

JAMES AND JOHN'S MOTHER

--- **MATTHEW 20:20** Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, prostrating herself before Him (forbidden in Acts 10:25 and Rev. 1:17; 19:10, but Jesus never forbade people to prostrate themselves before Him) and asking Him for something. **21 He said to her, What do you want? She said to Him, Command that in your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on your right, and the other on your left.** Jesus speaks of His suffering and death, but His disciples still think of being great in an earthly kingdom. They wanted honor, power, happiness and all this they got, but not as they thought. Jesus offers these things not through human might, but through suffering and service. They would be great, but going the way of the cross. The mother of James and John was very ambitious, she wanted "the best" (authority, power, fame) for her children, because she wanted her children to gain an advantage over the other apostles. This is another instance of which James speaks when he says, "You ask amiss" (James 4:3). Many parents want their children to be great, but how many parents sincerely want their children to be faithful Christians? For many parents children are very successful if they are well established in their profession or business, have good houses, cars, etc.

--- **Matthew 20:22** Then Jesus answered and said, **Ye know not what you ask (Luke 9:33).** Can ye drink of the cup which I shall drink, -- Vessel or cup (26:39) of suffering. Jn. 18:11.

"**You don't know what you're asking for**", obviously the mother's request was actually James and John's request.

--- Luke 14:25-33, Jesus speaks frankly of the cost of discipleship. He teaches that everyone should calculate expenses.

-- **and to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized? – Baptized** means submerged or overwhelmed with suffering (mocked, spat upon, scourged, slapped, crown of thorns, nails in hands and feet). Floods of suffering awaited them. Ps. 69:2; 124:4,5; Isa. 43:2. Jesus always spoke to them frankly, explaining the cost of discipleship. In Matt. 10:16-22 he told them that (1) they would be rejected, v. 14; (2) that their teaching would be rejected; (3) that they would be delivered, 17,18;

(4) even by relatives, v. 21; (5) who would be hated, v. 22 and (6) ended by saying, "And do not fear those who kill the body," v. 28. He then spoke of the great conflicts between relatives (Matt. 10:34-39, that there would be sword -- dissension and division -- instead of peace). He spoke of self-denial and carrying His cross Matt. 16:24,25, and the need to renounce everything for Him, Luc. 14:33.

--- This baptism of suffering was not "sprinkling" of suffering but "immersion," immersed in suffering.

--- This question is for us too. Are we willing to be submerged in suffering with Christ? What do we know of such suffering?

"And they said to him: We can.

– Actually, the apostles showed their willingness to suffer and even die with Christ. Jn. 11:16, "Then said Thomas, called Didymus, to his fellow disciples, 'Let us also go, that we may die with Him'; Luc. 22:33, "He said to him, 'Lord, I am willing to go with you not only to prison, but also to death.'" (Matt. 26:51), "But one of those who were with Jesus, stretching out his hand, drew his sword, and smote a servant of the high priest, took off his ear." No doubt the apostles were confused. Despite all that Jesus had told them about the true nature of His kingdom, and all that He was going to suffer, etc., they did not understand. Later they understood and showed that they could drink the cup of suffering for Christ.

20:23 He said unto them, Verily, ye shall drink from my vessel, and with the baptism with which I am baptized, ye shall be baptized;

-- The suffering of the apostles began soon after they began their ministry (Acts 4:3; 5:18). James was beheaded by Herod (Acts 12:2) and we see John, already in his old age, banished to the island of Patmos (Rev. 1:9). This text shows that Jesus had confidence in his apostles. He saw them not only as they were then, but as they would be. Beginning on the day of Pentecost they were very changed men, truly willing to suffer and die for Christ. 1 Peter 4:13; 2 Cor. 4:10; Gal. 6:17; Jn. 15:20.

-- but to sit on my right and on my left, it is not mine to give, but to those for whom it is prepared by my Father. – The exaltation of the apostles would be according to God's plan; that is, not according to

positions of authority, but according to suffering and service. Such honors are apportioned according to God's eternal plan.

20:24 When the ten heard this, they were angry at the two brothers. It is the inevitable result of such ambition, rivalry, and vain ambition, but there is no problem when someone wants to be great through suffering and serving.

20:25 Then Jesus, calling them, said, You know that the rulers of the nations rule over them, and those who are great exercise power over them. – In this way the men of the world judge greatness. The "great" in this world is prominent man and gives orders to many men.

20:26 But it shall not be so among you, {Luke 22. 25-26.} but whoever wants to become great among you will be your servant, 27 and whoever wants to be first among you will be your servant; {Matt. 23. 11; Mr. 9. 35; Luke 22. 26.} 28 as the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, (Jn. 13:5) – The Bible gives us many examples of those who became great in the kingdom. Apart from the apostles, prophets, evangelists, etc. who faithfully served the Lord, we also read of other examples such as the following: Dorcas, Acts. 9:36, 39; Phoebe, Aquila, Priscilla, Rom. 16:1, 3, 4 (and several others in this chapter); family of Stephanas, 1 Cor. 16:15, 16; Gaius, 3 Jn. 5, 6, etc. Of such Paul says (Phil. 2:3, 4) that their names are written in "the book of life." This clearly indicates that such are *great* in God's eyes.

-- and to give his life as a ransom for many (26:28; Heb. 9:28). – He gave his life to rescue us (redeem us), 1 Pet. 1:18, 19.

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