



Who is the Apostle identified as Bartholomew?

He may be identified in the Gospels under another name...

Each Gospel and ancient list of Apostles mentions a Bartholomew among the Twelve. But there is no mention of “Bartholomew” beyond his name. Other Apostles appear in episodes throughout Jesus’ public life. Others have historically-recorded dialogues, actions, and ministries. But not Bartholomew.

However, this may be because we are looking for evidence under the wrong name.

Bartholomew is a patronymic name, meaning “Son of Talmy,” and scholarly tradition has acknowledged Bartholomew’s identity in the Gospels as the man called Nathanael, a name meaning “God has given.”

In John’s Gospel, when Jesus first sees Nathanael, He calls out to him with a reference to the Psalms, “Behold, an Israelite indeed, in whom there is no guile!” (John 1:47, Psalm 32:2)

Immediately following this exclamation, Our Lord reveals that He knew Nathanael even as he sat under the fig tree. Nathanael responds to this moment of recognition with a profound confession of faith, “Rabbi, you are the Son of God! You are the King of Israel!” (John 1:49)

After the Ascension, Bartholomew traveled to India, Armenia, and Azerbaijan, where he was martyred for his faith. His body traveled the globe before arriving in Rome in 998 as a gift to Emperor Otto II. Upon his final burial and arrival in Rome, the beautiful church, San Bartolomeo all’Isola, was rededicated in his honor.

San Bartolomeo all’Isola is fascinating for many reasons, particularly its unique location. In the center of the Tiber River, right in the heart of Rome, there is a small island that has been covered with siding so that it almost appears to be an anchored ship. This is the Island Tiber and rising from its land is the beautiful Basilica of St. Bartholomew on the Island, San Bartolomeo all’Isola.