

# *Who Do You Say That I Am?*

## Seeing and Delighting in Jesus through an Expository Journey through the **Gospel of Matthew** 120- Jesus Chooses His Apostles- Part 17 James the son of Alphaeus

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### **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.*

I have been a Student of History my whole Life. And by the term, “*History*” I mean both World History as well as Church History. I have believed, since I was a child, that we really can’t even comprehend where we are right now or where we are going (or where we SHOULD go)- unless we also understand where we have already been. And where we have already been- is called, “*History*”.

But woven all through the History of Mankind- are the *undeniable* Moments when Almighty God sovereignly *intervened* and *inserted* Himself into the Affairs of this Life; and radically changed the Course or the Direction that Man was going. And suddenly- miraculously- supernaturally- the entire World and the people in it- had shifted; and were now heading into a completely different Direction.<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> One of the Best Examples of this Reality is the “*Battle of Midway*” on June 4-7, 1942; during World War II. Before this naval Battle in the Pacific- the Allies had LOST every Battle against the Axis Powers in both Europe and against Japan. And it looked as though we would lose Midway as well. But because God sovereignly intervened- the Allies won Midway- even though they were out-numbered and out-gunned. Winston Churchill called Midway the “*Hinge of Fate*” because the Allies won every Battle against the Axis from that time forward.

So, from that Standpoint- History is actually “*His Story*”- because it is the Study of the ongoing, real-Life Drama of God’s Relationship with His prized Creations- Man and Woman.

But History is a funny thing. The history Books pick the “Winners” as well as the “Losers”. And that results in History being shaped by the people who write about it. And that is why the old Saying goes, “*The Winners write the History; and the Winners are always the ‘Good Guys’*”.

But mostly, History is a snapshot of very common and ordinary people, who lived during an important Moment in Time. And those people were chosen by God to confront the titanic Issue that was before them at that Time and respond to it- by doing things- both Great and Terrible.

And so, it is no wonder that the history Books are filled with people, whose Name contains the Title, “*Great*”. People like Alexander the Great; Cyrus the Great; Genghis Khan (the Great Kahn); Charlemagne (Charles the Great); Constantine the Great; Herod the Great; Alfred the Great; Catherine the Great; Fredrick the Great; Peter the Great; Tamar the Great; Pope Leo the Great; Kamehameha the Great; Abbas the Great; and Yuknoom the Great. God raised these people up to do what His Will and His Decree *predestined* them to do- that involved both breathtaking Evil as well as amazing Goodness. And we are still living with the Results of their Actions today.

But sadly, in many cases- those who have been deemed to be “Great” often overshadow everybody else. And yet, the Reality is that it was the other people- the unknown ones- who labored along side of the “great ones” that helped make them to be considered, “Great”.

But in the Bible, there are ONLY two men, who were said to be “*Great*”: John the Baptist and Jesus. In **Luke 1:13b-17**, the Angel Gabriel said this to the Father of John the Baptist (Zacharias):

**13 ..."Do not be afraid, Zacharias, for your petition has been heard, and your wife Elizabeth will bear you a son, and you will give him the name John.**

**14 You will have joy and gladness, and many will rejoice at his birth.**

**15 For he will be great in the sight of the Lord; and he will drink no wine or liquor, and he will be filled with the Holy Spirit while yet in his mother's womb.**

**16 And he will turn many of the sons of Israel back to the Lord their God.**

**17 It is he who will go as a forerunner before Him in the spirit and power of Elijah, TO TURN THE HEARTS OF THE FATHERS BACK TO THE CHILDREN, and the disobedient to the attitude of the righteous, so as to make ready a people prepared for the Lord."**

... while six months later, in **Luke 1:30b-33**, the SAME Angel told the virgin Mary:

**30 ... you have found favor with God.**

**31 "And behold, you will conceive in your womb and bear a son, and you shall name Him Jesus.**

**32 "He will be great and will be called the Son of the Most High; and the Lord God will give Him the throne of His father David;**

**33 and He will reign over the house of Jacob forever, and His kingdom will have no end."**

... so, John the Baptist was "**GREAT in the sight of the Lord**" while Jesus was simply, "**GREAT**". So, with Jesus there were NO Caveats; no Qualifications; and NO Conditions. Jesus was GREAT in every respect. But John was "*Great*" in God's Sight- even though he was a flawed and wicked Sinner saved by Grace. But later on- Jesus said, whoever "**keeps and teaches the Commandments of God**" will be called, "*Great*" in the Kingdom of Heaven (**Matthew 5:19**).

There are a few other References in the Bible to people in general being "Great". For Example, **The Revelation 6:15-17** says:

**15 Then the kings of the earth and the great men and the commanders and the rich and the strong and every slave and free man hid themselves in the caves and among the rocks of the mountains;**

**16 and they said to the mountains and to the rocks, "Fall on us and hide us from the presence of Him who sits on the throne, and from the wrath of the Lamb;**

**17 for the great day of their wrath has come, and who is able to stand?"**

... and **The Revelation 19:11-18** says,

**11 And I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse, and He who sat on it is called Faithful and True, and in righteousness He judges and wages war.**

**12 His eyes are a flame of fire, and on His head are many diadems; and He has a name written on Him which no one knows except Himself.**

**13 He is clothed with a robe dipped in blood, and His name is called The Word of God.**

**14 And the armies which are in heaven, clothed in fine linen, white and clean, were following Him on white horses.**

**15 From His mouth comes a sharp sword, so that with it He may strike down**

the nations, and He will rule them with a rod of iron; and He treads the wine press of the fierce wrath of God, the Almighty.

16 And on His robe and on His thigh He has a name written, "KING OF KINGS, AND LORD OF LORDS."

17 Then I saw an angel standing in the sun, and he cried out with a loud voice, saying to all the birds which fly in midheaven, "Come, assemble for the great supper of God,

18 so that you may eat the flesh of kings and the flesh of commanders and the flesh of mighty men and the flesh of horses and of those who sit on them and the flesh of all men, both free men and slaves, and small and great."

... and both of these References seem to be talking about people, who have done "great things" and have been labeled as being "Great", but who were lost and unsaved during the Time Jesus comes back to this earth and were damned.

So, from the Moment after Adam fell until this very Day- there are people who have done "great things" in the earth and who have been labeled as being "Great". And it seems that this will *continue* until Jesus comes back.

On January 25, 1832, New York State Senator, William L. Marcy coined the phrase that is often quoted today about those who accomplished much in Life when he said, "*To the Victors go the Spoils*". And I agree with that.

I believe that we should all strive for "*Excellence*" in everything we do. The Difference I would make is that we strive to "BE our Best"- NOT merely because that causes us to "rise to the top"- but since we are saved, we represent the Lord Christ in every aspect of our Lives. And so, we should live our Lives to reflect that we are "*bought- and- paid- for*" Bond-slaves of the Savior. And this gives Glory to God by making Jesus look Irresistible.

For Example, I taught my Children and now am teaching my Grandchildren that, if, in School, you are ONLY capable of making "C's" and you make "C's"- then God is pleased with you. Because in that case- a "C" represents your BEST. But if you are capable of making "A's" and you make "B's" – then you are "*goofing off*" and you need to repent and do better. Granted, "B's" are *better* than "C's". But if God has graced you with the Capacity to *do* better- then you *should* do better.

Here is what

the Bible says about this Issue in **Luke 12:48b**:

**... From everyone who has been given much, much will be required; and to whom they entrusted much, of him they will ask all the more.**

Now I realize that NOT everybody has been chosen to lead. There are "*Leaders*" and there are "*Followers*" in this Life. And yet, BOTH have been made

in the Image and Likeness of God. And, so, from that we should always treat BOTH Leaders as well as Followers with Dignity and Respect.

But many today make the Mistake to assume that striving for Excellence ALWAYS makes a person Proud and Self-righteous. Now it *might*- so, we have to guard our souls against that. But the Bible says that ALL human beings are cursed with the Sin of Pride- to some degree ALREADY! Arrogance and Self-righteousness and Pride is part of what it means to be “Fallen”. So, to NOT pursue doing your BEST- or to refrain from even *trying* to accomplish “great things”- on Purpose- out of the Fear that you MIGHT become Arrogant is ridiculous. You are ALREADY Arrogant! And the Self-righteousness that was imputed to you at the Moment of your Conception- is a stench in the Nostrils of God!

But, by and large, we hold Leaders to a higher Standard. Now why is that? Because they have been graced by God with MORE and therefore, MORE is expected. So, it is usually the Leaders, who accomplish things; who blaze Trails; and who move Mountains. My Grandfather taught me at a young age that there are three kinds of people in the world:

1. Those who MAKE things happen
2. Those who WATCH things happen
3. Those who say, “*What happened?*”

... yet there are both Benefits and Dangers for all three Groups.

Primarily, the “*Movers and Shakers*” of this Life have to guard against Pride; Arrogance; and Self-righteousness; the “*Followers*” have to guard against Jealousy and Envy; while the Poor; the Feeble; and the “Weak-minded” have to guard against expecting and demanding others to take care of them. But ALL of it is Sin.

The Bible does NOT teach that Poverty is a Blessing. Poverty is a Curse- *unless* your Poverty results in godly Humility- and then your Poverty is a great Blessing. But simply being Poor does NOT make you Humble or Godly- the Miracle of the New Birth does. Here is what the Bible says about that from **1 Timothy 6:3-12:**

**3 If anyone advocates a different doctrine and does not agree with sound words, those of our Lord Jesus Christ, and with the doctrine conforming to godliness,**

**4 he is conceited and understands nothing; but he has a morbid interest in controversial questions and disputes about words, out of which arise envy, strife, abusive language, evil suspicions,**

**5 and constant friction between men of depraved mind and deprived of the**

truth, who suppose that godliness is a means of gain.

**6 But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment.**

**7 For we have brought nothing into the world, so we cannot take anything out of it either.**

**8 If we have food and covering, with these we shall be content.**

**9 But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.**

**10 For the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs.**

**11 But flee from these things, you man of God, and pursue righteousness, godliness, faith, love, perseverance and gentleness.**

**12 Fight the good fight of faith; take hold of the eternal life to which you were called, and you made the good confession in the presence of many witnesses.**

Now normally, this Passage is used to simply beat people, who seem to be wealthy, over the head- causing them to feel guilty about what God has blessed them with. But I want you to pay close attention to verse 9 that says,

**But those who want to get rich fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction.**

... so, I hope you can see that this Passage was NOT written to wealthy people at all- but to those, “**who want to get rich**”. And the inspired, inerrant, and infallible Word of the living God says that those who WANT to get rich,

**... fall into temptation and a snare and many foolish and harmful desires which plunge men into ruin and destruction**

... and yet, I would image that nearly everybody in this Room this morning would LOVE to make MORE money and have MORE things.

So, are we all just a bunch of wicked Sinners that are lusting for more Wealth? Well, yea, we are, but that will be a Sermon for another Day. This is what I call the “*Contradiction of Holiness*”. We are called to “do our best” and strive to obey- and yet, we are also told to be Humble. We are told to work hard and provide for those under us- but we are also told to NOT love the thing we work so hard for and that which is used to do the providing (Money). We are taught to be serious and “sober-minded”- and yet, Believers are the happiest people on earth. We are told clearly and repeatedly to always be ready for the 2<sup>nd</sup> Coming of Jesus at any Moment- and yet, we are also told to “Occupy until He

comes”. These “Opposites” seem, on the Surface, to be Contradictory- as though we may do one or the other but NOT both. But they merely reflect the Reality that we are Sinners called to be Holy- and so we MUST do both!

So, what is actually going on in the “*Arena of Greatness*” is that God made us in His Image and Likeness- and so, we yearn for “*Greatness*”. Human beings desire to be “Free” and to live according to the dictates of our own Hearts. This internal Drive to be “Great” reflects both the Remnants of being divinely created AND of being “Fallen”.

So, we want to *accomplish* “great things” in this Life. And yet, we are called to strive against the Lusts of our Flesh (by the Power of the Holy Spirit) to humbly and joyfully submit to the Authority of Scripture in our daily Lives- all to the Glory of God. And one seems to contradict the other. And what I am trying to say this morning is that- regardless of what the lost world says- obeying God in this Life IS the very height of “Greatness”.

Fallen, sinful, and carnal human beings seek to Dream; to always improve; to do better; to build; create; and raise up. And that’s why Communism and Socialism never work- unless they are *forced* on people. We aren’t content to just “sit back and coast”. We hate Failure. We despise Weakness. And nobody ever aspires to be “Mediocre”. We want our Children to have a “better Life” than we had. And those things- in and of themselves- are NOT inherently wrong. They CAN be wrong- but they don’t HAVE to be wrong. These things actually reveal the “*Imago Dei*” (Image of God) that God has stamped on our very Soul.

And this is what caused men to blaze the trails; and cross the Oceans; and climb the Mountains. This is what caused seemingly unqualified men to risk EVERYTHING to invent and create and make and improve titanic Industries; amazing Inventions; Businesses and even Nations- ALL of the Things that make our Lives better- that we now call, “*Common Grace*”.

So, what causes the “Contradiction” is NOT that we attempt great Things- but the Sin that lies within us. Sin ruins it all. Sin takes a wonderful and good Desire to build; and create; and plant; and invent; and causes the one, in whom is the spark of Idea, to neglect his Wife; tells Lies; start drinking and taking drugs; and to forget the Dream God gave originally him; and become deceived that the ONLY thing that matters is the fleeting “Success” that is ONLY physical and material. And that is why God the Holy Spirit “moved” on the Apostle Paul to say,

**... godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment. (1 Timothy 6:6b)**

Because we are fallen Creatures, we have an *enormous* Capacity to *ruin* everything- even our Gifts- even our Calling. We can take good and holy things like Prayer; Bible Study; and Fasting and turn them into a hideous Mechanisms that deceive us into thinking we can *earn* and *deserve* God's Favor. Even the God-given Desire to "*be Holy*"- as we are *commanded* to "BE" (**Leviticus 20:26/1Peter 1:16**) can become twisted and dark and destructive if we turn it into the Heresy of Legalism.

You and I have been called to "*walk the tightrope*" of attempting great Things while remaining Broken; Contrite; and a people, who *tremble* at God's Word. We are called to be Humble- while NEVER becoming prideful about the Humility we have. We live in a Capitalist Society where the common denominator of EVERYTHING we do- is Money. So, are called to *make* Money; *have* Money; *spend* Money; *save* Money; *invest* Money; *use* Money; and *give* Money- while NEVER crossing over into *loving* Money. This is the "*Contradiction of Holiness*". And it is the inherent Contradiction between our Flesh and Spirit; between being *led* by the Spirit of God and being *driven* by our own Lusts. The Contradiction of following after and giving ourselves faithfully to our Calling- and seeking the Praise of Man. It is the Battle between Pride and Humility; between Arrogance and Meekness; and between Accomplishing great Things for the Glory of God and Accomplishing great Things so we may Boast.

The Apostles were "Great". ALL of them were called to do the Impossible. And yet, some of them seem to *outshine* the others. We all know about Peter and John and Paul and even Matthew. But the record Books are mostly silent about James the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Thaddaeus. We know almost NOTHING about them. And in our eyes- that means they were NOT "Great". But that reflects the Way of our world today.

You and I are NOT "great" people. And yet- we all- EVERYONE of us- HAVE been called to do a "great" Thing. But as we do that- some will seem to *outshine* the others. Yet, ALL of the Redeemed are "Great" in one sense. Some might ask, "*But Brother Blair, I'm saved- but I'm just an ordinary person- what 'great thing' have I been called to accomplish in this Life?*" In **1Peter 2:9b-12**, the Holy Bible says that you are me...

**9 ...are A CHOSEN RACE, A royal PRIESTHOOD, A HOLY NATION, A PEOPLE FOR God's OWN POSSESSION, so that you may proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

**10 for you once were NOT A PEOPLE, but now you are THE PEOPLE OF GOD; you had NOT RECEIVED MERCY, but now you have RECEIVED MERCY.**



**11 Beloved, I urge you as aliens and strangers to abstain from fleshly lusts which wage war against the soul.**

**12 Keep your behavior excellent among the Gentiles, so that in the thing in which they slander you as evildoers, they may because of your good deeds, as they observe them, glorify God in the day of visitation.**

... so, EVERY Believer has been called to,

**... proclaim the excellencies of Him who has called you out of darkness into His marvelous light;**

... and NOTHING could be *Greater* than that!

So, do NOT fear attempting “great things”. But we MUST learn how to *yield* to that Divine Calling- without losing our souls.

We need to understand that God did NOT passively observe as Nations; Empires; and even entire Civilizations have risen and fallen throughout History. Almighty God sovereignly *intervened* and He decisively *caused* both their Creation and their Eclipse. Because of infra-red Photography we have discovered the ruins of entire Civilizations- that were suddenly and totally destroyed. And many people offer ideas as to how and why those people no longer exist. Yet the Scriptures tell us that God periodically destroys Empires because they engaged in Wickedness; tempted God; and refused to repent. And both the Certainty as well as the Eternality of God’s *decisive* Judgment against unrepentant Rebels is so obvious; so inarguable; and so “in your face”- that today, not a single Descendant of those Civilizations is alive.

So, I would encourage all of you to begin to read History and the biographies of “Great” people- and then marvel as you see the Hand of God at work through those people. But as you do that- please also read the Biographies of *godly* people- who may NOT even be recognized by the pagan World as being worthy to know at all- but people who were beloved by God; people who labored to make Jesus known; and people who worked hard to bring Glory to His Name.

Now why am I bringing all this up this morning? Because we are *continuing* to examine the Biographies of the men Jesus chose to lead the Church after He ascended into Heaven. And these men literally changed the world by taking the historical Facts about Jesus’ Birth; Life; Ministry; Death; Resurrection; and Ascension and these men *formulated* those Truths into the very Foundation of the Christian Church.

But even as those these men were *unique* in their Calling- they were, nonetheless, very common and ordinary men- who struggled with Sins and Faults and Prejudices and Evil- just like we do. And yet, God the Holy Spirit “moved” on

several biblical Writers to emphasize some of them and not the others. And in that sense, those men were just like us today. And that is why I want to try to know a little about them.

Now as I explained earlier, it was common back in 1<sup>st</sup> Century Israel for a Teacher or a Rabbi to have, what were called, “*Shaliah*”. And these were men who had been trained by that Teacher so they could take the Teaching of the Teacher and spread it to more people. We need to remember that back in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century there was no Telephones; no Internet; no Newspapers or Magazines; no Radio or Telegraph; no Mail-Service or any Means of mass-Communication. And so, if a Teacher wanted to reach more people- he had to acquire a group of men to teach and train- so they could go forth and speak the SAME Message with the SAME Authority of the Teacher.

And that is what the Apostles were. They were highly trained by Jesus to preach the SAME Message; with the SAME Divine Authority- back up by the SAME Signs; Wonders; and Miracles of Jesus Himself. Verse 1 says,

**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.**

... so, Jesus gave ALL of His Apostles the Power and Authority to heal diseases; cast out demons; and even raise the Dead. And even Judas Iscariot, who was NEVER saved- had that same Authority.<sup>2</sup>

So, even though we have very little Information about James, the son of Alphaeus- God knew EVERYTHING about him. And that teaches us a very important Principle as it pertains to God and His people. God knows His people. And He knows EVERYTHING about ALL of them. There is NOTHING about a single one of God’s people that is hidden or that remains a Mystery to God. The Apostle Paul was “moved” by God the Holy Spirit to write this in **2Timothy 2:19b**:

**... The Lord knows those who are His ...**

... in fact, God knows them BETTER than they do.

And that means that NO ONE is unimportant to God. There are NO unimportant people with God. There is NO ONE who I am allowed to discount; abuse; ignore; by-pass; or count as worthless. Because we have little or no Information about certain people- does NOT mean that

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<sup>2</sup> I can’t prove this conclusively, but the Reason I say that Judas had the same Authority as the rest is- because if he didn’t- he would had stood out like a sore thumb; and everyone would have known that something was wrong with him. But it is clear, even at the Last Supper- the other Apostles had no idea something was amiss with Judas.

they are, somehow, unimportant, or that God didn't use them; or that we can just pass them by.

According to Dr. Luke- Jesus stayed up all night long- praying- to choose the Apostles. And so, Jesus chose James, the son of Alphaeus; Simon the Zealot; and Thaddaeus on PURPOSE! Now I'm not sure why we haven't much Information about these men- but that should not cause us to think that they weren't important.

Now as I told you at the Beginning of this Study- Jesus divided the Apostle into 3 Groups of four men each. The first Group consisted of Peter; Andrew, his Brother; and James; and John- the two sons of Zebedee. And Peter was the Leader of this 1<sup>st</sup> Group as well as the unquestioned Leader of ALL the Apostles.

The 2<sup>nd</sup> Group consisted of Philip; Bartholomew; Thomas; and Matthew. And Philip was the Leader of this 2<sup>nd</sup> Group. And now we are going to look at the 3<sup>rd</sup> Group. This Group consisted of James, the son of Alphaeus; Thaddaeus; Simon, the Zealot; and Judas Iscariot. And James, the son of Alphaeus was the Leader of this final Group.

Now we don't know too much about him- this man- but this James would have probably never been on a TV talk show. He would never be asked to endorse a book; he would never be asked to pray at a Conference; and he would never be featured in a Christian magazine Interview. James was very, very obscure man.

Now there is a lot of Confusion about "James" in the Bible- primarily because there are at least four different men in the NT who are called, "James".

- **James- the *Father* of "Judas- NOT Iscariot"**. This Judas was chosen to be an Apostle as described in **Luke 6:16**. This *particular* Judas *probably* went by the other name of "*Thaddaeus*" in order to distinguish him from the "Bad" Judas. We don't really know anything else about this "James" other than he was the *Father* of the "Judas- not Iscariot"- who was an Apostle
- **James- the Brother of the Apostle John-** who were the sons of a man named, "*Zebedee*". *This* James was killed early on as recorded by Dr. Luke in **The Acts 12:2**
- **James- the "*Greater*" or James the "*Just*"** This man was the physical son of Mary and Joseph- which made him the half-brother of the Lord Jesus 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 the first Pastor (Elder) of the Church at Jerusalem and is probably the writer of the **Epistle of James-** which some scholars consider to be the very *first* NT Book ever written- sometime around AD 40- just 11 or so years after the Resurrection of Jesus. And 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; to the Glory of God alone” and is NOT brought about by adherence to Church Sacraments or Circumcision.

- **James the “Less”- the son of Alphaeus.** *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.** And *this* is the James we are looking at now.

Now please take note that I just called *this* James- the son of Alphaeus- by the title, “James the *Less*”. And there is a reason for that. Please turn with me to **Mark 15:40** for just a minute- The **Gospel of Mark 15:40** and read that verse with me:

**There were also women looking on afar off: among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James the less and of Joses, and Salome;**

Now the King James; the New King James; and the NASBU95 say, “**James, the less**” in this verse while the ESV and the Holman Christian Standard Version say, **James, the “younger”**. But the Greek word that was translated here as either “less” or “younger” is the word, *mikros*- from which we get our English word, “micro” which means: “*small or little*” but NOT “*younger*”.

So, John Mark is telling us under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit here that *this* James- James the son of Alphaeus- was the “micro” James; or the “little” or the “less” James- to distinguish him from the *other* James- who was called, James the “*Greater*”.

Now also notice that *this* James- the son of Alphaeus- according to John Mark- was also the “son of Mary”. Now *this* Mary that is listed here in **Mark 15:40** is *not* the mother of Jesus Christ but was her sister. And to see this- please turn with me to **John 19:25** that says:

**Now there stood by the cross of Jesus his mother, and his mother's sister, Mary the wife of Cleophas, and Mary Magdalene.**

Now the Confusion lies in the fact that John says here that *this particular* Mary was the *sister* of the mother of the Lord; and the wife of a man named, “*Cleophas*”. And many scholars have said that James the son of Alphaeus could not possibly be the son of *this* Mary because she was the wife of a guy named “*Cleophas*” and not of “*Alphaeus*”. And that may be true.

But we must understand that just as both Peter, Levi, and Thaddeus had more than one name- it is possible that “*Alphaeus*” and “*Cleophas*” were just

different names for the same man. And when you consider that the earliest copies of the Greek Scriptures that exist on earth omit the letter “h” from Cleophas’ name- it makes that possibility even more Credible.

But if it is true that *this* James was indeed the son of a woman who was the sister of the Mother of the Lord- that would make *this* James to be Jesus' cousin.

Now although Scripture doesn't say much about *this* James- I want to introduce you to a very interesting thought. Please turn with me to **Mark 2:14**. In *this* passage- Jesus passes by the tax office of a hideous Sinner named, “Levi” or “Matthew”- who eventually was gloriously saved; and who later became one the Apostles of the Lord- whom we have already studied. Now notice here in **Mark 2:14** that John Mark said this:

**And as he passed by, he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the receipt of custom, and said unto him, **Follow me.** And he arose and followed him.**

Notice that Mark says here that as Jesus passed by- he saw Levi who was Matthew- who was the son of who? Mark says that Levi was the **son of Alphaeus**. Now could it be that *this* particular James- James the son of Alphaeus- James the Less was also the *brother* of the Apostle Matthew? That is certainly possible because Mark says here that Levi or Matthew was the son of Alphaeus and there is no effort at all on the part of Mark to say that this was *another* guy named Alphaeus- so it very well could be.

And that wouldn't be so uncommon since Peter and Andrew were brothers and James and John were brothers. So why not James and Levi?

So, is it factually true that James was the cousin of our Lord Jesus? Is it factually true that he was also the brother of Matthew? Nobody knows for sure; and I don't know how we would ever find out- because we just don't have enough Information.

But suffice it to say that *this* James- James the son of Alphaeus was called by John Mark as James the “*Less*”. So, in just what sense of the word was *this* James “*mikros*” or “*micro*” or “*less*” or “*smaller*”? Well, this word *could* be referring to his own *physical* Features- this James *could* have been literally, a very small man and was “*little*” in the sense of his physical Stature. That is one Option that we have. Another Option could be his Age. This particular James *could* have simply been *younger* than the other James- and that is why it refers to him as “*mikros*”. We don't know the Answer to these Questions for a historical Certainty- but these are some Options.

Another Option is that *this* James could have been “*small*” or “*little*” or “*less*” only in his *Demeanor*. In other words- he could have been something of a quiet, background kind of person, and that's why he's called “*Little*” James, or

James the “Less,” or the “small” James. And another Option is that this Title of “mikros” could have been placed on this son of Alphaeus because his Ministry or his Accomplishments were “less” or “smaller” or not as grand on a public scale as James, the son of Zebedee- the brother of the Apostle John or James the half-brother of Jesus Christ.

Perhaps it's some kind of a combination of all of these Options- we certainly can't be dogmatic about any of it because we don't have enough Information- but for *some* Reason- *this* James was called, *mikros* or “James the “Less””.

Now the New Testament tells us absolutely nothing about this James other than that he was chosen by Jesus to be an Apostle after an all- night Prayer Meeting; and that he was the son of some man named, “Alphaeus”- about which we know absolutely nothing. And that in itself tells us a lot. Because the Bible is so silent about him- that tells us that his distinguishing mark then is his Obscurity. So, apparently *this* James didn't *see* the Need or didn't *have* the Need for any Recognition- which is a very admirable Trait and one that we all should emulate.

Now *this* James- displayed no outstanding Skills- even though he was the Leder of the 3<sup>rd</sup> Group of Apostles- which means that he did have *leadership* Traits. The New Testament doesn't record that this James asked any critical Questions; and he didn't demonstrate any unusual Insight- so, only his Name remains. His entire Life; and all of his Labors; as well as his own Relationship with Jesus are all hidden forever in Obscurity.

Historical Tradition however, tells us that he was sent after Pentecost to the land of Persia to preach the Gospel in what is now modern- day Iran. And both James personally; and the Gospel of Jesus Christ as a whole; were soundly *rejected* by the religious Authorities in Persia. And History tells us that James the “Less” was crucified at some point right before the End of the 1<sup>st</sup> Century in horrible Pain and Agony for his Faithfulness to Jesus Christ- just as his Lord had been crucified.

So, here is such a quiet, unknown Soldier of the Cross. And yet he became a great Preacher; and was given the Power to perform Miracles; cast out demons; and heal people to validate and give divine Credibility to the Message that he preached.

And he preached that Message with Faithfulness. And God's Word never returns void- Isaiah said. So, from that we know that James the son of Alphaeus bore much godly Fruit. And his Ministry and his Preaching was powerful enough and effective enough to bring about his own Martyrdom. So, even though we don't have much to go on- we should know that, for no other Reason than he was faithful to Jesus- James the “Less” was actually very “Great”.

Now Count Nickolaus von Zinzendorf was the Leader of a Group of Believers called, the “*Moravians*”. And on August 13, 1727, the Moravian

community of 300 people experienced a *profound* Visitation of the Holy Spirit, which became known as the “*Moravian Pentecost.*” This Event was marked by intense spiritual Fervor; deep Repentance; and a strong sense of God’s Presence. In the weeks that followed, Zinzendorf, initiated a 24-hour prayer Vigil, where they would gather in Groups of 24 and pray together until relieved by the next Group. This Prayer Meeting lasted for 100 years!<sup>3</sup>

On the heels of this “*Season of Prayer*”- the Moravians became so committed to reaching the Lost with the Gospel- that many of them sold *themselves* into Slavery- so they might reach both the Slaves and well as the slave Owners with the Gospel of Salvation. And during this Time- Count Zinzendorf spoke to the Moravians about always remaining Humble- and he said,

*“Preach the Gospel; Die; and be Forgotten”*

... so, the Vessel is NEVER the issue- the Master is!

So, in a sense, James- the son of Alphaeus was like the rest of the Apostles. He was harnessed to the Master's Chariot and was a slave of Love. He lived only for God’s Glory; and he died without leaving any earthly Record. But believe me- there is a powerful heavenly Record and right this second- and that Record shines bright in Heaven. James’ name right now is on the Foundation of one of the Gates that lead into the City of New Jerusalem. And so, in that sense- James was, in fact, very “Great”!

Amen. Let’s pray.

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The Grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit. Amen. Be watchful and quicken your Pace. Soli Deo Gloria. For the Glory of God alone.

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<sup>3</sup> *A Prayer Meeting that Lasted 100 Years*; Christianity Today; July 30, 2019; Leslie K. Tarr

