

LIVING GODS WILL

The Apostle

JAMES THE LESS



Saint James The Less by Peter Paul Rubens

The Apostle **JAMES THE LESS**

Page 1

Born: Galilee, Judea
Died: AD 62, Ostrakine, Egypt
Death: Crucified while preaching the gospel

Also known as "**James the Less**", "**James son of Alphaeus**"

He was the **son** of **Alphaeus and Mary (of Clopas)**

He was the **brother** of **Thaddaeus**

He was the **cousin of Jesus**

His mother was the **Virgin Mary's sister**

He was one of the **original 12 disciples**

James the lesser was the **son** of **Alphaeus** and **Mary of Clopas** (Maria Jacobi in Latin) and the **brother** of Apostle **Jude Thaddeus**.

James the lesser was also called "**the minor**" and "**the little**" to distinguish him from **James the greater**, who was the **son of Zebedee**.

James the Lesser may have been younger or smaller in stature than Zebedee's son, as the Greek word mikros conveys both meanings, less and small.

James, son of Alphaeus, was one of Jesus' **twelve apostles** (**Matthew 10:2-3**) and one of **three people named James** mentioned in the New Testament.

He is distinguished from the other James's in the Bible by his father's name. In Bible times, people did not have last names as we do in Western cultures. They were often identified by their fathers and grandfathers.

For example, the **other James** of the twelve apostles is described as "**James the son of Zebedee**" (**Mark 3:17**).

A **third James** mentioned in Scripture was the **brother of the Lord Jesus** (**Galatians 1:19**), a leader in the Jerusalem church (**Acts 12:17; Galatians 2:9**), and the author of the **book of James**.

Other than being listed as a disciple, nothing else is known about **James the son of Alphaeus**.

The lack of information about **James the son of Alphaeus** is a lesson in itself. This James was just as much an apostle as were **Peter and John**.

He will sit on a throne in Jesus' earthly kingdom (**Matthew 19:28**) with as much authority and honor as the other apostles. His name will be engraved in a foundation of the walls of the New Jerusalem (**Revelation 21:14**). James will not be considered "less" in eternity because **he was faithful to his calling on earth.**

Accomplishments of James the Lesser

1. **James** was hand-picked by **Jesus Christ** to be a disciple.
2. He was present with the 11 apostles in the upper room of Jerusalem **after Christ ascended to heaven.**
3. 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.

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

While **James the Lesser** is one of the least known of the 12, 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!**"

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. We are part of that movement 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**)

Tradition maintains that he was crucified at Ostrakine in Lower Egypt, where he was preaching the Gospel.

James the son of Alphaeus can be an encouragement to those called to lives of obscurity. Our callings are just as sure, just as God-honoring, but few will ever know our names on earth.

There will be no billboards, Time articles, or headlines praising our efforts. Some toil for decades in remote regions of the world with little to show for it. **Others serve quietly in their homes or neighborhoods and then die relatively unnoticed.**

But God notices. James the son of Alphaeus reminds us that God uses a different set of standards to choose His heroes.

He honors **faithfulness (Luke 18:8)**, **endurance (Matthew 24:13)**, **obedience (Matthew 7:21)**, and **sacrifice (Galatians 2:20)**. **Our only responsibility is obedience, not the results of that obedience.**

While some apostles wrote books of the Bible and others were featured regularly in the gospels, it appears that **James the son of Alphaeus** was quietly faithful to his Lord. **For that, he will be equally honored with them for all eternity.**

SUPPORTING SCRIPTURE

Matthew 10:2 **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.



Saint James the Less by Angelo de Rossi.