



## Applied Faith Men's Bible Study

South Hills Baptist Church

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# The Apostles, Thaddeus and Nathanael

## Lesson #7

## Lesson #35

### Thaddeus

Compared to more prominent apostles in the Scripture, little is known about Thaddeus, one of Jesus Christ's 12 apostles. Part of the mystery stems from him being called by several different names in the Bible: Thaddeus, Jude, Judas, and Thaddaeus.

Some have argued that there are two or more different people represented by these names, but most Bible scholars agree that these various names all refer to the same person.

In lists of the Twelve, he is called Thaddeus or Thaddaeus, a surname for the name Lebbaeus (Matthew 10:3, KJV), which means "heart" or "courageous."

The picture is confused further when he is called Judas but is distinguished from Judas Iscariot. In the single epistle he authored, he calls himself "Jude, a servant of Jesus Christ and a brother of James." (Jude 1, NIV). That brother would be James the Less, or James the son of Alphaeus.

### **Historical Background About Jude (Thaddeus) the Apostle**

Little is known of Thaddeus' early life, other than he likely was born and raised in the same area of Galilee as Jesus and the other disciples — a region which is now part of northern Israel, just south of Lebanon. One tradition has him born into a Jewish family in the town of Paneas. Another tradition holds that his mother was a cousin of Mary, mother of Jesus, which would make him a blood relation to Jesus.

We also know that Thaddeus, like other disciples, preached the gospel in the years following the death of Jesus.

Tradition holds that he preached in Judea, Samaria, Idumaea, Syria, Mesopotamia, and Libya, possibly alongside Simon the Zealot.

Church tradition holds that Thaddeus founded a church at Edessa and was crucified there as a martyr. One legend suggests his execution occurred in Persia. Because he was executed by ax, this weapon is often shown in artworks depicting Thaddeus.

After his execution, his body is said to have been brought to Rome and placed in St. Peter's Basilica, where his bones remain to this day, interred in the same tomb with the remains of Simon the Zealot. Armenians, for whom St. Jude is the patron saint, believe that Thaddeus' remains are interred in an Armenian monastery.

## **Accomplishments of Thaddeus in the Bible**

Thaddeus learned the gospel directly from Jesus and loyally served Christ despite hardship and persecution. He preached as a missionary following Jesus' resurrection. He also penned the book of Jude. The final two verses of Jude (24-25) contain a doxology, or "expression of praise to God," considered the finest in the New Testament.

## **Weaknesses**

Like most of the other apostles, Thaddeus abandoned Jesus during his trial and crucifixion.

## **Life Lessons From Jude**

In his short epistle, Jude warns believers to avoid false teachers who twist the gospel for their own purposes, and he calls us to staunchly

## **Occupation**

Epistle writer, evangelist, missionary.

## **Family Tree**

Father: Alphaeus

Brother: James the Less

## **Nathanael**

Nathanael was one of the 12 original apostles of Jesus Christ. Little is written about him the Gospels and book of Acts.

Most Bible scholars believe Nathanael and Bartholomew were the same person. The name Bartholomew is a family designation, meaning "son of Tolmai." Nathanael means "gift of God." In the synoptic Gospels, the name Bartholomew always follows Philip in lists of the

Twelve. In the Gospel of John, Bartholomew is not mentioned at all; Nathanael is listed instead, after Philip.

John also describes Nathanael's call by Philip. The two may have been friends, for Nathanael scoffs, "Nazareth! Can anything good come from there?" (John 1:46, NIV) Seeing the two men approach, Jesus calls Nathanael a "true Israelite, in whom there is nothing false," then reveals that he saw Nathanael sitting under a fig tree before Philip called him. Nathanael responds to Jesus' vision by proclaiming him the Son of God, the King of Israel.

Church tradition says Nathanael carried a translation of Matthew's Gospel to northern India. Legend claims he was crucified upside down in Albania.

### **Accomplishments of Nathanael**

Nathanael accepted Jesus' call and became his disciple. He witnessed the Ascension and became a missionary, spreading the gospel.

### **Nathanael's Strengths**

Upon meeting Jesus for the first time, Nathanael overcame his skepticism about the insignificance of Nazareth and left his past behind. He died a martyr's death for Christ.

### **Nathanael's Weaknesses**

Like most of the other disciples, Nathanael abandoned Jesus during his trial and crucifixion.

### **Life Lessons from Nathanael**

Our personal prejudices can skew our judgment. By being open to God's word, we come to know the truth.

### **Hometown**

Cana in Galilee

### **Occupation**

Early life unknown, later, disciple of Jesus Christ.

### **Family Tree**

Father - Tolmai

### **Application/Activity**

Our discussion this week has been on the service of Nathaniel and Thaddeus. We have discussed our opinions on whether or not they were well known back in their time of spreading the gospel. Were they like these preachers of mega-churches or did they quietly go about their business. We also discussed the way these two apostles are viewed by modern day Christians. We have discussed the difference between being recognized for our service and quietly going about our business. Our application this week is to spend time in prayer and ask God how you can best serve His kingdom. How can you serve inside and outside the church? Pray to be given a servant's heart and to be happy to go about your business without recognition from man because we have faith that God sees all that we do.