

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

The Risk of Choosing Simon **St. Simon and St. Jude**, apostles Saturday, October 28, 2017 8:15 AM Eph 2:19-22; Lk 6:12-16 (If we are trying to do God's will, everything will work out for the best, as Jesus discovered in the resurrection.)

Today we are celebrating the feast of Saints Simon the Zealot, not Simon Peter, and Thaddeus, or Jude.

Now this idea of Simon the Zealot is very significant in the life of Jesus. Some say Jesus was a Zealot, but there's absolutely no proof of this. What is a Zealot? In order to understand what a Zealot is, we have to understand something about **Judaism as it grew and developed from the time of the Exile onward**. In the beginning, Israel had a covenant with God in which God was king until he appointed David to take his place, as it were, as a vicar. **David was God's vicar**. But all that went down the tube eventually and Israel ended up in exile in Babylon for about fifty years. During this time Judaism as we know it developed. **By Judaism we mean now only 1/12th of the original covenant of 12 tribes; only one is left, Judah**. The rest have all disappeared or mixed with gentiles.

Now this one tribe of Judah had within it **two opposing tendencies: one very political, the reestablishing of Judea as a nation**. And they understood the kingdom of God is a nation of Jews, ruled by Jews under the law of God. But there was another group, wisdom, men of wisdom, **wisdom school that said that the covenant had to be thought of in a spiritual sense**. And associated with this wisdom school were the Pharisees, who saw the Law, the Torah, as a form of wisdom teaching God's regulations. **So spirituality and faith is a matter of walking in God's regulations**. These two tendencies vacillated like a pendulum. **The Pharisaical wisdom school allowed Judaism to expand beyond Judea and become a Diaspora, a world religion, if you will. But the other side stayed very strong and eventually prevailed in reestablishing a home in Judea and rebuilding the Temple**. Even some of the prophets hailed this as the will of God.

The leaders of the Judean political system were the Sadducees, as opposed to the Pharisees, and **the chief priests were the Sadducees. They formed an alliance with Pontius Pilate and various factors in the Roman government, and the Zealots didn't like that.**

The Zealots were people who wanted a political Judea ruled by Jews, but didn't want the chief priests or the Sadducees to rule because they saw them as sellouts to gentile power. They were purists, if you will. And **by accepting Simon as one of Jesus' disciples actually Jesus created an enormous problem for himself because then he was suspected of being a Zealot himself, and it became the interest of the chief priest to get rid of him.**

Now for a long time they couldn't move against Jesus because their opponents in Rome were in the ascendancy, but eventually at a certain moment that ended. There was a shift in Rome. **The Emperor decided he would no longer favor the party he was favoring and he shifted over to a different party that were allies of the chief priests. And that's why they were able to inaugurate the movement against Christ that led to his crucifixion.**

So this was a very expensive move when Jesus accepted Simon as a disciple. **We don't always know the consequences of our decisions.** What Scripture wants to constantly bring about in our mind, however, is the conviction that **if we are trying to do God's will, everything will work out for the best, as Jesus discovered in the resurrection.**