

# He uses common, ordinary men!

## Bartholomew, Matthew or Levi, Thomas, James, Simon, and Judas

Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;

Matthew 10:2-4 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, **Simon**, who is called Peter, and **Andrew** his brother; **James** *the son* of Zebedee, and **John** his brother; **3 Philip**, and **Bartholomew**; **Thomas**, and **Matthew** the publican; **James** *the son* of Alphaeus, and **Lebbaeus**, whose surname was Thaddaeus; **4 Simon** the Canaanite, and **Judas Iscariot**, who also betrayed him.

## Overall lessons learned from these lives

- 1.** God used mostly men who loved the Scriptures or who were apparently seeking Him and searching the Scriptures. That is everyone but Judas Iscariot
- 2.** The men Jesus chose to use all had problems but got victory over who they were and had been except for Judas Iscariot
- 3.** God shows us who they really were. He doesn't leave us believing that they were flawless. We see real men with real problems just like us
- 4.** From Nathanael we learn to be honest, transparent, and open
- 5.** We learn also to believe quickly what Jesus says though that was hard for the disciples from the beginning except for Nathanael
- 6.** Thank God our past doesn't matter-Matthew has a horrible past but becomes an Apostle and even writes a gospel

- 7.** Instead of being embarrassed about our past or what has happened to us in salvation we should invite our friends like Matthew does
- 8.** God uses doubters who tend to be pessimistic in their disposition
- 9.** God's men are often not recognized on this earth
- 10.** Even when they are honored it is that they are associated with the One doing the work
- 11.** Jesus regularly used common, weak, unknown, background people. Why should I desire or expect anything different
- 12.** God put together a team of extreme differences. Matthew the tax collector and Simon the Zealot
- 13.** One of the men seems to have been the baby of the group. Maybe he was the whiner

# Bartholomew, Matthew or Levi, Thomas, James, Simon, and Judas

- All twelve disciples except for Judas are from Galilee, a place of country people and fishermen. Nothing but common people
- No mention of Bartholomew is found in the Scriptures except for finding his name in the list of the apostles!
- There is a possibility that Nathanael is another name for Bartholomew but there is no Biblical evidence to support this. There has been a large argument about this historically so we can't draw a conclusion here
  - Nathanael does come to Jesus through the influence of Philip
  - Bartholomew is listed next to Philip in the three of the lists where he is mentioned and only separated in the Acts account
  - Nathanael does go fishing with Peter and the apostles after the resurrection **John 21:2 There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana**

in Galilee, and the *sons* of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

- If Nathanael is another name for Bartholomew we can learn a few things

John 1:45-51 **Philip** findeth **Nathanael**, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses **in the law, and the prophets**, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph. 46 And **Nathanael** said unto him, Can there any good thing come out of **Nazareth?** **Philip** saith unto him, Come and see. 47 Jesus saw **Nathanael** coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is **no guile!** 48 **Nathanael** saith unto him, Whence knowest thou me? Jesus answered and said unto him, Before that **Philip** called thee, when thou wast under the **fig tree**, I saw thee. 49 **Nathanael** answered and saith unto him, Rabbi, thou art the Son of God; thou art the King of Israel. 50 Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the fig tree, **believest thou?** thou shalt see greater things than these. 51 And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.

1. Nathanael seems to have loved the Scriptures [John 1:45](#)  
**Philip** findeth **Nathanael**, and saith unto him, We have found him, of whom Moses **in the law, and the prophets, did write, Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph.**
  - a. Found him implies that they were looking. They had studied the Scriptures and were looking for the Messiah
  - b. To study and know the law and the prophets without being full time in that required discipline
  - c. Could it be that the reason God isn't working more in your life is that you do not express your love for the Scriptures?
  - d. Are you known as someone that is searching for the truth and seeking Jesus and His kingdom
  
2. Outspoken in his prejudice [John 1:46](#) And **Nathanael** said unto him, **Can there any good thing come out of Nazareth? Philip** saith unto him, Come and see.
  - a. The Messiah was to come out of Bethlehem [Micah 5:2](#) **But thou, Beth-lehem Ephratah, Though thou be little among the thousands of Judah, Yet out of thee shall he come**

forth unto me *that is* to be ruler in Israel; Whose goings forth *have been* from of old, from everlasting.

- b. Jewish people like us had strong prejudice and willingly expressed them **John 7:52** They answered and said unto him, Art thou also of Galilee? Search, and look: for out of Galilee ariseth no prophet.
  - c. The prophet is rejected in his own home town, familiarity breeds contempt
  - d. How often do we let social, racial, political, or religious prejudice keep us from what God wants to do in our lives
3. He was an honest, transparent man-nothing hidden
- John 1:47** Jesus saw **Nathanael** coming to him, and saith of him, Behold an Israelite indeed, in whom is **no guile!**
- a. He was a man of character
  - b. He was genuine.
  - c. Do you live a double life? Are you one thing at church and another at home?
4. He was quick to believe **John 1:50** Jesus answered and said unto him, Because I said unto thee, I saw thee under the

fig tree, **believest thou?** thou shalt see greater things than these.

- a. The only way Jesus could see Nathanael under the fig tree was to be all knowing, God!
- b. Jesus declares to Nathanael that He is the door, the way, the entrance into Heaven. He is God. **John1:51** And he saith unto him, Verily, verily, I say unto you, Hereafter ye shall see heaven open, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man.
- c. Would you describe yourself as a believer? Do you accept and believe what the Scriptures say without being skeptical?

## Matthew

**Matthew 9:9-13** And as Jesus passed forth from thence, he saw a man, named **Matthew**, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he saith unto him, Follow me. And he arose, and followed him. **10** And it came to pass, as Jesus sat at meat in the house, behold, many **publicans and sinners came** and sat down with him and his disciples. **11** And when the Pharisees saw *it*, they said unto his disciples, Why eateth your Master



with **publicans and sinners**? 12 But when Jesus heard *that*, he said unto them, They that be whole need not a physician, but they that are sick. 13 But go ye and learn what *that* meaneth, I will have mercy, and not sacrifice: for I am not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Mark 2:14-17 And as he passed by, he saw **Levi** the *son* of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, Follow me. And he arose and followed him. 15 And it came to pass, that, as Jesus sat at meat in his house, many **publicans and sinners** sat also together with Jesus and his disciples: for there were many, and they followed him. 16 And when the scribes and Pharisees saw him eat with **publicans and sinners**, they said unto his disciples, How is it that he eateth and drinketh with **publicans and sinners**? 17 When Jesus heard *it*, he saith unto them, They that are whole have no need of the physician, but they that are sick: I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 5:27-32 And after these things he went forth, and saw a publican, named **Levi**, sitting at the receipt of custom: and he said unto him, Follow me. 28 And he left all, rose up, and

followed him. 29 And **Levi made him a great feast** in his own house: and there was a great company of **publicans and of others** that sat down with them. 30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with **publicans and sinners**? 31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

Luke 6:13-16 And when it was day, he called *unto him* his disciples: and of them he chose twelve, whom also he named apostles; 14 Simon, (whom he also named Peter,) and Andrew his brother, James and John, Philip and Bartholomew, 15 **Matthew** and Thomas, James the *son* of Alphaeus, and Simon called Zelotes, 16 And Judas *the brother* of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

1. Matthew is probably the biggest sinner on the team
  - a. He was a publican or tax collector
  - b. A picture of a tax collector Luke 19:2-10 And, behold, *there was a man named Zacchaeus, which was the chief*

among the publicans, and he was rich. 3 And he sought to see Jesus who he was; and could not for the press, because he was little of stature. 4 And he ran before, and climbed up into a sycomore tree to see him: for he was to pass that way. 5 And when Jesus came to the place, he looked up, and saw him, and said unto him, Zacchaeus, make haste, and come down; for to day I must abide at thy house. 6 And he made haste, and came down, and received him joyfully. 7 And when they saw *it*, they all murmured, saying, That he was gone to be guest with a man that is a sinner. 8 And Zacchaeus stood, and said unto the Lord; Behold, Lord, the half of my goods I give to the poor; and if I have taken any thing from any man by false accusation, I restore *him* fourfold. 9 And Jesus said unto him, This day is salvation come to this house, forsomuch as he also is a son of Abraham. 10 For the Son of man is come to seek and to save that which was lost.

c. The tax collectors ranked down there with the harlots

2. Matthew invites his lost friends to come to know Jesus

Luke 5:29 And **Levi made him a great feast** in his own house: and there was a great company of **publicans and**

**of others** that sat down with them. 30 But their scribes and Pharisees murmured against his disciples, saying, Why do ye eat and drink with **publicans and sinners**? 31 And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.

- a. The good thing about being so wicked is that they knew that they needed forgiveness and salvation [Luke 5:31](#)  
And Jesus answering said unto them, They that are whole need not a physician; but they that are sick. 32 I came not to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.
- b. Remember the publican that goes to the temple to pray and will not lift his head-realizing his condition made him humble

## Thomas

[John 11:16](#) Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.

- Didymus refers to Thomas being a twin

1. He always seems to be discouraged and doubting
  - a. Let us go die with Him **John 11:16** Then said Thomas, which is called Didymus, unto his fellowdisciples, Let us also go, that we may die with him.
  - b. Thomas seems often confused and does not want to be left out **John 14:5** Thomas saith unto him, Lord, we know not whither thou goest; and how can we know the way?
  - c. Possibly off pouting but still doubting **John 20:24** But Thomas, one of the twelve, called Didymus, was not with them when Jesus came. **25** The other disciples therefore said unto him, We have seen the Lord. But he said unto them, Except I shall see in his hands the print of the nails, and put my finger into the print of the nails, and thrust my hand into his side, I will not believe.

## 2. We can identify with Thomas

- a. It can be easy to find ourselves doubting the truth
- b. We can easily question if we even understand anything
- c. We can think that we have been left out
- d. We want to go off to a corner and lick our wounds

# James, Simon, and Judas

Luke 6:15-16 Matthew and Thomas, **James** the *son* of Alphaeus, and **Simon** called Zelotes, 16 And **Judas** the *brother* of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

1. We don't know hardly anything about these men
  - a. That is really good because it should be Jesus that gets the honor Ephesians 2:20 And are built upon the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief corner *stone*;
  - b. Jesus uses weak, common, background people Mark 15:40 There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of **James the less** and of Joses, and Salome;
  - c. God has many all over the world whose names we will never know Hebrews 11:32-38 And what shall I more say? for the time would fail me to tell of Gedeon, and of Barak, and of Samson, and of Jephthae; of David also, and Samuel, and of the prophets: 33 Who through faith

subdued kingdoms, wrought righteousness, obtained promises, stopped the mouths of lions, 34 Quenched the violence of fire, escaped the edge of the sword, out of weakness were made strong, waxed valiant in fight, turned to flight the armies of the aliens. 35 Women received their dead raised to life again: and others were tortured, not accepting deliverance; that they might obtain a better resurrection: 36 And others had trial of *cruel* mockings and scourgings, yea, moreover of bonds and imprisonment: 37 They were stoned, they were sawn asunder, were tempted, were slain with the sword: they wandered about in sheepskins and goatskins; being destitute, afflicted, tormented; 38 (Of whom the world was not worthy:) they wandered in deserts, and *in* mountains, and *in* dens and caves of the earth. 39 And these all, having obtained a good report through faith, received not the promise:

2. They were apostles and worked great works even if we do not have them recorded for us II Corinthians 12:12 Truly the signs of an apostle were wrought among you in all

patience, in signs, and wonders, and mighty deeds.

3. Simon was a Zealot, radical political party member
  - a. Zelotes refers to Zealot or man full of zeal
  - b. They were the strong tea party fundamentalist
  - c. The Zealots were known for being ready to die in a minute for what they believed in
  - d. They were basically the terrorist of their day
  - e. They were known to use curved knives and kill Romans or Jews that sided with Romans
  - f. Jesus called men from Matthew who was a traitor to his people to Simon who was a fundamentalist, fixed their problems and put them to work together

#### 4. Judas the son of James

- a. Judas means Jehovah leads
- b. The Bible lists three names for this man, [John 14:22](#)  
*Judas saith unto him, not Iscariot, Lord, how is it that thou wilt manifest thyself unto us, and not unto the world?* [Matthew 10:3](#) Philip, and Bartholomew; Thomas, and Matthew the publican; James *the son* of Alphaeus, and **Lebbaeus**, whose surname was **Thaddaeus**;



- i. These two names are like mamma's boy
  - ii. Thaddaeus means breast child
  - iii. Lebbaeus means heart child
- c. In the 12 they have everything from the sons of thunder to mamma's boy
- d. They have traitors to the nation and zealots
- e. But all get right and get used of God