

**13 And He went up on the mountain and called to [Him] those He Himself wanted. And they came to Him. 14 Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach, 15 and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons: 16 Simon, to whom He gave the name Peter; 17 James the [son] of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom He gave the name Boanerges, that is, "Sons of Thunder"; 18 Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the [son] of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Cananite; 19 and Judas Iscariot, who also betrayed Him. And they went into a house.**

The last three studies were looks at the life of Peter, the first and the most pre-eminent of the list. Now we will start with the rest of the list.

James is next in the list in Mark. James is the son of Zebedee. His brother is John. And Jesus called them Sons of thunder.

While Peter is the disciple who is mentioned the most, Peter James and John are mentioned often together with Christ. They were Christ's inner circle. Christ shared the most with them and spent the most time alone with them.

But oddly enough, while Peter and John are mentioned alone, James is only mentioned alone once. But this mention is very significant. It is when James became the first martyr for Christ.

**[Act 12:1-2 NKJV] 1 Now about that time Herod (Agrippa 1) the king stretched out [his] hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.**

James was John's older brother. It is likely that Zebedee, their father, was a prominent person. The fact that they are often referred to as the sons of Zebedee might imply that. None of the other disciples are commonly referred to by their father's name.

Remember when we read in Mark 1:20 that James and John left their father's fishing business and it makes mention of servants. Evidently Zebedee's business may have been a notch bigger than many of his competitors. Which may imply some wealth.

And look at this next reference. I had never considered these implications before. **John 18:15-16 And Simon Peter followed Jesus, and so [did] another disciple. Now that disciple was known to the high priest, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest. 16 But Peter stood at the door outside. Then the other disciple, who was known to the high priest, went out and spoke to her who kept the door, and brought Peter in.**

John was known to the high priest. I had always figured it was because John was a disciple of Christ. But that is probably not the case. These were probably family acquaintances. How could that be, unless Zebedee was a man with connections.

There is some extra biblical evidence that Zebedee was a Levite related to the high priest's family.

We can't know for sure. But it is likely that Zebedee was a somebody in the community. And when Jesus said "Sons of Zebedee", that would be helpful in identifying them to others.

It is likely that James was a strong leader. His name comes immediately after Peter's in two of the lists. It is quite likely he was, in essence, second in command after Christ's death. This would explain why he was singled out to be killed by Herod Agrippa.

Peter, James and John were the only ones allowed to be with Christ when He raised Jairus's daughter from the dead. They were there at Christ's transfiguration. James was among the four that questioned Jesus in Mark 13 in the Mount of Olives. Peter, James and John were asked by Christ to pray in the Gethsemane. At this point, we need to stop and consider how these events would have affected these real men. We know what little the Gospels reveal about Christ. We know them as facts we read on a page. But these men **saw** this. They would have **felt the wonder** when they saw a dead girl and the next thing they knew she was alive. They would have known that they were in the very presence of the **power of God**. And then to see the glory of God on Christ. And then to see Him speaking to Moses and Elijah. They are seeing things from the pages of their precious Old Testament scriptures coming to life. Absolutely amazing. How could these things not affect them?

But what was James like?

Well look what Jesus called them. In Greek it is Boanerges (bon-air-geese') The name seems to denote fiery and destructive zeal that may be likened to a thunder storm.

For a picture of that lets look at Luke 9:51-56

**[Luk 9:51-56 NKJV] 51 Now it came to pass, when the time had come for Him to be received up, that He steadfastly set His face to go to Jerusalem, 52 and sent messengers before His face. And as they went, they entered a village of the Samaritans, to prepare for Him. 53 But they did not receive Him, because His face was [set] for the journey to Jerusalem. 54 And when His disciples James and John saw [this], they said, "Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?" 55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner 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 to another village.**

Does this look like fiery and destructive zeal to you?

Christ was headed for Jerusalem at Passover. There were two ways to get there.

**Through** Samaria or **around** Samaria. Samaria was the shortest route. But most

Jews would not go through that area because they hated the Samaritans. You can imagine that did very little to make the Samaritans to **like** the Jews. The Samaritans had set up a worship spot to compete with the temple in Jerusalem once Israel and Judah had split in the reign of Solomon's son.

Now Jesus has people travelling ahead trying to make arrangements for his lodging. And, since the Samaritans know where Christ is headed and they have no love for Jerusalem, they will not lodge him.

Now we need to keep in mind that in the minds of most Jewish people, the Samaritans are dirt. They are traders. They are unclean. They are inferior. And now these same people will not receive Christ. It is not a big stretch for these men to assume that these Samaritans should be wiped off the map for what they are doing to their savior.

Now where would they have gotten this idea about calling down fire?

This is lengthy but it helps us understand what James and John were thinking.

**[2Ki 1:1-18 NKJV] 1 Moab rebelled against Israel after the death of Ahab. 2 Now Ahaziah** (*Ahaziah was the King of Israel- the land that set Samaria up as their center for worship.*) **fell through the lattice of his upper room in Samaria, and was injured; so he sent messengers and said to them, "Go, inquire of Baal-Zebub,** (*This name is very similar to a synonym for the devil. Baal-Zebub was the Philistine diety. It means the lord of the flies. The name for the devil, Baelzebub means the lord of dung.*) **the god of Ekron, whether I shall recover from this injury."** 3 **But the angel of the LORD said to Elijah the Tishbite, "Arise, go up to meet the messengers of the king of Samaria, and say to them, '[Is it] because [there is] no God in Israel [that] you are going to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron?' 4 "Now therefore, thus says the LORD: 'You shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' "** So Elijah departed. 5 **And when the messengers returned to him, he said to them, "Why have you come back?" 6 So they said to him, "A man came up to meet us, and said to us, 'Go, return to the king who sent you, and say to him, "Thus says the LORD: '[Is it] because [there is] no God in Israel [that] you are sending to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " " 7 Then he said to them, "What kind of man [was it] who came up to meet you and told you these words?" 8 So they answered him, "A hairy man wearing a leather belt around his waist." And he said, "It [is] Elijah the Tishbite."**

*Now this is where James and John's reference comes in.*

**9 Then the king sent to him a captain of fifty with his fifty men. So he went up to him; and there he was, sitting on the top of a hill. And he spoke to him: "Man of God, the king has said, 'Come down!' " 10 So Elijah answered and**

said to the captain of fifty, "If I [am] a man of God, then let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And fire came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty. 11 Then he sent to him another captain of fifty with his fifty men. And he answered and said to him: "Man of God, thus has the king said, 'Come down quickly!' " 12 So Elijah answered and said to them, "If I [am] a man of God, let fire come down from heaven and consume you and your fifty men." And the fire of God came down from heaven and consumed him and his fifty.

**13 Again, he sent a third captain of fifty with his fifty men.** *Now at this point it makes you wonder if Ahaziah was daft. If Elijah can do this twice, what is there to make you think that the third time will be the charm? Imagine if you were this captain. I am sure if he was allowed to quit his job, this would have been the day he did it. But he probably would be killed for failure to obey his commander. So he is in a real bind. I guaranty you, this man was not given the instructions by his commanding officer to go to Elijah and beg for your life. But this man has the wisdom to know that it is his only way out. Unless he gets God's favor, we will never survive this day.* **And the third captain of fifty went up, and came and fell on his knees before Elijah, and pleaded with him, and said to him: "Man of God, please let my life and the life of these fifty servants of yours be precious in your sight. 14 "Look, fire has come down from heaven and burned up the first two captains of fifties with their fifties. But let my life now be precious in your sight." 15 And the angel of the LORD said to Elijah, "Go down with him; do not be afraid of him." So he arose and went down with him to the king. 16 Then he said to him, "Thus says the LORD: 'Because you have sent messengers to inquire of Baal-Zebub, the god of Ekron, [is it] because [there is] no God in Israel to inquire of His word? Therefore you shall not come down from the bed to which you have gone up, but you shall surely die.' " 17 So [Ahaziah] died according to the word of the LORD which Elijah had spoken.**

Now in this story about Elijah we have the King of Samaria trying to show disfavor to a man of God. When the King's representatives show up to hassle the man of God, God kills them.

James and John know that the Samaritans in our New Testament narrative are failing to treat the Son of God with proper respect. In their minds, what they were asking to do would have been similar to what they learned in the story. The bad guys should pay for what they are doing to the man of God.

But what was Christ's response to James and John?

**55 But He turned and rebuked them, and said, "You do not know what manner 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 to another village.**

Christ was basically telling them that **their spirit** and **His Spirit** are two different things and they cannot discern the difference. They actually think that there is a chance that Christ is going to say yes, let's turn them into crispy statues. But that is not at all what Christ's heart or mission were about.

Then He tells them why Christ came to this earth. He tells them about his mission. He gives them an education they are not soon to forget.

**"For the Son of Man did not come to destroy men's lives but to save [them]."**

We don't see, at first, that the disciples got this. They were still thinking with fleshly motives. But they were being given **object lessons** day after day. They saw the difference between what **Christ** would do and what **they** would do.

Christ's birth on this planet was to accomplish salvation for men. It would be **offered** to all men and **received** by some. And those are the ones Christ came for. Now, Christ's next visit will have a different purpose. When Christ comes next time it will be for judgment. Christ will separate the believers from the unbelievers.

**[Mat 25:32-34, 41 NKJV] 32 "All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides [his] sheep from the goats. 33 "And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left. 34 "Then the King will say to those on His right hand, 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world: ... 41 "Then He will also say to those on the left hand, 'Depart from Me, you cursed, into the everlasting fire prepared for the devil and his angels:**

James and John did not get it wrong that God sometimes displays his wrath upon evil. He does. They just didn't understand what Christ was here for.

This text lays in front of us the most important question in all of life? Am I prepared for the judgment of God? When Christ separates those He loves from those He hates, which side will you be on? And why?

How does God make the division? How can you make sure that you will be on his right and not on his left?

Are you afraid that you are not good enough? If that is how you think you will impress God, you better be afraid. Scripture says our goodness, our righteousness, is like filthy rags. There is **no way** we can avoid judgment by simply doing good things.

The truth is, we need a miracle. Just like Jairus's daughter, we need made alive. And that happens when God moves on our hearts and minds to receive the sacrifice Christ made for our very own. You see Christ died on the cross to take upon himself all of the sin that **everyone who will ever believe upon Him** had ever committed. He paid the death penalty for that sin. And now you have an opportunity, if you have never done this before, to receive that for yourself. You

simply believe in Christ, you trust in what He did to save you. And as part of that, you trust him with your life from here on in.

This is what the apostle Paul said in Romans.

**[Rom 10:9-13 NKJV] 9 that if you confess with your mouth the Lord Jesus and believe in your heart that God has raised Him from the dead, you will be saved. 10 For with the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation. 11 For the Scripture says, "Whoever believes on Him will not be put to shame." 12 For there is no distinction between Jew and Greek, for the same Lord over all is rich to all who call upon Him. 13 For "whoever calls on the name of the LORD shall be saved."**

If you feel driven to make sure you are right with God, I would be glad to speak to you about it or ask anyone here who you believe knows how to be right with God. That is what we, as believers, are here for.

Now back to James.

James is shown by the story we read, and by the nickname Jesus gave to James and John, as a man of passion. He felt things very strongly and was willing to go to great ends to see those things accomplished, even to dramatic ends.

That is not a bad thing. Zeal for the house of God drove Jesus to clear out the temple of commerce twice. Many men of God were very zealous for the things of God and it drove them to great extremes. Passion and zeal are not bad things. But they must be properly directed. When James wanted a firestorm to kill the enemies of God while Christ was here to save men, that was not the proper zeal.

However, when Phillip went down to the city of Samaria in Acts 8:5 and preached the gospel to them, that **WAS** the proper zeal.

**[Act 8:5-8 NKJV] 5 Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. 6 And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. 7 For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. 8 And there was great joy in that city.**

Just think, there were probably people in the group that Philip preached to and that responded to the Gospel who were in the same group James and John wanted to call fire down on. We can see we cannot trust our zeal, but we can trust our Savior.

We see another insight into James in

**[Mat 20:20-24 NKJV] 20 Then the mother of Zebedee's sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 21 And He said to her, "What do you wish?" She said to Him, "Grant that these two sons of mine may sit, one on Your right hand and the other on the left, in Your kingdom." 22 But Jesus answered and said, "You do not know what you ask.**

**Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 So He said to them, "You will indeed drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with; but to sit on My right hand and on My left is not Mine to give, but [it is for those] for whom it is prepared by My Father." 24 And when the ten heard [it], they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.**

If the father, Zebedee, was well known, then it is likely that his wife would have had some notoriety as well. It would not be a stretch to imagine that Zebedee and his wife may have been ardent financial supporters of Christ's ministry. In fact, when we compare accounts, we find her name is Salome and she is mentioned in a list of those in Matt 27:55 who ministered to him, financially and probably preparing meals.

So James and John get their mom to make a play for their positions in Christ's political reign. Since that is where they think they are headed.

So Jesus responds that

**, "You do not know what you ask. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?" They said to Him, "We are able." 23 So He said to them, "You will indeed**

**drink My cup, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with;** James and John have no clue what they are saying. They are probably thinking, when Christ asks this question, this plan might be working. They may have felt they were getting somewhere with Christ. What Jesus is asking is whether they are willing to pay a price to get this reward. And both of them are ambitious enough to say yes to what Christ says, whatever it means.

But Christ goes on and tells them that they truly will drink that cup, but it isn't for him to divvy out seats.

This created a stir with the rest of the disciples, as you could imagine. And this debate about who was the greatest even ended up marring Christ last meal with them. Christ was thinking about them, and they were only thinking of themselves. I like what John MacArthur says about this.

**James wanted a crown of glory; Jesus gave him a cup of suffering. He wanted power; Jesus gave him servanthood. He wanted a place of prominence; Jesus gave him a martyr's grave. He wanted to rule; Jesus gave him a sword, not to wield, but to be an instrument of his own execution. Fourteen years after this James would become the first of the twelve to be killed for his faith.**

We now go back to James's death.

**[Act 12:1-2 NKJV] 1 Now about that time Herod (Agrippa 1) the king stretched out [his] hand to harass some from the church. 2 Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword.**

The Herod who did this was Herod Antipas's nephew. Remember that Herod Antipas killed John the Baptist and was called into Christ's trial proceedings as well. So the family probably wasn't too pleased with this growing sect. We don't know what his motivations were for killing James. But once he killed James and saw how well the Jews liked it, he arrested Peter as well. But we have the story of Peter's escape from jail in

**[Act 12:6-13 NKJV] 6 And when Herod was about to bring him out, that night Peter was sleeping, bound with two chains between two soldiers; and the guards before the door were keeping the prison. 7 Now behold, an angel of the Lord stood by [him], and a light shone in the prison; and he struck Peter on the side and raised him up, saying, "Arise quickly!" And his chains fell off [his] hands. 8 Then the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and tie on your sandals"; and so he did. And he said to him, "Put on your garment and follow me." 9 So he went out and followed him, and did not know that what was done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they were past the first and the second guard posts, they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, which opened to them of its own accord; and they went out and went down one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 And when Peter had come to himself, he said, "Now I know for certain that the Lord has sent His angel, and has delivered me from the hand of Herod and [from] all the expectation of the Jewish people." 12 So, when he had considered [this], he came to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose surname was Mark, where many were gathered together praying. 13 And as Peter knocked at the door of the gate, a girl named Rhoda came to answer.**

I think most of us know the rest of the story, how they could not believe it was Peter. But Peter it was.

Now at this point you gotta wonder, why didn't God free James. He could have done exactly the same thing to him and James would not have had to die. And what is the answer? We have no idea. God is God and He did not put us here to figure out everything that He does. We are just given enough reason to trust Him, and trust Him we must.

Now what happened to the man who killed James and tried to kill Peter?

**[Act 12:19-24 NKJV] 19 But when Herod had searched for him and not found him, he examined the guards and commanded that [they] should be put to death. And he went down from Judea to Caesarea, and stayed [there]. 20 Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus the king's personal aide their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's [country]. 21 So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. 22 And the people kept**



**shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" 23 Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died. 24 But the word of God grew and multiplied.**

God is in charge. We can never forget that. The death of James was not a tragedy from where God sits. It was ordained and it happened just as He intended it. That is such a comfort to know when we face tragedy. God is still in control working things out for the best for his people.

Now there is legend passed on by the church that says that James bore fruit clear to his death. Eusebius says that the guy who led James to the judgment seat was convicted by God as he heard James's testimony. He ended up professing Christ too and both of them were beheaded together. On the way, the man who had led James to the judgment seat asked James for forgiveness. After James considered it for a little while he told the man "Peace be with thee" and kissed him.

Here is the passionate James at the end of his life, still passionate, but changed by the love of Christ. And that will be true of every true believer.

A good application to make from our text this week would be to answer the question, how much are my passions aligned with the will of God? Do the things I pursue reflect what God says are His will? Are my money, time and talents spent reflecting God's will or ignoring or denying God's will? Are the things we are passionately for the things that God is for? Are the things we are passionately against what God is against? Are we wasting time calling down judgment upon people for whom it is not time for judgment? Do we remember that today is the day of salvation?