

New Testament Terms

gospels The most important books of the New Testament, which record the “good news” of the ministry, death, and resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ. Their authors are called evangelists. They preserved the teaching of Jesus for the ongoing catechization of the church. [1]

epistles Letters from the apostles to the church and her ministers in various places. These books are an exposition of Jesus’ Word and work in the gospels. [2]

the gospels and Acts The first five books of the New Testament, which are the foundation of the New Testament canon: Matthew, Mark, Luke, John, and Acts. [3]

the epistles of Paul The fourteen New Testament letters of Paul, either written by him or bearing his apostolic “seal of approval” (i.e., Hebrews). They begin and end with two large theological works—the letter to the Romans and the letter to the Hebrews; followed by the letters to churches—1 and 2 Corinthians, Galatians, Ephesians, Philippians, Colossians, 1 and 2 Thessalonians; and the pastoral letters to specific individuals—1 and 2 Timothy, Titus, and Philemon. [4]

the catholic epistles and Revelation The last eight books of the New Testament, written to the church at large by apostles other than Paul, which conclude with the Revelation to St. John: James, 1 and 2 Peter, 1, 2, and 3 John, Jude, and Revelation. [5]

The Ascension of Our Lord The event in Christ’s exaltation, forty days after His resurrection, which marked the beginning of His session at the right hand of God the Father as head over all things for the sake of His church. [6]

the Promise of the Father A phrase used by Jesus that named the Holy Spirit “the promised gift of the Father” to the Twelve. Jesus promised the Twelve: “When the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me” (John 15:26); and, “When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (John 16:13-14). [7]

disciple A believer in Jesus who trusts in His Word. This term also names the Christian a follower, catechumen, or student of Jesus. [8]

witnesses Those who had seen the resurrected Lord Jesus and could give testimony that He was risen from the dead. [9]

apostles The men who were eyewitnesses of Jesus’ resurrection, chosen and “sent out” by Him to speak His Word on His behalf in the world. The church is founded upon their Word. [10]

prophets The Old Testament men of God who were called by Him to preach His Word to the people of Israel and point them to the coming Savior. These men wrote the Old Testament Scriptures by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit. [11]

evangelists Ministers in the New Testament who preached as missionaries throughout the world. The term means “Gospel preacher” and is used of the authors of the four gospels. [12]

the Twelve The name referring to the original number of apostles who were chosen by Jesus to be eyewitnesses of His death and resurrection. This title for the apostles corresponds to the number of the tribes of Israel. [13]

St. Andrew, Apostle He was a disciple of John the Baptist, before John directed him to follow Jesus with the words, “Behold the Lamb of God!” (John 1:36). He was a fisherman by trade, the brother of Peter, and the first disciple called by Jesus. He brought his brother to the Lord Jesus with the words: “We have found the Messiah.” His feast day is 30 November. [14]

St. Thomas, Apostle The apostle who was known as “the Twin” (Didymus). He is known for four sayings recorded in the gospel of John: “Let us also go, that we may die with Him” when Jesus sought to return to Bethany to help Lazarus (John 11:16); “Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?” spoken to Jesus on Maundy Thursday night (John 14:5); “Unless I see in His hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and put my hand into His side, I will not believe” spoken to his fellow disciples when it was reported to him that Jesus had risen from the dead (John 20:25); and “My Lord and my God!” when he finally saw for himself the resurrected Jesus (John 20:28). He is nicknamed “the doubter,” though some question this title. Jesus Himself had promised that the Twelve would be eyewitnesses of His resurrection. His feast day is 21 December. [15]

St. John, Apostle and Evangelist One of the sons of Zebedee and the brother of James the Elder, with whom he shared the nickname “Sons of Thunder” given them by Jesus. He was a fisherman by trade and a disciple of John the Baptist before he was called by Jesus. He is the evangelist who wrote the fourth gospel, in which he refers to himself as “the disciple whom Jesus loved.” He wrote the book of Revelation and three epistles that bear his name. He is the disciple designated by Jesus to care for Mary after Jesus’ death. He is one of the inner circle of three, along with his brother James and Peter, who accompanied Jesus at the transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane. He ran to the tomb of Jesus with Peter on Easter morning. His feast day is 27 December. [16]

St. Matthias, Apostle The man chosen by the casting of lots to fill Judas Iscariot’s apostolic office. He was put forward to be an eyewitness of the resurrection from among those men who had accompanied Jesus and the Twelve from the time of Jesus’ Baptism until His ascension. His feast day is 24 February. [17]

St. Philip and St. James, Apostles The two apostles whose feast day is celebrated together on 1 May. The first of the two had a Greek name, was a disciple of John the Baptist, and brought Nathanael to Jesus with the words, “We have found Him of whom Moses in the law, and also the prophets, wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph....Come and see” (John 1:45-46). He received the request of certain Greeks during Holy Week, “Sir, we wish to see Jesus” (John 12:21). The second of the two was the son of Alphaeus and the brother of Matthew. He is sometimes called “the less” or “the younger.” [18]

St. Peter and St. Paul, Apostles The two most prominent and well-known of all the apostles, whose feast day is celebrated together on 29 June. The first of the two is always the first named in the list of the Twelve. He is noted for his confession concerning Jesus—"You are the Christ, the Son of the living God" (Matthew 16:16), his denial of Jesus in the courtyard of the high priest, his sermon on Pentecost, his vision of the unclean animals concerning the Gospel being preached to the Gentiles, and the authorship of two epistles which bear his name. The second of the two men is not one of the original Twelve, but was the persecutor of the church. He was called to faith and became an eyewitness of the resurrected Lord on the road to Damascus. He was chosen by the Lord to be "the Apostle to the Gentiles." He is the apostle about whom we know the most from the book of Acts and his epistles in the New Testament. [19]

St. James the Elder, Apostle The son of Zebedee, brother of John, and father of Jude (or Judas Labbaeus). He was a fisherman by trade, as were his brother and father. He and his brother John were nicknamed "Sons of Thunder" by Jesus. He is one of the inner circle of three, along with his brother John and Peter, who accompanied Jesus at the transfiguration and in the Garden of Gethsemane. He and John requested to sit at Jesus' right and left hand in His glory. Jesus predicted that they would share in His suffering and that their ministry would be patterned after His sacrificial death (Mark 10:35-45). Herod Agrippa I cut off his head, making him the first of the apostles to be martyred. His feast day is 25 July. [20]

St. Bartholomew, Apostle The name of this apostle occurs only in the listing of the Twelve in the gospels and Acts. Most believe he is also known by the name "Nathanael," from John 1:43-51, who was brought to Jesus by the Apostle Philip. On this occasion Nathanael asked Philip, "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" to which Philip replied, "Come and see." When Jesus saw Nathanael coming toward Him, He said of him, "Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom is no deceit!" Nathanael then confessed, "Rabbi, You are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!" His feast day is 24 August. [21]

St. Matthew, Apostle and Evangelist The brother of James the Less and son of Alphaeus. He is also named "Levi." He was a customs officer or tax collector, otherwise known as a "publican," for the Roman government. After he was called by Jesus, Jesus came into his home and ate with him and other "tax collectors and sinners." When the Pharisees objected, Jesus replied, "Those who are well have no need of a physician, but those who are sick. But go and learn what this means: 'I desire mercy and not sacrifice.' For I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners, to repentance" (Matthew 9:12-13). He is the evangelist and apostle who authored the first gospel. His feast day is 21 September. [22]

St. Simon and St. Jude, Apostles The two apostles whose feast day is celebrated together on 28 October. The first of the two is sometimes called "the Canaanite" or "the Zealot." Apart from his call and listing with the Twelve, there are no other references to him in the New Testament. The second of the two is the son of James the Elder, which makes him the grandson of Zebedee and the nephew of John. He is the other "Judas" in the listing of the Twelve, although he is not generally referred to by that name because of the association with Judas Iscariot. He is also called "Lebbaeus" or "Thaddaeus," which are Hebrew and Aramaic names that mean "one who is close to the heart" or "a beloved one." On Maundy Thursday evening, this disciple asked Jesus the question, "Lord, how is it that You will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world?" Jesus answered him, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our home with him" (John 14:22-23). [23]

Pentecost The day the Holy Spirit was poured out upon the apostles, in order that the Gospel might be proclaimed in all the earth. The signs and wonders associated with this day continued to accompany the ministry of the apostles, just as they accompanied the ministry of Jesus and bore witness to His authority from the Father. This event took place fifty days after the resurrection of our Lord. [24]