

The Disciples: Simon the Zealot (Matthew 10:4; Luke 14:25-35; Romans 12:1-2)

Simon was a zealot with strong political views. He was passionate and in Christ His passion was made right. We must be willing to sacrifice our certain misguided ways for Christ.

Intro:

Today we are going to talk about Simon the Zealot. A dictionary might define a Zealot as someone who would show zeal. Zeal would mean eager desire or enthusiastic diligence. I might think of passion.

Jesus chose at least one disciple out of this political party. His name was Simon. As we look at the disciple named Simon you will see that Simon was passionate, yet he was willing to surrender his misplaced passion to a passion on following Jesus. We also must be passionate about following Christ and this does mean surrendering any misplaced passions.

In Matthew 10:4 and a few other passages we find his name listed as one of the twelve disciples. In Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18 he is called Simon the Canaanite. This is not a reference to the land of Canaan or the village of Cana. **The Hebrew root qanna means to be zealous.** We cannot know much about this disciple. The Scriptures don't tell us much. However, knowing that he was a Zealot does tell us more than we realize. First, this tells us that he was extremely passionate about certain political views and secondly this tells us that he must have surrendered those views to follow Christ.

- I. Now, what were the Zealots?¹
 - a. That name in Jesus' day signified a well-known and widely feared outlaw political sect, and Simon had apparently been a member of that sect.
 - b. The Zealots hated the Romans, and their goal was to overthrow the Roman occupation. They advanced their agenda primarily through terrorism and acts of violence.
 - c. The Zealots were extremists in every sense. Like the Pharisees, they interpreted the law literally. Unlike the Pharisees (who were willing to compromise for political reasons), the Zealots were militant, violent, outlaws. They believed only God Himself had the right to rule over the Jews. And therefore they believed they were doing God's work by assassinating Roman soldiers, political leaders and anyone else who opposed them.
 - d. They would wear long cloaks with daggers that were concealed and kill Romans as they walked by in a crowded area.

¹ I am grateful to John MacArthur's work for much of this information. MacArthur, John. *Twelve Ordinary Men, How the Master Shaped His Disciples for Greatness, and What He Wants to Do with You*. Thomas Nelson, Inc. Nashville, Dallas, Mexico City, Rio De Janeiro, Beijing. 2002. Pages 174-178

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- e. The Zealots were hoping for a Messiah who would lead them in overthrowing the Romans and restore the Kingdom to Israel with its Solomonic glory. They were red-hot patriots, ready to die in an instant for what they believed.
- f. They involved themselves in guerilla warfare, burning, plundering and going up into Galilee to hide. And sometimes even killed their own countrymen whom they believed compromised with Rome.
- g. John MacArthur says the following in his sermon on this disciple: In fact, there are historians who believe in 70 A.D. when the Romans destroyed Jerusalem, Titus Vespasian, the Roman general, when they destroyed Jerusalem and massacred a million to a hundred thousand Jews in Jerusalem in that one terrible holocaust, that it was largely precipitated by the Zealots. Let me read you what one historian says, "When Jerusalem was besieged and when the inhabitants were slowly starving to death, and when the outlook was completely hopeless, within the besieged city a civil war was raging and the Zealots and the assassins, who were a part of the Zealots, were murdering anyone who suggested a more moderate policy, or who was prepared to come to terms before ultimate ruin engulfed the city. The Zealots and the Assassins were crazed with hatred for the Romans and for anyone who had anything to do with the Romans. It was their insane hatred of Rome which in the end destroyed their city." I mean, when a Roman army moved in and besieged the city, what they did was cut off all the supplies so they began to starve the people out. That's how sieges used to work in the ancient world. That's how you defeated a city. You just surrounded the thing and in its grasp the city's supplies were cut off, the people began to starve to death and as they began to starve to death, they would come to a negotiating position. And when you got them into a position of weakness, this would be like we would call "cold war power," when they knew they were on the edge of total defeat, they would then negotiate some kind of truce.
- h. Well there were people in Jerusalem who wanted to compromise their position and negotiate with Rome to save their lives, the Zealots wouldn't allow it. They actually killed the Jews who wanted to negotiate and as a result, wound up getting their entire city destroyed and the population massacred.
- i. They were so zealous they literally killed their families, rather than be taken by the Romans. This is Simon. MacArthur says: "Now think about Simon having to hang around Matthew who had sold himself to Rome to extort taxes out of Israel, who was the most hated and despised of all people in that society because he was a Roman tax collector who betrayed his people and aided and abetted the pagan invader. He would just as soon stuck his little knife in the heart of Matthew outside this shadow of Christ in which he had wonderfully come."
- j. MacArthur points out how amazing it is that Jesus picks this man as a disciple. He was basically a terrorist.

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- k. It is quite possible that Judas Iscariot was a zealot as well. But, Judas never sacrificed his political allegiance; he turned Jesus over to the people who crucified Him. But Simon, he didn't. He sacrificed his political beliefs for Jesus.
- l. MacArthur writes: But Simon believed the truth. And the fiery enthusiasm that he had for Israel was turned to Christ. Eusebius, the church historian, says he preached in the British Isles, in Egypt and in Africa. And finally because of his preaching, they sawed him in half.

II. So, our major application today has to do with sacrifice. Let's read a Scripture from Luke 14:25-33:

Now great crowds accompanied him, and he turned and said to them, ²⁶ "If anyone comes to me and does not hate his own father and mother and wife and children and brothers and sisters, yes, and even his own life, he cannot be my disciple. ²⁷ Whoever does not bear his own cross and come after me cannot be my disciple. ²⁸ For which of you, desiring to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, whether he has enough to complete it? ²⁹ Otherwise, when he has laid a foundation and is not able to finish, all who see it begin to mock him, ³⁰ saying, 'This man began to build and was not able to finish.' ³¹ Or what king, going out to encounter another king in war, will not sit down first and deliberate whether he is able with ten thousand to meet him who comes against him with twenty thousand? ³² And if not, while the other is yet a great way off, he sends a delegation and asks for terms of peace. ³³ So therefore, any one of you who does not renounce all that he has cannot be my disciple.

- a. Simon would not have continued to be a disciple of Jesus had he not counted the cost and sacrificed his political allegiance to the party of the Zealots. Jesus gives four illustrations regarding who is a *true* follower of Jesus.
 1. A true follower of Jesus is more devoted to Jesus than anyone else, even family. In this passage Jesus says that they must hate their family. Jesus doesn't literally mean that they must hate their family. He means that they must be most committed to Jesus. He was using hyperbole which is literary exaggeration.
 2. A true follower of Jesus must carry their own cross to follow Him. The cross was the method of crucifixion and the person to be crucified had to carry their own instrument of death to the location of crucifixion.
 3. A true follower of Christ must count the cost prior to becoming a disciple. With the type of commitment Jesus calls for we must really think about this.

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4. A true disciple of Christ must give up all possessions. This means that we are more committed to Christ than our possessions.
- b. It is time to clarify once again. Salvation is a free gift. We don't earn it. But once we accept Jesus' free gift of salvation He calls us to a life of following Him. Anyone can get on Jesus' team, but it is a team that requires more commitment than any other.
 - i. So, I ask you to consider your discipleship. Jesus challenged the people with this when there were large crowds following Him. Verse 25 says this. Are you committed to Christ beyond sports? Beyond your occupation?
 - ii. Romans 12:1 says this: *Therefore, I urge you, brothers and sisters, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as a living sacrifice, holy and pleasing to God—this is your true and proper worship.*
 - iii. Simon the Zealot sacrificed his political allegiance to follow Jesus. Are you willing, are we willing to sacrifice our misplaced passions to follow Jesus? Are we willing to be *living sacrifices* to Jesus?

Conclusion:

Speaking of passion how about a few short illustrations:

7690 Violins Without A Peer

Centuries ago, there lived in Italy a maker of violins, Antonio Stradivari. When he became able to have a workshop of his own he made it a rule that no violin should ever leave the shop until it was as near perfection as human care and skill could make it. He said, "God needs violins to send his music into the world, and if my violins are defective, God's music will be spoiled."

Bending over his workbench in Cremona, Antonio Stradivari, who died December 18, 1737, issued a vow that, though more than 200 years, has remained valid:

"Other men will make other violins, but no man shall make a better one."

7696 Churchill: Never Surrender

We shall go to the end, we shall fight in France, we shall fight on the seas and oceans, we shall fight with growing confidence and growing strength in the air, we shall defend our Island whatever the cost may be, we shall fight on the landing grounds, we shall fight in the fields and in the streets, we shall fight in the hills; we shall never surrender, and even if, which I do not for a moment believe, this Island or a large part of it were subjugated and starving, then our Empire beyond the seas, armed and guarded by the British Fleet, would carry on the struggle, until, in God's good time, the New World, with all its power and might steps forth to the rescue and the liberation of the old.

—Winston Churchill

There is a show called 24. It was made by Fox and it aired for eight seasons. In this show Jack Bauer investigates and finds people who have misguided passions and so they want to harm the United States. These people say they are Patriots and want to help the United States, but their passion has become

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misguided. So, a passionate government agent named Jack Bauer played by Keifer Sutherland saves the country again and again.

Sometimes our passions are misplaced; they are passions for the world and not for our eternal King Jesus. Surrender those passions and zealous behaviors that are passions for iPods, ipads, computers, boats, sports, entertainment, worldly politics and turn those over to Jesus. So, I urge you to be a living sacrifice. Do what Simon did and change your allegiance to Jesus.

Let's pray