

CHAPTER 8

JAMES, THE SON OF ALPHEUS, AND THADDAEUS

(The Little Known Disciples)

In this chapter we will consider two more of the Lord's disciples. Little is known about these two men. Hardly anything at all is said about these men except that their names are found in the lists of the 12 disciples. God has chosen not to tell us very much about these two men. We know them by their names, but that is about all that we know! Let us now go to the Bible and find out the little that we can about James and Thaddaeus.

James, the Son of Alphaeus

The name of this disciple is found in each of the four lists (see Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13). According to these verses, what was his father's name?

_____ Who else had a father by this name (Mark 2:14)?
 _____. What was Levi's other name? _____ (If you forgot, review [Chapter 7](#).)

James had a father named Alphaeus, and Matthew (Levi) had a father named Alphaeus. It is possible that James and Matthew were brothers and had the same father, but it is also possible that there were two different men by the name of Alphaeus. We know that there were at least two sets of brothers among the 12 disciples (see Matthew 10:2). They were Simon Peter and his brother _____ and James and his brother _____, but the Bible does not say that Matthew and James were brothers.

James was a very common name in New Testament times. We need to be careful not to confuse James, the son of Alphaeus, with the other men in the New Testament who have this same name:

1. James, the son of Alphaeus, should not be confused with James, the son of Zebedee, and the brother of John (Matthew 10:2). These men had the same name and were both disciples of Jesus, but they were two different men and not the same person. Do you have two people in your Sunday School class or in your class at school who both the same name? Does this ever get confusing?
2. James, the son of Alphaeus, should not be confused with James, the brother of the Lord, and the author of the book of James (see Galatians 1:19; Matthew 13:55). James, the brother of the Lord, is mentioned often on the pages of the New Testament, and we will study this man in Chapter 11 of these notes.

(See also Chapter 3, page 1 where the different men named James are discussed.)

In Mark 15:40 a man is mentioned by the name of "James the _____" (see also Matthew 27:56). It is possible that James, the son of Alphaeus, and James the less were the same person. The words "JAMES THE LESS" actually mean "JAMES THE LITTLE ONE." Perhaps the disciples used this title to distinguish James, the son of Alphaeus, from James, the son of Zebedee. Perhaps James, the son of Alphaeus, was called the "little James" because he was younger than James, the son of Zebedee, or because he was shorter than James, the son of

Zebedee. But, all of these things are just possibilities. The Bible does not tell us for sure. If the Bible tells us something, we can be sure of it! If the Bible does not tell us something, then we need to be very cautious in what we say and in what conclusions we make. We should not be dogmatic about something if God is silent about it.

If James the less is the same person as James, the son of Alphaeus, then who is the mother of James (Mark 15:40)? _____

The Bible tells us nothing more about James, the son of Alphaeus. We are not told anything about what he did or about the things he said. We only know that he was "one of the twelve."

Thaddaeus

In Mark 3:18 we learn of a disciple by the name of THADDAEUS. What was another name that this disciple had (see Matthew 10:3)? _____ According to this verse in Matthew, the name THADDAEUS was a surname or a nickname that was given to him. There are some who believe this name means "one close to the breast" or "one beloved." Others think it means "courageous, lion-hearted."

When we come to the other two lists of the disciples (found in Luke 6:14-16 and Acts 1:13), we need to do some good detective work! Do you find the name THADDAEUS or the name LEBBAEUS in Luke 6:14-16 or Acts 1:13? _____ Since we know that he was one of the twelve, he must be listed under another name. As good detectives we need to find the other name for THADDAEUS. Look at Luke 6:14-16 and Acts 1:13, and eliminate all of the men that cannot be THADDAEUS:

1. Eliminate all of the disciples whom we have already studied in these notes.
2. In Luke 6:14–16, eliminate the name of Judas Iscariot, the traitor. Certainly THADDAEUS was not the disciple who betrayed the Lord.
3. What is the only name that is left? _____

Thaddaeus has thus been called "THE DISCIPLE WITH THREE NAMES." In Luke 6:14-16 and Acts 1:13, he is called J _____ *the brother* of James. Actually we are not sure if he was the brother of James (as the King James Version says) or if he was the son of James (as most of the modern versions say). Notice in Luke 6:16 that the words *brother of* are in italics and were not part of the original Greek text. All we really know is that Judas belonged to James in a certain way. That is, there is a connection between Judas and James. He either belonged to him as his brother or as his son. The same kind of wording is found in Luke 6:15:

Verse 15	"James of Alphaeus"
Verse 16	"Judas of James"

(See also the genealogy given in Luke 3:23 and following.) Probably these verses mean that James was the son of Alphaeus and that Judas was the son of James. James was Judas's father. If this is true, then this James would be yet another "JAMES" that the New Testament mentions!

Among the 12 disciples there were three pairs of men who each had the same name. Look at the list in Luke 6:14–16. Can you find two men with the name James? Can you find two men with the name Simon? Can you find two men with the name Judas?

There is only one other verse in the New Testament that tells us something about this man named Lebbeaus-Thaddaeus-Judas. This verse is found in John 14:22. Why do you think this verse says "not Iscariot"?

Judas did not understand why Jesus did not manifest Himself to the world (compare John 7:3-4). Judas did not understand certain things, but he was wise enough to bring his question to the right Person.

James and Thaddaeus

We have already discussed everything that the Bible tells us about these two men. They are among the "little known" disciples. They were not leaders among the disciples like Peter was. They did not stand out among the disciples like John did. Perhaps they were slow to speak and often very quiet. The four gospel writers pass them by in almost complete silence!

Actually when we think about it, most of the disciples were "little known disciples." We know a great deal about Peter and John, but we know much less about Andrew and James. Philip's name is mentioned only in a few places. We would know nothing about Bartholomew (Nathanael) and Thomas apart from the bits of information that we learn from the Gospel of John about these two men. Apart from the day that Christ called Matthew, we know nothing else about this man. We know nothing about Simon except that he was a Zealot. At least seven out of the 12 disciples were "little known men."

If someone today were to write a "Gospel," he would probably write at least a full chapter on each of the twelve disciples! This is not what the four gospel writers did as they were guided by the Holy Spirit. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John said very little about the disciples. The Apostles were not their theme. The Lord Jesus Christ was their theme and their main subject. Christ was their HERO! They gazed steadfastly at the SUN OF RIGHTEOUSNESS who is the Lord Jesus (see Malachi 4:2). In His brightness these gospel writers lost sight of some of the attendant stars.

Not all men can be leaders. Some need to be followers. If the band of disciples were made up of twelve Peters, there might have been a real problem! "Little" men are needed as well as "great" men.

We should also remember that being "GREAT" does not always mean being "well known" or "noticed." The Lord had a lot to teach His disciples about GREATNESS. According to Matthew 20:26-27, who shall be GREAT? _____ The word "minister" means "servant." Usually servants are not especially recognized or noticed or appreciated. Others may get most of the attention, but servants just faithfully plod along doing their job and serving others! To find true greatness, what must a person do (Matthew 18:3-4)? _____ Usually little children are not especially recognized or noticed. How many little children do you read about in the headlines of the newspaper? The "little known disciples" should also remember what Jesus said in Matthew 19:30.

God is looking for faithfulness! God is looking for those men and women and boys and girls who are "faithful in that which is _____ [the little things of life, even the little things that no one else seems to notice]" (Luke 16:10). God is looking for those who are "great in the

_____ of the _____" (Luke 1:15), and not necessarily great in the eyes of men.

Men do not always see greatness the way God does. Men often look for people to be famous or to be long remembered or to be noticed for all their great accomplishments. God, however, sees greatness even in the little things that others may never see or may never notice. There are many things that you may do that others will not see and will not notice, but you can be sure that God sees and God notices! Will God forget those things that are done in His Name (see Hebrews 6:10)? _____

After the death and resurrection of Christ, where were these "little known disciples"? In Acts 1:13 we learn that they were right where they should have been and doing just what they should have been doing! They were faithful. They were praying (verse 14). They were waiting for the promise of the Holy Spirit. They did not make a BIG NOISE, but they were doing just what God wanted them to do.

God rewards faithfulness. We may not know very much about the 12 disciples, but God knows all about them. Did God promise to reward each of the 12 disciples in the future (Matthew 19:28)? _____ Does this include James and Thaddaeus? _____ In Revelation 21:14 we learn that the names of the "twelve apostles" will be engraved forever in the heavenly city! Will the names of James and Thaddaeus be included? _____ God does not forget those who are faithful in serving Him!

Think of the twelve sons of Jacob. We know a great deal about some of these sons such as Joseph and Judah; on the other hand, we know very little about sons such as Naphtali and Issachar. Nevertheless, whether a lot or a little was said about them, each of the 12 sons played an important part in the history of Israel (see Revelation 7:4-8 and Revelation 21:12).

Think of some of the great Christians of church history such as Martin Luther, Calvin, George Whitefield, John Wesley, William Carey, and D. L. Moody. These men are long remembered. These men made a mark on history and have not been forgotten, but there have also been many other men throughout the centuries of church history who have not been so well remembered. Even though history books have not recorded their names, these unnoticed men were faithful to the Lord in the little things. They may not have been **famous**, but they were **faithful**. Do you think the Lord will forget them? Did God notice what they did and what they said? Do you think that when we someday get to heaven there might be some surprises as far as who is really great and who is really not as great as we thought? Who really is the only One that can measure true GREATNESS in a man or a woman? _____

The same is true today. In the Church there may be people who are little seen and little noticed. Are these people important (see 1 Corinthians 12:22-24)? Are there parts of your physical body that are not seen and are not given much attention but that are very, very important to you? Why is every believer important to the Lord and to the Church?

What are some ways that you can be FAITHFUL in the LITTLE THINGS this week? At home? At church? Elsewhere?

May God help us to be faithful like James and Thaddaeus and the other "little known disciples." The important thing is not to be recognized or noticed or famous. The important thing is to please _____ even in the little things that we do every day!