

## THE TWELVE DISCIPLES

*"And when it was day, he called unto him his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, Matthew and Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, And Judas the brother of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor." (Luke 6:13-16)*

When Jesus began His ministry He chose twelve special disciples to work with Him. Who were these men and what happened to them afterwards? Though we may never know the pure historical facts about them, it is interesting to see what most respected legends and traditions say about the twelve disciples.

Simon Peter was a fisherman and a typical Galilean: more anxious for honor than for gain, quick-tempered, impulsive, emotional, easily aroused by an appeal to adventure, and loyal to the end (Talmud). Among the 12, Peter was the leader and spokesman for the group. It is true Peter had many faults, but no matter how many times he had fallen and failed, he always recovered his courage and integrity. Peter was martyred on the cross. He requested that he might be crucified upside down because he was not worthy to die as his Lord had died.

Andrew, the brother of Peter, was also a fisherman by trade. Although circumstances placed him in a position where it would have been easy for him to have become jealous and resentful, he was optimistic and well content in second place. His main purpose in life was to bring others to the Master. According to tradition, it was in Greece that Andrew converted the Governor's wife and the Governor's brother to Christianity. So the Governor arrested him and condemned him to die on the cross. Andrew, feeling unworthy to die on the same shaped cross as his Lord, begged that his be different. Thus, he was crucified on an X-shaped cross. However, he was fastened to the cross, not with nails, but with cords so that his death might be prolonged. In this situation he continued for two days, preaching the greatest part of the time to the people.

James, the brother of John, son of Zebedee, was also known as James the Elder. The New Testament tells us very little about James. His name never appears apart from that of his brother John. They were an inseparable pair. He was a man of courage and

forgiveness - a man without jealousy, living in the shadow of John. He was the first of the twelve to become a martyr. His death is recorded accurately for us in Acts 12 where we find that he preached in Jerusalem and Judea and was killed with the sword (beheaded) by Herod the king.

John, the brother of James, was known as the Beloved Disciple. He was a prominent Apostle, being mentioned many times in the New Testament. He was a man of action, very ambitious, with an explosive temper and an intolerant heart. He and his brother James came from a more well-to-do family than the rest of the Apostles. In the latter part of his life, John stressed his Lord's command of love. It is said that an attempt was made on his life by giving him a cup of poison from which God spared him. Once he was condemned to be cast into a caldron of boiling oil. But here a miracle occurred in that the oil did him no injury. So John was banished to the Isle of Patmos (Rev. 1:9), later freed, and then died of natural causes.

Philip came from the same town which Peter and Andrew came from and likely, he was a fisherman, too. He had a missionary instinct, shown in his bringing Nathanael to Christ. Philip was a man with a warm heart and a pessimistic head. He was one who would very much like to do something for others, but who did not see how it could be done. Yet, he gave it all he had. Traditionally, he died by hanging. While he was dying, he requested that his body be wrapped not in linen but in papyrus for he was not worthy that even his body should be treated as the body of Jesus had been treated.

Bartholomew, a number of scholars believe, was the only disciple who came from royal blood. He was the son of the king of Geshur. He was a great searcher of the Scripture and a scholar in the Law and the Prophets. He was a man of complete sincerity, a man earnest in prayer, a man who made complete surrender to the Christ and one of the church's most adventurous missionaries. Tradition says that he preached in India and his death seems to have taken place there. He died as a martyr for his Lord, being flayed or skinned alive with knives.

Matthew, or Levi, was a tax collector. Of all the nations in the world, the Jews were the most vigorous haters of tax gatherers. In NT times, tax collectors or publicans were classified with harlots, Gentiles and sinners. Yet, Jesus chose a man all men hated and made him one of His men. Unlike the other disciples who were mostly fishermen, Matthew could use a pen and by his pen he became the first man to present to the world an account

of the teachings of Jesus. Matthew was a missionary of the Gospel, who laid down his life for the faith of his Master. In Ethiopia he died a martyr by the sword.

Thomas Didymus lived in Galilee. He is commonly known as Doubting Thomas for his statement made in John 20:25. By nature, he was a pessimist. Yet, he was a disciple of courage. Thomas was always like a little child. His first reaction was not to do what he was told to do and not to believe what he was asked to believe. The good news to him was always too good to be true. By this very fact Thomas' faith became great, intense, and convincing. It is said that he was commissioned to build a palace for the king of India, and there he was killed with a spear as a martyr for his Lord.

James, the son of Alphaeus, was also called James the Lesser or Younger. He was one of the little known disciples. It is said he was a man of strong character and one of the most fiery types. According to tradition, he preached in Palestine and Egypt. It was in Egypt that James died as a martyr and that his crucifixion involved his body being sawed into pieces.

Simon was a Zealot (Zelotes). The Zealots were fanatical Jewish Nationalists who were crazed with hatred for the Romans. Josephus says the Zealots were reckless persons, zealous in good practices and extravagant and reckless in the worst actions. Tradition says that he was crucified as a martyr.

Judas, the brother of James, was the man with three names: Jude, Thaddeus and Lebbeus. He was interested in making Christ known to the world: not as a suffering Savior, however, but as a ruling king (John 14:22). It is said that Judas went to preach the gospel near the Euphrates River. There he healed many and many believed in the name of the Master. In Persia he was killed with arrows.

Judas Iscariot, the man who became the traitor, is the supreme enigma of the New Testament. It is so hard to see how anyone so close to Jesus, who saw so many miracles and heard so much of the Master's teachings could ever betray Him into the hands of His enemies. Judas was a Judean, the treasurer of the group and among the outspoken leaders. He was also a covetous man, who betrayed Jesus for 30 pieces of silver and afterwards hanged himself.

The accounts of these twelve disciples of Christ are certainly interesting and inspiring. But what about my account? What will

my record, as a disciple of Christ, look like? Will it be good like John's or will it appear like Judas Iscariot? Am I willing to die as a martyr for Christ?

RAY McMANUS

## COLUMBINE UPDATE

On Thursday (November 13), Darrell Scott, the father of Rachel Scott, a victim of the Columbine High School shootings in Littleton, Colorado, was invited to address the House Judiciary Committee's subcommittee. What he said to our national leaders during this special session of Congress was painfully truthful. They were not prepared for what he was to say, nor was it received well. It needs to be heard by every parent, every teacher, every politician, every sociologist, every psychologist, and every so-called expert! The following is a portion of the transcript:

"Since the dawn of creation there has been both good and evil in the hearts of men and women. We all contain the seeds of kindness or the seeds of violence. The death of my wonderful daughter, Rachel Joy Scott, and the deaths of that heroic teacher, and the other eleven children who died must not be in vain. Their blood cries out for answers."

"The first recorded act of violence was when Cain slew his brother Abel out in the field. The villain was not the club he used. Neither was it the NCA, the National Club Association. The true killer was Cain, and the reason for the murder could only be found in Cain's heart."

"In the days that followed the Columbine tragedy, I was amazed at how quickly fingers began to be pointed at groups such as the NRA. I am not a member of the NRA. I am not a hunter. I do not even own a gun. I am not here to represent or defend the NRA - because I don't believe that they are responsible for my daughter's death. Therefore I do not believe that they need to be defended. If I believed they had anything to do with Rachel's murder I would be their strongest opponent."

"I am here today to declare that Columbine was not just a tragedy - it was a spiritual event that should be forcing us to look at where the real blame lies! Much of the blame lies here in this room. Much of the blame lies behind the pointing fingers of the accusers themselves."

"Men and women are three-part beings. We all consist of body, soul, and spirit. When we refuse to acknowledge a third part of our make-up, we create a void that allows evil, prejudice, and hatred to rush in and wreak havoc. Spiritual presences were present within our educational systems for most of our nation's history. Many of our major colleges began as theological seminaries. This is a historical fact."

"What has happened to us as a nation? We have refused to honor God, and in so doing, we open the doors to hatred and violence. And when something as terrible as Columbine's tragedy occurs - politicians immediately look for a scapegoat such as the NRA. They immediately seek to pass more restrictive laws that contribute to erode away our personal and private liberties. We do not need more restrictive laws."

"Eric and Dylan would not have been stopped by metal detectors. No amount of gun laws can stop someone who spends months planning this type of massacre. The real villain lies within our own hearts. Political posturing and restrictive legislation are not the answers. The young people of our nation hold the key. There is a spiritual awakening taking place that will not be squelched! We do not need more religion. We do not need more gaudy television evangelists spewing out verbal religious garbage. We do not need more million dollar church buildings built while people with basic needs are being ignored. We DO need a change of heart and a humble acknowledgement that this nation was founded on the principle of simple trust in God!"

"As my son Craig lay under that table in the school library and saw his two friends murdered before his very eyes - He did not hesitate to pray in school. I defy any law or politician to deny him that right! I challenge every young person in America, and around the world, to realize that on April 29, 1999, at Columbine High School prayer was brought back to our schools. Do not let the many prayers offered by those students be in vain. Dare to move into the new millennium with a sacred disregard for legislation that violates your God-given right to communicate with Him. To those of you who would point your finger at the NRA - I give to you a sincere challenge. Dare to examine your own heart before casting the first stone! My daughter's death will not be in vain! The young people of this country will not allow that to happen!"

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## SEARCH THE SCRIPTURES

1. Who reigned on the throne of Judah in King Josiah's place?
2. Where did Abraham serve food to the three men that appeared to him in Genesis 18?
3. In the Parable of the Prodigal Son, which son wanted his inheritance?
4. From what can neither height nor depth separate us?
5. What does Zephaniah say the Lord must purify before the people can call on His name?

ANSWERS NEXT MONTH . . .

and remember last month's questions?

1. Who was the priest to whom Abram paid the first recorded tithes? MELCHIZEDEK (Gen. 14:18-20)
2. According to Numbers, how did a person purify himself if he had become unclean by touching a corpse? BY WATER ON THE THIRD AND SEVENTH DAY (Num. 19:12)
3. If you do not forgive, what will God not do for you? FORGIVE YOUR SINS (Matt. 6:15)
4. If one does not enter the sheep fold by the door, what is he? A THIEF AND A ROBBER (John 10:1)
5. What was Mephibosheth's infirmity? HE WAS CRIPPLED (2 Sam. 9:13)