

Appendix: Apostles' Hebrew Heritage

All serious Bible students realizes that Jesus was a Hebrew, living in Judea. Jesus was throughly 'Jewish'¹ having been born into a Torah observant family but few really take seriously how pervasive that truth really is. Likewise, the men he called to follow him were also Torah Observant Judean men, throughly Jewish in every sense of the term.

Following is a listing of Jesus' apostles and all that is known about them.²

1. Peter: (Greek: Petros meaning 'Rock') – Peter was one of the most prominent of the 12 disciples, a natural spokesperson and the leader of the early Christian church. His original Hebrew name was Simon, a common popular Hebrew name. Jesus gave him a name 'Kephas', Aramaic name. John translated into it Greek 'Petros' meaning Rock. (John 1:42 – “you will be called Cephas.”) Peter was native of Bethsaida (John 1:44), brother of Andrew, lived in a fishing town, Capernaum. (Mark 1:29) He was fisherman by occupation on the Sea of Galilee. He was married man. (Mark 1:30, 1 Cor 9:5)

2. John: (Meaning – God is gracious) John was originally the disciple of John the baptist (John 1:35), and he was introduced to Jesus in John 1:35-39. He was the brother of James and Son of Zebedee. He lived in Capernaum in Galilee, most probably native of Bethsaida. He was fisherman on the sea of Galilee with his brother and father. (Mark 1:19-20). He was one of the three disciples, closest to Jesus, with others being Peter and James

1 The word 'Jew' in the Bible means a Judean or descendant from a Judean family. Modern Jewry is more a cultural designation than a lineage designation like it was in the first century.

2 Original Source: <http://bibleseo.com/gospels/jesus-disciples-names-meaning-occupation/>

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3. James: (Greek Iakobos – the English word for Jacob meaning Israel or He Who Supplants His Brother). James was son of Zebedee (Mark 4:21), elder brother of John (Mat 17:1), by occupation, fisherman with his brother and father at the sea of Galilee, in partnership with Peter and Andrew. (Luke 5:10). He was the first disciple (apostle) to be martyred. (Acts 12:2)

4. Andrew: (Greek – Andreas, meaning ‘Manly’, man), brother of Simon Peter, son of Jonas, like his brother, lived in Capernaum, fisherman by occupation. Andrew was first a disciple of John the Baptist. He left John to become a disciple of Jesus. Andrew brought his brother, Simon Peter, to Christ and perhaps many others. (John 1:25-42)

5. Philip: (Greek Philippos, meaning ‘Lover of horses’). He was a close friend of Andrew and Peter, a native of Bethsaida (John 1:44). Jesus called Philip near Bethany where John the baptist was preaching. (John 1:43) He persuaded and brought Nathaniel to Jesus. (John 1:45-51)

6. Bartholomew: (Greek – bartholomaios meaning Son of Talmi) He is mentioned in all four lists of the apostles. There is no other reference to him in the New testament. Nothing much is known about him.

7. Thomas: (Greek – Thomas from Aramaic – te’oma meaning ‘twin’) Also called ‘Didymus’ or ‘the Twin’ (John 11:16, 20:24, 21:2). When Jesus appeared to the the apostles after resurrection, Thomas was not present. Later on, when disciples told him, he could not believe them, until Jesus showed himself a week later. (John 20:24-29). His occupation is unknown.

8. Matthew: (Greek – maththaios - meaning ‘gift of Yahweh’) also called ‘levi’ (Mark 2:14, Luke 5:27). He was a tax collector by occupation. Jesus called him to be one of his disciples, when he was at a tax office (Mat 9:9, Mark 2:14). He is ascribed as the author of gospel according to Matthew.

9. James, the son of Alphaeus: one of the apostle of Christ. Nothing much is known about him. When called, he was sitting at a tax booth but it is not know if he was collecting or paying taxes.

10. Thaddaeus: He is mentioned in two of four lists of Jesus' disciples. (Mat 10:3, Mark 3:18). The other two lists is also variously called him Jude of James, Jude Thaddaeus, Judas Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus. Nothing else is known about him apart from his names in two lists.

11. Simon the Zealot³: Another disciple of Jesus. a member of a party later called 'Zealots' (Matthew 10:4, Mark 3:18)

12. Judas Iscariot: The disciple who betrayed Jesus. His last name 'Iscariot' is from Hebrew word 'Ish Keriath' meaning 'a man from Keriath', a place in the south of Judah (Joshua 15:25). He was a treasurer of the group. (John 12:6, 13:29). After his betrayal of Jesus, he was grieved for his actions, and committed suicide. (Matthew 27:5). He is always mentioned last in the list of apostles. Judas was the only non-Galilean having come from Keriath.

This last detail about Judas is very important. Only if Judas is absent, can the apostles be called collectively 'Galileans.' If Judas is present, then they are a mixed group. In Acts 1, Jesus' apostles are gathered as designated as a mixed group by calling them apostles. But when the angels address the group after Jesus' ascension, they call the group 'men of Galilee' indicating that Judas was not in the group at that moment.

The best conclusion that can be drawn is that Judas was witness to the resurrected Christ but left to kill himself sometime before the ascension.

3 - Zealots were a Jewish political group who advocated that Judea should be a sovereign, independent state. Today, we might call them political activists.