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The Apostle Simon The Zealot

William Wallace was a Scotsman who defied the English and dared to fight for the freedom of Scotland at all costs and was a pest of a fellow with his constant resistance, driven by his hatred of the oppressors. A movie was made and they named it “Brave-Heart”.

Such was Simon the Zealot in his former life prior to coming to believe in Jesus, as he hated and resisted all foreign dominion over Israel.

* He is the eleventh apostle of Jesus according to Matthew’s list. Matt. 10:2-4

There are no braver men and women than those who lay their lives down for their country and freedom, be it in war or underground resistance.

* But only the bravery that comes from the work of God in a person’s life can make him brave enough, to abandon all and love those he hated at one time!

Simon will unfold for us as we examine him through three lenses.

- I.** The man Simon the Zealot.
- II.** The major parties of Simon the Zealot’s day.
- III.** The most important decision of Simon the Zealot.

I. The man Simon the Zealot.

- A.** Simon was one of the twelve apostles.
 1. He is the eleventh in the list of Matthew.
 2. He was also chosen after an entire night in prayer by our Lord Jesus Christ. Lk. 6:12
 3. He is in the third group of four, the least intimate of the three.
 4. He is the one who we know the least about, even less than Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus.
 5. He is next to Judas Ischariot in Matthew’s and Mark’s list of the twelve.
 6. He is tenth in Luke’s and Acts between James the son of Alphaeus and Judas the son of James or Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus.
 7. He is never mentioned in the New Testament, except for the list of the twelve. Matt. 10:4; Mk. 3:18; Lk. 6:15; Acts 1:13
- B.** Simon was a very common name.
 1. His name Simon means heard.
 - a. The name originates from the Hebrew name, Simeon or Shimeon.
 - b. Simeon was the second son of Jacob by his wife Leah and progenitor of the tribe of Simeon.
 - c. Simon was his proper name.
 2. His name must not be confused with the other men named Simon in the Scriptures.
 - a. Simon Peter was one of the apostles.

- b. Simon, the father of Judas who betrayed Jesus. Jn. 6:71; 13:2, 26
- c. Simon Magus, the Samaritan wizard
- d. Simon the tanner. Acts 10
- e. Simon the Pharisee. Lk. 7:40-44
- f. Simon of Cyrene who carried the cross of Christ. Matt. 27:32
- g. Simon the leper. Matt. 26:6-13

C. Simon is identified as well as disguised from all others by the word Zealot.

1. Matthew and Mark call him Simon the Cananite. Matt. 10:4a; Mk. 3:18h
 - a. The word Cananite would appear to be identifying Simon as a descendent of the Canaan but this can not be, for all the twelve disciples of Jesus were Jews.
 - b. The word is a translation, in fact a transliteration of the Syriac word Kanenyeh.
 - 1) The Aramaic word “Cananaean”, is not from “Cana” or “Canaan” but rather indicates jealous, zealous or enthusiasts.
 - 2) There is no evidence that Simon was from Cana of Galilee.
 - c. The word describes Simon as a man of zeal and jealous character.
2. Luke calls him Simon the Zealot. Lk. 6:15c; Acts 1:13

- a. Luke specifically and clearly tells us the nature of Simon’s zeal and jealousy.
- b. The word Zealot “Kanaim”, identified Simon with a group of men.
- c. These men were those who, in imitation of Phinehas that slew Zimri and Cozbi in the very act of uncleanness, likewise when they found any persons in the act of adultery, idolatry, blasphemy, or theft, would immediately kill them without any more ado: this they did, from a pretended zeal for the honor and glory of God: nor were they accountable to any court for it; such an action was highly applauded, as a very laudable one, under this specious name of Zealots.
- d. It is believed that they were born out of the Maccabean period in their zeal for God and full obedience to the covenant.
- e. They grew into a political party that swore to oppose and thwart any power that came against the Jewish nation.
- f. Simon the Zealot was a committed terrorist and assassin, who had vowed to the death to oppose Rome in every way, by every means and at every opportunity!
- g. Simon must of eyed Matthew more than once and Matthew must have felt uncomfortable more than one time, for he was a Jew who collected taxed for Rome, a traitor!

3. Simon is listed before Judas Ischariot twice. Matt. 10:4; Mk. 3:18
 - a. They probably went out together, as Jesus sent them out two by two.
 - b. They were both of the same political bent wanting to see the kingdom establish, but from two different perspectives.
 - c. They each made a decision, one to depend on Jesus and the other on himself and the worldly means.

Illustration

There were two prodigal sons in the house of the father, the one who had lived a debauched life repented, the one who lived a good life did not think he needed to!

* One simple decision made the difference!

Application

1. Each of us as Christians have been sent out as the apostles, we are called ambassadors of Christ. 2Cor. 5:20
 - a. Sent out as the salt of the earth. Matt. 5:13
 - b. Sent out as lights of the world. Matt. 5:14
 - c. Sent out to persuade men, knowing the terror of the Lord. 2Cor. 5:11
2. Each of us as Christians have an obligation to hear the call on our life and respond to it, regardless of our past passion and pursuit.
 - a. Our call will not be like others, but personal as Paul's. Acts 9

- b. Our call will be in view of God's enabling and gifts. Rom. 12:3-5
 - c. Our call will bless and build up the body and others through our obedience. Eph. 4:16
3. Each of us as Christians have to have passionate zeal for God and the things of God.
 - a. The passion will be challenged in order to deceive us from the simplicity of the gospel, as Satan did to Eve. 2Cor. 11:2-3
 - b. The passion that is not cultivated through the word, prayer and service will be seduced by love for the world as Demas. Tim. 4:10
 - c. The passion grows by spending time with Jesus, as a dear for the water brooks. Ps. 42:1

The man Simon the Zealot was fighting a war God was not behind!

- II. **The major parties of Simon the Zealot's day.**
 - * He was identified with an extreme political party, but there were many parties desiring to establish their position and power in the days of Jesus both religious and political.
- A. There were the Pharisee.
 1. The name Pharisees "pharash" comes from the word to separate, appearing one-hundred times in the New Testament.
 2. They were the separated ones, unto ritual, ceremony and ritual.

3. They were a very numerous sect among the Jews, but there were never more than six-thousand at any one time.
4. They, in their origin, were a pure and holy people that had become separatists from the pollution of the Jewish national worship.
5. They are thought of had their origin in after the Babylonian captivity to preserve the Law which they had broken, in order that they never go into captivity again.
6. They, in process of time, like all religious sects and parties degenerated: they lost the spirit of their institution, they ceased to be faithful to first principles of their party and had only the form of godliness.
7. They build a fence around the Law through their interpretations and amplifications and they arrived at a place where they honored their precepts and commandment more than those of God and in fact taught them as God's commandments. Matt. 15:9; Mk. 7:7
6. They were full blown hypocrites for by the time Jesus Christ arrived on the scene preaching in Judea; bearing witness, he declared they made the outside of the cup and platter clean-they observed the rules of their institution, but inwardly full of dead men's bones. Matt. 23:27

B. There were the Sadducees.

1. The name Sadducees "Saddoukaioi" means the righteous.
2. The sect of the Sadducees were the followers of one Sadok, a disciple of Antigonus Sochaeus, who flourished about three centuries before Christ.
3. The sect of Sadducees were the materialist in charge of the temple and the business end of the sacrifices and the money changers.
4. They were the Deists of the Jewish nation.
5. They denied the existence of angels and spirits and also the resurrection of the dead. Matt. 22:23
* Paul in his defense both parties comprised the Sanhedrin and divided them, "For Sadducees say that there is no resurrection--and no angel or spirit; but the Pharisees confess both." Acts 23:8
6. They denied the oral law to be a revelation of God and deemed only the written law. all Divine influence and inspiration.
7. They were of the priestly line Priestly line
 - a. John the Baptist called both the Pharisees and the Sadducees "a Brood of vipers". Matt. 3:7
 - b. Jesus cautioned His disciples about both parties, "Then they understood that He did not tell them to beware of the leaven of bread, but of the doctrine of the Pharisees and Sadducees." Matt. 16:12

C. There were the Essenes.

1. They were the third sect during the days of Jesus and were from the time of Jonathan the successor of Judas Macabee.
2. They were Ascetics and mystics for their means of holiness.
 - a. They rose before sun rise and recited prayers of ancestors.
 - b. They bathed in cold water.
 - c. They didn't own two cloaks, two pair of shoes, etc.
 - d. They wore white garments, avoided oaths, regarding them worse than perjury.
3. There were about 4,000-10,000.
4. They occupied the west shore of the Dead Sea by Qumran.
5. They set up their own priests and rejected marriage but adopted children.
 - a. They said that a man joined to a woman is pampered by his affections and is no longer a free man, but a slave.
 - b. Josephus tells us they were the strictest sect of the Jews.

D. There were the Ebionites.

1. They assumed their name from Matthew's gospel, "the poor people". Matt. 5:3
2. They denied the supernatural birth of Christ.
3. Epiphanius is most informative on the Ebionites in his Heresy #29, he identifies them with the Essenes.

4. They considered the body of Christ, the revived one of Adam.
5. They received only the gospel of Matthew.
6. They permitted marriage up to seven times.
7. They had a low view of women, crediting her with originating heathenism.

E. There were the Zealots.

1. They were a political, terrorist group.
2. One of the sects of the Zealots was the "sicharii", indicating the sword of the assassins.
3. A Leader in New Testament times named Judas of Galilee with various seditious acts to thwart the reign of Rome and was killed and his followers dispersed. Acts 5:37
4. But the Zealots continued their holy war against Rome.
5. They would not hesitate to murder a Roman but equally any Jew would side with Rome.
6. In 70 A. D. Rome put a stop to it by destroying Jerusalem being tired of these little terrorist campaigns.
7. They killed people in 985 towns in Galilee.
 - a. It is thought that they derived their name from the dying charge of the Asmonean Mattathias when he said, "Be you zealous for the law, and give your lives for the covenant of your fathers" (1 Mac. 2:50)

- b. Whatever they were at first, it is certain that their later course was marked by frightful excesses, and they are charged with having been the human instrument which brought about the destruction of Jerusalem, Josephus declares. Wars 4:3, 9, 5.1-4; 6.3; 7:8.1
- 8. A new leader after 70 A.D. arose, named Eliazar and he along with his followers used Masada as their fortress.
- 9. Rather than allowing Rome to conquer them, they by advice of Eliazar had the heads of the families to kill their own families and then those chose names by lot to take their lives and then his own.
- 10. The people that perished were 960, only two women and five children survived by hiding in a cave.
- 11. They robbed the Roman General of his victory, choosing to die rather than to live under the hand of Rome.
 - * The graduating classes of Israeli soldiers at one time all celebrate it on Masada and the motto is, “No more Masada”, they have the Samson philosophy, “We will take the whole world with us”. They do not do it any longer!

Illustration

The Catholic Church taught that after one-thousand years the Lord would return and set out in her zeal to

conquer the world by it Monastic hid always and their dishonesty to enrich herself through cruelty and the murder of countless people, but after the year one-thousand when Jesus did not return, she had to change her message but certainly not her methods!

Application

1. There still are groups of Pharisees today that declare to be part of the church.
 - a. They began with good intentions, but have become self-righteous and critical.
 - b. They have become actors, loving ceremony and ritual, while being hypocrites, not being doers of the word.
 - c. The Emergent Movement interpret the word subjectively allowing worldly practices of drinking, cursing, etc, under the guise of being able to relate with sinners.
2. There are the Sadducees in the church also, those who are the materialist.
 - a. Everything they talk about in relation to the Scriptures has to do with money.
 - b. The “faith movement” is classic for this, using the name of Christianity for their gain, without any concern for the people or God.
3. There are the Essenes and Ebinoites in the church who are ascetics and mystics attempting to bring about their own holiness by a legalistic code that is prefaced by “I don’t”
 - a. Extreme Pentecostal churches at times get into this mode.

- b Holiness movements focus on this dynamic.
- 4. There are the Zealots in the church today also.
 - a. They are those of “Dominion or Kingdom Theology” that proposes the church is going to take back territory from Satan and place Christians in office and bring in the Kingdom.
 - b. They are the liberating theology groups who advocate violence for the kingdom of God.
 - c. They are the political activists that have their hope on man and always want you to be part of a wake or a sit down demonstration.
 - * Don’t misunderstand me, I believe in using the legal system of voting, petitioning and calling our representatives, but I don’t believe that it is what God has called us to be involved on a regular basis!

The major parties of Simon the Zealot’s day, all claiming to be of God!

III. The most important decision of Simon the Zealot.

- A. Simon renounced all past affiliations that promised to bring about peace.
 1. He gave up on committing himself to bring about the peace of Israel.
 2. He acknowledge the history of his people as a rebellious nations towards God.
 3. He gave up his life of terrorist and assassin, in the name of God.

4. He saw the futility of such an attempt.
- B. Simon resigned himself to be at the very least, as zealous for Christ against sin as he had been in his zeal against Rome.
 1. He used to resist every and any foreign power that came against Israel, so he resisted the power of sin nature that came against the Kingdom of God.
 2. He used to have a hatred for those who stood who compromised the Jewish loyalty, so he hated sin that tended to compromise the life of Christ.
 3. He used to knowingly and willfully risked and was ready to loose his life for his Jewishness, so now he was laying his life down daily, by denying himself, picking up his cross and following Jesus.
 - C. Simon recognized that having come to Jesus, he did not need to search anywhere else.
 1. He had come to rest in the grace of Jesus, in contrast to the works of the Law.
 2. He had come to experience a complete removal of guilt and shame for all his past sins, and acts of terrorism.
 3. He had come to the promised Messiah of the Scriptures, God Himself.
 4. He had a message for people that could change their lives by God’s grace and Spirit.
 5. He knew where he would be in eternity.

Illustration

The devout scientist, Sir Isaac Newton said, “I can take my telescope and look millions and millions of miles into space, but I can lay it aside and go into my room, shut the door, get down on my knees in earnest prayer, and see more of heaven and get closer to God than I can assisted by all the telescopes and material agencies on earth.” #4605

Application

1. There are some individuals who after coming to Christ, attempt to help out the Lord and His Kingdom by trusting “the arm of the flesh”.
 - a. All past ideas and endeavors to do God’s work, not in accord with the Scriptures must be abandoned.
 - * Paul said that he did all past thing ignorantly in unbelief. 1Tim. 1:12-13
 - b. All that is done and embraced for the Kingdom must come from a Biblical philosophy of ministry, not a corporate or management model.
 - * The Spirit said, “Separate unto Me, Barnabas and Saul, for the work which I have called them.” Acts 13:2
2. Our zeal for Jesus must be based on our love for Him or else it will be based on temporary infatuation, resulting from feelings, emotions or newness.
 - a. We are to strive to enter in the narrow gate for difficult is the way which leads to life, and there are few that find it. Matt. 7:14

- b. We are to not present our members as weapons of unrighteousness to sin, but rather present ourselves to God as being alive from the dead and our members as weapons of righteousness to God. Rom. 6:13
 - c. We are to be filled with the power of God’s might, the Holy Spirit, put on the entire armor of God to withstand the spiritual enemy, finish the race, fight the good fight and keep the faith. Eph. 6:10-18; 2Tim. 4:7
3. Our coming to Jesus must never be thought of as another religious experience in life.
 - a. It is our decision based on conclusive evidence, that Jesus is who He said He was, God Incarnate. Jn. 1:1-14
 - b. It is our decision based on the conviction of the Holy Spirit and the revelation of the Scriptures, that Jesus has remove all of my sins and made me a New Creature. Ps. 103:12; 2Cor. 5:17
 - c. It is the Spirit of God Who dwells in us and yearns jealously for the things of God. Ja. 4:5

The most important decision Simon the Zealot ever made was to except Jesus and rest in the finished work of the Kingdom!

Conclusion

Simon has unfolded for us as we have examined him through these three lenses.

- I. The man Simon the Zealot was fighting a war God was not behind!

- II.** The major parties of Simon the Zealot's day, all claiming to be of God!
- III.** The most important decision of Simon the Zealot ever made, was to except Jesus and rest in the finished work of the Kingdom!