

**The Sons of
Thunder**
Gary McBride

**Andrew:
The Bringer**
Bill Yuille

**Simon: Passion
Transformed**
Keith Keyser

UPLOOK

November 2013

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Whoever
does
not
bear
his
cross
and
come
after
Me
cannot
be
My
disciple.

WHAT IS A
DISCIPLE?



Meeting Every Need

When our Lord Jesus came to earth, He gathered to Himself a little group of twelve disciples. We don't have to read very far before we realize that He didn't choose them because they had earned it or because they were perfect—they stumbled, they sinned, they weren't always exactly clever, they seemed to take a peculiar delight in learning the hard way. Let us note how our blessed Lord met the longings (and failings) of these disciples' hearts and lives.

Nathanael was looking for the Messiah. Although he was a little surprised at the details of how Messiah came into the world, it is evident from John 1 that Nathanael was sincerely expecting Messiah to come. As with Simeon and Anna, the Lord rewarded the heart that was genuinely seeking Him.

Philip longed to see God. *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is enough for us"* (Jn. 14:7). We wouldn't fault Philip for being slow to grasp the fullness of the blessing he had already been given for we, too, are so often slow. And so the radiance of God's glory stood before Philip and gently instructed him: *"He who has seen Me has seen the Father."*

James and John craved pre-eminence (Mk. 10:37). Sometimes a disciple's desires aren't entirely noble. Genuine spiritual zeal can be mixed with selfish ambition. But our Lord knows how to patiently and graciously sift out the chaff. In the years that followed, these two brothers were refined and became shining examples of His grace.

Thomas doubted (Jn. 20). We might wish that our walk of faith an inexorable

march through all obstacles. But if we waver, we remember that Christ remains faithful and knows how to strengthen our faith with a fresh view of Himself.

Peter needed restoration. He had boasted in himself, slighted his fellow disciples, and denied the Lord. Many would have written him off. But the Lord dealt with his sin, restored him, and used him to spearhead the gospel effort to Jews and Gentiles and give us two books of the Bible. If we need restoration (to the Lord or to our brethren), the Lord Jesus knows exactly how to do it.

John desired intimacy. None of the twelve was more intimate with Christ than John, the disciple of love. Like Mary of Bethany, he seems to have innately known that there were times to quietly step away from the frenzy and pressures of life, and simply enjoy the presence of the Saviour.

Today, the Lord Jesus has rather a few more than twelve disciples—the list extends around the world and across time. But as varied and extensive a group as we are, I can't help but notice that our flaws and needs bear a striking resemblance to the those of the first disciples. Could it be that He left us the record of His dealings with the first group, not to give us a chuckle, but to reassure us that He can deal with our faults and struggles, too? We might sometimes despair at our lack of progress. But take heart! Did the failings of the twelve thwart the Master's plan? Our shortcomings are nothing new and they pose no obstacle for our perfect Teacher.

—James Martin editor@uplook.org

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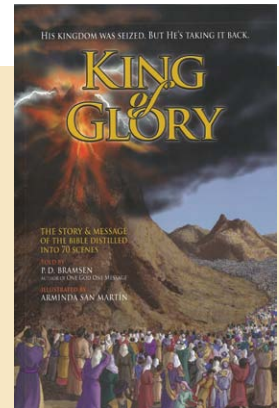
Records Incomplete



The Go in the Gospel

King of Glory: The Movie

Paul Bramsen writes: “Thank you for your prayers as we continue work on KING of GLORY the Movie, modifying and fine-tuning each of the 70 rough-cut scenes. Producing such a tool for making the gospel story and message clear to oral learners around the world is a huge project. (Did you know it’s as long as Ben-Hur? About 3½ hours, divided into ten 20-minute segments.) Lord’s willing, we hope to release it in 5 languages by the Fall of 2014. But we don’t see this happening apart from your prayers. Thank you for looking to Him with us for His inspiration, guidance, and provision.



“The Lord continues to open doors to make known His gospel to spiritually-blind people in scores of nations via radio and the printed page. In Senegal, the *Way of Righteousness* radio broadcasts continue on about 16 stations.... In the book ministry, the Lord continues to bless His Word via hard copies and downloads from our website. Several new translations are in the works. The English editions of KING of GLORY and ONE GOD ONE MESSAGE are due for reprints (nearly 25,000 copies have been distributed). In the Middle East and North Africa, more than 65,000 visitors have downloaded OGOM in Arabic. In Lebanon, a Christian organization carrying on a relief ministry to Syrian refugees is preparing to give out 2200 copies of the Arabic KING of GLORY among the thousands of displaced Syrians. Pray for God’s blessing upon this Creation-to-Christ presentation of the gospel as it is distributed along with blankets, mattresses, and stoves to people who have lost almost everything.” www.one-god-one-message.com

CONFERENCES, CAMPS & RETREATS

OUTREACH WEEKEND IN TEXAS

A gospel outreach is planned for Thanksgiving weekend (Nov 29-30) in Amarillo, TX. Join with others to talk with people about the Lord Jesus in door-to-door evangelism. If the Lord would have you join this effort, contact Oliver as soon as possible. Hotel information also available. If not able to attend, your prayers would be appreciated. **Contact:** Oliver John-Baptiste ph: 301-461-2418 email: obtjohnbaptiste@gmail.com

KNOW THE WORD/PARK OF THE PALMS

Know the Word Ministries will be hosting two events at Park of the Palms in 2014. The first event will be a conference scheduled for Feb 7-13, 2014. The speaker is Paul Young (Wales, UK).

It promises to be a great week of uplifting ministry and rich fellowship with believers from around the country. Included will be a regional CMLL conference on Sat, Feb 8 on the theme: “The Challenge of Europe” with Paul Young and Mark Swaim (Poland). Area assemblies will be invited. Other events have been planned to make this a refreshing time.

The other event will be a spring bus tour scheduled for Apr 9-17, 2014. This trip originates from NJ with a pick-up in Lancaster, PA en route for a five-day stay at Park of the Palms. The week will include singing and devotions each day and visits to places of interest along the way including the Billy Graham Library, JAARS international (NC), the Kennedy Space Center and more. For further details, email knowtheword@gmail.com or visit www.knowtheword.com

MINISTRY OPPORTUNITIES

CAMP CARETAKER POSITION IN NM

The Board of Directors for Southwest Bible Camp are praying for a couple to join the ministry as caretakers at the camp in Glenwood, New Mexico. Service would include maintenance of building facilities, equipment, the pool, and grounds. Knowledge or skills related to those areas would most accommodate the camp’s needs. A furnished residence in one of the most beautiful areas of southwest NM would be provided. All staff at SWBC are volunteers. Being commended by the assemblies or self-supporting would be most appreciated. If you are led by God to pursue this position, contact Alan Lennox at Alpilgrim@gmail.com web: www.southwestbiblecamp.com

front lines praise around the clock

CAMP POSITION AVAILABLE IN ON

The Board of Directors of **Galilee Bible Camp**, a year-round facility in the beautiful Ottawa Valley region of Ontario, are accepting applications for the full-time, faith-supported position of General Director. Contact Dave Reid, Harvey Pilgrim or Taffy Nahas via the camp office address or phone number found on the website at www.galilee biblecamp.on.ca

MINISTRY POSITIONS IN CALIFORNIA

High Desert Ministries is looking for an Assistant Director and a Caretaker who can interact for Christ among students in their discipling center. Both positions require Bible knowledge and a mature Christian life to manifest the grace of God among men who are on probation or parole. For qualifications, visit the website. **Contact:** Doug Crabb
email: ask@hdmca.org
web: www.hdmca.org

COMMENDATIONS

LAURA MESSERLY

The believers at Lake Country Bible Chapel, Ankeny, IA commend Laura to serve the Lord at **Morning Star Children's Home** and Strong Tower Christian School. The ministry is located in Pueblo Nuevo, Peru. She will be teaching and working with other missionaries for a 6 month commitment.

TIM SKILES

The believers and elders of Westside Bible Chapel, Wichita, KS have extended Tim's commendation to serve the Lord full time at **The Ezekiel Project School** of Evangelism until Sep 1, 2014.

DANIELLE WILSON

Those meeting at Northeast Bible Chapel, Colorado Springs, CO commend Danielle to the work of the Lord at **Immanuel Mission** in Teec Nos Pos, AZ. Danielle has been in happy fellowship and serving the Lord at NEBC for many years.

GUIDED TOURS

ISRAEL TOUR 2014

A teaching tour of Israel is planned for Feb 24-Mar 6, 2014. Led by Dr. Steve Price (KS) and John Heller (AR). The trip will involve thrilling discussion of biblical history and geography and will include visits with local believers. The tour cost is \$3165. **Contact:** Steve Allen
email : turkeysteve@yahoo.com

JOURNEY TO THE LAND OF THE BIBLE

Visit the Holy Land with Emmaus Bible College March 6-16, 2014. Exceptional biblical insight and a proven itinerary make this a spectacular experience with eternal value. Join Dr. Steven H. Sanchez and President and Mrs. Philip Boom as they visit Israel's historic and beautiful locations with key biblical significance. Visit www.emmaus.edu/israel to learn more today about this opportunity.

ISRAEL TOUR WITH REX TROGDON

Join Rex Trogdon for a **Bible Lands Study Tour** to Israel, the land of the Scriptures. This tour is planned during Mar 17-27, 2014, a beautiful time of year in this part of the world. If you would like to know more details about how you can go along on this trip of a lifetime, contact Rex by phone: 704-843-9632 or by email: RexTrogdon@me.com

HOMECALL

RUSSELL "RUSS" EARL FARWELL



Russ Farwell, 92, entered the Lord's presence Oct 13, 2013. He was born May 12, 1921 in Minneapolis, MN, the son

of Archie and Edna Farwell. While studying aircraft maintenance in CA, he attended a small church where a couple befriended him and led him to Christ.

Russ served the Lord faithfully for many years with the Lawrence Bible Chapel and was a valued co-worker in various ministries, especially with Kansas Bible Camp (which he helped to start) and Christian Workers Fellowship. He was also one of the founders of the Overland Park (KS) Gospel Chapel. His wise counsel and willing service will be greatly missed.

He is survived by his wife MaryLyn (Sommerville) Kress, as well as two daughters, two stepdaughters, 14 grandchildren and 23 great grandchildren.

MISCELLANY

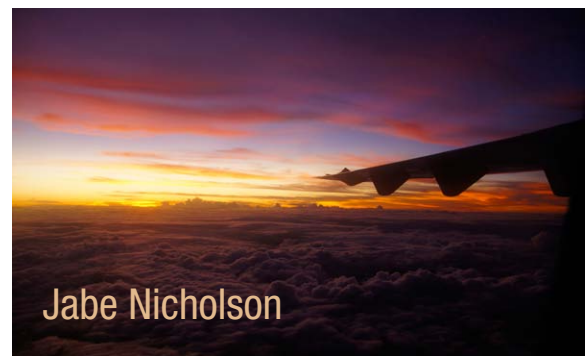
CWF FUND

Established in 1957, the **Christian Workers Fellowship Fund** is a tax-exempt corporation looking to the Lord to provide for the needs of assembly commended workers in the United States. To utilize the services of CWF, the new address for contributions or reports is:

CWF Inc.,
P.O. Box 12347,
Kansas City, KS 66112
ph: 816-330-3512
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you shall be witnesses

The Shoe on the Other Foot



Jabe Nicholson

We sure aren't overdoing it in the witnessing department. How many times has someone offered *you* a gospel tract? I can count the occasions it's happened to me on one hand. And how many times has someone initiated a conversation about spiritual things with me? Once! And she was a Mormon! I've flown close to three million miles all over the world. And been witnessed to just once.

It was on a flight up the east coast, I don't remember exactly where from and to, but I had changed planes in Charlotte and now we were heading north. When the woman started talking to me about her Mormonism, I began to press her about the way of salvation. Like a hundred other religions, she thought it all came down to doing the best you can.

"So you don't believe in a perfect God? Yours is just a pretty good God who settles for less than perfection?"

I had tried this approach before, and at this point they usually said something like: "Well, *your* works aren't perfect!"

Then I would respond with: "But I'm not counting on my works to get me to heaven. I'm trusting in one perfectly finished work, the sacrifice of Christ at Calvary, which evidently satisfied God; He proved that by raising His Son from the dead and then exalting Him to the highest place in the universe."

But the conversation in the plane didn't go that way. Instead the woman said: "Even if my religion isn't right, I'm not going to change. I'm happy with it. I like

how it gives my kids a safe environment with their dances and other activities..."

Just at that moment the plane dropped, I think, several hundred feet straight down. CAT they call it—clear air turbulence. Drinks went flying. Several people screamed. The stewardess staggered into the folk in the row ahead of us.

But the wild ride wasn't over. It was just beginning. The plane slewed left then right, up and then down. It shuddered like a coffee addict at sunrise. Things and people were coming unglued. I could hear the pilot trying a variety of altitudes to find smooth air, but there was none to be found. I've had some wild rides, especially in some small planes over the Rockies, but this won first prize (with one exception—when we hit a wind shear over the Sangre de Cristo Mountains in Colorado and dropped 2,000 feet straight down towards Mount Blanca, the range's highest peak, in a four-seater; I thought I was going Home that day).

The woman beside me was apoplectic. She said through clenched teeth, "Would you mind if I held your hand?" She meant could she apply a vise-like death grip with both hands. Her eyes literally bulged out from her face which was drained of all color. Every jolt brought new exclamations from between gritted teeth.

After twenty or thirty minutes, we finally got past the worst of it. The poor Mormon lay back in her seat and expelled a long breath. She was totally spent.

"You know what was just happening,

don't you!" I said to her with a smile. Silence. She was not yet close to being in a smiling mood. "God just gave us a little experiment. It's easy to spout ideas when everything is going smoothly in life, but when the rough times come, then we suddenly find out what's real. For me, if the plane went down, I know I'd go up. It would actually be the best case scenario for me. But I noticed you weren't thinking that way at all, were you. You were terrified. Know why? Because it does matter if what you believe is true or not."

I could see she was trying to process this. "The Lord," I added, "must love you a great deal to put this little display of His power on for you. It's like the story of the disciples in the boat. When it got stormy, they wondered if Jesus cared about them. They cried out in their terror, '*Don't You care that we perish?*' But Jesus does care—cares so much He *died* for you. I hope you never forget that."

"I certainly won't forget this ride," she said with a wry smile.

"No, and I hope you remember that the Lord Jesus wants you to take Him on board by trusting in His finished work at Calvary. Then, the next time you'll be able to relax in His arms because, even if the plane goes down, it's well with your soul."

As we got off the plane, she shook my hand, thanked me for caring for her, and said it had been a life-changing conversation. I don't exactly know what she meant, but hope she was trusting now in the One who still controls the winds. ■

JAMES & JOHN

Sons of Thunder

by GARY McBRIDE

The sons of Zebedee show some familial characteristics early in life that might have been the reason for the nickname given to them by the Lord. They were brash, at times harsh, and more than a bit concerned about their position in the kingdom.

The two left the family business to follow the Lord Jesus. It is likely that they came from a fairly well-to-do home, as their father had hired servants helping with the boat (Mk. 1:20). The identification of James and John as “*the sons of Zebedee*” suggests he may have been well known. Also, John was known to the high priest and was able to gain access into the courtyard for himself and Peter in John 18.

Among the twelve, the two brothers, along with Peter, were part of an inner circle. The three of them were with the Lord Jesus as His transfiguration. At the raising of Jarius’ daughter, these three went into the room with the Lord. Finally, in the garden, they were privy to the intense suffering of Christ as He prayed prior to the cross. In these three scenes, they were witnesses of the Savior’s glory, His grace, and His grief.

In Luke 9:54, the brothers asked the Lord if He wanted them to “*command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?*” This was in response to the negative reaction of the Samaritans to the ministry of Christ. This drew a rebuke from the Lord Jesus, “*You do not know what manner of spirit you are of*” (Lk. 5:55).

Matthew 20:20-28 records Salome’s request and the Lord’s response. She met the Lord Jesus; her two sons were with her as she asked for positions in the kingdom for her boys. It would seem from Mark 10:35 that James and John initiated the request and used their mother to deliver it. This caused indignation among the other disciples against the two brothers. The Lord responded with a challenge about faithfulness and a word about true greatness through service. In light of Luke 22:24, it is possible that this was an ongoing source of conflict and controversy. Just before the time in the Upper Room, there was a rivalry among them as to who would be considered the greatest. Later on, the two brothers obviously learned and applied the lesson about service and faithfulness to the Lord.

Very little is known about James, whereas John, along with Peter, would be among the most famous of the twelve. Though they share similar characteristics, their deaths stand in contrast to each other. James was the first of the disciples to be martyred, but John was the only one of the twelve to die of old age. Thus, of these two, it could be said that James died for Christ while John lived for Christ.

JAMES

Due to the fact that James is mentioned before his brother, it is thought that he was the older of the two. James is almost always mentioned in connection with his brother John or as one of the twelve. Only at his death is he alone. James is among the disciples in Acts 1 and not seen again until Acts 12:2.

There is no biblical or historical background as to what James was doing or why he was so conspicuous. One might surmise that he was vocal and visible in his testimony for Christ so that he came to the attention of Herod. The account of his martyrdom is brief: Herod killed James with the sword.

Clement of Alexandria gives an anecdotal account of events surrounding the martyrdom of James. The account is found in *Miller's Church History*. Either his guard or his accuser was so moved by the boldness and testimony of James that he repented of his part in the affair. He fell at James' feet and begged for forgiveness for what he had done. James raised him up, embraced and kissed him, and said, "Peace my son, peace to thee, and pardon for thy faults." The man immediately publicly professed himself to be a Christian and both were beheaded at the same time.

The Lord Jesus had asked James and John if they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink. Their response was that they indeed were able, to which the Lord said, "*You will indeed drink My cup.*" James proved in his life and death that not only was he able, but he was also willing to drink that cup and become a martyr for the sake of Christ his Lord.

JOHN

Although he was the younger of the two boys, much more is known about John than James. His contribution to the New Testament is enormous, giving us a Gospel, three Epistles, and the book of Revelation. The Gospel presents grace embodied in the person of Christ; the Epistles emphasize the godliness of life required of a Christian; the Revelation reveals the glory of Christ at the end of the age.

The only time in the Gospels that John is mentioned by name without someone else at his side is in Mark 9:38, where he rebuked someone for casting out demons. This incident, along with the others mentioned above, paints a picture

of a man who is hard, sometimes brash, and who would err on the side of truth. John aged well; he learned the balance of grace and truth, and he became the apostle of love. What a wonderful example of finishing well!

John in his own Gospel never mentions himself by name. He simply uses the phrase, "*the disciple whom Jesus loved.*" He gives the most intimate portrait of the Savior, gleaned from being the closest to Him. The one who "*leaned on the Savior's breast*" reveals the heart of the Lord Jesus.

John was the only one of the twelve that is recorded to have been at the cross when the Lord was crucified. It was in those touching moments that the Lord Jesus committed His mother, Mary, into John's care. Based on tradition, John never left Jerusalem and the care of Mary until after her death.

John moved to Ephesus, and it was from there that he was exiled by the emperor Domitian to the rocky island of Patmos. It was on Patmos, in a small cave, that he was given the Revelation of Jesus Christ. The heavens were opened above him and the future was unfolded before him. After the death of Domitian, the apostle John returned to Ephesus, living there for the balance of his days. He passed away from this scene and into the presence of the One he loved so well around the year AD 100. Tradition again relates that John was the only one of the twelve to die of old age; all the others died as martyrs for Christ.

Another anecdotal account of John's last days in Ephesus was that John would

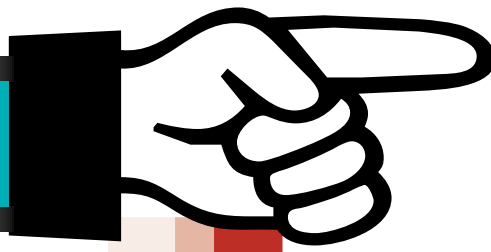
be carried to the assembly, asked for a word, and his constant refrain was, "*My little children, love one another.*" When asked why this was his only message, his response was to the effect that this was the Lord's command and if it is obeyed, everything else will be right.

The apostle of love has left a wonderful legacy. In his Gospel, he attests to the deity of Christ, while in 1 John, he affirms His humanity. Thematically, he develops the concepts of light, life, and love. He gives the balance of truth and grace first seen in Christ and subsequently to be seen in us all. ■

It is fitting to end with these instructive and transformative words of John to us:

*"Do not love
the world or the
things of the world"
(1 Jn. 2:15)*

*"Beloved, let us
love one another"
(1 Jn. 4:7)*



THE BRINGER

by BILL YUILLE

The DISCIPLE REMEMBERED for POINTING PEOPLE to CHRIST

Andrew and the Lord Jesus

(Jn. 1:35-39; Mk. 1:14-18)

Andrew is first introduced to us as a disciple of John the Baptist who, along with another unnamed disciple (probably the apostle John), heard John the Baptist identify the Lord Jesus as *the Lamb of God*. It isn't clear what they would have understood by that title, but they evidently recognized John's ministry as preparatory and as finding fulfillment in the One before them, so they left John and followed Jesus.

Jesus asked them, "What do you seek?"

This is the first recorded question of His ministry and one He might well put to us: What do we seek? Some look for wealth, power, and pleasure; some even hope to find health, wealth, and happiness in following the Lord Jesus. However, Andrew and his companion were motivated by a higher desire: "Rabbi, where are You staying?" They addressed Him respectfully as Rabbi or *Teacher*, expressed their desire to be with Him and learn from Him, and, at His invitation, they spent the rest of the day in His company.

Immediately, Andrew found his brother

Peter and announced that they had found *the Messiah*. He was looking for the One promised in the Old Testament and came to some appreciation of the Lord Jesus as God's anointed prophet, priest, and king.

In this way, Andrew was first brought into a relationship with the Lord Jesus, which led to a deeper knowledge of Him. But this wasn't the only occasion on which he followed Jesus. Other disciples were added to the group and accompanied Jesus, initially in Galilee and then in Jerusalem. On their return to Galilee (Jn. 4:3), Andrew and Peter apparently went back to their fishing until the imprisonment of John the Baptist signaled the commencement of the Lord's public ministry in Galilee (see Jn. 3:24 and Mk. 1:14). Peter and Andrew were casting a net into the sea when Jesus approached and invited them to follow Him and to become fishers of men. "They immediately left their nets and followed Him."

Andrew was initially called beside the river Jordan in Judea and he forsook John the Baptist: that was a call to be with the Lord and to know Him. Then

he was called by the Sea of Galilee and he forsook his fishing; that was a call to serve Him. This is consistent with the Lord's twofold purpose in appointing the twelve: "that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach" (Mk. 3:14). It is also a reminder of how we are called to come to the Lord Jesus, to have fellowship with Him, and to get to know Him. That is a priority. But at the same time, we are also called to be ambassadors for Christ, representing Him and serving Him.

Andrew and Simon Peter

(Jn. 1:40-42)

Because he was one of the first two disciples to follow the Lord, Andrew became known as the *protokletos* (the first called). However, after following his own introduction to Jesus, Andrew found his brother Peter and brought him to Jesus. In the years that followed, Andrew invariably stood in Peter's shadow:

- Peter's name occurs 97 times in the Gospels, 58 times in Acts, and 7 times in the remainder of the New Testament; Andrew's name is found only



 **We are all missionaries...Wherever we go, we either bring people nearer to Christ, or we repel them from Christ.**

—ERIC LIDDELL, in his biography

11 times in the Gospels (Mt. 4:18; 10:2; Mk. 1:16; 1:29; 3:18; 13:3; Lk. 6:14; Jn. 1:40; 1:44; 6:8; 12:22) and once in Acts (Acts 1:13).

- In 6 of the 12 references to Andrew, he is described as Peter's brother. Peter's name comes ahead of Andrew's in 7 of the 8 places where they are mentioned together or as part of a list (the exception is in Jn. 1:44).
- Only once is Andrew referred to with no mention of Peter (Jn. 12:22).
- Andrew was not part of the inner group which consisted of Peter, James, and John; only once is he mentioned together with these three (Mk. 13:3).

Andrew, as the *protokletos*, could have resented his brother being so much more prominent than himself, but there is no suggestion of any jealousy or complaint. He illustrates what brotherly love is like and how we should express it within the family of God: "*Be kindly affectionate to one another with brotherly love, in honor preferring one another*" (Rom. 12:10); "*Love does not envy... does not seek her own*" (1 Cor. 13:4-5).

Andrew and a young lad

(Jn. 6:8-9)

Another incident in which Andrew figured was when Jesus challenged the disciples about giving food to the multitude. They were in a desert place, the day was far spent, and the disciples didn't know what to do, but Andrew said, "*There is a lad here who has five barley loaves and two small fish, but what are*

they among so many?" He doesn't sound too confident, but he does bring the matter to the Lord. Jesus might have agreed that it wasn't very much, but He didn't ignore what they had. He took the loaves, gave thanks, and distributed the food to His disciples. He began with what they had and multiplied it by His power to alleviate the need.

It is not the quantity of our resources that counts because, ultimately, all our resources are inadequate. But the Lord doesn't expect us to be sufficient; He desires that we should be available. God uses weak things for the accomplishment of His work so that there is no place for human pride and He receives the glory (1 Cor. 1:31).

Andrew and some Greeks

(Jn. 12:20-26)

During the Lord's last week in Jerusalem, some Greeks told Philip that they would like to see Jesus, and "*Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus.*" On each occasion in which Andrew is described as acting independently of Peter, he was bringing people to the Lord Jesus: first his brother, then the lad with five loaves and two fish, and now some Greeks. The Lord challenges us in this respect: "*You shall be witnesses unto Me*" (Acts 1:8). Our mission is not to promote a religion or to invite people to join a church but to introduce people to Him.

We're not told whether these Greeks actually met Jesus at this time. We are told

how the Lord took this opportunity to explain to Andrew and Philip what was necessary for Gentiles such as these to have a relationship with Him: "*The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much fruit.*" To be glorified, He had to die; having died, it was inevitable that He be glorified. It would happen *in His crucifixion* because there the excellence of His person would be most clearly seen: His love, His holiness, His obedience, etc. Moreover, it would happen *in His exaltation* because His Father raised Him from the dead and gave Him glory at His right hand. And it would happen also *in the church* in that He is being glorified among the nations as men and women from around the world come to recognize who He is and what He has done. Glory is attained in the context of His utter submission to the Father's will, even to the point of death.

The Lord went on to point out that the same principle applies in our lives: "*If any one serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor.*" Andrew followed and, according to tradition, that led to missionary service in Asia Minor, Macedonia, and southern Russia. Eventually, Andrew's service led to martyrdom on a *saltire* (an X-shaped) cross, as he considered himself unworthy to be crucified on the same type of cross as Jesus. ■

Judas ONE AMONG THE TWELVE Iscariot

by Sam Thorpe

Judas Iscariot was a disciple of Jesus Christ? Yes, a disciple of great distinction. We may be tempted to say, “What a misfit!” Yet we will see he was a perfect fit for a significant role in the redemptive plan of God, established before the world began. And for this purpose he stands out among the twelve.

THE DISTINCTION OF HIS NAME

His name, Judas, is Greek for the Hebrew name Judah (also Jude). Judah means “celebrated.” He was one among the twelve sons of Jacob. Through the seed of Judah, the Messiah came as prophesied in Genesis 49:10 and as celebrated in Revelation 5:5.

Iscariot identifies him with the men of Kerioth, a city in Judea. This presents another point of distinction: Judas was the only Judean disciple; the rest were Galileans. It was Peter’s Galilean accent that betrayed his association as a disciple of Christ (Mk. 14:70).

HIS DISTINCTION AMONG THE 12

There are three listings of the twelve disciples in the Synoptic Gospels. Judas is always listed last, with the comment that he betrayed Christ. In fact, every

time his name is mentioned, he is either identified as the betrayer of Jesus or his name is found in the context of the betrayal event.

The name Judas is found 33 times in the New Testament. Ten times it refers to someone other than Judas Iscariot:

- Another disciple, the brother of James (Lk. 6:16)
- Christ’s half-brother (Mt. 13:55)
- A prophet of the Jerusalem church (Acts 15:22, 32)
- A false messiah (Acts 5:37)

Eleven of the 23 times, his full name, Judas Iscariot, is used as a distinguishing mark. Note the special handling by John so as not to confuse the other disciple named Judas with the betrayer (Jn. 14:22). To this day, the name carries a stigma and is seldom used. It is sometimes used as slang in connection with undesirable character traits.

DISTINCTION AS AN APPOINTED DISCIPLE

On the evening before the Lord called twelve men to be His disciples, He spent the entire night in prayer on the mountain. The next day, He selected the

twelve, including Judas Iscariot. As God manifest in flesh, Jesus knew the hearts of men (Jn. 2:24-25) and also knew the prophesies that must be fulfilled. Matthew gives us the words of Christ regarding Judas Iscariot: “...*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.*” But he needed to be born and selected as one of the twelve. He had a role to fulfill.

The traitor, as he is called, was given to Christ by God the Father. At least seven times in John 17:6-12, Christ makes it clear that the disciples were given to Him from the Father. Verse 12 indicated that Judas Iscariot was included. It is in this verse that he is called “*the son of perdition*” and identified as the only one of the twelve that is lost. The last phrase of this verse is key: “*that the Scripture might be fulfilled.*”

HIS DISTINCTION IN OT PROPHECY

There are several Old Testament passages that speak of Judas Iscariot. David speaks prophetically of him in Psalm 41:9, “*Yea, my own familiar friend, in whom I trusted, which did eat*



Jesus answered them, *“Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?”*

—John 6:70

of my bread, hath lifted up his heel against me.” Christ quotes this passage after washing the disciples’ feet (Jn. 13:18). Christ then reveals that one of them will betray Him and identifies Judas as the traitor by the dipping of the sop with him (Jn. 13:26).

The prophecy of Zechariah foretells the price of betrayal, thirty pieces of silver, and its final use in relation to the Potter’s Field (Zech. 11:12-13). Matthew quotes Zechariah’s prophecy as he records the thirty pieces of silver which Judas Iscariot cast down in the house of the Lord (Mt. 27:9-10).

Psalm 69:25 and 109:8 jointly speak of the replacement of Judas Iscariot. Peter, prior to Pentecost, makes reference to these scriptures in Acts 1:16 and 20. Seeking the mind of the Lord, the eleven disciples fill the vacated position with Matthias, who was then numbered with the eleven (Acts 1:24-26).

HIS DISTINCTION IN CHRIST’S EARTHLY MINISTRY

Peter declares that Judas Iscariot was *“numbered with us, and had obtained*

part of this ministry” (Acts 1:17). What was his part? Judas Iscariot holds the distinction as being the only disciple revealed as having a routine job assignment. John tells us that Judas had charge of their money bag and that Christ would, on occasion, direct him to purchase needed items or dispense money to the poor. This responsibility exposed his character flaw as a thief who stole from the finances of the ministry (Jn. 12:6). We would suppose that to preserve Judas Iscariot for the ultimate task of betrayal, Christ graciously tolerated this sinful behavior of one of His disciples.

Earlier, the Lord spoke of Judas Iscariot as *“a devil”* (Jn. 6:70). The final role of this traitor was formulated in the mind of Judas Iscariot by the influence of Satan (Jn. 13:2). To a lesser degree, Satan is still using this approach against the disciples of Christ today. Have there been times when we have betrayed the relationship we have with our Savior?

HIS DISTINCTION IN THE SOVEREIGN GRACE OF GOD

Although we see signs of strong remorse from Judas Iscariot (Mt. 27:3-4), it ap-

pears there was not cause for forgiveness. Realizing the seriousness of his condemnation, he hanged himself. There was no hope. Luke records the prayer of the disciples as they sought a replacement for Judas, who *“by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place”* (Acts 1:25). He chose to have an awful part in the ministry of Christ but would have no place in eternity with Christ.

To a great degree, the role of Judas Iscariot among the twelve disciples and his eternal damnation is a mystery not yet revealed by the heart of God. We must rest our curious minds in the same place Abraham found when he said, *“Shall not the Judge of all the earth do right?”* (Gen. 18:25). We accept the truth that God is righteous. He does all things well. His ways are truly unsearchable to us (Rom. 11:33-36).

We may take an application from this scene. Many people today claim a part in the religious functions of a church but, in time, will hear from the Lord, *“Depart from Me, ye that work iniquity”* (Mt. 7:23). What a precious assurance there is to those who *“are accepted in the Beloved.”* As the days grow darker, may we be willing to claim Christ’s name and suffer for Him, if need be. Soon, we will reign with Him. Each believer has a vital part in the ongoing ministry of Christ now on this earth, and, in a coming day, we will have a place in His presence, sharing in His eternal glory. ■

Photo of silver coins: <http://commons.wikimedia.org>

*Still, as of old, man by himself is priced:
For thirty silver pieces Judas sold
Himself, not Christ.*



Matthew

JOHN SCARSBROOK

The day began like any other for Levi, the son of Alphaeus, the tax collector of Capernaum. Tribute and customs were levied on goods passing on the busy trade routes to the north of Galilee, and Levi had undertaken this employment. His instructions came from the Roman authorities and the business could be very lucrative, particularly if the official was unscrupulous in his dealings. To the Jewish mind, such individuals were beneath contempt. Collaborators with the hated Romans, quislings, were spoken of in the same breath as sinners (Mt. 9:11), harlots (Mt. 21:32), and, worst of all, Gentiles (Mt. 18:17).

That day, however, would be indelibly etched on the memory of Levi: the day when, from among the passing crowd, a Man paused in front of Levi's bench and spoke just two words that completely revolutionized his whole life! Two words which saw the son of Alphaeus abandon the service of an earthly monarch in order to serve, and later record, the inspired Word concerning the King of kings!

We do not know just how often Levi, or Matthew, had seen the Lord Jesus since

He had moved to Capernaum (Mt. 4:13). He must have known of this carpenter from Nazareth, as he later records that *"Jesus went about all Galilee, teaching... and preaching...and healing all manner of sickness...His fame went throughout all Syria...and there followed Him great multitudes of people"* (Mt. 4:23-25). In chapter 8 of his Gospel, Matthew gives details of the Lord's power over disease as He deals with leprosy, palsy, and fever. Then, in verse 26, the Lord demonstrates His power over the elements and, in verse 32, He demonstrates His power over demons. In chapter 9, Christ is seen as the One having *"power on earth to forgive sins"* (v. 6), causing the multitude to marvel and glorify God *"which had given such power unto men"* (v. 8). Maybe Matthew saw in the Lord Jesus One whose power so evidently eclipsed the mighty power of Rome that it determined his response to the Lord's words that momentous day in Capernaum.

It is always a fruitful exercise to compare the Gospel records. When Mark records the call of Matthew, he tells us that the Lord *"saw Levi the son of Alphaeus"* (Mk. 2:14). Luke says He *"saw a publican,*

named Levi" (Lk. 5:27). Matthew, in his characteristic, self-effacing way, simply says, *"He saw a man, named Matthew"* (Mt. 9:9). Matthew is saying, in effect, "He wasn't concerned about my family background or my occupation; He saw me for what I was and knew all about me!"

Matthew means "Gift of Jehovah." If, as is most likely, his name of Levi indicates that his ancestry could be traced back to the priestly tribe, it would remind us that, in Numbers 3, the Levites were given as a gift to Aaron and to his sons in recognition of their fidelity following the matter of the golden calf. Many years later, this son of Levi would be numbered among *"the men which Thou gavest Me out of the world"* (Jn. 17:6)—entrusted to the keeping and engaged in the service of a priestly Man of a far higher order than that of Aaron.

Matthew's unique viewpoint

It is one of the most interesting and attractive aspects of Scripture that the burden of inspiration did not deprive the writers of their individual characters and personalities. It has been



Looking down on Capernaum, Matthew's hometown, on the northern shore of the Sea of Galilee. Capernaum was a toll collection center for the road from Jerusalem's Damascus Gate to the city of Damascus, the thoroughfare on which Saul of Tarsus first met the risen Christ.

noted by others how Luke draws on his medical knowledge with his words and phraseology. Likewise Matthew, the astute accountant, has a keen eye for monetary matters and value. Of all the Gospel writers, only Matthew speaks of gold, that most precious of commodities in every age. Only Matthew writes of silver. (The word used by Luke in 15:8 is *drachma*, which denotes a coin rather than the metal.) Again, it is only in Matthew's Gospel that we read of talents—the other writers deal in pence or farthings. A talent was a substantial sum and Matthew appreciated that. It is Matthew who, alone of the Gospel writers, recalls the tribute money in the fish's mouth (Mt. 17:27). And only Matthew takes time to count the “reward of iniquity” in the hand of the betrayer and tells us it was thirty pieces of silver.

We are indebted to Matthew to learn something of what it cost others to show their appreciation of the Savior. He alone tells us of that arduous journey undertaken by wise men from the east as they brought their precious gifts. He reminds us that, when called by the Savior, Peter and Andrew “straightway left their nets,” and James and John “immediately left the ship and their father, and followed Him.” Later, after the dark hours of Golgotha, only Matthew tells us that it was a rich man who undertook the burial of the Lord Jesus; he added further that it was

“his own new tomb” that Joseph gave, “which he had hewn out in the rock.” That was a costly day for the rich man from Arimathaea, but it placed a large deposit on the balance sheet of heaven!

Matthew's sacrifice

While taking time to emphasize the sacrifice of others, Matthew is very reticent when it comes to his personal cost. He deeply appreciated the Lord's gracious act in calling him to follow. Hence, when recording the names of the apostles, he added after his own name, “the publican” (Mt. 10:3). Matthew would have sung with feeling, “Amazing grace...that saved a wretch like me!” With this in mind, we note the response of Matthew, as written by his own hand, on receiving the command from the Master: “he arose and followed Him.” It is left to Luke to give the complete picture. He tells us that Matthew “left all, rose up, and followed Him” (Lk. 5:28). Luke's addition literally means, “he abandoned everything!” There was no question of finishing the day's work and starting tomorrow. Peter, Andrew, John, and others could re-launch their fishing boats if occasion required (Jn. 21:3), but there was no going back for Matthew; he “burned his boat” that day in Capernaum!

The Synoptic Writers all tell us of the feast which followed Matthew's call. Matthew says, “Jesus sat at meat in the house”

without specifying whose house it was. Mark says, “Jesus sat at meat in his house,” which could mean the Lord's dwelling place. Again we are indebted to Luke for recording the generosity of this self-effacing man. He tells us that “Levi made Him a great (*mega*) feast in his own house.” No expense was spared! The guest list caused consternation among the religious hierarchy as Matthew invited his former workmates at the tax office to come and meet his new Lord and Master. Love for the Savior should manifest itself in love for the sinner on the part of those who are His own! This is a challenge to us all.

In his Gospel, Matthew records eight occasions when different ones worshipped the Lord Jesus. From the brief personal record concerning Matthew, we can appreciate that he was well qualified to write on this subject. Many readers will be aware that the first mention of worship in the Scriptures is in Genesis 22, the well-known story of Abraham and Isaac. We recall that worship on that occasion involved sacrifice, obedience, and faith. For Matthew, the command of the Lord Jesus to “Follow Me” produced the same virtues. As Luke records, “he left all”—that was sacrifice; “he rose up” in obedience; “he followed Him”—the pathway of faith. Worship was not just an academic exercise for Matthew; he wrote from heart experience.

That day in Capernaum, Matthew closed the door and turned the key on his old life. With firm resolution, he fell into step with a despised and rejected Man. ■

The Twelve



BARTHOLOMEW
(Nathanael)

"Rabbi, You are the Son of God, You are the King of Israel"
(Jn. 1:45)



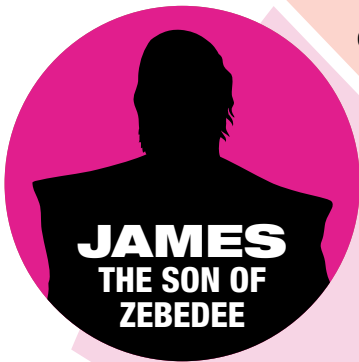
PHILIP

"Him of whom Moses in the Law and also the Prophets wrote, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph"
(Jn. 1:45)



JOHN
THE BROTHER OF JAMES

Wrote five books of the New Testament to confess Him; started with *"In the beginning was the Word..."* (Jn. 1:1) and ended with *"the Lord Jesus Christ"* (Rev. 22:21)



JAMES
THE SON OF ZEBEDEE

"Lord"
(Lk. 9:54)

lover of horses

son of Talmai = plowman; also called Nathanael = gift of God

Yahweh has been gracious



ANDREW
PETER'S BROTHER

"the Messiah"
(Jn. 1:41)

supplanter



SIMON PETER
(Cephas)

"You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God"
(Mt. 16:16)

manly

hearing; Peter = stone



Confession of Christ



Name Meaning

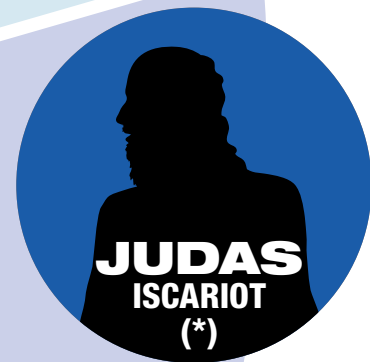
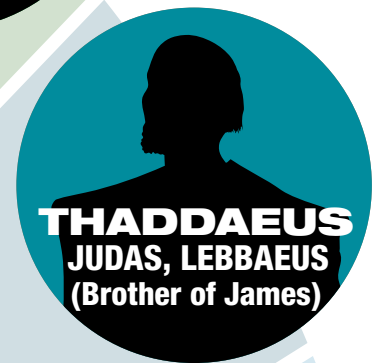
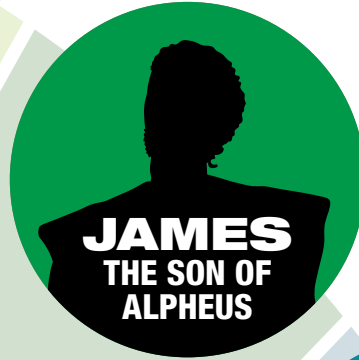
Matthew 10:2-4
Mark 3:16-19
Luke 6:14-16
Acts 1:13



*"my Lord and
my God"*
(Jn. 20:28)



*"Jesus Christ,
the son of David,
the son of Abraham"*
(Mt. 1:1)



twin;
also called
Didymus
= double

gift of Yahweh;
also called
Levi = joined

supplanter

a man
of heart

hearing

praise
(Greek form
of Judah)

"the Messiah"
(Jn. 1:41)

* (the one who betrayed Him / who also betrayed Him / who became a traitor)

SIMON Rex Trogon PETER

A follower of the Lord Jesus Christ



There are over twenty recorded junctures where the life of Simon Peter intersects with the Lord Jesus Christ. In each of these, we see the interaction of the man called Peter with whom we all, at times, like to identify.

MEETING

We begin with his introduction to the Lord Jesus. Usually when two people meet for the first time, each person identifies himself. Not so in the unique introduction of the Lord and Simon. When Andrew brought Simon to the Lord, it was the Lord who identified Simon, saying, “*You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas’ which is translated, a Stone*” (Jn. 1:42).

This profound identity is not who Simon is, but who he will become and what he will be. The Lord Jesus gave Simon a new name. He stated, “*You shall be called Cephas.*” Later He said, “*You shall be called Peter*” (Mt. 16:18), which means a rock. A stone, a rock—these are what Simon would become.

The Lord Jesus Christ is the Stone and the Rock. You can find a complete listing of the stone image titles given to the

Lord Jesus in the New Testament. He is the Living Stone, the Chosen Stone, the Chief Cornerstone, the Elect Stone, the Rejected Stone, the Stumbling Stone, and the Rock of Offense. These are listed by none other than Simon Peter himself (1 Pet. 2:4-8).

When he met the Savior, a work began in Simon’s life to make him more and more like the Lord. This work of conforming us to the image of Christ is a work that the Spirit begins in each of us the moment we trust the Lord Jesus Christ as our Savior. One day we shall see Him as He is and we will be like Him (1 Jn. 3:1). What a hope is ours. It is, as Peter calls it, “*a living hope*” (1 Pet. 1:3).

FOLLOWING

Upon meeting the Lord, Simon was called to follow Him. Through the rest of the Gospels, we can trace the footsteps of the heavenly Man and watch as Simon, follower of Christ, strives to keep up. He began following the Lord along the shore of the Sea of Galilee. He was called, along with Andrew, James, and John, to become a fisher of men. One day, the Lord Jesus sat in a boat—Simon’s boat. He asked him to put out

a little from the land. After teaching the multitudes, the Lord told Simon to launch out into the deep for a catch (Lk. 5:1-11). They made a great catch of fish. Simon was caught, too. Convicted by his sinfulness, he fell at Jesus’ knees, saying, “*Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!*” The Lord calmed his fears and redirected his fishing skills to catch men. On the best day of fishing they had ever had, they forsook all and followed Him (Lk. 5:11).

Peter sought to follow the Lord, even if it meant rocking the boat. On the storm-tossed sea, Simon heard Him say, “*Come,*” and, with his eyes fixed on Jesus and enough faith to venture overboard, he stepped out onto the sea. His eye began to wander, his feet began to sink, his heart began to fear, and he cried out, “*Lord, save me!*” The Lord said, “*O you of little faith, why did you doubt?*” His little faith got him out of the boat, into the deep water, and safe into the arms of Jesus (Mt. 14:22-31).

Peter, James, and John followed the Lord from sea level up to a high mountain. There the Lord Jesus was transfigured before them and Moses



and Elijah appeared. We read that the disciples awoke and were greatly afraid.

Peter spoke, not knowing what he said. While he was speaking, there came a

divine interruption. God spoke from the cloud that overshadowed them saying, *“This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!”* (Lk. 9:35). Peter writes of this experience saying, *“We did not follow cunningly devised fables...but were eyewitnesses of His majesty”* (2 Pet. 1:16).

Throughout their time together, Simon Peter had some questions to ask the Lord. Seven questions, if my count is correct. One of those questions was about the rewards for following the Savior. A rich, young ruler had just turned his back and walked away from an offer of treasure in heaven if he would take up his cross and follow Christ. Peter said to the Lord, *“See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore, what shall we have?”* (Mt. 19:27). The Lord Jesus assured Peter that it would be worth it all.

STUMBLING

Peter followed the Lord right up to the last day of our Lord’s life on earth. In the upper room, the Lord began to wash the disciples’ feet. He came to Simon Peter, who refused. In simple terms, the Lord explained that clean feet were required to follow Him (Jn. 13:1-17). Peter’s initial refusal turned into a request—for a

bath! But the Lord corrected him again. There was no need for a bath, just a basin, water, and a towel. Feet that follow Him must be washed.

It was that night that the Lord warned Simon what was ahead. *“Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat”* (Lk. 22:31-32). From there, Simon went astray. He was heading for a fall. He took seven downward steps.

1. Peter said, *“Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be”* (Mk. 14:29-31).

Peter boasted when he should have been listening.

2. From there they followed the Lord to Gethsemane. Christ left His disciples to pray and returned to find them sleeping (Mk. 14:32-41). Peter slept when he should have been praying.

3. The mob came to take Jesus into custody, and Peter drew his sword and cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest (Jn. 18:10). Peter fought when he should have been trusting.

4. They led Jesus away from Gethsemane, but Peter followed at a distance (Mk. 14:54a). Peter drew back when he should have been drawing close.

5. Peter followed into the courtyard of the high priest and sat by the fire (Mk. 14:54b). Peter sat when he should have been standing.

6. One of the servant girls of the high priest saw him and said, *“You were with Jesus of Nazareth.”* But he denied it and said, *“I neither know nor understand what you are saying”* (Mk. 14:66-68). This happened twice. Peter denied when he should have been owning.

7. Lastly, others who stood by said, *“Surely you are one of them for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.”* Peter began to curse and swear saying, *“I do not know this Man of whom you speak”* (Mk. 14:71). Peter cursed when he should have been confessing.

At that point, a rooster crowed, just as the Lord had said, and Christ looked over at Peter and their eyes met. Peter went out and wept bitterly.

RESTORED

Peter had fallen. Was there a way back? Oh, yes! For the Lord had anticipated that, too, and had comforted Peter in advance: *“When you are restored, strengthen the brethren”* (Lk. 22:32).

After the Lord’s resurrection, He met with Simon Peter. He spoke to Peter of his death and encouraged him saying, *“Follow Me”* (Jn. 21:19). Having just been restored, Peter turned around and saw John following the Lord. He asked, *“But Lord, what about this man?”* Simon had taken his eyes off the Lord and put them on John. The Lord’s answer to Peter should echo in our hearts today, *“What is that to you? You follow Me”* (Jn. 21:22).

It is no wonder that Simon Peter, follower of the Lord Jesus Christ, wrote in his epistles of the things that he learned. Not surprisingly, he sets forth the challenge saying, *“that you should follow His steps”* (1 Pet. 2:21)! ■

Two Thomases

by Stephen L. Anderson

Thomas Hardy, the great 19th century novelist, was an avowed cynic in regard to spiritual matters. Under the influence of contemporary skeptics, he disavowed his early faith in God. In fact, he went so far as to write a poem titled “God’s Funeral.” In it, Hardy depicts himself as an onlooker to a funeral procession. It has marchers dressed in black and a funeral bier, upon which is stretched out a strange figure. At times, he writes, it is “man-like” but also “phantasmal” and “various,” being surrounded by an “amorphous cloud of marvelous size,” and “at times endowed with wings of glorious range.”

It is God. The funeral attendants are former believers. They have, with great heaviness, come to conclude that their beloved Deity is dead. They had invented Him themselves in order to console themselves amid the hardships of life, and had come to depend on Him for assurance, purpose, and hope in a difficult world. But modern wisdom had come along, and, in its cold light, God had been slain—not literally killed, but revealed at last to be unreal, no longer an object of sincere faith, and thus “dead” to their hopes. Possibly the most curious feature of the poem, though, is Hardy’s own response. At the end, when the procession has passed him by and Hardy has convinced

himself that God can no longer be alive, he portrays himself as doing something startling: he joins the procession of mourners and “mechanically follows with the rest.”

What would Hardy want with a dead God? What could be more useless? Yet Hardy was, in his own words, “puzzled twixt the gleam and gloom.” Convinced that modern skepticism had buried God, he could not bring himself to rejoice in that fact. No, instead he became a permanent agnostic—partly convinced that God could not exist but continually lamenting and wishing that somehow that horrid eventuality could be escaped. Not surprisingly, Hardy was not a very happy man.

Thomas number two

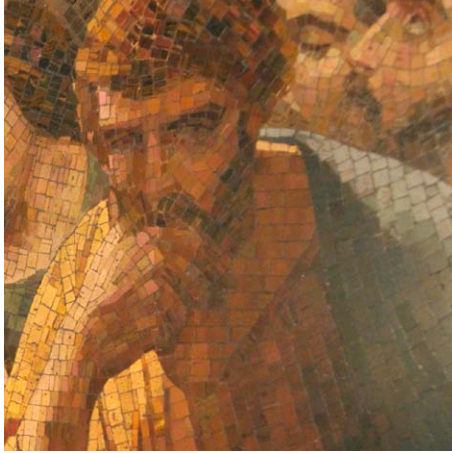
Of course, Hardy was not the most famous Thomas. That honor goes to the disciple. He is traditionally remembered as “doubting Thomas,” the one disciple who refused to believe that Christ had really risen from the dead. He comes in for a bit of a hard ride on that account: popular thought holds that he was of a naturally cynical disposition, too hard-headed and hard-hearted to accept good news unless it was confirmed to his satisfaction. But I don’t think we do our brother Thomas any justice when we treat him that way. I want to suggest that

maybe there was more to Thomas than mere skepticism.

We have ten New Testament references to Thomas. Three of them are simply in lists of the disciples. Seven of them are in John. Four are in the single famous incident in chapter 20, but there are three others, in chapters 11, 14, and 21. It is in the context of these three other references that I believe we need to view the events of chapter 20. Putting all the information together, we get a rather different picture.

The first action recorded about Thomas is a stunning declaration of his loyalty to the Savior. The occasion is the death of Lazarus. Jesus is staying beyond the Jordan, out of reach of the homicidal authorities in Judea. For two days, the Lord has done nothing about His friend’s passing, and His disciples have been thinking that the threat of death has prevented Him. Then suddenly, Jesus declares His intention to go to Bethany. His disciples protest: the authorities would surely plot some sort of violence. (Indeed, these suspicions were entirely correct: vv. 47-53.) But Jesus is determined to go. The disciples hesitate.

It is Thomas who rallies them: “*Let us also go, so that we may die with Him.*”



THE CONFESSION OF THOMAS

O! if the iris of the skies transcends the painter's art,
How could he trace to human eyes the rainbow of the heart;
When love, joy, fear, repentance, shame,
Hope, faith in quick succession came,
Each claiming there a part; each mingling in the tears that flowed,
The words that breathed: "My Lord! My God!" —*Thomas Dale*

Are these the words of a skeptic? Surely not! Thomas is devoted to the Savior, willing to lay his own life on the line. There is nothing cynical about such a sacrifice. Indeed, "*Greater love has no man than this...*"

Our second reference to Thomas is in chapter 14. Jesus is delivering a hard message to His disciples: He will soon depart from them, and they cannot follow. Peter declares, "*Lord,...I will lay down my life for You.*" Given what we already know about Thomas, you can imagine how his heart echoed Peter's plea. But then Jesus drops the bombshell: you are not going to be faithful, you are going to deny Me (13:38). Silence falls across the room—a pause. Then Jesus speaks: "*Do not let your heart be troubled; you believe in God, believe also in Me. In My house are many dwelling places...I go to prepare a place for you.*"

Thomas's heart bursts. He exclaims, "*Lord, we do not know where you are going; how do we know the way?*" There's no cynicism in the question. Thomas loves the Lord and wants to be with Him. He just doesn't understand. And, once again, he trusts the Lord: he does not leave, neither do we have any expression of doubt from him.

Thomas turned

What happened to Thomas? What was it that converted him to the skeptic of John 20? Of course, we cannot know for certain, but I think it was simply

this: shattered hope. Thomas had truly believed in Messiah. He had committed his entire being to the Lord. What sense, then, could Thomas make of what had happened? He had seen his Lord vilified, humiliated, tortured, and crucified. He had personally witnessed God's funeral. He had seen Hope die.

What was left? Some kind of pointless belief in the unbelievable? Some sort of Thomas Hardy self-delusion? Why would any sincere believer want that? No, Thomas himself had been deeply wounded. What had been the point of giving up everything to follow a murdered Messiah? How was this the hope of Israel? And where was the Father when His Son was dying? Where now was that dwelling of sweet fellowship that the Lord had so recently promised? How could there be a future anymore, when the bright Center of all hope had been buried in a borrowed grave?

When you've been hurt like that, you don't easily believe again. As the saying goes, "Fool me once, and shame on you; fool me twice, shame on me." Thomas was not going to be fooled again. It would take a very great deal to resurrect his hope. Certainly the apparently blind optimism of his fellow disciples would not do it. Nothing less than the seeing with his own eyes the evidence of genuine crucifixion and the touching of his own hand into the gaping wound on Jesus' side would bring Thomas to trust again. But can we blame him? Would we

have been any more ready to believe in such an unbelievable turn of events?

Application

Sometimes skepticism is only skin deep. People put up resistance to the knowledge of God not because they do not want to be convinced, but because they do. However, they do not want to be convinced easily. They don't want to be misled, tricked into a belief that is naïve, unfounded, and foolish, and which will let them down. But really, they want to believe.

This should be a great encouragement to the present-day Christian who feels himself or herself beset on all sides by skepticism. A doubting spirit may be genuine, or it may be a strategic obstacle set up by a would-be believer who is more self-protective than cynical. For that reason, we Christians should never back off our confession when we are challenged. Instead, we should go forward in faith, firmly confident that God is the Author and Possessor of truth, and that honest inquiry pursued diligently will inevitably reveal that God has been right all along.

A funny thing about "the gleam and gloom": light banishes darkness, but darkness never banishes light. Doubt is temporary, truth is permanent. Genuine faith can sustain itself through doubt—not by denying doubt's existence but by accepting it and holding off judgment in conviction that the Truth will always, inevitably vindicate Himself to the eyes of faith. ■

SIMON THE ZEALOT MEETS THE LORD

TRANSFORMED PASSION

KEITH KEYSER

For a man who did and said nothing that is recorded in the New Testament, Simon the Zealot certainly raises fascinating issues. What makes Simon so interesting is the dramatic description attached to his name. He is also known as “Simon the Canaanite” (Mt. 10:4; Mk. 3:18), referencing the Hebrew word for “zeal” rather than the similar sounding term for the land of Canaan.¹ His name only appears in lists of the twelve apostles (see the previously cited references plus Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13). He is never quoted directly, but, as a member of Christ’s closest followers, he participated in several miracles (e.g., Jn. 6:1-14; Mk. 8:1-10) and, most likely, two major preaching campaigns (Mt. 10; Lk. 10). Most importantly, as an apostle, he was an eyewitness of the risen Christ (Acts 1:21-22). It is the nature of his zeal both before and after his conversion that makes Simon such an important figure for believers to understand.

Big “Z”?

The Zealots were a well-known first century Jewish militant group. Depending

on one’s perspective, they were either freedom fighters or terrorists. Older scholarship holds that they were founded by the notorious agitator Judas of Galilee who is mentioned by Gamaliel in Acts 5:37.² Contemporary historians maintain that they did not exist prior to the first Jewish Revolt (66-73 AD).³ Whichever is correct, perhaps Simon was a zealot in the name’s revolutionary sense, for it is possible that it was also used before the previously mentioned revolt to describe patriots who wanted to achieve Jewish liberation by violent means.

Israel had a history of zeal expressed through force. Would-be guerrillas looked back for inspiration to passionate fighters like Phinehas (Num. 25:7-8, 11), Elijah (1 Ki. 18), and Josiah (1 Ki. 13:2). Closer to the time of the Lord, an incident from the intertestamental era furnishes an example of Jewish zeal expressed through violence. The following quotation describes a devout Jew’s reaction to the Gentile king Antiochus IV’s edict to cease offering to Jehovah and sacrifice instead according to his pagan rites:

When Mattathias saw it, he burned with

zeal and his heart was stirred. He gave vent to righteous anger; he ran and killed him on the altar. At the same time he killed the king’s officer who was forcing them to sacrifice, and he tore down the altar. Thus he burned with zeal for the law, just as Phinehas did against Zimri son of Salu. Then Mattathias cried out in the town with a loud voice, saying: ‘Let every one who is zealous for the law and supports the covenant come out with me!’ (1 Maccabees 2:24-27, NRSV).⁴

Likewise, the first century Jewish philosopher Philo of Alexandria writes of a man who violates an oath being punished by “...zealots for and keepers of the national laws, of rigid justice, prompt to stone such a criminal, and visiting without pity all such as work wickedness...”⁵

From revolutionary to apostle

Clearly, the Zealot was a well-established category of national folk hero in Jewish society in the days of Christ. This brings up the intriguing possibili-



Then His disciples remembered that it was written, “Zeal for Your house has eaten Me up.”

(John 2:17)

ty that such a man was among the Lord’s twelve closest disciples. Does God’s grace extend to people who stop at nothing to achieve their ends? How does this line up with the Lord’s teaching, “*Blessed are the peacemakers*” (Mt. 5:9)?

As A.B. Bruce remarks: “An ex-zealot was not a safe man to make an apostle of, for he might be the means of rendering Jesus and His followers objects of political suspicion. But the Author of our faith was willing to take the risk. He expected to gain many disciples from the dangerous classes as well as from the despised, and He would have them, too, represented among the twelve.”⁶ The Lord Jesus specializes in saving hard cases—people that others give up on. My personal friend, Mr. Billy Stevenson, originally from Northern Ireland, was brought to Christ out of a background of sectarian fighting and membership in a Protestant paramilitary unit. More recently, a prominent member of the radical Palestinian group Hamas professed to receive the Lord as his Savior. Others have been saved out of terrorist groups, dangerous cults, and organized crime. There is no one so extreme that they cannot be made a new creature in Christ (2 Cor. 5:17).

Or Little “z”?

Rather than a zealot as an armed partisan, maybe Simon was a zealot in a less dramatic sense: he was passionate for the Law and the rabbinic traditions that grew up around it. That great pattern of all longsuffering, Saul of Tarsus,

described himself in that way (Gal. 1:13-14); indeed, his zeal for Judaism even led him to persecute believers (Php. 3:6). One could never accuse him of half-heartedness! After his conversion, that same intense desire for the Lord’s glory moved Paul to carry the gospel into the most difficult situations. Of his devout countrymen, he wrote: “...*they have a zeal for God, but not according to knowledge*” (Rom. 10:2). The Judaizers were zealous to gain adherents in Galatia, but he warned them of the danger of misplaced zeal (Gal. 4:17-18). Zeal is good, but only if it is wedded to truth.

Godly zeal

God is passionately devoted to His people (Zech. 1:14; 8:2). At His first coming, the Son of God was zealous for His Father’s house and honor (Jn. 2:17). After his conversion, Simon became a zealot for the gospel of Christ. Whether his preconversion jealousy was for armed struggle or religious devotion, it was now channeled for God’s glory and the advancement of the gospel. Every believer ought to emulate his passion for the Lord.

Faith in Christ unites formerly disparate people in amazing ways. Bruce’s comments sum up Simon’s importance:

It gives one a pleasant surprise to think of Simon the zealot and Matthew the publican, men coming from so opposite quarters, meeting together in close fellowship in the little band of twelve. In the persons of these two disciples extremes meet—

the tax-gatherer and the tax-hater: the unpatriotic Jew, who degraded himself by becoming a servant of the alien ruler; and the Jewish patriot, who chafed under the foreign yoke, and sighed for emancipation. This union of opposites was not accidental, but was designed by Jesus as a prophecy of the future. He wished the twelve to be the church in miniature or germ; and therefore He chose them so as to intimate that, as among them distinctions of publican and zealot were unknown, so in the church of the future there should be neither Greek nor Jew, circumcision nor uncircumcision, bond nor free, but only Christ—all to each, and in each of the all.⁷ ■

Endnotes

- 1 Mark Wilhelm Gesenius, “qanah,” in *Gesenius’ Hebrew and Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament Scriptures*, ed. S. P. Tregelles (Bellingham, WA: Logos Bible Software, 2003), p. 735; see also J.C. Lambert, “Cananaean” in Hastings, James, John A. Selbie, and John C. Lambert, eds. *A Dictionary of Christ and the Gospels*, Vol. 1 (Edinburgh: T&T Clark, 1906), p. 268.
- 2 C. M. Kerr, “Simon the Canaanite, or Cananaean, or Zealot,” ed. James Orr et al., *The International Standard Bible Encyclopaedia*, Vol. 1-5 (Chicago, IL: The Howard-Severance Company, 1915), p. 2797.
- 3 David Rhoads, “Zealots,” in *The Anchor Yale Bible Dictionary*, Vol. 6, ed. D.N. Freedman (New York, NY: Doubleday, 1992), pp. 1043-1054.
- 4 1 Maccabees is not part of God’s Word. I quote it merely as a historical source; likewise, Philo in the next endnote.
- 5 Philo of Alexandria, “The Special Laws, II 253,” in *The Works of Philo: Unabridged*. Trans. C.D. Yonge (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson, 1995), p. 592.
- 6 Alexander Balmain Bruce, *The Training of the Twelve* (Oak Harbor, WA: Logos Research Systems, Inc., 1995), p. 35.
- 7 Bruce, pp.35-36.

FOCUS ON PHILIP

H.R. Ghezzi

I was admittedly biased when it came to selecting this topic. Our only son was born two years ago and we named him Philip. Incidentally, we didn't name him after either Philip cited in the first five books of the New Testament but after his maternal grandfather. Yet I have grown in my appreciation of the biblical Philips. I can learn a lot from the apostle Philip,¹ because he reminds me of myself.

The Greek rendering of his name, *Philippos*, is “horse lover.” In addition to their strength, speed, and responsiveness, horses are known for their exceptional vision, seeing up to 350°. Although the equine eye is the largest of any land mammal, there is a notable blind spot directly in front of their noses and directly behind them. Similarly, Philip was swift to heed his Master's call, strong in his aptitude for the Old Testament (Jn. 1:43-45), and sensed the multitude's lack of natural resources (Jn. 6:7). Though visually inclined, Philip demonstrated a blind spot for spiritual matters. Each of the four encounters with Philip documented for us in John's Gospel is a lesson in walking by faith, not by sight.

COME AND SEE (John 1)

Philip is always listed fifth among the Twelve (Mt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:14; Acts 1:13), but John's Gospel is the only insight we have regarding his interaction with others.

The closing paragraph of John 1 begins with the lovely phrase, “*The following day Jesus wanted to go to Galilee*” [emphasis added], where He found Philip (v. 43). It is a wonderful testament to our Savior that He meets us in our natural state, out of His desire (not just compulsion), so that He can change our lives!

Philip hailed from the same Galilean town of Bethsaida (Heb. house of fishing) as Simon and Andrew. The Lord initiated the conversation by telling Philip, “*Follow Me*” (v. 43). Philip immediately galloped into action, telling his friend Nathanael (a.k.a. Bartholomew) that “*We have found Him of whom Moses in the Law, and also the prophets wrote—Jesus of Nazareth, the Son of Joseph*” (v. 45).

Philip's unbridled zeal for telling his friend about the Messiah is evident.

Philip's intellectual strengths are also on display as he correctly concludes that the Lord Jesus was the Messiah prophesied by the Old Testament prophets. He knew his Bible. Moreover, when challenged by Nathanael about whether anything good could come out of Nazareth, Philip eschews debate by replying, “*Come and see*” (v. 46). When we refer others to Christ, it is often enough to tell them to see Him for themselves: “*Taste and see that the Lord is good, blessed is the man that trusts in Him*” (Ps. 34:8). Nevertheless, Philip's limited description of the Lord was an early indication of his blind spot.

Between the two friends, only Nathanael saw the Son of God (v. 49). By contrast, Philip only saw the Son of Joseph. He is both of course, and we commend Philip for his speedy acknowledgment of his Messiah. But only Nathanael acknowledged the Lord's deity.

The hazard of limiting the Lord's person is that it opens the door to the devil's lies (Jn. 8:44). Society certainly loves to assign shortcomings to our



blessed Lord. Recently, a book purporting to set the record straight about the historical Christ was published.² Among other false claims, it denies the virgin birth and the resurrection. The book concludes that the Lord Jesus was simply a product of His time, crucified for sedition as if nothing more than a first-century predecessor to Che Guevara. Conversely, the evaluation that truly matters is that of the Father: *“This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.”* The lesson to all disciples is to *“come and see”* the Son of God!

SURVEYING THE MULTITUDE (John 6)

The Lord’s next recorded conversation with Philip occurred while He ministered to the multitude above the shores of Galilee, with an audience of 5,000 men (in addition to their families).

The Lord tested Philip with the question, *“Where shall we buy bread, that these may eat?”* (Jn. 6:5). Philip replied, *“Two hundred denarii [seven month’s wages] worth of bread is not sufficient for them, that every one of them may have a little”* (v. 7). Instead of focusing on the Savior, Philip was focused on the suffering of the people. Similarly, society asks, “Where was God on 9/11?” or “Where is God when my loved one lies dying?” Whenever

we are confronted with dire circumstances, let’s remember that we wouldn’t seek the Physician without the pain! C.S. Lewis wrote, “God whispers to us in our pleasures, speaks in our conscience, but shouts in our pain: it is His megaphone to rouse a deaf world.”³

The One asking Philip the question was the Bread of Life (Jn. 6:35, 51). Multiplying the bread for the masses was only the beginning. If they were willing, He could also grant them eternal life. Andrew saw the boy with five loaves and two fishes. The Lord was able to feed the multitude with that small lunch (*“as much as they wanted,”* v. 11), with twelve baskets of leftovers!

Heaven’s bread house is still open! He still uses our resources, gifts, and abilities for His glory. Thinking of our shortcomings rather than His riches, our prayer meetings dwindle because we wonder how our little prayers can affect such a large, needy world. Subsequently, we demonstrate a lack of faith when we offer God what’s left of our income while harboring the best for ourselves. The lesson to all disciples is to offer all we have—however little—to Him and watch what He can do.

WE WISH TO SEE JESUS (John 12)

At the approach of the Lord’s final Passover, some Gentile proselytes approach

Whatever the early shortcomings of the disciples, they—and we—could do no better than invite others to **“come and see”** our blessed Master.

Philip with the noble request, *“Sir, we wish to see Jesus”* (Jn. 12:21). The text reminds us that Philip was from the northern region of Bethsaida, where exchanges occurred between Jews and Gentiles.

No words of reply are recorded from Philip. Instead, he entreats his compatriot Andrew and together they approach the Lord (v. 22). His apprehension may have been because he was unsure whether the Lord would receive the Gentiles. Although their ministry was primarily to the lost sheep of Israel, the Lord did give several indications that there were no boundaries to His message: His declaration about God’s love for the world (Jn. 3:16), His promise that anybody who came to Him would not be cast out (Jn. 6:37), and His remarks regarding having other sheep which are not of this fold (Jn. 10:16). But at that moment, all these seem to have been lost on Philip. Philip’s delay in granting the Gentiles an audience with the Savior hindered rather than helped their access. In their natural state, they were, *“without Christ, being aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and strangers from the covenants of promise, having no hope and without God in the world”* (Eph. 2:13). Or was Philip simply being like Jonah—afraid that the Lord *would* receive them (*cf.* Jon. 4:2)? May we never be guilty of discriminating among the lost sheep, all of whom the Shepherd is seeking!

The Lord’s response indicated that His time with them was coming to a close, as He anticipated His death at Calvary that very week (vv. 23-26). The privilege

of having the Lord Jesus physically accessible would soon end. Since the Lord's physical departure from our scene, the only means by which a lost society can see Jesus is through His church, composed of many "Philips" (Eph. 1:23). This begs the question: when they encounter us, do they see Jesus? The lesson to all disciples is to meet the world's gaze by reflecting the Savior's character.

SHOW US THE FATHER (John 14)

The Upper Room discourse in John 13-17 is the Lord's last disclosure to His disciples before His death. Within the discourse, the Lord responded to His disciples' queries, including one from Philip.

Having introduced the notion that His approaching death and subsequent entry into heaven would grant them the same access to the Father that He had, the disciples were confused about a few things: why He had to depart, where He was going, and the promise of His return (Jn. 13:31-14:7). Philip appealed, "Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us" (Jn. 14:8). In his attempt at earnestness, Philip revealed his disbelief of the One he beheld. The promises of the Lord Jesus weren't enough for him. The Lord replied, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip?", thereby listing the ways Philip was betraying his own senses (vv. 9-11). He had already



seen the Father, because He had seen the Lord. He had already heard the Father, because He had heard the Lord. He had witnessed the Father's works, because it was the Lord who performed them.

When I was a young boy, my father spent many months at a time working overseas. During his first term away, I would ask my mother daily when we would see him again. As weeks grew into months, I told my mother that I no longer believed that daddy was ever coming home. However, one day, my father came back just as he said he would! Because he kept his promise to me the first time, I never doubted his return after every subsequent departure. Because the Lord Jesus proved His claims through His death,

resurrection, and ascension, we never have to doubt His claims about our future together with Him. The lesson to all disciples is to look no further than the Sufficient One to experience the fullness of God now!

"While we do not look at the things which are seen, but at the things which are not seen. For the things which are seen are temporary, but the things which are not seen are eternal" (2 Cor. 4:18). ■

ENDNOTES

- 1 Not to be confused with the deacon-evangelist we are introduced to in Acts 6:5.
- 2 Reza Aslan, *Zealot: The Life and Times of Jesus of Nazareth*.
- 3 C.S. Lewis, *The Problem of Pain*.

Purity (Part 3)

What's a woman to do?

When it comes to online life, much of the purity content is written with men in mind. And rightly so, since it is a reality that men are more influenced by visual temptations than women are. But this issue affects women, too. In a world where we often feel valued by our physical appearance, it can be a battle in our own minds to stay pure in our thoughts and motives. We may even be tempted to adopt the “if you can't beat 'em, join 'em” mentality. Increasingly, we are told that joining our husbands in viewing graphic materials will actually improve intimacy. Not only that, the soft porn romance novels women have read for years and the recent more in-your-face *Fifty Shades of Grey* books fill the mind with impure thoughts and create fantasies that can be very harmful in relationships. It seems to me there is a double standard. Why are we women so upset about men's fantasies but justify our own?

Let's be real. Many Christian women regularly watch popular TV shows that are filled with promiscuity, adultery, homosexuality, crudeness, and innuendo. As mothers, we carefully monitor what our children are watching because we know they will be affected by what they see. But somehow we think we are immune to viewing ongoing sexual content.

There are so many women who are suffering from the devastation that unfaithfulness has caused in their lives:

wives without husbands and daughters without fathers. It is a painful reality that only the Lord Jesus can fully heal. But ladies, we also need to get our acts together and live holy lives. We should not conform to this world in how we view or conduct ourselves.

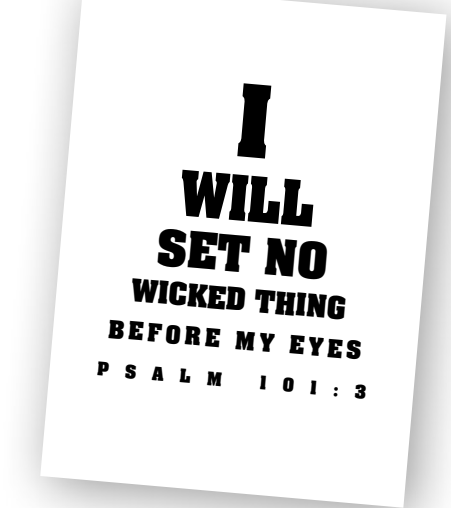
SO WHAT'S A WOMAN TO DO?

First, we need to embrace a biblical view of what makes a woman valuable. How does the Lord evaluate us?

“The Lord doesn't see things the way you see them. People judge by outward appearance, but the Lord looks at the heart” (1 Sam. 16:7b). *“Or do you not know that your body is a temple of the Holy Spirit within you, whom you have from God? You are not your own, for you were bought with a price. So glorify God in your body”* (1 Cor. 6:19f). The precious blood of Jesus Christ was shed for you. You are God's special treasure. Don't let this culture determine your thoughts of yourself.

Secondly, read the Word of God regularly. As a mom of five children, I know how hard it is to make sure this happens. But the Word of God is alive and powerful (Heb. 4:12). It cleanses us (Eph. 5:24) and empowers us to have victory over any temptations we face in the area of sexual purity.

Next, pray for the men in your life. Even the most godly men face temptation



and they need our support and prayer to endure the onslaught that comes their way on a daily basis. And ladies, we need to pray that we will have the Lord's perspective on men. I have heard women berating men because they are attracted to women or because of past hurts. This is neither fair nor godly.

Finally, we need to set boundaries for ourselves. Pornography, whether online or in book form, is as readily available for women as it is for men. Statistics show that the number of women viewing pornography is rising quickly. Even though we put filters and accountability in place for our husbands and sons, we need to have set boundaries for ourselves and our daughters as well. —SHERRI JASON

If you are a woman who is struggling in any of these areas and would like some confidential guidance, feel free to contact me at sherri@whyweweb.com



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It's a classic

The disciples' Master

J.B. Phillips, an excerpt from *New Testament Christianity*, pp. 9-16

In translating the Gospels, like every other conscientious modern translator, I emptied my mind as far as possible of preconceived ideas and conclusions. "Here," I said to myself in effect, "are four pieces of Greek, comparatively simple Greek, which it is my job to turn into the sort of English which is spoken and written today." I did my best to be detached and disinterested, for it is not part of a translator's job to add colour or give a slant to what he is translating. Yet I find, on comparing notes with other translators, that I am not alone in finding a minor miracle happening. As the work went on, steadily and inexorably there stood up from these pages a Figure of far more than human stature and quality. One tried to sense, and indeed to transmit, something of the difference in the style of the four evangelists.

Mark wrote in a downright "utility" style, with neither frills nor decoration, and certainly with a minimum of descriptive adjectives. Matthew's Gospel is careful and precise, a conscientious and, in a sense, calculated short history' to prove to the Jewish mind that the One Whom the prophets foretold was now a Fact of history. Luke (to whose careful research we owe such unforgettable parables as that of the Prodigal Son and the Good Samaritan, as well as the account of the Walk to Emmaus) writes with warm humanity. He is concerned for the Gentile, for the outcast and unprivileged, for the poor and for the then largely despised female sex. The Gospel of John,

written in all probability much later, adds fresh insight, supplying almost another dimension to the Figure simply portrayed by the first three evangelists.

Very naturally, a composite portrait forms in the mind after many months of study of these four remarkable compositions. But to the present translator it is by no means only the Figure that they succeed in creating between them that is so impressive. The feeling grows that behind these early attempts to set down what was reliably remembered about this Man, there stands the Man Himself! It is His presence, His character, which springs to life at the stimulation of these artless pages. Matthew, Mark, Luke, and John are nothing but humble instruments (as I am sure they would have been the first to admit), *but who is it, whose human life is it, they are trying to describe and record?* The translator, for all his assumed detachment and impartiality, has all his intuitive and imaginative faculties set at their most sensitive, or his work would be wooden and mechanical. And it is these very faculties which are set tingling and vibrating by the Presence of Someone who is almost unbearably near and alive today. That He was properly and thoroughly human is obvious from the records; indeed, He is seen to be more human than one thought, for the solemn majesty of the Authorized Version frequently obscures both His humanity and His humor. But steadily there grows in the mind the disquieting conviction that here is

much more than man. Here...one is in contact with something so tremendous in its significance that at first the mind cannot grasp it, but only as it were gasps incredulously. Previously one had accepted the teaching of the Church's Creeds that Jesus was both Man and God, and to say one believed in the "Incarnation" would not raise an eyebrow anywhere. But now from first-hand acquaintance with these early documents the truth sweeps in afresh, and the indescribable humility of God strikes one with overwhelming awe. This little sphere on which we live and move and have our being is, in fact, a *Visited Planet*. The Creator of the vast Universe, about whose nature we could at the most make intelligent guesses, slipped quietly into the stream of human life in the only way in which that could be possible—by becoming a human being. This is the truth that pulses and vibrates behind the steady prose of Matthew, Mark, and Luke, and shines through the more poetic works of John.

It now becomes apparent why, though the work of translating must be done as conscientiously as possible, the translator constantly feels not merely his own inadequacy but the extreme difficulty of his task. For behind all that he translates is not simply a uniquely important event of history, though that would be a profound understatement; not simply the story of the greatest man who ever lived,

though that again would fall a long way below the truth, but the active Presence of God Himself, God expressed in a form human beings can understand, in a form that can bring both inestimable comfort and surprising disquiet. This astonishing sense of spiritual attack which, it seems to me, must inevitably follow the continual reading of the four Gospels, without preconception but with an alert mind, is not the sole privilege of the translator. It can happen to anyone who is prepared to abandon proof-texts and a closed attitude of mind, and allow not merely the stories but the quality of the Figure who exists behind the stories to meet him afresh. Neat snippets of a few verses are of course useful in their way, but the overall sweep and much of the significance of the Gospel narratives are lost to us unless we are prepared to read the Gospels through, not once but several times. I would suggest that this be done in an unfamiliar version, not of course necessarily my own! Familiar words and verses have already their stereotyped reactions. It is not the significance of a single verse that we are seeking here—though Heaven knows there are enough single verses to revolutionize our thinking—so much as the full meaning that lies behind the total narrative.

From countless conversations and from a good deal of correspondence, I have become convinced that very few present-day Christians have allowed the Truth to break over them in this way. What is more, I have a feeling, although it cannot be proved, that most of the critics of the Christian religion have never given their serious adult attention to the Gospel records. It is easy to criticize the

The Creator of the vast Universe, about whose nature we could at the most make intelligent guesses, slipped quietly into the stream of human life in the only way in which that could be possible—by becoming a human being.

many failings of the Church; it is all too easy to criticize the lives of those who profess and call themselves Christians; but I should say that it is almost impossible to read the Gospels thoroughly with adult, serious attention and then dismiss the central figure as a mere human prophet or tragic idealist. The reaction to such study may indeed prove to be either conversion or open hostility, but it would at least mean the end of childish and ill-informed attacks upon what is supposed to be the Christian religion.

The total impression, then, of the close study of the Gospels is an indelible conviction that the well-nigh incredible has happened—that the Creator has visited this world in human form. He brings with Him confirmation of our highest hopes, He endorses our finest longings, and He confirms many of our intuitions. But of course He does far more than this. First, He introduces a new kind of truth—a kind of “super-sense” which transcends our earthly viewpoint. We may find sometimes our values disconcertingly reversed, sometimes we find we have been looking at things from the wrong angle. Now that we have this

revelation of truth, there is no need to grope or fumble. We have certain basic truths unquestionably revealed. We have a standard by which our scale of values and our conscience may be adjusted. It is not that all our questions are immediately answered. It is not that everything becomes immediately plain and that there are no more mysteries. But it is true that we now have enough light by which to live; we see something at least of life’s point and purpose, and we know where we are going. What is more, the humble and obedient are guaranteed an active, energetic, contemporary Spirit of Truth. In other words, although we see the character of God focused historically in the time and space set-up, we come to see and know that that human appearance is only the outcrop of what is eternally true. (That is why the material on which a New Testament translator works is alive under his hands.) It is almost too good to be true, but it is true that the One who walked and talked in the countryside, the streets and houses of Palestine nearly two thousand years ago, is in every way as alive and active in the world today. ■

Defining Terms



TERMINOLOGY does make a difference

When my son began to play baseball, the coach told him to “take the first pitch.” He promptly hit the first pitch and was confused as to why the coach was upset. It turns out the phrase “take the first pitch” means exactly the opposite of what he thought. It means don’t swing at the first pitch. Lesson learned. But this illustrates the point that understanding terminology makes a difference.

This is especially so in controversial issues like Darwinism and global warming. Since the agenda behind these issues is one of power and control rather than truth, there is much at stake in who controls the definitions of the terms used.

Law professor Phillip E. Johnson points out that whoever controls the definition of the terms can simply define away the opposition, as has been done by defining evolution as science and creation/design as religion.¹

You may have noticed the term *global warming* has recently been supplanted by the more generic term *climate change*. This is deliberate since global temperature has not risen for over 15 years. In fact, a recent paper in the scientific journal *Nature* uses the new terms “hiatus” and “pause” in regard to worldwide temperature remaining flat for the last 15 years. The first sentence is telling: “Despite the continued increase in atmospheric greenhouse gas concentrations, the annual-

mean global temperature has not risen in the twenty-first century.”² The paper goes on to suggest that this “hiatus is part of natural climate variability.” It has been asserted that this “pause” in worldwide temperature change does not invalidate the claim that human activity drives temperature increases. But one could reasonably conclude that a link between human-generated atmospheric carbon dioxide (CO²) and global temperature does not exist or that, at the very least, “the climate may not be as sensitive to greenhouse gases as was previously thought.”³

This semantically backs away from the alarmist term of *catastrophic anthropogenic global warming*, which appears to be a favorite of those of the persuasion to never let a good crisis go to waste when it comes to promoting political, rather than scientific, agendas.⁴

One would also think, after more than 15 years of stable temperature in the face of record CO² levels, that there might be some hiatus in the hype found in the popular press on this issue, but this is not the case. *National Geographic*, in the September 2013 issue, speculates on how high the seas will rise when all—not some!—all of the world’s ice melts, and claims that rising seas due to human activity are inevitable.

Terminology matters but so do facts. In 2007, the BBC reported the prediction

that the Arctic would be ice-free by the summer of 2013. But the fact is, more than one million square miles of ocean are covered with ice today. This is 60% *more* than in 2012, with the ice sheet stretching from the Canadian islands to Russia’s northern shores.⁵

Perhaps we should demand terminology that is at least in accord with the facts.

— MICHAEL G. WINDHEUSER, PH.D.

ENDNOTES

- 1 Phillip E. Johnson, *Darwin on Trial* (Downers Grove, IL: InterVarsity Press, 1993).
- 2 Yu Kosaka & Shang-Ping Xie, Recent global-warming hiatus tied to equatorial Pacific surface cooling. *Nature* <http://bit.ly/He4fDg> 2013.
- 3 *Nature* Editorial. Hidden Heat. 28 August 2013; <http://bit.ly/1aF7FpL>
- 4 E. Calvin Beisner, *Science Standards: Political or Pure?* DVD Lecture. www.CornwallAlliance.org
- 5 David Rose. And now its global Cooling! Record return of Arctic ice cap as it grows by 60% in a year. *UK Daily Mail*, 7 September 2013; <http://dailym.ai/179WxDR>



Records Incomplete

On earth, at least. Flawless records, right down to giving “one of these little ones only a cup of cold water in the name of a disciple,” are kept above.

An unknown disciple, in a story recorded in E.H. Broadbent’s *Pilgrim Church*, when told that he was to be executed for his faith in Christ, responded: “I was glad when they said to me, ‘Let us go into the house of the Lord.’” One of millions of disciples described in Paul’s words, “as unknown and yet well known” (2 Cor. 6:9), I believe heaven will be full of such stories of God’s grace translated into real history through simple faith and rigorous obedience to the Lord.

The other three

This issue of *Uplook* has said little about Nathanael (also called Bartholomew), James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddeus or Lebbaeus (nicknames meaning “a man of heart” and “large-hearted” rather than constantly calling him “Judas, not Iscariot”). One reason is that so little is recorded of these men in Scripture. But isn’t it fitting that some are virtually anonymous in what they do for the Lord?

Anonymous for Jesus

The Lord Himself described the ultimate in anonymity: “When you do a charitable deed, do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing” (Mt. 6:3). Imagine being anonymous even to yourself! This, He said, was one good kind of forgetfulness (along with forgetting wrongs others have done to us), when we forget kind deeds we have done to others.

The Lord, as usual, was the greatest exemplar of this self-effacing trait. “He

made Himself of no reputation” (Phil. 2:7). The word here, sometimes translated “*emptied Himself*” can be misunderstood to mean He emptied Himself of certain attributes, a false idea sometimes referred to as Semi-Kenosis. The passage is an exhortation to us to do the same, but surely we can’t empty ourselves of our personality characteristics. He emptied Himself, poured out as a drink offering, as Paul (v. 17) and Timothy (v. 20) and Epaphroditus (v. 26) were also willing to do.

A significant part of this emptying was that our Lord “*made Himself of no reputation.*” The Designer of the ages, the Architect of the worlds, the Upholder and Heir of all things, He became known as “*the carpenter’s son*” (Mt. 13:55). Grace!

Reasons for anonymity

1. Sometimes being unknown is the best policy for safety’s sake and so the work carries on unnoticed by the authorities. There are thrilling accounts about God’s amazing work in many troubled parts of the world, but they must remain unspoken until heaven. The best stories can’t be told until God’s people are all safe Home. Remember the “*And others...*” list in Hebrews 11? If things continue on their present course, we will soon have some additions to that list from our lands, too.

2. The recording of Church history has been very uneven. Its characters mostly have European roots. I was privileged to hear the stories of some heroic African and Indian disciples for whom we prayed

at our table. In my childhood I learned there were many giants of the faith who were unknown in the West. Since then it has been my privilege to meet some of these Others in lands of persecution “*that know their God*” who are “*strong, and carry out exploits*” (Dan. 11:32).

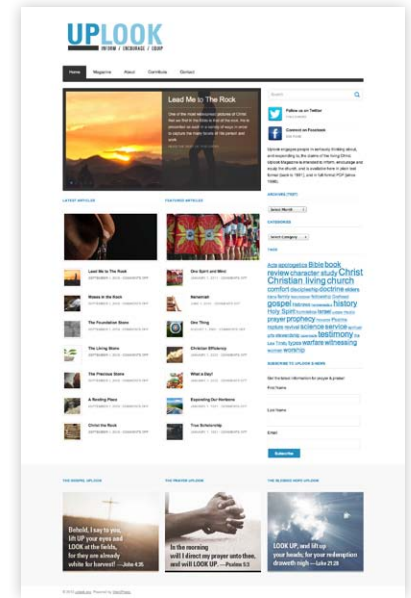
3. Of course, there are many, even in this part of the world, where notoriety for any reason is considered valuable, who choose to be unknown. In the words of J.N. Darby, “Say little, serve all, pass on. This is true greatness, to serve unnoticed and work unseen. Oh, the joy of having nothing and being nothing, seeing nothing but a living Christ in glory, and being careful for nothing but His interests down here.” And why should we choose such a path? First, because pride lurks at every corner, waiting to trip us up. Second, because we cannot make people think we are great and Christ is wonderful at the same time.

When people told John the Baptizer that he was losing his disciples to Jesus, he made three key points: i) all that you enjoy through my ministry came from heaven; I’m just the channel of God’s blessing (v. 27); ii) you should never confuse me with “the Christ”—I merely bear witness of Him (v. 28); and iii) my joy finds its fulfillment in Christ getting all the attention (v. 29). John concludes: “*He must increase, but I must decrease*” (v. 30).

Of course there are no anonymous disciples in heaven; we’ll all be on a first-name basis there (see Rev. 3:12). ■

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