

Acts 1:12-14

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The disciples return to Jerusalem and wait. The eleven apostles are there, as are the women who had closely followed Jesus, and His mother Mary, and His half-brothers.

Jesus, in His resurrected body, returned to Heaven. His last instruction to His disciples was to wait in Jerusalem for the sending of the Holy Spirit.

So they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, also called the Mount of Olives. The Mount of Olives was a place of great importance in Jesus's ministry. It stands between Jerusalem and Bethany and Jesus would cross over it many times when He visited Jerusalem. On the Mount, He taught His disciples about His second coming and the tribulation (Matthew 24). From the descent of the Mount, He made His triumphal entry into Jerusalem on the back of a donkey (Luke 19:30). After His last supper, Jesus went to the Garden of Gethsemane near the base of the Mount and prayed, was betrayed, and arrested. It was where He ascended from the earthly plane to the heavenly plane (Acts 1:9). It is likely the place where He will initially return when He comes a second time (Zechariah 14:4).

The Mount of Olives is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath's journey away. A Sabbath's journey is traditionally regarded to mean 2000 cubits, or about two thirds of a mile. It means that the disciples did not have to walk far to return to Jerusalem, the idea being that on the Sabbath, the Jews were not supposed to travel far or work, to observe it as a day of rest. Mount Olivet is outside of Jerusalem's eastern gate, so the disciples returned from the mountain into the city. There, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas the son of James.

Here the eleven remaining apostles are named. Judas Iscariot is not among them. He took his own life soon after betraying Jesus. But the remaining apostles gathered together, united even though their Lord was now gone from them.

Peter is the most prominent disciple. He is one of the main figures in the Gospels and for the first half of Acts. His name given at birth was Simon, but Jesus gives him the new name Peter (Greek, "Petros," which means "stone"). Peter was the first to publicly confess Jesus as the Messiah and the Son of God (Matthew 16:16). He was part of Jesus's inner circle (along with James and John), and saw Jesus be briefly glorified on the Mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). After His resurrection, Jesus asked Peter to tend and shepherd His sheep (believers in Jesus) because of his love for Him. He is the brother of Andrew, another one of the eleven disciples. Peter would be the mouthpiece for God in bringing many to belief in Jesus, as will soon be seen in the early chapters of Acts.

John wrote the Gospel of John. He identifies himself as the "disciple whom Jesus loved." He was the brother of James, the son of Zebedee. He too witnessed Jesus's transfiguration and the

appearance of Elijah and Moses who spoke with Christ there (Matthew 17:2). He would go on to write three epistles (1, 2, and 3 John). He would also witness the great vision from Jesus of the end of days and the coming kingdom, which he wrote down as the book of Revelation.

James was *John's* brother, both were the sons of Zebedee. He and John and Peter were the only ones who witnessed Jesus's transfiguration (Matthew 17:2). That same inner circle trio were the only ones allowed to see Jesus resurrect Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37). James and John were both given nicknames by Jesus, who called them "Sons of Thunder," probably due to their passion and outspokenness. At one point in Jesus's ministry, when He was rejected by a village of Samaritans, *James* and *John* asked Jesus, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" (Luke 9:54). They were brothers who were fiercely loyal to Jesus, Sons of Thunder. James will be the first apostle executed for his faith (Acts 12:2).

Andrew was the brother of *Peter*. He was a fisherman like his brother. Originally he was a disciple of John the Baptizer, and then left John to follow Jesus (John 1:40). *Andrew* told his brother *Peter* that he had found the Messiah, and led *Peter* to Jesus.

Matthew (also called Levi) was a Jewish tax collector. While at work in his tax booth, he was called by Jesus to follow Him, and Matthew obeyed (Matthew 9:9). He held a great feast for Jesus at his house, and then followed Him all over Israel during His three-year ministry. He also wrote the Gospel of Matthew.

Thomas is best known as Doubting Thomas, for he was not with the other disciples when the resurrected Jesus appeared to them, and so he disbelieved that Christ had returned to life. Only by feeling the physical wounds from His crucifixion would Thomas believe. Jesus appeared to Thomas and showed him the nail-marks on His hands and the scar on His side, calling Thomas to believe (John 20:24-29). But Thomas also exhibited courage and loyalty to the Lord. Before Jesus's arrest, when they were journeying near to Jerusalem where anti-Jesus sentiments were at their boiling point, the disciples wanted to stay away from the city. But Thomas rallied them, "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him" (John 11:16).

Bartholomew, also called Nathanael, was sitting beneath a fig tree when first told about Jesus of Nazareth's ministry by *Philip*. *Bartholomew* scoffed at the idea that anything good could come from Nazareth. But when Jesus met Bartholomew, He complimented the man, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit!" (John 1:47), which is like saying, "This is an honest man." Bartholomew wondered how Jesus knew him, to which Jesus explained, "Before Philip called you, when you were under the fig tree, I saw you." Bartholomew immediately recognized who Jesus was, "You are the Son of God; You are the King of Israel" (John 1:48-49).

James the son of Alphaeus, *Simon the Zealot*, and *Judas the son of James* have no notable moments associated with their names in scripture, except for one or two questions asked of Jesus which were attributed to them (John 14:22). *Simon the Zealot* apparently was an insurrectionist against the Roman Empire at some point before following Jesus; this was the goal of the Zealot party. Despite very little information about them in scripture, we know that since these men were chosen by Jesus to be His apostles, they evidently were devoted followers of the Lord's, or they became so after He chose them. We know they and the other apostles healed people of sickness

and demon possession. At one point during His ministry, Jesus sent every apostle out on mission with the authority over “unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness” (Matthew 10:1). He commanded the apostles to preach the Kingdom of Heaven to the Jewish people, to “Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, cast out demons” (Matthew 10:7-8).

These eleven men had served and suffered with Jesus. They learned from Him and were empowered to work miracles as they preached of the coming Kingdom and its King, the Son of God. Now they were to wait for the Holy Spirit to arrive, so that they could preach to the entire world about Jesus’s death and resurrection, that belief in Him brought the gift of eternal life with God, and the forgiveness of all sin.

Luke tells us that *These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with the women, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.*

The *women* were likely Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna, and others who followed Jesus (Luke 24:10). Mary Magdalene was a faithful disciple of Christ’s after He healed her from possession by seven demons, and apparently Jesus’ largest financial supporter (Luke 8:1-3). She was also the first person to see Jesus after He resurrected (John 20:16) *Mary the mother of Jesus* was among them, as they prayed. She had witnessed her son’s crucifixion personally. As He died, Jesus gave the responsibility of taking care of her to His disciple John (John 19:26-27).

Also attending this group were *His brothers*. Jesus’s *brothers* included Jude and James (Mark 6:3, Jude 1:1), who had once scorned Jesus for His ministry and did not believe in Him (John 7:3-5). Yet now they were devoted to following Christ, and were also praying and waiting. James would become a strong leader of the Jerusalem church. We will see him take an important stand supporting Paul’s teaching of the gospel of grace in Acts 15. James also wrote the earliest epistle to the church abroad (James 1:1). Jude would write his own epistle as well (Jude 1:1).

All waited for the coming of the Holy Spirit, as Jesus had instructed. Then their ministry would begin. They might have waited and prayed for about a week. Jesus ascended after teaching them concerning the kingdom for forty days, Pentecost occurs fifty days after Passover, and Jesus was crucified on Passover, then rose on the third day.

Biblical Text

¹² Then they returned to Jerusalem from the mount called Olivet, which is near Jerusalem, a Sabbath day’s journey away. ¹³ When they had entered *the city*, they went up to the upper room where they were staying; that is, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James *the son of Alphaeus*, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas *the son of James*. ¹⁴ These all with one mind were continually devoting themselves to prayer, along with *the women*, and Mary the mother of Jesus, and with His brothers.