

Not about position but about disposition to serve others - James and John

1- Family life

John, or Johanan, was a common Hebrew name meaning God has been gracious.

James, Iakobos is a Hellenized form of Iakob or Jacob, also a common Jewish name, meaning holder of heels or supplanter

Zebedee, Zebedaios means gift of Yahweh.

In most accounts James is mentioned first, and at times John is identified as his brother:

He saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John (Mark 1:19), or James and John the sons of Zebedee (Mark 10:35).

Because James is mentioned first, the suggestion has been made that he was the older of the two brothers.

“The mother of James and John is named among the women at the cross in Matthew 27:55- 56:

Many women were also there, looking on from a distance; they had followed Jesus from Galilee and had provided for him. Among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of the sons of Zebedee

Some interpreters have identified the mother of the sons of Zebedee as Salome on the basis of the parallel account in Mark 15:40

There were also women looking on from a distance, among them were Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the younger

and of Joses, and Salome. These used to follow him and provided for him when he was in Galilee; and there were many other women who had come up with him to Jerusalem.

in all the lists, Mary the mother of James the younger and Joseph (or Joses) would be the mother of Jesus (Mark 6:3; 15:40; Matt. 13:55; 27:56). Salome is suggested to be the mother of James and John, the sons of Zebedee and that she was the sister of Mary, the mother of Jesus. That would make James and John the maternal first cousins of Jesus.

2- Fisher men

James and John were fishermen, and sons of a fisherman, who probably spent their early life in Bethsaida, Capernaum, or other villages. As a fishermen, James and John were neither rich nor destitute.

The frequent references to fish in the New Testament indicate that fish was an important part of the diet of first-century Galileans and Judeans

The population was so dependent upon the supply of fish that when the fishermen interrupted the supply by observing religious feast days, there were complaints.

The importance of the fishing industry is evidenced by some of the names around the Sea of Galilee. Bethsaida means "House of the Fisher" or "Fishville." Magdala, the home of Mary Magdalene, was located on the western shore, north of Tiberias. It is identified by the Talmud as migdalnunaiya,¹¹ which means "Fish Tower."

They abandoned their business without regret to answer the call.

Application: discipleship is aligning our priorities with God's priority.

Jesus may have called the brothers "sons of thunder" not as a reflection of their character but maybe as a promise of what they could become. Mark 3: 17

In Jewish tradition, names were often given either as a promise or as an act of laying upon the recipient a specific task.⁴⁵ Accordingly, the "sons of thunder" were probably recognized by Jesus for their potential as thundering witnesses, not because they were hot-tempered.

As members of the inner circle, James and John witnessed the raising of Jairus' daughter (Mark 5:37, Luke 8:51), the Transfiguration (Mark 9:2), and Jesus' agony in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:33, Matthew 26:37).

3- Two significant discipleship opportunities

The biblical narratives hardly mention the sons of Zebedee separately

A) Invoking fire from heaven

And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said, "Lord, do you want us to tell fire to come down from heaven and consume them?" Luke 9: 54

B) Request for a position

James and John asked Jesus to let them sit, one at his right and one at his left, in his future glory (Mark 10:35–40), a favour that Jesus said was not his to grant.

Jesus invited them to be co-minister rather than prime minister as they wish. emptying themselves in love to serve others.

The son of man came not to be served but to serve and give his life as a ransom for many Mark 10: 45

Application: discipleship is not about position but about disposition to serve others.

James:

Beheaded by Herod Agrippa during the early Christian persecution in Jerusalem. Acts 12:2

John: Was thrown into a boiling oil in Rome, but escaped unharmed. Sent to exile at Patmos where he wrote Revelation.

He wrote the Gospel of John, three epistles, and the book of Revelation.

Application: hardship or persecution cannot prevent the demonstration of God's power.

He died in old age, possibly in Ephesus where he was the church leader.

John was known as a disciple of love. Tradition says that John took Jesus's mother and look after her as own mother. This would be a clear demonstration of the loving care, he is known for.

Application: Each one of us can be known for something that is a blessing to others. Affirm each other with this grace.