

Discovering the Lesser-Known Disciples

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Mark / Mark 3:18

INTRODUCTION

- For many weeks now we have been looking at the disciples
- And we've been asking the question, "What kind of people does God use?"
- We've been seeing how the Lord took 11 raw men and made them into vessels of honor and one into a vessel of dishonor
- We'll consider Judas Iscariot next week
- Our study today takes us to the third group within the twelve disciples
- If you remember there are four lists of the disciples
- There is a list in the first three gospels and the fourth in Acts
- John is the only gospel writer that didn't include a list of the disciples
- Each list has three groups of four disciples
- Each group has the same person at the head of the group
- We have already looked at the first two groups
- Today we are looking at the third
- This group consisted of James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot
- Scripture gives us little to no information about the first three

- We know about the fourth, Judas Iscariot because he betrayed Jesus
- So what can we learn about these three obscure men, who were disciples and apostles of Jesus
- First, all three were called by Jesus
- And second, they were given the same command as the others to preach, cast out demons, and heal the sick (Mark 3:13-15) (Matthew 10:1)

› The first is...

I. James the Son of Alphaeus

- Also referred to as "James the Less" (Mark 15:40)
- The term "Less" comes from the Greek word "mikros," which means "little"
- This likely suggests his physical stature, possibly indicating he was short or small-framed
- Or it could imply his youthfulness, suggesting he was younger than James the son of Zebedee
- Even if not primarily age-related, it's conceivable he was younger, or he might have been called "James the Elder"
- However, the phrase probably also signifies his lesser influence compared to James the son of Zebedee, who was prominent and part of Jesus' inner circle
- Therefore, James the son of Alphaeus was known as "James the Less" or "Little James."
- Here's an interesting thought about James, son of Alphaeus:
- You may recall that according to Mark 2:14, Levi

(Matthew) was the son of a man named Alphaeus as well

- It could be that this James was the brother of Matthew
- After all, Peter and Andrew were brothers and James and John were brothers
- Why not these two?
- There is no effort on the part of Scripture to distinguish between the two Alphaeuses
- On the other hand, Matthew and James are nowhere identified as brothers
- We simply don't know whether they were or not
- Another interesting question about James's lineage comes to light when we compare Mark 15:40 with John 19:25.
- Both verses mention two other Marys who were standing by the cross of Jesus with Mary the Lord's mother
- Mark 15:40 mentions "Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses"
- John 19:25 names "[Jesus'] mother and His mother's sister, Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene"
- It is possible, perhaps even likely, that Jesus' mother's sister ("Mary the wife of Clopas") and "Mary the mother of James the less" are the same person
- ("Clopas" may have been another name for Alphaeus, or James's mother might have remarried after his father died)
- That would have made James the Less Jesus' cousin
- *The disciples' significance didn't hinge on their lineage; otherwise, Scripture would have documented it*
- *What truly mattered was their devotion to the Lord they*

served and the message they shared

- *While details about the disciples themselves may be sparse, it's acceptable because heaven will ultimately reveal the truth about them*

- *For now, it suffices to understand they were chosen by the Lord, empowered by the Spirit, and instrumental in spreading the gospel*

- *Within a few years after Pentecost, these men largely fade from the biblical narrative without detailed biographies because Scripture prioritizes the power of Christ and His Word over the individuals who served as vessels*

- *They were filled with the Spirit and preached the Word, which is all that truly matters*

- *The focus lies not on the vessel but on the Master*

- *There are a few principles we can learn from James the son of Alphaeus:*

- *First...There is value in obscurity*

- *Even though he is rather obscure in the biblical narrative, he was still one of the twelve*

- *He was given the same training by our Lord Jesus*

- *He was taught some of the same lessons as the twelve*

- *His significance and ours is not determined by public recognition or prominence but by *faithfulness* to Christ*

- *1 Corinthians 15:58, "Therefore, my beloved brothers, be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord."*

- *His obscurity can also lend to his *humility**

- *He didn't seek fame or recognition for his role as an*

apostle

- He quietly served Jesus and His mission without seeking attention or praise
- Another principle has to do with *maturity and age*
- As James the less, he may not have had the influence or experience that James the son of Zebedee had but he was equally called to serve Jesus and His Church for His glory
- He was also *perseverant*
- He followed Jesus even during difficult times, even when Jesus was arrested and crucified

› The next disciple is...

II. Thaddaeus

- He had three names
- He was called Thaddaeus, Lebbaeus, and Judas the son of James
- It's likely that "Judas" was his given name at birth, while "Lebbaeus" and "Thaddaeus" were essentially nicknames"
- Thaddaeus," meaning "breast child," suggests the image of a nursing baby and carries a somewhat derogatory tone, akin to "mamma's boy"
- This could imply he was the youngest in his family, perhaps specially cherished by his mother
- Similarly, his other name, "Lebbaeus," derived from a Hebrew root related to the heart, literally translating to "heart child"
- What can we learn from Thaddaeus?
- Everything we know about him comes from his names

- He was also faithful, humble, and also perseverant
- › The next disciple mentioned in Mark 3:18 is...

III. Simon the Zealot

- In Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18, he is called “Simon the Cananite”
- That is not a reference to the land of Canaan or the village of Cana
- It comes from the Hebrew root qanna, which means “to be zealous”
- Before Jesus called Simon, he was part of a political party known as the Zealots
- The Zealots were fervently opposed to Roman rule and sought to overthrow it by force
- This was a widely feared political sect

The Jewish historian Josephus said, “The Zealots hated the Romans, and their goal was to overthrow the Roman occupation. They advanced their agenda primarily through terrorism and surreptitious (secretive) acts of violence.

- The Zealots were extremists in every aspect
- Similar to the Pharisees, they adhered to a literal interpretation of the law
- However, unlike the Pharisees, who were willing to compromise for political reasons, the Zealots were militant and violent rebels
- They held the belief that only God Himself had the right to rule over the Jews, and consequently viewed their actions, including assassinations of Roman soldiers,

political leaders, and opponents, as carrying out God's will

- The Zealots anticipated a Messiah who would lead them in overthrowing the Romans and restoring Israel to its former glory under Solomon
- They were fervent patriots, prepared to sacrifice their lives at a moment's notice for their cause
- The old Simon would have killed Matthew the tax collector since he was a traitor to the Jews and working for Rome
- It's tremendous to see how this publican and Zealot were able to join hands in the love of Christ
- God changed his heart and life just like He changed ours
- Just as he received forgiveness from Christ, he ministered forgiveness in his own life
- He was no longer a political zealot
- He was now zealous for the Lord Jesus and the gospel
- He, like the others, preached the good news of Jesus Christ
- All the disciples, except for Judas, were loyal followers of Christ
- Even though they ran away when Jesus was arrested, after the resurrection, they demonstrated loyalty to their deaths
- Proverbs 18:24, "...there is a friend who sticks closer than a brother."
- Proverbs 27:6, "Faithful are the wounds of a friend..."
- They all enjoyed this kind of relationship with Jesus
- Jesus said in John 15:13–15, "13 "Greater love has no one

than this, that one lay down his life for his friends. 14 “You are My friends if you do what I command you. 15 “No longer do I call you slaves, for the slave does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all things that I have heard from My Father I have made known to you.”

CONCLUSION

- There was a concert violinist who wanted to demonstrate a very important point he felt, so he hired a great hall in a city and announced that he would play a concert on a \$20,000.00 violin
- He had the place packed with violin lovers, came out, and he played exquisitely, and they applauded just gloriously
- He bowed and took their applause, threw the violin to the ground, and stomped it into bits
- The people were horrified
- And then, he walked off the stage
- The stage manager came out and said, “Ladies and Gentlemen, to put you at ease, that was a \$20.00 Violin
- He will now return to play the \$20,000.00 violin.”
- And you know what?
- They couldn’t tell the difference, and he made his point
- It isn’t the instrument; it’s the artist, right?
- Let’s face it, most of us are \$20.00 violins, at best, right?
- But oh, what music can the Master make with us
- God uses the willing, the obedient, the humble, the faithful, the broken, the contrite, the unlikely, the ordinary,

the compassionate and merciful

- And He uses the repentant
- If you're here today without a saving relationship to Jesus, you're without hope
- You have a horrible future ahead of you
- A place where there will be the "weeping and gnashing of teeth"
- A place of eternal torment
- But that doesn't have to be your ultimate destiny
- Repent and put your faith in Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins and He will grant you eternal life with Him in heaven
- No one in here knows the day of his death, so every day is urgent
- Don't go another second without Christ
- Believe now
- Repent now
- Come to Him now and be saved as we pray
- Let's pray