

Mark 10:35

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And James and John, the sons of Zebedee, come unto him, saying, Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire.

Analysis

James and John made presumptuous request: 'Master, we would that thou shouldest do for us whatsoever we shall desire' (Διδάσκαλε, θέλομεν ἵνα ὃ ἐὰν αἰτήσωμέν σε ποιήσης ἡμῖν). This blank-check request reveals spiritual immaturity and selfish ambition. They wanted Jesus to promise before hearing their request—manipulative approach treating Jesus as genie granting wishes. Their subsequent request for throne seats (v. 37) exposed motives: personal glory, not kingdom service. This immediately followed Jesus' third passion prediction (vv. 33-34)—while Jesus described suffering, disciples sought status. Their error warns against approaching God with demands rather than submission. True prayer asks according to God's will (1 John 5:14), not presuming God exists to fulfill our ambitions. Jesus' response (vv. 38-45) teaches that greatness comes through suffering and service, not self-promotion.

Historical Context

James and John were 'sons of Zebedee,' nicknamed 'Boanerges' ('sons of thunder,' Mark 3:17) for their temperament. They were Jesus' inner circle (with Peter) witnessing transfiguration, Jairus' daughter's raising, and Gethsemane. Their request for chief seats reflected common messianic expectation—when Messiah establishes kingdom, who gets top positions? Matthew's account adds that their mother made the request (Matthew 20:20), suggesting family ambition. The other ten disciples' indignation (v. 41) reveals they all sought prominence. Jesus used

this as teaching moment about servant leadership (vv. 42-45). Church history shows ongoing struggle with ecclesiastical ambition—councils, schisms, and controversies often stemmed from power-seeking rather than Christ-like servanthood. James became first apostle martyred (Acts 12:2); John lived to old age enduring persecution (Revelation 1:9). Both learned to suffer rather than rule.

Related Passages

John 3:16 — God's love and salvation

Romans 10:9 — Confession and belief for salvation

Study Questions

1. How does James and John's manipulative approach ('do whatever we ask') reflect immature understanding of prayer and relationship with God?
2. What does their request for status immediately after Jesus' passion prediction reveal about spiritual blindness to His mission?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	προσπορεύονται	αὐτῷ	Ἰάκωβος	καὶ	Ἰωάννης	οἱ
And	come	unto him	James	And	John	G3588
G2532	G4365	G846	G2385	G2532	G2491	
υἱοὶ	Ζεβεδαίου	λέγοντες	Διδάσκαλε	θέλομεν	ἵνα	ὃ
the sons	of Zebedee	saying	Master	we would	that	G3739
G5207	G2199	G3004	G1320	G2309	G2443	
ἐὰν	αἰτήσωμέν	ποιήσης	ἡμῖν			
whatsoever	we shall desire	thou shouldest do	for us			
G1437	G154	G4160	G2254			

Additional Cross-References

Mark 14:33 (References John): And he taketh with him Peter and James and John, and began to be sore amazed, and to be very heavy;

Mark 5:37 (References John): And he suffered no man to follow him, save Peter, and James, and John the brother of James.

1 Kings 2:20 (Parallel theme): Then she said, I desire one small petition of thee; I pray thee, say me not nay. And the king said unto her, Ask on, my mother: for I will not say thee nay.

1 Kings 2:16 (Parallel theme): And now I ask one petition of thee, deny me not. And she said unto him, Say on.

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