

# Who was Thaddeus in the Bible?

Thaddeus was one of the original twelve disciples chosen by Jesus Christ. Thaddeus, whose name is also spelled Thaddaeus, is somewhat of a mystery apostle. For one, Thaddeus is hardly mentioned in the Bible. To complicate matters, Scripture refers to Thaddeus by a few different names.

Jerome, a fourth-century Bible scholar, dubbed Thaddeus “Trinomious,” which means “the man with three names.” In both the Gospels of Matthew and Mark, the apostle is listed as Thaddeus (Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18). In the King James Version of Matthew 10:3, he is called “Lebbaeus, whose surname was Thaddaeus.” Luke, however, replaces the name Thaddeus with “Judas son of James” in both Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13. And when the apostle John mentions Thaddeus, he calls him “Judas (not Iscariot)” (John 14:22).

Judas was a popular name in New Testament times. It means, “Jehovah leads.” Bible scholars suggest that Judas was likely the name given to Thaddeus at birth, while Lebbaeus and Thaddeus were nicknames. Lebbaeus translates as “heart-child,” and Thaddeus means “breast-child,” so it’s possible these were terms of endearment given him by family members. John MacArthur proposes in his book *Twelve Ordinary Men* that these nicknames suggest Thaddeus was a gentle soul with a tender, childlike heart.

The only recorded words of Thaddeus are in John 14. Jesus and the twelve disciples were gathered together in the Upper Room for the Last Supper. The Lord was speaking to them about the troubling matter of His impending death. The apostles had questions and concerns. Jesus promised to give them the Holy Spirit to help them and to dwell within them. Then He said, “Before long, the world will not see me anymore, but you will see me. Because I live, you also will live. On that day you will realize that I am in my

Father, and you are in me, and I am in you. Whoever has my commands and keeps them is the one who loves me. The one who loves me will be loved by my Father, and I too will love them and show myself to them” (John 14:19-21).

Confused, Thaddeus asked Jesus, “Lord, why are you going to reveal yourself only to us and not to the world at large?” (John 14:22, NLT). Thaddeus’s question reveals a few things about the man. First, he felt comfortable enough in his relationship with Jesus to interrupt Him with a question. Second, Thaddeus wanted to know why Jesus would treat the disciples differently from the world. And third, like most first-century Jews, Thaddeus was expecting a Messiah who would reveal Himself in power to the world.

The answer Jesus gave Thaddeus was simple: “Anyone who loves me will obey my teaching. My Father will love them, and we will come to them and make our home with them. Anyone who does not love me will not obey my teaching. These words you hear are not my own; they belong to the Father who sent me” (John 14:23-24). Our love for God is expressed through obedience to His teaching. Love and obedience are inseparable for Christians. Those who love and obey God are His children. These children receive the Holy Spirit, who reveals Christ to them, but Christ remains hidden to the world.

Nothing more is revealed about Thaddeus in the Bible. We know Thaddeus, like the other disciples, left his former life to follow and serve Jesus Christ faithfully, enduring hardship and persecution. Some scholars believe Thaddeus wrote the book of Jude, although the more widely accepted view is that Jude, the half-brother of Jesus, penned the book. Extrabiblical literature says that, after Pentecost, Thaddeus took the gospel message north, where he performed miracles, preached, and founded a church in Edessa, an area in modern Turkey. One tradition says that he was either clubbed or axed to death

for his faith, and another that he was crucified.