

# Historic Overview: Philip and Nathaniel (Bartholomew)

## Philip

**Philip the Apostle** was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus. Later Christian traditions describe Philip as the apostle who preached in Greece, Syria, and Phrygia.

The Gospel of John describes Philip's calling as a disciple of Jesus. Philip is described as a disciple from the city of Bethsaida, and connects him to Andrew and Peter, who were from the same town. It further connects him to Nathaniel (sometimes identified with Bartholomew) whom Philip first introduces to Jesus. The authors of the Synoptic Gospels also describe Philip as a disciple of Jesus.

Of the four Gospels, Philip figures most prominently in the Gospel of John. His two most notable appearances in the narrative are as a link to the Greek community [Jn 12:20–36]. Philip bore a Greek name and we may infer from the context that Philip spoke Greek.

Philip introduced many members of this community to Jesus, most notably, Peter, Andrew, James, John and Nathaniel. During the Last Supper [Jn 14:8–11] when Philip asked Jesus to show them the Father, he provides Jesus the opportunity to teach his disciples about the unity of the Father and the Son.

Philip is always listed fifth among the apostles.[Mt 10:3][Mk 3:18][Lk 6:14][Acts 1:13]

Later stories about Saint Philip's life can be found in the anonymous *Acts of Philip*, probably written by a contemporary of Eusebius. This non-canonical book recounts the preaching and miracles of Philip. Following the resurrection of Jesus, Philip was sent with his sister Mariamne and Bartholomew to preach in Greece, Phrygia, and Syria. Included in the *Acts of Philip* is an appendix, entitled "Of the Journey of Philip the Apostle: From the Fifteenth Act Until the End, and Among Them the Martyrdom."

This appendix gives an account of Philip's martyrdom in the city of Hierapolis. According to this account, through a miraculous healing and his preaching Philip converted the wife of the proconsul of the city. This enraged the proconsul, and he had Philip, Bartholomew, and Mariamne all tortured. Philip and Bartholomew were then crucified upside-down, and Philip preached from his cross. As a result of Philip's preaching the crowd released Bartholomew from his cross, but Philip insisted that they not release him, and Philip died on the cross.

## **Bartholomew (Nathaniel):**

Bartholomew was one of the Twelve Apostles of Jesus, and is usually identified as Nathaniel (mentioned in the first chapter of John's Gospel). He was introduced to Christ through Philip, another of the twelve apostles as per John 1:43-51, where the name Nathaniel first appears. He is also mentioned as "Nathaniel of Cana in Galilee" in (John 21:2). Interestingly, the account of the calling of Nathaniel of Cana occurs at the end of John 1, immediately followed by the account of Jesus' miracle at the Marriage at Cana in John 2. The name Nathaniel is the one used for him in John's Gospel.

Though Bartholomew was listed among the Twelve Apostles of Christ in Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and also appears as one of the witnesses of the Ascension [Acts 1:4,12,13] each time named in the company of Philip.

In the Gospel of John, [1:45-51] Nathaniel is introduced as a friend of Philip. He is described as initially being skeptical about the Messiah coming from Nazareth, saying: "Can anything good come out of Nazareth?", but nonetheless, follows Philip's invitation. Jesus immediately characterizes him as "Here is a man in whom there is no deception." Nathaniel recognizes Jesus as "the Son of God" and "the King of Israel". Nathaniel reappears at the end of John's gospel [21:2] as one of the disciples to whom Jesus appeared at the Sea of Galilee after the Resurrection.

Along with his fellow apostle Jude, Bartholomew is reputed to have brought Christianity to Caucasian Armenia in the 1st century. Thus both saints are considered the patron saints of the Armenian Apostolic Church. Saint Bartholomew is also to have undertaken mission trips to India.

He is said to have been martyred in Albanopolis in Armenia. According to one account, he was beheaded, but a more popular tradition holds that he was skinned alive and crucified, head downward. He is said to have converted Polymius, the king of Armenia, to Christianity. Astyages, Polymius' brother, consequently ordered Bartholomew's execution. The account of Bartholomew being skinned alive is the most represented in works of art, and consequently Bartholomew is often shown with a large knife, holding his own skin (as in Michelangelo's *Last Judgment*), or both. Bartholomew is also the patron saint of tanners.

### **Miracles after his death:**

During World War II, the Fascist regime of Italy looked for ways to finance their activities. The order was given to take the silver statue of St Bartholomew and melt it down. The statue was weighed, and it was found to be only a few grams. It was returned to its place in the Cathedral of Lipari. In reality, the statue is made from many kilograms of silver and it is considered a miracle that it was not melted down. St Bartholomew is credited with many other miracles having to do with the weight of objects.