

Author Claims 12 Apostles Were Made Up

At least some of Jesus' 12 disciples by the names we know may have been made up, author Tom Bissell claims in his new book, *Apostles: Travels Among the Tombs of the Twelve*.

"A couple of the names recorded in the New Testament are probably actual people," Bissell says in an interview with *National Geographic*. "There was probably a Peter and a John, definitely a James (the brother of Jesus), and probably a Thomas. Beyond that, there's nothing historical that verifies their existence other than the gospels themselves. So I think they're a mixture of fact and fiction."

For his book, Bissell spent years exploring the purported tombs and resting places of the Twelve, from Jerusalem to India to Kyrgyzstan to Spain and beyond, as well as the vast scholarly literature on early Christianity, according to his author page.

According to *The Guardian*, Bissell's book asks if the names mentioned in the gospels, like Bartholomew, is the same person as Nathanael mentioned in Luke and Acts.

But the most controversial disciple might be Judas, who hanged himself, according to Matthew 27.

"As to whether Judas was real, I think it's probably true that Jesus was betrayed by someone. Whether or not his name was Judas is a much more difficult question," Bissell tells *National Geographic*. "I suspect the broad outlines of the Judas story, as the gospel writers outlined it, is probably fictional. In a lot of the other Jesus stories, the Gospel writers seem to be singing from the same hymn sheet. But with Judas, I think they had much less raw material to work with, so they all treated it in their own way. This

suggests to me that he was more a fictional character than actual person.”

But others, including the History channel, also explored the tombs of the apostles and came away with questions of their own.

Despite concerns over the specifics of the lives of the disciples, other archaeological finds proved the Bible’s authenticity.

While the miraculous Pool of Siloam was found almost a decade ago, author and historian Eric Metaxas praised the significance.

“The point is that it’s become increasingly clear that the default scholarly position of disbelieving the Bible because it is the Bible is untenable,” Metaxas writes. “Of course, Christians should already know that. But it’s still gratifying to see that other people are able to see it, as well. Even if they have to go to the Pool of Siloam to do it.”