

# **Character Study: James the Less, Simon the Zealot, Judas**

## **A Focus on Christ**

### **Various Bible Passages**

#### **What's happening?**

- James was the son of Alphaeus ([Matt. 10:3](#)), and is often referred to as "James the Less" to distinguish him from the other Apostle named "James." The nickname is used in [Mark 15:40](#), and is a term that could mean "little" (as in short) or "younger as to age." Of the two Apostles named "James," most likely this one was younger. He had a mother named "Mary" and a brother named "Joseph" (or "Joses"), but this is all we are told about the life of James the Less ([Matt. 27:56](#)).
- Simon was called the "Zealot" (or "Cananite," meaning "to be zealous" in Greek), which may imply that he had a zealous personality, but also indicates that he had been part of a political party at that time known as the Zealots ([Matt. 10:4](#); [Luke 6:15](#)). The Zealots were a militant sect of Jews who hated the Romans and made attempts to overthrow them through violence. As a follower of Jesus, however, he embraced a new focus ([Matt. 22:21](#); [26:52](#)), and used his zeal for Christ.
- Judas, the son of James, had three names. "Judas," meaning "Jehovah leads," was his birth name ([Luke 6:16](#)). He is also called "Thaddaeus" ([Mark 3:18](#)) and "Lebbaeus" (seen in some Greek manuscripts of [Matt. 10:3](#)). Distinguished from Judas Iscariot (who betrayed the Lord), we see his humility when he asked the Lord why He had manifested Himself to the Apostles, but not to the whole world. Jesus replied, saying He would manifest Himself to anyone who loves Him ([John 14:21-23](#)).
- Scripture only gives minimal details of the lives of these Apostles, though tradition states that following the resurrection of Christ they were involved in missions work and faced martyrdom (though exact details are unclear).

#### **What's God doing?**

> We know very little about these three men, but like the other Apostles, they sacrificed all to follow Jesus ([Luke 18:28](#)). God used them for His purpose and they will be forever remembered for it ([Rev. 21:14](#)).

#### **What's to learn?**

→ The story of history is God's story, and the focal point of God's story is Jesus Christ. The Apostles, just like the biblical writers, sought to keep the focus on Christ. When Christ is magnified, God is glorified. As we are used by God, may we also learn to always keep the focus on Christ!