

SABBATH THOUGHT 2025-06-21—WHO WERE THE APOSTLES?

May God bless you on His Sabbath day!

Who were the apostles? What makes an apostle? Are there apostles today? Some of those answers may seem obvious, but who they were and what was required of them is both interesting and inspiring.

THE APOSTLES

The names of the 12 apostles¹ were Simon Peter son of Jonas, Andrew son of Jonas, James son of Zebedee, John son of Zebedee, Philip, Bartholomew (Nathanael), Matthew (Levi), Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Thaddeus (Judas or Labbaeus) son of Alphaeus, Simon the Zealot, and Matthias (who replaced Judas Iscariot).

LUKE 6:13-15 And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles: 14 **Simon**, whom He also named Peter, and **Andrew** his brother; **James** and **John**; **Philip** and **Bartholomew**; 15 **Matthew** and **Thomas**; **James** the *son* of Alphaeus, and **Simon** called the Zealot; 16 **Judas** *the son* of James, and **Judas Iscariot** who also became a traitor.

The order in Matthew, Mark, Luke, and Acts differ slightly. Compared with Luke, Matthew is before Thomas in the book of Matthew, Andrew before James in the books of Mark and Acts, and Thomas before Bartholomew in Acts.

Brothers included Simon Peter and Andrew sons of Jonas; James (the Great) and John, sons of Zebedee; and likely Matthew and James (the Lesser), sons of Alphaeus. Jesus called the brothers James and John “sons of thunder.”² James was also the half-brother of Jesus Christ through Mary and likely older than John. Peter, Andrew, James, John, and Zebedee were fishing partners. Matthew (Levi) was a tax collector.

Judas Iscariot, both rejected and dead, was replaced by Matthias:

ACTS 1:15-17, 20-26 And in those days Peter stood up in the midst of **the disciples (altogether the number of names was about a hundred and twenty)**, and said, 16 “Men *and* brethren, this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before by the mouth of David **concerning Judas [Iscariot]**, who became a guide to those who arrested Jesus; 17 “for he [*Judas Iscariot*] was numbered with us and obtained a part in this ministry.” ... 20 “For it is written in the Book of Psalms: ‘Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it’; and, ‘**Let another take his office.**’ 23 And **they proposed two: Joseph called Barsabas, who was surnamed**

¹ Also Matt. 10:2-4; Mark 3:16-19; Acts 1:13; 1 Pet. 1:1; 2 Pet. 1:1.

² Mark 3:17.

Justus, and Matthias. 24 And **they prayed** and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, **show which of these two You have chosen** 25 **“to take part in this ministry and apostleship** from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” 26 And they cast their lots, and **the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.**

NOTE: The ~120 disciples had some or all of the qualifications for an apostleship (Acts 1:15); however, only 12 were appointed.

Paul also was an apostle:

ROMANS 1:1 Paul, a bondservant of Jesus Christ, **called to be an apostle**, separated to the gospel of God

There was one more—Jesus Christ is the Head Apostle:

HEBREWS 3:1 Therefore, holy brethren, partakers of the heavenly calling, consider **the Apostle** and High Priest of our confession [*profession*], **Christ Jesus**,

Others had the title of apostle including Andronicus (a Jew) and Junia³ (who was, interestingly, a Roman woman) and Barnabas (Joses)⁴. They were likely of the ~120 and maybe even the 70; however, they were not given the same recognition and authority as those Jesus referred to as “the twelve”⁵ for unknown reasons.

APOSTOLIC QUALIFICATIONS & REQUIREMENTS

REQUIREMENT: Apostles were APPOINTED by God and CHOSEN by Jesus Christ:

Jesus Christ prayed all night, discussing with God the Father those who He would choose from among the ~120 disciples:⁶

LUKE 6:12-13 Now it came to pass in those days that **He [Jesus Christ] went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God.** 13 And when it was day, He called His disciples to *Himself*; and from them **He chose twelve whom He also named apostles:**

Matthias was APPOINTED by God the Father and CHOSEN by Jesus Christ:

ACTS 1:24-26 And **they [the 11 apostles] prayed** and said, “You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, **show which of these two You have chosen** 25 **“to take part in this ministry and apostleship** from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place.” 26 And they cast their lots, and **the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven apostles.**

³ Rom. 16:7.

⁴ Acts 4:36; 14:14.

⁵ Mark 6:7; 9:35; et al.

⁶ Also Mark 3:13-14; Acts 1:2; Rom. 1:5.

Paul was APPOINTED by God the Father and CHOSEN by Jesus Christ:⁷

1 CORINTHIANS 1:1 **Paul, called to be an apostle of Jesus Christ through the will [decree] of God, ...**

1 TIMOTHY 1:1 **Paul, an apostle of Jesus Christ, by the commandment [decree] of God our Savior and the Lord Jesus Christ, our hope,**

REQUIREMENT: Apostles were with Jesus during His entire ministry, which made them witnesses of the Gospel and Jesus Christ to the world:

ACTS 1:21 “Therefore, of these **men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 “beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us** of His resurrection.”

REQUIREMENT: Apostles were taught directly (and privately at times⁸) by Jesus:⁹

JOHN 18:19-21 The high priest then **asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine.** 20 Jesus answered him, “**I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple,** where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. 21 “Why do you ask Me? **Ask those who have heard Me** what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said.”

JUDE 1:17 But you, beloved, remember **the words which were spoken before by the apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ:**

GALATIANS 1:11, 15-18 But **I [Paul]** make known to you, brethren, that **the gospel** which was preached by me is not according to man. 12 For I neither received it from man, **nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ.** ... 15 But when it pleased God, who separated me from my mother’s womb and called *me* through His grace, 16 to reveal His Son in me, that I might preach Him among the Gentiles, **I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood, 17 nor did I go up to Jerusalem to those who were apostles before me; but I went to Arabia,** and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then **after three years [with Jesus Christ]** I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.

REQUIREMENT: Apostles were witnesses of the resurrection of Jesus Christ:

ACTS 1:21-22 “Therefore, of these men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, 22 “beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, **one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection.**”

⁷ Also Acts 9:10-11, 15, 17; 14:14; Rom. 1:1; 1 Cor. 1:1; 9:1-2; 2 Cor. 1:1; Gal. 1:1; Eph. 1:1; Col. 1:1; 2 Tim. 1:1; 1:11; Titus 1:1.

⁸ Matt. 20:17.

⁹ Also Mark 9:31; 12:35; John 7:14, 28; 8:20, 28.

ACTS 4:33 And with great power **the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus**. And great grace was upon them all.

1 CORINTHIANS 15:3-8 For I [Paul] delivered to you first of all that which I also received: **that Christ died** for our sins according to the Scriptures, 4 and that He was buried, and that **He rose again** the third day according to the Scriptures, 5 and that **He was seen by Cephas, then by the twelve**. 6 After that He was seen by over five hundred brethren at once, of whom the greater part remain to the present, but some have fallen asleep. 7 After that **He was seen by James, then by all the apostles**. 8 Then **last of all He was seen by me** also, as by one born out of due time.

1 CORINTHIANS 9:1 Am I [Paul] not an apostle? Am I not free? **Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord [after He was resurrected]?** Are you not my work in the Lord?

REQUIREMENT: Apostles were partakers of the last Passover with Jesus Christ:

LUKE 22:14-15 When the hour had come, **He [Jesus Christ] sat down, and the twelve apostles with Him**. 15 Then He said to them, “With *fervent* desire I have desired to **eat this Passover with you** before I suffer;

NOTE: Matthias was an exception because he replaced Judas Iscariot. Also Paul was not at last Passover with Jesus Christ but he certainly would have partaken of it during the three years he was with Him:

GALATIANS 1:17-18 nor did I [Paul] go up to Jerusalem to those *who were* apostles before me; but **I went to Arabia**, and returned again to Damascus. 18 Then **after three years [with Jesus Christ]** I went up to Jerusalem to see Peter, and remained with him fifteen days.

REQUIREMENT: Apostles were tested when Jesus sent them to do signs and wonders and to preach the Gospel or a warning to those who rejected them:

MATTHEW 10:5-8 These **twelve Jesus sent out** and commanded them, saying: “Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6 “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel. 7 “And as you go, **preach [the Gospel], saying, ‘The kingdom of heaven is at hand.’**

LUKE 10:1, 9-11 After these things **the Lord appointed seventy others** also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go. ... 9 “And **heal the sick there, and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God has come near to you.’** 10 “But whatever city you enter, and they **do not receive you, go out into its streets and say, 11 ‘The very dust of your city which clings to us we wipe off against you. Nevertheless know this, that the kingdom of God has come near you.’**

NOTE: It is reasonable to assume that the 70 sent out by Jesus were of the group of ~120 disciples.

APOSTOLIC POWER & AUTHORITY

POWER: Apostles were given power to cast out unclean spirits, heal sickness and disease, and perform signs and wonders:¹⁰

LUKE 9:1-2 Then **He [Jesus Christ] called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases.** 2 He sent them to preach the kingdom of God **and to heal the sick.**

POWER: Apostles were given power to do signs and wonders as proof that their authority came from God to preach the Gospel and witness (testify) of Jesus Christ:

2 CORINTHIANS 12:12 Truly **the signs of an apostle** were accomplished among you with all perseverance, **in signs and wonders and mighty deeds.**

ACTS 1:8 “But you [*the apostles*] shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and **you shall be [My witnesses]** in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth.”

ACTS 2:43-44 Then fear came upon every soul, and **many wonders and signs were done through the apostles.** 44 Now **all who believed [the Gospel]** were together, ...

ACTS 4:33 And **with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus.** And great grace was upon them all.

ACTS 5:12, 14 And **through the hands of the apostles many signs and wonders were done** among the people. And they were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch. ... 14 And **believers were increasingly added** to the Lord, multitudes of both men and women,

[TS2009] 1 CORINTHIANS 4:9 For I [*Paul*] think that **[God] has exhibited us,** the [apostles], last, **as appointed to death [lit. doomed to death], because we became a spectacle to the world,** both to [angels] and to men.

Even their deaths were a public witness (testimony).

AUTHORITY: Apostles were given authority to PREACH THE GOSPEL:¹¹

NOTE: The Gospel is always PREACHED (proclaimed, announced) whereas the Word of God is TAUGHT.

MARK 16:14-15 Later **He [Jesus Christ] appeared to the eleven** as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. 15 And **He said to them, “Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature.**

¹⁰ Also Matt. 10:1, 5-8; Mark 3:13-15; 6:7, 12-13.

¹¹ Also Mark 3:13-14; 6:7, 12; Luke 9:1-2, 6; 1 Cor. 1:17; 9:16.

AUTHORITY: Apostles were given authority to TEACH THE WORD OF GOD (the Law and Prophets):

ACTS 1:1-2 The former account I [*Luke*] made, O Theophilus, of all that **Jesus** began both to do and **teach**, 2 until the day in which He was taken up, after **He through the Holy Spirit had given commandments [*teaching the Word of God*] to the apostles** whom He had chosen,

ACTS 2:42 And they [*the people*] continued steadfastly **in the apostles' doctrine [*teaching the Word of God*]** and fellowship, in the breaking of bread, and in prayers.

EPHESIANS 2:20 having been built on **the foundation [*teaching the Word of God*] of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself** being the chief *cornerstone*,

2 PETER 3:2 that you may be mindful of **the words which were spoken before by the holy prophets, and of the commandment of us [*teaching the Word of God*], the apostles of the Lord and Savior**,

JUDE 1:17 But you, beloved, remember **the words which were spoken before by the apostles [*teaching the Word of God*] of our Lord Jesus Christ**:

AUTHORITY: Apostles were given authority to “bind and loose”:

Under that unique authority, they pronounced doctrines (teachings) that established and set judgments for certain matters according to the Word of God. This was especially important for the Gentiles. Initially, Peter alone was given the authority to bind and loose but later all 12 apostles received it.

MATTHEW 16:18-19 “And I [*Jesus Christ*] also say to you that **you are Peter**, and on this rock I will build My *ekklesia*, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. 19 “And **I will give you [*singular = Peter*] the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you [*singular*] bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you [*singular*] loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**”

MATTHEW 18:18 “Assuredly, I [*Jesus Christ*] say to you [*plural = the twelve disciples—v1*], **whatever you [*plural*] bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you [*plural*] loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.**

NOTE: The authority to “bind and loose” is why certain matters were brought to Peter (and the other disciples) for judgments. Examples include accepting Paul¹² as an apostle and the circumcision of the Gentiles¹³. Paul also had authority to “bind and loose” because he distinguishes between teachings he “received of the Lord” (1 Cor.

¹² Acts 9:27.

¹³ Acts 15:1-29.

11:23) and those that were his own judgments—"I have no commandment from the Lord; yet **I give judgment**" (1 Cor. 7:25).

APOSTOLIC RESPONSIBILITY

RESPONSIBILITY: The original 12 apostles were sent to the 12 Tribes:¹⁴

MATTHEW 10:5-6 These **twelve Jesus sent out** and commanded them, saying: "Do not go into the way of the Gentiles, and do not enter a city of the Samaritans. 6 "**But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.**

RESPONSIBILITY: Paul was sent to the Gentiles:¹⁵

ROMANS 11:13 For **I [Paul]** speak to you Gentiles; inasmuch **as I am an apostle to the Gentiles,** I magnify my ministry,

GALATIANS 2:7-9 But on the contrary, when they [*the 12 apostles*] saw that **the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me [Paul], as the gospel for the circumcised was to Peter** 8 (for He [*Jesus Christ*] who worked effectively **in Peter for the apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me [Paul] toward the Gentiles**), 9 and when **James, Cephas, and John,** who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave **me and Barnabas** the right hand of fellowship, that **we should go to the Gentiles and they to the circumcised.**

CONCLUSION

There were only ever thirteen apostles with the full set of qualifications and requirements and who received their appointment and selection directly from God the Father and Jesus Christ along with the requisite power and authority. Anyone claiming to be an apostle today is speaking heresy or is a false christ.

However, Jesus Christ is the head Apostle so **there was a total of 14 apostles.** Fourteen is a significant number that points to The Christ—the three groups of 14 in the lineage of Jesus Christ¹⁶ and the date of the Passover sacrifice (Nisan 14). It is also an indication that there are no other apostles after them.

May God's grace and peace be upon you!

Steven Greene

<https://sabbathreflections.org>
sabbathreflections@gmail.com

¹⁴ Also 1 Pet. 1:1.

¹⁵ Also 1 Tim. 2:7; 2 Tim. 1:11.

¹⁶ Matt 1; Luke 3.