

Simon the Zealot

The Apostle Who was a Revolutionary

Lu 6:13 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.

Ac 1:13 And when they were come in, they went up into an upper room, where abode both Peter, and James, and John, and Andrew, Philip, and Thomas, Bartholomew, and Matthew, James *the son* of Alphaeus, and Simon Zelotes, and Judas *the brother* of James.

Introduction:

1. Ruben Conner was an angry young man. Things had to change. He joined the Black Panthers because they wanted things to change also. A friend invited him to a Bible study where he heard the gospel of God's grace in Jesus Christ. Ruben became a Christian and the direction of his life was miraculously changed. He eventually became a church-planting pastor and then launched his own mission organization. He eventually became a pastor to pastors in helping to plant churches all over the United States. His drive to bring about social and spiritual change remained intact, but he was no longer motivated by anger, but by love.
2. Luke calls him "Simon Zelotes" and he was like Ruben
 - a. Some Bible versions call him, "Simon the Zealot"
 - b. This is the only thing we know about him – he was a zealot
 - c. Much is revealed in that one word – zealot
 - d. Jewish historian Josephus says that there were four groups within Judaism - Pharisees, Sadducees, Essenes, and the Zealots

1. The Pharisees were the religious fundamentalists of their day and they were fastidious about keeping the law.
2. The Sadducees were the religious liberals. They denied the supernatural. They were rich, aristocratic and powerful. They were in charge of the temple.
3. The Essenes were ascetics and celibates who lived in the desert. They copied and cared for the Dead Sea Scrolls and dedicated their lives to the study of the law.
4. The Zealots were more politically minded than the other groups.
 - a. The Zealots hated the Romans and their goal was to overthrow the Roman occupation
 - b. They advanced their agenda mainly through terrorism and acts of violence
 - c. The zealots would not compromise and work with the Romans. They were militant, violent outlaws.
 - d. They believed that only God himself had the right to rule over the Jews.
 - e. They believed that they were doing God's work by assassinating Roman soldiers, political leaders and anyone else who opposed them.
 - f. The Zealots were looking for a military Messiah who would come and deliver them from Roman occupation.
 - g. They were red-hot patriots who were ready to die in an instant for their beliefs.
3. We do not know how or when this man was called to be an apostle
4. The Bible does not record a single word that was said by this apostle
5. Richard Owen, the renowned zoologist, said that with one bone he was able to sketch the structure of an animal long since extinct. We will take the word "zealot" and sketch the character of Simon.

I. SIMON THE ZEALOT LOVED HIS COUNTRY

1. The Zealots were a party that had been active for many years before Jesus
 - a) *They refused to pay taxes to the Roman govt*

- b) *They firmly believed that Israel was the “holy land” and that what they produced and accumulated was not to be given to a foreign ruler.*
 - c) *The zealots would never accept Roman domination*
 - d) *They used terrorism for their cause of patriotism*
 - e) *These patriots banded themselves to deliver Judaea from Roman domination*
 - f) *These fanatical Jews seized every opportunity to stir up sedition and rebellion against the Romans*
 - g) *Among the Zealots was a group called the sicarii - “the dagger-men” These men carried a deadly, curved dagger in the folds of their robes. They would sneak up behind Roman soldiers and politicians and kill them expertly.*
 - h) *They were a group that used guerrilla fighters and tactics to try to drive out the Romans*
 - i) *They were a Jewish underground that functioned to keep Israel on the edge of open revolt most of the time*
2. They looked for a Messiah who would restore the Kingdom to Israel again with all the glory of the old theocracy
 3. At the time of Jesus many of their leaders had been executed by the Romans and the Zealots had begun to die out
 4. We do not know what kind of trouble Simon caused to free his country from the Romans
 - a) *It is easy to imagine Simon and a couple of other zealots slipping out at midnight; dodging silently through deserted, dark, back streets; avoiding Roman guards; climbing the wall and dropping down; crouching for a minute to listen; then dashing to the cover of an olive grove; stopping again; lying flat on the ground for a few minutes to make sure no one had detected him and was trailing them.*
 - b) *Then, hearts beating rapidly, scrambling cross country over the desolate hills, down a steep ravine; a password; then a bloody strike on a dozing Roman outpost.*

Simon the Zealot Loved His Country....

II. SIMON THE ZEALOT SOUGHT A BETTER LEADER

1. What a mighty transformation took place when Simon left the Zealots and became a follower of Christ
2. Through God's amazing grace the fiery patriotism of Simon became refined to a deep and lasting zeal for Christ and His kingdom
3. How he came to meet Christ we do not know
4. Was he drawn to Jesus' revolutionary message
5. Maybe he thought that Jesus was the up and coming leader of a new cause that would rid Israel of the Romans
6. Simon had been looking for the Messiah and in Jesus he found what he was looking for
7. Through constant teaching of the Master, Simon realized that Jesus' kingdom was not of this world
8. A miracle happened as the ardent, violent revolutionist laid his zeal at the feet of Jesus to become a herald of His gospel
 - a) *As a Zealot he would not pay taxes to Rome, but he followed Jesus who told people to "render to Caesar that which was Caesar's"*
 - b) *As a Zealot he used assassination and any other means necessary to accomplish his purposes*
 - c) *As a Zealot, Simon was against Roman occupation of Israel, but Jesus said that if "someone forced you to carry his pack a mile, then carry it two."*
9. The question we ask is "Why did Jesus choose such a man to be an apostle?"
 - a) *A reckless zealot would not be a safe man to have as an apostle*
 - b) *His reputation might hurt the cause of Christ*
 - c) *Jesus' ways are not our ways and Simon might be able to reach some whom the other disciples could not*
10. If you want to change things, enlist for service under the cause of Christ
 - a) *He has changed more people*
 - b) *He has changed more history than anyone else*
 - c) *Without money, without arms, he has conquered more millions*

than Alexander the Great, Caesar, Mohammed, Napoleon or Hitler combined.

Simon the Zealot Sought a Better Leader.....

III. SIMON THE ZEALOT SOUGHT A HOLIER CAUSE

1. Now that Simon was free from the old-time fanatical patriotism, his new cause was the cause of Christ
2. His old ardor and passion was curbed and consecrated and directed into another channel
3. One of the problems we see in churches today is lack of spiritual enthusiasm
4. Early believers turned the world upside down with the gospel
5. We need a new baptism of holy enthusiasm if we are going to warm a cold world

Simon the Zealot Sought a Holier Cause...

IV. SIMON THE ZEALOT SOUGHT INNER PEACE

1. The power of the gospel is seen in Matthew, the former Roman tax collector, being able to work together with Simon the former zealot to spread the gospel
2. Matthew had worked for the Romans and Simon had tried to destroy the Romans
3. Total opposites, they worked side by side
4. At one time in his life, Simon the Zealot probably would have gladly killed a tax-collector like Matthew
5. Former feuds were forgotten as they united in a new cause

V. LESSONS FOR US TODAY

1. Christ accepts people just as they are and changes them forever
He was Simon the Zealot while in the darkness and blindness of his mind he knew not the Messiah. He surely could not have been less Simon the Zealot when, gifted with the Holy Spirit, he went forth to cast out devils, heal the sick and to proclaim that the kingdom of

Heaven was at hand. I should be glad if many among us would earn the same title by so living that men would call us zealots, or even "fanatics," for this is so sleepy an age concerning religious things, that to be called fanatic, nowadays, is one of the highest honors a man can have conferred upon him! May we so act and live that we might truthfully wear the title of Christian zealots. - Spurgeon - 1865

2. The fiery enthusiasm he once had for Israel was now expressed in his devotion to Christ
3. The Lord can use all kinds of people
 - a) *Peter the enthusiastic apostle and Thomas the doubter*
 - b) *James and John the sons of thunder and Philip a man of practical, calculating wisdom*
 - c) *Nathanael, a soul full of gentle devotion and Simon the Zealot the rebel*
 - d) *Christ brought them together, imperfect as they were and made them what they became*
4. It is hard for some people to forget the past
 - a) *Simon had not been a zealot for several years, but the nickname stuck with him*
 - b) *When someone is saved, whom we have known for many years, lets try to forget the past and see them as they are now, a fellow-believer in Christ*

Conclusion:

1. When 17-year-old W.P.L. Mackay left his humble Scottish home to attend college, his mother gave him a Bible in which she wrote his name, and a verse of Scripture. College was only the beginning of the lifestyle which saddened his godly mother. At one point he sank so low he pawned the Bible to get money for whiskey. His mother prayed for him until she died. Eventually, Mackay became a doctor in a city hospital. One day a dying patient asked for his "book." After the man died, Mackay was curious to know what book could be so precious, so he searched the hospital room. He was surprised to find the very Bible

he had pawned years before. He went to his office and gazed again at the familiar writing, noticing many pages with underscored verses his mother had hoped he would read. After many hours in that office, Mackay knelt and prayed to God for mercy. W. P. Mackay, the physician, later became a minister. The Book he once treated so lightly became his most precious possession. He wrote the hymn "Revive Us Again."

2. Some early sources say that after the destruction of Jerusalem, Simon took the gospel north and preached in the British Isles. Like many of the other apostles, Simon simply disappears from biblical and historical record. The Zealot who had been ready to kill and be killed for a political agenda found a more fruitful cause for which to give his life.