



Saint James the Greater, Apostle

St James the Greater was one of the disciples of Jesus Christ and thought to be the cousin of Jesus himself, as the son of the sister of the Virgin Mary and the brother of St. Jude Thaddeus. He worked as a fisherman with his brother, John, his father, Zebedee, and his partner, Simon. John and James were followers of John the Baptist and later, Jesus.

James, along with his brother John, left life as a fisherman when Jesus called him to be a “fisher of men”. He followed Jesus as one of his disciples until Jesus was crucified by the Romans.

Following the crucifixion of Jesus Christ, James made a pilgrimage to the Iberian Peninsula to spread the word of Jesus.

When he returned to Judea, he was beheaded by King Herod Agrippa I in the year 44AD. This is detailed in the Bible in Acts 12 of the New Testament, “King Herod extended his hands to harm certain ones from the church. He killed James the brother of John with the sword. Seeing that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to arrest Peter also,” (Act 12 Modern English Version).

The remains, or relics, of St James the Greater, were then transported by his followers to the Iberian Peninsula (today’s Galicia in Spain) and are said to be buried in Santiago de Compostela, which is why St James the Greater is now the patron saint of Spain.

According to legend, his body, along with his followers, sailed to the Iberian Peninsula on a rudderless ship with no sail. Landing on the northwest coast of the peninsula they proceeded up the River Ulla to land at Iria Flavia, (modern-day Padron). The Celtic Queen Lupia ruled these lands, and when asked by James’ followers if they could bury his body she refused and sent troops after them. While chasing the followers of James with his body across a bridge, it collapsed, killing her troops.

Queen Lupia then converted to Christianity and provided an ox and cart for the followers of James to transport the body.

Unsure of where they should bury the sacred remains, his followers prayed on this and decided to let the ox continue until it chose a place to rest.

After pausing at a stream the ox finally came to rest under an oak tree at the top of a hill. It’s here that the Cathedral of Santiago stands today.