

Apostles: Ministry & Martyrdom

A. Apostles Ministry: Global Witnesses

1. Witnesses: Fulfillment of the Great Commission [Acts 1:8]

Was Judas Iscariot an Apostle? [Matt. 10:2-4; Luke 6:13-16; Luke 22:14-21; Acts 1:25]

a. **Matthew** [Like John Newton, the chief of sinners receives Amazing Grace]

Call of Matthew (Levi) Luke 5:27-32 – 1st Century Negative View of a Publican

“Matthew, who had at first preached to the Hebrews, when he was about to go to other peoples, committed his Gospel to writing in his native tongue.” [Eusebius]

Like John Bunyan, Matthew was hindered in his obedience to God’s command to “Go into all the world and preach the gospel” by God’s higher calling of writing for future generations and eternity.

“You can’t take it with you” – Writings: A Long-lasting Legacy

The Gospel of Matthew is this apostle’s greatest Legacy.

b. **Mark** [Gospel of the Second Chance]

See Acts 12:25; 13:5; 14:19; 15:37-40; Col. 4:10-11; Philemon 24; 2 Tim. 4:11

1 Peter 5:13 – “The church that is at Babylon, elected together with you, saluteth you; and so doth Marcus my son.” [See also Acts 12:12-13 – Peter escapes to house of Mark’s mother]

Papias of Hierapolis conducted extensive interviews with those who had known the apostles:

“If, then, anyone came, who had been a follower of the apostles, I questioned him in regard to the words of these elders – what Andrew or what Peter said, or what was said by Philip, or by Thomas, or by James, or by John, or by Matthew, or by any other of the disciples of the Lord ... For I did not think that what was to be gotten from the books would profit me as much as what came from the living and abiding voices.”

“Mark, having become the interpreter of Peter, wrote down accurately, whatsoever [Peter] remembered of the things said or done by Christ. For [Mark] neither heard the Lord nor followed him, but afterward, as I said, he followed Peter, so that Mark committed no error while he thus wrote some things as [Peter] remembered them. For [Mark] was careful of one thing, not to omit any of the things which he had heard, and not to state any of them falsely.” [Eusebius]

Early Church Fathers connect Mark with Peter in Rome [Roman coin, 12:42; centurion, 15:39]
Colossians 4:10-11 and Philemon 24 indicate that Mark was in Rome at the same time as Peter and Paul.
Irenaeus: Mark bequeathed a written gospel to later generations after the “living voice” of Peter ceased.
Church of Alexandria, Egypt claimed Mark as founder to give it “status” [Legend]

Early Church and Search for Apostolic Relics
[Promote Church Status and Scriptural Confirmation]

Ancient Practice [Gen. 50:2 cf. Exodus 13:19; Num. 21:9 cf. 2 K. 18:4; 2 K 13:21 – Elisha’s bones]

But Unnecessary - Our Faith increases as we read the Word of God, not by spectacular events. [1 Kings 19:11-12 (*still small voice*); Luke 16:29-31 (Moses and the prophets); Rom. 10:17 (Word of God)]

Most claims to the bodies of the Apostles are Legend

In Rome (close to Pope’s cathedral) *Basilica of the Holy Cross in Jerusalem*

Helena, pious mother of Emperor Constantine, journeyed to Jerusalem and surrounding area in search of Christian Relics [c. 326-328 AD]

Helena’s Discoveries (?): 3 crosses, a “miracle” revealed which one was the “Holy Cross”, a portion of the sign that hung above Jesus’s head, two briers from His crown of thorns, one of the nails that pierced His body, the crooked skeletal finger bone believed to be that of doubting Thomas which he placed into Jesus’s wounds, the holy tunic, the staircase from Pilate’s palace, and Jesus’s holy crib or manger.

Perplexity [Encyclopedia Britannica]: “*By the medieval era, so many fragments of Christ’s cross were distributed and venerated across Europe that skeptics, famously John Calvin, mocked that the accumulated wood would fill a ship.*”

c. **Peter** [Apostle of Inconsistent Character]

Like us, Peter, often failing, but still used by God [Matt. 16:16; Eph. 2:20; 1 Peter 2:2-9]

Not the First Pope

John Broadus *Commentary on Matthew*, Five “Pope” Requirements, all without Scriptural evidence:

It must be shown that Peter *alone* was to be the founder of Christianity.

It must be shown that Peter was vicegerent [a Sovereign’s personal delegate] of God and the sovereign of all Christians.

It must be shown that this supposed authority of Peter’s was *transmissible*.

It must be shown that Peter lived and died at Rome [Possibly true, but of Paul as well]

It must be shown that Peter’s supposed transmissible authority was actually transmitted to the leading official of the church at Rome.

We hesitate to teach on Holy Spirit, Mary, and Peter because of extreme teaching on each from others.

If we glorify Peter we think we support Roman Catholicism; if we minimize Peter, we ignore his Apostleship and *Authorship* of God-inspired Epistles.

(1) His Successes

Matt. 10:2 – “Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter.”

Luke 5:5 – “Master, we have toiled all the night and have taken nothing; nevertheless, at thy word I will let down the net.”

Matt. 14:28-29 – By Faith temporarily walked on water Matt. 16:16 – “Thou art the Christ, the son of the living God.”

Acts 2:14; Acts 3:6 – Spokesman for the Twelve Acts 2 – Preacher of Pentecost [3000 saved]

Acts 3:6 – Performed miracles in the name of Jesus Acts 4:8-13 – Spirit-filled Boldness

Acts 10:34-35 – Peter preached God’s message to the Gentiles and united them with Jews

(2) His Failures

Matt. 16:17-18, 23 – “Blessed are thou, Simon Barjona” [and later] “Peter, get thee behind me, Satan”

Matt. 16:21-23; Luke 9:30-33; John 18:10 – He often acted and spoke without thinking

Matt. 26:31-35 – In the flesh, Peter promised he would die with Christ, but failed under pressure

(3) His Final Chapter

Peter makes a speech at the Jerusalem council (Acts 15) and is never mentioned again.

Peter visits Antioch where he had a dispute with Paul about Jewish law (Gal. 2:11-14)

Peter ministered around the Mediterranean, especially Jerusalem (Acts 9:32 – *all quarters*)

Peter most likely ministered and wrote his two epistles from Rome.

(4) His Example: A man like us [Matt. 16:18; Eph. 2:20; 1 Pet. 2:5]

John 21:15-22 [Tendency to Compare: *More than these? What is that to you? Follow me!*]

(5) Peter: A man who failed in the flesh but succeeded in the Spirit. [1 Pet. 5:5-6]

d. **Luke** [Apostolic Authority] – Paul’s faithful co-worker throughout Acts

2 Timothy 4:11 – “Only Luke is with me” [*Remained with Paul until the end*]

First person narrative – Acts 27:1-28:16 [“we”]

Luke is mentioned by name only 3 times in Scripture [Col. 4:14; 2 Tim. 4:11; Philemon 1:14]

The Beloved Physician [Col. 4:14]

Bible Reference	Medical Diagnosis	Explanation
Luke 4:38	“a great fever”	Greek Doctors in 1st century determined the degree of fever
Luke 6:6	“ <i>right</i> hand”	Anatomical precision not found in other gospels
Luke 8:43-44	“an issue of blood”	Greek Medical term for hemorrhage or chronic bleeding
Luke 13:11	“spirit of infirmity”	Greek <i>astheneia</i> : standard Greek medical word for physical weakness or chronic illness
Luke 14:2	“the dropsy” [fluid retention]	Rare medical diagnosis, rare in literature, unique to Luke
Acts 3:7	“right hand” & “ankle bones”	Precise anatomical terms
Acts 9:18	“scales”	Greek: film shedding from eyes
Acts 12:23	“eaten of worms”	Pathological cause of death [parasites]
Acts 13:11	“a mist and a darkness”	Greek Ophthalmology term for clouding of vision
Acts 28:8	“sick of a fever and of a bloody flux”	Greek for malaria relapses and technical term for dysentery – very Hippocratic

Irenaeus: Luke was “inseparable from Paul”; was his “fellow-laborer in the gospel”; and was “always attached to and inseparable from him.”

Tertullian: “Of the apostles, therefore, John and Matthew first instill faith into us; whilst of apostolic men [Apostolic Authority], Luke and Mark renew it afterwards [confirm it as well].”

Luke gave us approximately 25% of our New Testament

The *Anti-Marcionite Prologue to Luke* places Luke in Thebes, Greece where he most likely died in the first century when special ecclesial burials were not given to Christians. [Grade B-]

e. **Paul** [Beyond Acts 28]

(1) Paul eventually came to Rome [c. 60 AD]

(2) His desire was to reach Spain

Rom. 15:24-25 – “Whensoever I take my journey into Spain, I will come to you (Rome); for I trust to see you in my journey ... But now I go unto Jerusalem to minister unto the saints.”

Litfin: “The ancients viewed Spain as the farthest end of the world. Like most people in Europe until the time of Christopher Columbus, the Romans considered the Atlantic Ocean to stretch away from Spain’s western coast into the vast unknown.” [AA, p. 165]

Romans 15:20-21 – “Yea, so have I strived to preach the gospel, not where Christ was named, lest I should build upon another man’s foundation; But as it is written, **To whom he was not spoken of, they shall see; and they that have not heard shall understand.**”

Acts 13:47 – “For so hath the Lord commanded us, saying, I have set thee to be a light of the Gentiles, that thou shouldest be for salvation **unto the ends of the earth.**”

Isaiah 66:19 – “And I will set a sign among them, that I will send those that escape of them unto the nations, to Tarshish” [*Tarshish = Tartessos on the Atlantic coast of Spain*]- cf. Jonah’s extreme fleeing

(3) Evidently Paul’s ministry in Spain was brief without establishing a church

Clement of Rome – “After preaching both in the east and west, (Paul) gained the illustrious reputation due to his faith, having taught righteousness to the whole world, and come to the extreme limit of the west and suffered martyrdom under the prefects.” [ANF, vol. 1, *First Epistle of Clement* 5]

(4) Paul returned to the Aegean area, ministered, imprisoned, wrote epistles, and foresaw his martyrdom after house arrest in Rome. [2 Tim. 1:15-18, 4:6-11]

(5) The man to whom Paul had appealed was a depraved lunatic, Nero. Since Nero was obsessed with *imperial majesty*, Paul was condemned, most likely, for injury to the imperial majesty and found guilty of the crime of high treason.