

Early Church Martyrs

Martyrdom of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus Christ

St. Peter



Crucified upside down in Rome under Nero.

St. Andrew



Crucified on an X-shaped cross in Patras, Greece.

St. James the Greater



Beheaded in Jerusalem (Acts 12:2).

St. John



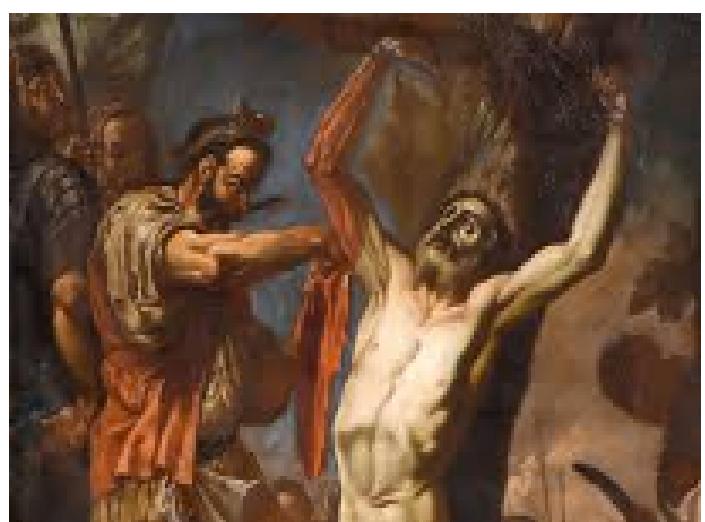
Exiled to Patmos, died naturally in Ephesus (tradition: survived boiling oil).

St. Philip



Martyred in Hierapolis (crucifixion or stoning).

St. Bartholomew



Flayed alive and beheaded in Armenia.

St. Matthew



Martyred in Ethiopia (stabbed or burned).

St. Thomas



Speared to death while praying in India.

St. James the Less



Beaten, stoned, and clubbed in Jerusalem.

St. Jude



Martyred in Persia (killed with axe/club).

St. Simon the Zealot



Martyred in Persia (sawn in half or crucified, traditions vary).

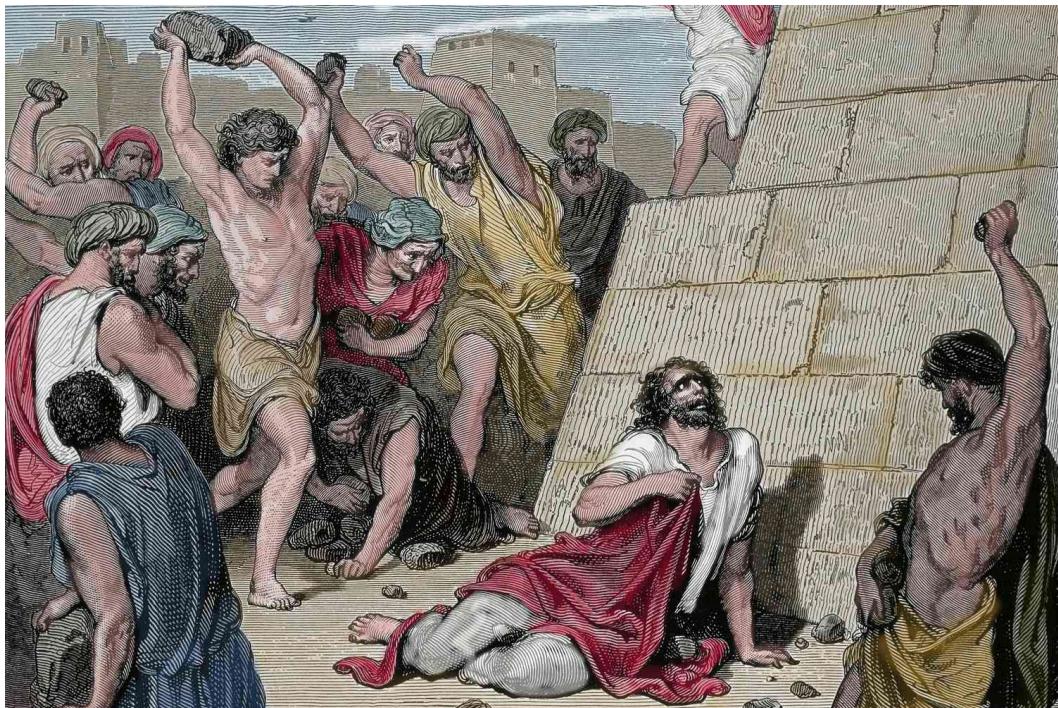
St. Matthias



Stoned and beheaded (Jerusalem/Ethiopia).

St. Stephen

First Martyr of the Church



St. Stephen, the first Christian martyr, was chosen as one of the first deacons of the Church. Known for his wisdom and faith, he boldly proclaimed Christ before the Sanhedrin. Accused of blasphemy, he delivered a powerful speech recounting Israel's history and pointing to Jesus as the Messiah. Filled with the Holy Spirit, he saw a vision of Christ standing at the right hand of God. Enraged, the crowd dragged him outside the city and stoned him. As he was dying, **Stephen prayed for his persecutors:** 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' His death marked the beginning of widespread persecution of Christians.

The Timeline of the Persecution under the Roman Empire

Nero (54-68 AD)

Great Fire of Rome, 64 AD. Methods: burned alive, crucifixion, torn by dogs, human torches. Victims: hundreds (tradition: Peter and Paul martyred).

Domitian (81-96 AD)

Methods: executions, exile (John to Patmos). Victims: unknown, many elites accused of 'atheism'.

Trajan (98-117 AD)

Policy: Christians executed if accused and refusing sacrifice. Victims: many local martyrs, incl. Ignatius of Antioch (c. 107 AD).

Marcus Aurelius (161-180 AD)

Methods: beheadings, torture, beasts. Victims: Martyrs of Lyon (177 AD), Justin Martyr.

Septimius Severus (193-211 AD)

Methods: beheadings, torture. Victims: Perpetua and Felicity (203 AD).

Decius (249 - 251 AD)

Methods: forced sacrifice, imprisonment, torture, execution. Victims: thousands; Pope Fabian (250 AD).

Valerian (253 - 260 AD)

Methods: executions, property seizure, exile. Victims: Pope Sixtus II, deacon St. Lawrence, Cyprian of Carthage.

Diocletian (284 - 305 AD)

Great Persecution (303–311 AD). Methods: burning Scriptures, imprisonment, torture, execution. Victims: tens of thousands; worst persecution in Roman history.

Martyrs under the Roman Empire

St. Peter



Crucified upside down in Rome under Emperor Nero (c. 64–67 AD).

St. Paul



Beheaded in Rome under Nero (c. 64–67 AD).

St. Ignatius of Antioch



Martyred in Rome, thrown to beasts under Emperor Trajan (107 AD).

St. Polycarp of Smyrna



Burned and stabbed under Marcus Aurelius (155 AD).

St. Perpetua & Felicity



Executed in Carthage under Septimius Severus (203 AD).

St. Lawrence of Rome



Burned on a gridiron under Emperor Valerian (258 AD).

St. Cyprian of Carthage



Beheaded under Emperor Valerian (258 AD).

St. Agnes of Rome



Virgin martyr, killed during Diocletian's persecution (c. 304 AD).

St. Sebastian



Shot with arrows under Diocletian (c. 288 AD).

St. Catherine of Alexandria



Tortured and beheaded in the Great Persecution (c. 305 AD).

“The Blood of Martyrs is

the Seed of the Church.”

- Tertullian