

The King's Ambassadors, James the First and John the Last: Steve Swartz
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Matthew 10:2

James and John are mentioned together, James always listed first. They are the sons of Zebedee.

Introducing James & John: Matt. 4:21, they are found mending their nets with their father. James and John left their father's fishing business to follow Jesus. John's family were well connected and known by the High Priest's family, John 18:15-16.

Ministry Role of James & John: Peter, James and John were closest to Jesus, joined Jesus when healing Jairus' daughter (Mk. 5:37), on the mount of transfiguration (Mk. 9:2-8, Luke 9:28), and to pray in the garden with Jesus prior to His arrest (Mk. 14:32-33).

- Peter, James, and John saw the glory of Christ on the mount (Luke 9:32) and joined Jesus as He returned to Jerusalem to give His life as a sacrifice for many on the cross.

Unusual Nickname of James & John: they are called by Jesus, "The Sons of Thunder," Mk. 3:17. They wanted to bring fire down on the Samaritans in Luke 9:49-56.

- Jesus rebuked them because His disciples would bring the Gospel to the world, (Luke 9:56).

Career Plans of James & John: After Jesus told the disciples that He would be crucified and rise again (Mk. 10:32-34), James & John asked to be on Jesus' right and left in the kingdom of God, Mk. 10:35-45. James and John's mother also asked the same of Jesus, Matt. 20:20.

- Jesus' response in Mk. 10: 43-45, "whoever wishes to become great among you shall be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you shall be slave of all." Jesus' disciples are taught to lose their lives and serve others.

James Relationship to John: mentioned 16X in the Gospels and Acts. James is older and listed first. Rarely is John mentioned first. Acts 12:2, John is mentioned as the brother of James.

John's Privileged Relationship with Jesus: John mentions himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved 6X in his Gospel (Jn. 21:24). John was with Jesus at His early trials, John 18:15-16. He is considered the Apostle of Love. John mentions "love" 117X in his 5 writings. 24X he commands believers to love one another.

John's Entrusted Charge from Jesus: On the cross, Jesus commits His mother Mary to John's care, John 19:25-27. Jesus' brothers were not yet believers (Jn. 7:5, Mk. 3:21), so Jesus entrusted Mary to John to care for her (Ex. 20:12, Deut. 5:16).

- They would come to believe in Him. James would write the first epistle for the NT, and Jude would also write a letter to the church. Jesus' brothers were with the apostles in the upper room, Acts 1:14.

John's Unique Mission for Jesus: John 21:18-19, Peter would be crucified for his faith, but John would remain into old age and be given Revelation to provide to the church while exiled to Patmos.

- Jesus rebuked Peter after restoring him, telling him: "You follow Me!" Jesus said this when asking how John might die, John 21:19.

John and Peter Together: They would prepare Passover on the night of betrayal, Luke 22:8. They would preach in the synagogue to thousands and heal the lame man, Acts 3-4. They would continue to proclaim Christ, Acts 4:19. Peter and John would travel to Samaria to testify that the Samaritans had also received the Holy Spirit, Acts 8:14-17.

John's Inspired Writings: The Gospel of John which explained the Gospel and Deity of Christ to unbelieving Jews. 1 John tells the believer how they can have assurance of salvation and commands believers to love one another. 2 John tells believers to rejoice with those who walk in the truth. 3 John was written to commend the faithful believer and confront the unfaithful who stir up strife. Revelation is given to the church to tell of the fulfillment of all Biblical prophecies that God has promised and reveal who Jesus is in the last days.

James Life: James would travel to Sardinia and the Iberian Peninsula (Spain). He would be martyred in March of 43/44 AD by Herod, who according to Acts 12:2, wanted to make an example of Christians who were being blamed for causing problems.

John's Life: John left Israel for Ephesus where he established elders in 7 churches. Emperor Domitian wanted to kill the last of the apostles, arrested, tortured and tried John. John was thrown into boiling oil but was not killed. John was exiled to Patmos where he received Revelation and delivered the letters to the churches of Asia Minor. He died sometime after 100 AD.

Further Discussion and Application

As we consider the lives of James and John, what about their conversion to Christ makes them relatable to us? Why can we make the same decision they did, to forsake all others and follow Jesus? What did they leave behind to be followers of Christ? How might we consider again the cost to follow Christ, and what we might give up to serve Him more?

James' life was lived to spread the Gospel to Sardinia and Spain. He died relatively early in the early church period. John lived to be the last apostle in his 90s. What is the message for living a faithful life? How can we be as Psalm 1:3 reads, "And he will be like a tree firmly planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaf does not wither; and in whatever he does, he prospers" in our old age? How can we live everyday bearing fruit for the Lord and being useful for His kingdom?

How does the life of James and John encourage us to keep the faith and continue loving our brothers and sisters in Christ and sharing the Gospel with others? The writings of John give great confidence of salvation to believers. What is a life of Christian greatness as defined by Jesus? How can we live a life that serves everyone? What fruit should our lives bear in our relationships, our marriages, our friendships, our discipleship of others, and our life of sanctification? How might God use us if love and service for others is what we give our strength to? The truth of God's word sanctifies us, John 17:17, how can our study and sharing of God's word be useful to God?