

Introduction:

A few years ago, my father and I were hiking through the area of where the first and second battles of Bull Run were fought in the Civil War. As we were walking down a path, we noticed the ruins of a foundation out in an overgrown field. We decided to check it out. Obviously, some building had been there a long time ago. We guessed it had been a church building or perhaps an old homestead, for next to the foundation were several very worn and weathered grave stones. Their markings were barely legible. Sometimes there was a first and last name and a year. On a couple of markers there was just a first name

Who were these people? What was their story? What things did they do? What brought them to this place? But other than a fading gravestone, nothing is known about them.

How would you feel if a 150 years after your life on the earth the only specific record about you was your first name? No biography. No eulogy No legacy. No family tree. That may not be a comfortable thought. Most of us want to leave some sort of mark. We want our lives to make a difference. We hope our 80 years or so on this planet amounts to more than a name and a date. We want to be remembered. We want others to know that we were here.

That's what the late Steve Jobs thought, the former CEO of Apple. One of the things he often told people who interviewed him was "I want to put a ding in the universe." He wanted to leave a mark. Most would certainly agree that he did that.

But it is not how history records our life that's important. Your significance is not determined by what others say and write about you after you're gone. How earth remembers us is not what matters. Ultimately, it is how heaven remembers us.

Body:

To understand this we only need to read a short list of names in Luke 6:13-16

13 When morning came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them. whom he also designated apostles: 14 Simon (whom he named Peter), his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, 15 Matthew, Thomas, James son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called the

**Zealot, 16 Judas son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.
(NIV)**

When we read this list of Jesus' apostles, some of the names leap right out at us. Guys like Peter, James, John, and even Judas Iscariot. We know who these guys are. We know what they did. History records them in detail. The Scriptures are full of accounts of their words and teachings. But tucked away in this list are a couple of names that are so obscure, we tend to just skim right over them and not even notice.

They are James the son of Alphaeus, and Judas, son of James. No relation between them. They weren't father and son. Basically, all we know about these two guys is their names, the names of their fathers, and that they were apostles.

What We Do Know

The fact that they were apostles, does tell us some very important things about them. **First, they gave up everything to follow Jesus** (Lk. 18:28). They left their jobs and their homes to follow Jesus and learn from him. Even when all others turned and left they still followed him.

Secondly, we know that as apostles they were empowered first by Jesus, then by the Holy Spirit to heal the sick, to cast out demons and perform miracles. They were able to do what Paul called in 2 Cor 12:12, *"the things that mark an apostle—signs, wonders and miracles."*

Thirdly, because of their uncommon calling, they helped form the foundation of the church. Ephesians 2:20 tells us that the church is built on the apostles and prophets as a foundation with Christ as the cornerstone.

There is also one other thing we know about them, but I will save that for later. Until Jesus called these men and set them apart, there was nothing special about them. There was nothing remarkable about them that set them apart. They had no great fame or accomplishment. They were just common men with an uncommon calling.

Scanty History

Other than their uncommon calling, they were so common we know next to nothing about them. If they ever wrote anything, it is lost to history. If they ever asked Jesus any insightful questions or said or did anything to stand out from the crowd, with only one exception, the gospel writers did not record it. Basically, all we have is their names. In one case, James is even called Little James.

James

When you compare the list of the apostles in each of the gospels with each other and with a couple of other scriptures, we do discover a couple of curious facts. One, we find out that James' mother, Mary, was a devoted follower of Jesus. In fact, she is one of the women who were at the crucifixion, and she was one of the women who came to prepare Jesus body for burial.

In Mark 15:40, in the NIV, James is called James the Younger. Other translations have it as James the less. The Greek word used here is *mikro*, from which we get *micro*, and it means small. Literally, he is James the small, or *Little James*. It may mean that he was the younger of the two James that were apostles. He might have been the youngest of all the apostles. He might have been the baby of the group.

It could mean that James was short. He was literally little James. Insert Roy joke here. However, some Bible scholars think it means that he was of little notoriety. That certainly makes sense for what little we do know about Little James.

Early church accounts of James are sketchy at best, and we know that many of them are legendary. Some records indicate that he may have taken the gospel to Syria and Persia. We also have varying accounts of his death. Some say he was stoned. Others say he was beaten to death, and still others say he was crucified. Bottom line is we don't know. All we know is that he died for his faith.

Judas

When we look at Judas we also find that we know very little about him other than he had the bum luck to share the same name with the guy who would betray Jesus. Judas had been a perfectly fine name, but Judas Iscariot had to come along

and ruin it for the rest of history. How would you like to be named Adolph, Jezebel, Ted Bundy, or Osama?

Luke and John both distinguish this Judas from that other Judas. They want us to know he's not THAT Judas. Matthew and Mark use a different name for him altogether, probably to avoid any confusion. They call him Thaddaeus. Thaddeaus is a nickname which means *breast child*. This lends support to the idea that he was the youngest. All of the guys call him Thaddeaus. It's an endearing but teasing nickname. It's kind of like calling him mama's boy. That's not too big of a stretch to imagine among a group of guys who hang out together all the time is it?

John 14:22 records the only incident involving this Judas in Scripture. In the upper room during the Last Supper, he asks Jesus, "*Lord, how is it that you will manifest yourself to us, and not to the world?*" This is certainly more insightful than some of the things the other disciples were saying at this time, but it's not a whole lot to go on.

Here we have two men who were called to fill two of the most important roles in all of history, yet we know almost nothing about them. History records no accomplishment or achievement of either of these men. Their teachings and writings have not been passed down through the generations. From an earthly point of view, their impact was minimal at best.

An Eternal Honor

But is that what matters? Is how history remembers us what is important? Is that what we should seek and strive for? Are you here to leave your mark?

Is that why Jesus called these two disciples, James and Judas? Certainly, he called them in Mark 16:15 to "*go into all the world and preach the gospel to all creation.*" The good news they proclaimed changed history, even though history remembers almost nothing of their specific contribution.

What matters most is not how history remembers you; it's how eternity remembers you.

In Revelation 21, we read glorious description of the new Jerusalem as John gets a sneak peek of our eternal home. Here's one of the things

John sees in verse 14, *"The wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb."*

Two of those names will be James, the son of Alpheus and Judas, son of James. There they will be remembered and honored for all eternity. What is greater, being remembered for a few decades or even a few centuries on earth, or being remembered for all of eternity?

(Advance Slide) The most famous quote by artist Andy Warhol is "In the future, everyone will be world-famous for 15 minutes." Ironically, he's famous for saying something he may have never actually said. But whether your name is known here for 15 seconds, 15 minutes, 15 years, or for 15 centuries, doesn't really matter. What matters is that your name is known in eternity.

You can strive all your life to find your fifteen minutes of fame, and never find it, but there is one simple decision you can make today that will insure your name is known for all eternity. John also tells us this about the new Jerusalem in Revelation 21:22-27

22 I did not see a temple in the city, because the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. 23 The city does not need the sun or the moon to shine on it, for the glory of God gives it light, and the Lamb is its lamp. 24 The nations will walk by its light, and the kings of the earth will bring their splendor into it. 25 On no day will its gates ever be shut, for there will be no night there. 26 The glory and honor of the nations will be brought into it. 27 Nothing impure will ever enter it, nor will anyone who does what is shameful or deceitful, but only those whose names are written in the Lamb's book of life. – Revelation 21:22-27

When you choose to follow Jesus as your Lord and Savior, your name is written in the book of life. Having your name written there is your pass into the new Jerusalem. That is your citizenship in the heavenly city.

If you could pick where to be famous, where would you pick? Here or Heaven?

We live lives of varying significance and influence, but at the end of our lives what matters is not what other people say about us, but what our Lord says about us. The words we want to hear are what Jesus says in Mt. 25:23, *"Well done, good and faithful servant...Come and share your master's happiness."* That is the eulogy

for which we should all live. If the only thing that is known about you is that your name is written down, where is it written down?

The Dash

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I read of a man who stood to speak at the funeral of a friend. He referred to the dates on the tombstone from the beginning... to the end.

He noted that first came the date of birth and spoke of the following date with tears, but he said what mattered most of all was the dash between those years.

For that dash represents all the time they spent alive on earth and now only those who loved them know what that little line is worth.

For it matters not, how much we own, the cars... the house... the cash. What matters is how we live and love and how we spend our dash.

So think about this long and hard; are there things you'd like to change? For you never know how much time is left that still can be rearranged.

To be less quick to anger and show appreciation more and love the people in our lives like we've never loved before.

If we treat each other with respect and more often wear a smile... remembering that this special dash might only last a little while.

So when your eulogy is being read, with your life's actions to rehash, would you be proud of the things they say about how you lived your dash?

You have to pick where you want to be famous.

If the only thing that is known about you is that your name is written down, where is it written down.