

The Lesser Twelve
Mark 3:18-19
January 6, 2013

Introduction

The Bible is full of characters that we know very little about. Sometimes all we have are their names and nothing else. Who are these people? God knows and He has put them down on the written word for all of us to see as a silent testimony to His approval of their faith. In America, it is regarded that the bigger things you have done, the better person you are. It is easy to view the last three disciples as nothing because we know pretty much nothing except their names. It is easy to think them as unimportant.

What we need to understand is that Jesus chooses them to be the foundations of the church. It is their faith that sustains them to the end. During His ministry, Jesus has had many followers and many disciples. When He preaches things that are hard to accept, many of these followers begin to leave. The final tipping point is when He declares Himself as the Bread from Heaven and whoever eats of His flesh shall have eternal life. Not only that, whoever the Father draws to Himself shall be saved. The implication is too much for the Jews because they believe that as a race, they are saved because of their perceived status of God's chosen people. They are scandalized (Gk of "offend"—*skandalizō*) by His sayings.

John 6:60-71 On hearing it, many of His disciples said, "This is a hard teaching. Who can accept it?" ⁶¹Aware that His disciples were grumbling about this, Jesus said to them, "Does this offend you?" ⁶²What if you see the Son of Man ascend to where He was before! ⁶³The Spirit gives life; the flesh counts for nothing. The words I have spoken to you are spirit and they are life. ⁶⁴Yet there are some of you who do not believe." For Jesus had known from the beginning which of them did not believe and who would betray Him. ⁶⁵He went on to say, "This is why I told you that no one can come to Me unless the Father has enabled him." ⁶⁶From this time many of His disciples turned back and no longer followed Him.

Jesus asks the Twelve if they want to leave as well. This is one of the several watershed moments of their faith.

⁶⁷"You do not want to leave too, do you?" Jesus asked the Twelve. ⁶⁸Simon Peter answered Him, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. ⁶⁹We believe and know that You are the Holy One of God."

Peter, speaking, knows that the Twelve are fully committed to Him. Their lives have changed to the point here ever He leads they will follow. They seek Him and give their lives to Him. They believe.

However.

⁷⁰Then Jesus replied, "Have I not chosen you, the Twelve? Yet one of you is a devil!" ⁷¹(He meant Judas, the son of Simon Iscariot, who, though one of the Twelve, was later to betray Him.)

I. Judas Iscariot, the Traitor

Note: I am placing Judas first for two reasons. 1) There might be an underlying feeling that the last four disciples could have easily betrayed Jesus because of their distance to Him. 2) I

definitely do not want to end the sermon with a sad note, but instead focus on the other three men and their characters.

- Every time his name is mentioned, it is always associated with betrayal.
- This is the saddest story in history of man
- Judas has had three years of being under Christ's teaching, being exposed to His miracles
- He has completely hardened his heart to Lord Jesus Christ
- What keeps him away from Christ?

John 12:1-6 Six days before the Passover, Jesus arrived at Bethany, where Lazarus lived, whom Jesus had raised from the dead. ²Here a dinner was given in Jesus' honor. Martha served, while Lazarus was among those reclining at the table with Him. ³Then Mary took about a pint of pure nard, an expensive perfume; she poured it on Jesus' feet and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the perfume. ⁴But one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, who was later to betray Him, objected, ⁵"Why wasn't this perfume sold and the money given to the poor? It was worth a year's wages." ⁶He did not say this because he cared about the poor but because he was a thief; as keeper of the money bag, he used to help himself to what was put into it.

- He trades the wealth of eternity for 30 pieces of silver (which incidentally is the price for a slave)

Luke 22:3-6 Then Satan entered Judas, called Iscariot, one of the Twelve. ⁴And Judas went to the chief priests and the officers of the temple guard and discussed with them how he might betray Jesus. ⁵They were delighted and agreed to give him money. ⁶He consented, and watched for an opportunity to hand Jesus over to them when no crowd was present.

Matthew 26:14-16 Then one of the Twelve—the one called Judas Iscariot—went to the chief priests ¹⁵and asked, "What are you willing to give me if I hand Him over to you?" So they counted out for him thirty silver coins. ¹⁶From then on Judas watched for an opportunity to hand Him over.

Exodus 21:32 If the bull gores a male or female slave, the owner must pay thirty shekels of silver to the master of the slave.

- The disciples did not know he would be the betrayer (only Jesus knew)
- He is completely lost—Jesus says that it would have been better if he had never been born (**Mk 14:21**)

Transition: Judas is lost—yet the other three disciples continue to follow Him. Listen to Jesus' prayer for them.

John 17:6-12 I have revealed You to those whom You gave Me out of the world. They were Yours; You gave them to Me and they have obeyed Your word. ⁷Now they know that everything You have given Me comes from You. ⁸For I gave them the words You gave Me and they accepted them. They knew with certainty that I came from You, and they believed that You sent Me. ⁹I pray for them. I am not praying for the world, but for those You have given Me, for they are Yours. ¹⁰All I have is Yours, and all You have is Mine. And glory has come to Me through them. ¹¹I will remain in the world no longer, but they are still in the world, and I am coming to You. Holy Father, protect them by the power of Your name—the name You gave Me—so that they may be one as We are one. ¹²While I was with them, I protected them and kept

them safe by that name You gave Me. None has been lost except the one doomed to destruction so that Scripture would be fulfilled.

II. James the Son of Alphaeus

- We know nothing else about him
- Some people have thought him and Matthew were brothers because their fathers have same name

Mark 2:14 *As He walked along, He saw Levi son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax collector's booth. "Follow Me," Jesus told him, and Levi got up and followed Him.*

Note: We do not know for sure because Scripture does not say. It is possible. But then again, it is more likely they were not brothers since Scripture is silent here. There is 100 percent accuracy in Scripture when it comes to names and relations between people. We need to be careful into read too much into names and make broad assumptions that Scripture does not warrant.

Application: There are many little known believers who labor for the Lord in obscurity. They receive no recognition nor receive any acclaim. They work until death, preaching, teaching, sharing the gospel of Christ. Despite the world does not recognize them—our Lord recognizes us and tells us well-done good and faithful servants!

III. Thaddaeus

- Thaddaeus means breast child—uses this name instead of Judas for obvious reasons
- Lebbaeus—heart child
- Judas, Son of James—this is his given name
- Emphasis on his character—compassionate, tender

John 14:22 *Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said, "But, Lord, why do You intend to show Yourself to us and not to the world?"*

- He was asking Jesus—You're the King, why doesn't the world know about You? You're the Savior, why doesn't the world know about You? Why us only?
- Jesus' response—Because you love Me and obey My commandments

IV. Simon the Zealot

- Some translations have "Canaanite"—this is not a reference to where he was from
- It is a reference to his political affiliations (if you will)
- Zealots are a political group who hates the non-Jewish influence on the culture
- Will assassinate anyone...Romans, Greeks, Jews who support Rome
- Masada—960 people killed (zealots killed their families first, then themselves) (because of siege from Romans)
- Imagine such conflict between Matthew and Simon (!)
- Our Lord breaches the big divide and creates brothers—this the changing power of the gospel!