



Judas Jude Thaddaeus Lebbaeus

THE MAN WITH THREE NAMES

This is another disciple of which Scripture mentions little. Tradition tells us that he may have made several missionary journeys, and thus the sailboat. Other symbols may include a club, representing the death he is to have suffered.

HIS NAME

While several of the apostles were given a second name in addition to their surnames, this disciple has the distinction of having three names, thus causing some confusion among Bible readers. Although the surname Judas, “Jehovah leads” was a very popular and beautiful name in its day, it has taken on an air of contempt following the betrayal of Judas Iscariot. That is why John makes it very clear that there was a distinction between the two men when he writes: “*Then Judas (not Judas Iscariot) said . . .*” (John 14:22). In Luke’s listing of the twelve apostles, he tells us that this Judas was the son of James (see Luke 6:16); however, he should not be confused with the many other James’ mentioned in Scripture.

Judas’ two other names are somewhat similar in meaning, although there is no hint as to why he was given them. In the KJV, Matthew 10:13 names him as Lebbaeus, which means “nursing baby.” In the NIV, he is instead named Thaddaeus, meaning “heart child.” That is also the name he is known by in Mark 3:18.

Was he called a baby or child because he may have been one of the youngest of the disciples? Might it have been his childlike qualities and gentle nature that caused these names? Because of his obscurity, that answer is left to our imaginations. What we do know is that as with all the other lesser known apostles, he was neither insignificant, unnecessary, nor unimportant in the rise of God’s church. Jesus had a plan and a place for Judas Lebbaeus Thaddaeus and the special personality he brought to the Twelve.

THE QUESTION

There is one brief moment that Judas came to the forefront. That moment took place the night that Jesus instituted the Lord’s Supper, just hours before he was to be arrested, tried, and put to death. John records many dramatic details of that night as he highlights the discussion of several lesser known disciples such as Judas Thaddaeus, Thomas, and Philip.

That night was to be the last time that Jesus could impress his mission upon his followers.

Consequently, the night was filled with insights spoken by Jesus that were often missed, confused,

or mistaken by his apostles. Jesus truly wanted them to understand his mission, yet they failed again and again in grasping the simple message. Thankfully, his teachings that night finally became crystal clear after Pentecost. Then the puzzle pieces finally came together as the apostles clearly saw the full and brilliant picture of the meaning of Christ’s mission of redemption, mercy, and grace.

And so, after Jesus spoke in detail about the love he has for his followers, Judas Thaddaeus asked, “*But, Lord, why do you intend to show yourself to us and not to the world?*” (John 14:22). Judas showed that he was still confused as to how the Lord was to come and establish his kingdom. Jesus gently went on to explain that it was not a worldly



kingdom that would win over the hearts of its subjects. Rather, his was a heavenly kingdom that reached out to the hearts of people everywhere. We should not become too critical of this disciple's question, for it brought about an answer that has stilled the hearts of many believing Christians: "*Jesus replied, 'If anyone loves me, he will obey my teaching. My Father will love him, and we will come to him and make our home with him'*" (John 14:23).

It can also be noticed that when Thaddaeus addressed his Savior, he began it with the title "Lord." (Note that in the same chapter Thomas and Philip also began their questions with that title. Judas Iscariot never once called Jesus his Lord.) As Paul so aptly wrote, no one can call Jesus Lord but by the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3).

Although confused and troubled, we see that these men were indeed loyal and faithful servants of their Lord and Savior, and they comprehended a certain amount of Christ's revelations, although they were very cloudy and confused in certain respects.

HIS MISSION

Again, as with the other apostles, after their mission was outlined for them at Pentecost, they went their different ways to spread the gospel far and wide. Most went quietly into obscurity, and nothing more is heard from them. Tradition says that Thaddaeus went north to the region of Turkey to a place called Edessa. Here he healed King Abgar of a terminal disease, as well as many in the land. This prompted a mass conversion to Christianity. Years after Abgar's rule had ended, it is said that Thaddaeus was arrested and beaten to death. (#1; page 260)

Discuss: How did the daily routines of these men have to change when they followed Jesus? What do you suppose it was like living in a country that was under the oppression of a heathen nation like Rome?

***ST. JUDE'S DAY:
October 28***