

# James the Less (Alphaeus)

## The Early Life of the Apostle James the Less

James, the son of Alphaeus, was called James the Less, was thought to be a cousin of Jesus, by the sister of the Virgin Mary, and the brother of Jude Thaddaeus (Acts 1:13).

He is generally associated with the name James the Less. This is because there was already a more prominent James among the twelve apostles (James, son of Zebedee, who was considered the greater apostle).

## The Death of the Apostle James the Less

After the crucifixion of Jesus James was created the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

- Cousin of Jesus
- Brother of Saint Jude/Judas/Lebbaeus/Thaddaeus
- Raised in a Jewish home of the time with all the training in Scripture and Law that was part of that life
- Convert
- One of the Twelve Apostles
- One of the first to have visions of the risen Christ
- First Bishop of Jerusalem
- Met with Saint Paul the Apostle to work out Paul's plans for evangelization
- Supported the position that Gentile converts did not have to obey all Jewish religious law, though he continued to observe it himself as part of his heritage, may have been a vegetarian
- A just and apostolic man known for his prayer life and devotion to the poor
- Martyr

He is reported to have spent so much time in prayer that his knees thickened, and looked like a camel's.

Soon after the Crucifixion, James said he would fast until Christ returned; the resurrected Jesus appeared to him, and fixed a meal for James Himself.

James died at Jerusalem by being thrown from a pinnacle of the Temple, then stoned and beaten with clubs, including fuller's mallets, while praying for his attackers.

He was persecuted for his Christian faith and Simeon the fuller dashed out his brains.

Fullers were people who performed the last steps in making cloth or cleaning clothes and a fuller's club was used to beat clothes in order to clean them.

Having been beaten to death, a club almost immediately became his symbol.

**There is still some confusion about James the Less, who is mentioned three times in the Bible,** which was in direct connection with his mother in the book of Mark, and James, son of Alphaeus four times in the New Testament alongside that of the twelve apostles.

However, James, son of Zebedee is among the twelve disciples and known as James the Greater.

The conclusion is that the identity of St. James the Less is accepted by the early church leaders, while modern Biblical scholars are still torn with his identity.

#### **Accomplishments of James the Less:**

James was hand-picked by Jesus Christ to be a disciple. He was present with the 11 apostles in the upper room of Jerusalem after Christ ascended to heaven. He may have been the first disciple to see the risen Savior.

Although his accomplishments remain unknown to us today, James may simply have been overshadowed by the more prominent apostles. Even still, being named among the twelve was no small achievement.

#### **Weaknesses of James the Less:**

Like the other disciples, James deserted the Lord during his trial and crucifixion.

#### **Life Lessons from James the Less:**

While James the Less is one of the least known of the 12 apostles, we can't overlook the fact that each of these men sacrificed everything to follow the Lord. In Luke 18:28, their spokesman Peter said, "We have left all we had to follow you!" (NIV)

They gave up family, friends, homes, jobs, and all things familiar to answer Christ's call.

These ordinary men who did extraordinary things for God, set the example for us. They formed the foundation of the Christian church, initiating a movement that steadily spread across the face of the earth. And we are part of that movement--the body of Christ--today.

For all we know, "Little James" was an unsung hero of faith. Evidently, he did not seek recognition or fame, for he received no glory or credit for his service to Christ. Perhaps the nugget of truth we can take from the altogether obscure life of James is reflected in this Psalm:

*Not to us, O Lord, not to us, but to your name give glory ...*  
(Psalm 115:1, ESV)

**Hometown:**

Unknown

**Referenced in the Bible:**

Matthew 10:2-4      Mark 3:16-19    Luke 6:13-16    Acts 1:13

**Occupation:**

Disciple of Jesus Christ

**Family Tree:**

Father - Alphaeus

Brother - Possibly Matthew

**Key Verses:****Matthew 10:2-4**

*The names of the twelve apostles are these: first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus; Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. (ESV)*

**Mark 3:16-19**

*He appointed the twelve: Simon (to whom he gave the name Peter); James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James (to whom he gave the name Boanerges, that is, Sons of Thunder); Andrew, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus, and Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who betrayed him. (ESV)*

**Luke 6:13-16**

*And when day came, he called his disciples and chose from them twelve, whom he named apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and Andrew his brother, and James and John, and Philip, and Bartholomew, and Matthew, and Thomas, and James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon who was called the Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor. (ESV)*

**Acts 1:13**

*And when they had entered, they went up to the upper room, where they were staying, Peter and John and James and Andrew, Philip and Thomas, Bartholomew and Matthew, James the son of Alphaeus and Simon the Zealot and Judas the son of James. (ESV)*

**Click link below to read more about James “the Less”**

<http://christianity.about.com/od/newtestamentpeople/a/James-The-Less.htm>