

*The  
Twelve  
Disciples*

*Learning Discipleship  
From  
The Original  
Apostles*

*Burley W. Moore*

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Twelve  
Disciples  
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From  
The Original Apostles**

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## Preface

This book is a result of a sermon series that I did while in the pastorate. I preached on a different disciple each Sunday until all twelve were covered. In several churches where I served as pastor, we did a twelve disciples pageant following my sermon series. I wrote a brief description of each disciple and asked for twelve men to volunteer and represent his character. Each man designed his own clothing attire (with most depending upon the help of their wives). The pageant would consist of each man coming out into the pulpit area and telling about his life as a disciple. Afterward, they would take their seat at a table designed as the Last Supper. At the conclusion of the service, I led God's people in the observance of the Lord's Supper. It was a moving and significant occasion that climaxed on the thirteenth week and finalized the series of messages from God's Word.

I trust that Christ will be honored and the reader blessed as I share with you these messages in print. Discipleship is a wonderful privilege that God bestows upon His people, but it does not come without responsibilities and costs. May God give us the grace to take up our cross and daily follow Jesus Christ as Savior, Lord, and Master.

As we begin taking a brief look into the lives of the twelve disciples who were called to follow Jesus during His earthly ministry, it is my desire that we learn something that can be applicable to our lives today. The word disciple refers to a learner, pupil, and follower of a particular teacher. Jesus had many disciples, including men and women who followed His teachings. This book will mainly address those that we commonly call the twelve disciples, or the original twelve apostles as they are called in Lk. 6:13, "And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles." The term apostle literally means one that is sent forth. These twelve were not the only apostles in the New Testament, but they were the first, or shall I say the original.

When we think about Christian discipleship, we ask, “What does it mean to follow Jesus?” If we are going to follow Jesus, then we can expect the same type of treatment that Jesus received. That prompts us to ask, “What was the reaction to the ministry of Jesus?” Was Jesus always received with open arms or were there people who opposed Him and falsely accused Him?

We’re well aware of the mistreatment of Christ all during His earthly ministry and especially in the closing hours of His life during His terrible crucifixion. The religious leaders of His day accused Him of “blasphemies” when He healed “one sick of the palsy” and told him that his “sins be forgiven him” (Mk. 2:1-13). This man had come for physical healing, but Jesus spoke of his need for spiritual healing. Physical sickness today is the result of sin that entered the human race back in the Garden of Eden. Jesus claimed the power to heal both the physical and spiritual illnesses of man and with Him, one was not “easier” than the other to cure.

There were many occasions where Jesus irritated and provoked the religious crowd of His day. If we are going to follow the Lord Jesus Christ, then we also can expect to stir up opposition, especially from the self-righteous religious bunch. It’s never been easy following Jesus Christ and for that reason Jesus told us that it is a “cross” that we are to take up if we “follow Him” (Mk. 8:38). A “cross” is not merely an ornament of jewelry, but a symbol of death, suffering, and persecution. To truly “follow” the call of Jesus Christ means that we can expect to be misunderstood and questioned just as Jesus was.

In studying the lives of the twelve original apostles, we’ll discover the type of people God uses for His purposes. We’re not going to look at these men through rose colored glasses as “Stained Glass Saints” with no human failures, but as people just like us. They were common every-day men with a similar calling that united them. From His many followers, Jesus chose twelve to be apostles. They were men who would be endowed with a special authority to carry on the work of the Lord Jesus following His earthly departure. Although, there are no apostles today in

the same biblical sense as the days of Christ, there remains a multitude of disciples following the teachings of the Lord Jesus.

As believers study the lives of these twelve men, we can all find ourselves somewhere among them. At the time Jesus called His disciples, they were exceedingly ignorant, narrow minded, superstitious, full of prejudices, misconceptions, and animosities. They had much to unlearn as well as to learn. Most of them were rather poor men of humble birth, low stations, simple occupations, and little education. But, despite all their imperfections, they were devoted to Jesus. The selection of these twelve by Jesus is an important landmark in Gospel history. It was more than a selection of traveling companions, but the choosing of students who would learn His doctrine and propagate the Christian faith after the final departure of Christ from earth.

These disciples were trained by not only what they heard, but also by what they saw. They were eyewitnesses of Christ's many miracles. They were taught that prayer was to occupy a prominent place in their lives. They were not only taught to pray, but how to live holy lives and become active agents in evangelism.

It was not until His public ministry was drawing to a close that Jesus spoke in plain unmistakable terms about His death. There came a time near the end when it became necessary to prepare His disciples for this approaching event. He not only told them that He was going to suffer, but that they also would suffer for His name's sake. They were taught that all who become followers of Christ would have to bear a cross. The cross signifies not merely the external penalty of death, but all troubles that would come on those who earnestly endeavor to live for Christ.

What kind of people does God use? He uses ordinary people like the twelve apostles. They had the same struggles, strengths, and weaknesses as you and I. It's not what you are that's so important, but what you're willing to become. Christ took twelve very common individuals and made them into very uncommon disciples. He can do a similar work in our lives today. When God

saves a lost sinner from the penalty of his sin, he transforms us into a follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Among the twelve apostles there were political, physical, spiritual, and emotional differences. However, the Lord Jesus used that hodgepodge of personalities to change the world. Before God can ever change the world through us, He must first change us by the transforming power of the Holy Spirit. Can you honestly say that such a change of spiritual transformation has ever taken place in your heart and life? (II Cor. 5:17)

Just before Jesus died, He referred to His disciples as “little children” (Jh. 13:33). They had a lot of spiritual growing up to do, just like true disciples of today. He told them to do something that we also need to do and that was to practice a new commandment, “to love one another” (Jh. 13:34). We need to “love one another” because to be hated and evil entreated by the world is a price of discipleship as well as a privilege Christ confers on His “friends” (Jh. 15:14-15). Hostility toward Christianity is very hard to bear and the desire to escape it has caused many who profess Christ to become unfaithful. Christians need to love and encourage one another.

It’s the same today as it was in the day of Christ. Not everyone who professes Christ is a true disciple. Jesus exposed Judas Iscariot just before the actual partaking of the Lord’s Supper and expelled him from His presence. Jesus had known all along that there was a traitor in the camp, but it was at the institution of the Lord’s Supper that he was named and exposed among the disciples. Following the arrest of Jesus in the garden, all the disciples forsook Him and fled with the exception of Peter and John. Unfortunately, while in the courtyard, Peter ended up denying his Lord. Only John was present at the crucifixion scene at Calvary when Jesus died. Our Lord is so full of grace to patiently tolerate a bunch of disciples like us.

## **Chapter 1**

### **Andrew**

#### **A Disciple Who Brought Others To Jesus**

“Again, the next day after John stood, and two of his disciples; And looking upon Jesus as he walked, he saith, Behold the Lamb of God! And the two disciples heard him speak, and they followed Jesus. Then Jesus turned and saw them following, and saith unto them, What seek ye? They said unto him, Rabbi (which is to say, being interpreted, Master,) where dwellest thou? He saith unto them, Come and see, They came and saw where he dwelt, and abode with him that day: for it was about the tenth hour. One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus.” (Jh. 1:35-42a)

Scripture records that Andrew was a native of Galilee being from the city of Bethsaida (Jh. 1:44). The name Andrew means manliness. He appears to have been a manly, rough, hardy fisherman just like his father and older brother, Peter. Prior to his calling as one of the twelve, he had been a follower of John the Baptist. The first time we meet Andrew in Scripture, he is following the ministry of John the Baptist some fifty miles from his home in Galilee. John the Baptist, who was the cousin of Jesus and also known as the forerunner of Christ, preached repentance with a special emphasis on the coming of the promised Messiah. This attracted the spiritually minded Andrew.

He made his first contact with Jesus when John the Baptist pointed Him out as “the Lamb of God.” Andrew was so intrigued with Jesus that he sought a private visit and “abode with him” for a day. His encounter with Christ was so significant that he left with the conviction of Him being the Messiah of whom John the Baptist preached.



Andrew apparently became the first of the twelve apostles to follow Jesus. The early church is said to have frequently called him by the Greek title protokletos which means first called. However, Andrew's first encounter with Christ was not the time of his official calling as an apostle. After being introduced to Jesus by John the Baptist, Andrew returned to his trade of fishing. Later, while he was busily engaged in his trade, Jesus passed through Galilee and called both he and his brother to become apostles. Mark 1:16-18 says, "Now as he (Jesus) walked by the sea of Galilee, he saw Simon and Andrew his brother casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And Jesus said unto them, Come ye after me, and I will make you to become fishers of men. And straightway they forsake their nets, and followed him."

Andrew and Peter shared the family fishing business and at the time when Jesus appeared they were having little results (Lk. 5:1-11). The miraculous catch of fish produced by Jesus convinced them of His greatness and deity. Following the great catch was the command to become "fishers of men" (Matt. 4:18-20).

There is not a great deal of direct information about Andrew recorded in the New Testament. Much of what we learn about him must come from tradition, legend, and history. However, there is enough told to us in Holy Scripture that reveals an unmistakable picture of his character. From our study of Andrew, we can learn some valuable concepts of true discipleship. Besides being listed along with the other apostles, Andrew is mentioned only three times and each time he is always seen bringing someone to Jesus.

### **Andrew Brought Peter to Jesus**

"One of the two which heard John speak, and followed him, was Andrew, Simon Peter's brother. He first findeth his own brother Simon, and saith unto him, We have found the Messias, which is, being interpreted, the Christ. And he brought him to Jesus. And when Jesus beheld him, he said, Thou art Simon the

son of Jonah: thou shalt be called Cephas, which is by interpretation, A stone” (Jh. 1:40-42).

After Andrew personally discovered the promised Messiah, he immediately introduces his brother, Peter, to Christ. Andrew was actually the first apostle to meet Jesus, yet he is never mentioned first. The greatness of Andrew emerges in his willingness to play second fiddle and be referred to as “Simon Peter’s brother.” The quiet, reliable, humble life of Andrew was undoubtedly respected by his older brother to the point of checking out his report of the newly found Christ. Since we as believers in the Lord Jesus Christ have our own peculiar characteristics, people may not necessarily like some of our ways, but at the same time they should respect our Christian witness. I’m sure these siblings had their differences, but there is apparent trust between the two.

Andrew was not a flashy leader with great talents, but we remember him today as the one who brought his great brother, Peter, to Jesus. Peter was later used by God at Pentecost to see three thousand saved with one sermon. Andrew was the spiritual father of Peter, so to speak, which made him the spiritual grandfather of the three thousand who were saved at Pentecost. The Andrews bring the Peters, but do not get the notice, publicity, recognition, or perhaps even the praise. They are not the quarterbacks, but the linemen. They are ordinary men that are always taken for granted by others. I don’t know the names of those who led John Knox or Charles Spurgeon to Christ, but I’ve heard of Knox and Spurgeon. Most people have never heard the name of Edward Kimball, but quickly recognize the name of D.L. Moody. Edward Kimball is the man who led Moody to Christ while he was a shoe salesman in Boston. Moody became a renowned evangelist that God used on two continents.

Andrew is sometimes referred to as the human founder of personal evangelism when it comes to pointing others to Christ. At least, he certainly set a good example for us to follow. Peter became a fisherman of men in mass number whereas Andrew was a fisher for individuals. Mass evangelism has its place, but some of the most effective witnessing is person to person

evangelism. Not every Christian can be a Peter, but we all can be an Andrew. From the human perspective, there may never have been a Peter, if there had not first been an evangelistic Andrew. However, we know that it turned out the way it did because that is the way God ordained it. Our creator has made us all differently for the purpose of using us according to the good pleasure of His will.

Although Andrew was the first to meet Jesus, he was never included in what we call the inner circle. He was a rare breed, willing to take a back seat and follow Jesus from a heart of devotion and not for the sake of popularity. Andrew would not have been listed in a Who's Who because his gifts and abilities were not as highly recognized as Peters. Church members who hold grudges when not given a place of leadership that they think they deserve need to learn a lesson from this humble servant. We all need to be reminded that Christ "is the head of the body, the church: who is the beginning, the firstborn from the dead; that in all things he might have the preeminence" (Col. 1:18).

For Andrew, missionary work began at home. If you want to do something for Christ, then you don't have to leave home to do it. We must be available when the opportunity presents itself to share Christ with relatives, friends, neighbors, acquaintances, or even strangers. However, before we can ever bring someone to Jesus, we must know where He is and how to find Him. When I speak of bringing someone to Jesus, I'm talking about telling them about Christ. Only the Holy Spirit can actually bring a lost sinner to a saving encounter with the Lord Jesus Christ, but He uses human vessels to do the telling. That commission to do so has been given to every Christian as we assume our roll of discipleship.

Jesus Christ is revealed by the Holy Spirit through the written Word of God that we call the Holy Scriptures or the Bible. Do we know the Bible well enough to open it up and share the saving Gospel of Jesus Christ? We are asked a series of questions in the tenth chapter of Romans beginning in verse fourteen, "How then shall they call on him in whom they have not believed? and how shall they believe in him of whom they have

not heard? and how shall they hear without a preacher? And how shall they preach, except they be sent? as it is written, How beautiful are the feet of them that preach the gospel of peace, and bring glad tidings of good things!” (Rom. 10:14-15). The Greek word for “preach” means to herald, publish, or proclaim. When we think of a preacher, our first thoughts usually turn to a pastor in a local church that teaches the Word of God to the flock of God. That is certainly an accurate picture, but the truth of the matter is that every believer (disciple/follower) of Jesus Christ, both male and female should be able to proclaim the good news of Jesus Christ. Scripture goes on in that same chapter to remind us that “faith cometh by hearing, and hearing by the word of God” (Rom. 10:17). Our job is to do the telling and God is the One Who does the convicting and saving as the Holy Spirit grants repentance and gives “faith” to believe (Eph. 2:8). Andrew is an example and inspiration to us as we learn how to be a witness in evangelizing the lost.

### **Andrew Brought the Boy With the Lunch to Jesus**

“After these things Jesus went over the sea of Galilee, which is the sea of Tiberias. And a great multitude followed him, because they saw his miracles which he did on them that were diseased. And Jesus went up into a mountain, and there he sat with his disciples. And the passover, a feast of the Jews, was nigh. When Jesus then lifted up his eyes, and saw a great company come unto him, he saith unto Philip, Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat? And this he said to prove him: for he himself knew what he would do. Philip answered him, Two hundred pennyworth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may take a little. One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother, saith unto him, There is a lad here, which hath five barley loaves, and two small fishes: but what are they among so many? And Jesus said, Make the men sit down. Now there was much grass in the place. So the men sat down, in number about five thousand. And Jesus took the loaves; and when he had given thanks, he distributed to the disciples, and the disciples to

them that were set down; and likewise of the fishes as much as they would. When they were filled, he said unto his disciples, Gather up the fragments that remain, that nothing be lost. Therefore they gathered them together, and filled twelve baskets with the fragments of the five barley loaves, which remained over and above unto them that had eaten. Then those men, when they had seen the miracle that Jesus did, said, This is of a truth that prophet that should come into the world” (Jh. 6:1-14).

We discover that Andrew was interested in all types of people, even little children. There is an incident recorded in Scripture where we are told of how the disciples instructed the children to depart from Jesus and to leave Him alone. “But Jesus said, Suffer little children, and forbid them not, to come unto me: for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Matt. 19:13-14). In the sixth chapter of John, we see that Andrew learned the value of God using little things that appeared to man as insignificant. It was a time when the rest of the disciples were full of despair, thinking that it was impossible to feed such a large multitude of people.

Humanly speaking, it would have taken “two hundred pennyworth” to feed this crowd of “about five thousand.” In today’s standards that amounted to a rather large sum of money, perhaps something like over two thousand dollars. When Andrew saw the lad’s “five barley loaves and two small fishes,” his faith told him that little could be much if God was in it. Andrew most likely was not a five or ten talent man, but only a one talent man. However, he knew that if God could use him, then God could use the loaves and fishes. By calling attention to the boy’s five loaves and two fishes, it appears that he knew how His Master’s ability could make the impossible become possible.

Like Andrew, this lad was willing to give God all that he had. It’s not a matter of how much we give God, but rather giving Him our ALL. In this story, we discover how Jesus uses the small and most unlikely of people as well as sources for His glory. God can use people like little children, Andrew, you, and me if we are only willing to surrender and be used by the Master.

### **Andrew Brought the Seeking Greeks to Jesus**

“And there were certain Greeks among them that came up to worship at the feast: The same came therefore to Philip, which was of Bethsaida of Galilee, and desired him, saying, Sir, we would see Jesus. Philip cometh and telleth Andrew: and again Andrew and Philip tell Jesus” (Jh. 12:20-22).

The Greeks spoken of in this passage of Scripture were Jews by religion, but not by birth. In other words they were Greeks who had converted to Judaism. They appear to be true seekers after Christ who happened to be in Jerusalem for the Feast of the Passover. It was after, what we call Palm Sunday, and Jesus was soon to die. After hearing so much about Jesus and wanting to meet Him, these Greeks approached Philip who in turn consults Andrew as to what they ought to do.

It was commonly considered by the Jews of that day that anyone of another race could not be of any use to God. But, it's very apparent that is not the way Andrew thought. To him, there was no doubt that Jesus wanted to save even the Greeks. It seems that Philip hesitated, but not Andrew when it came to deciding what to do with the Greek's request.

It's possible that Andrew could have been the first apostle to see the universality of the Gospel message to the world. He acted as a home missionary when he brought his brother, Peter, to Jesus. But, he acted like a foreign missionary when he brought the Greeks to Jesus. There is no record as to how many if any of these Greeks were saved when Andrew brought them to Jesus. One thing is for certain, he was able to bring people to Jesus because He had a personal relationship with Jesus himself. We must know Jesus ourselves before we can be an effective witness in trying to take others to meet Him.

### **Summary**

The life of Andrew teaches us a lesson in humility. He was more interested in serving Christ than in making a reputation for

himself. Sadly today, there are some in the local church who refuse to play in the band unless they can play the big drum or sit in the first chair. Andrew never displayed the gift of leadership, but was always appearing in Scripture as a subordinate among the apostles. His life should encourage every believer to use the best that they have and serve God to the maximum of their God-given ability. Andrew serves as a model disciple, reminding us that we are saved to serve and share Christ with others.

Information about Andrew in the New Testament comes to an end, but legend and tradition gives us an idea about the remaining years of his life. Tradition tells us that he suffered much for Christ, being stoned, imprisoned, and even threatened to be eaten alive by cannibals in Sinope. It's believed that he later became a missionary to what we call Southern Russia in a place called Scythia. The Scythians were known as barbarians. It's said that they were more barbarous than the barbarians. Josephus declared that they were little different from wild beast. It's generally believed that Andrew led many of the barbarous Scythians to know the Lord Jesus Christ.

Tradition informs us that in the town of Patras in Greece that Andrew died a martyr. It appears that the governor became hostile toward him when his wife, Maximilla, became a Christian. He had Andrew tied with thick ropes to an X shaped cross. Legend says that Andrew asked to die on an X shaped cross because he was unworthy to die on the same type of cross as his Lord. By being tied and not nailed to his cross meant that his death would be prolonged and that he would die of hunger, thirst, and exposure. Before being fastened to the cross and left to die, it's also believed that he was beaten with rods by seven Roman soldiers. While hanging on his cross, it's been said that he continued to preach to those that tormented him until he died. In about 69 AD, on the last day of November, after hanging on his cross about two or three days, Andrew died a martyr for his Lord.

A Christian disciple is a learner with Jesus being his Master Teacher. However, he is more than a pupil, but one who accepts instruction and becomes a follower as he puts into practice what

he learns. Please allow me to ask you a very personal question. “Have you ever become a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ through the new birth?” If so, “Have you ever had a part in bringing someone to Jesus?”

All during his ministry, Andrew brought people to Jesus. If you are saved, then you can be an Andrew. The best place to begin being an Andrew is within your home, among your relatives, and friends. I didn't say that it would be easy, but all God expects of His disciples is that we do the sharing and living out the Gospel. Parents can tell their children about Jesus by bringing them to a Bible believing teaching local church, reading them the Word of God, and by Godly example. Like Andrew, we should be willing to share Christ and point people to Jesus when God provides the opportunity. Today, will you accept the challenge to be a disciple of Jesus Christ like Andrew? He was a disciple with a vision for lost souls.



## **Chapter 2**

### **Nathanael**

#### **A Man of Sincerity, Honesty, And Integrity**

“Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip said unto him, Come and see. Jesus saw Nathanael coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is no guile! Nathanael saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that Philip called thee, when thou wast under the fig tree, I saw thee. Nathanael answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, believest thou? Thou shalt see greater things than these. And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.” (Jh. 1:45-51)

The full name of this apostle is actually Nathanael Bartholomew. Most frequently, I'll refer to him as Bartholomew. He came from Cana of Galilee and is believed to have been a fisherman by trade like several of the other apostles. He also appears to be a devout Jew being from the House of Naphtali. There is very little personal information given to us from the Scripture about Bartholomew. Biblically speaking, most of what we know about him is found in these seven verses of John's Gospel. Although, little is mentioned in the Bible, enough is said that gives us a good idea as to the type of man that he was.

#### **Nathanael Was a Man With a Double Name**

In the Gospel of John, he is referred to as “Nathanael” as we discover in the first chapter and again in the twenty-first chapter.

On all other occasions, Scripture refers to him as “Bartholomew” when we find him listed along with the other apostles (Matt. 10:2-4, Mk. 3:13-19, Lk. 6:12-16, Acts 1:13). There is nothing uncommon about a person being known by more than one name. Today, some people are called by their first, middle, or nickname. This was true during biblical days as we observe among the different disciples. Thomas was also known as Didymus. Peter was also called Simon Barjona, and Matthew was also referred to as Levi. Then again, when we come to Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus, and Judas, all three names were used to speak of the same person.

We believe that Bartholomew was Nathanael’s surname. Bartholomew was not his first name, but rather a distinguishing second name that identifies a man by the name of his father. The first three letters of Bartholomew begins with BAR. The word bar was of Aramaic origin and used in the Greek. Bar means “son of” which simply distinguishes him as the son of Tolmai. However, the name Nathanael is very significant because it means gift of God.

### **Nathanael Was a Man** **Who was Introduced to Christ by a Friend**

The Gospel of John is an excellent manual on personal witnessing. Remember, from chapter one, that after Andrew met Christ, he introduced his brother, Peter, to Jesus. When Jesus found “Philip,” then “Philip” in turn introduced Nathanael to Christ. A close bond of friendship appears to have knit both Philip and Nathanael together. In listing the twelve disciples throughout Scripture, their names are always paired together. Both of these men were sincere, and dedicated orthodox Jews. From reference made to “the law” in John, chapter one, verse forty-five, we can conclude that they were students of the Old Testament and diligent seekers after truth. They apparently had spent much time searching the Scripture in expectation of the coming Messiah.

### **Nathanael Was a Man of Strong Prejudice**

A preconceived opinion led him to believe that the Messiah could not come from “Nazareth.” In this respect, he was sincere, but sincerely wrong. How many times have we been like that? Sincerity in and of itself does not turn that which is wrong into something that becomes right. Right is right and wrong is wrong regardless of how we feel about the issue. Often, our preconceived ideas are a great obstacle to us living the victorious Christian life because they differ with the Word of God. Learning the truth of biblical doctrine is a good example of this. It’s easy to get “set in our ways” even if those ways are wrong. Human nature says that it’s easier to remain in the wrong than to make things right with God.

“Nazareth” was not only a remote town, but was considered a rather insignificant one. A person might want to think that the promised Messiah would come from a more proud and prestigious city like Jerusalem or Bethlehem. Prejudice caused the Jewish nation to reject the Lord Jesus Christ simply because He did not meet their expectations of the long awaited Messiah. They were looking for a mighty King and not a lowly Suffering Servant. Today, many reject the Lord Jesus because they want a Savior to rock them to sleep in a cradle of ease rather than demanding from them a cross to bear.

“Then said Jesus unto his disciples, If any man will come after me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow me. For whosoever will save his life shall lose it: and whosoever will lose his life for my sake shall find it.” (Matt. 16:24-25)

Philip knew that one could not reason with ignorance nor argue with prejudice. Therefore, he simply told Nathanael to come and see for himself. You can tell others how wonderful Christ is to you, but they will never know it until they know Him personally for themselves. There are some people who reject Christ because of His Jewish ancestry, disbelief in His incarnation, sinless life, substitutionary death, or His glorious resurrection. The only cure

for such prejudice is a personal transforming encounter with Jesus Christ like that of Nathanael.

### **Nathanael Was a Man With Deep Spiritual Sentiments**

Nathanael was a true “Israelite.” He was a devout Jew in character and disposition. He was a student of the Old Testament Scriptures and waiting for the promised Messiah. He was a man of simplicity and integrity who feared the One true and living God. Jesus saw Nathanael as a man “in whom is no guile.” He did not live by a double standard. He could be trusted with whatever you gave him to do. Being a man of “no guile” was quite a compliment coming from the lips of Jesus. “No guile” means without deceit, hypocrisy, or craftiness. This didn’t make him a perfect man for we have already seen him steeped in prejudice towards Nazareth. Regardless of how many virtues a person may possess, there will also be many flaws as long as we live in these frail mortal bodies of flesh. He reminds us that even though we have been saved, the old nature has not been eradicated.

### **Nathanael Was a Man Who Learned of Christ’s Omniscience**

Omniscience refers to God as being ALL KNOWING. In other words, there is nothing hidden from God because He knows all things. Nathanael had never met Christ until Philip introduced him. However, When Nathanael met Christ, he discovered that Jesus already knew him. Without Nathanael being aware of it, Jesus had observed his daily conduct. We seldom pause to think of how God knows all about us. The omniscient eye of God sees into our innermost thoughts. Nothing that we do or say can be hid from God. No man can hide his secret sins in some back room of his heart. The Creator of man has the master key that unlocks every room and closet in the mind and heart.

The psalmist David reminds us of God’s Omniscience from Psalms 139:1-13. “O Lord, thou hast searched me, and known

me. Thou knowest my downsitting and mine uprising, thou understandest my thought afar off. Thou compassest my path and my lying down, and art acquainted with all my ways. For there is not a word in my tongue, but, lo, O Lord, thou knowest it altogether. Thou hast beset me behind and before, and laid thine hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me; it is high, I cannot attain unto it. Whither shall I go from thy spirit? Or whither shall I flee from thy presence? If I ascend up into heaven, thou art there: if I make my bed in hell (the Hebrew word is shoel referring to the grave), behold, thou art there. If I take the wings of the morning, and dwell in the uttermost parts of the sea; Even there shall thy hand lead me, and thy right hand shall hold me. If I say, Surely the darkness shall cover me; even the night shall be light about me. Yea, the darkness hideth not from thee; but the night shineth as the day: the darkness and the light are both alike to thee. For thou hast possessed my reins: thou hast covered me in my mother's womb."

The "fig tree" under which Nathanael sat was a favorite place where the Jews would retreat for prayer and meditation. He thought that he had been unseen under the shade of the tree, but now discovered that the omniscient eye of God had been upon him. Jesus is really saying that "I saw thee" in secret as only God Himself can see. God knows and sees everything that we do and think. As we think of God's omniscience, allow me to also remind you that public prayer has its place, but the most important praying is private (Matt. 6:6). Every individual and family needs a special time to commune with God daily. We must be careful not to allow our garden of prayer to be overtaken with the weeds of the world. Every Christian needs some private time alone with God.

### **Nathanael Was a Man With a Good Testimony**

When Nathanael encountered Christ, faith sprung up from within his heart. His testimony was a testimony of faith. It was a God given faith and not mere intellectual assent. Scripture says

that “the devils also believe and tremble” (Jam. 2:19). Believing facts about something is one thing, but believing with an eternal trust is another. Many today believe about Jesus, but have never trusted Him to the saving of their souls. That kind of faith is from above and is a gift of God.

Without hesitation, Nathanael proclaimed that Jesus was the Christ by using two of the highest Messianic titles, “Son of God” and “King of Israel.” He recognized the deity of Jesus because he knew that only God could read the secrets of a man’s heart. Nathanael discovered that he had been wrong because something good had come out of Nazareth. His childlike simplicity is evidenced by being so quick to believe. It took very little evidence to convince him that Jesus was the long awaited Messiah.

### **Nathanael Was a Man Who Was Graciously Rewarded**

The simple faith which Nathanael exhibited was honored by Christ. Being of such child-like faith is no doubt the reason Jesus promised that he would “see greater things.” Whenever a believer exercises faith then his capacity of faith increases. Jesus assured Nathanael that He would be all to him as He had been to the Old Testament patriarch, Jacob.

Reference to “the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man” is a clear picture of Jacob’s ladder in his dream at Bethel (Gen. 28:12-13). The ladder in Jacob’s dream speaks to us of heavenly communication and fellowship with God. The “angels of God” are still available to minister to the saints of today (Heb. 1:13-14). They are given to us because we are joint-heirs with Christ” (Rom. 8:17). In reality, the ladder in Jacob’s dream is Christ because without Him there is no way to heaven. As the “Son of God,” Christ reveals that God is good, gracious, and holy. As the “Son of Man,” Christ reveals that He is the last Adam Who knows our human needs and the trials of life that we personally experience (Heb. 4:15).

## **Summary**

Tradition and legend tells us that Bartholomew later preached in India, Phrygia, and Armenia. It's said that Philip and Bartholomew were both persecuted while preaching in Phrygia. Philip is believed to have been martyred by being pierced through the thighs and hung upside down. Bartholomew was also fastened to a cross, but later taken down and released.

Tradition goes on to say that he traveled to Armenia where he preached to this idolatrously steeped society. It is believed that he was condemned and beaten with clubs where he was martyred. His death came by being skinned alive and then crucified head downward in 68 AD at Albanus. He was a deeply spiritual man who lived, preached, and died for the Christian faith.

One of the greatest characteristics of discipleship is sincerity. May we so live as to hear Christ say of us that we are without "guile." Only you and God can give an answer as to how sincere you are about following and serving Jesus Christ. I'm afraid that Christendom is filled with people today who play the role of a hypocrite. I'll be the first to admit that there are multitudes that pretend to be a disciple, but amount to no more than hypocrites. The truth about our spiritual condition cannot be hid from God. Nathanael was a good godly man, but he, like the rest of us, are far from perfection. He stood in need of a change of attitude. When he met Jesus, his attitude changed. It could be that our attitude is damaging our Christian witness for Christ. Therefore, let's take an honest look at our attitude and see where it needs improving.

## **Chapter 3**

### **John**

### **A Beloved Disciple**

“And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants, and went after him.” (Mk. 1:19-20)

Our character study of the apostle John verifies that when God makes a preacher out of a man that He does not unmake the man. God takes our human limitations and frailties and polishes them into a useful life of service to His glory. When God transforms a soul into a new creation (II Cor. 5:17), He begins developing and sanctifying that personality. John was one of the most outstanding of the twelve disciples because of his extremely close relationship with Christ. In all humility he never uses his own name in any of his writings except in the prophetic book of Revelation. It's generally accepted that the other disciple who went with Andrew to talk with Jesus was John (Jh. 1:37-40). Also, we believe that the other disciple who was known to the high priest in the eighteenth chapter of John was probably the apostle John (Jh. 18:15-16). John is the only human writer of the four gospels that does not give a list of the twelve apostles.

It appears that John came from a rather well-to-do family in Galilee. His father, Zebedee, owned a fishing business in which he employed not only his sons, but also “hired servants.” His older brother, James, worked with him in the fishing trade and both were called at the same time to become disciples of Christ. His mother, Salome, is believed to be the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. If this was true, then it would make John and Jesus cousins.

John is believed to be the youngest of the twelve disciples and also the disciple to live the longest of the apostles. We think that he served his Lord for a period of over seventy years. He appears



to have been a disciple of John the Baptist before discovering the “Lamb of God” (Jh. 1:35) for himself. In the gospel that bears his name, John testified of the “Lamb” that was led to the slaughter and crucified on the cross. In the writing of Revelation, he once again refers to Christ as the “Lamb” more than twenty times. Besides these two books of the Bible, he is accredited for being the human penman of First, Second, and Third John.

At this point, I emphasize that Holy Scripture is the inerrant, infallible, and plenary Word of God that is verbally inspired by the Holy Spirit (II Tim. 3:16). God simply used human hands to write and bleed through their personalities His written Word that reveals to us the Living Word. I believe that God superintended the very words that the human writers wrote in the original manuscripts. This means that they did not understand everything they were writing, but they wrote as the Holy Spirit inspired them. This was the case with John as well as every human penman chosen by God.

John was employed in his trade at the time Jesus called him into discipleship. Upon being called, he immediately “left” his “father” and his prominent fishing business to follow Jesus by faith. There is no doubt that he later fished for an income and to make a living. But, it’s clear from the scriptures that upon this call, money was not the most important thing in his life. With Jesus as his LORD, his goal was not to get rich in this world, but to do the will of God. John, along with Peter and James became what we commonly refer to as the inner circle of the twelve disciples.

### **John Was a Disciple With a Temper**

In his younger years, John was guilty (just like many Christians of today) of possessing the human weakness of uncontrolled or outburst of temper. Mark, chapter three and verse seventeen records, “And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder.” This is speaking of when Jesus nicknamed both James and John the “sons of thunder.” A son of thunder was a man who

suddenly broke out in outrage of temper, but the outburst would quickly pass away. John was quick tempered and perhaps was guilty of wearing his feelings on his cuff. His temper was on a hair trigger. He was just as human and you and I. God made a great disciple out of him; although, he had problems with himself just like you and I do today. The life of John shows us how the grace of God turned his temper into tenderness and made this son of thunder to become a son of love.

His short fuse is again evidenced by the way he rebuked a man for doing miracles. In Luke, chapter nine, verses forty-nine through fifty, we read, “And John answered and said, Master, we saw one casting out devils in thy name; and we forbid him, because he followeth not with us. And Jesus said unto him, Forbid him not; for he that is not against us is for us.” John appeared to be very intolerant of this man because he was not one of the close disciples. His attitude was like many today who basically say that if he’s not like me; therefore, he’s wrong! I realize where there are certain biblical doctrines that cannot be compromised, but there are other areas where we’re not all going to dot every “I” and cross every “T” just alike. If we can agree on the cardinal truths of God’s Word, then we ought to be able to fellowship with other Christians. The problem we need to recognize in this passage is that of jealousy on the part of John. Jealousy remains a big problem within the ranks of the church and especially among preachers.

John’s temper flared up again when Samaria didn’t receive Christ. It’s recorded in Luke, chapter nine and verse fifty-four, “And when his disciples James and John saw this, they said, Lord wilt thou that we command fire to come down from heaven, and consume them, even as Elias did?” Ordinarily, the Jews had no dealings with the Samaritans. Since Jesus came for all mankind, He had planned a visit to Samaria. Upon making preparation for His stay, the Samaritans refused Him hospitality. The reaction of James and John to this treatment toward Jesus was very stern. Jesus rebuked and corrected their ill attitude by saying, “Ye know not what manner of spirit ye are of. For the Son of man is not come to destroy men’s lives, but to save them”

(Lk. 9:55-56a). By human nature, John was intolerant, resentful of abuse, and stern in his attitude toward offenders.

### **John Was a Disciple of Quick Reaction**

On one occasion, Salome asked a very selfish question of Jesus in Matthew, chapter twenty and verse twenty-one. She asked, “Grant that these my two sons may sit, the one on thy right hand, and the other on the left, in thy kingdom.” It’s possible that she made this request because of their close physical kinship with Jesus. Maybe she didn’t give sufficient thought as to what she was asking. On the surface, she appears very selfish in asking for her two sons to be elevated above the remaining ten disciples which angered them. Their response is recorded in Matt. 20:24, “And when the ten heard it, they were moved with indignation against the two brethren.” A desire for selfish glory is a mark of spiritual immaturity. The recording of this passage is a reminder to us that the church has always had people who have wanted to be in the limelight, center of attention, and the seat of authority.

James and John seem to be men of ambition. Now, there is nothing wrong with ambition in and of itself, but it must be preceded with humility. We read on in this same passage of Scripture and discover that Jesus taught them a lesson in humility. “But Jesus called them unto him, and said, Ye know that the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they that are great exercise authority upon them. But it shall not be so among you; but whosoever will be chief among you, let him be your servant; Even as the Son of man came not to be ministered unto, but to minister, and to give his life a ransom for many” (Matt. 20:25-28).

When the disciples were told about the missing body of Jesus on Resurrection Sunday, it was John who immediately responded. “So they ran both together: and the other disciple (whom we believe to be John) did outrun Peter, and came first to the sepulcher. And he stooping down, and looking in, saw the linen clothes lying; yet went he not in. Then cometh Simon Peter following him, and went into the sepulcher, and seeth the linen

clothes lie” (Jh. 20:4-6). There are some people who act before they think. Perhaps most of us do. This can often be said of young people and hopefully, we’ll all learn how to better handle difficult situations as we grow older with maturity. Being an older youth at the time of Christ’s death, John was excitable and impulsive and outran Peter to the tomb where Jesus was buried. However, it was his immaturity that kept him outside permitting Peter to be the first to enter the sepulcher.

### **John Was a Disciple of Love**

Although John must have been quick tempered and stern in reaction, God’s grace transformed him into a disciple of love. In closing his gospel in the last chapter, it’s noteworthy to pay close attention as to how he spoke concerning the subject of love. He said, “Therefore that disciple whom Jesus loved saith unto Peter” (Jh. 21:7), and again he wrote, “Then Peter, turning about seeth the disciple whom Jesus loved” (Jh. 21:20). The literal rendering of “whom Jesus loved” is “whom Jesus kept on loving.” John is making it perfectly clear that when he was unlovely, unloving, and unlovable that Jesus continued loving him. This love of Jesus changed John’s life, disposition, and attitude.

Jesus loved all of His disciples just as He loves all His children today with a special kind of love. John 3:16 reminds us “That God so loved the world,” but love for a world of humanity does not exclude a special love for some. This in no way whatsoever indicates that everyone in the world is saved and going to heaven when they die. The blood that Jesus shed on the cross is sufficient for all, but only efficient for those who believe. Faith to trust Christ as Savior, Lord, and Master comes as a gift from the Holy Spirit to hell deserving sinners who are numbered among God’s elect.

You can love family and friends, but the love of family is usually greater. Jesus did not play favorites with His disciples, but at the same time He found in John the capacity of great spiritual love. We single out John as the Beloved Disciple because he says so much about love as we find in the fourth

chapter of his first epistle. “Beloved, let us love one another: for love is of God, and every one that loveth is born of God, and knoweth God. He that loveth not knoweth not God; for God is love. In this was manifested the love of God toward us, because that God sent his only begotten Son into the world, that we might live through him. Herein is love, not that we loved God, but that he loved us, and sent his Son to be the propitiation for our sins, Beloved, if God so loved us, we ought also to love one another. No man hath seen God at any time. If we love one another, God dwelleth in us, and his love is perfected in us. Hereby know we that we dwell in him, and he in us, because he hath given us of his Spirit” (I Jh. 4:7-13).

One of love's greatest expressions is trust and while in bitter agony on the cross, Jesus entrusted His mother's care to John. He records that episode in verses twenty-six through twenty-seven in the nineteenth chapter of his gospel. “When Jesus therefore saw his mother, and the disciple standing by, whom he loved, he saith unto his mother, Woman behold thy son! Then saith he to the disciple, Behold thy mother! And from that hour that disciple took her unto his own home.”

As far as we know, John was the only one of the twelve disciples present at the crucifixion. We can only assume that Joseph, Mary's husband, was deceased when Jesus committed the care of Mary to the apostle John. Scripture says that “from that hour” when Jesus was on the cross, John's home most likely became Mary's home. We can speculate and wonder why she was not placed in the care of one of her other sons. We'll never have the correct answer to such a question, but it could have been because of their attitude toward Jesus at the time.

John wrote in the seventh chapter, “For neither did his brethren believe in him” (Jh. 7:5). It appears that Mary had other children who were (what I'll call) the half-brothers and sisters of Jesus (Matt. 13:55-56). They were fathered by Joseph and with Jesus being conceived of a virgin by the Holy Spirit, this means they had the same mother, but not the same father. During His earthly life, it appears that these siblings did not “believe in him.” It wasn't until after His resurrection that they became His followers

(Acts 1:14). There are several James' mentioned in the New Testament, but it's believed that the human writer of the Book of James was the half-brother of Jesus (Gal. 1:19) who became a leader in the Jerusalem church (Gal. 2:9,12). Although, these siblings were slow in acknowledging Jesus as the Son of God, their eyes were eventually opened. As we hear the words of Jesus commissioning the care of Mary to John, it reminds us that under the blood kin can be stronger than physical blood relationships. Of course when I speak of under the blood kin, I'm speaking of the blood of Jesus. It's been said that blood is thicker than water, but for a spiritually minded believer the Spirit of God within us is thicker than the physical blood of our earthly pedigree. According to the scriptural account of the crucifixion, John appears to be the last friend that Jesus spoke personally to before He died.

John made it perfectly clear that the true meaning of love is to give of yourself. He said, "Greater love hath no man than this, that a man lay down his life for his friends" (Jh. 15:13). In the first epistle that bears his name, he declares, "God is love" (I Jh. 4:8,16). The only way to know real true genuine love is to be in personal contact with the Lover of your soul. God's love is not wordy, but demonstrative (Jh. 3:16). God demonstrated His love in the death of Jesus Christ on the cross for the sins of His people. John came a long way in his Christian life because he was not born with a loving heart. It was by the power of the Holy Spirit that he won control over his temper as he grew in love for his Lord.

### **Summary**

There is a legend that tells of John being in Rome along with Peter and while there he was submitted to torture by being boiled in oil. Somehow he was miraculously delivered unharmed. Another legend says that John was once forced to drink a cup of poison, but no harm came to him. Tradition says that John was exiled on the desolate island of Patmos when Emperor Domitian persecuted the church. It seems ridiculous that anyone would be

afraid of a ninety year old man, but they were of John. We're not told of the hardships that he suffered while imprisoned on Patmos. We may be tempted to ask, "Why God allowed such a faithful servant to suffer?" However, we discover that in suffering God proves that His "strength is made perfect" in our "weakness" (II Cor. 12:9).

While on Patmos, God revealed the glorious vision that John recorded in the Book of Revelation. After his release from Patmos, he returned to Ephesus where he had previously served as pastor. Most of the original twelve disciples died violent deaths. But, it is generally believed that John died peacefully in the city of Ephesus on September 26<sup>th</sup> in about 100 AD.

That which God did in the life of John, He can do for us if we only surrender to His Lordship. The greatest lesson to learn from the life of John is the beauty of spiritual growth. John's unlovely traits were changed by Jesus until he was molded into something useful for God's glory. He is a good example of how Christ can take a life that is scared with imperfections and make something useful out of it. Every immature Christian can grow to be a trusted disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ. The secret to growing in love is not found in education, but in daily walking with Christ (I Jh. 1:7, 2:16). Let's ask ourselves two questions. Do we have a desire to walk daily with Christ and is it our desire to be nearer to Him than to anyone else?

## **Chapter 4**

### **Peter**

### **A Disciple Who Became As Solid As A Rock**

“And Jesus, walking by the sea of Galilee, saw two brethren, Simon called Peter, and Andrew his brother, casting a net into the sea: for they were fishers. And he saith unto them, Follow me, and I will make you fishers of men. And they straightway left their nets, and followed him.” (Matt. 4:18-20)

When something is referred to as being solid as a rock, we mean that it's stable, strong, and secure. Such a description did not always fit the life of Simon Peter. During the early years of training as a disciple, we discover that his nature was as unstable as water. However, Jesus eventually empowered and transformed Peter into a man who became as **SOLID AS A ROCK**.

Of all the twelve disciples we have more biblical knowledge of Peter than of any other. Peter came from a family of fishermen where he and his brother, Andrew, had their own fishing boat. It's possible that they were in partnership with James and John, the sons of Zebedee. It was Peter's brother, Andrew, who first introduced him to Christ. Sometime later after his first encounter with Jesus, Peter was officially called as an apostle while busily engaged in his fishing trade.

Peter emerges as the apparent leader and spokesman of the twelve apostles. Matthew begins his list of apostles by naming Peter, “the first” (Matt. 10:2). This word “first” in the Greek is **PROTOS** which not only can mean first, but chief or principal. Peter stands out in Scripture as a natural born leader, so to speak. We discover in him qualities of humility, sensitivity, enthusiasm, as well as great talent.

He is known within the pages of the Bible by three different names. The first time we meet him in the New Testament, he is called “Simon” (Jh. 1:41-42). He is also referred to as “Simon Barjona” (Matt. 16:17). “Bar” simply means son; therefore, “Simon Barjona” made reference to him as being Simon the son



of Jona with Jona most likely being the name of John. On another occasion, Peter is referred to as “Simeon” (Acts 15:14). The reason for this is because “Simeon” is the original Hebrew form of Simon. In Hebrew the name “Simeon” means listening. The name that we best know him by is “Peter” which is the new name given to him by Jesus when they first met (Jh. 1:42). “Cephas” and “Peter” are different forms of the same name with both names meaning a rock or “a stone.” The name “Cephas” is Aramaic whereas the name “Peter” is Greek.

Peter was a typical Galilean, quick tempered, impulsive, emotional, and loyal. There is no doubt that most of the disciples were married men; however, Peter is the only disciple ever mentioned in Scripture with a wife (Mk. 1:29-31). It’s possible that his mother-in-law lived with him as he made his home in Capernaum (Matt. 8:14). Peter was one of the three men that formed the inner circle of disciples and became especially close to Jesus. The only epistles in the New Testament accredited to his human penmanship are First and Second Peter.

### **Peter’s Great Proclamation**

“When Jesus came into the coasts of Caesarea Philippi, he asked his disciples, saying, Whom do men say that I the Son of man am? And they said, Some say that thou art John the Baptist: some Elias; and others, Jeremias, or one of the prophets. He saith unto them, But whom say ye that I am? And Simon Peter answered and said, Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God. And Jesus answered and said unto him, Blessed art thou, Simon Barjona: for flesh and blood hath not revealed it unto thee, but my Father which is in heaven” (Matt. 16:13-17).

Having led His disciples to a place of rest and spiritual refreshment, Jesus asked what the public was saying about Him. Some thought that Jesus was John the Baptist, Elijah, or Jeremiah or some other prophet. But, it was Simon Peter that proclaimed emphatically, “Thou art the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Before we can proclaim Christ effectively, we must

first discover Him for Who He is. Jesus is not a reincarnation of some Old Testament character nor was He ever a chosen cherub from heaven. He is no other than the Godman who came down from above as our only redeemer from sin.

There are some people today that still see Him as only a good person or teacher who lived a long time ago and is historically remembered on certain occasions during the year. However, let me remind you that the only way to know Jesus like Peter knew Jesus is by supernatural revelation of the Holy Spirit. Jesus made it very clear that “flesh and blood” cannot discover who Jesus is, but that it can only be “revealed” by “my Father which is in heaven.” The third person of the trinity is the One Who reveals Christ to sinners (Jh. 16:13-14). If God does not convict a person’s heart of sin, then it won’t be convicted by mortal flesh. In Christian service we need to realize our human limitations and depend upon God to do what only He can do.

### **Peter’s Great Promise**

“And I say also unto thee, That thou art Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church; and the gates of hell shall not prevail against it. And I will give unto thee the keys of the kingdom of heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt bind on earth shall be bound in heaven: and whatsoever thou shalt loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven. Then charged he his disciples that they should tell no man that he was Jesus the Christ” (Matt. 16:18-20).

In the Greek, it reads, “thou art Petros (which means pebble) and upon this Petra (which means rock) I will build my church.” Petros means a fragment of stone chipped from the whole Rock (Petra). Jesus does not promise to build His church on Peter, but upon Himself. A heresy of Roman Catholicism believes the church was built on Peter with him being their first pope. Peter was only a pillar of the church (Eph. 2:20). Scripture teaches that every believer is a “living stone” (I Pet. 2:4-9) as we compose the spiritual body of the “household of faith” (Gal. 6:10). The only foundation of the Christian church is no other than the Lord

Jesus Christ (I Cor. 3:11). He alone is the eternal Rock of Ages upon which His church is built. Peter as only a PETROS (chip from the massive Rock); whereas Jesus is the PETRA, the foundation Rock on which the church is constructed.

Christ gave an assuring and encouraging promise that not even the “gates of hell” will have power over His church. The “keys” given to Peter are speaking of the privilege in taking the Gospel to the world and seeing the Holy Spirit unlock the door of heathen hearts with God’s message of truth and deliverance. There is a false legend that pictures Saint Peter standing at the door of heaven letting people in or keeping people out. Such a description of Peter is not what this passage is talking about and is not biblical. A key is a symbolic badge of power or authority. Every Christian has been given the same privilege as Peter in bearing a witness of Jesus Christ and declaring God’s grace to a lost world.

### **Peter’s Great Rebuke**

“From that time forth began Jesus to shew unto his disciples, how that he must go unto Jerusalem, and suffer many things of the elders and chief priests and scribes and be killed, and be raised again the third day. Then Peter took him, and began to rebuke him, saying, be it far from thee, Lord: this shall not be unto thee. But he turned, and said unto Peter, Get thee behind me, Satan: thou art an offence unto me: for thou savourest not the things that be of God, but those that be of men” (Matt. 16:21-23).

Peter is the only apostle that we know of that ever “began to rebuke” the Lord Jesus. Peter was so shocked to hear of Christ foretelling His death. The thought of someone killing Jesus was unbearable for him. While Jesus was talking about suffering, Peter most likely had a kingly throne in mind. Actually, Peter’s “rebuke” of Christ was a temptation of Satan to keep Him off the cross.

The reaction of Jesus was one of rebuke toward Peter. Christ was not saying literally that Peter was Satan. In other words,

Jesus was not saying that Peter had become demon possessed or that he was full of the devil. Peter was thinking in earthly terms rather than in spiritual terms. As a result, Satan had used Peter's lips in trying to tempt the humanity of Christ. At this point, we need to learn a vital lesson. As followers of Christ, we need to beware that we not yield to the carnal flesh. We must put up our guard and not allow Satan to use us in hindering the cause of Christ. When we fail to grow spiritually as we should, we can become a stumbling block to other believers as well as to the lost.

### **Peter's Great Denial**

“Then saith Jesus unto them, All ye shall be offended because of me this night: for it is written, I will smite the shepherd, and the sheep of the flock shall be scattered abroad. But after I am risen again, I will go before you into Galilee. Peter answered and said unto him, Though all men shall be offended because of thee, yet will I never be offended. Jesus said unto him, Verily I say unto thee, That this night, before the cock crow, thou shalt deny me thrice. Peter said unto him, Though I should die with thee, yet will I not deny thee. Likewise also said all the disciples” (Matt. 26:31-35).

In the upper room immediately after the Last Supper, Peter affirmed his undeniable loyalty to Christ. Later that same evening, he drew a sword to defend Jesus against the soldiers who came to arrest Him in the garden. It was on that same evening while in the courtyard of the high priest, Peter denied having ever known Jesus (Matt. 26:69-75). Within a few hours of promising never to desert his Lord, Peter was caught off guard and denied Him. In trying to convince his peers that he was not associated with Jesus, he resorted to his old barnyard sailor language when he began to curse and to swear.

Perhaps at this point, it would be good to ask ourselves, “Does the language we use sound like we belong to Jesus or to the world?” Cursing and profanity shows ignorance and reveals our

lack of Christlikeness. We must be careful never to become overly confident in the flesh. Before we get too critical of Peter, we need to realize that we are just as weak as he was (I Cor. 10:12). Jesus warned that His disciples must remain on guard against satanic attack. He said, “Watch and pray, that ye enter not into temptation: the spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak” (Matt. 26:41).

Peter’s denial is certainly not commendable, but before we condemn him let’s ask, “Where were the other disciples at this point and time?” It’s believed that only Peter and John followed Jesus into the courtyard. The rest of the disciples fled and hid in terror. It took a brave man to follow Jesus into the courtyard. It took a weak man to deny his Lord. It took a humble man to go out and weep bitterly (Matt. 26:75, Lk. 22:62) .

The repentance of Peter is one of the most beautiful things about his entire life. In a sense, both Peter and Judas denied Jesus. Peter sinned just as badly as Judas. Peter cursed Christ whereas Judas sold Christ out to the enemy. The difference between the two is that Peter had the humility to repent. Peter knew that he was as weak as sand and that he was a long ways from being made as solid as a rock.

### **Peter’s Great Commission**

“So when they had dined, Jesus saith to Simon Peter, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me more than these? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my lambs. He saith to him again the second time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? He saith unto him, Yea, Lord; thou knowest that I love thee. He saith unto him, Feed my sheep. He saith unto him the third time, Simon, son of Jonas, lovest thou me? Peter was grieved because he said unto him the third time, Lovest thou me? And he said unto him, Lord, thou knowest all things; thou knowest that I love thee. Jesus saith unto him, Feed my sheep” (Jh. 21:15-17).

After his denial, Peter courageously rejoins the other disciples. He was the first disciple to enter the tomb and witness the resurrected body of Jesus (Jh. 20:6). After the resurrection, Jesus sent a special message to Peter and let him know that he was still loved and included among the apostles; although, he had denied his Lord. I believe the wording is most significant that we find in Mark 16:7 when Jesus said to “tell the disciples and Peter.” It sounds like Jesus was saying that in spite of his denial, Peter was still numbered among the original twelve. Jesus did not chalk him off the list because he blew it.

Upon the third post resurrection appearance of Jesus is when Christ commissioned Peter to “feed my sheep.” After eating a meal prepared by the nail scarred hand of Christ, Jesus asked Peter three times if he loved Him. It is most significant that three times Peter denied his Lord and three times Jesus questioned him as to his love and loyalty to his Master. I’m glad to report that the rest of Peter’s life reaffirms his unfailing commitment to Christ. After acknowledging his love for his Savior, Jesus foretold the manner of death that Peter would die (Jh. 21:18-19).

### **Peter’s Great Realization**

“Then Peter opened his mouth, and said, Of a truth I perceive that God is no respecter of persons: But in every nation he that feareth him, and worketh righteousness, is accepted with him” (Acts 10:34-35).

The first twelve chapters in the Book of Acts deals with the ministry of Peter. These opening chapters clearly reveal that Peter is a strong leader in the early Christian church. He was the one who made the first move to select a replacement for Judas. He was the human vessel that God used on Pentecost to see three thousand souls converted to Christ. It was Peter who dealt with Ananias and Sapphira as God’s discipline was pronounced against them. One of the most vital steps that Peter took was in receiving Gentiles into the Christian church.

The Jews saw themselves as God's chosen people and Gentiles were generally despised in their eyes. But, after Peter's vision at Joppa, he led the church to go with the gospel to the Gentiles. Those of us who are Gentiles are much indebted to Peter because of his obedience to the will of God. He dared to follow through with his divine realization that the gospel of saving grace was to be a universal gospel, meaning it was to be carried beyond the boundaries of the Jewish community into the Gentile world.

### **Summary**

Tradition and legend connect Peter with having served the church at Antioch for seven years before traveling into Asia Minor. It's generally accepted that Peter was in Rome at the same time as Paul, sometime around 61 AD. Tradition says that he arrived during a time of heavy persecution and was martyred by crucifixion. His request was that he be crucified upside down on an X-shaped cross because he was unworthy to die in the same manner as his Lord. It's also believed that just prior to Peter's death that his wife was crucified, with Peter being forced to look on while she suffered.

Peter was a man with many faults and failures, just like you and me. However, he was a man who remained tender to God's grace. His failures and triumphs turned out to be stepping stones in reaching higher spiritual heights. The apostle Peter is such a great encouragement to all believers of today who have a true heart's desire to climb upward and live on the plateau of God's will. Any born again child of God can miserably fail his Lord many times, but we must never forget that we have a loving and gracious Heavenly Father who is willing to forgive when we repent and confess (I Jh. 1:9).

## **Chapter 5**

### **Jude**

### **A Disciple Who Remained True**

“Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?”

(Jh. 14:22)

In doing character studies of biblical personalities, it's beneficial to look deeper than the surface of one's life and uncover spiritual lessons which that individual conveys. In creation God distinguished between the “greater” and “lesser” lights in the universe (Gen. 1:16). Just as God distinguished between the lights of His creation, He also made a similar distinction among some of the characters in Scripture.

Just because God made a “lesser light” to rule the night does not mean that it is of no importance. There are some personalities in the Bible that shine much brighter than others and more information is revealed about them. Then again, there are, shall we say, minor personalities that we know very little about. However, that doesn't mean that they of no importance because they still have a very special place in God's eternal plan. The twelve disciples were made up of “greater” and “lesser” lights in this regards. The apostle that claims our attention in this chapter is one that we know very little about from the Bible. Although, little biblical information is known about Jude, God had a place, plan, and purpose for his life just as He does for every one of His followers of today.

#### **Jude was a Man with Three Names**

First of all, he was known as Judas (Lk. 6:16, Acts 1:13). There are many in the New Testament who were named Judas. Judas is the Greek form of the Hebrew word, Judah, which is found in the Old Testament. Jude is simply the Latin word for Judah and was a very common name among the Jews. We refer to him as Jude, a



disciple who remained true to distinguish him from Judas Iscariot, the traitor who did not remain true to the Lord Jesus.

The KJV refers to Jude as the “brother of James” (Lk. 6:16). Some of the best Greek translations translate it to read, “son of James.” The Greek only says “of” and does not specify it to be either brother or son. Most likely, “son of” is the best translation. Some believe that Jude the apostle was the son of James the apostle which would have made him the grandson of Zebedee and the nephew of the apostle John.

It’s believed that Jude the apostle and Jude the human penman of the epistle Jude are two different men. The Jude who wrote the epistle is believed to be the half-brother of Jesus (Jude 1). James the writer of the epistle James is also thought to be another half-brother of Jesus (Matt. 13:55-56). At first, these half-brothers of Jesus apparently did not believe in Him as the Promised Messiah. Therefore, they would not have been called as apostles. It appears that they were probably converted after the resurrection of our Lord. It’s interesting to note that the writer, Jude, does not call himself an apostle, but refers to them as “they” and not we (Jude 17-18).

Secondly, Jude was known as Thaddeus (Mk. 3:18). Thaddeus was the Greek form of a Jewish name. He is often referred to as Jude Thaddeus. Judas was the original name of this apostle, but after Iscariot’s betrayal he was probably called by one of his other names. There is an awful stigma associated with the name Judas because of the way Judas Iscariot betrayed Jesus. This remains true even to this day. Who wants to name their child, Judas? Nobody! What a terrible handle to hang on a poor kid! It’s an insult to call somebody a Judas.

Thirdly, Jude was known as Lebbeus (Matt. 10:3). It’s been suggested that Jude was one of the youngest of the twelve disciples and that this is the nickname given to him by the apostles. The name is believed to be a connotation and expression of tenderness. Some of the apostles have double names, but Jude is the only one with three different names.

### **Jude was a Man with a Question**

Apart from being listed along with the other disciples, all we are told about Jude is that he asked Jesus a question (Jh. 14:22). At the Last Supper, Jesus had washed the disciple's feet, instituted the observance of the Lord's Supper, and was in the midst of speaking. Judas Iscariot had already left the room when Jesus began telling His disciples about the comforting work of the Holy Spirit following His death. While Jesus was speaking it was Jude who asked a question. Jude wanted to know how Jesus would "manifest" (make known) Himself to a believer differently than to the world. Since the ascension of Christ no one has seen Him physical, but yet only a believer can know the reality of His presence through the indwelling Holy Spirit.

Jesus gave a three-fold answer to his question as He taught them about the coming "Comforter." Jesus promised that the Holy Spirit would make His "abode" within the believer at the time of his response to God's "love" (referring to the new birth). "Jesus answered and said unto him, If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him. He that loveth me not keepeth not my sayings: and the word which ye hear is not mine, but the Father's which sent me" (Jh. 14:23-24).

A person demonstrates his love for Christ by seeking to keep His Word. Love is the key that unlocks the door to communion with God and that motivates us to obedience. Only when we truly love God will we want to obey His Word. Apart from His Word there is no communion with heaven. Jesus revealed that the Holy Spirit would be our great "Comforter" (Jh. 14:25-26). The Holy Spirit is the third person of the Godhead sent by the Father and in the name of Christ (Jh. 16:7-14). The work of the Holy Spirit is to introduce us to Christ, empower us for service, and lead us into godliness. When the Holy Spirit converts us, He plants the love of Christ in our hearts. Jesus proclaimed that the Holy Spirit would give a transformed believer an inner peace that the world knows nothing about (Jh. 14:27). The outward circumstances of life may be troublesome, but a Christian can

know peace in the midst of life's stormy seas as we learn submission to God's will.

By asking his question, Jude showed a real desire to learn. Asking questions is no sign of ignorance. Actually, it is a symptom of intelligence and in this case it showed a thirst for spiritual knowledge. Earlier in Jesus' discourse, it was Thomas who had also asked a question (Jh. 14:5). These men did not understand what Jesus was saying because it was a new teaching concerning the work of the Holy Spirit. But, this one thing we need to notice. Jude began his question by calling Jesus, "Lord." Thomas and Philip also addressed Jesus in the same way (Jh. 14:5,8). To know Jesus as "Lord" requires devotion, obedience, and surrender. As a born again believer, the Holy Spirit is resident in your life today, but are you seeking to yield every aspect of your life to Him? For Jesus to be "Lord" of your life means that He must be in total control (I Cor. 12:3b). The Christian life is a process of constantly growing in the grace and knowledge of the Lord Jesus Christ. This is what we call sanctification. As we spiritually mature, we ought to find ourselves surrendering daily to His Lordship over us. A sinner cannot trust Christ as Savior without acknowledging His Lordship. This is often referred to as Lordship Salvation.

### **Jude was a Man who Lived in Obscurity**

We know nothing of Jude's call to discipleship or what his occupation was before meeting Christ. A dead silence surrounds his life and history. Obscurity is a distinguishing feature about him. The last time we read about him in Scripture is when he and the other disciples were waiting in Jerusalem for the Holy Spirit to empower them. Just because he was obscure doesn't mean that he was unimportant. He was obscure, but he was an obedient and faithful follower of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The world will probably never hear of you or me, but what we do for Christ is not to be done for the sake of worldly fame, fortune, recognition, popularity, or praise. Many humble, obscure, and faithful saints are unknown to the world, but they

shine brightly to the glory of God in the corner of the world where they live. God doesn't save us to make a name for ourselves, but to proclaim His name and radiate His light to this dark world of sin. The motto for the New Testament church as a whole and to the saint individually is not fame, but faithfulness. God does not require us to be big, but He does require us to be faithful. He does not require us to be popular, but He does require us to be faithful.

### **Summary**

Church history records that Jude preached in Syria, Arabia, Mesopotamia, and Persia. Tradition says that Jude and Bartholomew helped to evangelize Armenia where both suffered martyrdom. Some say that Jude was put to death at Ardaze in 50 AD. Others claim that he was killed with arrows at Mt. Ararat or was slain with the apostle Simon Zelotes in Persia. We don't know for certain the details of his death, but it does appear that he was put to death for his Lord.

The task of Jude Thaddeus was the same task as the other apostles. First, they learned of Jesus as they walked with Him and listened to Him. Secondly, they took His message of redemption to the world. Judas Iscariot turned traitor while Jude Thaddeus remained true, loyal, and steadfast. The perseverance of the saints does not depend upon our free will, but upon the keeping power of the indwelling Holy Spirit. Only God can keep us from sin and eternally secure. Therefore, just as we rely upon the utility company for electricity, we need to rely upon our God for power to overcome sin and render effective Christian service. God's power is released through the indwelling person of the Holy Spirit, the third person of the triune Godhead. Jesus told Jude that the Holy Spirit would make His abode within those who truly love Him. Do you have a personal love relationship with God through Jesus Christ in the new birth? If so, it is one that will last throughout all eternity and until we cross over onto heaven's shore, the Holy Spirit will equip us with the strength to face all the tomorrows of life.

## **Chapter 6**

### **Thomas**

### **A Doubting But Devoted Disciple**

“But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.” (Jh. 20:24-25)

The Bible tells us absolutely nothing concerning the background of the apostle Thomas. Legend says that he was born of poor parents, brought up in the fishing trade, and instructed in the knowledge of the Old Testament Scriptures. It is certain that Thomas was a Jew and probably was a Galilean. Thomas is first mentioned in the New Testament when Jesus sent the disciples out in pairs (Matt. 10:3, Mk. 3:18, Lk. 6:15). It’s interesting to note that Matthew’s name is always paired up with Thomas. This could very well indicate that they were paired up to work together as a team.

The first three Gospels give us no information on this particular disciple except for his name. Thomas was also known by the name of Didymus. It was customary for Jews to also have a Greek or Latin name to use when they associated with the Greeks or Romans. Thomas was his Hebrew name whereas Didymus was his Greek name. The meaning of both names was twin. If Thomas had a twin brother or sister then we have no idea who it could have been.

It’s possible that his name represented his double mindedness because in Thomas we see the twins of unbelief and faith mixed. Such a mixture is certainly not commendable, but unfortunately a reality in our own lives (Jam. 1:8, 4:8). Before we quickly condemn Thomas for doubting, let us be reminded that this same sort of twin or dual consciousness is within every one of us as believers (Rom. 7:21). As long as a Christian is housed in a

fleshly body, the spirit will war with the carnal plague of unbelief. Say what you will, but we all have at times been just like Thomas. In other words, we can see ourselves in him if we are willing to take an honest look.

Three episodes regarding Thomas are recorded in the Gospel of John. Without these few interesting facts then we would have no idea of his vivid personality. With the exception of Peter and John, we have more historical data on Thomas than on the rest of the apostles. However, it's not history that we are interested in as much as spiritual truths. Sufficient information is given in the Gospel of John whereby we can come to an understanding of Thomas' character.

### **Thomas was a Courageous Man**

Jesus was in the wilderness when He received word that Lazarus was sick (Jh. 11:1-16). He told His disciples that He was going to Bethany to minister to this friend, but Jesus waited for two days knowing that Lazarus would die and be raised from the dead. Herein is a beautiful picture of our Lord's great sovereignty even during his earthly life as He declared that it would all be "for the glory of God." As sovereign God in human flesh we see proof that Christ incarnate was omniscient, meaning all knowing. There has never been a time when God the Son, Jesus Christ, was not equal with God the Father. In His majestic sovereignty, Jesus knew the future of Lazarus just like He knows yours and mine. Not only does He know it, but He has predestined it. The writing of Holy Scripture in advance of it happening, which we often refer to as prophecy, is evidence that God knows the "end from the beginning" (Isa. 46:10). The reason He knows it is because He has ordained it!

The disciples tried to talk Jesus out of going to Bethany because the religious Jews had already tried to stone Him. On two previous occasions, Jesus had been in danger of being stoned to death (Jh. 8:59, 10:31). It was Thomas who spoke up, stating that they should not hinder Jesus from doing what He knew was best (Jh. 11:16). Being aware of the opposition against Christ,

Thomas was willing to go with Him to Bethany even if it meant having to die with Him. From the lips of Thomas there is evidence of a deep seated love and commitment to his Master. His words tell us that he was a man of courage, loyalty, and devotion. If necessary, Thomas was willing to be faithful to Christ even unto death.

### **Thomas was an Inquisitive Man**

During the Last Supper, Jesus was speaking to the troubled hearts of the disciples about the joys of heaven and the place that He was going to prepare (Jh. 14:1-6). It appears that Thomas contradicted Jesus, but actually he simply failed to understand what Jesus was saying. Often, we are prone to condemn Thomas because he asked a question. Instead of condemning him, we need to commend him. Thomas had a spiritual hunger to understand more fully the teaching of Christ. The asking of biblical questions can very well be the beginning of spiritual knowledge.

There are many people today who have a misconception of how to get to heaven. Jesus answered this question by saying, "I am the way, the truth, and the life: no man cometh to the Father, but by me." It's not enough to believe in a mere existence of God (Jam. 2:19). Neither is it enough to believe in the historical Christ who lived on earth. We must believe that Jesus is God incarnate and cherish the indwelling Holy Spirit living in us as born again believers. As God grants us faith to believe there will be repentance of sin and conversion to Christ with a new nature within.

There are not many ways to heaven, but only one way and Jesus declared that He was that "way." Many mistakenly think they are going to heaven because they do the best they can, because they are sincere about what they believe, because they join a local church, or attend church services occasionally. Some think that doing good works, being charitable or tithing will merit you a few brownie points when it comes to getting into heaven. However, Holy Scripture teaches that the only "way" for

heaven to be your eternal home is to personally know the forgiveness of your sins through the shed blood of Jesus Christ.

### **Thomas was a Doubting Man**

On the evening of Christ's resurrection, He appeared to His fear stricken disciples with the calm assurance of peace (Jh. 20:19-29). At this first meeting with His disciples, Thomas was absent for some unknown reason. It was at that time when some believe that the Holy Spirit was given to indwell these New Testament believers present in the room. On the day of Pentecost, they were "filled" with power for service (Acts 2:1-12). Let us be reminded at this point where there is only one entrance of the Holy Spirit into a believer, but many fillings (Eph. 5:18). We need to be repeatedly filled with the power of the Holy Spirit to live the Christian life. If the disciples who were present on that first resurrection evening did receive the Holy Spirit's indwelling, then Thomas missed out until his next encounter with Christ.

Later, after being told of Christ's appearance, Thomas was stubbornly unconvinced and doubted by saying that he would not believe until he could see and feel for himself. The absence of Thomas from the presence of Jesus has application for us today. If we fail to read and study the Bible or neglect to hear the sound preaching and teaching of God's Word, then we'll miss the revelation of God to our hearts. God's written Word reveals Christ, Who is the Living Word. Also, if we fail to commune with God through prayer, then we'll miss out on His blessings and spiritual power.

Thomas demanded the same proof of Christ's resurrection that the rest of the disciples received. After eight days, Thomas received his proof. Jesus did not expel Thomas for doubting, but reappears with a lesson on faith. Faith is not supposed to rest on demonstration and proof. Faith is not sight nor intellectual attainment, but the gift (Eph. 2:8) of God that enables us to trust Him to the uttermost (Heb. 11:1,6) in every area of our Christian life.



Upon seeing Christ, Thomas declared, “My Lord and my God.” Can you imagine how ashamed he must have felt for not believing what his fellow disciples had told him? His faith might have been weak, but it was still there. Christian faith is built on the Lordship of Jesus Christ. As our Savior, Jesus saves us from the penalty of our sin. As our Lord, Jesus governs and takes charge of our lives. Thomas not only saw Jesus as Lord of his life, but he acknowledged Him as the One and only true divine sovereign God. When he observed those marks of Calvary upon His body, then he was quickly convinced of his wrong and confessed it in his declaration. Lovingly, Jesus rebuked Thomas by saying, “blessed are they that have not seen, and yet have believed.” You and I have never seen Jesus physically with the eyes of the flesh. But, do you believe that He is Who He claimed to be? Do you believe that He can do for you what He promises to do for all those that come to Him in faith?

The only solution to doubt is a personal encounter of faith in Jesus Christ. Doubt is actually no more than unbelief. The main problem with doubt is not in the mind, but in the heart of man. Doubt can be overcome in a believer’s life through a study and application of God’s Word as we daily learn to walk with God by faith. Christians often have a problem with doubt for several reasons. It could be due to not knowing the Holy Scriptures. It might be because sin has led you astray and you’re walking contrary to God’s will. Or, possibly, you’re trying to live by sight rather than faith. Problems with doubt are not hopeless cases because doubt can be overcome by fueling our faith with the Word of God and relying upon the Holy Spirit for strength.

### **Summary**

We do Thomas a great injustice by remembering him only as a doubter. His chief characteristic was one of deep devotion to the Lord Jesus Christ. Unfortunately, human nature has a tendency to remember the worst about people instead of the best. In a character study of Thomas, most people are reluctant to speak well of him due to the way he doubted the resurrection. Just

remember that some of God's greatest saints have at some time or another had doubts. I'm sure that all of us if we were to be honest, must confess that our faith has not always been everything that it should have been in every situation and circumstance of life. For His own sovereign reason, Christ saw in Thomas that which constrained Him to select this man as one of the apostles.

Tradition tells us that Thomas established the first Christian church in ancient Babylon and that he might have gone as far east as China. It's believed that he went to Persia and arrived in India no later than 49 AD. While in India, it is said that he was martyred with a spear while communing with God in prayer. If the Christian faith is to make an impact on the world today, then its followers must know the loyalty, courage, and devotion like that of Thomas. We must be able to declare along with him that Jesus is our "Lord" and "God." We need to make the same discovery that Thomas made. With man everything is impossible, but with God nothing is impossible.

## **Chapter 7**

### **Matthew**

#### **A Man Who Had Been A Tax Collector**

“And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named Levi, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. And he left all, rose up, and followed him. And Levi made him a great feast in his own house: and there was a great company of publicans and of others that sat down with them. But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with publicans and sinners? And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (Lk. 5:27-32)

All the twelve apostles were Jews and were probably very familiar with the Old Testament Scriptures. Matthew came from a devout Jewish family where he was originally known as Levi. It's possible that Matthew's brother was James the Less who was also one of the original twelve disciples. The father of both Matthew and James the Less is said to be Alpheus (Matt. 10:3, Mk 2:14). We're not sure if it is the same Alpheus or two different men with the same name. Matthew was most likely a Galilean being born near or at Capernaum.

At birth he was named Levi which means joined. The name Levi is related to the priestly order and tells us that he was a member of the Tribe of Levites whom God had set apart for holy service in the Old Testament. In disgrace to his heritage and family, Levi didn't serve God, but chose a profession of ill repute in which was found much financial gain.

After Levi encountered Christ, he spoke of himself as Matthew. It's possible that his name was not changed until after his call to discipleship. Levi was his Hebrew name whereas Matthew was his Greek name, meaning gift of God. Oftentimes, throughout Scripture God changed the names of men to commemorate their transformed lives. Examples of some name

changes are seen in Jacob to Israel, Simon to Peter, and Saul to Paul.

Biblically, all we know concerning Matthew is found in the three different accounts of his call in the Gospels (Matt. 9:9-13, Mk. 2:13-17, Lk. 5:27-32). We know little about Matthew personally, but because of his occupation we can discover the caliber of man that he must have been before he became a disciple. Matthew chose a profession that made him a hated man among his fellow Jews as well as a social outcast.

### **Matthew had been a Man with an Ungodly Occupation**

Instead of becoming a priest among the Levites, he chose to be a publican. A publican was simply a tax collector in that day and time. The Jews commonly considered it to be disloyal to God to become a Roman publican. The reason for this is because the publicans collected whatever tax that the Roman government demanded PLUS any percentage they personally desired for their own fee. The government allowed these publicans to unfairly and unjustly abuse the citizens in over taxation. Do you remember the story of Zaccheus when he encountered Christ? He admitted his crime and became a transformed man (Lk. 19:8). It was John the Baptist who spoke about the dishonesty of the publicans (Lk. 3:12-13).

Since the publican's business was one of legalized stealing, they were classified along with the most disreputable people of that day. It's interesting to note how they are grouped by the anointed pen of Matthew. In the Gospel that bears his name, he wrote in chapter nine and verse eleven, "And when the Pharisees saw it, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master with publicans and sinners?" Then again in the twenty-first chapter and verse thirty-two, he wrote, "For John came unto you in the way of righteousness, and ye believed him not: but the publicans and the harlots believed him: and ye, when ye had seen it, repented not afterward, that ye might believe him." Following his conversion, Matthew grouped the publicans along with sinners and harlots.

Matthew was sitting at the receipt of custom when the call of Jesus came to him. This receipt of custom was his toll booth in Capernaum. There were two kinds of taxes and tax collectors, the fixed and customs tax. The fixed tax left little room for extortion because the amount was designated by the government. It included such taxes as a ground tax, produce tax, income tax, and poll tax. However, a customs or duty tax was an import and export tax that was the main source of government revenue. This is the type of tax that was collected by Matthew. The customs tax included such things as, bridge money when bridges were crossed, road money when roads were used, market money when markets were used, town money when towns were entered, and harbor money when harbors were entered.

A customs officer had the right to stop anyone (except married women) and demand to see his goods so that he could impose almost any tax that he wanted. These tax collectors were known for being greedy, dishonest, and money minded men who had such bad reputations that they were even forbidden to testify in court. Today, we complain about high taxation and rightly so. However, high taxes are nothing new because it has been used as a satanic scheme of oppression for centuries. We need to understand that there is nothing wrong with paying a fair share of tax for the operating expense of government (Matt. 22:21). The problem lies in over-taxation to the point of abuse in the use of power.

Jesus gave this wicked publican, Matthew, a simple and short invitation of “follow me.” Notice how Christ did not plead or beg Matthew to follow Him. Our Lord does not beg anyone in Scripture to get saved and follow Him. He merely issues the invitation and it is the Holy Spirit that makes the sinner willing. Have you ever been in a church service where the preacher issues an “invitation” and it just goes on and on? Long drawn out appeals which cater to man’s emotions are not Biblical. The invitation of the Holy Spirit is clear, short, simple, and irresistible (Matt. 11:28). Only the Holy Spirit can convince a sinner of his need of Christ. The problem today is that man is

trying to do the work of the Holy Spirit rather than trusting God to do what only He can do.

Matthew did not have to go home, shave, shower, dress up, and walk down some church isle in order to follow Christ. The call of Christ came to him right where he lived and worked. Do you remember the call of Saul on the Road to Damascus? He was not saved at a church altar, but on a highway. Yes, it's possible to get saved in a church service, but don't ever think that is the only place. In fact, I believe more people are genuinely saved outside of a church building than on the inside. One thing is certain, a person will not be saved regardless of where they are physically located without the drawing convicting transforming power of the Holy Spirit.

### **Matthew Became a Man of Appreciation and Hospitality**

The choice of Matthew as a disciple is proof that Christ selected men from every walk of life. Prior to his call, Matthew might have seen Jesus and listened to His teachings at some time or another. When Christ issued His invitation to Matthew there was no delay in his response which no doubt is indication of his new birth. Jesus knew Matthew's future potential that others didn't know.

Having been delivered from his guilt and greed, Matthew wanted to be a witness and unashamedly identify with the Lord Jesus Christ. We need to keep in mind, that basically the only friends that Matthew had were fellow publicans. Wanting so share Christ with others, he invited his friends to a great feast in his own house to introduce his new Master.

This feast was Matthew's way of showing that he had forsaken his old life and that all things had become new in him. Matthew was probably the wealthiest man chosen by Christ as an apostle. His house where the great feast was held testifies to his affluent way of life.

It's nothing new for Christians to be criticized when they try to follow Christ. Jesus was criticized for attending Matthew's feast (Lk. 5:30). Christ did not come into the world to play politics or

to be socially acceptable. His mission was to offer forgiveness to those who would confess and repent of their sin. The self-righteous Pharisee can still be heard saying, “There’s nothing wrong with me, and I’m just as good as anybody else in that church.” But at the same time, harlots and publicans can be heard saying, “God be merciful to me a sinner” (Matt. 21:32, Lk.18:9-14). While at the feast, Jesus taught the truth of regeneration (Lk. 5:36-39). Christ taught that a person must be made new just like there is a need for a new wine bottle and a new piece of cloth. When a person is made “new” (II Cor. 5:17) he is indwelt by the “Holy Spirit” (Rom. 8:9) and “born again” (Jh. 3:3).

### **Matthew Became a Man of Humble Authorship**

Under divine inspiration the Spirit of God empowered and moved Matthew to write the Gospel that bears his name. God’s grace changed Levi the customs officer to Matthew the apostle. In listing the apostles, Matthew attaches publican to his name as a reminder of how God’s grace transformed his life (Matt. 10:3). Nowhere except in this list does he write of himself. Humility is indeed a true mark of spiritual conversion to Christ.

Of all the twelve apostles, Matthew perhaps had more money and education than the rest. But, when the sovereign call of Christ came his way, Matthew forsook his material wealth to experience spiritual riches in the Lord Jesus. Just listen to what he says concerning “mammon” which is a KJV word for riches. He declared that, “No man can serve two masters: for either he will hate the one, and love the other; or else he will hold to the one, and despise the other. Ye cannot serve God and mammon” (Matt. 6:24).

It appears that the most important thing in Matthew’s life until he came to Christ was the making of money. It’s been said that the only thing that Matthew took with him from his old occupation was his pen and ink. The pen that once added figures behind the receipt of custom began writing about the divine life of the Messiah. The Gospel of Matthew was the first book in the New Testament written about 70 AD. It was written especially

with the Jews in mind, trying to show them that Christ was truly the promised King of the Jews. Matthew's Gospel is the link between the Old and New Testaments presenting Jesus as the long awaited Messiah through the seed of Abraham.

### **Summary**

It's believed that for some eight years after Christ's ascension that Matthew preached in Judea basically among the Jews. There is no reliable evidence of his history after he left Judea. Most of his historical data is lost in wild legendary tales. Tradition tells of him witnessing to many kings and high government officials. Legend says that he traveled to Egypt, Ethiopia, and Persia on various missionary endeavors. Eventually, it appears that he was martyred by either a sword or spear or possibly put to death by the Sanhedrin.

The transformed life of Matthew is a reminder that Jesus Christ can change the life of anyone regardless of their foul past. A person's past life does not disqualify them from becoming a disciple of the Lord Jesus. The Great Physician specializes in mending broken lives and transforming hearts. He can do for you what He did for Matthew. We must trust Christ in faith for Who He is, the Son of the Living God, Who stepped out of Heaven, clothed Himself in a body of human flesh, and became the Substitute in paying the penalty of our sin in suffering God's divine wrath in our place. When that happens there will be repentance of sin and a willingness to follow Him just like it was in the life of Matthew.



## **Chapter 8**

### **James The Less**

### **An Obscure Disciple**

“There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome.” (Mk. 15:40)

Of all the twelve disciples, we know the least about James the less. Not only is he a silent figure within the pages of Holy Scripture, but he is also obscure even from history, legend, and tradition. He was most likely a native of Capernaum which was a city on the northwest shore of the Sea of Galilee. Tradition says that he was a zealot before coming to know Christ. Zealots were a group of revolutionaries that wanted to overthrow the Roman government.

The New Testament only tells us his name, his father’s name, his mother’s name, and gives a description of him as “the less.” He is named in the list of disciples and identified as the “son of Alphaeus” (Mk. 3:18). His mother was named “Mary” whom we believe was a devout follower of Christ. She is one of the women identified at the crucifixion of our Lord. While standing at the foot of the cross, she is referred to as “the mother of James the less.” This phrase, “James the less,” comes from the Greek translation of James the little. Therefore, with this being the case, it probably is a reference to him being short in physical stature. This description might have also been placed upon his name to help distinguish him from James the son of Zebedee.

The name, James, is a very common one in the New Testament and has its root in the name, Jacob. James the son of Zebedee was an apostle who became the second martyr in the early church. James the half-brother of Jesus was not an apostle, but was probably converted after Christ’s crucifixion. James the less is known to us only by his name, family ties, and physical size. It appears by assumption that Matthew could have been the brother of James the less. The reason for this is because they both are

identified as the son of Alphaeus (Mk. 2:14). Some even believe that if they were brothers then they might have been the cousins of Jesus. However, let me stress that this is nothing more than human conjecture or speculation and we have no positive proof of this being the case.

The most distinguishing feature of James the less is his obscurity. In other words, he's known for just how little we know about him. It sounds rather strange when we put it that way, doesn't it? But, just remember that the majority of people who follow Christ today will never be known by the public. Let this be a lesson that what we do for our Lord, we don't do to be seen, or recognized by men. One thing is for certain, Jesus knew far more about James the less than his name because He chose to include this silent figure among the twelve apostles.

The very fact that his name is preserved in the Bible teaches us a valuable lesson. Here is a disciple who was not famous, but he was faithful. Most Christian work is done by those who will never be recognized individually by the world. God forbid that His disciples of today serve Him for the praise of men rather than for the glory of God. God does not tell us to be big, popular, liked, and famous, but He does tell us as He told the church at "Smyrna" that our faithfulness will not go unrewarded (Rev. 2:10).

Let's pause and ask ourselves just how faithful are we to Christ, His Church, to a study of Holy Scripture, to prayer, tithing, to the giving of our time, and on and on we could go (Matt. 25:21). It's not our ability, but availability that God honors. Christ promises to reward His unknown (obscure) servants as well as His known (popular) servants. We know James the less to have been a faithful disciple because His name is listed on one of the twelve foundations in the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). The life of James the less was obscure, but there is no question that he faithfully served His Master.

Since we can conclude that James the less was a faithful follower of Christ, let us look at some principles of discipleship that are applied in his life and that remain applicable today. He was a disciple that we also know as an apostle. I remind you

from what I've already stated in the preface of this book that a disciple is a learner and the word apostle refers to a messenger. The word apostle comes from the Greek word, apostolos, meaning messenger. Apostolos is derived from apostello, meaning to send away on a mission. Both the verb and noun appear in the New Testament. The verb is translated to send and the noun is translated to be apostle. The original twelve disciples were unique apostles.

The apostolic age was a time period surrounding the personal earthly ministry of Christ. When all the people who lived during that time frame died off the scene, then the apostolic age came to an end. The New Testament apostles were commissioned to perpetuate the work of Christ on earth. Before the New Testament Scriptures were written and compiled, God authenticated His messengers by giving them the divine credentials of miraculous powers to perform at will. During the apostolic age, the apostles were endowed with, what we call, sign gifts. These gifts consisted of such things as healing, speaking in languages never before learned nor studied, miracles, and things of this nature. Today, we cannot be an apostle in this same apostolic sense, but we can become more than a disciple as we spiritually mature into an "ambassador for Christ" (II Cor. 5:20). Therefore, let's look at two great truths concerning Christian discipleship that are still relevant today.

### **A Christian Disciple Identifies with Jesus Christ**

Before one can become a messenger, he must first be a disciple. Prior to becoming a disciple, a person must personally know Jesus Christ as Savior of his soul and Lord of his life. Discipleship follows salvation. It is learning how to live the Christ-like life. Through the process of sanctification we develop into Christian ambassadors. Being called to salvation and being sent out as witnesses are two sides of the same coin (so to speak). The twelve apostles were called to be sent. Their command is still our command (Matt. 28:19-20, Acts 1:8). Jesus didn't save us to only congregate together on Sundays and play church. He

saved us to live His life through us during the week, proclaim His Word, run His errands, do His work, and seek His will. Salvation separates the Christian from the world for our Master's service.

A true Christian disciple is one who eagerly and unashamedly follows the teachings of Jesus Christ (Jh. 8:31). A faithful disciple will be a diligent student of the Word and stand for its truth without compromise. He will be one who reflects the love of Christ (Jh. 13:34-35). A genuine disciple seeks to put Jesus in first place, even before his family, employment, and his own life (Lk. 14:26-27,33). To follow Christ means that we must be willing to bear a cross just as Jesus willingly bore His cross. Christ doesn't convert a sinner into a saint for a life of ease and quietness, but for the purpose of cross bearing and following in His steps.

### **A Christian Disciple will Bear Fruit**

Before the twelve disciples could function as apostles, they had to listen and observe as attentive pupils of their Master teacher. The apprenticeship of these men was certainly not in vain (I Jh. 1:1-4). After a period of instruction, Jesus first sent His disciples "to the lost sheep of the house of Israel" (Matt. 10:5-6). After the crucifixion and resurrection of Christ, they were sent into the entire Gentile world.

On the eve of the crucifixion, Jesus promised His disciples the coming Comforter (Jh. 14:26-27). Since the call into discipleship was a call into the fellowship of His suffering, Jesus knew they needed the indwelling Holy Spirit to sustain them. It was under the divine power of the third person of the God-head that these apostles became witnesses "unto the uttermost part of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Therefore, the true title of the Book of Acts could be the Acts of the Holy Spirit through the Apostles. Fruitfulness is a characteristic of genuine Christian discipleship. Jesus said, "Herein is my Father glorified, that ye bear much fruit; so shall ye be my disciples" (Jh. 15:8). The fruit of the Holy Spirit is Christian character (Gal. 5:22-23). As a Christian learns the

Word of God and yields to the Holy Spirit, then he can become an effective and fruitful follower of Christ and represent Him before a lost and dying world as one of His ambassadors.

### **Summary**

Just because James the less is in the background (so to speak) does not mean that he is of no importance. In fact, I think that this disciple is typical of most of Christ's followers. He is a good reminder of the many nameless millions who follow Christ without receiving any attention or recognition whatsoever. There were many Christians who were fed to the lions, but today we know none of their names. Just remember, for every General we find in the army, there are many Privates! James the less is a symbol of the privates in God's mighty army.

He was a witness for Christ both in life and in death. Legend says that James the less preached in Persia and died a martyr by crucifixion. Others say that he preached in Spain, Britain, and Ireland. Some claim that he ministered in Syria and was stoned to death by the Jews for preaching Christ. James the less was no star as the world thinks of people today, but the Lord Jesus considered him important enough to record his name in the Word of God as well as the Book of Life (Phil. 4:3, Rev. 3:5, 20:15).

If you are a follower of the Lord Jesus, don't ever think that you are not important to God because of your lack of talent or popularity. You were important enough to Christ for Him to come down from Heaven and die for you on Calvary's cruel cross. In order for your name to be recorded in the Lamb's Book of Life (Rev. 21:27) and have assurance of Heaven as your eternal home means that, "According as he hath chosen us in him before the foundation of the world, that we should be holy and without blame before him in love: Having predestinated us unto the adoption of children by Jesus Christ to himself, according to the good pleasure of his will, To the praise of the glory of his grace, wherein he hath made us accepted in the beloved. In whom we have redemption through his blood, the forgiveness of sins, according to the riches of his grace" (Eph. 1:4-7).

If you've never trusted Christ as your personal Savior, will you do so today? (II Cor. 6:2) Do you believe that as a sinner, Christ took your place on the cross? (I Tim. 1:15) Has God given you a desire to believe and repent of your sin? (Lk. 13:3) Do you hunger and thirst after righteousness? (Matt. 5:6) Will you believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and be saved? (Acts 16:31) Will you take up your cross and follow Him? (Matt. 16:24)

## **Chapter 9**

### **James The Great**

### **The First Disciple Martyred**

“And when he had gone a little further thence, he saw James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, who also were in the ship mending their nets. And straightway he called them: and they left their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants and went after him.” (Mk. 1:19-20)

James was the older brother of John the Beloved and the son of Zebedee. His mother was Salome who is believed to have been a sister of Mary the mother of Jesus and a devout follower of Christ. It was a Jewish custom for sons to follow in the same trade as their fathers. Jesus became a carpenter as a result of Joseph’s trade and likewise, James and John followed the trade of Zebedee and became fishermen. It’s apparent that the family had a prosperous business from the mere fact that they employed hired servants.

While working in their occupation, Jesus called both brothers at the same time into discipleship. When the call was issued, they didn’t ask for an extension of time to think about it and neither did they bargain for wages and benefits. But, straightway without hesitation and questioning they immediately acknowledged Jesus Christ as their top priority.

Not only did they walk away from their financially prosperous fishing boat, but they even placed Jesus ahead of their own father (Lk. 14:26). We’re not told anything about Zebedee’s spiritual condition or how he felt about his son’s walking away from their fishing nets. I really wonder what could have been his reaction. Did he rejoice or get angry? We’ll never know the answer to that question on this side of glory, but there have been many to answer the call to discipleship and walk away from either a family business or prosperous occupation. Nothing is more important than doing the will of God.

This is not to say that James never went fishing again, but it's clearly showing us about his priorities. He, like all the apostles, was willing to leave father, mother, friends, house, and earthly occupation to follow Christ. It's possible that James had more material goods to leave than some of the other disciples. However, when he weighed his loved ones and wealth on the scale with Jesus, then he discovered that Jesus exceeded them above everything else. He truly followed the words of the beautiful old hymn that says, "Wherever He leads I'll go."

### **James was a Prominent Disciple**

In every list of the apostles that we find in the Bible, this James is always named among the first three who are mentioned (Acts 1:13). James the son of Zebedee is also referred to as James the great in order to distinguish him from James the less that we find in the previous chapter. These distinguishing terms have nothing to do with their spiritual superiority. Most likely these terms identified them as the taller and the shorter or the younger and the older.

Peter, James, and John were selected by Jesus to make up what we call the inner circle of disciples. They shared in some of our Lord's greatest earthly experiences. They witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:37-43). They were privileged to witness the transfiguration as they saw the deity of Christ radiate through His body of flesh (Mk. 9:3). They witnessed the deep agony of Christ in the heart of Gethsemane (Mk. 14:33). Although, James was one of the closest companions of Christ, the only time that he is mentioned in Scripture apart from the other disciples is in death.

Because of their temperament, Jesus nicknamed James and John the sons of thunder (Mk. 3:17). Their fierce zeal and explosive temper is seen when Jesus is refused hospitality by the Samaritans (Lk. 9:51-56). Jesus took their fiery passion and harnessed, disciplined, and trained it into useful service. These brothers remind us that when we come to Christ in spiritual conversion and transformation, the old nature is not eradicated in



these bodies of flesh. At the time of our salvation, God begins the process of sanctification within us. Positional sanctification is instantaneous, but practical sanctification is an ongoing process until we die and enter the gates of splendor in glory. I've often referred to the three tenses of salvation as justification, sanctification, and glorification. Justification means that I've been saved from the penalty of sin. Sanctification means that I'm being saved from the power of sin. Glorification means that someday I'll be saved from the presence of sin. Hallelujah, what a day that will be! For the Christian, the best is yet to come!

### **James was an Ambitious Disciple**

According to Matthew's account, it was actually their mother that made a rather bold request (Matt. 20:20-29). Mark's account of this episode shows us that the brothers must have prompted their mother to ask this of Jesus (Mk. 10:35-45). The request had to do with each brother being given positions on the right and left hand of Jesus. It appears that their mother was only voicing their desire for ambition. Now, let's understand that there is nothing wrong with ambition unless it becomes selfish.

Salome begged for the principal seats of honor in Christ's kingdom to be given to her two sons. Today, it's very common to find parents who push and drive their children to seek areas of achievement where the parents themselves were not able to fulfill. This kind of ambition is unhealthy because we cannot live our lives through our children. Every individual is different and we must allow them to live his or her own life and set their own goals. I'm not saying this was the case with Salome, but it is the case with many parents in our affluent society.

That which we need to notice in this request is the spirit of jealousy that erupted among all the apostles (Mk. 10:41). Jealousy is a sin that is still common within the ranks of the Christian church. It's sad to say, but it's true, even among pastors. We should all be ambitious to the degree of wanting to be all that God would have us to be. However, we should never

be so ambitious that we compete with others for what they are or for what they have.

Jesus taught that true greatness was not sitting on a throne, but ministering to the needs of others. He informed His disciples that the only way to a throne was by way of a cross. Jesus asked, “can ye drink of the cup that I drink of? and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” These disciples would indeed identify with Christ in His sufferings as each of them would be given their own individual cup. The cup of suffering was going to involve severe trials and for the majority of these disciples, it would cost them their lives in death. The only way to enter into the kingdom of God is through much tribulation. Jesus said that the world hated Him and it will also hate those who follow Him (Jh. 15:18-20).

### **James was a Faithful Disciple**

James the great was the first of the twelve disciples to seal the Gospel of Jesus Christ in martyrdom (Acts 12:1-4). Next to Stephen (Acts 7:54-60), James was the second man recorded in the early church to be martyred for the cause of Christ. In an attack against the church, Herod struck out at James and Peter. Herod the first slaughtered all the innocent children when Jesus was born. Herod the second is the one who beheaded John the Baptist. Herod the third executed James the great.

Fourteen years after the ascension of Christ, James gave the greatest witness for his Lord that anyone could possibly give. James was killed while Peter was imprisoned. Only the sovereign secrets of God can reveal why one was taken and the other was spared at this time. Herein is a reminder that death will not come until we’ve finished our appointed time on earth. When our earthly task on earth is finished, then God will call us home. It’s not the length of one’s witness that is important, but the quality of one’s faithfulness unto the Lord. Jesus only ministered for something like three and a half years in public, but He changed the course of history and of the eternal destiny of His people. Whenever and however death comes to the Christian, we need

not fear (Rom. 8:35-39). Christ has conquered it for us as Paul declares in First Corinthians, chapter fifteen, verses fifty-five through fifty-seven, “O death, where is thy sting? O grave, where is thy victory? The sting of death is sin; and the strength of sin is the law. But thanks be to God, which giveth us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ.”

### **Summary**

Holy Scripture only records the death of two of the twelve disciples. Those two men are James the great and Judas Iscariot. The Book of Acts does not tell us one word or ministerial act that James said or did, but it does tell us about his sacrifice for Christ in his death. In 44 AD, James the brother of John was beheaded by Herod Agrippa. Tradition says that the officer who guarded James was so impressed by his courage that he was saved and was beheaded along with James. When James faced the prospect of martyrdom, he willingly drank from His Mater’s cup of suffering.

Following Pentecost, after the resurrection of Christ, the zeal of James for his Lord made him a slave for his Master which led him to a martyr’s grave. James the apostle is not the same James that wrote the Book of James. However, the Bible does record the life and death of this man who was one of the closest friends of Jesus.

James the great did fulfill the prophecy of Christ. He drank from the same cup of suffering as did his Lord and Master. The question before us today is, “are we willing to drink of that same cup?” The Word of God says, “So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple” (Lk. 14:33). Are we willing to forsake our own life in death for the sake of Christ? With people around the world being put to death for their Christian faith and Christian persecution on the increase, we never know when our faith might be tested like that of James. If there is anything in your life that is nearer and dearer to you than Christ, then you had best let go of it. God’s will must be supreme in the life of a Christian disciple.

## **Chapter 10**

### **Philip**

### **An Analytical Disciple**

“The day following Jesus would go forth into Galilee, and findeth Philip and saith unto him, Follow me. Now Philip was of Bethsaida, the city of Andrew and Peter. Philip findeth Nathanael, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. And Nathanael said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip saith unto him, Come and see.” (Jh. 1:43-46)

In doing a character study of some biblical personality we may sometimes feel like the biographical information is very scarce. However, we need to remember that God does not record any unimportant facts in His inspired Word. If we pay close attention then we'll discover that God often gives sufficient information to distinguish a person's characteristics.

Philip is known as the analytical or the practical disciple. He appears as a pragmatist who wanted truth to be tested by practice and who found it hard to believe without proof being given. There is indication that he wanted to analyze, experience, and figure out a situation before he could accept it. Along with being hesitant in making decisions, it's possible that he was slower to learn his spiritual lessons.

Scripture tells us that Philip was from the city of Bethsaida and was most likely a fisherman. He was a Jew even though his name is Greek which means lover of horses. It was a custom in parts of the Roman Empire to name children after the reigning prince and possibly this is the way he got his name. Just because he is called by a Greek name didn't change his Messianic outlook. He was a devout student of the Old Testament and anticipated the coming of the promised Messiah (Jh. 1:45). It's also believed that he came from the Tribe of Zebulun.

Philip the apostle must never be confused with Philip the deacon (Acts 6:5, 8:5-40, 21:8). We actually know more from Scripture about Philip of the seven than we do Philip of the twelve. Just keep this in mind as we try to differentiate between the two. We read about Philip the apostle before Pentecost and never afterwards. Philip the deacon, who became a great evangelist, is recorded after Pentecost. The first three Gospels only record the name of Philip the apostle, whereas the Gospel of John speaks of him on four different occasions and tells us all that we biblically know about him.

### **Philip was the First Called into the Ranks of the Twelve**

Although Andrew was the first of the twelve to personally get acquainted with Christ, it appears that Philip was actually the first apostle called into the ranks of the twelve. We must pay close attention to the fact that the reason Philip “found” (Jh. 1:45) Christ is because Christ first “findeth” (Jh. 1:43) Philip. It’s impossible for any sinner to ever desire Christ without Christ first finding us and giving us a desire for Him. When Jesus finds us, then we discover Him for Who He is, the Lord and Savior of sinners.

The reason God’s sovereign grace is so amazing is because it finds us when we are not even looking for it. Just as the shepherd (Matt. 18:12-13) finds his sheep, the Savior finds the sinner. While we are “dead in trespasses and sins” (Eph. 2:1), God quickens us, or in other words, He makes us alive. A dead man cannot do anything to make himself alive. Only God can raise the dead, even spiritually dead people. We are all walking around spiritually dead inside until God breathes spiritual life into our eternal souls. A dead person doesn’t do anything, but stink, rot, and decay. It’s bad theology to think that in conversion a sinner contributes faith and God contributes grace. Sinful man has nothing to contribute to his salvation and will never have a desire for Christ until the Holy Spirit births him into the Kingdom of God and gives him faith to believe.

The truth about the matter is that we do not find Christ, but it is Christ that finds us (Jh. 15:16). It was not Adam that went looking for God in the garden, but God went looking for Adam (Gen. 3:9). Depraved sinners don't want anything to do with God or have any desire to search for God unless the convicting power of the Holy Spirit has first found them, arrested the soul, and aroused a desire for the Savior. It's the task of the Holy Spirit to prepare one's heart for an encounter with Jesus Christ (Jh. 16:8). It wasn't chance or luck that caused Christ to meet Philip, but it was in the sovereign plan of God.

After Philip's encounter with Christ, his first response was to tell the good news to Nathanael. Philip's response should give us an incentive to personal evangelism. Every believer is saved to be a witness of God's grace (Acts 1:8). We can have a part in proclaiming the Gospel by the way we speak, live, and give. After Jesus found Philip, then Philip went looking for Nathanael. Andrew didn't save Peter nor did Philip save Nathanael, but they did become witnesses of the One Who has the power to save from the penalty of sin. The Holy Spirit is the real soul sinner and He merely uses men and women as vessels and instruments in witnessing (Rom. 10:14-18).

Mass evangelism has its place, but it cannot take the place of personal evangelism. Lifestyle evangelism or market place evangelism is the best kind. Evangelism is not getting people saved because that is strictly the job of the Holy Spirit. But, it is sharing Christ through life and lip with those whom we come into contact every moment of the day. Therefore, if you profess Christ as your personal Redeemer, let's pause and ask ourselves just how we rate on the scale of personal evangelism. How faithful are we in sharing the story of God's redeeming love in Jesus Christ and telling the world who Jesus is?

Philip knew how to deal with the skeptical mind of Nathanael. Without arguing, he simply encouraged Nathanael to experience Christ for himself by saying, "come and see." Arguing never solves any problem and in fact only creates more. Therefore, Christians should always refrain from arguing! Opinions and convictions may be expressed, but to argue only stirs up strife

and discord. Christ's call to Philip was simple. All He said was, "follow me." Philip's witness to Nathanael was just as simple. All he said was, "come and see." Salvation is so simple that even a "little child" (Mk. 10:15) can be saved. At the age of ten, God saved my soul and transformed me for all eternity. My life has never been the same since. One will never know how wonderful Jesus is until they encounter Him for themselves.

### **Philip had to Learn that Nothing is Impossible with God**

On one occasion, Jesus directed a question especially to Philip when He said, "Whence shall we buy bread, that these may eat?" (Jh. 6:5-7). A large crowd of people had followed after Jesus to hear Him teach. It was lunch-time and obvious that the people were getting hungry when Jesus posed this question to Philip. He answered by saying that "200 pennyworth of bread is not sufficient" to feed such a large number. From the practical point of view, it looked impossible to feed so many with so little money. He couldn't figure out how it could be done so he answered with facts rather than faith. Philip forgot that the One Who turned the water into wine and healed the sick could also provide food for the hungry.

Now, let's not misunderstand this passage and take it to the extreme. When we go through the check-out line at the grocery store, we can't get out the door by smiling and telling them that we're living by faith and not paying the bill. We must learn to live by faith as well as live in a world that demands our Christian witness in how we pay our bills. There are many Christians who destroy their witness by a poor financial testimony. Jesus directed His remarks to Philip (and us) to teach a valuable lesson. We need to stay spiritually minded at all times and look at the circumstances of life from a spiritual mind-set.

Jesus directed His question to Philip in order "to prove him." This word in the KJV means to try or to test. It's nothing unusual for God to put His children to the test in order to teach us spiritual truths. The trial of Philip's faith resulted in unbelief. He should have recognized that the omnipotence of Christ was well

able to furnish a table full of food. Instead, he depended upon his own intellect rather than faith. There is a human way and a divine way of looking at things, but for the Christian we need to learn how to think in spiritual terms.

We also must be on guard not to become so heavenly minded that we are of no earthly good. In other words, don't walk around with your head in the clouds and try to spiritualize everything. As we face the reality of daily living, we must learn to live it by a true and steadfast faith in our loving Lord. I've often said that the devil likes to get the Christian off balance. If he can't make a lying liberal out of you, then he'll try to make you a flaming fanatic. Either extreme is harmful to the cause of Christ. May God help us to live a life of victorious faith that is pleasing and glorifying to Him (I Jh. 5:4-5).

### **Philip was Reluctant to Make Decisions**

Some Greeks had come to Jerusalem inquiring about Christ (Jh. 12:20-22). It appears that they had a true desire to meet Jesus, but Philip was reluctant to arrange a meeting because they were not Jews. We need to remember that at this time in church history, it was just the beginning stage of transition in preaching the Gospel to the heathen Gentiles. It's possible that these Greeks came to Philip because of his Greek name, but for whatever the reason, he lacked the courage to introduce these Greeks to the Jewish Messiah. Therefore, he went to Andrew asking for advice.

Philip appears as one who disliked responsibility and tried to refrain from making important decisions. Have you ever known anyone like that or perhaps you are like that yourself? Since Philip was unable to make up his mind on what to do, Andrew made it up for him. There are still many Christians today just like Philip. Believers who neglect to make certain decisions and take a firm stand because of what others may say or think simply have their eyes fixed on the wrong person. Christians need to know what they believe and why they believe it so they can stand in faith without "wavering" (Jam. 1:6-8).



### **Philip had to Learn about Faith**

The things that Jesus spoke in the fourteenth chapter of John was a great mystery to Philip. He did not bottle up his questioning mind to which Jesus responded. “Philip saith unto him, Lord, shew us the Father, and it sufficeth us. Jesus saith unto him, Have I been so long time with you, and yet hast thou not known me, Philip? He that hath seen me hath seen the Father; and how sayest thou then, Shew us the Father? Believest thou not that I am in the Father, and the Father in me? the words that I speak unto you I speak not of myself: but the Father that dwelleth in me, he doeth the works. Believe me that I am in the Father, and the Father in me: or else believe me for the very work’s sake” (Jh. 14:8-11).

Philip strikes us as a person that wanted an explanation for everything. We need to learn as did Philip that we must accept by faith what we cannot understand (Heb. 11:6). God does not intend for us to have answers to all our questions. However, Philip’s question shows that he was thirsty for spiritual truth. Asking questions is good, but we need to realize that there are some questions for which we’ll never have answers. For example, I cannot explain such things as election, the trinity, human suffering, and so forth. But, if we know Jesus in faith then we don’t need to demand the answers. If we had all the answers to all the questions, then we would be God. When Philip told Jesus to “show us the Father” he was declaring that seeing is believing when he should have been saying that believing is seeing. We need to see through the eyes of faith. Let us always remember that we cannot pump genuine faith from within our depraved hearts. It is a “gift of God” planted in our hearts by His “grace” (Eph. 2:8).

Jesus answered Philip’s question by saying that the very image of God is seen in Jesus Christ (Heb. 1:2-3). Everything we know about God is revealed in the incarnation of Christ (Jh. 14:6). Jesus is the only “way” to the Father. Jesus is the “truth” about the Father. Jesus is eternal “life” from the Father. Apart from Jesus Christ mankind will never know God.

## Summary

Philip slowly gained spiritual ground and matured into a faithful witness for Christ. After Pentecost in the Book of Acts, his timidity was turned into triumph. Legend says that he traveled into Scythia and preached for about twenty years before going to Hierapolis in Phrygia. His preaching was said to be so successful in Hierapolis that it aroused such hostility that he was crucified at eighty-seven years of age and while hanging on a cross he was also stoned. Legend goes on to say that as he was dying, he requested that his body not be wrapped in linen, but in papyrus because he was unworthy for his dead body to be treated as the body of his Lord.

There remain people today just like Philip who demand proof and human understanding before they will believe the things of God (II Cor. 5:7). God does not require us to understand how He took our sins upon Himself and became our Substitute nor to scientifically prove His resurrection. All that God requires is for us to simply believe by faith and trust His Word (Rom. 10:9-10). Faith is the instrument that God uses to bring us unto Himself and He grants that to us as a gift of His grace.

Before we can know the joy of sins forgiven and the hope of a home in heaven, then we must “come and see” for ourselves. There is no such thing as being saved by proxy and depending upon human pedigree to get you into heaven. We certainly can’t depend upon our good works, because no one outside of Christ has ever measured up to God’s holy standards. Salvation is so wonderful that it cannot be described by human lips. A personal encounter with Christ by the drawing power of the Holy Spirit through faith and repentance is the only passport into the kingdom of God. Today, if you are not saved, has the Holy Spirit given you a desire to “come and see” Jesus for yourself?

## **Chapter 11**

### **Simon**

### **A Disciple Who Had Been A Zealot**

“Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes.” (Lk. 6:15)

History teaches that Simon was born in Cana of Galilee and nicknamed Zelotes. Our biblical knowledge of Simon is extremely scarce. One of the few things that Scripture tells us about him other than the fact of his discipleship is that he was a Zealot. This one small pep-hole into his character says a great deal as to the type of man that he must have been.

The descriptive adjective, Zelotes, which was applied to Simon distinguishes him from Simon Peter. In the list of apostles found in the Gospel of Matthew and the Gospel of Mark, identifies Simon as “the Canaanite” (Matt. 10:4, Mk. 3:18). In Luke’s list, he is called Zelotes (Lk. 6:15, Acts 1:13). The word Canaanite in the Greek text is Cananean. This Greek word is derived from the Hebrew word, kana, which means to be zealous. Cananean as it is found in the Greek text is the exact Hebrew equivalent of the Greek word Zealot.

#### **Simon was a Man who Loved his Country**

The name Zelotes lets us know that he was an enthusiastic Jewish patriot. Zelotes was a Greek word that described those who were affiliated with the party of Zealots. Because of this description it’s generally accepted that Simon was a member of this radical revolutionary Jewish nationalist party of rebels. Zealots were said to be the Pharisees of the Pharisees. In other words, they held to the strictest sect of Jewish law. Their expectation of the coming Messiah was of one who would restore Israel as a great nation. They claimed that the Roman government destroyed the independence of Israel and made it difficult to observe the ceremony of their religious law.

At this time in history, Palestine was a country under Roman rule; therefore, subject to Roman authority which the Jews greatly resented. The Zealots were a group of fanatical Jews who did not mind suffering for their country. This political party amounted to no more than an underground guerilla force. Crime and murder often marked some of their fighting tactics. The destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD has sometimes been attributed to the Zealots' hatred for Rome.

### **Simon was a Man who Found a Better Way of Life**

The Gospel of grace transformed Simon the rebel into a repentant child of God. When Simon was converted to Christ, his flaming patriotism was turned into enthusiasm for the cause of his Lord. Through the teaching of Jesus, Simon came to learn that the Messiah's "kingdom is not of this world" (Jh. 18:36). His new-found Leader practiced love and forgiveness, not bloodshed and hatred. Now, that doesn't mean that a Christian is never to bear arms against an oppressor. As followers of Christ we are to try and be peace-loving people, but at the same time stand and fight for what is right in the sight of God if necessary.

In listening to Jesus, Simon soon learned that Rome was not the greatest snare to Israel. It was their sin against Almighty God. Simon had been a political revolutionist who became a zealous believer in Christ. One might be prone to ask, "Why would Jesus ever choose a man with such a background as Simon's?" From a human standpoint, it would appear dangerous to have such a person in your group. The Roman soldiers searched out members of the Zealots. People could have easily misinterpreted the work of Christ with someone like Simon tagging along with Him. However, it appears that Jesus disregarded the gossip of men if there was any. At this point, we too must learn not to let what people say about us bother us if we are surrendered to the Lord Jesus. Instead of trying to be a people pleaser, we need to try and please our God (Gal. 1:10). It's impossible to satisfy both man and God (Lk. 6:26).

Christ didn't select Simon because of his past, but because of the future plans that God had in store for him. From the human vantage point, we might say that it was risky for Christ to choose Simon. The truth of the matter is that we are all unlikely candidates for salvation because we all are sinners and undeserving of salvation or service. If we profess Christ, but fail to exemplify Him, then we bring reproach on His blessed Name. It's a bad testimony for a Christian to live in sin or mock Christ by acting in a worldly, carnal, or lustful way.

### **Simon was a Man of Zeal**

Before his conversion, Simon's zeal was that of an unsaved Jew (Rom. 10:1-2). After meeting Christ, his zeal was redirected to glorify God. Jesus didn't eradicate his zeal, but purified it and redirected it. There is nothing wrong with zeal as long as it is the right kind. Jesus was a man of zeal. His zealous emotion was displayed when He cleansed the temple (Jh. 2:13-17). One must be careful how he refers to Christ as a revolutionary. He was not a revolutionary against the Roman government (Lk. 20:25). Neither was He a liberal in the sense of worldliness. When it came to the way He gave of Himself in love as a sacrifice, then He was liberal. Theologically, He was not a liberal when it came to watering down the truth of Scripture. I'll never forget many years ago, sitting across the desk of a Baptist denominational leader who said that he took his stand right beside Jesus and that Jesus was a liberal. May God have mercy upon today's church scene. If Jesus was a revolutionary of any kind, then it was one that opposed dead liberal religion.

Every true Christian needs zeal for his Master in order to be an effective witness. Enthusiasm is a commendable quality in believers (II Cor. 9:2). God's work deserves more than half-hearted effort (Col. 3:23). It's been said that enthusiasm is the motivating power of success. That is especially true in the realm of Christianity when the Holy Spirit is empowering us. Carelessness and indifference are just other names for the lack of zeal. The lack of zeal causes us to become careless in holy living,

Christian service, spiritual discipline, training of our little children, and in supporting God's work with our time, talents, and tithes. Within most modern day churches, the problem is not too much, but too little zeal. The Ephesian church went bankrupt on zeal (Rev. 2:4). A crying need in today's church is for brave spiritual zealots to fearlessly confront our godless world with the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit.

Zeal is a good thing, but it becomes a mighty dangerous thing when it is not channeled in the right direction by the right source (Rom. 10:2). Some people, like the terrorist and religious cults, are zealous for the wrong reasons. It's even possible for Christians and local churches to become so emotional that they disregard the value of biblical instruction and doctrine. Before his conversion, Paul was a zealous Jew who persecuted the church (Phil. 3:6), but afterward Paul the persecutor became Paul the persecuted. God redirected his zeal which eventually cost him his life as a faithful warrior in the Lord's army.

### **Simon was a Man who Discovered Godly Love**

As a Zealot, Simon was a man with hate and murder in his heart toward Rome. But, when he became a follower of Christ, he came to know inner peace and love. God's peace and love bound the disciples together just as it should bind believers together today. Just pause and consider the different personalities of Matthew and Simon. Matthew had been an unpatriotic Jew who worked for Rome as a Publican. Simon was a patriotic Jew who hated everyone who worked for Rome. Before meeting Christ, these men would have hated each other; however, Jesus made a difference in their lives and in their attitudes towards each other.

Genuine Christians should have no problem getting along with each other in the church (I Jh. 3:14). Simon and Matthew were opposites who learned how to get along. People will always differ, but we need to do so in a kind spirit. It's a shameful testimony for Christians not to treat one another in love. Most of the time we try to straighten out everyone, but ourselves. Let's be

honest, it's a full time job trying to keep ourselves in step with God. Instead of majoring on finding fault with our brethren, we ought to be praying for one another. I'll never forget the time when I was a child that our pastor stood in front of the congregation and asked the people to pray for him instead of talking about him. That church eventually ran him off and to this day that congregation is not worth squat.

### **Summary**

The call of Simon Zelotes is a reminder that God calls and uses all types of people to become His children and servants. God doesn't turn us into mechanical robots, but He gives us His likeness, a new nature, equips us with spiritual gifts, empowers us with the Holy Spirit, and uses our personalities. One's previous life does not disqualify him from discipleship. It is not our goodness, but God's grace that saves us and calls us to His service.

Nothing less than a miracle changed the life of Simon Zelotes. His political ambitions were transformed into peaceful ambitions. His military mind became a missionary mind. Tradition says that after leaving Jerusalem, Simon traveled to Egypt, North Africa, Spain, and Britain. After preaching in Syria and Mesopotamia, tradition tells us that he went to Persia where he was martyred by being sawn to pieces.

People may want to argue over what constitutes a miracle, but I believe in the miracle working power of our God. I love the old song by John W. Peterson that expressed it so well when he penned the words, "It took a miracle to put the stars in place, It took a miracle to hang the world in space; But when He saved my soul, Cleansed and made me whole, It took a miracle of love and grace!" God's miracle of "love and grace" can change your life today, just as it did that of Simon Zelotes many years ago.

## **Chapter 12**

### **Judas Iscariot**

#### **A Disciple Who Was A Betrayer**

“Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went unto the chief priest, And said unto them, What will ye give me, and I will deliver him unto you? And they covenanted with him for thirty pieces of silver. And from that time he sought opportunity to betray him.” (Matt. 26:14-16)

The story of Judas Iscariot is one of the darkest and most tragic in all of history. We have no idea as to when or how he became a disciple of Christ. It's interesting to note that in every list of the apostles, Judas Iscariot is always placed last (Matt. 10:4, Mk. 3:19, Lk. 6:16). Scripture identifies him as the betrayer or the traitor. The name Judas is a form of the word Judah. Apparently, he was named after the Jewish tribe of Judah from which he came. The name Iscariot comes from the Greek, meaning a man of Kerioth. Kerioth was the town where this Judas was born. It's believed that most likely he and his father, Simon, had been leatherworkers by trade.

Judas Iscariot should be clearly distinguished from the other disciple name Judas or Jude who remained true to Christ. Of all the twelve disciples, Judas Iscariot was the only one who was not a Galilean, but rather a Judean from the south country. Doubtless to say, his reasons for wanting to follow Jesus were different from the other disciples. He is the only one of the twelve who walked beside Jesus, but never was truly converted. It makes us wonder how many people there must be today who pretend to be a disciple of Jesus Christ and take an active part in a local church, but are not saved. I'm confident that the number is high. Just think, there were twelve original apostles and one of them was a phony. One out of twelve! If there was a phony among the original apostles, it shouldn't surprise us to find them within the ranks of Christendom today. If one out of every twelve people



who make a profession today are not genuine, just think how many that must be.

A frequently asked question is, “Why did Christ select him to come along-side and be numbered among the other apostles?” The fact is that it’s impossible for the mortal mind to fully understand and answer that question. However, by faith we must believe that Jesus acted according to His own sovereign will. Some degree and perhaps the best explanation is found in the fact that Old Testament prophecy had to be fulfilled. Jesus prayed in John, chapter seventeen and verse twelve, “While I was with them in the world, I kept them in thy name: those that thou gavest me I have kept, and none of them is lost, but the son of perdition; that the scripture might be fulfilled.” We must never forget that Christ is omniscient, meaning that He knows ALL things. Therefore, He knew what was in the heart of Judas from the beginning. He declared, “But there are some of you that believe not. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were that believed not, and who should betray him. And he said, Therefore said I unto you, that no man can come unto me except it were given unto him of my Father. From that time many of his disciples went back, and walked no more with him. Then said Jesus unto the twelve, Will ye also go away?” (Jh. 6:64-65).

I personally believe that Jesus permitted Judas to be listed in the ranks of the twelve to show that it’s possible and probable for people to profess Christ without possessing Christ. Actually, I think that the institutionalized church of today is filled with such individuals. The life of Judas reminds us of how one can routinely associate with a local church and still not be a part of the blood bought body of redeemed believers. We learn from Judas Iscariot that it’s possible for one to do good works in the name of Christ without having the new nature of Christ in his heart (Matt. 7:21-23). It should come as no surprise to find hypocrites and phonies within the ranks of today’s visible church because there was one even among the original twelve disciples.

Outwardly, Judas Iscariot appeared as a disciple of Christ, but inwardly he was full of the devil. Just because a person attends church services every week, totes a Bible under his arm, quotes

Scripture, prays pretty prayers, teaches a Sunday School class, preaches from a pulpit, sings with gusto, or testifies eloquently does not necessarily mean in and of itself that he is a child of God. Judas Iscariot lived at the feet of Jesus for several years, but eventually the day of reckoning caught up with him and his true colors were revealed. Just like Judas, a day of reckoning will catch up with every hypocrite at some time or another.

Attempts have been made by a liberal world to defend, justify, and whitewash the character of Judas Iscariot. However, an honest study of God's Word and evaluation of his life clearly reveals him to be a greedy and unregenerate soul. Jesus said of him the most terrible thing that could be said of any man. His words are recorded in Matthew, chapter twenty-six and verses twenty-four and twenty-five, "The Son of man goeth as it is written of him: but woe unto that man by whom the Son of man is betrayed! It had been good for that man if he had not been born. Then Judas, which betrayed him, answered and said, Master is it I? He said unto him, Thou hast said."

### **Judas Iscariot was a Lover of Money**

After having supper in Bethany with Lazarus, Mary, and Martha, Mary anointed the feet of Jesus and wiped them with her hair (Jh. 12:1-8). Judas protested the use of the costly ointment. He complained that the money should have been given to the poor, but his mind was not on the poor as much as it was on the monetary value of the ointment.

From the twelfth chapter of John we discover that Judas served as the treasurer among the disciples. Not only was he the treasurer, but we also learn that he was a thief. Keep in mind that John wrote his gospel under inspiration of the Holy Spirit after the betrayal took place. There is no indication that the apostles were ever suspicious of Judas Iscariot even up to the very end. In the upper room when Jesus announced that someone would betray Him, they did not ask, "Is it Judas?" They asked, "Is it I?" The very fact that he was made treasurer proves that the disciples

did not question his honesty, but Jesus knew him better than all the remaining eleven disciples put together.

In the selling of Christ for “thirty pieces of silver” (Matt. 26:15, 27:3,9), Judas Iscariot displayed a greater value for his money than for his soul. There is nothing wrong with money, but the wrong desire and use of it causes it to become sin (I Tim. 6:10). From the example of Judas Iscariot we learn that if you’re not on guard then the devil can get his hands in God’s money. At this point, let me stress how the local church must be careful and particular as to the manner in which it manages God’s money. God’s money is holy money and is to be expended in such a way so as to glorify Him. Born again believers should not be guilty of supporting any program or cause that is not in keeping with the teaching of Holy Scripture or that is in direct opposition to the Word of God.

### **Judas Iscariot was a Tool of Satan**

From the very beginning, Judas Iscariot was a traitor at heart and Jesus even referred to him as a devil (Jh. 6:66-71). After Jesus preached a hard sermon, many of His followers left Him for good. Jesus turned and asked the twelve, “Will ye also go away?” (Jh. 6:67). It was Peter who answered and said that Jesus alone spoke the words of eternal life. At this time Jesus did not call Judas Iscariot the devil, but simple “a devil.” In other words one of the devil’s demons had control of him.

Even though Jesus knew from the start that he was not genuine, Judas Iscariot was still fully responsible for allowing Satan to control him. This in and of itself indicates that he was never saved. Christians can most definitely be oppressed by the devil, but never possessed. It was Satan and not Christ who had possession of his heart.

According to Scripture, Judas waited for a fitting occasion to sell Jesus to the enemy. He did not act in a moment of passion, but in a planned, calculated, premediated manner. All Jesus was worth to him was “30 pieces of silver.” This was considered the value of an Old Testament slave that had been killed or injured

by another man's beast (Ex. 31:12). In the eyes of Judas, the Lamb of God was only worth the price of a dead slave.

Allow me to pause for a moment and ask you a question. How much do you value the Christ of Calvary? Many today are selling their soul as did Judas for religion, pleasure, wealth, and popularity. It's even popular today on the part of many church congregations to sell Jesus out by compromising the Word with the world in order to draw crowds and be accepted by the majority. Have you sold Jesus out or are you sold out for Jesus?

Although the disciples didn't question the integrity of Judas Iscariot, there is no doubt that Jesus noticed signs and symptoms of his true devilish nature. There are always signs or indications that bear evidence when one is not in fellowship with Almighty God. Some common signs are disrespect for the holy things of God, inattentiveness, restlessness, resentment, murmuring, grumbling, complaining, stubbornness, prayerlessness, bickering, gossiping, pride, backbiting, jealousies, and hypocrisy just to name a few.

### **Judas Iscariot Refused the Love of God**

While in the upper room knowing that Judas Iscariot would betray Him, Jesus washed his feet (Jh. 13:2-30). Herein is a beautiful picture of loving your enemies (Matt. 5:44). Christ not only taught love, but also humility as he acted as a servant in washing feet. Jesus said that the one who received the sop would be the betrayer. It appears for some reason that the disciples didn't suspicion why Judas Iscariot got up and left the room (Jh. 13:29). I would like to call your attention to the fact that every disciple, except Judas Iscariot, asked, "Lord, is it I?" Judas did not use the word, Lord (Matt. 26:22-25), but he asked, "Master, is it I?" Both words, Lord and Master, are precious words to use in referring to Christ. However, Lord is considered a higher term of endearment as we think of a believer surrendering to Christ the total control of his life. The word, Master, is a lesser term as we may associate it with a servant obeying merely because of obligation or necessity.

Judas had many opportunities to get saved even at the last washing of feet. The Bible says that when Jesus washed the feet of His disciples that it was night. Not only was it physically night, but for Judas Iscariot it was spiritual darkness of the blackest sort. He was a child of the devil and in him was no light whatsoever. He had heard the external call, but never the internal call of salvation. Many people are just like this today in the ranks of Christendom. They play the role, but never are changed by the transforming grace of Jesus Christ.

It was Judas Iscariot that led the enemy into the Garden of Gethsemane and identified Jesus with a kiss (Matt. 26:47-50). A kiss is supposed to be a token of love and affection, but the kiss of Judas was profane and hypocritical. Jesus does not want our profane kisses! I'm afraid that it's far too common for people to sing, O How I Love Jesus, on Sunday and then turn around and live as unholy as the devil on Monday. An illustration of God's common grace is seen in the manner in which Jesus referred to him as "friend." Jesus was a friend of sinners, not in the sense that he approved of their sin, but as a display of His great love for humanity. In this case, Judas Iscariot was certainly an acquaintance, but not a comrade in whom he placed confidence. Jesus knew Judas better than Judas knew himself. That same thing can be said of us today. Every person alive has experienced God's common grace by the mere fact that they're able to take their next breath, but only God's elect will know His saving grace from the penalty of sin.

### **Judas Iscariot Confessed his Sin too Late**

Judas Iscariot confessed that he had done wrong, but he didn't go far enough (Matt. 27:3-10). He didn't go to Jesus for atonement, but to the chief priest. The story of Judas shows us the result of Christ-less religion. A sinner doesn't need to tell the preacher or some priest that he has sinned, but he needs to confess it to Jesus and repent in sorrow.

The only thing that Judas admitted is that Jesus was innocent. Christ was more than an innocent man, He was the only begotten

Son of God and only Savior of sinful man. It's not enough to confess that we have made mistakes, erred, sinned, or to even admit that Jesus was a good man. Salvation from the penalty of our sin lies in the fact that we must trust Christ by faith as our Substitute in suffering for our sin on the cross of Calvary. Judas could not turn the clock back and relive the past. Neither can you or I. With Judas Iscariot, his opportunity of redemption was gone and his sorrow came too late. Like Judas, most sinners are sorry that they got caught in their sin, but not sorry for sinning against a Holy God.

The money that he received for selling Jesus out to the enemy was considered to be blood money; therefore, it could not be returned to the temple treasury. We must remember that it was the religious crowd of Jews that wanted Jesus dead. Just look at how the religious Jewish money was used by the devil against the Lord Jesus Christ. It still gives Satan a laughing fit for a church to support his work in the name of religion. Our giving unto the Lord must be based upon the Word of God and not emotions or feelings. God's Work must be supported by God's people and not by a heathen world. The blood money that was paid to Judas was used to buy the potter's field that was also referred to as the field of blood and was used as a place to bury strangers.

### **Summary**

Bogged down in the bondage of his sin and depressed with guilt, Judas Iscariot hanged himself. As he was hanging apparently somehow his swollen body fell and burst open (Acts 1:18). Judas was not a Christian who backslide nor was he a Christian who lost his salvation. First of all, a true born again believer can't lose his salvation (Jh. 10:27-29, Rom. 8:35-39). Secondly, Christians can and do slide down the hill of holiness when they take their eyes off the Lord, but not without chastisement (Heb. 12:6-11). A true Christian has a permanent relationship with Jesus Christ, but when sin interrupts that

fellowship, then the fellowship can be restored as the Holy Spirit chastens us and we “confess our sins” (I Jh. 1:9).

From Scripture, we know that Judas Iscariot was never a child of God, but was the “son of perdition” (Jh. 17:12). In the Greek, the same word for perdition that Jesus used is also waste. Judas didn’t weep bitterly over his sin as did Peter, but he died a waste. He thought that suicide would be a way out of his remorse, but unfortunately he was deceived by Satan, died outside of Christ, and will suffer in eternal torment for all eternity. Judas died and went “to his own place” (Acts 1:25).

Let me say at this point, that just because Judas Iscariot committed suicide does not mean that every person who commits suicide dies and goes to Hell. In the case of Judas, he did go to Hell, not because he committed suicide, but because he did not trust Christ as his Lord and Savior in the forgiveness of sins. Many people today who commit suicide do so out of a state of depression and mental anguish. It’s a tragic way to die, but people don’t go to Hell because they take their own life. People go to Hell because they are lost in their trespasses and sins. Anyone who is thinking straight will not want to take his or her own life. Unfortunately, in this fallen world, it does happen when depression gets the best of a person. In the case of Judas Iscariot, sin got the best of him.

There is only one eternity, but two different places in which to spend it. Every individual is made in the image of God Who Himself is a triune being. That means that we are a body, soul, and spirit. Upon death, the body returns to the earth, but the soul and spirit will exist forever somewhere. Heaven is for the redeemed children of God whereas Hell is for the unregenerate children of Satan. In this life, we could say that everyone is writing his own biography and when he is finished he goes to his own place. For a Christian, Jesus has gone to prepare that place for us (Jh. 14:1-3). On the other side of death, it will be too late to be saved from the consequences of our sin.

God is warning every Christian that we must stay on guard against indifference and not play around with sin. Sinful thoughts lead to sinful acts and those sinful acts create bad habits. Those

habits formulate character and character determines our testimony. The life of Judas Iscariot is a reminder that there is a difference in playing the role of a Christian and in being a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ. Don't waste your life in living for this ungodly world. Confess and repent of your sin and by faith trust Christ for the forgiveness of your sin. If you profess Jesus Christ, then think back over the life of Judas Iscariot and ask yourself, "Am I a genuine disciple of Jesus Christ or am I a first class phony?"

With the death of Judas Iscariot, there were left only eleven original apostles. There is a difference of opinion as to who should have taken his place among the twelve. Some believe that it should have been Matthias and others Paul. After the final ascension of Christ (Acts 1:9-26), the apostles returned to Jerusalem where they waited and prayed. It was during prayer that they sought a replacement for Judas Iscariot. The question has been raised as to whether or not they should have done this. It appears to me that after much prayer, they were correct in selecting Matthias. However, there are some who think that Paul should have become that twelfth disciple.

There is no doubt that God gave Paul apostolic authority in ministering to the Gentiles and he is referred to as an "apostle" (Rom. 1:1) on numerous occasions in the New Testament. He referred to himself as "one born out of due time" and as "the least of the apostles" (I Cor. 15:8-9). Paul was gloriously saved on the Damascus Road (Acts 9) and was sent with a divine call to preach to the Gentiles. We know much more about Paul than Matthias, but there is no doubt that both men were used mightily of the Lord. From history it appears that both men died a martyr for Christ. We have been told that Matthias was stoned and then beheaded. After writing so much of the New Testament and experiencing much suffering and imprisonments, Paul was beheaded by the wicked Emperor Nero in Rome in 67 AD.



## **Closing Thoughts**

### **The Discipline Of Discipleship**

“And there went great multitudes with him: and he turned, and said unto them, If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also he cannot be my disciple. And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple. For which of you, intending to build a tower, sitteth not down first, and counteth the cost, whether he have sufficient to finish it? Lest haply after he hath laid the foundation, and is not able to finish it, all that behold it begin to mock him, Saying, This man began to build, and was not able to finish. Or what king, going to make war against another king, sitteth not down first, and consulteth whether he be able with ten thousand to meet him that cometh against him with twenty thousand? Or else, while the other is yet a great way off, he sendeth an ambassage and desireth conditions of peace. So likewise, whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” (Lk. 14:25-33)

Our text deals with a message delivered by Jesus calling people out of the world to follow Him in discipleship. The word disciple means learner or pupil; therefore, a disciple is one under the supervision of a particular teacher. A disciple not only listens to his teacher, but tries to imitate his lifestyle (Matt. 10:24-25a). The bottom line of Christian discipleship is that we are to be like Christ and to be like Him means that we're to adopt His values and priorities in total surrender to His will. It's been recorded that Thomas Huxley once said, “It doesn't take much of a man to become a Christian, but it does take all of him.” Discipleship is a process by which the Christian becomes like Christ. The more you become like Him the more the world will treat you like it treated Him. Justification is an instantaneous act of God's grace, but sanctification is lifelong. Part of sanctification is learning how to be a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ.

Notice the likeness in the two words, discipline and disciple. We've already looked at the meaning of disciple on more than one occasion in this book. Sometimes the word discipline is used in referring to correction, such as when a parent disciplines a child. There are times when God disciplines His children (II Tim. 3:16, Heb. 12:5-11). However, the word discipline can also mean training that produces a certain character, behavior, and values. With this in mind, we can say that a disciple of the Lord Jesus Christ is one of His disciplined followers.

### **Discipleship is a Choice**

What did Jesus actually mean when He said that, "If any man come to me, and hate not his father, and mother, and wife, and children, and brethren, and sisters, yea, and his own life also, he cannot be my disciple"? Much can be said about this question, but to put it simply it means that to be a disciple of Jesus Christ, one must put Christ first and choose Him over and above all human relationships, even those that are the closest to us on earth. There is no way that a totally depraved sinner will ever choose Christ without the divine intervention of the Holy Spirit. When God births us into the family of God, convicts us of our sin, and grants us faith to believe, He gives us a new nature that has a desire to please the Lord of Glory. That spiritual family relationship becomes more important than any earthly family relationship.

The words about hate spoken by Jesus do not give us permission to have ill will toward our loved ones or to bear malice in our hearts toward others (Rom. 12:10). The only way to deal with this verse is in comparison with other Scriptures. God tells us to love people (Matt. 19:19) and especially our relatives (Ex. 20:12, Matt. 5:44) and fellow believers (I Jh. 4:19-21). Christ simply taught that His disciples must place Him above all human relationships and to strive for Him to be "Lord of all" (Acts 10:36). In other words, our love for Christ should be

so intense that when compared to our love for others, it would be far superior.

The fact remains clear that confessing Christ will often bring divisions within families (Matt. 10:34-38). Christ's coming into the world split the population into two segments one against the other. While peace reigns in the heart of a believer, discord and division rules the life of an unregenerate soul. The worst kind of division on earth is a family division. That can apply to either a home or local church. Jesus taught that a true disciple will serve God regardless of what his kin folks think about it. A Christian disciple is to affirm the Lordship of Jesus Christ to the point of placing his will above the will of his immediate earthly family. A Christian should never literally hate his family, but his love for Christ will cause him to place his family in proper perspective. Our love for Christ must always be greater than our love for anyone or anything else.

Christian discipleship involves learning how to maintain a proper spiritual focus as we deal with the various demands of life. According to Holy Scripture, there's no doubt that Jesus is interested in those who are sick and sorrowful, but His major emphasis is not upon our physical aches and pains (Jh. 10:10). If you listen to the prayer list of the average church, you would think that you were in a doctor's office taking complaints from the patients (Matt. 9:12). A church's prayer list will tell you where that local congregation places its greatest emphasis when it comes to discipleship.

While we in the church have a prayer list for the sick and sorrowful, our major emphasis as disciples of the Lord Jesus Christ should be on life and living, not death and dying (Lk. 9:57-62). Now, don't you dare get me wrong! We need to be concerned about those who are suffering physically. Jesus was and we need to follow His example! The point that I'm making concerns our greatest emphasis. Are we more concerned about one's temporary physical condition upon earth, or their spiritual condition throughout all eternity? Mercy ministry has its place and I think it is very biblical. Jesus fed the hungry, healed the sick, and raised the dead. We can often demonstrate the love of

God toward those who are going through a difficult time in life. However, let's not forget that a person's spiritual need of Christ always far outweighs the physical as desperate as it may be.

We can make all kinds of excuses for failing to be a good disciple, but no excuse is acceptable to God if we truly belong to Him. (Lk. 14:16-24). God wants us to be concerned about our families. God wants us to be concerned about the sick, the hurting, the suffering, the sorrowing and the lost. However, most of all He expects from His disciple complete obedience in learning and following the teachings of Scripture and seeking to live a holy life. God demands that absolutely nothing come between us and our faithfulness to Christ (Jh. 12:25-26). In making His claim over us, Jesus expects to have the throne of our hearts. By the very fact that He died for us means that He has the right to all of us.

### **Discipleship is a Crucifixion**

Jesus said, "And whosoever doth not bear his cross, and come after me, cannot be my disciple." The cross spoke of a painful and torturous death. In referring to an adversity or a difficulty as a cross is sometimes rather misleading. The reason is because once a cross is taken up, there is no putting it down or turning back. When a man in biblical days was destined to be crucified, he took up his cross without any compromising with the destiny that faced him.

Likewise, when a Christian takes up his cross, he has to say his good-byes to the world (Lk. 9:23). The word, deny, that we find in our text literally means to say, "NO." We're living in a society that has lost its moral values and doesn't know how to just say "NO" to drugs, lust, cheating, lying, deception, and on and on we could go. Jesus said that if we really wanted to be His disciple then we must learn to say "NO" to this sinful world and to our sinful selves. This doesn't mean that we attain sinless perfection in this life, but it means that while living in these bodies of flesh with the old sinful nature not eradicated, our goal in life is to please our God. Although, we fail at this many times, by the

power of God's grace, we strive to please our Lord till the day we die because we have taken up our cross to follow Him. Paul put it this way in Galatians, chapter two and verse twenty. "I am crucified with Christ; nevertheless I live; yet not I, but Christ liveth in me: and the life which I now live in the flesh I live by the faith of the Son of God, who loved me, and gave himself for me."

Instead of denying self, the majority of people are denying Christ (Matt. 10:32-33). Following Christ means putting the old man to death so that we'll no longer have an attraction to this world, but live the risen life through the power of the Holy Spirit (Rom. 6:6,11-12). To take up a cross and follow Jesus means to abandon one's selfish will in exchange for the Lordship of Christ. The purpose in being a surrendered disciple is so that God can use us in reaching a lost world with the Gospel. In doing so, we become a source of blessing to some, but at the same time an aggravation to others. Cross-bearing will always involve shame, humiliation, toil, and suffering. It never has and never will be an easy assignment. However, the true disciple will assume all that cross-bearing entails.

### **Discipleship is a Cost**

In verses twenty-eight through thirty-two of our text, Jesus used two short stories to illustrate how we should count the cost of being a Christian disciple. The first story teaches that it cost to build any project. In our text the project was a tower. This analogy shows us that a Christian disciple is a spiritual builder of sorts. Every believer in the Lord Jesus Christ is building a spiritual life in how he lives his life. In other words, God has a spiritual construction project going on within His disciples whose foundation is no other than Christ Himself (I Cor. 3:11).

Presently, in a matter of speaking, we could say that God has two construction projects underway. He is not only preparing a place for us (Jh. 14:1), but He is preparing us for that place. Part of the preparation process includes suffering, sickness, sorrow, trial, and trouble. Throughout life's difficulties, we need to learn

how to humble ourselves and pray for God's will to be accomplished. Usually, it's even through a painful battle with suffering that God takes most believers home to heaven. We need to keep in mind as we journey through this life, that a day is coming when every "born again" (Jh. 3:3) believer will stand in the presence of Christ (Rev. 21:4). All the sufferings of this life that we've had to endure as a disciple of Christ will be worth it all when we see Jesus.

Currently, the Holy Spirit is actually the One doing the building on our earthly road of sanctification. As we grow in the grace and knowledge of Christ (II Pet. 3:18), it can only be done as we build ourselves up through prayer and the Word of God. We can only be the witness that God would have us to be in helping build others up in the faith as we ourselves become established in it. It cost to build anything, including a devoted life to the Lord Jesus Christ. Don't think that it comes without cost. Remember, salvation is free, but it didn't come cheap. There is always a price to pay on the road to spiritual maturity.

The second story teaches that it cost to go to war presenting a Christian disciple as a spiritual warrior. A Christian will find himself in a routine confrontation with the enemy of his soul. The Christian life is spiritual warfare. That is why Paul tells us about the spiritual armor with which every believer must be clothed (Eph. 6:10-18). Inwardly, the old nature with which we are born is in conflict with the new nature of Christ that is spiritually planted in us at the time of conversion.

These two natures are at war with one another until we die and go to heaven. I realize that some like to debate this matter, but the truth remains a reality. There is an internal war taking place within every believer, but outwardly we must realize that there is another war that we must fight against the hellish forces of evil. As we do battle against the devil and the demons of Hell, don't ever forget that "greater is he that is in you, than he that is in the world" (I Jh. 4:4). Anytime we fail to finish what we start, like building a structure or fighting a war, proves to be embarrassing. Not only is it embarrassing for Christians to fail in discipleship, but it is damaging to the cause of Christ.

### **Discipleship is a Commitment**

A true disciple of Jesus Christ totally and unconditionally commits himself as a servant to his Lord and Master. Jesus made it perfectly clear that “whosoever he be of you that forsaketh not all that he hath, he cannot be my disciple.” At the age of nineteen, Jonathan Edwards said, “I have been before God and have given myself, all that I am and have, to God: so that I am not, in any respect, my own.” It was through such a man as this who was fully committed to Christ, which God chose to use in seeing the first great awakening in America.

Forsaking “all that he hath” doesn’t necessarily mean living in poverty, but it means to hold all that you have in proper relation to the kingdom of God. If a Christian allows worldly principles to govern him, then he cannot fulfill God’s purpose for his life as a disciple. That which we must forsake is a system of worldliness that is totally contrary to the Word of God. Life is not for mere enjoyment, but embracing God’s saving grace by faith and living a holy life in fellowship with Him.

### **Summary**

These words of Jesus recorded in the fourteenth chapter of Luke were not dealing with the cost of salvation, but the cost of discipleship. That doesn’t mean a cost wasn’t involved in our salvation because it did cost God the death of His only begotten Son (Jh. 3:16). There is also a cost that every lost soul must pay for rejecting Christ. The song writer of many years ago issued such a warning when he asked, “Have you counted the cost if your soul should be lost?”

The particular cost that Jesus is talking about in our text concerns the discipline of discipleship. As a Christian, we must realize that there are both privileges and responsibilities of being a child of God. We must never forget what it cost God in order to reconcile a sinful person with a Holy God. It cost God the very best that Heaven had to offer in the crucified death of Jesus Christ. In order for us to become a disciplined follower of Christ,

it cost the Lord Jesus the most agonizing death there has ever been. There is a tremendous cost to ourselves as we yield our wills to God's will and recognize Christ as preeminent in our lives. It wasn't easy for Christ to die and neither will it be easy for us to follow Him.

While our discipleship will go unappreciated by the world, it will be rewarded at the judgment seat of Christ. We must never forget as a Christian disciple that we're not living for this world, but for the world to come. With Jesus paying the cost of our salvation, we can pay the cost of discipleship through the power of the indwelling Holy Spirit.

The cost of discipleship is the cost of putting Jesus Christ first in your life. On a scale from top to bottom, where have you placed Christ in your life? If He's not on top, then He's not your "Lord" and if He's not your "Lord" then you're not His faithful disciple. Christ is either Lord of all or Lord not at all in your life. As a disciplined follower of the Lord Jesus to Christ, we need to count the cost and be willing to make a full surrender when we take up our cross.

A person can be saved by trusting Jesus Christ as personal Savior with a God given faith. Upon conversion and in the process of sanctification, a person will learn how to follow and serve Christ as a disciple. There should be no difference between being a believer and a disciple. Unfortunately, not everyone who professes Christ is meeting God's requirement for discipleship. Every genuine believer ought to be a disciple, a follower, a learner, an imitator of Jesus Christ. Are you a phony like Judas Iscariot or a disciplined disciple who loves the Lord with all your heart, mind, soul, and strength?