

Over the past few years I've wondered how many of the disciples of Jesus came to believe that he had been raised from the dead. The traditional answer is that all eleven of them (the twelve minus Judas, who hanged himself before it happened) did, along with a handful of women, among them Mary Magdalene. I suppose that's probably right, but I'm not **completely** sure.

In the end, I'm afraid we simply don't know. The problem is that our sources - even the ones completely favorable to the earthly disciples of Jesus - are virtually silent about them. We know almost precisely nothing about what they thought, what they did, and what they came to believe. Paul says nothing about them (of the twelve, he mentions only Peter and John). The book of Acts portrays Peter, and to a much lesser degree John, as important before and immediately after the conversion of Paul, but then they themselves virtually disappear from the narrative. And the other nine or ten are discussed almost not at all.

Why is that? I really don't know. But my hunch is that the author of Acts simply hadn't heard any stories about the things they said and did. Why would that be? Again, I really don't know. Was it because he simply wanted to focus on the main people: Peter, James, (John,) and Paul? But why were these the main people? Why wasn't it important to know what the others were doing? Is it that his sources of information didn't give him anything? Is it that they in fact didn't do anything important? Did they just go back home to Galilee to eke out an existence until they died? Do we even know that they came to believe in the resurrection?

Acts (at the beginning) and the Gospels (at the end) are in fact explicit that all eleven became believers. But if so, why aren't there any stories about them?

It is in the context of this puzzling issue that I want to broach a question that I often get asked, one that is commonly asked by evangelical Christian apologists: How could the disciples ...

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