

~ Saint James the Great ~



Feast Day ~ July 25th

James the Great was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. According to the New Testament, he was the second of the apostles to die, after Judas Iscariot, and the first to be martyred. Saint James is the patron saint of Spain and, according to tradition, what are believed to be his remains are held in Santiago de Compostela in Galicia, Spain.

He was also known as:

James, son of Zebedee,

James, brother of John,

Saint James the Great, Saint James the Greater,

St. James Son of Thunder,

St. James the Major, Saint James the Elder,
or Saint Jacob, James the Apostle or Santiago.

James was born into a family of Jewish fishermen on the Sea of Galilee. His parents were Zebedee and Salome. James is styled "the Greater" to distinguish him from the other apostle James "the Lesser," with "greater" meaning older or taller, rather than more important. James the Great was the brother of John the Apostle.

James is described as one of the first disciples to join Jesus. The Synoptic Gospels state that James and John were preparing to fish with their father by the seashore when Jesus called them to follow him.

James, along with his brother John, and Peter, formed an informal triumvirate among the Twelve Apostles. Jesus allowed them to be the only Apostles present at three particular occasions during his public ministry: the raising of Jairus' daughter, the transfiguration of Jesus, and Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane.

James and John (or, in another tradition, their Mother) asked Jesus to grant them seats on his right and left in his glory. Jesus rebuked them, asking if they were ready to drink from the cup He was going to drink from and saying the honor was not even for Him to grant. The other Apostles were annoyed with them. James and his brother wanted to call down fire on a Samaritan town, but were rebuked by Jesus.

The Acts of the Apostles records that "Herod the King" had James executed "by the sword."

Henry Alford suggests that he was probably beheaded.

The Feast Day of St. James is celebrated on July 25th on the liturgical calendars of the Catholic, Eastern Orthodox, True Orthodox, Anglican, Lutheran and certain other Protestant churches. The traditional reason why St. James' feast day is held on the 25th of July is the belief that he was martyred on this date in the year 44 AD. However, some historians argue that July 25th was chosen so as to coincide with the Feast Day of Saint Christopher.

The National Day of Galicia is also celebrated on July 25th: St James is its patron saint.

The site of martyrdom is located within the Armenian Apostolic Cathedral of St. James in the Armenian Quarter of Jerusalem. The Chapel of Saint James the Great, located to the left of the sanctuary, is the traditional place where he was martyred when King Agrippa ordered him to be beheaded (Acts 12:1–2). His head is believed to be buried under the altar, marked by a piece of red marble and surrounded by six votive lamps.

