

# The Illustrated Guide to the



# 12

# APOSTLES



## About this book

During Jesus' ministry on earth, he amassed many followers. He chose twelve of these disciples to accompany Him, preach His word, heal the sick, and cast out demons. Of these, 11 would become church leaders after Jesus' resurrection.

One would betray Him.

## About the author

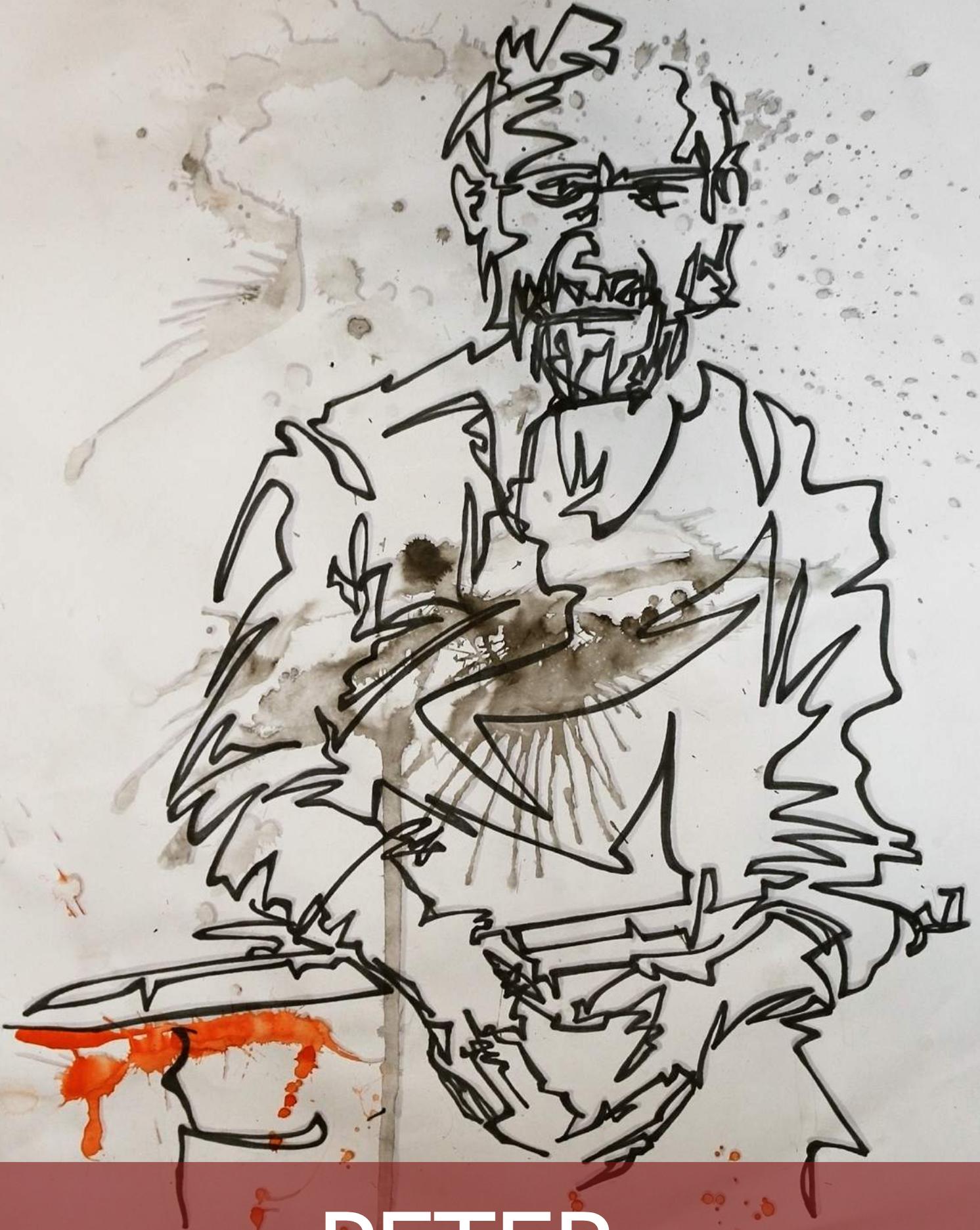
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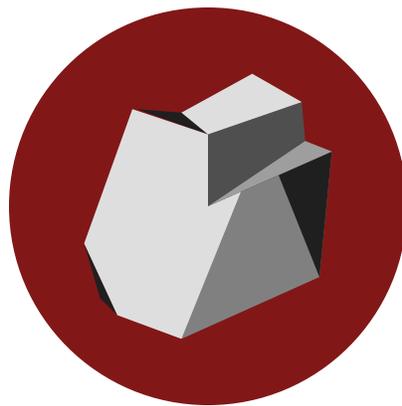
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PETER

# Simon Peter

No apostle stands out like Peter. Even when fellow apostles Matthew and John write down the story of Jesus, they give more attention to Peter than themselves. And for good reason: of all the apostles (besides maybe Judas), Peter is most involved in the grand story of Jesus.



## Peter rocks

His original name is Simon, but Jesus give him the moniker the moment they meet. "Peter," means "stone," and the name sticks (Jn 1:42).

The name takes on a deeper meaning later in the story. When Jesus asks the disciples who they think Jesus is, only Peter speaks up: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Mt 16:16).

Then Jesus makes a play on words: “You are Peter [stone], and on this rock I will build my church.”

And Jesus does. Paul says the church is built on the apostles, and Matthew puts Peter first among them (Ep 2:19–20; Mt 10:2). In fact, Peter’s always first in the lists of the apostles.

## Bold (besides the denial)

If you ever have to describe Peter in one word, I recommend “bold.” Peter is courageous, outspoken, and impulsive.



For example, the other apostles freak out when they see Jesus walking on the Sea of Galilee, but Peter jumps out and walks to Jesus (Mt 14:29). When Peter, James, and John see Jesus transfigured, only Peter can find the words to blurt out (Lk 9:33).

Peter even has the guts to pull Jesus aside to talk the Lord out of dying (Mt 16:22).

Peter plans to support Jesus to the bitter end. He's willing to die for Jesus, and even cuts off a man's ear in an attempt to defend the Lord (Mk 14:29, 31; Jn 18:10).

Despite all his bravado, Peter's more famous for denying Jesus three times. But to his credit, most of the other apostles turn tail and run. At least Peter follows Jesus to his trial. (Jn 18:15–16)

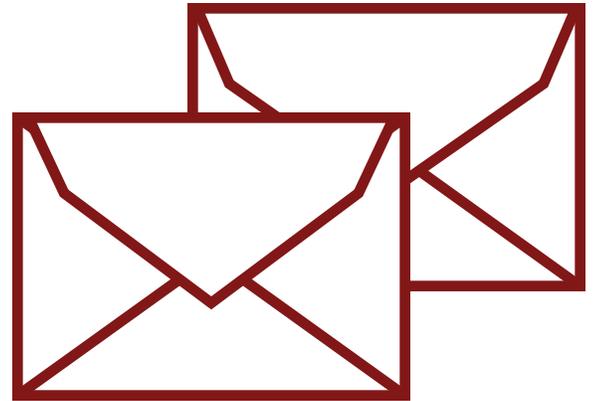
Peter's boldness rebounds after the resurrection. When the Holy Spirit is poured out over the disciples, Peter is the one who stands up and preaches the gospel to the masses. Peter calls out the Jews for crucifying the Messiah they'd been waiting for. Peter tells the Jewish Christians that Gentiles are welcome in the church (Ac 2:14, 3:14–15, 11:1–18). Peter's a bold fellow.

## Bible author

Only three of the twelve contribute to the New Testament, and Peter is one of them. His earliest contributions are in the Gospel of Mark.

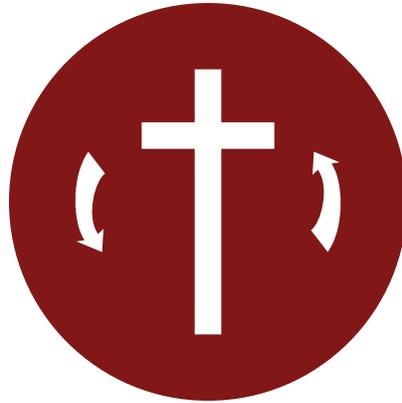
Peter works alongside John Mark in ministry, and comes to care for him as his own son (1 Pe 5:13). According to tradition, Mark wrote down the story of Jesus as Peter told it to him: the Gospel of Mark is Peter's take on the life of Jesus.

Peter also writes two books of the Bible on his own: First and Second Peter. He wrote these letters to Christians living as foreigners across the Roman empire (1 Pe 1:1; 2 Pe 2:1).



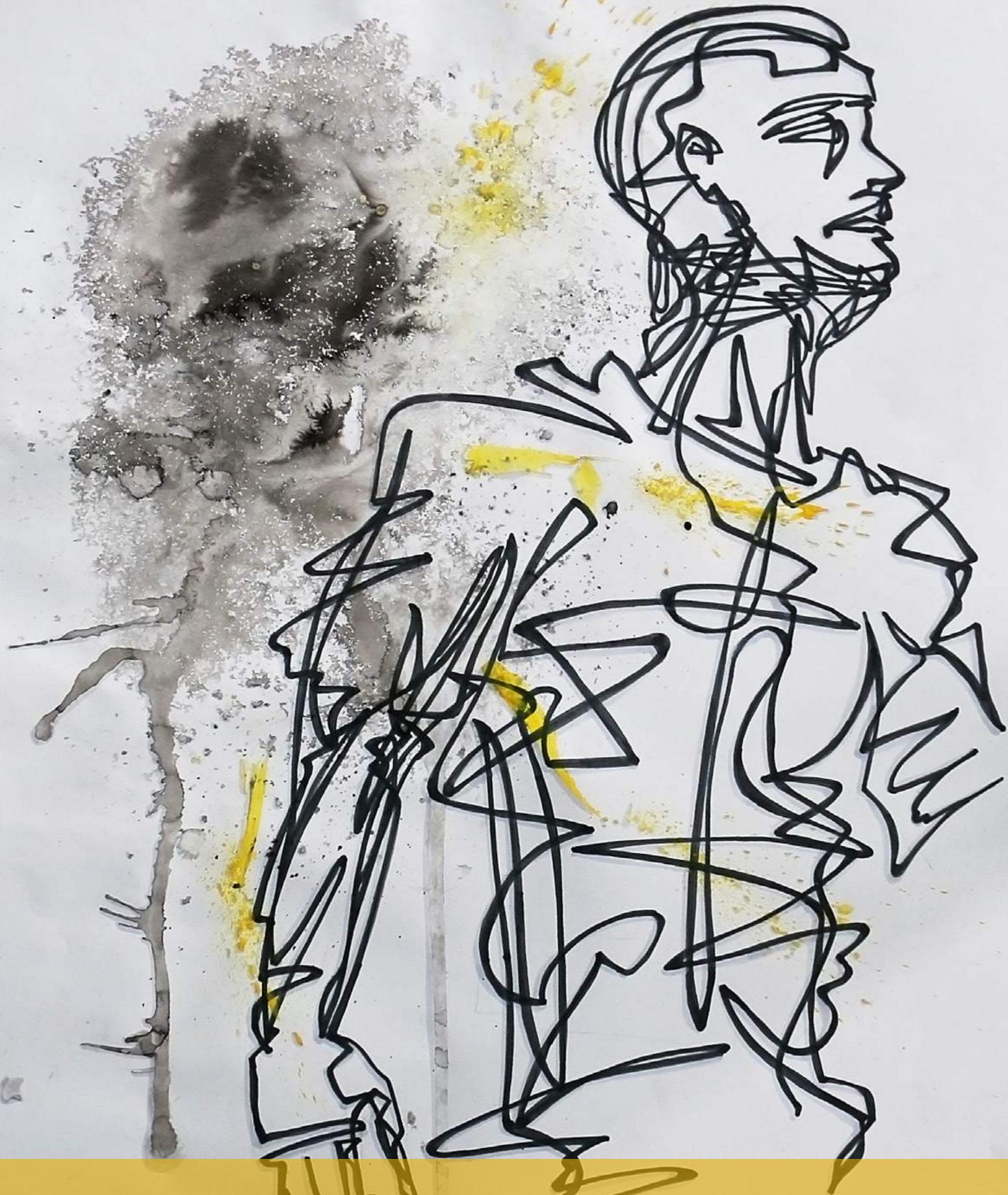
### Fun fact

Matthew and John are the only other members of the twelve who write New Testament books.



## Crucified upside-down

Peter was martyred in Rome for the Lord he once denied. According to tradition, he boldly requested to be crucified upside-down, as he was unworthy to die in the same manner as his King.



JAMES

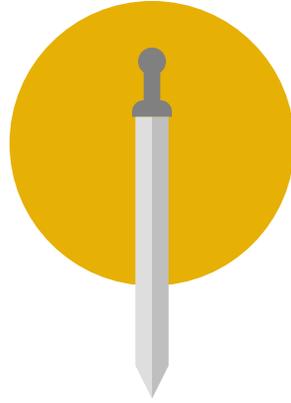
# James, son of Zebedee

James is the fiery apostle who's almost always doing things in tandem with his brother John. He's an ambitious man, a passionate man, a man devoted to Jesus.

James leaves everything behind for the Lord—including his father's family business. Zebedee is successful enough to support his family along with multiple paid employees (Mk 1:20). And since James is always mentioned before John, it's possible he's the eldest—the heir to the family business.

But when Jesus calls him, James immediately drops everything, leaves his father, and follows Jesus. His brother John comes, too (but we'll talk about him later).

And just so you know: **this is not the James who wrote the book of James**—that was probably Jesus' brother (Jam 1).



## First to die

One time, James and John demand seats of honor in Jesus' kingdom. Jesus tells them they don't really know what they're asking for: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

Jesus is referring to a hard life and a martyr's death. James is sure he can take it (Mk 10:38).

And he does. James is the first apostle to be martyred: Herod puts him to death with the sword in an attempt to please the Jewish community (Ac 12:1-2).



## Sons of Thunder

Just like Jesus names Simon “Peter,” the Lord gives James and his brother John the nickname “Sons of Thunder” (Mk 3:17). The Bible doesn’t say why.

However, the gospels give us a few glimpses of their stormy personalities. For example, when a city denies Jesus lodging, they propose calling fire from heaven onto the town.

Don’t worry: Jesus sets them straight (Lk 9:51–56).

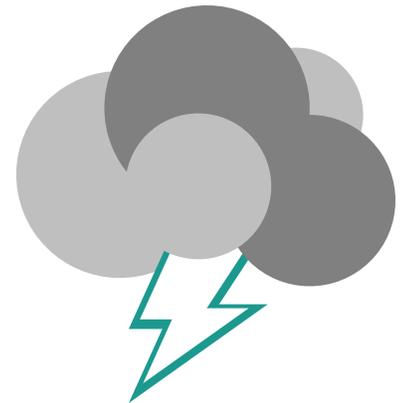


JOHN

# John

He's the other Son of Thunder. While James dies a quick death at a younger age, John lives as much as 60 more years after Jesus' resurrection. James burns out quick and bright like lightning; John rolls on like thunder.

After the resurrection, John becomes a pillar of the early church (Ga 2:9). He works miracles with Peter. He teaches whole churches. He disciplines renegades. He writes personal notes of encouragement.



John is a Son of Thunder, the apostle of love, and the one who has the vision of Jesus' glorious return.

## Apostle of love

According to church tradition, John is the "disciple Jesus loved"

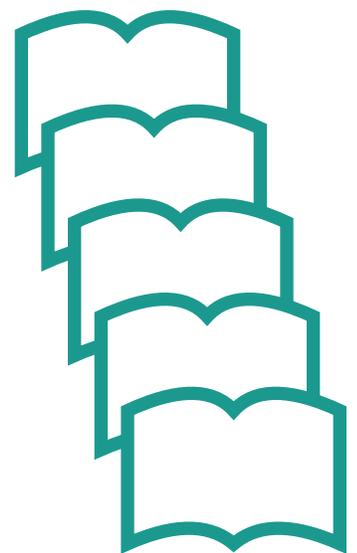
and the author of the Gospel of John. It's John who recorded Jesus' most famous quote: "For God so loved the world, that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him shall not perish, but have eternal life" (Jn 3:16).

No other apostle focuses on love like John. His gospel mentions love more than any other book of the New Testament. If you include the Old Testament, John's gospel comes in second, only to Psalms—which is twice as long!

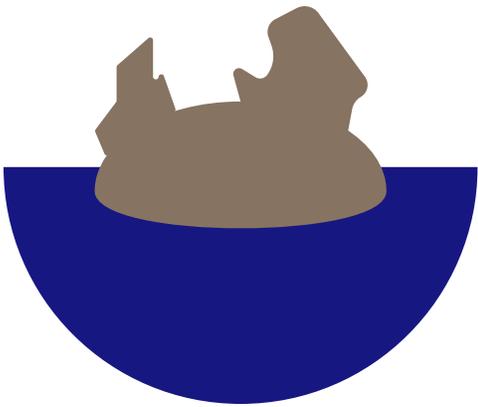
Plus, John's first epistle mentions love more often than any other book of the Bible: about once every 55 words.

## John writes the most

According to tradition, John writes the fourth gospel, three epistles, and the apocalypse Revelation.



That's just under 5% of the Bible. In fact, only Luke and Paul write more of the New Testament than John.

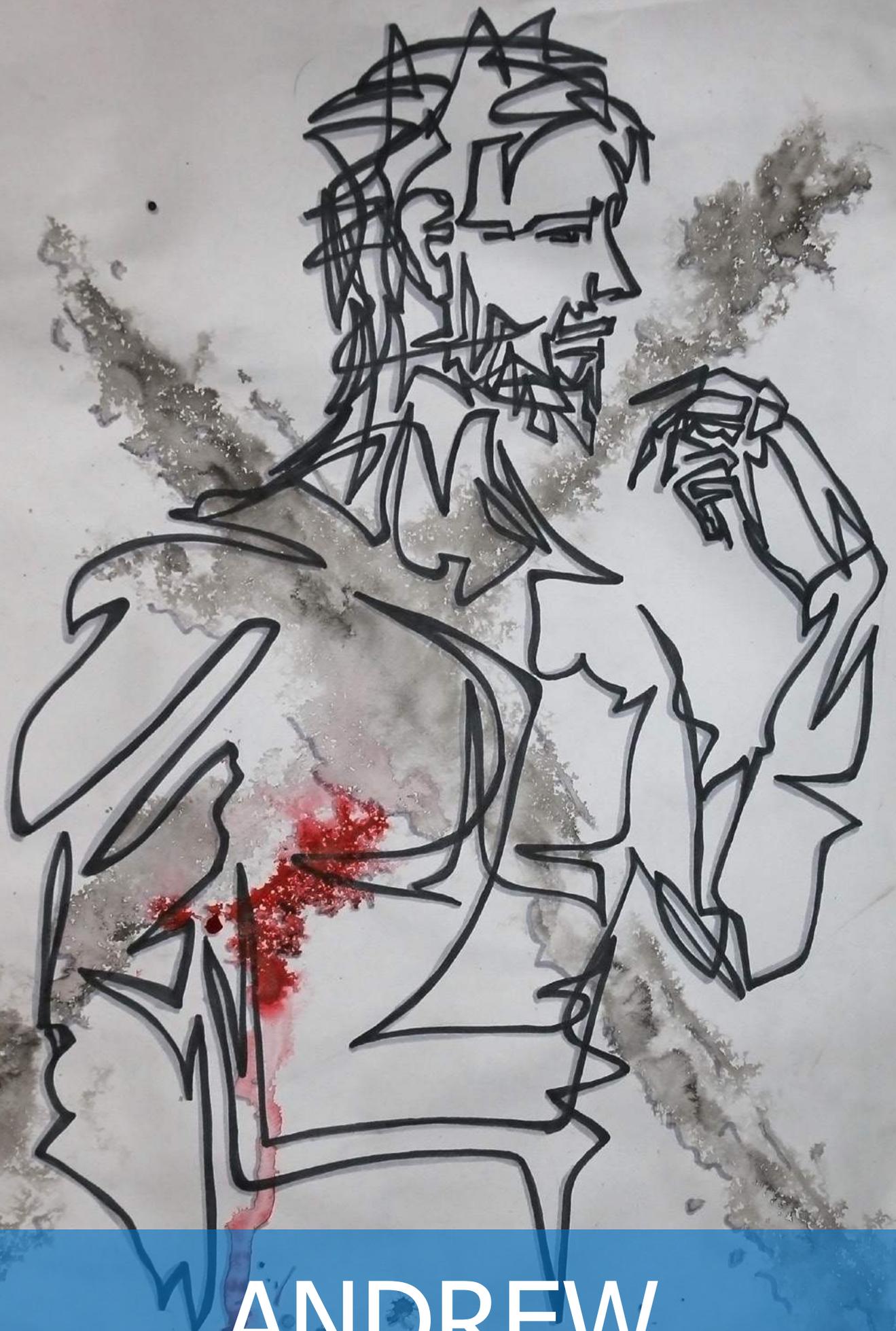


## Exile at the end

John ministered in Ephesus, and is exiled to the Isle of Patmos for his faith. Traditions vary on how the apostle John dies (Rev 1:9).

## The three

Three of the apostles are especially close to Jesus: Peter, James, and John. These men witness Jesus' transfiguration. They see him raise Jairus's daughter from the dead. And they pray with him in Gethsemane (Mt 17:1; Mk 5:37, 14:33).



ANDREW

# Andrew

The Bible doesn't give Andrew a cool nickname like his brother Peter. But the church has one for him: *Protokletos*. It's Greek for "first-called," because of the twelve, Andrew was the first to follow Jesus.

In fact, Andrew was in the discipling business well before the other eleven. Before Jesus begins his ministry, Andrew follows another important prophet: John the Baptist.



One day, John points Jesus out to Andrew, saying Jesus is the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. Andrew spends the rest of the day with Jesus. By nightfall, he's sure of two things:

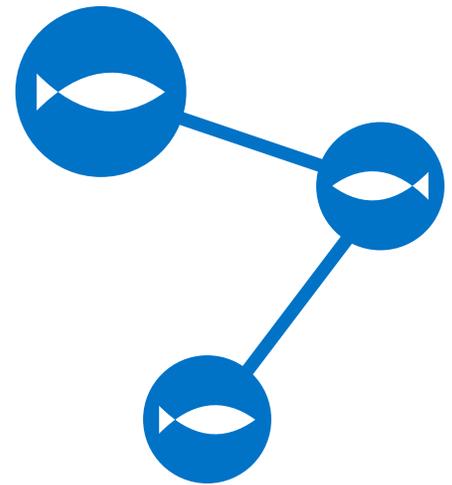
1. Jesus is the long-awaited Messiah.
2. He has to tell his brother Simon (Jn 1:38–41).

# From working nets to networking

Andrew is a fisherman like Peter, and Jesus promises to make them both “fishers of men” (Mt 4:18–19). After the resurrection, Peter leads the early church and converts many to the faith.

But we see Andrew bringing people to Jesus even earlier. In fact, whenever Andrew comes up in the story of Jesus, he’s bringing people to the Lord.

Andrew introduces his brother to Jesus. When 5,000 people get hungry at once, Andrew brings Jesus a boy with bread and fish—and Jesus uses the food to feed the multitude. Andrew even helps Philip bring some God-fearing Greeks to see Jesus (Jn 1:41, 6:8–9, 12:20–22).



## Fun fact

On one occasion, Andrew joins the Three to ask Jesus about the future (Mk 13:3).

# Saint Andrew's Cross

According to tradition, Andrew was bound to an X-shaped cross in Achaea and crucified by the sea.



Today, you can see Saint Andrew's Cross on the Flag of Scotland, as Andrew is Scotland's patron saint.

## Brothers

The Bible says two sets of brothers are member of the twelve: Peter and Andrew, and James and John. Both pairs are fishermen, and both worked together before following Jesus together.

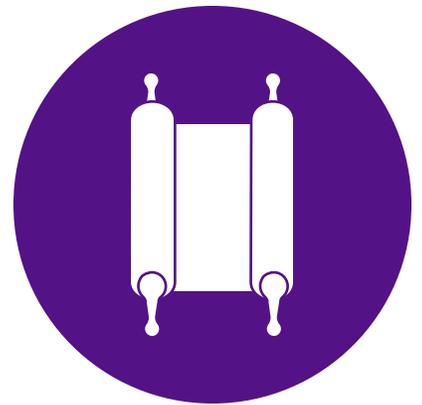


PHILIP

# Philip

Of all the apostles, I'm probably most drawn to Philip. He's a level-headed, well-educated, approachable guy. Plus, his name means "lover of horses," which is pretty cool.

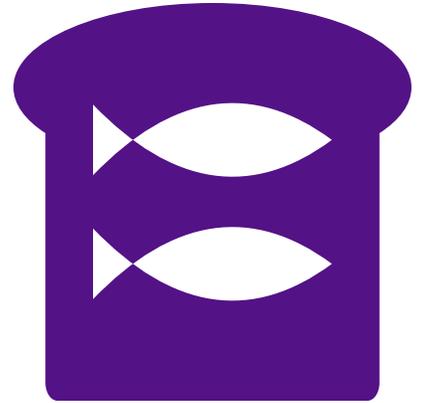
When we first meet Philip, he tells his friend Nathanael that he has found "Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote" (Jn 1:38–41). Philip may have a Greek name, but he's decently familiar with the Jewish Scriptures—our Old Testament.



Philip doesn't get much face time in the gospels of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, but he's vocal in the book of John—that's the only book of the Bible that really tells us anything about Philip.

On that note: there are at least three Philips mentioned in the New Testament. Philip the apostle is easily confused with Philip the evangelist in Acts (Ac 6:5, 8:5ff)—don't get mixed up!

# Pragmatist



Philip takes a practical approach to things, but doesn't always grasp just how supernatural Jesus is.

For example, remember the feeding of the 5,000? When Jesus sees the multitude getting hungry and asks Philip a test question: "Where should we buy bread for everyone?"

Not realizing that Jesus will feed them miraculously, Philip says it's impossible—not even 200 days' wages could feed them all (Jn 6:5–7).

Obviously, this was long before Taco Bell.

Philip has another moment like this on the night of Jesus' betrayal. Right after Jesus says that he is the only way to the Father, Philip proposes that Jesus just show them the Father. Again, Philip doesn't understand that by seeing Jesus, he has seen the Father.

# Inviting and approachable

Like Andrew, Philip invites other people to see Jesus. When Jesus calls Philip to follow him, Philip finds his friend Nathanael, saying, “Come and see” (Jn 1:46).

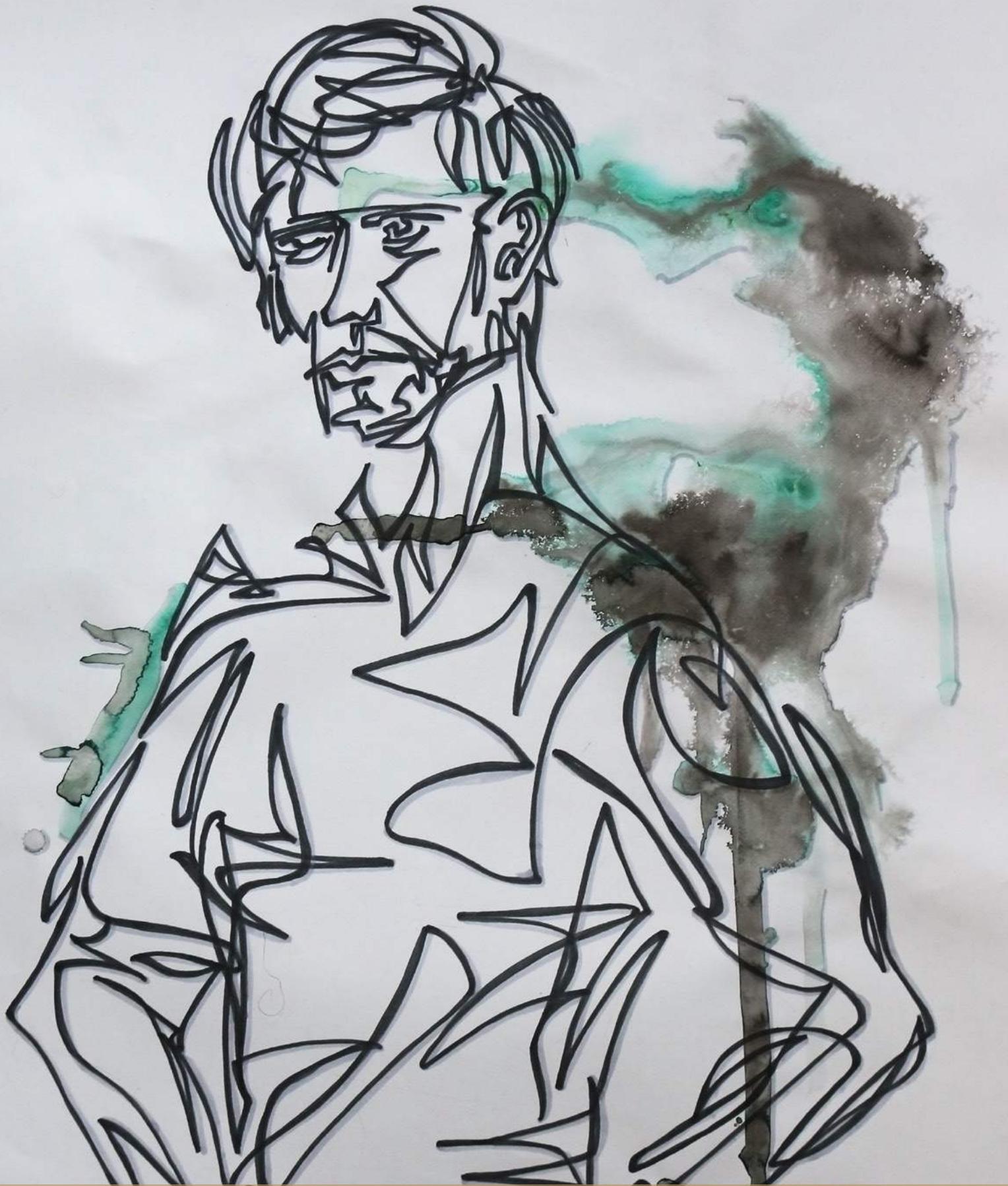


Philip also helps some God-fearing Greeks meet Jesus. The Greeks approach Philip, Philip brings them to Andrew, and they both bring them to the Lord (Jn 12:20–22).

## Died in Greece



According to tradition, Philip took the gospel to Greece, and was martyred in Hierapolis. His tomb was reportedly found there in 2011.

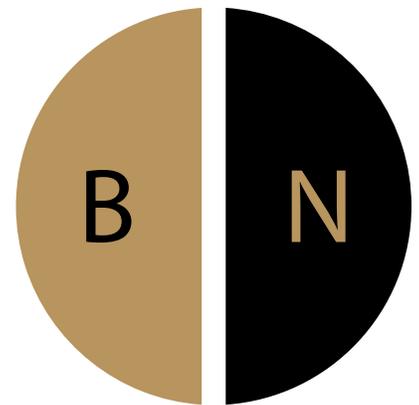


BARTHOLOMEW

# Bartholomew

We don't know much about this guy, folks. Matthew, Mark, and Luke list him as one of the twelve, and that's all we got on the name "Bartholomew."

However, the church has generally assumed that Bartholomew is the same person as the man named Nathanael in John's gospel. There are a few reasons for this.



Firstly, Matthew, Mark, and Luke include Bartholomew in their lists of the twelve apostles, but never mention a Nathanael. There's no Nathanael in Acts or the epistles, either.

Secondly, John never mentions Bartholomew, but he includes Nathanael in stories that otherwise only feature other apostles. For example, he includes Nathanael in the story of Jesus meeting

Peter, Andrew, and Philip—all recognized as members of the twelve by the time the Gospel of John was written.

So that leaves us with a question: “Who’s this Nathanael guy, and why is he showing up in these apostle stories?”

One answer the church has found: Nathanael is Bartholomew. If so, he wouldn’t be the only apostle to go by more than one name—Thaddaeus and Matthew do, too. I’ll side with tradition on this.

Plus, Bartholomew literally means “son of Tolmai.” It’s possible that a man named Tolmai had a son named Nathanael, and some people just called him “Tolmai’s boy.”

## What else do we know?

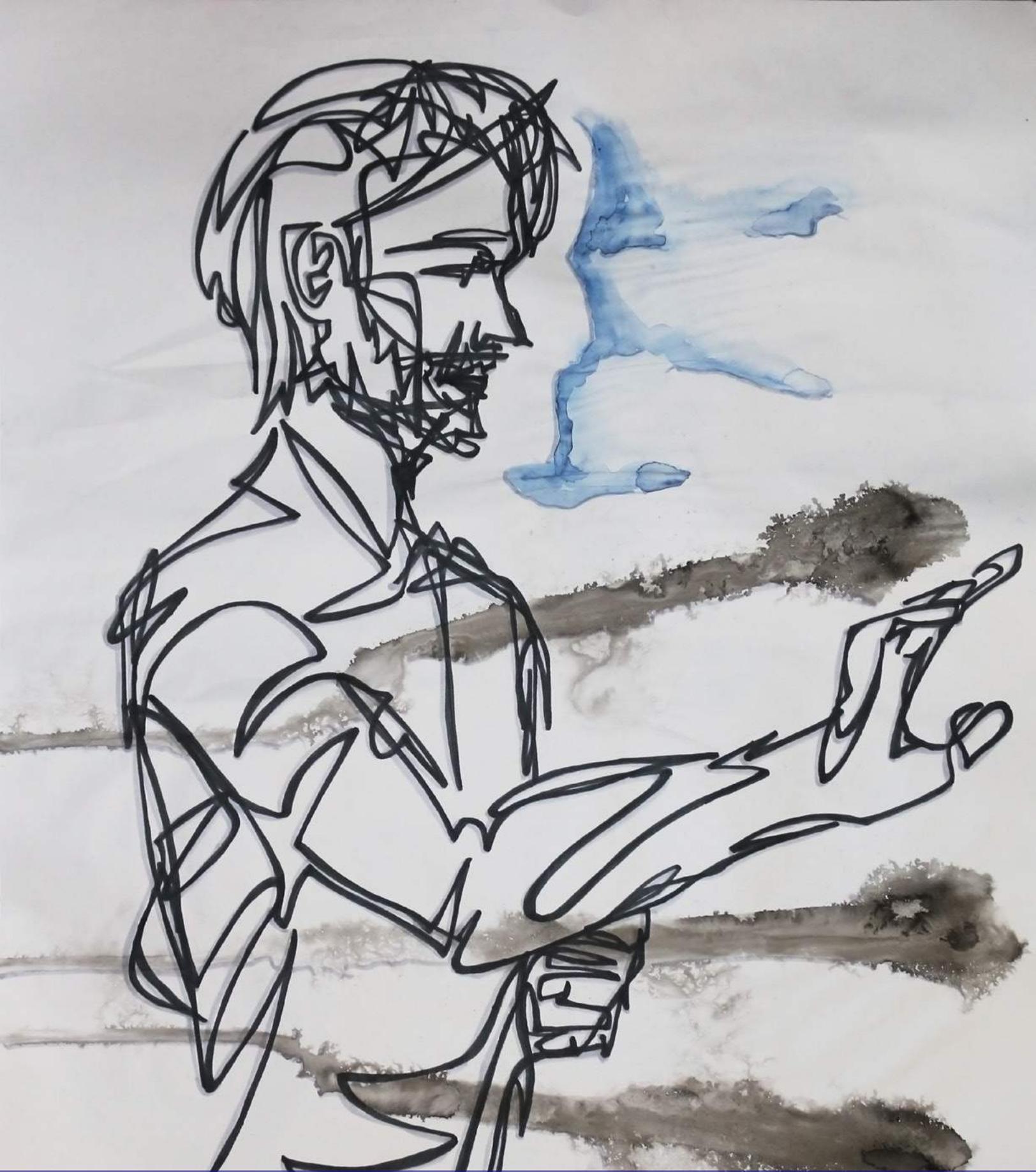
Not much, except that Bartholomew is originally skeptical about Jesus’ hometown. He asks Philip, “Can anything good come out of Nazareth?”



Still, his curiosity gets the better of him, and Bartholomew follows Philip to Jesus. When Jesus meets him, Jesus calls Bartholomew “an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no deceit” (Jn 1:47).

Jesus knows all about Bartholomew, from the motives of his heart to the tree he sits under. Bartholomew declares Jesus to be his Rabbi, God, and King on the spot. But Jesus tells him that he’ll see even greater things (Jn 1:45–51).

And so he does. After Jesus’ resurrection, Nathanael goes fishing with six other apostles and witnesses an apparition of the risen Jesus Christ on the Sea of Galilee (Jn 21:2).



THOMAS

# Thomas

Even if you've never studied the apostles, you've heard about this guy. He's remembered as "doubting Thomas," but in a way, you can't blame him.

Here's the background: some of the other apostles see the Lord Jesus Christ risen from the dead and walking among the living. They go around telling their friends Jesus is alive, even though everyone knew he'd been killed and buried.

To be fair, Thomas isn't the only one who doubts this story (Mt 28:17; Mk 16:11; Lk 24:38). He's just the only one who wants physical proof.

So later, Jesus appears to Thomas and the others. Jesus invites the skeptic to inspect his nail-pierced hands and the hole in his side, where he had been speared. Thomas believes, and proclaims, "My Lord and my God!"



## More than a doubter

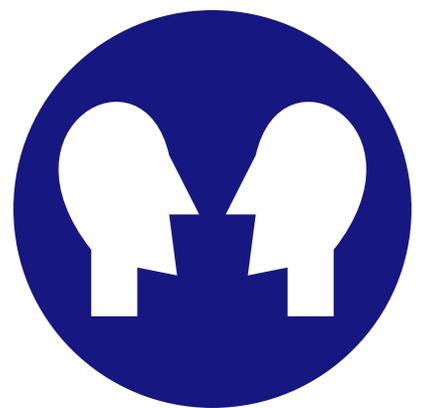
Unfortunately, we don't remember him as "brave Thomas"—even though the Gospel of John paints him that way, too.

When Jesus hears Lazarus is dead, He plans to visit the grave—even though the local Jews want to kill Jesus. The other disciples try to talk Jesus out of it, but it's no good. Jesus is going to Judea.

And it's Thomas who rallies the other disciples to follow Jesus, even though it means they might all die with him (Jn 11:16).

## Didymus

Like Simon "Peter" and the "sons of Thunder," Thomas has a nickname: Didymus, which is Greek for "twin." We don't know why they call him that. If he has a twin, the Bible doesn't say.



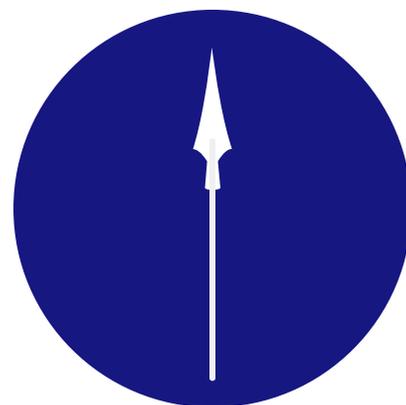
However, Thomas doesn't know where Jesus is going (before the cross), or the way to follow. (Jn 14:5)

## Martyred for his faith

Thomas was originally confused about where Jesus was going and how to follow him (Jn 14:5). But after seeing Jesus alive again, Thomas follows and worships him to the end.

According to tradition, Thomas takes the gospel to India. He converts many, but eventually he is run through by spears for his belief in Jesus.

Thomas comes full circle. His faith begins when he sees Jesus' spear wound. His ministry ends with the same kind of wound. Indeed, Thomas is true to his first recorded words: "Let us also go, so that we may die with Him" (Jn 11:16).





**MATTHEW**

# Matthew

Tradition says Matthew wrote the gospel that bears his name, but the New Testament author didn't have such distinguished beginnings. Before following Jesus, Matthew is a tax collector—one of the most hated kinds of people in that society.

The Jews saw tax collectors as traitors and crooks (Mt 9:11), and they had some good reason for this. Tax collectors took money from their countrymen on behalf of the Roman government. And they weren't always honest when it came to setting tax brackets (Lk 19:8).

But when Jesus sees Matthew sitting at his tax booth, the Lord sees more than a cheater and traitor. He sees a disciple.

And when Jesus calls, Matthew follows.



# Levi?

Matthew likely also went by the name Levi. Luke's and Mark's gospels tell the story of a tax collector named Levi, whose story is almost identical to Matthew's (Mk 2:14–15; Lk 5:27–29).

## Double names

More than half of the apostles go by multiple names:

- Simon/Peter/Cephas
- Thomas/Didymus
- Bartholomew/Nathanael
- Matthew/Levi
- Thaddaeus/Judas/Jude
- James and John / sons of thunder



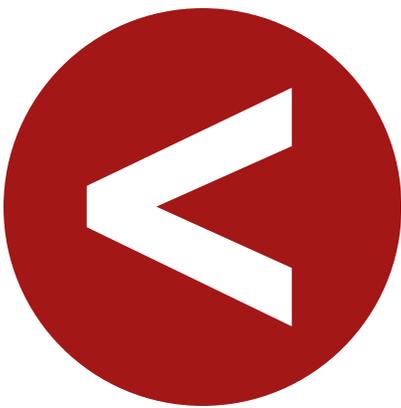
JAMES (ALPHAEUS)

# James, son of Alphaeus

We don't know much about this James aside from who his father was (Alphaeus, obviously).

Because Matthew's father was also named Alphaeus (Mk 2:14), it might be tempting to think of Matthew and James as brothers. However, Matthew specifically points out sets of brothers in his list of the twelve—and doesn't pair himself with James (Mt 10:3).

## James the Less?



The church has nicknamed him “James the Less” to avoid confusion with the son of Zebedee, or “James the Great.”

However, this probably isn't the man Mark calls “James the Less.” “Less” in this sense means “little,” “short,” or even “junior.” (Mk 15:40)



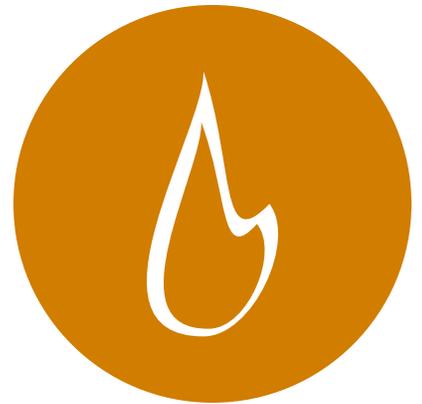
SIMON

# Simon the Zealot

Two apostles are named Simon: one of them is also called Peter, and the other is called “the Zealot.” We don’t know why Simon got this name, but it probably made it a little less confusing for the other apostles.

## What’s a zealot?

“Zealot” means “guy with zeal.” We get the word “zeal” from the Greek word for the sound water makes when it boils. In the Bible, zeal refers to all-consuming, white-hot reverence and desire for something.



That means zeal can be good or bad, depending on what you’re zealous for. For example, Paul encourages us to be zealous for

good deeds (Ti 2:14). But Paul was also zealous about killing off Christians before he met Jesus (Php 3:6)!

But what kind of zealot was Simon?

He might have been a member of a revolutionary nationalist party. The historian Josephus tells us that around 6 A.D. a political party called the Zealots arose. They were led by a man named Judas (not one of the twelve). Their mission: cast off the Roman government so that the Lord's land would be returned to the Lord's people. They were zealous for the land God had promised them.



Luke gives a nod to this party in the book of Acts (Ac 5:37). It's possible that Simon was a member of this revolt as a young man.

Of course, "zealot" may not have been a reference to the political party. Simon may have just been an especially fervent and pious

member of the twelve—so much so that they just nicknamed him “the zealot.”

Remember the nicknames you and your friends gave each other in high school? You can imagine how Simon could have got this nickname ...

*John: “We really need more donkey chow.”*

*James: “Send Simon to get some.”*

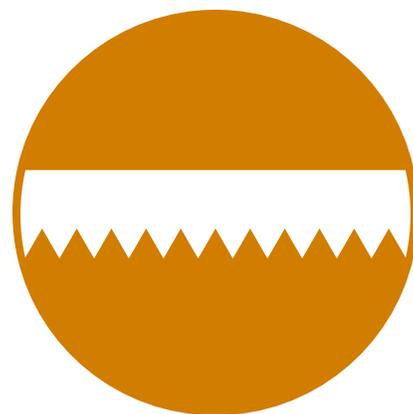
*John: “Which Simon?”*

*James: “I dunno. The zealous one, I guess.”*



## Hacked in two?

According to some traditions, Simon was killed with a saw. Other traditions have him martyred with Thaddaeus (by axe).



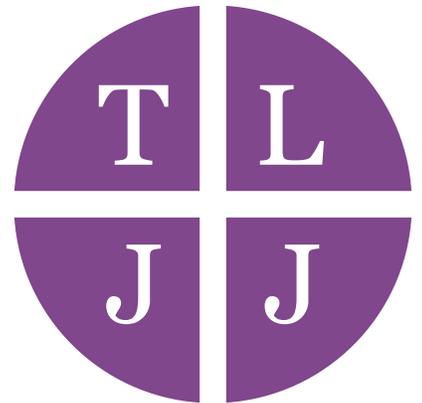


THADDAEUS

# Thaddaeus

We'll call him Thaddaeus for this section of the book, but that's only to avoid confusion. Thaddaeus is known by more names than any other apostle!

Granted, some of that depends on the manuscripts different Bible translations use—and how the translators chose to write his name. Even so, we still use at least four different names when referring to this guy.



## #1: Thaddaeus

When Matthew and Mark list the twelve, they call him Thaddaeus, plain and simple (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18). Most of today's

popular Bibles (NIV, ESB, NLT, NASB) just call him Thaddaeus and move on.

## #2: Labbaeus

However, some Bible translations (KJV, NKJV) say his first name is Labbaeus and Thaddaeus is his surname (Mt 10:3; Mk 3:18).

## #3–4: Judas and Jude

Luke and John call him Judas (or Jude). Or course, they make no room for confusing him with Judas Iscariot, the one who betrays Jesus (Lk 6:16; Jn 14:22).

This is the Saint Jude who's called the patron saint of lost causes.

## Son of James

Luke says Thaddaeus is the son of James, but that doesn't mean he's related to any of the Jameses you've met in this book. James was a common name in Jesus' time. In fact, when Luke calls him the son of James in Acts, there are three guys named James in the same room!

### “What has happened?”

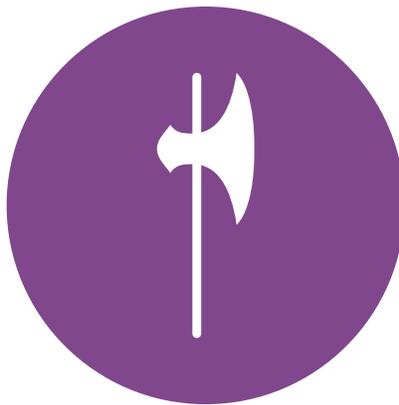
Thaddaeus only has one spoken line in the Bible: “Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?”

Jesus is explaining that he will be leaving for a time. The world will not see him, but those who love him will. Thaddaeus wonders how one group of people will see Jesus and everyone else not notice.

The answer: those who love Jesus will keep Jesus' commandments, and the Holy Spirit will teach them (Jn 14:22–27).

## Herald, evangelist, martyr

Church historian Eusebius says Thaddaeus goes to Edessa “as herald and evangelist.” He works miracles of healing—until he’s beheaded by axe.





JUDAS

# Judas Iscariot

You've probably heard more about this apostle than any other member of the twelve (besides Peter). Human history has seen many a traitor, but nobody rivals Judas Iscariot in infamy. He's the most iconic betrayer of all time: the man who sold his friend and mentor and God into the hands of his murderers.

Here's how it happens.

## History of betrayal

The apostle John tells us that Judas had been doing some shady business long before he turned Jesus over. Judas is the treasurer of the twelve, and he regularly embezzles from the money box (Jn 12:6).



But Judas knows how to keep up appearances. For example, one night a woman named Mary (not Jesus' mother) anoints Jesus

with costly perfume. Judas is disgusted, and says the perfume should have been sold to benefit the poor.

He cleverly advocates for the poor, but only so he can take his cut from the generosity of others (Jn 12:5–6).

## A pathetic price

Judas is a cheap lackey, too. He agrees to hand Jesus over to the chief priests for just 30 pieces of silver (Mt 26:14–15).

To put that in perspective, Moses had told the Jews long beforehand that if a slave is accidentally killed by a farm animal, the animal's owner had to pay the slave's master 30 pieces of silver (Ex 21:32).

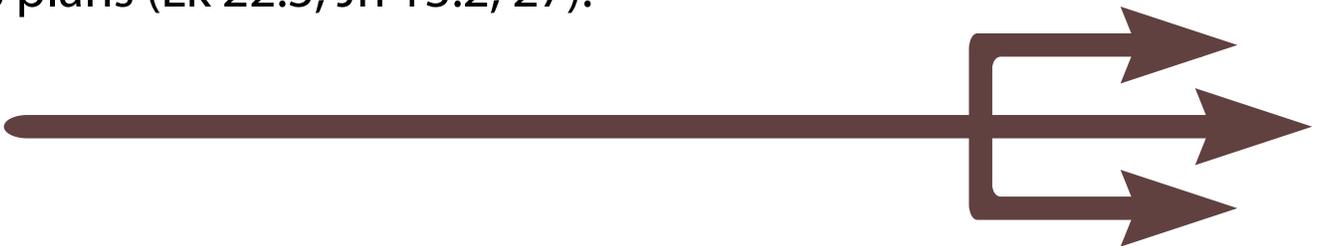


That's right: Judas handed over the Master of the universe for the price of a common slave.

Of course, from this side of the resurrection, we can see that price as another example of Jesus' humility. Paul tells us that Jesus took the form of a bondservant, and humbled himself to a shameful death (at a shameful price) on our behalf (Php 2:6–8).

## Under Satan's influence

Judas was intending to betray Jesus for a while, but when the time comes to pull the trigger, Judas doesn't act alone. Luke and John say Satan enters Judas, moving him to make and execute his plans (Lk 22:3; Jn 13:2, 27).

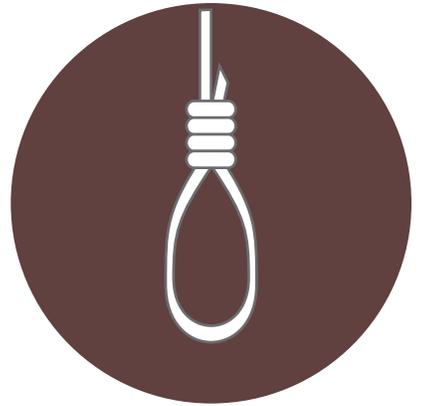


## Kiss of Judas

Judas keeps up his façade right down to the last second. He takes the mob to a place Jesus often met with the apostles, and designates their target with a friendly kiss (Lk 22:48).

# Suicidal

But when Judas sees that the Jews are really going to kill Jesus, the traitor feels guilty. He realizes that he has betrayed an innocent man and tries to return the cash.



But the priests don't care what Judas believes or regrets. They can't accept his silver for the temple treasury (since it's blood money), so they buy a field to bury strangers in—the Field of Blood (Mt 27:3–5).

As for Judas, he hangs himself. A man named Matthias takes his place among the twelve (Ac 1:18–26).

# Any more?

This guide walks through the twelve apostles that followed Jesus during His ministry on earth, but they're not the only ones the Bible calls "apostles."

"Apostle" means "one sent," or "ambassador." And the Bible refers to a few other men as apostles:

1. Matthias is chosen to take Judas' place among the twelve apostles (Ac 1:26).
2. Paul, the missionary who wrote most of the New Testament epistles, is an apostle. Jesus Himself called Paul specifically to preach the gospel to the non-Jewish world (Ro 1:1, 11:13; 2 Co 12:12; Ga 1:1).
3. Barnabas, the missionary who first befriended Paul, is also an apostle (Ac 14:14).

4. Yet another James is called an apostle. This James is Jesus' brother, and probably the author of the New Testament book of James. He leads the church at Jerusalem along with Peter and John (Ga 1:19, 2:9).
5. Paul uses the Greek word for "apostle" in a broader sense to describe a few people of the early church. The word is often translated "messenger"; Epaphroditus is a good example of this (Php 2:25).
6. Along with Paul, Timothy and Silas come as apostles to the Thessalonians (1 Th 2:6).
7. Just as these men were sent by Christ to represent Christ, Jesus was sent by God to represent God. Therefore, the author of Hebrews calls Jesus *the* Apostle of our confession.

So although we tend to think of the twelve as the only apostles, there were a few more in the Bible.

# THANKS FOR READING!

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