

The Master's Men Part 4: James the Son of Alphaeus

Scripture: Matthew 10:3-4

Code: 2275

Turn in your Bible with me to the tenth chapter of Matthew, Matthew chapter 10. In the wonderful ongoing experience of studying the gospel of Matthew, we have come to chapter 10. The chapter begins with an introduction of the 12 disciples and follows from there to discuss their initial sending ministry. Before we get into how the Lord equipped and sent them, we've been looking at who they are. And just as a setting, let me read verses 1 through the first part of verse 5. Speaking of the Lord it says, "And when he had called unto him his 12 disciples, he gave them power against unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all manner of sickness and all manner of disease. Now, the names of the 12 apostles are these: the first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew, his brother; James, the son of Zebedee, and John, his brother; Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew, the tax collector; James, the son of Alphaeus and Lebbeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus; Simon, the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed him. These 12, Jesus sent forth."

Now, this is part 4 in our series on the Master's men, and we've been looking at these individuals whom our Lord chose and sent to preach the kingdom, to heal, to cast out demons. We've found, I think, that it's fascinating to note that in spite of what is traditionally believed about them, they were very common men, very much like we are. Very opposite the saintliness that we may assume belonged to them in an almost otherworldly manner. Just in introducing our thoughts for this morning, I was reading a quote this week by Henry Drummond who was an author, preacher, who wrote the little book, "The Greatest Thing in the World" on First Corinthians 13. On one occasion when he was in England he was invited to speak at a very uppity, snobbish, high-class, West End London club. Upon his arrival, he found all of the members present and everything was arranged for his message. And he began his speech with this very provocative truth: "Ladies and Gentlemen, the entrance fee into the kingdom of heaven is nothing. However, the annual subscription is everything." Now, those men in that club knew about annual subscriptions and entrance fees; that's how they got in. It was a well-stated introduction. And that's how it is in the kingdom of God: the entrance fee is nothing, free gift. The annual subscription is everything.

Now, in this series from Matthew 10, we're examining men who were willing to pay everything. They were willing to go to the ultimate sacrifice. They were willing to turn their back on their profession, their lifestyle, their homes, their own choices in life to follow Jesus Christ. These 12 gave everything. They walked away from their nets, their tax tables, their political involvements, their enterprises totally committed to following Jesus Christ wherever He led them. And may I suggest to you that they were a few among many who were not so willing.

Look with me for a moment at John chapter 6, and I want to give you a contrast out of which the message this morning I think will flow with deeper meaning. Now, Jesus had many who followed Him. In fact, unnumbered multitudes followed Him. They were attracted by His personal magnetism, they were attracted by the power of what He said and its ring of truth and conviction in their hearts. They were attracted by His ability to do miracles and signs and wonders. They were fascinated by Him and by the things He said and did. And so wherever you see Jesus, you see this mass of people following. Now, all of these people in one sense or another could be classified as disciples, for the word *maths* in the Greek simply means a learner. They were there taking it in, learning about Him. The word doesn't really say anything about their commitment. That's why chapter 10 of Matthew starts out with 12 disciples, and then a verse later it says apostles. First, they were learners; then they were sent when they had shown that they had learned their lessons. But not all were sent, because not all were willing to learn all the lessons.

For illustration's sake, look at verse 26 of John 6. It is morning; it is the morning after the morning after Jesus had fed the 5,000 men, plus women, plus children. As morning breaks, He sees the same crowd back again. I mean why not? They got a free dinner; why not go for a free breakfast? And so, they're all back, and Jesus says to them in verse 26, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, 'You seek me, not because you saw the miracles, but because you did eat of the loaves, and were filled.'" In other words He says to them: your interest in Me is not supernatural; it is not because you saw the divine hand of God. It is not because you saw miracles which spoke of the divine dimension. It's because you ate and got filled up. In other words, you are living on a totally physical level, and your attraction to Me has to do with free food and physical healing. Verse 27, stop working is what He says, "For the food that perishes, you better begin to work for food that endures to everlasting life." In other words, you better get off the physical, onto the spiritual. You need to leave the natural dimension for the supernatural. You need to be more concerned with eternity than you are with time, with heaven than you are with earth. They were attracted to Him because of what they could see that applied to their physical living, not really thinking about the spiritual at all. And so, He will not accept them at that level, and pushes them past that.

Dropping down to verse 53, same day, same crowd, same setting. And again He says to them, "Verily, verily, I say unto you, unless you eat of the flesh of the Son of Man, and drink his blood, you have no life in you." In other words when you're thinking about life, don't think about it on the physical level; think about it on the spiritual level and recognize that unless you eat My flesh and drink My blood, you have no life on the spiritual plane. Verse 54 says, "He who eats my flesh, and drinks my blood, has eternal life; and I'll raise him up at the last day. For my flesh is food indeed," the real food, *alths*, for real, "and my blood is real drink." The truest kind, which is the spiritual. "He that eateth my flesh, and drinketh my blood, dwelleth in me, and I in him." Now, this is an amazing statement. What is He saying? Simple, really. He's not talking about physically eating His flesh and drinking His blood. That would be cannibalism; anybody knows that. He's making an analogy, and He is saying: you

cannot come to Me simply to grant physical desires; you must take in all of Me. You will take Me on this basis, all or nothing. He is simply saying: you have to take Me all in as if you were consuming Me. Everything I am, everything I say, everything I do.

They wanted free food and miracles but they weren't interested in really taking Jesus Christ for all that He was. Look at verse 60, "Many, therefore, of his disciples," learners, "when they heard him say this," in the synagogue there at Capernaum, "they said, 'This is an hard saying. Who can hear this?'" Now, some people say this means they didn't understand it, I don't agree with that. I think they understood it perfectly. The word hard is *sklros*: stiff, unbending. And they're saying this is an objectionable, offensive, impossible to accept statement. They're not saying it's hard to understand. It's stiff, it's uncompromising, it's unbending, it's absolute, it's resolute. Jesus is saying, I alone and only I am able to give you life, and you have to take Me in, all of Me, to have that life. And they're saying, we can't handle that, we cannot accept that. You see, false disciples, and you see if this isn't true, just think it through, false disciples reject Christ's words. They take only what fits their lifestyle. That's why there are so many people today who want to jump on the bandwagon, and they want to identify with Jesus, and they want to claim to be born again, and wear a cross around their neck, or a fish sign on their car. They want to talk about Jesus, but when you start to point them in the direction of explicit commands in the Bible, they're not interested. False disciples ultimately will accept only what fits their desires and their lifestyle, and they'll bail out of the rest.

They didn't like what He said, and they did understand it. And as a result of that, Jesus said in verse 61, "Does this offend you?" He doesn't say, are you confused? He says, does this offend you? And He uses *skandaliz*. The word *skandaliz* basically had to do with a stick that was in a trap, and they put the bait on the stick and the animal would come, and the stick would kill them. Because as soon as they grabbed the bait, pulled the stick, the trap would fall and they'd be dead. What is He saying? He's saying, when I fed you it was okay, and when I healed you it was okay. We had something going. But when I said you take all of Me or none, did that kill off our relationship? Did that end anything we had going? Was that a trap for you that snuffed out the hope of any relationship for us? Did that end it?

And indeed it did; go down to verse 66, "From that time many of his disciples went back," back where? Just back, back to their former life, "and walked no more with him." Why? Too much, too much was expected, too much was required. They weren't interested in total commitment. They bailed out. Free food? That's great. Healing? Super. Commitment? Not interested. Verse 67, "Jesus said to the 12." Listen, after everybody leaves, guess who's still there? 12 guys. What I'm trying to show you is: these are not just sort of tagalongs; these 12 are the ones who counted the cost, stuck it out, paid the price when the rest bailed out. And He said to them, "Will you also go away?" And you don't understand that in English you have to see the Greek. The Greek is a class of condition that should expect a no answer. In other words Jesus said this, and if you were looking at it in the Greek, "You won't also go away, will you?" Peter speaks for the group and says, "Where would we go? You

have the words of eternal life. And we believe and are sure that you are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Then, Jesus points out that even among them, one of them’s a devil. But the point was this: the crowd was on the surface in the physical; Peter says, we’ve gone past that, we’re looking at a spiritual truth, we see You as the Messiah, the Son of the living God. You got it, Peter.

Now, why did I take you to that passage? Turn back to Matthew 10, because, beloved, I want you to understand that these men that we’re dealing with in this chapter are men who have made the decision. They’ve crossed the line. They’ve made the total commitment. They will follow Jesus Christ, eating His flesh and drinking His blood, and paying whatever price there has to be paid. Commitment. Do you remember the disciple who went away because he wanted to bury his father? Remember the disciple who went away because he wanted to say goodbye to his relatives? The disciple who went away because he wanted comfort? That’s not these men. These have made the commitment and paid the price. This is the cream of the crop. Why do I say that? Because I’m about to introduce to you three men that we don’t know anything about. And at least, if we don’t know anything else, we ought to know that they made the commitment, right? Because when you take obscure names, and we’re going to be looking today at James, the son of Alphaeus; Lebbaeus, surnamed Thaddaeus; and Simon the Zealot. At least if we don’t know anything about them, the tendency is to sort of figure them as second class sort of out of the way stragglers, when the fact is they had made the same commitment that Peter and everybody else made: they crossed the line in utter, total obedience to Christ.

Now, we’ve been asking a question, and the question we’ve been asking is: what kind of people does God use in His special service? When the Lord went out to pick people, what kind did He pick? And we’ve found some interesting answers, haven’t we? He picked all kinds, all kinds of people. I mean, we have seen that the Lord can basically take any kind of raw material at all, and use it for the advance of His glorious eternal kingdom. Longfellow could take a worthless piece of paper, and write a poem on it, and make it instantly worth thousands of dollars. That’s genius. Rockefeller could sign his name to a piece of paper and make it worth millions of dollars. That’s riches. Uncle Sam can take a gold stamp or a gold stamp, put an eagle on a coin, make it worth \$20.00. A mechanic can take material worth

\$5.00 and instantly make it worth \$500.00, and they say it’s skill. An artist can take a fifty cent piece of canvas, and paint on it, and make it worth thousands of dollars. And Jesus Christ can take a worthless, sinful life, wash it in the blood, put His Spirit in it, and make it a blessing, and that’s called sanctification, and that’s what the Lord is in the business of doing: taking rough, raw material and using it.

There’s a church in Strasbourg. In the Second World War, it was bombed along with a lot of other churches. The people who went to that church came in after the bombing to see what was left of their beloved church, and they found that the entire roof had fallen in. In the middle of the church, they had a very beautiful statue of Christ with His hands outstretched that had been carved some centuries

before by a great artist. It was a very important piece of art to the church, and when they came back and found that the church had fallen down, to their surprise they found that the statue still stood remaining. However, one of the beams had fallen across the hands and sheared both the hands off. The townspeople hurried to a sculptor who lived in the town and said, would you be kind enough to replace the hands on our statue? And he was willing to do it for nothing. He proposed that to the church leaders and they had a board meeting. After the meeting they came out to announce to the artist that they had rejected his offer. The reason being, they felt that the statue without the hands would be the greatest illustration possible for the fact that God does His work through His people, and the only hands He has are their hands. So, the statue remained without hands.

In a very real sense, that's true. Jesus Christ chooses human hands, and sometimes they seem to be the most infirm hands, the least potentially successful. And as we have been looking at the apostles, we have been amazed I think, at their lack of qualification. In fact, there is not of executive search organization in the country who would have picked up any one of these guys. They just didn't cut it, by the world's standards.

Group one had some pretty strong leaders, James and Peter; some pretty solid lovers of men, Andrew and John. And group two, there's some pretty good men there: Philip, Bartholomew, Thomas, and Matthew. But James, the son of Alphaeus, Lebbeus, and Simon the Zealot? Whoever heard of them? Do you want to know the Bible doesn't say anything about them? Some of you are saying, does that mean we can go? No. Because even though the Bible doesn't say anything about them, I have some things to say about them. Now, this is the least intimate group. You remember, I told you they always appear in the same groups? Four, four and four. Whenever the list of 12 is given, and it's given four times in the Scripture, and all the names always appear in the same group of four, and they move away in intimacy from Christ. But they are all wonderfully chosen by the Lord, they all preached the kingdom, they all taught the truths of the kingdom, they all healed the sick and they all cast out demons. They were the first order of kingdom preachers after Christ Himself, and they will reign on thrones ruling the 12 tribes of Israel in the millennium. I mean they are remarkable for what the Lord transformed them into.

What have we learned about them in terms of the kind of people the Lord uses? Well, He uses strong, dynamic, bold leaders like Peter who take charge, initiate, strategize, confront. He uses humble, gentle, inconspicuous souls like Andrew, quietly seek no prominence but bring people to Christ behind the scenes. He uses zealous, passionate, ambitious, uncompromising, task-oriented, insensitive men like James who wind up being early martyrs. He uses loving, sensitive people-oriented, believing, trusting, intimate, truth-seekers like John. He uses skeptical, analytical, mechanical slow to believe, slow-witted, visionless, pessimistic, unsure men like Philip. And He'll use even a man with prejudice in his heart, who is a seeker of truth, and honest, and open, and clear-minded, and deeply surrendered like Nathanael. And He'll use an outcast, extortionist, tax collector, a traitor, and the most hated man in his entire society like Matthew, who knows he is a sinner and

seeks forgiveness, and He'll turn him into a meek and quiet humble man who loves the riffraff of society, and who has a great faith in Christ.

And now, the last group, and for this morning we'll look at these three: James, Lebbaeus, and Simon. First, James, the son of Alphaeus. There's a famous line in the Apocrypha which might fit at this point. It says, "Let us now praise famous men." Well, if we were to do that, James the son of Alphaeus would not be in our list. He would never make "Who's Who." He would never be a guest on a TV talk show. He would never be asked to write a preface for a book or to pray at a convention, and he would never be interviewed by Christianity Today. James the son of Alphaeus, who is that? Do you know what the Bible says about him? Absolutely nothing. That's right, nothing. Just his name. And he had a famous name. I guess he probably suffered, because there was James, the son of Zebedee who was a ramrod of a guy. A son of thunder, the Bible calls him. And then, there was James, the brother of our Lord; and then there was James, the son of Alphaeus. Never wrote anything, never said anything, never asked anything, never did anything recorded in the Bible. In fact, in Mark 15:40 he is called James the *mikros*, the little, little James. Guess who big James was? Big James, son of thunder. Little James, he was just little James.

The word *mikros* basically means small in stature. It could indicate that he was little. It also can mean young in age. It could mean that he was little and young. It also could mean that he was least in influence. So, he was little, and young, and not very influential. I kind of think he probably was all three of those things, and that's why they sort of gave him that nickname, little James. James the Less, as he's called by Mark. If he was older than James the son of Zebedee, they probably wouldn't have called him *mikros* because it would have confused people. They probably would have called him the elder James or the older James. So, it probably indicates that he was younger. And if he was big in stature, they probably wouldn't have called him little James. And if he had a lot of influence, they probably never would have nicknamed him little James; they probably would have nicknamed him something according to his influence, like bold James or something. So, it may well be that he was just a small, little, young fella who wasn't a particularly powerful personality.

You know it's just encouraging to me the Lord doesn't depend on superstars, isn't it? People say, oh you know, if only so-and-so would become a Christian, just think what would happen. You'd be amazed what people say to me. "I'm praying for Bob Hope to become a Christian, because if Bob Hope ever became a Christian, can you imagine what would happen?" You want to know something? That's a great thing to pray. I'd like to see him become a Christian, but the kingdom of God will not advance any faster with him leading the parade than anybody else. Because God does not depend on that. James the son of Alphaeus will sit on a throne reigning over one of the tribes of Israel in the millennium, and what do you know about him? You don't know anything about him. Well, what's the point? That God is the power, right? Not James. The Bible doesn't say a thing about him. His work, his personality, nothing. His mark is obscurity, and I think it's kind of neat that the Lord put one guy in here who is utterly obscure. He's the most obscure of all of them. He didn't ask any questions, he

didn't say anything, we don't know anything about him. It may be that he just was obedient all the time and there wasn't a lot to say about that. I mean, Peter appears a lot, but it's usually negative. James never appears; maybe he was just on target all the time.

Oh, there is one faint tradition about him. The early church fathers say he preached in Persia. Persia is ancient Iran, and that he took the gospel of Jesus Christ to that land, and they refused to hear him preach, and they crucified him. I wonder what the world would be like today if Iran had heard the gospel, preached by James, the son of Alphaeus. Maybe they wouldn't have had a legacy of the Muslim religion. The Lord uses ordinary people to do extraordinary things. Silent unknown soldiers. I thought to myself as I was thinking about this individual of Hebrews chapter 11, where it says, "What shall I say more?" Verse 32, "Time would fail me to tell of Gideon, and Barak, and Samson, and Jephthah; and David, and Samuel, and the prophets." We know those names. And then, "Who, through faith, subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promise, stopped the mouths of lions, quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong." And then he goes on, "Women received their dead to life, others had trial of cruel mockings and scourging, of bonds and imprisonment; were stoned, and sawn asunder, and tested, and slain with the sword," and on, and on, and on. Nameless, nameless, nameless people who died for their faith and then he says, "Of whom the world was not," what? "Worthy." I don't know their names even.

Could I add just an interesting note on James? Alphaeus is a common name. So is James. But there's one other disciple who had a father named Alphaeus, and that is Matthew. According to Mark 2:14, Matthew's called Levi, Levi or Matthew, same one, and it says, "Levi," Mark 2:14, "son of Alphaeus." There is a remote possibility that James was Matthew's brother.

May I speak to you from my heart for just a minute? The apostles, and you see this, and it's just coming clear to me as I'm going through this series: the apostles demonstrate to us that it is never really the worker who is the issue in the kingdom work. It's never the worker. I don't think I ever really understood before what Paul meant when he said, "So, what is Apollos and what is Paul? It is God that gives the increase." First Corinthians 3. The worker is nothing. So, that the New Testament never even focuses on these guys. I mean, it doesn't say, now you, you people, the important thing is to study these 12 men. Now, we want you to understand their career, their style, their method, their means. The Bible doesn't pick out the best preacher and give you his homiletic method. The Bible doesn't pick out the one who was the best healer, or the most effective at something or another. It doesn't even deal with them. The only time the apostles are ever mentioned in the Scripture is when they intersect with Christ for a specific purpose. He is the focus. There's never a diversion. You don't have any record of the career of any disciple. You don't have the record of any career of any apostle, because they are not the issue. The human instrument is immaterial to God. He can use Balaam's ass if He has to. He can make the rocks cry out if He has to. The human instrument is not the issue. You don't have to be way up here intellectually or in the gifted category, that is not the issue. The Bible never deals with that. The focus is always on Jesus Christ, and these people just go in and out

of the picture, and usually they ask dumb questions.

You maybe have read the story of the man who painted the great painting of the Last Supper. He called in his friend and he said, I want you to look at it, I'm finished, evaluate it. He looked it over, and he said to him, "I want to tell you. Those cups that you have painted on the table are the most magnificent things I've ever seen." His friend was dumbfounded instantly as the artist picked up a brush and some paint and just painted over every cup, and said, "I failed because I wanted you to see Christ. You saw cups." It's a wonderful thing to be a vessel, fit for the Master's use, but that's not where the focus is. I think one of the great tragedies of Christianity in our time and place is that we see the cups; we don't see Christ. We are personality-oriented, studying the methods and means of men, rather than experiencing the power of God. And I think part of the impotence in the church is because of this Christian superstar mentality. That isn't the issue; Christ is the issue.

So, the Lord uses an obscure little fellow, unknown, unsung. Could have claimed to be a brother to Matthew, but goes quietly unnoticed through the gospel narrative. And yet, was no doubt a powerful preacher with a deep, deep commitment, used by God. And someday you can read the heavenly record for yourself, and find out all that the Bible doesn't say.

What about the second one? Verse 3, "Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus." And if you look in Luke 6:16, and Acts 1:13, you don't have to look it up, you'll find he had a third name: Judas, son of James. And he's one place called Judas, not Iscariot. Judas also was a common name. It means Jehovah leads, and many people in that time named their son, Jehovah leads, God leads. This is Judas. That's probably his given name, and then he probably received the names Lebbaeus and Thaddaeus as people add names, almost like nicknames. Thaddaeus is a fascinating word. It comes from a Hebrew root *thad* which has to do with a female breast. And basically, Thaddaeus means breast child, and it likely reflects the fact that Thaddaeus was the baby of his family. It was common to have large families. Thaddaeus was the baby, he was Thaddaeus. You've seen a mother. She comes up and says, "I want you to meet my baby," and she looks up, and the guy's 6'5", you know? This is my baby. Well, that's the baby of the family, that's the last one, right? That's the breast child. That's just a little colloquialism perhaps, for the baby. And so, to his family he was the baby. He was breast child, especially cherished by his mother probably. And then, he was called also, Lebbaeus. Now that may be a nickname too and it comes from the Hebrew root *leb*, which means heart, and it means a heart child. And a heart child was someone with a great heart, and usually that was related to courage.

So, his family saw him as their baby and it may well be that the disciples kind of nicknamed him, or other men who knew him nicknamed him Lebbaeus, because that reflected his courage. He may have been a man of courage. Now, we can't be sure about these things, but it may well be that from his mother's perspective he was the tender baby, but from his friend's perspective he was a man of hard courage. He too is wrapped in obscurity. He would never make the "Who's Who" either. But he

did ask one very important question, and it's the only time we meet him in the Scripture. John 14. Look with me quickly, and we'll just look at this rather briefly. Jesus speaking, the night before His trial, and He says in verse 21, "He that hath my commandments, and keepeth them, he it is that loveth me; he that loveth me shall be loved of my Father, and I'll love him, and manifest myself to him." That is an incredible statement. You could sit and look at that, and think about it, and dwell on it for hours. You keep your commandments, you show you love Me. That's all it says basically. I can tell who loves Me; they obey Me. You may claim to love God and love Christ, you don't obey, that claim is a lie. He that keeps My commandments is the one that loves Me. "And the one who loves me will be loved of my Father, and I will love him, and manifest myself to him." That is an incredibly important statement. God can only be manifest to a heart that loves Him. That's the reason people in the world don't know God. That's the reason they can't perceive the truth, because they don't love God. There has to be a love toward God, a willingness to obey, and then God is manifest. The point being, here's the sum of it: God is only manifest to a loving heart, did you get that? That's all. Only to those who love Him is He manifest.

Now, the word manifest triggers this thought, and Judas, Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus responds in verse 22, "Judas said unto him," not Iscariot, a different Judas, Judas, son of James, "Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?" You're saying that only those who love You are going to see You and know You, and You will be manifest only to those who love You. How can You manifest Yourself to us and not unto the world? What does he mean? Well, he's thinking of the manifestation as an outward one. You see he came into the apostolate like so many others did, thinking of an earthly kingdom, an earthly rule, an overthrow of Rome, great expectation of establishing the earthly kingdom. And he's saying to Him: how could You possibly fulfill the Messianic hope, how could You possibly set up the kingdom on earth, how could you possibly reign on the throne of David, how could You possibly demonstrate who You are, and the world not see it? I mean, how could You do that? How could it be done in such a way that they wouldn't see?

And there may be another allusion in his statement. He may be also saying: why would You think of manifesting Yourself only to us? I mean, this motley group of nobodies. I mean, if You're the Messiah, and this is the moment, why would You only show Yourself to us? I mean, it is the world that the Messiah is to rule. It's a good question. Why won't everybody see You? I mean if it's the time for the kingdom, let's get it on, and you might see a little of that courage that he perhaps was known for. Let's go for it, Lord. The whole world needs to know. Why do You just want to show us? But you see, he didn't understand, and so the Lord says again, "If a man love me, he'll keep my words; and my Father will love him, and we will come to him, and make our abode with him." And He repeats the same principle. The point is this, Judas, Lebbaeus, Thaddaeus: the only people who will perceive Me are the ones who love Me, that's all. And verse 24, "He that loves me not keeps not my sayings; and the word which you hear is not mine, but the Father's, who sent me." In other words, the one who doesn't love Me doesn't know what I'm talking about, and doesn't know it came from God. He says, manifestation is limited to reception. It's like a radio station. You can send the signal out but until you

turn on the set you can't receive it.

Robert Louis Stevenson one time quoted Thoreau, and in an interesting quote, he said Thoreau said on one occasion, "It takes two people to speak the truth, the one who says it and the one who hears it." It's true. "Christ came unto his own, but his own," what? "Received him not. He was in the world, the world was made by him, but the world knew him not." The God of this world had blinded their minds, light has come into the world, but men love darkness. You see, the receivers aren't on, and Jesus is saying, I can only manifest Myself to people who receive. I'm so glad that he asked that question, because that's a tremendous truth to know, isn't it? I'm so glad Jesus got to answer that. That was an insightful question. This guy really thought through. He reflects a typical Jewish view of the kingdom, that it was an earthly, literal, real kingdom. That's exactly what the Jews believed, and he couldn't figure out how you could bring it without everybody knowing it. He also reflects, I think, humility. Why would You tell it to us, and not the whole world? Why would You limit Yourself to just us? So, you see some things in him that are admirable.

One writer said you could take a Charles Wesley hymn, pull it out of a hymnal, throw it out in the street, just let it set there, dog would come by and sniff it, wouldn't mean anything to that dog. And maybe the garbage guy will come along, and pick it up, and throw it in the trash. Or, some enthusiastic person who's worried about the tidiness of the street would come along and say, oh, this litter, delicately remove it. Or, somebody in the world might come along who was very materialistic and think, I'd better pick that up. It might be the title deed to some property or something. A literary man might pick it up and say, ah-hah, Charles Wesley. My, he was a literary fellow. Wonderful poetic expression here. Then, there might be a spiritually minded person pick it up and get his soul blessed. The paper was one thing, but it was how you received it that was the issue. That's how it is in the world too. Only those whose hearts are purified by love and walk in obedience will know the manifestation of God. I think that's the kind of person Thaddaeus was. So, we see the Lord uses obscure people like James the son of Alphaeus and Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus, Judas. They wouldn't make the "Who's Who," but they'll reign in the millennium.

By the way, early church tradition tells us about Thaddaeus, that he was tremendously gifted with the power of God to heal the sick. And a certain king in Syria by the name of Abgar heard about it, and was ill, and he called for Thaddaeus to come and heal him. And on the way, he healed multiple hundreds of people throughout Syria, and when he finally reached the king he healed the king, and presented the gospel to the king, and the legend says the king became a Christian. This threw the country into such chaos that an apostate nephew of the king seized Thaddaeus, made him a prisoner, and martyred him, and he was killed in Syria. If you ever pick up an old church history book on Thaddaeus, you will see that each of the disciples have a symbol, and the symbol for Thaddaeus is a big club, because the legend says they beat him to death with a club. Faithful to his Lord.

Finally, the last name for this morning: Simon, the Zealot. Now, listen closely because I'm going to run this by real fast. You have in your Bible, perhaps, the word Canaanite, that is an unfortunate transliteration of the word Canaan. *Kananaios*, really. And the assumption that it referred to Canaan, geographically. That is not true. It comes from a root *qanna*, which means to be jealous, or to be zealous for the law. In Luke he is called Simon the Zealot, *zlt*s, and this is just another word meaning the same thing: Simon the man full of zeal, Simon the Zealot. And it may mean that he was actually identified with a party in Judaism known as the Zealots, and that when he became a disciple they didn't change that name; he must have continued to manifest the same kind of fiery, passionate zeal that he had when he was a Zealot. There were four basically dominant groups within Judaism: Pharisees, they were the rightest, they were the fundamentalists, legalists. Then, there was the Sadducees, and they were the liberals. Then, there was the Essenes and they were the mystics, the ascetics, the monastics out in the caves. And then, there were the Zealots. They were the political-oriented group, they were the terrorists, they were the guerrillas, they were the brigands. They went around looting, and burning, and murdering. A group of them within the Zealots were known as Sicarii from *sicae*, sword. They were the assassins. And they had revolted against the Roman domination. In fact, they really were born out of the Maccabean period. Whether by name or not, we can't be sure. But out of the Maccabean period when the Jews were led by Judas Maccabeus to revolt against the Greek power, there were statements made about being a revolutionary and standing to defend the covenant of God, particularly in 1 Maccabees there's some stuff about that.

And it seems as out of that, came a sort of a politically-oriented kind of terrorist approach that became later known as the Zealots. They found a leader in New Testament times by the name of Judas, another, as I say, very common name. And under this Judas of Galilee, they began seditious acts, and all over the land these things were going on. In fact, if you could see the rest of history, as you read the New Testament, there would be little interludes going on all over the place led by the Zealots that the Romans are putting out like little fires. They would murder here, murder there, plunder, burn, anything they could do. Much like you see in the Middle East today with guerrilla-type engagements.

Now, for many years the land had been ruled by an Idumaeen king, not a Jew, by the name of Herod the Great. And when Herod the Great died, he gave the division of his territory to three of his sons: Philip, who took the Northeast regions; and then there was Antipas, who took Galilee; and then there was Archelaus, who took the Judaea-Samaria part. Archelaus proved to be a loser, so he was replaced by a Roman governor, and that's how Pilate got into the picture. But in all of this sort of political unrest, and the shifting and moving and struggling of powers, the flame from the Zealots began to burn under the leadership of Judas. Finally, the Romans murdered Judas, but they couldn't stamp out the Zealots, and so they continued doing what they did. They led what they called a holy war. Josephus says they believed it was a holy war. And they would just loot, and burn, and plunder, and kill, and all of that. It's very possible that Simon was a member of the Zealots. He is called Simon the Zealot. He was a terrorist engaged in guerrilla warfare.

It might be interesting for you to know that they were so anti-Roman that they wouldn't even give a thought about murdering a Roman, but they were so anti-Roman that anybody of their own countrymen, even a Jew of their own countrymen who would in any way side with Rome, they would also assassinate. Finally, in 70 AD the Romans had to put a stop to all of it, and so they came and destroyed Jerusalem. And Josephus says writing in his "Antiquities," that the key reason for the destruction of Jerusalem was the activity of the Zealots. The Romans got so tired of fighting these little seditious things all over the place, they decided to come in and just destroy the whole operation. And if they could just destroy Jerusalem, they would then move from there. And they did. They destroyed Jerusalem in 70 AD and they moved out, they slaughtered people in 985 towns in Galilee. They just obliterated the nation, and the Zealots were the thorn in their side that finally brought this about.

Now, there was a leader after 70 AD of the Zealots by the name of Eleazar, and he led the Zealots in continuing plunder. There were just a few left, but they were going everywhere, doing what they'd always done. They finally found a retreat where they could hide. The place was Masada, and the Zealots were located in Masada. From there, they would move out to do their guerrilla type activity. And this of course is later than the time of Simon. Do you remember how it all finally ended? The Romans finally took Masada, and the Zealots, not wanting to lose their life to their despised and hated Roman enemy, committed suicide. And Josephus writes in "The War of the Jews" that Eleazar summoned the people together, and made a flaming speech in which he urged them to slaughter their own wives and children and then commit suicide. They took him at his word; they tenderly embraced their wives, kissed their children, and then began the bloody work. 960 perished. Only two women and five children escaped by hiding in a cave. Now recently, a movie sort of glamorized Masada. Those were not the normal Jewish people. Those were the political terrorists, and they would kill themselves before they would let a Roman take their life. That's how deep their hatred was.

Now, a man like Simon to attach himself to them, must have been a man with a tremendous passion, a tremendous capacity for zeal. And you can imagine that he must have been a fireball when it got to the work of the Lord. He found a better leader, and a greater cause. He is listed, will you notice? He is listed right before what name? Judas Iscariot. It's interesting to me, but they probably went together. Maybe there were two-by. When they went out two by two, it was he and Judas, because Judas had the same kind of political orientation, didn't he? And it may well have been that they came in on the same ground, on the same level, figuring, boy, this Jesus could really aid our cause. And Simon could have been the betrayer, and you would have named your children Judas, not Simon. But Simon believed, and was transformed. Judas did not, and so no one names anything Judas.

Simon became Christ's man. Think of how wonderful it must have been for him to get along with Matthew, who collected taxes for the Roman government. I wonder if he ever had just little anxieties about Matthew. Well, the Lord uses all kinds of unqualified people, doesn't He? He can use you and

me.

I'm going to close with this illustration. There was a concert violinist who wanted to demonstrate a very important point he felt, so he hired a great hall in a city and announced that he would play a concert on a \$20,000.00 violin. He had the place packed with violin lovers, came out, and he played exquisitely, and they applauded just gloriously. He bowed and took their applause, threw the violin to the ground, and stomped it into bits. The people were horrified. And then, he walked off the stage. The stage manager came out and said, "Ladies and Gentlemen, to put you at ease, that was a \$20.00. He will now return to play the \$20,000.00," or whatever it was, "violin." And you know what? They couldn't tell the difference, and he made his point. It isn't the instrument; it's the artist, right?

Now folks, let's face it, most of us are \$20.00 violins, at best, right? At best. But oh, what music can the Master make with us. Let's pray.

Thank You Father for Your Word to us through the lives of these obscure people. Thank You that they have a special place forever. That we'll see them reigning in Your kingdom, that we'll spend eternity with them, and learn all of the unspoken truths about their marvelous and powerful ministries. Lord help us to know that the focus is never on the human tool, but only on You, and oh how that stresses the fact that we should function in the power of God, not in our own strength. Save us from the foolishness of seeing the cups instead of the Christ. Father bring us back tonight again as we open up Your Book and look at spiritual service and what You have called us to do. Put these truths deep in our hearts, may we see what You can do with a simple life for Your glory. Thank You for this time together. In Christ's name, amen.

Available online at: <http://www.gty.org>

COPYRIGHT (C) 2015 Grace to You

You may reproduce this Grace to You content for non-commercial purposes in accordance with Grace to You's Copyright Policy (<http://www.gty.org/connect/copyright>).