percent of the purchase price of normal trade items and up to 12.5 percent on luxury items. Matthew also collected taxes from fishermen who worked along the Sea of Galilee and boatmen who brought their goods from cities on the other side of the lake.

The Jews considered a tax collector's money to be unclean so they would never ask for change. If a Jewish man did not have the exact amount that the collector required, he borrowed from a friend. Jewish people despised the publicans as agents of the hated Roman Empire and the puppet Jewish king. Publicans were not allowed to testify in court, and they could not tithe their money to the temple. A good Jew would not even associate with publicans in private life (cf. Matt. 9:10–13).

Yet the Jews divided the tax collectors in two classes. First were the *gabbai*, who levied general agricultural taxes and census taxes from the people. The second group were the *mokhsa*, the officials who collected money from travelers. Most of the *mokhsa* were Jews, so they were despised as traitors to their own people. Matthew belonged to this class of tax collectors.

The Gospel of Matthew tells us that Jesus approached this unlikely disciple as he sat at his tax table one day. Jesus simply commanded Matthew to "follow me," and Matthew left his work to follow the Master (Matt. 9:9).

Apparently Matthew was fairly well-to-do, because he provided a banquet in his own house. "And there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them" (Luke 5:29). The simple fact that Matthew owned his own house indicates that he was wealthier than the typical publican.

Because of the nature of his work, we feel quite certain that Matthew knew how to read and write. Papyrus tax documents dating from about A.D. 100 indicate that the publicans were quite efficient with figures. (Instead of using the clumsy Roman numerals, they preferred the simpler Greek symbols.)

Matthew may have been related to the disciple James, since each of them is said to have been a "son of Alphaeus" (Matt. 10:3; Mark 2:14). Luke sometimes uses the name Levi to refer to Matthew (cf. Luke 5:27–29). Thus some scholars believe that Matthew's name was Levi before he decided to follow Jesus, and that Jesus gave him the new name, which means "gift of God." Others suggest that Matthew was a member of the priestly tribe of Levi.

Even though a former publican had joined His ranks, Jesus did not soften His condemnation of the tax collectors. He ranked them with the harlots (cf. Matt. 21:31), and Matthew himself classes the publicans with sinners (Matt. 9:10).

Of all the Gospels, Matthew's has probably been the most influential. Second-century Christian literature quotes from the Gospel of Matthew more than from any other. The church fathers placed Matthew's Gospel at the beginning of the New Testament canon, probably because of the significance they attributed to it. Matthew's account emphasizes Jesus' fulfillment of Old Testament prophecy. It stresses that Jesus was the promised Messiah, who had come to redeem all mankind.

We do not know what happened to Matthew after the day of Pentecost. In his *Book of Martyrs*, John Foxe stated that Matthew spent his last years preaching in Parthia and Ethiopia. Foxe says that Matthew was martyred in the city of Nadabah in A.D. 60. However, we do not know from what source Foxe got this information (other than from medieval Greek sources) and we cannot judge whether it is trustworthy.

**IX. Philip.** John's Gospel is the only one to give us any detailed information about the disciple named Philip. (This Philip should not be confused with Philip the evangelist—cf. Acts 21:8.)

Jesus first met Philip at Bethany beyond the Jordan River (John 1:28, RSV). It is interesting to note that Jesus called Philip individually while He called most of the other disciples in pairs. Philip introduced Nathanael to Jesus (John 1:45–51), and Jesus also called Nathanael (or Nathanael Bartholomew) to be His disciple.



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When 5,000 people gathered to hear Jesus, Philip asked his Lord how they would feed the crowd. “Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little,” he said (John 6:7).

On another occasion, a group of Greek men came to Philip and asked him to introduce them to Jesus. Philip enlisted the help of Andrew and together they took the men to meet Him (John 12:20–22).

While the disciples ate their last meal with Jesus, Philip said, “Lord, show us the Father, and it sufficeth us” (John 14:8). Jesus responded that they had already seen the Father in Him.

These three brief glimpses are all that we see of Philip in the Gospels. The church has preserved many traditions about his later ministry and death. Some say that he preached in France; others that he preached in southern Russia, Asia Minor, or even India. In A.D. 194, Bishop Polycrates of Antioch wrote that “Philip, one of the twelve apostles, sleeps at Hierapolis.” However, we have no firm evidence to support these claims.

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**ST. PETER’S BASILICA.** *According to tradition, Peter was executed in the circus of Nero, where thousands of Christians suffered martyrdom. In A.D. 319, Emperor Constantine destroyed the circus and built over its northern foundations the first basilica of Saint Peter. The present structure was started in 1450 and took 176 years to build. Michelangelo designed the magnificent dome. St. Peter’s is the largest church building in the world.*

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**X. Simon Peter.** The disciple named Simon Peter was a man of contrasts. At Caesarea Philippi, Jesus asked, “But whom say ye that I am?” Peter immediately replied, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matt. 16:15–16). But seven verses later we read, “Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him....” Going from one extreme to another was characteristic of Peter.

When Jesus attempted to wash Peter’s feet in the Upper Room, the intemperate disciple exclaimed, “Thou shalt never wash my feet.” But when Jesus insisted, Peter said, “Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head” (John 13:8–9).

On their last night together, Peter told Jesus, “Although all shall offend thee, yet will not I” (Mark 14:29). Yet within hours, Peter not only denied Jesus but cursed Him (Mark 14:71).

This volatile, unpredictable temperament often got Simon Peter into trouble. Yet the Holy Spirit would mold Peter into a stable, dynamic leader of the early church, a “rockman” (*Peter* means “rock”) in every sense.

The New Testament writers used four different names in referring to Peter. One is the Hebrew name *Simeon* (Acts 15:14), which may mean “hearing.” A second name was *Simon*, the Greek form of Simeon. A third name was *Cephas*, Aramaic for “rock.” The fourth name was *Peter*, Greek for “rock”; the New Testament writers apply this name to the disciple more often than the other three.

When Jesus first met this man, He said, “Thou art Simon, the son of Jona: thou shalt be called Cephas” (John 1:42). Jonah was a Greek name meaning “dove” (cf. Matt. 16:17; John 21:15–17). Some modern translations render this name as “John.”

Peter and his brother Andrew were fishermen on the Sea of Galilee (Matt. 4:18; Mark 1:16). He spoke with the accent of a Galilean, and his mannerisms identified him as an uncouth native of the Galilean frontier (cf. Mark 14:70). His brother Andrew led him to Jesus (John 1:40–42).

While Jesus hung on the cross, Peter was probably among the group from Galilee that “stood afar off, beholding these things” (Luke 23:49). In 1 Peter 5:1 he wrote, “I ... am also an elder, and a witness of the sufferings of Christ....”

Simon Peter heads the list of apostles in each of the Gospel accounts, which suggests that the New Testament writers considered him to be the most significant of the Twelve. He did not write as much as John or Matthew, but he emerged as the most influential leader of the early church. Though 120 followers of Jesus received the Holy Spirit on the day of Pentecost, the Scripture records the words of Peter (Acts 2:14–40). Peter suggested that the apostles find a replacement for Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:22). And he and John were the first disciples to perform a miracle after Pentecost, healing a lame man at the Beautiful Gate of Jerusalem (Acts 3:1–11).

The Book of Acts emphasizes the travels of Paul, yet Peter also traveled extensively. He visited Antioch (Gal. 2:21), Corinth (1 Cor. 1:11), and perhaps Rome. Eusebius states that Peter was crucified in Rome, probably during the reign of Nero.

Peter felt free to minister to the Gentiles (cf. Acts 10) but he is best known as the apostle to the Jews (cf. Gal. 2:8). As Paul took a more active role in the work of the church and as the Jews became more hostile to Christianity, Peter faded into the background of the New Testament narrative.



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The Roman Catholic church traces the authority of the Pope back to Peter, for it is alleged that Peter was bishop of the church at Rome when he died. Tradition says that the Basilica of St. Peter in Rome is built over the spot where Peter was buried. Modern excavations under the ancient church demonstrate a very old Roman cemetery and some graves hastily used for Christian burials. A careful reading of the Gospels and the early segment of Acts would tend to support the tradition that Peter was the leading figure of the early church. The tradition that Peter was the leading figure of the apostolic church has strong support.

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**CAESAREA PHILIPPI.** *This town was situated at the foot of Mount Hermon, on the main source of the Jordan River. Here Christ asked His disciples who they thought He was. Peter immediately replied, "Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matt. 16:16).*

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**XI. Simon Zelotes.** Matthew and Mark refer to a disciple named "Simon the Canaanite" (modern translations have "Canaanite," which is more correct), while Luke and the Book of Acts refer to one named "Simon Zelotes." These names refer to the same man. *Zelotes* is a Greek word that means "zealous one"; "Canaanite" is an English transliteration of the Aramaic word *kanna'ah*, which also means "zealous one"; thus it appears that this disciple belonged to the Jewish sect known as the Zealots. (See "Jews in New Testament Times.")

The Scripture does not indicate when Simon Zelotes was invited to join the apostles. Tradition says that Jesus called him at the same time that He called Andrew and Peter, James and John, Judas Iscariot and Thaddeus (cf. Matt. 4:18–22).

We have several conflicting stories about the later ministry of this man. The Coptic church of Egypt says that he preached in Egypt, Africa, Great Britain, and Persia; other early sources agree that he ministered in the British Isles but this is doubtful. Nicephorus of Constantinople wrote: "Simeon born in Cana of Galilee who ... was surnamed Zelotes, having received the Holy Ghost from above, traveled through Egypt and Africa, then Mauretania and Libya, preaching the Gospel. And the same doctrine he taught to the Occidental Sea and the Isles called Britanniae."

**XII. Thomas.** The Gospel of John gives us a more complete picture of the disciple named Thomas than we receive from the synoptic Gospels or the Book of Acts. John tells us he was also called Didymus (John 20:4) the Greek word for "twins" just as the Hebrew word *t'hom* means "twin." The Latin Vulgate used Didymus as a proper name and that style was followed by most English versions until the twentieth century. The RSV and other recent translations refer to him as "Thomas called the Twin."

We do not know who Thomas might have been, nor do we know anything about his family background or how he was invited to join the apostles. However, we know that Thomas joined six other disciples who returned to the fishing boats after Jesus was crucified (John 21:2–3). This suggested that he may have learned the fishing trade as a young man.

On one occasion Jesus told His disciples that He intended to return to Judea. His disciples warned Him not to go because of the hostility toward Him there. But Thomas said, "Let us also go, that we may die with him" (John 11:16).

Yet modern readers often forget Thomas's courage; he is more often remembered for his weakness and doubt. In the Upper Room, Jesus told His disciples, "Whither I go ye know, and the way ye know." But Thomas retorted, "Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?" (John 14:4–5). After Jesus rose from the dead, Thomas told his friends, "Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe" (John 20:25). A few days later Jesus appeared to Thomas and the other disciples to give them physical proof that He was alive. Then Thomas exclaimed, "My Lord and my God" (John 20:28).

The early church fathers respected the example of Thomas. Augustine commented, "He doubted that we might not doubt."

Tradition says that Thomas eventually became a missionary in India. It is said that he was martyred there and buried in Mylapore, now a suburb of Madras. His name is carried on by the very title of the Marthoma or "Master Thomas" church.

**XIII. Judas's Replacement.** Following the death of Judas Iscariot, Simon Peter suggested that the disciples choose someone to replace the betrayer. Peter's speech outlined certain qualifications for the new apostle (cf. Acts 1:15–22). The apostle had to know of Jesus "from the baptism of John, unto that same day that he was taken up from us." He also had to be "a witness with us of his resurrection" (Acts 1:22).

The apostles found two men who met the qualifications: Joseph surnamed Justus and Matthias (Acts 1:23). They cast lots to decide the matter and the lot fell to Matthias.



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The name Matthias is a variant of the Hebrew name *Mattathias*, which means “gift of God.” Unfortunately, Scripture tells us nothing about the ministry of Matthias. Eusebius speculated that Matthias would have been one of the 70 disciples that Jesus sent out on a preaching mission (cf. Luke 10:1–16). Some have identified him with Zaccheus (cf. Luke 19:2–8). One tradition says he preached to cannibals in Mesopotamia; another says he was stoned to death by the Jews. However, we have no evidence to support any of these stories.

Some scholars have suggested that Matthias was disqualified and the apostles chose James the brother of Jesus to take his place (cf. Gal. 1:19; 2:9). But there appear to have been more than 12 men thought of as apostles in the early church and Scripture gives us no indication that Matthias left the group.<sup>23</sup>

### The Twelve Apostles

<b>Matthew 10:2–4</b>	<b>Mark 3:16–19</b>	<b>Luke 6:13–16</b>	<b>Acts 1:13</b>
Simon “Peter”	Simon “Peter”	Simon “Peter”	Peter
Andrew	James, son of Zebedee	Andrew	John
James, son of Zebedee	John	James	James
John	Andrew	John	Andrew
Philip	Philip	Philip	Philip
Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Bartholomew	Thomas
Thomas	Matthew	Matthew	Bartholomew
Matthew	Thomas	Thomas	Matthew
James, son of Alphaeus			
Thaddaeus	Thaddaeus	Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot
Simon the Zealot	Simon the Zealot	Judas, son of James	Judas, son of James
Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	Judas Iscariot	— <sup>24</sup>

<sup>23</sup> Packer, J. I., Tenney, M. C., & White, W., Jr. (1997). *Nelson’s illustrated manners and customs of the Bible* (pp. 528–539). Nashville, TN: Thomas Nelson.

<sup>24</sup> Barry, J. D., Mangum, D., Brown, D. R., Heiser, M. S., Custis, M., Ritzema, E., ... Bomar, D. (2012, 2016). *Faithlife Study Bible*. Bellingham, WA: Lexham Press.