

History is His Story

Jesus gave the disciples the Great Commission to spread the story of salvation to the ends of the earth. Here are some legends and speculations about some of the lesser known disciples and where they went with the gospel message.

Phillip Baptized the Eunuch of Ethiopia, and a certain Phillip went to Carthage and started a church. Scholars debate about whether this is Phillip the Apostle or Phillip who waited tables in Jerusalem, a Hellenistic Jew. Later this Phillip went to Herapolis, Phrygia (N. Central Turkey) and teamed up with **Nathaniel Bartholomew**. They converted the wife of the Roman Governor against his wishes. The Governor had them seized and crucified upside down. But a crowd begged for mercy and Bartholomew was cut down off his cross but Phillip expired as they cut him down. While it's unknown if this was the disciple Phillip, it is known that these were very early church centers. Galatia, province of the Phrygians, was where Paul also planted several churches. These Asia Minor churches struggled with Gnosticism, a Persian/Greek cult which insisted that there was secret knowledge needed to be a Christian, not just faith, and they published many alternate gospels full of these crank notions.

Simon the Zealot headed east to Persia and joined Nathaniel Bartholomew. They witnessed effectively but got into a power struggle with two magicians who had a vendetta against Christians. When Simon and Bartholomew exposed the trickery of the magicians the fakers were seized. But the disciples asked the king for mercy for them, whereupon the magicians turned on the two disciples and killed them. What irony that Nathaniel, the skeptic, wound up seeing conversions and miraculous escapes in Armenia, Phrygia, and Persia before he died.

Andrew also went north into Asia Minor, then went to Greece. Across the Black Sea he preached in Georgia and Ukraine which was wild and barbaric. While these areas were unfertile, he came back by way of Roman Province Dacia (Romania) and in Greece began to have a profound effect. By tradition, Andrew was thought to be very fluent in Greek and functioned as a partial interpreter for Jesus with the Greeks he met in the Decapolis region. He'd learned Greek by being the guy who sold the fish he and Peter caught at market. His mission and fate began when he healed a proconsul's wife. But then she converted to Christianity and left her husband which made him angry. The proconsul rounded up Andrew and some other Christians, crucified him on a cross shaped like an X. Andrew even shared the gospel to the crowd as he hung there, many of whom came to faith. They began weeping and demanding that the soldiers take Andrew down. Finally the proconsul complied but Andrew died as they were taking him down from his cross. This story was so oft-repeated in 1st century Greece it was commented upon by several writers. It also illustrates that the Romans flogged those who were crucified so badly that they usually bled to death. This was so there was no escape for the condemned even if the guards be over-run by another army and the victims cut down from the cross.

Andrew's bro, **Peter** stayed in Jerusalem for awhile. Though a leader in the early church, he was illiterate. John Mark penned his gospel, the first book chronologically in our New Testament. But the Assyrian church of Iraq claims he came to them in the first Century and this may be a fact. Peter writes one of his epistles from "Babylon" which could have logically Babylon (or perhaps Rome). He then went to Rome and encountered terrific conflict between Romans and the Christians. Fleeing the city, he is said to have had a vision and met Jesus coming in the other direction. When he asked where his Lord was going, Jesus says it is to be crucified again and take your place. Peter paused, turned around and went back to Rome where he was taken captive and crucified upside down. Peter's understudy, **Mark**, it is well-documented, went to Alexandria, preached the gospel, and was martyred.

James the Lesser (short James) went to Syria but was captured at one point. When he returned to Jerusalem he was killed. Tradition has it that **James the Greater** went to Iberia (Spain). He had little fortune in getting converts, just 9. But as he was leaving he saw a vision of Virgin Mary telling him that the mission would grow. He went back to Jerusalem, was seized by Herod Agrippa and beheaded. And it seems that someone surely did visit far northwestern Iberia in the first century and plant the seed. Some others have speculated that this is where Paul went after being sent to Rome. That is, his trial was dismissed and he did a 4th journey about 62 AD. Or, Paul may have been granted a leave to travel to Spain.

Matthias replaced Judas and became a great preacher who was eventually tortured and beheaded in Jerusalem. **John**, youngest disciples, thought to have been only about age 15 at the time of Jesus' death, stayed in Jerusalem until very late when most other apostles had died. About 80 AD he penned his gospel. We know from the simple Greek it was written in, he was no scholar--definitely his 2nd

language—yet considered some of the most beautiful simple Greek ever written. Thereafter he settled in Ephesus. But the Romans arrested and nearly beat him to death on a road. They exiled him to the Isle of Patmos where he penned Revelation between 90 and 96 AD. When he was released, he became the only disciple to die a natural death.