

10/21/18

The Apostle James, The Son of Alphaeus

The Bible is full of information about people used by God that we might see the work of God in their lives that we might be exhorted in our potential in Christ.

* But on the other hand there are those who are like trees that have but one or two leaves, very little is known about them and at times nothing at all.

In fact, three of the last four apostles are of this kind, we know absolutely nothing about them.

* They are James the son of Alphaeus, Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus and Simon the Cananite, according to Matthew's list. Matt. 10:3-4

We want to look at James, the son of Alphaeus, in view of three things. Matt. 10:3:c

- I. The little we know about James.
- II. The lack of information that is a common practice in the Bible.
- III. The lessons God wants us to learn from James.

I. The little we know about James.

A. The man James.

1. He is known as the son of Alphaeus.
 - a. The name Alphaeus means "changing".

b. The name Alphaeus is identified with two other apostles.

- 1) The apostle Matthew, known as Levi was the son of Alphaeus. Mk. 2:14
- 2) The sons of Zebedee, the sons of Thunder, were the sons of Alphaeus. Matt. 10:3, Mk. 15:40

2. He is distinct from other man called James.
 - a. He is distinct from James, the son of Zebedee. Matt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15, Acts 1:13
 - b. He is distinct from James, the Lord's brother. Matt. 13:55, Mk. 6:3
 - c. He is distinct from James the father of Judas. Lk. 6:16, Acts 1:13
3. He is the leader of the fourth group of four.
 - a. This is the least intimate of the three groups.
 - b. Three of these last four, we literally know nothing, the Scriptures have very little to say about them or nothing at all.
 - c. The only one that we have much information on is Judas Ischariot.
 - d. Yet it would be a great mistake to think of the third group as inferior or less important in the category of the twelve apostles, to the other two groups of four.
 - e. The twelve remember, were chosen from many disciples of Jesus.
 - 1) Many walked with Jesus for the mere physical benefits.

- a) Jesus said to them, “Most assuredly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw the signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. Do not labor for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to everlasting life, which the Son of Man will give you, because God the Father has set His seal on Him.” Jn. 6:26-27
- b) The charge is clear, rather than following Jesus for spiritual reasons, many were following Him for the physical benefits He was providing.
- 2) Many turned away from Him when He asked for a complete commitment.
 * John tells us, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the twelve, “Do you also want to go away?” But Simon Peter answered Him, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Jesus answered them, “Did I not choose you, the twelve, and one of you is a devil?” He spoke of Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon, for it was he who would

betray Him, being one of the twelve.
Jn. 6:66-71

- B.** The name of James.
1. His name James “Iakobos” means surplanter, caniever.
 - a. It is the Greek of the Hebrew, Jacob.
 - b. The son of Issac the surplanter was brought to the end of himself by God.
 2. He is called “James the less”, whose brother was Joses. Mk. 15:40
 - a. The word for less is “mikros” which means little, least, small or less.
 - b. It is used for the little child who is caused to stumbled by another. Matt. 18:6
 - c. It is used of the mustard seed which is the least of all the seeds, in the parable of the Sower. Mk. 4:31
 - d. It is used of Zachaeus who was of little stature. Lk. 19:3
 - e. It is used of men in authority, small and great. Rev. 11:18
 - 1) His name could refer to be younger.
 - 2) His name could also refer that he was of small influence or popularity.
 - 3) But most likely, it refers to his stature.
 3. His identity of James, the son of Alphaeus results in many interesting possibilities.
 * These are only possibilities, not absolute facts with the limited record of James!

- a. The father of James, Alphaeus is also identified as Cleopas or Clopas. Jn. 19:25
- b. Clopas was one of the two men on the road to Emmaus, to whom Jesus appeared. Lk. 24:18
- c. Clopas was the husband of Mary who is said to be the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus, who was at the cross along with the mother of the sons of Zebedee. Lk. 24:18; Jn. 19:25
 - * Three Mary's are list at the cross!
 - 1) Since it is unlikely that a mother would name two of her daughters Mary, some interpret the word "sister", to means sister-in-law.
 - 2) That would mean she was married to the brother of Joseph the supposed father of Jesus.
 - 3) That would mean James the son of Alphaeus would be the cousin of Jesus and John the Baptist.
 - 4) But if the Mary of Clopas is another Mary, distinct from the sister of Mary the mother of Jesus, then she is Salome, the wife of Zebedee, the mother of James and John. Mk. 15:40
- d. James the son of Alphaeus could also be the brother of Matthew, whose father is also name Alphaeus? Mk. 2:14
 - 1) There is no way of knowing for sure.

- 2) These again are only possibilities, not absolute facts with the limited record of James the son of Alphaeus!

C. The ministry of James.

- 1. He was an apostle by qualification.
 - a. He is found in all four list of the apostles. Matt. 10:3; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13
 - b. He had seen the Lord, testified of Him and of his resurrection from personal knowledge. Jn. 15:27; Acts 1:21, 22; 1Cor. 9:1; Acts 22:14, 15
 - c. He had been immediately called to that office by Christ. Lk. 6:13; Gal. 1:1
 - d. He partook of the power for miracles. Mk. 16:20, Acts 2:43, 1Cor. 12:8-11
 - 1) The twelve apostles therefore could not have had successors.
 - 2) They were and are the only authorized teachers for the Christian doctrines.
 - 3) The office of an apostle extended beyond the twelve, distinct from the twelve . 2Cor. 8:23; Phil. 2:25
 - a) In fact the same Greek word, "apostello" is translated "messenger" as well as "apostle." 2Cor. 8:23
 - b) The attempt to equate oneself with the authority of one of the twelve for today's church is a bit presumptuous.

- c) The modern day apostle is anyone who goes out, but the “missionary” would be more applicable!
- 2. He without doubts was present at many of the miracles that Jesus performed.
 - a. The feeding of the five-thousand.
 - b. The healing of the blind man.
 - c. The restoring of Malchus ear in the Garden.
 - d. The calming of the sea of Galilee, when Jesus declared, “Wind be muzzled”.
- 4. He was one of the twelve sent out to cast out demons, heal the sick and proclaim the gospel to the lost sheep of the house of Israel.
 - a. Jesus called His twelve disciples together and gave them power and authority over all demons, and to cure diseases. Lk. 9:1
 - b. The seventy returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in Your name.” And He said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven.” Lk. 10:17-20

- 5. He was present when the Lord appeared to the eleven as well as the next time when Thomas was present. Jn. 20:19-29
 - a. He is not mentioned in particular.
 - b. He is not recorded as saying anything.
 - c. He is just there as one of the twelve apostle of Jesus, who would be sent to the world with the message of the gospel.
- 6. He preached in Persia, tradition tells us, modern day Iran.
 - a. Having healed the king who was sick, the king embraced the gospel.
 - b. One of his right had man had James crucified.
 - c. Today they are given up to Islam.

Illustration

The policy of the editors of Appleton’s cyclopedia Of America biography was to accept in good faith all material received by mail. This opened the door to an unknown practical joker who sent them at least 84 biographies of fictitious persons between 1886-1888. Although these individuals were figments of the imagination, their achievements and books credited to them were supposed to be well-known in their particular professions.

The fake entries went unnoticed until 1919 when 14 were discovered by a librarian. This started a more thorough search which brought to light 70 more by 1936. #1736

* Such is not the case regarding the list of twelve apostles, they are the real apostles Jesus chose after an entire night in prayer, and one was James the son of Alphaeus.

Application

1. Today we need men and women like James, who answer the call, even though they may never be spoken about or know by most people.

* “Then those who feared the LORD spoke to one another, And the LORD listened and heard them; So a book of remembrance was written before Him For those who fear the LORD And who meditate on His name.” Mal. 3:16

2. Today we need in the church those who know and are willing to exercise their gifts faithfully as unto the Lord not man, recognizing their responsibility and accountability to the Lord.

* “For I say, through the grace given to me, to everyone who is among you, not to think of himself more highly than he ought to think, but to think soberly, as God has dealt to each one a measure of faith. For as we have many members in one body, but all the members do not have the same function, so we, being many, are one body in Christ, and individually members of one another. Having then gifts differing according to the grace that is given to us, let us use them: if prophecy, let us prophesy in proportion to our faith.” Rom. 12:3-6

3. Today there is the need is for vessels of honor.

* “Therefore if anyone cleanses himself from the latter, he will be a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work.” 2Tim. 2:21

The little that we know about James, tells us he was such a man!

II. The lack of information that is a common practice in the Bible.

A. Regarding people.

1. The life of our Lord Jesus is limited to the years from twelve and thirty years of age.
 - a. God in His sovereign wisdom chose not to disclose these silent years.
 - b. Man at times has attempted to help God by his theories, such as that Jesus went into Egypt to learn the magical arts and returned, but only to confuse the truth.
 - c. God revealed only the things that are necessary for our learning.
2. The life of Paul is limited from his conversion until his call to Antioch.
 - a. He was saved on the Damascus Road and preached Christ at Damascus for three years, as he abode in Arabia. Acts 9:1-22; Gal. 1:18
 - b. He was persecuted by the Jews in Damascus, to the point of seeking his life, but he escaped being lowered down

- in a basket fleeing to Jerusalem. Acts 9:23-25; 2Cor. 11:32-33
- c. He was shunned by all thinking he was not a disciple. but Barnabas took a chance on him introducing him to Peter and James the Lord's brother, after fifteen days Paul was escorted to Caecarea and ultimately Tarsus. Acts 9:26-30, Gal. 1:18-19
 - d. He labored for nine years in obscurity from the churches of Judea, doing what he was called to do, preach the gospel and all heard how he who formerly persecuted the church now preached the faith which he once tried to destroy, glorifying God in him. Gal. 1:21-24
 - e. He was sought out by Barnabas once the work at Antioch was confirmed and remained for an entire year teaching the people. Acts 11:25-26
* The rest is history, the church was never the same!
3. The list of heroes in the hall of faith. Heb. 11:35-40
- a. Those who are well known to us by the abundant information we have in the Scriptures.. vs. 8-34
 - 1) Abraham.
 - 2) Moses.
 - 3) Rahab.
 - 4) Gideon.

- 5) Barak.
 - 6) Jephthah.
 - 7) David.
 - 8) Samuel.
- b. Those who we have little and absolutely no information about.
- 1) Women received their dead raised to life again. And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection. vs. 35
 - 2) Still others had trial of mockings and scourgings, yes, and of chains and imprisonment. vs. 36
 - 3) They were stoned, they were sawn in two, were tempted, were slain with the sword. They wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins, being destitute, afflicted, tormented-- vs. 37
 - 4) Of whom the world was not worthy. They wandered in deserts and mountains, *in dens and caves of the earth.* vs. 38
 - 5) And all these, having obtained a good testimony through faith, did not receive the promise. vs. 39
 - 6) God having provided something better for us, that they should not be made perfect apart from us. vs. 40
4. Malchijah, the son of Rachabite.

- a. God sent Jeremiah to pour wine before the Rachabites to see if they would violate their covenant with God and they refused to do so. Jer. 35:2-17
- b. “And Jeremiah said to the house of the Rechabites, “Thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: `Because you have obeyed the commandment of Jonadab your father, and kept all his precepts and done according to all that he commanded you, therefore thus says the LORD of hosts, the God of Israel: "Jonadab the son of Rechab shall not lack a man to stand before Me forever.” Jer. 35:18-19
- c. Milchijah the son of Rachab is faithfully served at the Refuse Gate, the Dung Gate of the city as unto the Lord. Neh. 3:14

B. Regarding places.

- 1. The location of the ark of the covenant is unknown.
 - a. No one knows for sure.
 - b. Some attimes will declared the possible location, if not that it has been found.
- 2. The exact location of the Tomb of Jesus.
 - a. The present tomb everyone visits is known as Godon’s Tomb, a British who discovered it.
 - b. The approximate location fits the description in the Bible.

- c. The location is in the general vacinity and may very well be the tumb of Jesus.
 - * But if it is not, it really does not matter!
 - 3. The exact location that Paul was in Arabia.
 - a. One place is as good as another.
 - b. One man’s opinion is no more valid that the next.
 - c. When you go to Israel there are two things that you can be absolutely sure are in the same place as in the days of Jesus, the Sea of Galilee and the Mount of Olives, everything else is round about.
- #### C. Regarding periods of time.
- 1. There is sixteen years between. Gen. 16:16-17:1
 - a. In just one verse a sixteen year interval.
 - b. God sought not fit to record anything.
 - 2. The 430 years of captivity in Egypt are declared rather than describes in a sweep of the pen, while the visit to Egypt to redeem God’s people is recorded in many chapters. Ex. 1-13
 - a. It is sufficient enough that God said He would place them there.
 - b. It is sufficient that God said, He would deliver them.
 - 3. The 400 years of silence between the Old and New Testament.
 - a. The condition of the people in the time of Malachi was very sinful.

- b. Malachi proclaiming repentance o the people of God.
 - 1) In view of their present sin.
 - 2) In view of the coming of Messiah.

Illustration

In relations to all that could have been written about Jesus, very little is known, but all that God wanted us to know was revealed and recorded.

* John states, “And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen.” Jn. 21:25

Application

1. The Scriptures tell us that the secret things belong unto God and the one He revealed belong to us and our children forever, in order that we may do all the words of this law. Deut. 29:29
 - a. The context is speaking about Israel and that people would know they were put in captivity due to their disobedience to God.
 - b. The promise in the following chapter is that God would return the remnant.
 - * How God would do all is His business, but what He has revealed we are to know, believe and not worry about what is not revealed!
2. The Holy Spirit is the One Who reveals to us the things of God. 1Cor. 1:9-16

- a. For here and now, for the Spirit searches all things, yes, the deep things of God. vs. 9-10
 - b. Man is able to know the things of man by his fallen spirit but the things of God only the Spirit of God knows them. vs. 11
 - c. The believer has received the Spirit of God to know the things of God, that are freely given and are able to test and discern the things of God but not the natural man thinks them foolish. vs. 12-15
 - d. The privilege of the believer is that he has the mind of Christ. vs. 16
 - e. The trouble with man, is that he fails to put it on. Phil. 2:5
3. The Lord will use us differently at different periods of our life.
 - a. We are His workmanship created n Christ Jesus unto good works. Eph. 2:10
 - * We are His poem or message to the church and the world.
 - b. Can you handle being a James, knowing that no one knows anything about you, what you do or how much you do?
 - c. Can you be as committed as Paul to labor in some obscure place for nine years or the rest of your life?
 - * Promotion does not come from the east or the west but from the Lord. Ps. 103:12a

The lack of information is a common practice in the Bible!

III. The lessons God wants us to learn.

- A. The message is more important than the man.
1. The man or woman is the mere instrument.
 - * Paul says who is Paul or Apollo but ministers through whom you believed, as the Lord gave to each one? 1Cor. 3:5
 2. The work is the work of God.
 - * “One plants another waters, but it is God Who gives the increase.” 1Cor. 3:7
 3. The power is of God, not of the instrument in human wisdom.
 - * “And my speech and my preaching *were* not with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power, that your faith should not be in the wisdom of men but in the power of God.” 1Cor. 2:4-5
- B. The messenger is not to taint the message or to call attention to himself.
1. The messenger is called a “herald” in the New Testament, one hired by the king or state to make all public proclamations.
 - a. The message was not his.
 - b. The authority is not his.
 - c. The responsibility for the response was not his.
 - d. The expectation was, that there would always be a response.
 - 1) Either to reject the word.

- 2) Either to accept the word.
2. The excellency and glory is to be of God not man. 2Cor. 4:7
 - a. The focus of the Scriptures is never on the men, they are mere instruments of God as we have seen.
 - b. The focus is always to be God!
 - c. The danger is always in an over-estimation of oneself.
 - 1) “If you compare yourself by yourselves and among yourselves, you are not wise.” 2Cor. 10:12
 - 2) “But we have this treasure in earthen vessels, that the excellence of the power may be of God and not of us.” 2Cor. 4:7
- C. The message and messenger must always point people to Christ.
1. Evident by realizing that Jesus is the One working through the man.
 - * “Not that we are sufficient of ourselves to think of anything as *being* from ourselves, but our sufficiency *is* from God.” 2Cor. 3:5
 2. Evident by relying on the Holy Spirit to teach and illuminate the man.
 - * “Who also made us sufficient as ministers of the new covenant, not of the letter but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life.” 2Cor. 3:6

3. Evident by resorting to and relying on the words of Jesus.

- * Paul says, “But we preach Christ crucified, to the Jews a stumbling block and to the Greeks foolishness, but to those who are called, both Jews and Greeks, Christ the power of God and the wisdom of God. Because the foolishness of God is wiser than men, and the weakness of God is stronger than men.”
1Cor. 1:23-25

Illustration

Perhaps few people today know why the face of Lincoln is engraved on the American penny, rather than one of the larger coins.

The reason for this goes back to the boyhood days of David Brenner, who had known nothing of liberty and much of hunger and want in Russia. After coming to America, where he found both liberty and opportunity awaiting him, Brenner became a famous sculptor and was the man responsible for placing the face of the Lincoln on the most lowly coin of the United States, who had said, “The Lord must love the common people, He has made so many of them.”

Brenner’s idea was that there would be more pennies minted than any other one coin, and consequently there would be more of them in the pockets of the common people. #4475

* Such is the case with the instruments of God, they are common people and they are to desire and strive to cause others to remember, not them but the Lord!

Application

1. Nowhere is it more evident that the message is more important than the man, than in the book of Jonah. Jonah 1-4

- a. Jonah was not the most willing instrument of God.
- b. Jonah was not the most loving vessel of God.
- c. Jonah did not save the Ninevites, but the message he preached.

* Jonah knew who his God was, he just did not want to be like his God!

2. Paul and Barnabas preached at Lystra and they were taken for gods and they refused to obstruct the message. Acts 14:8-18

- a. They tore their clothes and declared they were mere men.
- b. They told them to turn to the living God.
- c. They restrained the multitudes from sacrificing to them.

* They were in their greatest peril of losing their ministry by taking the glory from God but they resisted it!

These are some of the lessons God wants us to learn are important!

Conclusion

When you think of James, the son of Alphaeus, remember these three things.

- I.** The little we know about James!
- II.** The lack of information is a common practice in the Bible!
- III.** The lessons God wants us to learn are important!