



James the Less

Transformed People: The Twelve Apostles
(B.L. Newberry, Spring 2020)

James within the Twelve (1 of 2)



Luke 6:14-16

Peter
Andrew
James
John

Philip
Bartholomew
Matthew
Thomas

James (the less)

Simon
Thaddeus
Judas Iscariot

- James is referred to by two names: James the son of Alphaeus [[Luke 6:14-16](#)] and James the Less [[Mark 15:40](#)]. We also learn from the Mark 15 account that his mother's name was Mary and he had a brother named Joses.
- The Greek word translated “Less” literally means “small in stature”. This could, therefore, physically describe him or it could denote he is younger than James (the brother of John).
- James' mother (Mary) was at the crucifixion and went to the tomb on the resurrection morning [[Mark 15 & 16](#)].

James within the Twelve (2 of 2)



Luke 6:14-16

Peter
Andrew
James
John

Philip
Bartholomew
Matthew
Thomas

James (the less)

Simon
Thaddeus
Judas Iscariot

- A comparison of Mark 15:40 and John 19:25 could indicate that James' mother was a sister to Mary, the mother of Jesus. It is not certain if this is the case, however.

There were also *some* women looking on from a distance, among whom were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the Less and Joses, and Salome. [Mark 15:40]

But standing by the cross of Jesus were His mother, and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. [John 19:25]

- A final item of interest is that both Matthew (Levi) and James are called a “son of Alphaeus”. It is possible they were brothers, but scripture never confirms this point.

James' Character

Working from the Background



- While we know some about the family of James, we not nothing more. Scripture never records any conversation between James and Jesus or any specific act performed by James.
- It seems that his nicknames, James the Less, also described his personality. He was not a person that needed to be in the front or to have attention. He was content to work behind the scenes.
- We know, however, that he remained faithful and received the full reward of being an apostle of the Lord.

Revelation 21:13-15 (NASB)

There were three gates on the east and three gates on the north and three gates on the south and three gates on the west. And the wall of the city had twelve foundation stones, and on them were the twelve names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb.

The Power of Humility

Transformed Away from Self



- In the same way, you who are younger, submit yourselves to your elders. All of you, clothe yourselves with humility toward one another, because, “God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble.” Humble yourselves, therefore, under God’s mighty hand, that he may lift you up in due time. [**1 Peter 5:5-6**]
- Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves. [**Philippians 2:3**]
- **This is a huge transformative step. We often want credit and attention. Yet, scripture encourages humility.** Recall the words of Christ, So the last will be first, and the first will be last. [**Matt. 20:16**]

Stories of James' Late Life

(Mix of historical and Biblical sources)



- Traditions about James the Less are few and confusing. The biggest issue is he is often confused with James the half brother of Jesus. Admittedly, this is somewhat unclear. As **Mark 6:3** states that Jesus had brothers names James and Joses. However, James the Less is also called the “son of Alphaeus”. As a result, traditions blend the stories.
- What little is recorded would tend to indicate James the Less carried the gospel into Egypt and was likely crucified for his faith.