

The (Flat) Apostles

Apostle Andrew was a Jewish fisherman from the town of Bethsaida. His name, Andrew, means to have “courage.” He was also the older brother of Apostle Peter. In fact, he is known as the one who introduced Peter to Jesus. In Matthew 4:18-20 and Mark 1:16-20 Jesus first encounters Andrew and Peter fishing near the shore of the Sea of Galilee. Apostle Andrew was not only one of the twelve disciples, he was the first disciple to be called by Jesus and the first claim that Jesus was the Messiah. He is mentioned 12 times in the Gospels, 4 of which are in being listed amongst the group of 12. When Jesus feeds the 5,000 it is Andrew who found the boy with the loaves of bread and two fish. Saint Andrew brought the Gospel to various ancient regions including Scythia, Achaea, and regions around the Black Sea, converting the King of Armenia. Apostle Andrew was crucified on a cross laid upon its side, like the letter X.

Apostle James, Son of Zebedee, is also known as James the Greater. He is considered one of the three pillars, or the three main disciples, to Jesus, along with his brother John and Peter. He is the older brother of Apostle John and just like Apostle’s Peter and Andrew, Apostles James and John were also discovered by Jesus while fishing as they are also Jewish fishermen. The two brothers are nicknamed “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus in The Gospel of Mark 3:17. Apostle James, Son of Zebedee, was present at many important events, including the resurrection of Jairus’ daughter, Jesus’ transfiguration, and the agony in Gethsemane. His symbol is 3 seashells.

Apostle John, Son of Zebedee, was the third disciple, along with Peter and James, considered to be part of Jesus’ “inner circle.” He is the younger brother of Apostle James and just like Apostle’s Peter and Andrew, Apostles James and John were also discovered by Jesus while fishing as they are also Jewish fishermen. The two brothers are nicknamed “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus in The Gospel of Mark 3:17. John was believed to be the youngest of the twelve disciples and lived into old age. His symbols are an eagle or a chalice with a snake.

Apostle Philip, like the Apostles Peter and Andrew, is also from the town of Bethsaida near the Sea of Galilee. His name means lover of horses, so he is known as the patron saint of jockeys, horse breeders, and horseback riders. He spread the Gospel to Greece, Syria, and Phrygia. Apostle Philip was crucified upside down with Bartholomew. He continued to preach to the crowd while hanging upside down. His symbol is a Tau cross.

Apostle Bartholomew, *Bar-Talmai*, means “son of Talmai,” who was a King of Geshur. His name only appears in the four lists that name all twelve Apostles so there is not much that is known about him. He was regarded as a scholar and held interest in the prophets and the law, which is why he is often pictured with a scroll. He tends to be listed along with Philip which indicates some sort of a relationship between the two disciples. He spread the Gospel to Phrygia and Armenia. Both Bartholomew and Philip were crucified upside down.

Apostle James, Son of Alphaeus, is only mentioned four times in the lists of all twelve disciples. He is also known as James the lesser or James the younger. He is not to be confused with James, Son of Zebedee. He is often pictured with a saw in his hands. This saw is a reminder of his departure from Earth. He also shares his feast day with the Apostle Philip on May 1st. Apostle James, Son of Alphaeus, spread the Gospel throughout the land of Egypt.

Apostle Judas Iscariot: The association with this apostle in Christianity is equivocal to one who betrays. We know from the Gospels it was Judas Iscariot who identified Jesus to the Roman soldiers in the Garden of Gethsemane in exchange for 30 pieces of silver. After Jesus was crucified, Judas removed himself from the original 12 apostles and died. Iscariot is believed to indicate “man from Kerioth”, which is a place in south Palestine. If this is so, then Judas Iscariot would be the one apostle who came from Judea, whereas the others were seen as Galileans. His symbol is 30 pieces of silver or a silver coin.

Apostle Jude (Thaddeus): Jude is referred to as “Judas not Iscariot” and may have been a brother of James, or may have been a son of James. In the lists of apostles given in the Gospels of Matthew, he is called Thaddaeus or Lebbaeus. Tradition has it that he ministered in Persia and was also martyred there. His symbol is a ship or a sword.

Apostle Matthew: Before he answered Jesus’ calling him from the custom-house, we know that he was known as Levi, and as an adult he was a publican, which we translate as tax collector. In tradition he has been depicted holding a sword, bags of money or a carpenter’s square. Matthew wrote down many of the sayings and stories that Jesus told, but probably is not the author of the Gospel of Matthew, which uses most of the saying and parables that the Apostle Matthew collected. It is known that Matthew spent much effort building the church in Antioch. The time and death of Matthew is uncertain, although tradition has him as a martyr for the Christian faith. His symbol is an angel or 3 bags of money.

Apostle Matthias: In the days between Jesus ascending to the Father and the Day of the arrival of the Advocate (Pentecost), the remaining disciples were together praying. Peter proposed that from the people who had been traveling with Jesus and the 12, one person should be chosen to fill the vacancy left by Judas Iscariot. Two names were selected, and by casting lots, and Matthias was selected. Little is known about his life, although tradition has him ministering to the people of Ethiopia. His symbol is a lance.

Apostle Peter: Peter, called Cephas by Jesus. Introduced to Jesus by his brother Andrew, was from Bethsaida, near Lake Tiberias, participated in the family fishing business, until he became an apostle. He was the natural leader, to whom group looked to after the death of Jesus. In each listing of apostles in the Gospels, Peter is always named first. He worked within Palestine and was the first apostle to convert a Gentile, Cornelius. Though he and Paul often had differing opinions, they both ventured to Rome, where after some two decades, Peter was crucified, most likely during the persecution of the Christians, 64 C.E. during the rule of Nero. Often Peter is seen with a key in his hand, or sometimes a rooster. Peter's tomb is historically believed to be in St. Peter's in Rome.

Apostle Simon: Sharing a calendar day of the saints with St. Jude, (October 28), Simon is mentioned by John as the brother of James, son of Zebedee. To set him apart from Simon Peter, he is referred in the new Testament as "the zealot" or "the Cananaean. Tradition has his ministry paired with Jude, preaching in Persia and likely martyred there. His symbol is a boat or 2 fish.

Apostle Thomas: Often referred to as Thomas the twin, or doubting Thomas, his name appears in all four Gospels. We learn the most about his role in the Gospel of John where acts of loyalty, literal understanding, and total incorporation of belief are told. After leaving Jerusalem, he evangelized in to Syria and then to India, where he was martyred at Mylapore, which we now call Madras. His symbol is a builder's square or an axe.