

“There were twelve disciples
Jesus called to help him Simon Peter, Andrew,
James, his brother John, Philip, Thomas, Matthew,
James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon, Judas
and Bartholomew.
He has called us too. He has called us too.
We are His disciples. We His work must do.”

James, the son of Alphaeus

What do we know about James the son of Alphaeus?

1. His name appears in the four biblical lists of the disciples (Matt. 1:2-3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:12-16, Acts 1:13).
2. Though we have in the lists Mathew (Mark 2:14, “also. “son of Alphaeus) and James 3:16-19) who are “sons of Alphaeus,” they are likely not brothers since brothers are listed as such (Peter and Andrew, James and John).
3. James has two names in the Gospels, the other being James the Younger (Mark 15:40). Some translations render him as James the Less. Was it his place among the apostles relative to James, the son of Zebedee of the inner circle? Was it his physical stature?
4. His father was Clopas and Mary his mother (John 19:25). A striking insight to this is that this Mary was the sister of Jesus’ mother.
“...standing by the cross were His mother and His mother’s sister, Mary the wife of Clopas.” In another text we have “Mary the mother of James and Salome” at the empty tomb (Mark 16:1), Salome being the mother of James, the son of Zebedee.
5. No words are recorded in the narrative spoken by this disciple.
6. Tradition suggests that James labored in Persia where he gained the martyr’s crown.



Thaddaeus

We encounter another disciple for whom little information is available to us.

1. In the lists of the disciples, he has several names. In Matthew 10:3 and Mark 3:18, he is called Thaddaeus. In Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13 with a slight change of order (Simon the Zealot before Thaddaeus), he is called Judas.
2. We learn that his father's name was James, and this Judas is designated as "Judas the son of James" to distinguish him from Judas the son of Iscariot, perhaps James the son of Zebedee, or both.. Some translations follow Jerome and call him "Lebbaeus," meaning small.
3. The only words recorded for us from him are from the last gathering of the disciples following the Passover meal before Jesus' crucifixion. Jesus comments of the reality of intimacy with Himself is linked to obedience. Jesus commented,
"He who has My commandments and keeps them is the one who loves Me; and he who loves Me will be loved by My Father, and I will love him and will disclose Myself to him."



Judas (not Iscariot) said to Him, 'Lord, what then has happened that You are going to disclose Yourself to us and not to the world?'

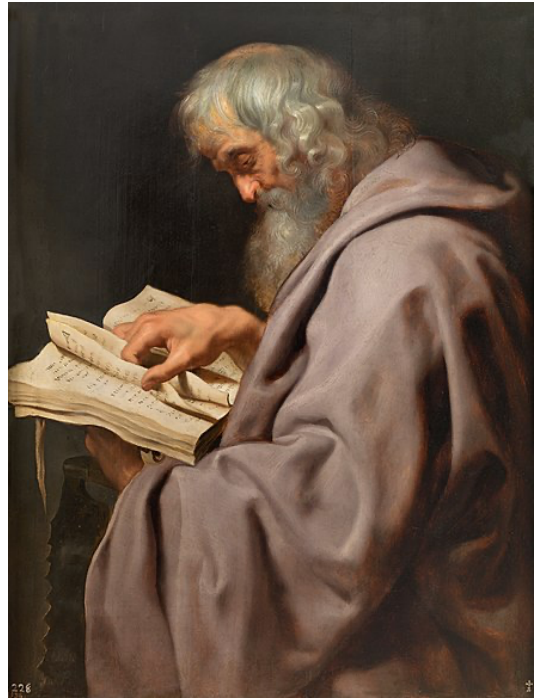
Jesus answered and said to him, 'If anyone loves Me, he will keep My word; and My Father will love him, and We will come to him and make Our abode with him.

"He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine, but the Father's who sent Me (John 14:21-24)."

5. Tradition places Thaddaeus missionary labors in Armenia where he earned the martyr's crown, having been clubbed to death.

Simon the Zaelot

1. In many ways, Simon the Zealot is the most unrecorded of the twelve. He has not particular role in the gospel narratives. His name appears in the four lists of the disciples.
2. There are six “Simon’s” in the New Testament (Simon Peter, Simon the Leper, Simon the Cyrene, Simon Iscariot, Simon the Tanner, and this one).
3. He is accorded several names. In Matthew’s list, he is called Simon the Canaanite (10:3) and in Mark’s list he is Simon the Cananean (3:18). The discrepancy may have come from the Latin Vulgate, the great Bible the of Medieval Period, where Jerome mistranslated “qanna” for “Canaanite” instead of “to be zealous.” Clearly, this Simon was no Canaanite!
4. While Simon is called “the Zealot,” we are not told what he was zealous for though most scholars indicate a radical right-wing patriotic stance. In Jesus’ day there were four distinct parties: Sadducees, the aristocratic religious leadership; the Pharisees, the popular party of the people; the Essenes, non-political separatists; and the Zealots, patriotic extremists.



We know that in 6 AD a heavy tax was placed on Judea, as well as the whole Roman world, that caused Joseph and Mary to go to Bethlehem for registration (Luke 2:14). Gamaliel commented of this and other failed revolts implying that the Christian Movement would prove valid or invalid with time. Falsity comes and goes; truth remains.

“And he said to them, ‘Men of Israel, take care what you propose to do with these men. For some time ago, Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody, and a group of about four hundred men joined up with him. But he was killed, and all who followed him were dispersed and came to nothing. After this man, Judas of Galilee rose up in the days of the census and drew away *some* people after him; he too perished, and all those who followed him were scattered. So in the present case, I say to you, stay away from these men and let them alone, for if this plan or action is of men, it will be overthrown... (Acts 5:34-38).”

5. Tradition does not help us because it is conflictive. Some say he labored in Egypt, others in Persia with Thaddaeus. Some records suggest that he died peacefully, others that he gained the martyr's crown having been cut in half with a saw.

What can we learn?

1. The lack of information about James the son of Alphaeus is a lesson for all of us. Though unheralded, he was just as much an apostle as were Peter and John. He will sit on a throne in Jesus' kingdom (Matt. 19:28) with as much authority and honor as the other apostles. His name will be engraved in a foundation of the walls of the New Jerusalem (Rev. 21:14). James will not be considered "less" in eternity because he was faithful to his calling on earth. Station in life, status, does not determine priority.
2. James the son of Alphaeus can be an encouragement to those called to lives of obscurity. Our callings are just as sure, just as God-honoring, but few will ever find their names in a biographical dictionary. Some toil for decades in remote regions of the world with little to show for it. Others serve quietly in their homes, professions, and neighborhoods largely unnoticed. He honors faithfulness endurance, obedience, and sacrifice which transcends status. We will not go unheralded by Him!
3. What does it mean "to keep God's word?" Simply put, it means to obey and submit to God's directives. "The person who has my commandments and obeys them is the one who loves me (John 14:21)." A life directed by Jesus' teaching is proof of love, and Jesus came for those people, not His antagonists. Love and obedience are twins; a lack of affection and disobedience are twins. True believers receive a double blessing: "My Father will love them," making them the recipients of all the promises of Scripture, and "we will come to them and make our home with them," making each of them a new temple of God. There is simply a remarkable contrast between believers and non-believers, the latter manifesting neither love nor obedience.
4. Jesus Christ transcends political causes, governments, and all earthly turmoil. His kingdom is eternal. Following Jesus leads to salvation and heaven. No contemporary political issue however passionately embraced accompanied with profound certainty, should ever be the cause of disharmony among God's children.