

The first to die for the Faith under the New Covenant was Stephen. The religious leaders that killed Jesus became so enraged at his message that they drove him out of the city and stoned him to death.

James the Greater, the son of Zebedee and elder brother of the Apostle John, was the first of the Twelve Apostles to be martyred. James was beheaded at Jerusalem by the orders of King Herod Agrippa of Judea.

Many historical accounts record that the Apostle Matthew suffered martyrdom in Ethiopia. They say he was pinned to the ground and beheaded with a halberd.

According to the Jewish historian Flavius Josephus, the High Priest ordered James the half-brother of Jesus to be killed by stoning.

Matthias, the Apostle chosen to replace the traitor Judas, is reported to have been stoned at Jerusalem and then beheaded.

Church tradition records that Andrew, the brother of Peter, was martyred in Greece by being crucified on an X-shaped cross.

Those same records say that Mark died in Alexandria, Egypt after being dragged by horses through the streets when he spoke out against a solemn ceremony for their idol.

They also inform us that the Apostle Peter requested he be crucified upside down because he felt unworthy to die in the same manner as Jesus had died.

Jude, another half-brother of Jesus, was martyred through crucifixion at Edessa, an ancient city of Mesopotamia, because he refused to deny Christ.

Bartholomew, also known as Nathanael, was flayed to death by a whip by his pagan enemies in Armenia for preaching the Gospel to the people.

The Apostle Thomas was stabbed with a spear by angry pagans in India and thrown into the flames of a burning hot oven.

During the reign of Emperor Nero, the Apostle Paul was arrested and sent back to prison. Not long after, he was tortured and then beheaded in Rome, just before the fall of Jerusalem.

One ancient source says that Luke went to Greece to evangelize after Paul's execution and was martyred there by being hung from an olive tree.

During Emperor Domitian's reign money was offered to anyone who would bear witness against a Christian and so many were killed or plundered for financial gain. The most familiar martyr of that time was Timothy, a Disciple of Paul. He was attacked and beaten with clubs when he blocked the way of a pagan procession.

Time forbids we go on, but it is a well-documented fact that since these early believers, millions of others have died in similar conditions to this day, and very few of them have ever recanted.

This takes us to the main point of our discussion, which is simply to define the true biblical meaning of the word *martyrdom*. Contrary to what many believe, martyrdom is actually a gift, bestowed exclusively upon those who have learned to see it as such!