

=THE APOSTLES=

Lesson 10

Simon, Not Peter; Judas, Not Iscariot; James, Not Major

AIM: to teach my pupils the importance of being what you can, even if you cannot be what others can be.

POINT OF CONTACT: These are three of the apostles who have the same names as others. There was Simon Peter and then this Simon; there was Judas Iscariot and then this Judas; there was James Major and then this James. Ask the class how many of them know two people who have the same first name. Then limit it to two people in the church with the same first names. Then try to narrow it down to two people in the class with the same first names. You might even make a little contest out of it, passing out paper and pencils and seeing who can write down the most names in pairs of people who have the same first name.

INTRODUCTION: Of course, the Bible is filled with bigger lights: the Andrews, the Elishas, the Pauls, the Isaacs, the Peters, the Samsons, etc. The Bible also has many important lesser lights. Such is the case of these other three apostles. Everybody knows Andrew in the Bible, but the little lad who gave the lunch basket is also important. Everybody knows Elisha and Naaman; but the little maid who told the leper, Naaman, about the Prophet Elisha is also important. Everybody knows Moses, but who knows Jochebed and Aaron and Hur? Everybody knows Isaac and Rebekah and about their marriage, but who knows the name of that servant who sought our Rebekah for Isaac? Everybody knows that Peter preached the Pentecostal sermon, but how many know the names of the 120 in the Upper Room? Everybody knows of Samson, but how many know of Shamgar, who did something nearly as wonderful? It is important not to overlook the lesser lights.

Very little is said in the Bible about these three, but we will glean some truths from them for the lesson today.

- I. SIMON IS CALLED “SIMON ZELOTES.” The Bible introduces him to us four times in the four lists we have of the apostles. Twice he is called “Simon the Canaanite” and twice, “Simon Zelotes.” The word “Zelotes” comes from the word “zealot.” Consequently, he was zealous. This is certainly an attribute that a Christian should possess. Very little do we know about Simon, but we know he was zealous. (Teacher, talk for a while about the importance of being zealous in whatever we do. Tell the class it is important to do a job well. Especially is this the case in service for the Lord Jesus Christ. We should be zealous in work for Him.)
- II. SIMON IS ALSO CALLED THE “CANAANITE,” WHICH COMES FROM THE WORD “PATRIOT.” Consequently, we know Simon was patriotic. In a generation of draft card burners and draft dodgers and demonstrators, we need to teach our boys and girls to be patriotic. Why not sing the National Anthem in class? Give the Pledge of Allegiance to the flag. Have the class members tell some good things about America. Lead them to patriotism.
- III. THE ONLY OTHER THING WE KNOW ABOUT SIMON IS THAT HE DID DIE AS A MARTYR FOR THE GOSPEL.
- IV. JUDAS, NOT ISCARIOT, WAS ALSO CALLED “LEBBÆUS” AND “THADDÆUS.” (Matthew 10:3) Very little is said about him in the Bible. His name, of course, is important and gives us some idea of what kind of person he was. The word “Lebbæus” comes from a word which means “from the heart.” Consequently, could we not say he was a sincere man? He was a man who felt his Christianity in his heart and did what he did from the heart. (Teacher, dwell a while here on the subject of sincerity and the importance of doing what we do from the heart. Hypocrisy is a dangerous sin. Many people preach, but not from the heart. Many sing, but not from the heart. Many join in congregational singing but do not know what they are singing. Many read the Bible and never know what they read.)
- V. JUDAS WAS A MAN WHO MADE IT IN SPITE OF HANDICAPS. He had a name that was like Judas Iscariot’s. None of us know of anyone who was ever named Judas since then. Boys are named Peter, James, and John, but not Judas. Don’t you know many times when he said he was Judas, an

apostle, people raised an eyebrow? Yet he became a good servant of God in spite of his difficulty. Most everyone has difficulties. Let us not let them keep us from doing our best for God.

- VI. JUDAS WAS ALSO CALLED “THADDÆUS.” The word “Thaddæus” comes from an Aramaic word which means “a mother’s breast.” In other words, he was a beloved child. He was a good boy, a delight to his mother’s heart. (Teacher, this is a good place to stop and teach the pupils that they should do their best to be a delight to their godly parents. Judas was this.)
- VII. WHEN JESUS WAS IN THE UPPER ROOM, IT WAS JUDAS WHO ASKED, “LORD, HOW IS IT THAT THOU WILT MANIFEST THYSELF UNTO US, AND NOT UNTO THE WORLD?” See John 14:22-24. To this question, “Jesus answered, ...If a man love me, he will keep my words: and my Father will love him, and we will come unto him, and make our abode with him.” It was exactly what Jesus had said before. There is no use trying to explain, no use trying to tell him just how it will all come about. He was just saying, “Take comfort, Judas, and don’t be afraid. Tomorrow you will see Me die. You will not be left alone. I will come to you, and I will be with you as long as you love Me and lovingly keep My Word.” Actually, what He was saying was that He would give the Comforter. Judas could not understand this, but Jesus took time to answer him. This is interesting: Had Judas Iscariot asked this question, Jesus would obviously have answered. Had Peter asked this question, Jesus would obviously have answered, but here is Judas, not Iscariot, who was not a well-known apostle. He was not the spokesman; he was not a leader; yet Jesus had time for him, too. Jesus has time for every one of His children. If you have a question, He can answer it, and He will answer it. If you have a problem, He can share it, and He will share it. If you have a load, He can bear it, and He will bear it. He is interested in every one of His children—not just the Johns, Peters, etc., but a Judas, not Iscariot, as well.
- VIII. THE BIBLE SPEAKS ABOUT CROWNS CHRISTIANS CAN RECEIVE. These crowns can be received by any Christian. A James, not major; a Judas, not Iscariot; or a Simon, not Peter, can receive them. There is a crown for faithfulness. Anybody can be faithful. There is a crown for suffering. Anybody can be willing to suffer for Christ. There is a crown for loving the appearing of Jesus. Anybody can do this. There is a crown for separation. Anybody can do this. There is a crown for soul winning. Anybody can do this. The Bible never mentions a crown for talent or a crown for preaching or a crown for leadership. It puts the crowns within the reach of anybody. (Teacher, discuss with the class the importance of being faithful, the importance of suffering for Christ, the importance of loving His appearing, being separated from the world, and winning souls for Christ. Anybody can do this, even a James, the minor.)
- IX. JAMES WAS CALLED IN SOME CIRCLES “JAMES, THE YOUNGER.” Sometimes he is called “James, the little.” Probably he was little in stature. He was the kind of man who is nicknamed “Shorty” in our day. He has also been called “James, the less” and “James Minor” to distinguish him from the other James, who was the brother of John, who was often called “James Major.” His father’s name was Alphæus, which was also the name of Matthew’s father; yet, nowhere are we told that James and Matthew are brothers. His mother’s name was Mary. She was one of the Marys who went to the tomb on Easter morning. Consequently, he had a godly mother. (Stress the importance here of godly mothers.)