

SAINT JAMES THE LESS-APOSTLE OF JESUS

James, son of Alphaeus was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus, appearing under this name in all three of the Synoptic Gospels' lists of the apostles. He is often identified with James the Less and commonly known by that name in church tradition. He is distinct from James, son of Zebedee and in most interpretations also from James, brother of Jesus.^[2] He appears only four times in the New Testament, each time in a list of the twelve apostles.

James, son of Alphaeus is often identified with James the Less, who is only mentioned three times in the Bible, each time in connection with his mother. (Mark 15:40) refers to "*Mary the mother of James the younger and of Joses*", while (Mark 16:1) and (Matthew 27:56) refer to "*Mary the mother of James*". ^[citation needed]

Since there was already another James (James, son of Zebedee) among the twelve apostles, equating James son of Alphaeus with "James the Less" made sense. (James son of Zebedee was sometimes called "James the Greater").

Jerome identifies James, son of Alphaeus with James the Less writing in his work called *The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary* the following:

Do you intend the comparatively unknown James the Less, who is called in Scripture the son of Mary, not however of Mary the mother of our Lord, to be an apostle, or not? If he is an apostle, he must be the son of Alphaeus and a believer in Jesus, "For neither did his brethren believe in him."

The only conclusion is that the Mary who is described as the mother of James the Less was the wife of Alphaeus and sister of Mary the Lord's mother, the one who is called by John the Evangelist "Mary of Clopas".^[4]

Papias of Hierapolis, who lived circa 70-163 AD, in the surviving fragments of his work *Exposition of the Sayings of the Lord* relates that Mary, wife of Alphaeus is mother of James the Less:

Mary, mother of James the Less and Joseph, wife of Alphaeus was the sister of Mary the mother of the Lord, whom John names of Cleophas, either from her father or from the family of the clan, or for some other reason.^[5]

Therefore, James, son of Alphaeus would be the same as James the Less.