

Chapter One: The Apostles - Where Did They Go?

It may seem rather unusual to begin a study of western heritage by introducing a question regarding the Apostles. The omission of the majority of the Apostles in the book of Acts, and where they are found later, provides an important key in the study of our heritage. Knowledgeable Bible students know that the patriarch Jacob had 12 sons. All the descendants of Jacob (whose name was changed to Israel) are known as Israelites. They were the progenitors of the 12 tribes of Israel. As far as Old Testament history is concerned, what is not generally understood is that after the time of King Solomon (1017-978 BC), the 12 tribes of Israel split into two nations. Three of the tribes remained loyal to Rehoboam, Solomon's son, while the others formed their own kingdom north of Jerusalem and chose Jeroboam as their king. From that point of time the two nations were known as the kingdom of Judah and the kingdom of Israel. They were often at war with one another. After three successive invasions by the Assyrians, the kingdom of Israel was vanquished, and the people deported from their land. The fall of the northern kingdom took place around 721-718 BC. At the same time, a large number of Jews were deported. These people never returned to Palestine and historically were lost from sight. Later, the kingdom of Judah was exiled to Babylon, but a number of Jews returned under Ezra and Nehemiah and formed their own nation once again. These are the people to whom Jesus preached. In the gospels they are repeatedly called Jews. What needs to be recognized is this: All Jews are Israelites, but not Israelites are Jews. In much the same way we would say all Californians are Americans, but not all Americans are Californians.

During His ministry Jesus made some striking statements. On one occasion He told His disciples “. . . I am not sent but unto the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 15:24). Certainly Jesus knew the difference between Jews and Israelites. He instructed His disciples, “But go rather to the lost sheep of the house of Israel” (Matt. 10:6). His personal ministry was taken up with the Jews in the land of Judah, but a perplexing question arises with respect to the 12 Apostles. Why are the majority mentioned only briefly in the book of Acts when the book itself takes us through the year AD 61? The commission Jesus gave the Apostles included the Jews in Palestine, but could not have excluded millions of both Jews and Israelites scattered abroad. The book of Acts mentions the original Apostles, but after the first chapter only a few are mentioned again. What happened to these original Apostles? Perhaps the Jewish historian, Josephus, gives us a clue. Josephus said in his day there were only two tribes in subjection to the Romans, and that the ten tribes were located beyond the river Euphrates and could not be estimated as they were such an immense multitude (Ant., XI, v, 2). Clearly, Christ's instruction to His Apostles to go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel was much broader in scope than the environs of Palestine.

We should discard the notion that the world was uncivilized during the early AD period. During the time of the Apostles, the Roman world was a secure place to dwell. It was under the protection of the Roman army. There was one government from Babylon to Calais, and there were roads leading everywhere. Some of these roads still exist today. They were without parallel until the invention of railroads. The Roman world included a vast amount of territory united by language and transportation. Travel was safe and frequent. On these military roads a Roman citizen could travel from Babylon to London with little inconvenience. Notice Paul's epistles, for example. He knew people in Rome even though he had not yet visited there. The book of Acts relates that on the day of Pentecost people attended Jerusalem from all quarters, including the land of the Parthians and Medes. There was little travel restriction in that area of the world.

Communication in the Roman world made possible the rapid expansion of the gospel. All evidence indicates that a large portion of the early British people professed Christianity. A fact that is generally overlooked by modern historians (who maintain that Augustine was the first to preach the gospel in

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England) is that the early British Churches were destroyed by the Angles. Augustine was the first to “convert” the invading Angles to Christianity, after they had killed most of the British Christians (Haberman, 142). The history of the flourishing Celtic Church was buried under the waves of heathen Saxons and Danes, as well as Romish Norman influence. Not until the time of Henry II was this memory recalled (Lewis, 17).

The tradition of Europe repeatedly affirms that Britain was the first country to receive the gospel, the British Church being the most ancient. When Augustine came to convert the pagan Saxons, the British Churches refused to accept him. Their argument was that they could not depart from their ancient customs. The British historian Gildas (AD 516-570) wrote that Christianity was introduced into Britain in AD 38, during the last year of the reign of Tiberius Caesar (Morgan, 63-69). Not until the Council of Pisa (AD 1409) was the pre-eminence of the British Church challenged. The argument during the council was that the churches in France and Spain must yield precedent to the British Church because Joseph of Arimathæa founded it not long after the crucifixion of Christ. The Councils of Constance (1414), Sienna (1424), and Basle (1434) upheld this view. Since the British Church was founded more than 550 years before the time of Augustine, British pre-eminence was taken for granted until 1409. Even as early as the second century AD, Tertullian wrote that the extremities of Spain, parts of Gaul, and the regions of Britain which had never been penetrated by Roman arms had received the religion of Christ. The church historian Eusebius (AD 265-340) said, “The Apostles passed beyond the ocean to the isles called the Britannic Isles.” The venerable Bede (AD 670-735) wrote, “The Britons preserved the faith which they had received, uncorrupted and entire, in peace and tranquility until the time of the Emperor Diocletian” (quoted in Williams, 19, 54-55; Bede, *History of the English Church and People*, bk. 1, chap., 4).

Cardinal Baronius, the distinguished Catholic scholar and curator of the Vatican library, wrote in his *Ecclesiastical Annals* that Joseph of Arimathæa, along with others, was exiled in AD 36. After preaching the gospel in Marseilles, he and his companions went to England (Jowett, 33). William of Malmesbury wrote that Philip sent Joseph of Arimathæa and his companions to England from France, and that they landed in Glastonbury. This was the report of Freculphus, the French bishop of Lisieux, who was born around AD 800 (Lewis, 146). The Talmud tells us that Joseph of Arimathæa was the younger brother of the father of the virgin Mary, that is, her uncle. Some conjecture that Joseph of Arimathæa was involved in the tin trade with Britain. Britain had been the main source of tin for many centuries (Williams, 17-18). Whatever the facts are, the account of Joseph of Arimathæa as founder of the church at Glastonbury was valuable in proving the claim that the British Church was established in Apostolic times, and as such, was less subject to control by Rome (MacDougall, 14). Joseph of Arimathæa was followed by Simon Zelotes, who was martyred; then by Aristobulus, the brother of Barnabas; and then by Paul himself (Morgan, 62, and Lewis, 26).

So, all indications are that the belief Christianity was introduced into England by Augustine is false. This was why the disputes over the control of the British Church were settled in favor of the Britons. The same is true in Ireland. The independent people of Ireland denied that the Roman bishops had authority anywhere outside the Roman Empire. There are no extant facts to support the idea that St. Patrick visited or represented Rome. Nowhere in his writings does he refer to Rome. As late as AD 634, the Churches in Ireland and northern England were independent of the churches on the continent that were subject to the bishoprics within the Roman Empire. In 634, the Britons and Scots said, “All the world errs; Rome and Jerusalem err; only the Scotti and the Britons are right.” Not until Ireland was partly conquered by Henry II of England (AD 1154-1189) was the Church forced to be subject to Rome (Kephart, 423, 429-430). Its history was steeped in the Apostolic tradition.

Reports of the location of the original Apostles persist in tradition. So, that leads back to our original question: What happened to the 12 Apostles?

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From the New Testament account, we see that after his betrayal of Christ, Judas committed suicide. James, the son of Zebedee and brother to John, was martyred around AD 44. These are the only recorded deaths of the original Apostles. Peter was slated for execution and while in prison was miraculously delivered by an angel. After being delivered we read, “. . . And he departed, and went into another place” (Acts 12:17). Josephus, who lived in the early second century, wrote that in his day there was a large Jewish colony in Babylon (Ant., XV, ii, 2). This certainly explains why Peter’s first epistle was written from Babylon (1 Pet. 5:13).

Scholars of the past have not hesitated to show where the original apostles traveled. Socrates Scholasticus in his Ecclesiastical Historie, states that the Apostles sorted themselves to travel to certain nations (Bible Research Handbook, serial 52d). Eusebius went so far as to say that the apostles divided the inhabited world into zones (McBirnie, 43). He also says that the Apostles passed beyond the ocean to the isles called the Britannic Isles. Andrew is traditionally linked to Scotland and is said to have preached there. He remains the patron saint of Scotland to this day (Williams, 13). In addition Andrew has been identified in Scythia, near the Black Sea, as well as in Greece or Macedonia, and Asia Minor. Another tradition places him in the foothills of the Caucasus Mountains where he preached to the Scythians, even as far as the Caspian Sea (McBirnie, 80-84).

Williams mentions a comment by William Cave. According to Cave, Simon Zelotes preached the gospel in Egypt, Cyrene, Africa, Mauritania, and Libya. He then went to Britain and was crucified and buried there (Williams, 13). There is one tradition that is uncertain, which places the tomb of Simon the Zealot in the Cimmerian Bosphorus. Several early writers, however, attest to his visit to Britain, but there is some doubt that he was martyred there (McBirnie, 211-212).

Regarding Matthew, tradition holds that he visited and preached in a number of countries. Irenaeus said that Matthew preached to the Hebrews, which is probably a reference to the Jews in Palestine, as well as the Jews of the Diaspora. Clement of Alexandria said Matthew went to the Ethiopians, that is, the Asiatic Ethiopians located south of the Caspian Sea where the kingdom of Parthia was located. He also went to the Greeks of Macedonia, the Syrians, and the Persians (McBirnie, 174-177). The Greek historian Metaphrastes attested to the same (Williams, 13).

We have already seen that Peter wrote his first epistle from Babylon. Metaphrastes wrote that Peter not only traveled in the western parts of the Mediterranean, but spent a long time in Britain where he converted many nations to the faith (Williams, 11).

James, the son of Alphæus, is reputed to have been in Spain as well as Britain and was regarded as the first bishop of the Syrian churches (Williams, 13).

Thomas is credited with establishing the first church in Babylon. He then went to Parthia and India. He is said to have arrived in India no later than AD 49. It is reported that he was accompanied by Judas (McBirnie, 146-147). Judas is called Thaddæus in the gospels. Thaddæus has traditionally been linked to Assyria and Mesopotamia (Williams, 13). Also, he is associated with four other Apostles who visited Armenia. These are Bartholomew, Simon the Zealot, Andrew, and Matthias. Thaddæus also preached in Syria, Arabia, and Persia (McBirnie, 198-199, 207).

Bartholomew is said to have worked among the Parthians and the Phrygians of Asia Minor. He visited the Armenians, remaining there 16 years, and traveled into Arabia, southern Persia, and to the borders of India (McBirnie, 130-131).

Earlier, it was mentioned that Philip was associated with Gaul. Bede assigns him there (Lewis, 113). Philip traveled to other places however. He spent 20 years in Scythia. Later, he preached at Hierapolis in

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Phrygia and is reported to have died there. Those familiar with ancient migrations know that a portion of the Gauls migrated to Galatia, so it would not be unreasonable that Philip would preach among them as well (McBirnie, 123-127). Luke, who was not an Apostle, is said to have taught in Gaul and to have made frequent trips to Britain (Jowett, 172).

Polycarp, a disciple of the Apostle John, reported that the elderly John died peaceably at Ephesus around AD 100. John had been exiled to the isle of Patmos where he wrote the book of Revelation. Later, the Emperor Nerva revoked the honors of Domitian and permitted all who had been unjustly expelled to return to their homes and have their goods restored. Augustine wrote that John had also preached to the Parthians, which was the territory we now know as eastern Turkey (McBirnie, 109-115). There is also a tradition that John, at some time, preached in Gaul (Williams, 13).

Paul's commission included preaching to the Gentiles, to kings, and to the children of Israel (Acts 9:15). Paul tells us in the book of Romans that he intended to go into Spain (Rom. 15:24). The Epistle of Clement and the Muratori Fragment both state that Paul visited Spain (McBirnie, 280-281). But Paul did not limit his journey to Spain. Theodoret, bishop of Cyprus, wrote, "Paul liberated from his first captivity at Rome, preached the gospel to the Britons and others in the West. Our fishermen and publicans not only persuaded the Romans and their tributaries to acknowledge the Crucified and His laws, but the Britons also and the Cymry." Clement of Rome wrote that Paul went to the utmost bounds of the West. Irenæus, Tertullian, Origen, Mello, Eusebuis, and Athanasius all confirm that Paul preached in Britain. In his History of the Apostles, Capellus wrote, "I scarcely know of one author, from the times of the Fathers downwards, who does not maintain that St. Paul, after his liberation, preached in every country in Western Europe, Britain included" (Williams, 44).

In the Turkish archives at Constantinople is a copy of the Acts of the Apostles which contains 29 chapters. While this 29th chapter is, no doubt, spurious, it does lend supporting evidence as to the location of some of the lost ten tribes. In the 29th chapter we read: "And Paul, full of the blessings of Christ, and abounding in the spirit, departed out of Rome, determining to go into Spain; for he had a long time purposed to journey thitherwards, and he was minded to go from thence into Britain. For he had heard in Phoenicia that certain of the children of Israel, about the time of the Assyrian captivity, had escaped by sea to the 'isles afar off' as spoken by the prophet, and called by the Roman's [sic] Britain. And the Lord has commanded the gospel to be preached far hence to the Gentiles, and to the lost sheep of the House of Israel. . ." (Haberman, 141). Tradition tells us Paul was martyred in Rome. Bede, in his Ecclesiastical History of the English Nation, said that in AD 665 Pope Vitalian sent the relics of Peter and Paul to Oswy, King of Britain. The report of this final resting place has been avoided by the Catholic Church (Williams, 11-12).