

SESSION THREE

*POST-RESURRECTION
TESTIMONY*

SESSION THREE

POST-RESURRECTION TESTIMONY

I. **THE IMPORTANCE OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE RESURRECTION**

A. **What is an Apostle? (Matthew 28:19-20; Acts 6:1)**

1. Qualifications of an Apostle
 - a. Greek for “one who is sent”
 - b. Given authority by the one who sent him
 - c. First-hand knowledge of the Savior
 - d. All apostles were also disciples
2. Qualifications of a Disciple
 - a. Every person who believes in Jesus¹
3. Differences between Apostles and Disciples

B. **Who were the Apostles? (Matthew 10:1-4, Mark 3:14, Acts 26:14-18)**

1. Simon (Peter)
2. Andrew (brother of Peter)
3. James (son of Zebedee)
4. John (brother of James; son of Zebedee)
5. Philip
6. Bartholomew
7. Thomas
8. Matthew (tax collector)
9. James (son of Alphaeus)
10. Thaddaeus (Jude)
11. Simon the Zealot

12. Judas Iscariot* (betrayed)
13. Matthias (replaced Judas)
14. James (brother of Jesus)
15. Paul

Who is James?

Son of Zebedee (Brother of John)	Son of Alphaeus	Brother of Jesus	Father of Jude the Apostle
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • “Sons of thunder” • Jesus’ “inner circle” • “The Great” (older or taller) likely to distinguish “the Lesser” • Martyred 42 AD by sword (Acts 12:2) • 21 ref in NT • Fisherman 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 10 references in NT • “The lesser” (maybe shorter or younger?) • Little known 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Did not believe during Jesus’ earthly ministry • “The Just” (extreme strictness to the law) • Writer of the book of James • Became one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Little known

C. Why study the Apostles?

1. Their actions reveal important clues about their beliefs.
2. Their influence extends to the apostolic fathers.

D. Traditional Assumptions about the Apostles

1. Questions about traditional assumptions
 - a. Do the apostles’ willingness to suffer and die confirm the *truth of the Resurrection*?
 - b. Do the apostle’s willingness to suffer and die confirm the *depth of their sincerity*?
2. Answers to these questions are important but are only one piece of a larger Resurrection argument.

II. THE FATE OF THE APOSTLES AFTER THE RESURRECTION^{1 2}

A. Martyrdom and the Apostles

1. Definition of a Martyr³
 - a. Testimony results in death
 - b. Death is voluntary
 - c. Refuses to recant their belief
2. Critics claim many die for their belief
 - a. Modern martyrs
 - b. Examples of modern martyrs: Muslim radicals, Buddhist monks.
3. Differences between apostles and modern martyrs

How are the Apostles Different?

Apostles	Other (Muslim radicals and Buddhist monks)
eye witnesses	NOT eye witnesses
NOT received second-hand	received second-hand

4. Critics claim apostles were not given the opportunity to recant
 - a. Don't miss the obvious: The apostles knew the danger when they proclaimed Jesus
 - b. Evidence of the apostles' resurrection faith
 - (1) Paul (1 Corinthians 15:3)
 - (2) Peter (Acts 2:22-24, 37-38)
 - c. There was a consistent resurrection message
 - (1) Earliest creed
 - (2) New Testament writings
 - (3) Apostolic preaching

¹ John Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs, Updated Through the 21st Century*, Harold J Chadwick (ed), Newberry, FL: Bridge-Logos, 2001, 1-8.

² Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

³ Everett Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, Second Edition, Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan Academic, 2013, 81-84.

B. Highest Possible (probability of martyrdom⁴)

1. Peter⁵
 - a. Strong evidence Peter went to Rome
 - b. High probability that Peter was crucified in Rome during the reign of Nero⁶
 - c. Ten sources through the 2nd century about his martyrdom
 - d. Three 1st century sources (John 21:18-19, 2 Peter 1:12-15, 1 Clement 5:1-4)
 - e. Solid historical evidence that Peter was martyred

2. Paul⁷
 - a. Strong evidence that Paul went to Rome
 - b. Eight sources through the 2nd century about his martyrdom
 - c. 2 Timothy 4:6-7, 1 Clement 5:5-7
 - d. Solid historical evidence that Paul was martyred and likely beheaded

3. James (son of Zebedee)⁸
 - a. First apostolic martyr
 - b. Martyred with the sword (Acts 12:2)
 - c. Solid historical evidence that James was martyred

C. Very Probable (probability of martyrdom)

1. James (brother of Jesus)⁹
 - a. Josephus source (Antiquities 93/94)
 - b. Martyred by stoning

D. More Probable than Not (probability of martyrdom)

1. Thomas¹⁰

⁴ Levels of "Probability of Martyrdom" as differentiated in Sean McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, New York: Routledge Taylor & Francis Group, 2008.

⁵ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 55-92.

⁶ Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 4-5.

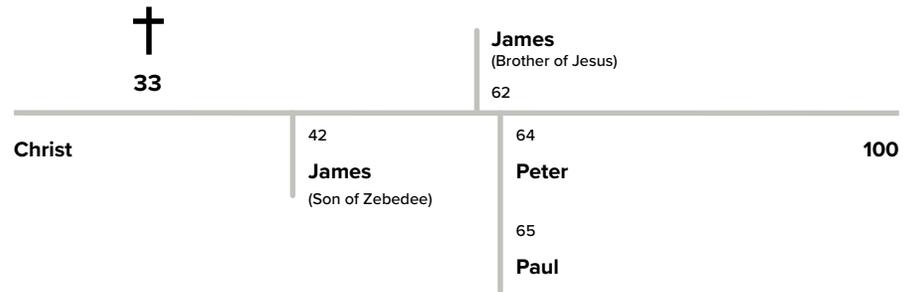
⁷ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 93-114.

⁸ *Ibid.*, 187-192.

⁹ *Ibid.*, 115-134.

¹⁰ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 157-173.

Martyrdom of the Apostles



E. More plausible than not (probability of martyrdom)

1. Andrew¹¹

F. As plausible as not (probability of martyrdom)¹²

1. Philip
2. Bartholomew
3. Matthew
4. James, son of Alphaeus
5. Thaddeus
6. Simon the Zealot
7. Matthias

G. Improbable (probability of martyrdom)

1. John¹³

III. LIFE AND MARTYRDOM OF THE APOSTOLIC FATHERS

A. Characteristics of the Apostolic Fathers¹⁴

1. Highly influenced by the apostles
2. Important link between the apostles and future church
3. Gives important historical insights into the early Christian movement

¹¹ McDowell, *The Fate of the Apostles*, 175-185.

¹² *Ibid.*, 193-257.

¹³ *Ibid.*, 135-156.

¹⁴ Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 49-57.

B. Clement of Rome

1. Disciple of Peter and Paul
2. Letter to the Corinthians (1 Clement)¹⁵
3. Martyred when thrown into the sea with an anchor around his neck

C. Ignatius of Antioch

1. Disciple of John
2. One of the prominent Christians of the time
3. Wrote seven letters on his way to Roman imprisonment and martyrdom¹⁶
4. Examples of Ignatius' writing

Ignatius of Antioch, AD 117

"I write to all the Churches, and impress on them all, that I shall willingly die for God, unless ye hinder me. I beseech of you not to show an unseasonable good-will towards me. Suffer me to become food for the wild beasts, through whose instrumentality it will be granted me to attain to God. I am the wheat of God, and am ground by the teeth of the wild beasts, that I may be found the pure bread of God. Rather entice the wild beasts, that they may become my tomb, and may leave nothing of my body; so that when I have fallen asleep [in death], I may not be found troublesome to any one. Then shall I be a true disciple of Jesus Christ, when the world shall not see so much as my body."¹⁷

"Let fire and the cross; let the crowds of wild beasts; let tearings, breakings, and dislocations of bones; let cutting off of members; let shatterings of the whole body; and let all the dreadful torments of the devil come upon me: only let me attain to Jesus Christ."¹⁸

D. Polycarp of Smyrna

1. Disciple of John
2. Leading second-century Christian
3. Martyred when burned at the stake and stabbed.¹⁹

¹⁵ Hubertus R. Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, Grand Rapids, MI: Baker Publishing, 2007, 47-49.

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 51.

¹⁷ Ignatius of Antioch, "Allow Me to Fall a Prey to the Wild Beasts," Chapter IV, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, Accessed on 7/14/24, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm.

¹⁸ Ignatius of Antioch, "I Desire to Die," Chapter V, *The Epistle of Ignatius to the Romans*, Accessed on 7/14/24, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0107.htm.

¹⁹ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 9.3. Accessed on 7/14/24, www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm.

Proconsul: “Swear, and I will set you at liberty, reproach Christ”.

Polycarp, (155 AD): “Eighty-six years I have served him, and he never once wronged me. How then shall I blaspheme my King who has saved me?”^{20 21 22}

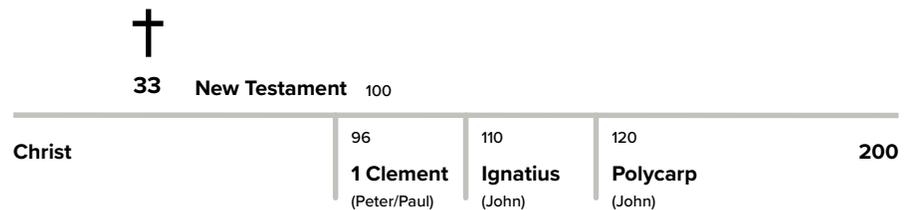
Proconsul: “I will cause you to be consumed by fire, seeing you despise the wild beasts, if you will not repent.”

Polycarp: “You threaten me with fire which burns for an hour, and after a little is extinguished, but are ignorant of the fire of the coming judgment and of eternal punishment, reserved for the ungodly. But why do you tarry? Bring forth what you will.”²³

“The blood of the martyrs was the seed of the church.”

—TERTULLIAN ^{24 25}

Apostolic Fathers



IV. DISCUSSION POINTS REGARDING THE APOSTLES

- A. Christian movement was a resurrection movement from its inception.
- B. The Apostles were the first witnesses to the Resurrection and launched missionary movement from Jerusalem.
- C. Christians were persecuted in the early church.
- D. Although there is minimal early evidence that each of the Apostles died as martyrs, some general claims make their deaths more likely than not.
- E. The Apostles were willing to suffer and die for their faith.
- F. There are no accounts that any of the Apostles recanted their faith.

²⁰ Foxe, *Foxe's Book of Martyrs*, 13-14.

²¹ Drobner, *The Fathers of the Church*, 53.

²² Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 79.

²³ Martyrdom of Polycarp, 11, Accessed on 7/14/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0102.htm>.

²⁴ Tertulian, *Apology*, 50, Accessed on 7/10/24, <https://www.newadvent.org/fathers/0301.htm>.

²⁵ Ferguson, *Church History, Volume I, From Christ to the Pre-Reformation*, 126.

V. **SUMMARY**

- A. An Apostle is one that is “sent out” and has first-hand knowledge of the Savior. Their actions and behaviors following the Resurrection give us important clues to their beliefs. Their willingness to suffer and die confirm the depth of their sincerity.
- B. Martyrdom of the Apostles demonstrates the depth of their sincerity in the Resurrection of Christ. The highest probability of martyrdom was achieved by Peter, Paul, and James (son of Zebedee), and very probably James (brother of Jesus).
- C. The writings and martyrdom of the apostolic fathers reflect the beliefs of the early church. A few of these fathers who died as martyrs include Clement of Rome, Ignatius of Antioch, and Polycarp.

VI. **STUDY QUESTIONS**

A. Describe the actions and behaviors of the Apostles following the Resurrection of Jesus. Why is this important to resurrection belief?

B. Which Apostles were martyred? Explain. How does the martyrdom of the Apostles affect your Resurrection belief today?

C. Explain the difference between modern-day martyrs to that of Christian Apostolic martyrs.

D. Explain the role of the apostolic fathers in our understanding and belief of the resurrection.

