

Section A

A disciple is a faithful pupil and follower of Jesus and his teachings. From among many disciples, Jesus chose 12 men to work closely with him in spreading the good news of the kingdom of God. Jesus led this group for three years. Later, Jesus called these disciples apostles. He commissioned them to preach, teach, and help build and lead the Church after Pentecost.

The Bible does not give very many details about the men who followed Jesus. Some of the information below comes from the Bible. Some of it is based on Church history and tradition.

Section B

Three disciples—Peter, James, and John—are often mentioned together (Matthew 17:1; Mark 5:37, 9:2, 14:33; Luke 8:51, 9:28). They spent more time with Jesus than the other disciples. Andrew sometimes joined them (Mark 13:3). These four disciples were two sets of brothers: Peter and Andrew were brothers, and James and John were brothers (Matthew 10:2). All four were fishermen (Matthew 4:18, 21). John later described himself as one “whom Jesus loved” (John 13:23), so some believe he was Jesus’ best friend. Here is a little about each of their lives:

John—This disciple took care of Jesus’ mother after Jesus died (John 19:26). Later he wrote the gospel of John and four other books in the New Testament: 1 John, 2 John, 3 John, and Revelation. He wrote Revelation while he was in exile, by order of the Roman emperor Domitian, on the Greek island of Patmos, near Turkey (Revelation 1:9).

James (son of Zebedee)—This disciple was John’s older brother. Jesus gave the pair the nickname “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Some think James had a fiery temper because he and his brother wanted Jesus to call down fire on a town in Samaria (Luke 9:51–56). He was the first of the apostles to die, as he was killed by Herod Agrippa (Acts 12:1–2). This James did not write the epistle of James; Jesus’ half-brother wrote it.

Simon Peter—This disciple’s name was Simon, but Jesus called him Peter (John 1:40–42). He was the leader of the apostles, often asking questions, speaking up, or taking action before the rest did. He denied Jesus three times before the crucifixion (Matthew 26:75; Mark 14:72; Luke 22:61; John 18:17, 25–27). Jesus forgave him (John 21:15–19) and Peter led the apostles on Pentecost (Acts 1:15, 2:14). Peter wrote two books in the New Testament: 1 Peter and 2 Peter. Christian tradition holds that Peter was crucified by the Roman emperor Nero Augustus Caesar.

Andrew—Peter’s brother is best known for bringing people to Jesus, including Peter (John 1:35–42) and the boy with the loaves and fishes (John 6:8–9). Andrew is said to have preached in many places, from Greece, Macedonia, and Turkey to Romania, Ukraine, and even Russia. It is believed he was crucified.

Section C

In addition to John and Simon Peter, two other disciples contributed to the New Testament:

Matthew—Matthew, also known as Levi, was a tax collector from the town of Capernaum (Matthew 9:9, Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27). He wrote the gospel of Matthew. After this, some say that he went to Persia (modern-day Iran) to preach; others say that he died as a martyr in Ethiopia.

Thaddaeus—This disciple was not only called Thaddaeus (Matthew 10:3), but also Judas (Luke 6:16, John 14:22, Acts 1:13). He wrote the epistle, or letter, of Jude. He is also thought to have been a missionary to Persia and died there as a martyr.

Section D

Jesus chose six other disciples at the start of his ministry. They were:

Philip—Like Andrew, Philip is known for bringing others to the Lord (John 1:45, 12:20–22). He is thought to have served the Lord as a missionary in Central Eurasia, and then been martyred. Philip, one of Jesus' 12 disciples, is not the same person as Philip, a deacon (Acts 6:5), who preached to the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26–40).

Bartholomew—Philip introduced Bartholomew, known as *Nathanael*, to Jesus (John 1:45). Jesus said Nathanael was a man without deceit (John 1:47). Tradition says that this disciple preached the gospel in Ethiopia, Mesopotamia, Iran, Turkey, and Armenia, where he was beheaded by King Astyages. Some say he took a copy of Matthew's gospel to India.

Thomas—This disciple was a twin (John 11:16, 20:24, 21:2). At first, he doubted that Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:24–29). Thomas is thought to have served God as a missionary in Persia and then traveled all the way to India, where he was killed by the king of Mylapore, in modern-day Chennai.

James (son of Alphaeus)—Although this disciple is mentioned several times in the New Testament (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13), little is known about him. One legend says he was martyred in Persia.

Simon the Zealot—The Bible does not say much about this disciple (Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:15, Acts 1:13). The Zealots were revolutionaries who wanted to free Judea from the Romans. This disciple revolutionized the world by preaching the gospel. It is said he went to Egypt and later to Persia, where he died after being sawed in half.

Judas Iscariot—This disciple is always mentioned last when all the disciples are named. He was a thief (John 12:6) who betrayed Jesus (Matthew 26:14–16, Mark 14:10, Luke 22:3–4, John 13:2). He felt guilt for his sin, and then hanged himself (Matthew 27:3–10). After his death, God chose another apostle, named Matthias, to take his place (Acts 1:12–26).