

## **The Twelve Apostles**

### **Lesson 11**

#### **Study Notes**

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**Text: Matthew 28:19-20 & Acts 2:5-11.**

Introduction: We cannot but have a legitimate curiosity as to the doings and ends of many of the apostles who made such an impact upon the world in their own day and generation. What happened to the majority of them beyond their story in the sacred record is lost to us, apart from what we can gather about them from the somewhat vague and shadowy land of tradition and myth. Eusebius, the church historian around the third century, said that, "The apostles and disciples of the Savior scattered over the whole world, preached the Gospel everywhere," and the enumeration of the countries represented at the Day of Pentecost should be borne in mind in the traditional record of post-New Testament history. The countries mentioned cover broadly the region occupied by the Jewish Dispersion, and that therefore to which the apostles first directed their labors.

We should keep in mind in this lecture much of what will be discussed is from tradition and the writings of early church historians. The Scriptures are silent as to how these men died; but one thing we certainly can be sure of and that is they gave the world a great gift by spreading and preaching the gospel of Jesus Christ.

#### **Andrew:**

Early tradition says that he went to the land of cannibals, located on the southern coast of the Black Sea, inhabited by pirates. He also figures as a missionary to Russia, and as the Patron Saint of Scotland.

Briefly, the story of his martyrdom runs like this: The wife of the governor was converted through the preaching of Andrew, and blind with rage and jealousy, after doing his utmost to tear his wife away from the new faith, the governor ordered the apostle to be cruelly crucified on a cross decussate in form, that is, in the shape of the letter 'X' - where he hung alive for two days exhorting the people all through his agony to be constant and faithful to the truth.

#### **Barnabas:**

Although Scripture references to Barnabas cease with his sad parting from Paul after their quarrel over John Mark, and his return to his native island of Cyprus, there are differing traditions as to his further labors and death.

Some early legends affirm that he was stoned to death by Jews at Salonica. Yet other sources relate that Barnabas, the man of Cyprus, returning to his much-loved island, remained and found a grave there. Wherever he was buried we lay our ivy wreath with the hope that his memory in the Christian world will ever remain an inspiration.

#### **Bartholomew:**

As already indicated in our coverage of this apostle, he is likewise the Nathanael Christ met under the fig tree. Eusebius in his Church History relates that when Pantaenus of Alexandria, a philosopher renowned for his wisdom, visited India in the second century he found there a Hebrew copy of The Gospel

According to Matthew, which had been left behind by Bartholomew who had preached the Gospel through the Asian Ethiopia. This apostle is also said to have ministered in Parthia, Lycaonia and Greater Armenia. He is traditionally said to have been crucified with his head downwards, or flayed to death at Albanopolis or Urbanopolis in Armenia.

#### **James, Son of Alphaeus:**

Some ancient writers affirm that he did a great work in Spain, others in Britain and Ireland where he planted Christianity and appointed a few select disciples to perfect what he had begun, and then returned to Jerusalem, where he had a popedom over the whole Christian Church. A late legend of martyrdom in Persia has no authenticity.

#### **James, Son of Zebedee:**

James, his bold reproof of the Jews, and his vigorous defense of the Christian faith brought James under the wrath of Herod Agrippa, son of Aristobulus, who had the apostle arrested and cast into prison. Sentence of death was passed upon him and on the way to the place of martyrdom, the officer who had guarded James was so impressed by the mighty courage and constancy he displayed, that he repented of his sin and fell down at the apostle's feet, and begged pardon for the part he had played in the rough treatment he had accorded James. The apostle raised up the officer, embraced and kissed him, saying "Peace, my son, peace be to thee, and the pardon of thy faults." Immediately transformed, the officer publicly confessed his surrender to Christ, and was beheaded along with James.

#### **James, The Lord's Brother:**

According to a canonical tradition, James was surnamed the Just, and was a Nazarite from his mother's womb, abstaining from strong drink and animal food, and wearing linen. It is said that he was always kneeling in instruction for the people so that his knees were calloused like a camel's. He was cruelly martyred by the Scribes and Pharisees. Finding him at the southeast angle of the temple wall, where the pinnacle of the temple stood, his foes cast him down into the valley (See Matt. 4:5; Luke 4:9). He fell near the workshop of the fullers who carried on their trade there, and they, finding him there still alive, beat him to death with their clubs.

#### **John:**

A legend widely circulated was the one stating that while in Rome, John was thrown into a cauldron of boiling oil, which was one of the cruel deaths to which Christians of that time were subjected. This legend is known as St. John before the Latin Gate, that is, the outer gate leading to Latium, where he was cast, by order of Domitian, into the boiling oil. But God preserved his servant for he suffered no torture and found the burning oil a refreshing bath in which he seemed to renew his youth. Domitian seeing John come forth full of life and strength attributed his deliverance to magic, but nevertheless was so far restrained by fear of the faith which had sustained his victim that he dared not inflict any further sufferings on the apostle, but banished him to Patmos, where he remained until the Emperor's death, when he returned to Ephesus.

The most pleasing and plausible and probable tradition regarding the final days of John is that which affirms that he was carried to and from the Lord's Day services shortly before he died, being so feeble

because of his 100 years that all he could do was to say the closing word to his disciples, "Little children, love one another." Thus, he died, naturally, in the expectation of eternal blessedness, and was buried in Ephesus.

#### **Judas Iscariot:**

There is no need to linger over the sad ending of this disappointing apostle, seeing the Bible fully describes his terrible deed and tragic death. It is interesting to note that the phrase Peter used as to the manner of the betrayer's death, "All his bowels gushed out" (Acts 1: 18) is the Hebraic equivalent of our modern phrase, "broke his heart." His was the only suicide's grave among the apostles.

#### **Matthew:**

It is generally supposed that for eight years after the ascension of Christ, Matthew preached the Gospel in Judaea. He gave us the Book of Matthew in the New Testament.

Socrates, the ecclesiastical historian of the fourth century, speaks of Matthew preaching in Ethiopia and Arabia. From other sources it is said that he labored first in the Syrian colony established at Palmyra, or Tadmor, in the wilderness between Damascus and the Euphrates, and that he passed eastward to the Median people of Carenania. Another tradition takes him to labor with Andrew among the man eaters on the coast of the Black Sea.

As to his death, an ancient writer affirms that he suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia, being slain by the sword.

#### **Matthias:**

Of Matthias, appointed to take the place in the apostolate which Judas vacated, nothing authentic is known, apart from his brief and only appearance before Pentecost.

He is supposed to have worked first in Judaea and lastly in Cappadocia, where, amid a wild and barbarous community, he was stoned and then beheaded about A.D. 61 or 64.

#### **Paul:**

Being "in deaths oft," Paul anticipated the end of his earthly sojourn. Sentences like, "I have finished my course"; "I am now ready to be offered"; "To die is gain"; "We that are in this tabernacle do groan," indicate that the apostle was under no delusion as to the nearness of his decease and possible martyrdom.

we are certain that the apostle died in Rome about the summer of A.D. 68. Tradition has always been clear that he was beheaded in the reign of Nero, and that Nero himself met his end in June of the same year. Surely there was never in all history a more striking contrast to be found than that between Paul, the condemned criminal, and Nero, the judge whose character was stained with unspeakable crimes. Nero was clothed in imperial purple, and as king of the then known world with unlimited power, had incense offered to him on a thousand altars. Condemned by Nero, Paul the aged would be fettered, dressed in rags, despised, and perhaps not considered important enough to be brought into the august

presence of the Emperor, and finally led out of the city to a martyrdom of which no record has been kept.

**Peter:**

Another legend concerns Peter's wife who was said to have been the daughter of Aristobulus, and to have been martyred first. As she was led forth, Peter called to her by name and comforted her with the words, "Remember the Lord," and rejoiced exceedingly that his dear one was called to so great an honor and was now on her way to see the King in His beauty. Between husband and wife there had been agreement in those things that had been dearest to them; now their mutual devotion to Christ was seen in their death for His dear sake.

The legend which Origen mentions that Peter was crucified head downward. When he was brought to the cross, he made the request, "Not with my head up: My Master died that way! Crucify me head downward. I die for my Lord: but I am not worthy to die like Him." In this way he made amends for the memory of his fall and denial.

**Philip:**

Tradition tells us that he went to Phrygia with his old companion Bartholomew or Nathanael, and also accompanied by his devoted sister, Mariamne, who became conspicuous in the distribution of food to the needy. These three went on to Asia Minor, and then to Hierapolis, a city devoted to the idolatry of a gigantic serpent, possibly in memory of that infamous act of Jupiter who, in the shape of a dragon, was worshipped.

As to the mode of his actual death one tradition says that Philip died from natural causes; according to another tradition he was crucified. Yet another says that he was executed. When he rebuked the Phrygians for the solemn veneration accorded to such an odious creature as a serpent, many repented of their idolatry and became Christians. But the city magistrates seized the apostle, severely whipped and scourged him and cast him into prison. Later he was brought out, and hanged by the neck against a pillar. As Philip was being executed the earth suddenly quaked and when it seemed as if the people present were in danger of being swallowed up alive, they bewailed the evident act of divine vengeance upon their idolatry and repented, and immediately the earth closed. The tradition goes on to say that Bartholomew took down the bodies of Philip and Mariamne, Philip's sister, and he buried them, and exhorting the people to remain true to Christ, departed from the city.

**Simon the Zealot:**

Eusebius in his Church History, however, names Simon Zelotes as one of the apostolic missionaries who "passed beyond the Ocean to the isles called the Britannia Isles." After preaching in Egypt and Africa, Simon at last penetrated beyond the Mediterranean Sea, and landed upon the English shore, and his soul was filled with peace at the mission awaiting him among the tribes there. As to the end of Simon, according to the apocryphal Passion of Simon and Jude, after preaching the Gospel in Egypt, Simon joined Judas, or Thaddaeus, in Persia where both were martyred, Simon being sawn asunder, as some saints were (Heb. 11: 37).

**Thaddaeus:**

Most of the early tradition regarding Lebbaeus Thaddaeus suggests that a few years after Pentecost, he took the gospel north, to Edessa, a royal city of Mesopotamia, in the region of Turkey today. There are numerous ancient accounts of how he healed the king of Edessa, a man named Abgar. In the fourth century, Eusebius the historian said the archives at Edessa (now destroyed) contained full records of Thaddaeus's visit and the healing of Abgar.

The traditional apostolic symbol of Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus is a club, because tradition says he was clubbed to death for his faith.

**Thomas:**

Tradition says that the Savior appeared to Thomas in a night vision and said unto him, "Fear not, Thomas, go thou unto India, and preach the Word there, for My grace is with thee."

As to his death, Thomas' career ended on the Indian coast near Bombay, where he was martyred by a lance thrust through his body while he was kneeling in prayer.