

### Jesus Heard the Request of James and John

In our last topic, we saw that we want to help our physical and spiritual children learn to explain the parable about the marriage feast. We saw that God is a loving God who will reward all those who serve Him. In our topic today, we will see that James and John came to Jesus with a request.

Matthew 20:17-19 says, “Now Jesus, going up to Jerusalem, took the twelve disciples aside on the road and said to them, ‘Behold, we are going up to Jerusalem, and the Son of Man will be betrayed to the chief priests and to the scribes; and they will condemn Him to death, and deliver Him to the Gentiles to mock and to scourge and to crucify. And the third day He will rise again.’” Here, we see that Jesus and the disciples were going toward Jerusalem, along with many other people. They were on their way to Jerusalem to celebrate the Passover. However, Jesus took the disciples aside and explained that something else was going to happen while they were in Jerusalem. We will see that Jesus was actually on His way to the crucifixion.

Jesus said that several things would happen when they arrived at Jerusalem. First, Jesus said that the Son of Man would be betrayed to the chief priests and the scribes. Just a few weeks earlier, the high priest had said, in John 11:49-50, “And one of them, Caiaphas, being high priest that year, said to them, ‘You know nothing at all, nor do you consider that it is expedient for us that one man should die for the people, and not that the whole nation should perish.’” Here, we see that the high priest had told the others that it was necessary for Jesus to die for the people. God allowed the high priest to give this prophecy to predict that Jesus would die for all people. The purpose of the high priest in making this statement was very different. His purpose was to say that they had to destroy Jesus in order to maintain their power over the people.

Second, Jesus said it would be the chief priests and scribes who would condemn Him to death. This statement was fulfilled in Matthew 26:65-66, where we read, “Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, ‘He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?’ They answered and said, ‘He is deserving of death.’” Here, we see that it was the religious leaders who condemned Jesus to death and then, early in the morning, took Jesus to Pilate and asked him to put Jesus to death. Third, Jesus said that the religious leaders would deliver Him to the Gentiles who would mock, scourge and crucify Him. John 19:1-3 says, “So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him*. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, ‘Hail, King of the Jews!’ And they struck Him with their hands.” John 19:16 adds, “Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. Then they took Jesus and led *Him* away.”

Fourth, Jesus told the disciples that He would rise again the third day. Here, we see that Jesus clearly explained to His disciples, again, that He would die and rise the third day. Jesus did appear to the disciples the day that He arose from the dead. They showed that they did not really hear and believe what Jesus had told them when He said He would rise the third day. Luke 24:37-39 says,

“But they were terrified and frightened, and supposed they had seen a spirit. And He said to them, ‘Why are you troubled? And why do doubts arise in your hearts? Behold My hands and My feet, that it is I Myself. Handle Me and see, for a spirit does not have flesh and bones as you see I have.’” We see here, in Matthew, that the disciples did not really listen and understand.

That is shown by the request that the mother of James and John made, as they continued on their way toward Jerusalem. Matthew 20:20-21 says, “Then the mother of Zebedee’s sons came to Him with her sons, kneeling down and asking something from Him. 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.’” In these verses, we see that James, John and their mother all thought that Jesus was going to remove the Romans and set Himself up as the King of Israel. James and John had their mother make a request to Jesus, based on that thinking.

We see that the mother of James and John came and kneeled down in front of Jesus. She said that she had a request to make of Him. Jesus then asked the mother what she wanted. Her request clearly showed that the three of them expected Jesus to set up an earthly kingdom when they arrived at Jerusalem. Later, Jesus clearly explained to Pilate that He was a king but that His kingdom was not of this world. John 18:36-37 says, “Jesus answered, ‘My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here.’ Pilate therefore said to Him, ‘Are You a king then?’ Jesus answered, ‘You say *rightly* that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice.’” Jesus made it clear that His kingdom, at that time, was not an earthly kingdom, but instead a spiritual kingdom. The earthly kingdom will come when Christ returns to rule for one thousand years, according to Revelation 20:1-9.

The request of the mother of James and John was for her two sons to sit on the right and the left hand of Jesus when He set up His kingdom. The seats on the right and left hands of a king were the positions of power. Here, we see that James, John and their mother were thinking in terms of a worldly kingdom and not a spiritual kingdom. They wanted positions of authority and power. We see the answer of Jesus in Matthew 20:22-24, where we read, “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.’ 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.’ And when the ten heard *it*, they were greatly displeased with the two brothers.” Jesus made it clear that the three totally lacked spiritual understanding.

Jesus told the three that they did not know what they were asking. Then, Jesus asked James and John a question, “Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink, and be baptized with the baptism that I am baptized with?” The cup that Jesus was about to drink was the wrath of God against sin. God said Israel had experienced a cup of wrath, in Isaiah 51:17, where we read, “Awake, awake! Stand up, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk at the hand of the LORD the cup of

His fury; you have drunk the dregs of the cup of trembling, *and drained it out.*” Then, just two chapters later, in Isaiah 53:10-11, we read that God would be satisfied with the payment of Christ for the wrath of God against the sins of all mankind. Those verses say, “Yet it pleased the LORD to bruise Him; He has put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the LORD shall prosper in His hand. He shall see the labor of His soul, *and* be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant shall justify many, for He shall bear their iniquities.” Jesus experienced that wrath of God against sin as He hung on the cross and the earth was covered with darkness.

Jesus said that there was a baptism which He would experience. In Luke 12:50, we read, “But I have a baptism to be baptized with, and how distressed I am till it is accomplished!” That baptism was the baptism of suffering. There are eight different kinds of baptism given in the New Testament. A Greek doctor named Nicanor, in a recipe of how to make pickles about two hundred years before Jesus, used two different words that help us understand the act of baptizing and the results of baptism. To make a vegetable into a pickle, he wrote that you first dip (*bapto*) the vegetable into a pot of boiling water. Then, you place (*baptizo*) the vegetable in a vinegar solution for a period of time. When the vegetable is taken out of the vinegar solution, the vegetable has been permanently changed. It is the second word that is used here, and in Romans 6:3-4, where we read, “Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life.” Our baptism, into the death of Christ, produced a permanent change in our lives that makes it possible to live a new life.

Jesus was going to experience a baptism of suffering in our place and for our sin that would produce a permanent change in our lives because all of our sins would be blotted out. As a result, there is nothing on the record against us. James and John would experience the cup of suffering as they served Christ. They would receive a permanent change when their sins were blotted out by the payment of Christ for their sins. However, Jesus said that He was not the One who would determine who would sit on His right and left hand. He said that privilege would be for those for whom those places have been prepared by the Father.

We learn one other lesson from these verses. We see that the other ten disciples were very unhappy when they heard about the request of James and John. The reason that they were very upset was due to the fact that the ten also wanted to sit in those positions of power and authority. As a result, we will see in the next topic that Jesus used this opportunity to teach all twelve disciples about the nature of spiritual leadership. We want to help our physical and spiritual children understand the nature of that spiritual leadership. In order to help them learn, we want to show them, by our example, that we are not to seek positions of power and authority. We will see that Godly spiritual leaders are those who learn to serve others. May the Lord richly bless you as you show your children by your example that it is a privilege to serve the Lord by serving others.