

Readings for Today: *Revelation 21: 9 – 14; Psalm 144 (145): 10 – 18; John 1: 45 – 51.*

Bartholomew is one of the Twelve Apostles, named in the Gospels of Mark and Matthew, and by Luke in his Gospel and in the *Acts of the Apostles*. He is not mentioned in the Gospel of John, nor are we told anything about him beyond his name and his place among the Twelve.

But – as the Gospel Reading for today shows – there has been a long tradition of identifying him with Nathanael, who does appear in John's – and only John's – Gospel.

The argument for making this identification seems to depend partly on the way that John links the apostle Philip with Nathanael, while the lists of the Twelve place Philip near Bartholomew.

But what is really important about Bartholomew is indicated by today's first reading from the Apocalypse of John the Theologian. He is one of the Twelve whose witness to the Resurrection of the crucified and buried Jesus is the foundation of the Church.

John's vision of *Jerusalem, the holy city*, teaches us the origin, the foundation and – later in chapter 21 – the eternal destiny of the Church. Its origin is in the people of Israel, the names of whose twelve tribes are *inscribed over the twelve gates*. Its foundation is the apostolic teaching, represented by *twelve foundation stones, each one of which bore the name of one of the twelve apostles of the Lamb*.

Later verses take up the images in the book of Isaiah, which describe the future of the city of Jerusalem, restored after the exile in Babylon. The gates of the city *shall never be shut*, and through them *they shall bring the glory and honour of the nations* – that is all that is good of every nation and culture.

Today's Collect seems to pick up these themes when it prays that the *Church may become for all the nations the sacrament* – the sign and the means – *of salvation for all the nations*.

Tradition has Bartholomew preaching the Gospel among other places in India, Greater Armenia, Mesopotamia, Persia and Egypt. He is customarily shown with a flaying knife, the instrument of his martyrdom.

The building of his church in Rome on the site of a temple to Asclepius, the god of healing, may account for the connection of Saint Bartholomew to hospitals like "Barts" in London.