

Who Do You Say That I Am?

Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository
Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew**

109- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 6
James and John

Church August 11, 2024

Matthew 10:1-4

1 Jesus summoned His twelve disciples and gave them authority over unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal every kind of disease and every kind of sickness.

2 Now the names of the twelve apostles are these: The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; and James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

3 Philip and Bartholomew; Thomas and Matthew the tax collector; James the son of Alphaeus, and Thaddaeus;

4 Simon the Zealot, and Judas Iscariot, the one who betrayed Him.

*To the Glory of God the Father; God the Son;
and God the Holy Spirit. Amen.*

Now this morning- we are *continuing* our Examination of the list of men whom Jesus called, “*Apostles*”. And we are taking the Time to learn about these men- because these men literally changed the world. After these men did what they did and taught what they taught and wrote down what they wrote down- the world was never the same. And so, we should all have enormous Respect and Admiration for these men- because the twelve Apostles of Jesus are some of the most important people the world has ever known.

But as important as they were; and as powerful as their Ministry was- these men were very *common* and very *ordinary* men. They were all terrible Sinners before God-but they had all been touched by the Almighty; and singled out for one of the most important and serious Tasks that God ever gave to anyone.

These men didn’t simply preach the Gospel- they actually *defined* the Gospel! They didn’t simply build a church building- they *established* the Christian Church on the earth! They didn’t simply take notes about what Jesus taught them- they wrote (or had written) 27 Books- that are equally as inspired; inerrant and infallible as the 39 Old Testament Books! These men didn’t simply

believe the Old Testament was true- but God used these men to write down what the Old Testament actually meant by what it said!

And in addition to being given the Privilege and Anointing to herald the very SAME Message that Jesus preached- these men were also given the SAME Power to heal Sickness; perform astounding Miracles; and cast out demons that Jesus Himself had! And these men were gifted with the Ability to give Divine Credibility to what they taught and what they wrote down through Signs and Wonders; Miracles; and Gifts of the Holy Spirit!

These men actually did what so many shysters in our Day claim- they received Divine Revelation directly from God! And they wrote that Revelation down (or had their scribes write it down) in 27 Books that were then added to the 39 Old Testament Books to form what is now called, the “*Canon of sacred Scripture*”!

So, the 66 Books form the “Rule” or the “Standard” of what it means to be saved and a Christian and how the Church of Jesus is to function to the Glory of God!

And as we have discovered- these 27 Books of the New Covenant- not only lay out for us the Details of Who Jesus is and What Jesus did- but they also give us the Information that we need on how sinful people may become fully justified before a holy God; Instruction on how we are to live our daily Lives after we are saved in a Way that is pleasing and honoring to God; how to organize and run the Church in accord with God's Will; and what the Old Testament meant by what it said!

So, today, when someone asks us how we may please the Lord- we don't tell them to obey the first five Books of Moses. Instead, we point them to the 21 New Testament Epistles that *replaced* Moses' Books as the *didactic* Books from God.

Today, when someone tells us that we are sinning because we do not sacrifice animals in accord with what God infallibly told Moses- we can respond with Divine Authority from the 27 New Testament Books that Jesus' sinless Life; His vicarious Death on the Cross; and his bodily Resurrection made what God told Moses to be obsolete- because now we have an infinitely *greater* Sacrifice!

When someone tells us that we are sinning by not submitting ourselves to the Authority of the Levitical Priests- in accord with what God infallibly gave to Moses- we can respond without any hesitation that- according to the 27 New Testament Books- ALL genuine Believers are “Priests unto God and to the Lamb” and that we have an infinitely *greater* High Priest- who reigns from His Throne in Heaven!

When someone might castigate us because we do NOT travel once a year to worship God in the Temple in Jerusalem- as Moses infallibly wrote down- we can

respond with great Authority- that according to the 27 Books of the New Covenant- we have an infinitely *greater* Temple in Heaven that has *forever* replaced the earthly one!

That is a sampling of the Power and the Authority of the 27 Books that God the Holy Spirit “moved” on these twelve men to write. And in those 27 Books- the Apostles made *amazing* Statements! *Astounding* Statements! *Earthshaking* Statements! And they made those Statements in a very “*matter-of-fact*” Way!

And so, we have learned that as members, in particular, of the Body of Jesus Christ in the 21st Century- our Job; our Duty; and our Joy and Privilege as the modern Church- is NOT to receive new Revelation from God. It is NOT to “reinvent the wheel”; or to get a “new spin” on the Word of God! It is NOT to try to develop “new angles” or “new Ways and Methods” of serving Christ! No, our *primary* Job; Responsibility; And Privilege is to ...

... Contend earnestly for the Faith which was once for all handed down to the saints (Jude 1:3b)

... and then as we obey this Command and we “*contend earnestly*” for that “*once for all handed down “Christian Faith”*”- we then must, first, know; and believe; and admire; and love; and obey; this Faith; and then teach the very SAME “Apostles’ Teaching” that these 12 men wrote down.

This is what the Apostles did for us. And so, we are NOT an “apostolic Church” because we make the *ridiculous* Claim that those who lead the Church today are those who have a direct Line back to the Apostle Peter. NO! We are an “*apostolic Church*” as the Nicene Creed says we MUST be- because we teach and believe the very SAME things that the Apostles received directly from God!

And so, while *some* people today make the Claim that they are Apostles of the Lord; that they hear directly from God; and that God speaks individually to them- we can easily see that those people hold that Office and that Title *illegitimately!* And while some of those people may well be saved; and whereas some of them may well be very sincere; and whereas they may mean well; and whereas they should be called, “Missionaries”; or “Evangelists”; or even “Pastors or Teachers”- they are certainly NOT Apostles! Because all that Jesus desired for the twelve Apostles to do- was done! It was completed! It was finished! And there simply wasn't anything left out; and there wasn't anything left undone!

And so, we labor on- so that on *that* Day- we may hear the most blessed Words that any man could ever hear- when the Lord Himself will descend from Heaven with a shout; and with the Voice of the archangel; and with the Trump of God; and when He takes Account of ALL we have done in this Life and says to us-
" Well done good and faithful slave. You were faithful with a few things, I will

**put you in charge of many things; enter into the Joy of your Master!”
(Matthew 25:21)**

And that is my Motivation! And that is *why* I labor on- because I really do believe that this will happen! And I am looking forward to it! And I am staking my Life on it! Someone asked me recently, "*Your Problem, Brother Blair, is that you believe that every Problem can be solved in Jesus Christ.*" And I replied, "*You betcha! That is exactly right! I really and truly DO believe that Jesus Christ is the Answer to every Question and the Solution to every Problem! I sure do!* So, this is not a Job to me. This is not an Occupation to me- I'm not a hireling! This is not a pipe dream; or simply blind faith; or a strongly held Opinion for me. No, serving Jesus Christ is Reality! This is Truth! And this works!

Now I have told you many times that I am, personally, in awe of the Apostles. Because they *should have* failed in their Mission! They *should have* collapsed under the Weight and the Enormity of their Calling. I read about Preachers today getting what they call, "*Burn-out*" and then they leave and abandon what they said God called them to do. They say that being called into the Ministry is just too hard; and it costs too much! And then I look at those twelve men- 2,000 years ago- who *should have* collapsed under the weight of their Calling' and yet they *didn't* quit; they *didn't* fall apart; they *didn't* walk away from what God called them to do!

Those men- absent Judas Iscariot- remained Faithful to the Call! And even though they *should have* failed- they *didn't* fail! They *didn't* collapse; and they *didn't* falter! They *succeeded* in accomplishing *everything* that Jesus Christ commissioned them to do!

I look at the fact that those men were very ordinary men. And every one of them was sinful; weak; frail; and tempted. And every one of them had sinful Tendencies- just like we do! And yet, with all these Weaknesses; and with all these Temptations; and with all this Sinfulness inherent in their Flesh- they succeeded! And that is Testimony to the Power and the Omnipotence and the Glory of the risen Christ!

Now the Effort by these men- acting as the Apostles of Jesus Christ- had never been done before- and it will never be done again. So, from that standpoint- these men were very unique; they were special; they were "one of a kind". And with the Death of John- sometime near the End of the 1st Century- the Office and the Title and the Position and the Authority and the Unction and the supernatural Gifting of the Apostles came to an End. And it came to that End- for one very important Reason- these men did what God called them to do; they completed their Task!

So, what we are doing on Sunday Mornings for a while is to look as close as we can on each of these men. And we have already looked at both Peter and

Andrew- who were natural brothers. And so, today, Lord willing, I am going to begin to teach you about another set of brothers- the “sons of Zebedee”- two men called James and John.

So, let's look first at the Apostle named, “James”. Now as you read through the New Testament Books- two of the Apostles- Peter and John get the “*lion's share*” of the Highlights. And so, we have a well colored Portrait of both of them. But we only have Silhouettes of both Andrew and James.

And there is a lot of Confusion about James in the Bible- and *part* of that Confusion lies in the fact that there are at least four different men in the NT who are called, “James”.

1. “James the *Father of Judas*” First of all- there is “James” who was the *father* of “*Judas*”- who was chosen to be an Apostle (**Luke 6:16**). This particular “*Judas*” was NOT Judas Iscariot, who betrayed the Lord. And it is very possible that this “*Judas*” went by the other name of-“*Thaddeus*”.

2. “James the Less” This “James” was the son of a man named, “*Alphaeus*”. And this James was chosen by Jesus to be an Apostle as recorded for us in **Matthew 10:3; Mark 3:18; Luke 6:15; and again in The Acts 1:13.**

3. “James the Greater” or “James the Just” This man was the son of Mary and Joseph- which made him to be a *half-brother* of the Lord Christ. This James *initially* rejected Jesus as being the Messiah as recorded for us in **John 7:5**. But according to **1Corinthians 15:7**- he later believed. This James became a key Leader in the Church at Jerusalem and served as its first Pastor. It is *this* James that was *probably* the writer of the **Epistle of James**- which some scholars consider to be the very *first* NT Book ever written. James was written sometime around AD 40- just 11 or so years after the Resurrection of Jesus took place. According to **The Acts 15**- this James was used by God to moderate the very *first* Church Council- the “*Jerusalem Council*”- which successfully *resisted* the Heresy of the Judaizers; and *reaffirmed* that Salvation is by Grace alone through Faith alone in the finished Work of Christ alone and is NOT brought about by adherence to Church Sacraments or Jewish Circumcision.

4. James, the brother of John This James was the son of a man named “*Zebedee*”- who, along with his brother, John was called to be an Apostle. And this is the James we are looking at now

Now notice that I said that James #1 was the *Father* of Judas as recorded in **Luke 6:16**. But if you are reading from the King James Version- the Translators said that

this James was the *Brother* of Judas. But if you are reading from the NIV or the NASB or the ESV- **Luke 6:16** says that Judas was the *son* of James- making this James to be Judas' *Father*.

So, which one is it? Was this James, Judas' father or his brother? And is this an Example of where the modern Translations have gotten it all wrong? Or is this an Example of where the King James Version is in Error? Nope! None of that is true. You can trust your English Translations. But then how in the world could the people, who translated the Bible into English, get something so simple mixed up like this?

Because it *isn't* so simple. If you have followed me on this verse-by-verse "Journey" through **Matthew**- you remember that we talked about this very Issue back when we were going over the Genealogy of Jesus. And I told you that where you see a phrase that says, "This man was the *son of* this other man"- the words, "*son of*" is in italics.

That means that it wasn't in the Original Autograph. And this is why you can't simply add up all the men who are listed in a Genealogy and come up with the Date of Creation or the Date of anything, really.

The Original simply says, "This man is *of* this other man". And we don't know if that means he is the "son" of that other person; or his "grandson"; or his "nephew"; "great-grandson"; or even his "adopted son". You simply can't tell. Please read **Luke 3:23** with me. In the original Greek, this verse says,

When He began His ministry, Jesus Himself was about thirty years of age, being, as was supposed, of Joseph, who was of Eli,

The phrase, "*the son of*" which is written twice in this verse was NOT originally in the Greek Documents- but was added later by the English Translators. Now there isn't anything sinister about this- Jesus was supposedly the son of Joseph; and Joseph was the son of Heli or Eli- but that is NOT the way people say that in Greek. The way that they say this in Greek is that Jesus was supposedly "of" Joseph- and that Joseph was "of" Heli- meaning that they came out of the other man's loins or in other words- the one man was the other man's son.

And this is the way that the King James translators translated every single one of these men in the Genealogies found in the New Testament. They almost always translated the men as being "the son of" the other man and never "the brother of" that other man. But for some reason- and nobody knows why- these very same Translators chose to translate the very same words in **Luke 6:16** in the King James differently. The way that the original Greek reads in **Luke 6:16** is:

And Judas of James, and Judas Iscariot, which also was the traitor.

All that the Greek says is that Judas was "of" James- just like the Greek does back in **Luke 3**. And all that I am telling you now is that the wonderful and godly men who translated the King James were simply *inconsistent* about the Method they used to translate this verse as opposed to the way they translated **Luke 3:23-38**.

If there was additional Information that might have caused the Translators to change "son" into "brother" in **Luke 6**- that Information has been lost to us- because nobody has it. So, no one knows *why* the Translators did this- but it certainly appears that they were just simply *inconsistent* here.

Now in spite of what many in the "King James Only" crowd say- the newer Translations are actually MORE *consistent* in translating Judas as being "the son of" James in **Luke 6**- even as the men were all "sons of" the other men in **Luke 3**. And that is why the newer Versions read slightly different than the King James. The King James is simply *inconsistent* for no known Reason and the newer Versions are more *consistent* in their approach.

Now I call things like this, "*Translation Difficulties*". And as I have told you before- there are about 12 of these Problems in the King James. And we know about every one of them; and NONE of them involve any serious issue of Doctrine or Theology. So, they are *minor* Inconveniences and are NOT a serious Problem- as long as people don't go about to prove how wrong the modern Translations are by using the King James as the one true Standard.

Of course, the most *notable* of these "*Translation Difficulties*" in the King James occurs when the Translators were divided into two Groups. And one Group translated the Greek word into "*Holy Spirit*" while the other Group translated the very SAME Greek word into "*Holy Ghost*".

And as long as you understand that this is simply a "*Translation Difficulty*" and is NOT a Doctrinal Issue- you are fine. Where people get off base is in *assuming* that since the King James says, "Holy Spirit" in some places and, "Holy Ghost" in other places- it is referring to two different Beings- because that is simply not true.

So, we have absolutely no reason to assume that Judas was anything other than the "son" of this particular man named, James.

Now along with his brother, John- James was the "son of" a man named, "*Zebedee*". And Zebedee owned a fishing Business; and James and his brother John, worked with their Father in that Business.

Now I personally think James is much more significant than it might initially appear. Many people have a very low Opinion of this James- because we know so very little about him. But in two of the Lists of Apostles- his name comes immediately after Peter. And, in the ancient world- that would lead us to believe

that he was a very, very strong Leader. Also, when the two names of the brothers are seen together- James and John- James is always *first*- which again, in the ancient World, probably indicates that he was either *older* than John or that he was the more *dominant* of the two.

This James never appears at any time in the Gospels apart from John. So, we don't have any Information about James without John- it's always James and John. And this could indicate that these brothers were very close. They are completely inseparable throughout the Gospels. But James seems to be the *dominant* one.

Now the fishing Business of Zebedee was apparently very successful- because we learn in **Mark 1:20** and **Matthew 4:21** that their Father apparently had employees- which would indicate that the Business must have been fairly large.

Now James and John, like Peter and Andrew, were privileged to be called in that *first* Group of Apostles- who were very close and intimate with Jesus. But unlike Andrew- James was in the most intimate Group of three men- Peter, James, and John- who seem to have been the closest to Jesus.

James was there on the Mount of Transfiguration; and he was there in the special Place in the Garden of Gethsemane with the Lord- praying. You will remember that the rest of the Apostles were all at the outer perimeter of the Garden while Jesus brought Peter, James, and John part of the way into the Garden- while Jesus went to the very center of the Garden alone to pray.

Now one very good Way to get a look at James is probably to note that Jesus gave he and John a name. He called them "*Boanerges*" and that Aramaic name means: "*Sons of thunder*." Now when you call somebody a "*son of thunder*"- you are defining their Personality in a very vivid term. So, we must know that being a "son of thunder" fits James as well as John. And by that we know that James was very zealous and thunderous and no doubt brutal and violent as well as passionate and fervent.

He may well have been the New Testament counterpart of Jehu who said in the Old Testament, "**Come with me and see my zeal for the Lord,**" (**2Kings 10:16**) and then uprooted the house of Ahab and swept away Baal worshipers from the Land.

So, James was a very fiery person- very passionate. He seems to have been able to make enemies very easily. So, while Andrew was quietly bringing people to Jesus- James was busy driving them away.

And we need to know that there's a place in spiritual Leadership for those people who have thunderous Personalities. And James apparently was that way by Personality and by Character. And that may have been aided and abetted by the fact that he centered on some of the things that Jesus did- that seemed to justify that kind of Fury.

Now I'm sure that James remembered in great detail that Jesus had exercised holy and righteous Indignation; had made a whip; had turned over the tables; and had cleansed the Temple when those people in the Temple were doing what dishonored God. And I'm sure that James was convinced that Jesus' Fury was correct; and that it was Divine; and was a very good display of the Holiness of God.

But sometimes James' Zeal and Indignation were *less* than Righteous. We don't have many glimpses of James- but I want to show you the ones we have. So please turn to **Luke 9** with me and we will find a very typical Response of a “son of Thunder”. Please look at verse 51. Here- Jesus is going to go into Jerusalem for the final Passover, for His Death, Burial, and Resurrection. And in **Luke 9:51**- Jesus sets His Face to go to Jerusalem.

And Jesus and that huge crowd of Disciples as well as the Apostles are all coming from the Galilee area- and so they are literally coming “down” towards Jerusalem. And they have to go through an area called, Samaria. And, instead of going around Samaria- they walked through a Samaritan village. And back then there was no 800 number to call to make a Reservation- so they could get a room for the night- so you had to send a messenger ahead of you to find a place to stay.

And this was a time when a lot of Pilgrims were migrating throughout that region and so there was a lot of people there and Jesus sends messengers on ahead of them and they entered a village of the Samaritans.

Now you need to know that back in that day- the Samaritans and the Jews hated each other with a passion- because the Samaritans were people who had inter- married with pagan Gentiles. They were Jews who had blatantly disregarded and disdained their Heritage- like Esau had- and they had inter- married with pagans. And, in the mind of the Jews- the Samaritans had polluted the supposed “*Pure blood- line of Israel*”.

So, the Jews considered the Samaritans to be “Half- breeds”; as well as Traitors; and Turncoats. And this Animosity was so great- that Jews wouldn't even go into Samaria. They would walk all the way around it.

But the Samaritans hated the Jews just as passionately. And they not only hated the Jews- but they despised the Worship that went on in Jerusalem. So, the Samaritans had devised their *own* religion with their *own* worship on Mount Gerizim. And so, by hating Jerusalem- they also therefore hated the Messianic Gospel. But just like the hard-hearted Jews- the Samaritans had absolutely no interest in being “saved from the Wrath of God against their Sins”. Because, to a Samaritan, all that “Salvation stuff” was nothing more than Jewish Propaganda.

So, when the messengers of Jesus came ahead of the group into Samaria to prepare the Way for Jesus- they probably told the people of Samaria, “*Look, the*

Messiah is coming," And they probably gave the Samaritans the whole story. And they wanted to make Arrangements for Jesus. But in verse 53- we see that the Samaritans did not receive Jesus because He was journeying with His Face toward Jerusalem- which, in their mind, made Jesus to be part of their ongoing Problem with the Jews.

So, the Samaritans wanted absolutely nothing to do with anyone who was going to Jerusalem to be a part of the Worship of the Jews. And so, the Samaritans outright *rejected* Jesus- and they *refused* to receive Him.

And when James and John saw that the Samaritans rejected Jesus- they didn't begin to pray that God would please open their eyes so that the Samaritans might see and be saved. No, how did these two sons of thunder respond to the Rejection of Jesus by the Samaritans? Look at verse 54:

Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?

Now this is not an Example of the “Seeker-friendly Mentality” that many in the modern Church have. These two men wanted Jesus to give them the Power to burn these pagan Samaritans up! And so, this is a glimpse into the Personality of a “son of thunder”.

Now it very well may have been that there was some extra- curricular Activities going on here. For example, it is very possible that the Messengers could have been driven out from that Village with Curses and with stones thrown at them. We don't know that- but the Animosity between the Jews and the Samaritans was that bad.

But just the fact that the Samaritans wouldn't accept the Messiah infuriated James and John so much- that they wanted God to incinerate these people. So, we have a great Contrast between Andrew and James. Andrew said, "*Bring them to Jesus!*" while James said, "*Burn them up!*" So, James didn't actually have the “missionary Spirit” of Andrew and yet the Lord Jesus stayed up all night praying so he could pick a hotheaded and violent and unmerciful man like James- to be a part of this Group.

Now what do you do with a guy like James, who wants to burn up people who reject Jesus? Well let's look at what Jesus did do. Look at verses 55&56:

**55 But He turned and rebuked them, [and said, "You do not know what kind of spirit you are of;
56 for the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives, but to save them."]
And they went on to another village.**

So, this was James and John's approach. And there's a touch of Nobility in it. There's something about it that I like. Because it is better to get fired up with righteous Wrath than to allow Insults to Christ. So, I like the fact that they don't allow an Insult to the Messiah to pass without a Reaction because Jesus Himself got angry when God was dishonored. And Jesus was zealous and explosive and fervent. But, of course, Jesus was perfect- and James wasn't.

Now there's another Insight about James in **Matthew 20:20**- so let's go there. And this is one of the strangest Incidents in all of the Gospels about the Apostles. Here we find that James was not only fervent, passionate, zealous, and brutal and violent and insensitive. But he was also a type "A" man- a very ambitious man. James was driven to achieve. And he wanted to be in the highest and best Places. So, please read with me **Matthew 20:20-28**:

20 Then the mother of the sons of Zebedee came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.

21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right and one on Your left."

22 But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

23 He said to them, "My cup you shall drink; but to sit on My right and on My left, this is not Mine to give, but it is for those for whom it has been prepared by My Father."

24 And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

25 But Jesus called them to Himself and said, "You know that the rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great men exercise authority over them.

26 It is not this way among you, but whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant,

27 and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be your slave;

28 just as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many."

Now I have no idea what Mr. Zebedee was like- but Mrs. Zebedee was really something! Here this mother is actually *commanding* the Messiah! And some of you ladies are saying, *"I cannot even identify with this because this is not a meek and quiet spirit."* I mean, perhaps one or two of you ladies might have said this.

But this woman just walked up and told Jesus, *"I'm telling you- you command that my boys are on your right hand and your left hand in the Kingdom."*

And all I can say to that is, "*Poor Mr. Zebedee!*". I'm sure he spent a lot of time out on the boat!

Now what is interesting here is that James and John were both very close to Jesus. They knew that they were in that very close, "intimate circle". And they had been called as Disciples for a long, long time by now. And they both knew Jesus very well. And so, what is going on here is that these two sons of thunder are going to take Advantage of their Position with Jesus to their own Advantage. They were on the inside track- and they knew it. And so, they got Mom involved.

Now obviously- she thought this was a good Idea; and obviously she didn't have any Reservation or Hesitation here- that's how bold she was.

So, Momma carried her sons sinful Ambition right before Jesus. But Jesus said,

... You do not know what you are asking...

In other words- "*Dear lady- you don't have clue what you're asking for. Being on My right and left Hand- that's having the most prominent Place in all the Kingdom- so you need to back off- because you don't know what you're asking for.*" Then Jesus turned to the two brothers and asked them a Question,

Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?

... and in their Self-righteous Confidence and sinful Arrogance they said, "*Sure. No problem. Drink of your cup? No, biggie- yes, of course we are able.*"

So here are these two men- James and John and all they are doing here is clamoring for Honor and Position.

Now surely the Lord would never purposely call somebody- who is insensitive and harsh and zealous and brutal and violent and passionate and ambitious into Ministry would He? Surely God would only choose people who are holy and righteous and without sin, right?

Well, the Truth is that God does this all the time. In fact, if God didn't choose people with great Flaws and great Weaknesses and great Iniquities- then He would have to simply use Himself because every human being on earth is just like this.

So, God did indeed choose James and John. And God tuned their raw Passion, and their raw Zeal, and their raw Fervency that God gave them when they were born- and Jesus personally molded those Attributes and shaped them- so He could use them for His Own Glory! And at the end of the day- these two brothers were used mightily by God!

So, the Lord says, "*Okay, My cup you shall drink. You want to get there? You think you can handle it? You're going to drink it, alright- but even at that- I*

can't give you the right or the left Hand, only the Father will determine who deserves the Seats of Prominence."

Now listen to me. There will absolutely be "Seats of Prominence" in the Kingdom- even among the Apostles. And the Bible says that the Apostles will rule over the twelve Tribes of Israel. But some will receive *more* Prominence than others. And only God the Father knows how to adjudicate all that.

But James and John's sinful Ambition created all kinds of Problems because verse 24 says,

And hearing this, the ten became indignant with the two brothers.

So now this Sin has spread through the entire Group. And every one of these twelve men are all caught up with this Spirit of Rivalry. So, this becomes the big debate the whole time they're together- clamoring for Honor; and Recognition; and Prestige; and Glory.

So here are the would-be killers of the pagan Samaritans- forgetting all about how evil and wicked the Samaritans have been- as they are all consumed with their own wicked Ambition. And their raw Zeal has become a source of sinful Pride- to get them into the Positions of Power with Jesus. And so, both James and John tried to play on their Privilege and by doing this- they all demean and minimize and insult Christ and His Kingdom.

So, Jesus knows that He has a lot of work to do with these two men. James wanted a glorious Crown- so Jesus gave him a bitter Cup. James wanted Power- so Jesus gave him Servanthood. James wanted to rule over Sinners- so Jesus gave him Martyrdom at the hands of Sinners. James wanted to rule on a Throne over the Gentile nations- and so, Jesus gave the Gentiles a sword- that would cut him in half as he was executed.

And it is in his Arrest and Martyrdom that I see how strong and important James was to the Church- at that time. Because just fourteen years from this very moment- James was found beneath the "Shadow of the Sword" as **The Acts 12:1&2** says:

1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them.

2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword.

Now to prove to you that the Issuance of Mercy is solely in God's Prerogative; and to prove to you that there are times when God absolutely does actively and sovereignly *intervene* on behalf of His children to perform Miracles and Acts of Providence in Healing and Rescuing and delivering them from Danger

and from Persecution and from Disease and from Problems- as you read through the rest of **The Acts 12**- you will see how God chose to actively and sovereignly *intervene* on Peter's behalf and through a series of Divine Miracles- Peter was set free.

And yet here in verses 1&2- we see that the very *same* God- Who rescued Peter- chose NOT to rescue James. So, God stepped aside and He passively *allowed* Herod to do what was in his evil heart to do to James; and to kill him with the sword. Yet God chose NOT to intervene on James' behalf- although He certainly could.

And many people in the modern Church want to say that the Reason why God rescued Peter and did not rescue James was simply because James was weak in his Faith and Peter was strong- but the Bible doesn't teach that at all.

We need to understand that while it is true that it is *sometimes* God's Will to perform powerful Miracles or Acts of Providence to deliver and heal and rescue His people- God does not always choose to do that. But by this very *same* Faith- God sometimes chooses to *sustain* His people IN their Sufferings rather than deliver them from it.

And having strong Faith or *not* having strong Faith is NOT the ultimate determining Factor in whether you suffer or you are delivered. God's sovereign Will and Wisdom and Love *always* takes precedent over our Faith!

We need to know and believe, dear friends, that the common Feature of the Faith that *escapes* Suffering and the Faith that *endures* Suffering is this: both of them involve believing that God Himself is infinitely *better* than anything that Life can give to us now; and it is infinitely *better* than anything that Death can take from us later.

Because those who love God more than this Life; and who suffer *willingly*- not *accepting* Deliverance- are awaiting something infinitely *better* than what this Life can offer. So, the suffering saints are NOT Failures- who didn't have enough Faith to be delivered- but in fact - they are God's great Gifts to the world!

So, notice that Herod is very furious and angry against the Church and the spread of the Gospel- because the Gospel is beginning to affect the pagan world- mightily. And Herod laid hands on some who belonged to the Church in order to mistreat them. So, he begins a great Persecution.

Now here in verse 2- and through the rest of this Chapter we see these same three men- Peter, James, and John. And so, Herod takes James and kills him with the sword. And when Herod saw that killing this great Apostle James pleased the Jews- he proceeded to arrest Peter so he could kill him too.

Now notice- when Herod wanted to stop the Growth of the Church; when Herod wanted to stop the great spread and impact that the Gospel is having on the people- who does he kill? Peter? No! John? No! Herod kills James! The *first*

person that Herod killed right out of the starting Gate was James- and *not* Peter. Herod didn't arrest Peter until *after* he killed James and saw that by killing James- the Jews were pleased- and then he took Peter.

And from this we can see- *that at this particular Time*- James is an even *greater* Force for God and an even *greater* Proponent for the Gospel than Peter was- because James was the *greater* Threat to Herod! So, at this time- James- not Peter- is being used more than Peter was. And that is why Herod kills James and not Peter- the greatest Preacher of the first twelve chapters of **The Acts**. And that is why Herod kills James and not John- who was the constant Companion of Peter- who traveled with him. So, instead of either Peter or John- Herod killed James.

This “son of thunder” had been personally mentored by Jesus; he had been empowered by the Holy Spirit; and he had been shaped by those “spiritual Means” into a man whose Zeal and Ambition was for God; and the Kingdom of God; and whose Strength and Intolerance was for Divine Purposes; and the protection of the Truth; whose Sympathies were reserved for those things that honored God.

So, somewhere along the line God had taught James how to control his Temper. And God had taught James how to bridle his Tongue. And God had taught James how to redirect his Zeal; and how to eliminate Revenge; and how to completely *abandon* his own personal Ambition.

This courageous, zealous, brutal, violent, sometimes loveless, insensitive, and ambitious man of Passion, who had wanted to brutally destroy an entire city; and who wanted to selfishly sit on a Throne next to Jesus had been turned into an Instrument of Love and Grace in the Hand of God.

And his Strength was so great and his Influence in the community was so powerful; and his Ability to proclaim the Gospel was so strong; that when it came time to stop the Christian Church- James was the *first* Apostle who had to die.

So, James really did drink from that “bitter Cup” after all. And his Life was very short. James' life blazed brightly- very brightly and very quickly- but then it went dark very swiftly at the edge of a sword.

And, you know, one of the Church historians wrote that when James was sentenced to Death- he was taken to the place of Execution by an Officer, it says, who guarded him, who became so impressed by the Courage James displayed- that the Guard repented of his Sin and fell down at James' feet; and begged Pardon for the part he had played in the rough Treatment James had received on the way to Execution.

And this great Apostle James, according to this Report, raised up the Officer from the ground, embraced and kissed him and said, "*Peace, my son, peace be to you as God has pardoned your Sins.*" And being immediately transformed- this

Officer, publicly confessed his Surrender to Jesus Christ; and he too was beheaded alongside of James and both of them entered into Glory together!

Amen. Let's pray.

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