

The Apostle John in the New Testament

Christian tradition identifies the "beloved disciple," whose testimony is incorporated into the fourth New Testament Gospel, as John the son of Zebedee, one of Jesus's original twelve disciples. What do we know about this person from other New Testament writings?

- John and his brother James were among the first disciples called by Jesus. They were fishermen who left their nets and their father, Zebedee, when Jesus called them to follow him (Mark 1:19–20).
- Along with his brother James and the disciple Peter, John seems to have belonged to an inner circle among Jesus's followers. The trio of Peter, James, and John are invited to accompany Jesus when he raises Jairus's daughter from the dead (Mark 5:37), when he is transfigured on a mountaintop (Mark 9:2), and when he prays in Gethsemane (Mark 14:33). There is also an episode in which the three of them are said to question Jesus privately (Mark 13:3).
- James and John bore the nickname "Boanerges," meaning "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17), and their headstrong ways sometimes got them in trouble with Jesus or the other disciples. In one instance they ask Jesus to guarantee them the two best seats in glory (Mark 10:35–41), and in another they offer to call down fire from heaven to destroy a Samaritan village that has refused hospitality to Jesus (Luke 9:51–55).
- John's brother (James) was the first of the twelve apostles to die as a martyr (Acts 12:2), and John went on to become a prominent missionary in the early church. He is specifically mentioned as testifying boldly before Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (see Acts 3:1–11; 4:1, 13, 19–20) and as a key missionary worker among the Samaritans (Acts 8:14–25). He became known as "a pillar of the church," one of three people whom the apostle Paul regarded as the key leaders of the Christian movement (Gal. 2:9).