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THE FALLEN HEROES OF FAITH – LESSON 6

EARLY MARTYRS

We have covered the first three apostles who were martyred. Using Bishop James Ussher's calendar dates (of questionable accuracy but accepted by Roman Church tradition) they were James the Greater (A.D.44), Philip (A.D. 54) and Matthew (A.D. 60). Deacons Stephen and Nicanor were in A.D. 34, and deacons Timon and Parmenas about A.D. 44. All the apostles were killed, being martyred, with the sole exception of John.

We now consider the other Apostles who were executed. The dates are uncertain nor the order in which the events occurred. For the most part, details are scarce with very little recorded by historians or passed on by oral tradition.

James the Lesser, called in Matthew 10:2 and Acts 1:13 as James, the son of Alphaeus, chosen by Jesus as one of the original twelve, is said by Fox to have lived to the age of 94. He was stoned by Jews, then had his brains dashed out with a fuller's club.

I am leery of Fox's account as he said James the Lesser wrote the Book of James (which is unlikely) and was Jesus' brother (unlikely), as those were two different James. It is easy to mix up James the Greater, James the Lesser, and James, Jesus' brother, as Fox apparently had done. Nonetheless, we know that James the lesser son of Alphaeus did give his life.

Matthias was chosen by the eleven apostles as a replacement for Judas Iscariot. He surely would have been one of the seventy sent out two by two by Jesus to do His works. Tradition says he was stoned at Jerusalem, then beheaded. Beheading was important because it is presumed that one could not be resurrected as Jesus had been if their head is taken.

Andrew, Peter's brother, preached the gospel to much of Asia Minor and beyond. Upon arrival at Edessa, he was taken and hung on a cross fixed in the form of an "X." This unusual configuration was later called by the Roman church "Saint Andrew's Cross."

Mark was not one of the Apostles. He appears to have been converted by the Apostle Paul who considered him like a son. Paul became his mentor and gave him considerable responsibility in serving many of the churches in Asia Minor which Paul had established. He was the author of the gospel bearing his name. His life was taken in the Egyptian city of Alexandria where he was dragged to pieces during the solemn observance of their pagan god Serapis.

Tomorrow we will talk about Peter and the disputed accounts of his demise.