

Hey, today we're focusing on a fresh new episode in the Whitestone series profiling notable, very accomplished people who deserve our interest and study. And we're going to start with talking about someone who isn't the direct focal point of this episode—instead, his idea accelerated the foundational thinking for this episode. And that person is the Reverend David Railton, who was a clergyman, a pastor for the Church of England and also a military chaplain during the First World War a bit over a century ago.

And here's the snapshot of what happened: ministering in the midst of the horrors of chemical warfare, widespread destruction, and massive loss of life in that war, Railton thought up the idea of "The Tomb of the Unknown Warrior" in Britain. You see, there were some soldiers killed who were "unknown" due to complete destruction of their identifiable characteristics like fingerprints or facial features or something like so-called "dog tags" around his neck, you know, a military equivalent of an identifying driver's license.

And it wasn't long before Britain devoted itself to implementing Railton's idea, in an exalted place called Westminster Abbey where kings and queens of England are entombed and honored. And in just that way, all those who sacrificed their lives to their country yet remained "missing" in a very concrete sense were acknowledged by just one comprehensive, overarching symbol: the tomb of one manifestly representative soldier who countless families, friends, neighbors and grateful citizens could identify with.

And the idea spread quickly to other countries, like France and Canada and the U.S. In Arlington, Virginia, America's Tomb of the Unknown Soldier was crafted and, ever since, then attended to 24/7 by a specially trained military unit, especially proficient in honoring the fallen in intricate ways for spectators to absorb and reflect upon. There are actually multiple tombs at the site, each representing the specific wars from World War I to Vietnam—with the end goal of grateful remembrance for heroic actions taken in each war.

But science caught up to and surpassed that particular lack of knowing identity. The man buried in the Vietnam tomb was later identified by his DNA—he was USAF 1LT Michael Blassie. Then Lieutenant Blassie was re-buried in a veteran's cemetery in St. Louis, and the crypt for Vietnam he vacated remains empty. But the crypts for WWI, WWII, and Korea still contain the remains of their respective soldiers.

This is where it gets a bit interesting. When you look at discussion blogs about all this reality, often someone asserts that there's no need for any other type of these "unknown" tombs because DNA processes can always identify remains of bodies from now on. That's true, insofar as it goes.

But what about wars around the world where folks don't necessarily gather bodies respectfully *or at all*, for that matter? About the time of recording this episode, the ruthless Assad father-and-son regime of five decades in Syria dissolved and many families have discovered that tens of thousands of their relatives no longer were in Assad's prisons—those folks had simply vanished. It's situations like these that aren't structured to accomplish remembrance via an unknown, symbolic, dead body in a tomb.

*But God's economy is so radically different!* You see, every person who's walked the face of the earth was or is known by God. ...Including those unknown soldiers buried in D.C. ...Including those people who died or vanished in Syria over fifty years. ...Including everyone who died at sea. ...Including you. ...Including me.

That is all true, no matter when our final time on earth will be, *yes, God knows us all*. In God's economy, there are no unknowns in tombs. That should startle and even shake those who reject God and will face Him at the Great White Throne judgement (Revelation 20:11-15). And it should excite those who believed, were saved, and faithfully "built on the foundation of Christ"—they will receive rewards from Him at His Judgement Seat (1 Corinthians 3:9-16).

But an ironic thing about the universal church throughout history is that it often does tend to mimic worldly values on the issue of "being known." You know, like being excited about world-famous actors or athletes or leaders perceived to be believers—yeah, many Christians seem to tend to ascribe that there's somehow higher importance as to what these people are doing. But often some of these folks are evil or simply immature, a stumbling block for the Kingdom—*not someone building on the foundation of Christ*.

Take Roman Catholic Pope Innocent IV...who was not truly innocent at all. On May 15, 1252, the Pope issued a papal bull that legally *legitimized torture* in the interrogation of called-out “heretics” who disagreed with him and his church hierarchy. And, sadly, some well-known pastors for two thousand years have failed in ways that become public. And take note that all the theologians who are demonstrably quite famous over the millennia disagree in crucial ways with one another—and in so doing, one or more of them is gravely incorrect! *Beware: fame does not confer accuracy or truth—sometimes it’s the opposite!*

Still, hear this: in the final analysis, only Jesus is qualified to judge in all cases...yes, *in every case*, because everyone who ever lived will appear before Jesus the Christ and Judge. For those who didn’t acknowledge God, there will be severe consequences. For those who did acknowledge Christ, Jesus alone will determine if and when each action or every person is worthy of reward due to “building on the foundation of Christ.”

And ostentatious levels of fame or the fact that Jesus does actually “know” everyone is absolutely not the determining factor—Jesus has to *truly “know” each one by their belief in Christ and Him crucified for their sins*. In fact, Matthew 7:21, 23 (ESV) teaches us that some “who say to [Christ], ‘Lord, Lord,’” at the time of their meeting Him will hear these words back from Christ: ‘I never knew you, depart from me.’”

But *in contrast*, what’s so spiritually delicious, invigorating, and personally motivating to many Christians is that a number of those supposedly unknown warriors literally crossing millennia of time can and literally will receive rewards for truly “building on the foundation of Christ”—as God Himself defines His rewards! That’s right, *believers routinely unknown beyond a small circle of people* in the annals of written history or supposedly “important” history...well, those can be fully known and rewarded by Christ for their fruits!

So, how about a few interesting folks in the New Testament? First, a nameless Gentile unknown to virtually everyone, but whose act of faith was recorded in the Scriptures for billions to later read (Mark 7:25-30):

“But immediately a woman whose little daughter had an unclean spirit heard of him and came and fell down at his feet. Now the woman was a Gentile, a Syrophenician by birth. And she begged him to cast the demon out of her daughter. And he said to her, ‘Let the children be fed first, for it is not right to take the children’s bread and throw it to the dogs.’ But she answered him, ‘Yes, Lord; yet even the dogs under the table eat the children’s crumbs.’ And he said to her, ‘For this statement you may go your way; the demon has left your daughter.’ And she went home and found the child lying in bed and the demon gone.”

And then there’s the account of Tabitha, also known as Dorcas, in this narrative in Acts 7:36-37,40-42:

“Now there was in Joppa a disciple named Tabitha, which, translated, means Dorcas. She was full of good works and acts of charity. In those days she became ill and died, and when they had washed her, they laid her in an upper room. ...Peter...knelt down and prayed; and turning to the body he said, ‘Tabitha, arise.’ And she opened her eyes, and when she saw Peter she sat up. And he gave her his hand and raised her up. Then, calling the saints and widows, he presented her alive. And it became known throughout all Joppa, and many believed in the Lord.” God knew Dorcas as one full of good works and acts of charity!

And how about the ultimate in being unknown, the Bible account of the nameless poor widow giving all she had—as contrasted with the rich, according to Jesus Himself who was standing nearby? (Luke 21:1-4)

These three stories recounted in Scripture recorded women who were culturally disenfranchised, perhaps doubly so—with each surely virtually unknown in their larger geographical area. Of course, this indicates that Jesus has His “highest” level of “knowing” when it comes to the faithful doing His Father’s will.

The title of this particular podcast episode in this “About” series has moved beyond a specific person to this: “About the Unknown Believer.” Yes, we’re talking about people of faith, folks that moved beyond mere belief into acting upon God’s will. Hey, this gift of faith is for each believer, ready for each of us to willfully act upon daily, culminating in the future meeting where the Son of God rewards those building on the foundation of Christ. *This is His intent for each of His children, you and me included! Wow.*

## *A&A: Application & Action*

1. Do you believe that every person attending church is “known” by God in the sense of rightly arriving at the Judgment Seat of Christ for believers instead of arriving at the Great White Throne of Judgment for unbelievers? Discuss.
  
2. Do you tend to believe that professing Christians who are widely known or famous—say, from popular theologians to star athletes—tend to be quite on target with a “building on the foundation of Christ”...perhaps that God has blessed their accuracy with fame? Or not? Discuss.
  
3. Do you comfortably believe and act upon the knowledge that you yourself can be relatively unknown and yet be fully “building on the foundation of Christ,” as God has directed your steps? Discuss.