

Female disciples of Jesus



Part of a series on

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Theology

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Organizations

Christians for Biblical Equality
Council on Biblical Manhood and Womanhood
Evangelical and Ecumenical Women's Caucus

Theologians and authors

Feminist:

Letha Dawson Scanzoni · Anne Eggebroten · Virginia Ramey Mollenkott

Egalitarian:

William J. Webb · Kenneth E. Hagin · Gordon Fee · Frank Stagg · Paul Jewett · Stanley Grenz · Roger Nicole

Complementarian:

Don Carson · John Frame · Wayne Grudem · Douglas Moo · Paige Patterson · Vern Poythress

Patriarchal:

Doug Phillips · R. C. Sproul, Jr. · Douglas Wilson

The New Testament identifies a number of women as followers of Jesus. The four gospels differ in the number, names, and roles of such female disciples. Even greater variation is found in the noncanonical gospels.

A disciple (not to be confused with an apostle) is widely held to refer to "one who follows a person's moral teachings", more commonly called a "student".

Women feature prominently in accounts of Jesus' crucifixion and in reports of his resurrection and at the pentecost. In all four gospel accounts, women were the first to receive a sign of Jesus' resurrection and to report it to others (the "Good news").

Authorship of one of the apocryphal gospels, the Gospel of Mary Magdalene, is attributed to this most famous of Jesus' female apostles. And in Pistis Sophia Chapter 96, Christ says; "Where I shall be, there will be also my twelve ministers. But Mary Magdalene and John, the virgin, will tower over all my disciples and over all men who shall receive the mysteries in the Ineffable. And they will be on my right and on my left. And I am they, and they are I."

The seven women apostles

Non-canonical texts

'The Sophia of Jesus Christ' begins: After he rose from the dead, his twelve disciples and the seven women continued to be his followers and went to Galilee onto the mountain called "Divination and Joy"

In the apocryphal 'Pistis Sophia', Christ calls upon Mary the mother of Jesus, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Salome to answer his questions concerning an exegesis of scripture and the Gnostic mysteries to create the Greater Soul. These women discourse at great length amongst the male disciples which vexes Peter. He protests when Mary Magdalene answers again and wants the women to be excluded. Pistis Sophia 146 Peter said: "My Lord, let the women cease to question, in order that we also may question." But Christ gently corrects Peter's error and calls upon Martha next.

And Peter protests the inclusion of Mary Magdalene in the Gnostic Gospel of Thomas 114: Simon Peter said to them, "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life."

But according to the 1st Apocalypse of James, James says, "I am satisfied [...] and they are [...] my soul. Yet another thing I ask of you: who are the seven women who have been your disciples? And behold all women bless you." This text, however, reveals four of these women's names, when Jesus speaks to James: "When you speak these words of this perception, encourage these four: Salome and Mariam and Martha and Arsinoe."

From these texts a list may be culled:

- Mary Magdalene
- Mary, the mother of Jesus
- Mary Salome
- Martha, sister of Lazarus
- Miriamne, sister of Phillip
- Arsinoe

But the name of the 7th female apostle can only be conjectured from the known list of female disciples. Perhaps Susanna or Joanna are more likely to be the 7th woman apostle as they travelled with Christ and Mary Magdalene who was called the 'Apostle of the Apostles':

Canonical texts

Within the books actually included in the Bible, as part of Christian scriptures, female disciples are often mentioned.

Luke 8:1-3 Soon afterward he went on through cities and villages, preaching and bringing the good news of the kingdom of God. And the twelve were with him, and also some women who had been healed of evil spirits and infirmities: Mary, called Mag'dalene, from whom seven demons had gone out, and Joan'na, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, and Susanna, and many others, who provided for them out of their means.

Another prominent woman at the time of Christ is Mary of Bethany. Because her sister Martha is one of the Seven Women Apostles called by Christ and because they are mentioned together four times in the New Testament, this makes it more likely that she is the 7th.

Luke 10:38-39 Now as they went on their way, Jesus entered a village. And a woman named Martha welcomed him into her house. And she had a sister called Mary, who sat at the Lord's feet and listened to his teaching.

Luke 11:1-3 Now a certain man was ill, Lazarus of Bethany, the village of Mary and her sister Martha. It was Mary who anointed the Lord with ointment and wiped his feet with her hair, whose brother Lazarus was ill. So the sisters sent to him, saying, "Lord, he whom you love is ill.

John 20:16 Jesus said to her, "Mary." She turned and said to him in Aramaic, "Rabboni!" (which means Teacher).

Although the apocryphal texts of Christ and James enumerate seven women apostles only Junia is called an apostle in the New Testament. Paul says;

Romans 16:7 "Greet Andronicus and Junias, my relatives who have been in prison with me. They are prominent among the apostles, and they were in Christ before I was."

But we do not know if Junias was one of the Seven Women called by Christ or if she was a Disciple after his Ascension. Paul calls himself an apostle to the apostles and he did not walk with Christ nor was he called to be a messenger by Christ, so Paul might ascribe to a broader definition of the term apostle.

Terminology: "disciples" and "apostles"

A disciple is a follower. All Christians are called to be disciples of Christ. An apostle is one who is called by Christ and sent out by Christ as an evangelist messenger.

Disciple

In biblical usage, the term "disciple" often means "student" — someone who believes in the person's message and tries to follow the person's moral values and teachings. Under such a definition, all women and men followers of Jesus could be considered *disciples* of Jesus, as long as they followed the teachings of Jesus.

The Great Commission declares;"Go therefore and **make disciples** of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, **teaching them to observe (obey) all things that I have commanded you....**" [Matt. 28:19–20a]

John the Baptist had disciples.^[1]

Apostle

The term **apostle** is derived from the New Testament Greek word *ἀπόστολος* or *apostolos*, meaning one who is sent forth as a messenger^{[2][3]} and should not be confused with a disciple (who is a follower or a student who learns from a "teacher").^{[3][4]} Traditionally, Jesus is said to have had *Twelve Apostles* who spread the Gospel after his Resurrection.

Christian scholars and theologians disagree on the meaning of "apostle";

- Some consider the term apostle means one who starts Christian congregations, like the apostle Junia who is believed to have been one of the founders of the Church of Rome. Or one who wrote Gospels like Mary Magdalene or Thecla. Or evangelists who were called personally by Christ to follow him like Mary Magdalene, Joanna, or Susanna. Or early martyrs of the church like Thecla or those who walked very closely with Christ and were present during the Crucifixion, the Resurrection and the Pentecost like Mary Mother of Christ, Mary Magdalene, and Mary Salome.
- Others believe that there were exactly 12 male Apostles chosen directly by Jesus Christ and that Judas Iscariot was replaced by Matthias to maintain a dozen witnesses; Matthew 10 and Acts 9

- Others believe that the term apostles includes any of those who are either students of the 12 apostles, or otherwise implied to be apostles e.g., Paul, Luke, Silas, Timothy and Barnabas on the basis of New Testament passages like 1Corinthians 9:1,13.
- In the apocryphal Pistis Sophia, Jesus calls his 12 male apostles and his 7 female apostles to discourse after his resurrection. Of these seven women apostles; Mary Mother of Christ, Mary Magdalene, Martha and Mary Salome speak prevalently concerning their own exegesis of the scriptures and the divine mystery to create the immortal light body or Greater Soul.
- In the apocryphal First Apocalypse of James James says, "I am satisfied [...] and they are [...] my soul. Yet another thing I ask of you: who are the seven women who have been your disciples?" Jesus speaks to James: "When you speak these words of this perception, encourage these four: Salome and Mariam and Martha and Arsinoe [...] since he takes some [...] to me he is [...] burnt offerings and [...]. But I [...] not in this way; but [...] first-fruits of the [...] upward [...] so that the power of God might appear. The perishable has gone up to the imperishable and the female element has attained to this male element."
- Although the apocryphal Gospels of Christ and James enumerate seven women apostles only Junia is called an apostle in the New Testament; Paul says in Romans 16:7, "Greetings to Andronicus and Junia, my relatives, who were in prison with me. They are very important apostles. They were believers in Christ before I was." In the English Standard Version (ESV), however, this is translated as "They are well known to the apostles, and they were in Christ before me."^[5]

Female disciples identified in the New Testament

- Mary Magdalene

Matthew 27:55-56,61, Matthew 28:1-11, Mark 15:40,47, Mark 16:1,9, Luke 8:1-3, Luke 23:49, Luke 24:10, John 19:25, and John 20:1,10-18

- Mary, the mother of Jesus, and the mother of James the Just, Joses, Jude the Apostle, Simon who might be Simon the Zealot, and possibly the mother of Thomas Didymus and Mary Salome

Matthew 13:55-57, Matthew 27:55-56, Mark 6:3, Mark 15:40,47, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:10, John 19:25, and Acts 1:13-14

- Mary Salome, wife of Zebedee who was the father of James the Greater and John the Apostle. Possibly both the daughter and sister-in-law of Mary and the sister of Jesus.

Matthew 20:20, Matthew 27:55-56,61, Matthew 28:1-11, Mark 15:40, Mark 16:1, Luke 24:10, and John 19:25

- Sisters Mary and Martha of Bethany, also the sisters of Lazarus

Luke 10:38-39, John 11:1-44, John 11:28, and John 20:16

- Mary of Clopas possibly Mary Salome the daughter or wife of Clopas

John 19:25

- Joanna

Luke 8:1-3, Luke 23:49, and Luke 24:10

- Susanna

Luke 8:1-3

- Priscilla

Acts 18:2,18-19,26, Romans 16:3-4, 1Corinthians 16:19, and 2Timothy 4:19

- Tabitha/Dorcas

Acts 9:35-36,39-41

- Lydia

Acts 16:14-15

- Phoebe

Romans 16:1-2

- Mary

Romans 16:6

- Junia

Romans 16:7

- Tryphena of Rome and Tryphosa

Romans 16:12

- Julia

Romans 16:15

- Nympha

Colossians 4:15

- Apphia

Philemon 1:2

Probable New Testament female disciples

The following New Testament women, though not called "disciples" in scripture, were closely identified with either Jesus or his apostles.

- Thecla
- Veronica
- Unnamed women at Pentecost with Mary Mother of Christ, his brothers and the 12 Male Disciples

Acts 1:13-14

- Unnamed sisters of Jesus, one of which might be Mary Salome

Matthew 13:55

- Wife of Simon Peter

1 Cor. 9:5

- Wives of apostles other than John

1 Cor. 9:5

- Wives of Jesus' brothers Joseph, James, Simon and Jude

Matthew 13:55: 1 Cor. 9:5

- Mariamne sister of apostles Bartholemew and Phillip
- Woman with an issue of blood

Matthew 10:20

- Poor widow who cast two copper coins into the temple treasury

Mark 12:41–44, Luke 21:1–4

- Widow of Nain

Luke 7:11–17

- Woman who anointed Jesus' feet
-

Luke 7:47

- Woman bent double

Luke 13:10–17

- Saint Photini#The_woman_at_the_well_in_Samaria and her five sisters; Anatole, Photo, Photis, Paraskeve, Kyriake

John 4:1–4

- Woman taken in adultery

John 7:53–8:11

External links

- Women In Ancient Christianity: The New Discoveries ^[6]
- Junia called an apostle by Paul ^[7]
- Junia ^[8]
- The relatives of Jesus ^[9]
- Women in the Bible ^[10]
- St Mary Magdalene, Catholic Encyclopaedia 1911 ^[11]
- Convent of Saint Mary Magdalene ^[12]
- Mary of Clopas historical citation as a daughter of Clopas ^[13]
- Mary Magdalene & the other Marys ^[14]
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- concerning 7 female apostles ^[20]
- Slideshow Female Apostles in History ^[21]

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- [3] "Christian History: The Twelve Apostles" (<http://www.christianity.com/11536381/>). . Retrieved 2007-11-19.
- [4] "Apostle." Cross, F. L., ed. The Oxford dictionary of the Christian church. New York: Oxford University Press. 2005.
- [5] Romans 16:7
- [6] <http://www.pbs.org/wgbh/pages/frontline/shows/religion/first/women.html>
- [7] <http://www.godswordtowomen.org/rissjunia.htm>
- [8] <http://www.churchofgoddfw.com/monthly/junia.shtml>
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- [10] <http://www.gospelassemblyfree.com/facts/women.htm>
- [11] <http://www.newadvent.org/cathen/09761a.htm>
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