

# The Apostles

**Introduction.** The apostles were chosen during the second year of Christ's ministry after He had prayed all night. Although Jesus was surrounded by enemies who were already plotting his death, Christ was more concerned about the future. He chose men to spread the story of redemption to the entire world.

## I. **Prominent Apostles**

### A. Peter.

1. He was picked first, but not because of his excellent qualities. He was a humble fisherman, but he had an impetuous personality.
2. When confronted with Christ he admitted that he was unworthy to even be in Christ's presence.

### B. Matthew.

1. Matthew was a publican. He was not only a tax collector, but he was collecting money for the Roman Empire.
2. Publicans were hated and despised by the Jewish people. They were unethical and corrupt in taking more than even the Romans required in taxes.
3. Publicans were equated with the Gentiles. They were not allowed in the synagogue, and no one associated with them. A publican was not a good choice if Jesus wanted to be popular with the people.

### C. Simon the Zealot.

1. The Zealots were a Jewish patriotic party whose primary desire in life was to see a violent end to the Roman Empire. They often resorted to fanatical violence and assassination in their hatred of the Romans.
2. Christ picked this man to work side by side with Matthew, a publican. Now people on both sides of the issue could find a reason to criticize the group Jesus was assembling.

### D. James and John.

1. These men were fishermen who left their father's fishing business to follow Jesus. They were referred to as "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17).
2. When Christ was rejected by a Samaritan village, James and John asked for fire from heaven to punish them. Jesus told them that He came to save men, not to destroy them (Luke 9:54-56).

## II. **Notable Characteristics**

### A. Prejudice and ignorance.

1. The apostles were astounded that it would be hard for a rich man to enter the kingdom of heaven (Matthew 19:23-25).

2. When they saw a blind man, the apostles asked, "Master, who did sin, this man, or his parents, that he was born blind" (John 9:2)?
- B. Selfish ambition.
1. After the transfiguration, the apostles began to argue about who would be the greatest in the kingdom (Mark 9:33-34).
  2. Matthew 20 and Mark 10 records how the mother of James and John asked the Lord to put her sons in places of power when He came in His kingdom.
  3. During the last supper they were again arguing about who would be the greatest. Jesus washed their feet to teach them about true greatness (John 13:1-17).
- C. Slow to understand.
1. They could not grasp the fact that Jesus would be put to death. The concept of man killing God was too much for them to understand.
  2. Jesus told them many times yet they did not see beyond their own selfish interests (Matthew 16:21; 20:17-19; 26:1-2; Mark 9:31-32).
- D. Willing to follow.
1. These men sincerely believed that Jesus was the Son of God, but their belief was misinformed belief. They left all to follow Christ expecting an earthly kingdom.
  2. Even though they did not understand, they were sometimes sorrowful over what Jesus told them (Matthew 17:22-23).
  3. They were fiercely loyal at times (Matthew 26:34-35). They became servants for life, giving their lives for the cause of Christ.
- E. Appropriate principles.
1. The church today is not made up of senators, millionaires or celebrities. Christ calls everyone regardless of social standing, wealth, power, education or personality.
  2. Christ accepts all who will come. No one is too sinful to be forgiven, and no talent is too small to use. There is useful work for all who will dedicate their lives to Christ.
  3. There is no room for cowards in God's army. Serving the Lord has never been for the weak or faint-hearted (1 Corinthians 16:13, 2 Corinthians 11:22-33).
  4. Even from the beginning there were those who fell away. We must learn from the example of Judas (cf. 1 Corinthians 9:27).

**Conclusion.** The men Christ chose to be His representatives were perhaps not the men that you and I would have selected for such a job. Most people would expect Christ to pick men of power, intelligence, wealth and influence to spread the message. But the men He chose were simple, ignorant, uneducated, superstitious, prejudiced and full of selfish ambition.

**Questions:**

1. Why did Jesus pick these men to be His apostles?
2. What does the word "apostle" mean? What special tools were they given to do their job? Are those powers available to us today?
3. Compare the attitude and character of these men before and after the day of Pentecost. What changed them?
4. What changes do we have to make in our lives when we commit ourselves to Christ?
5. What were some of the good qualities of the early apostles before the coming of the Holy Spirit? What characteristics of Andrew and Philip should we have (John 1:40-41, 45)? What characteristic of Nathaniel should we cultivate (John 1:46-49)?
6. Did the disciples love Jesus? Why did they flee after He was arrested?