

Matthew 4:21

Authorized King James Version (KJV)

And going on from thence, he saw other two brethren, James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother, in a ship with Zebedee their father, mending their nets; and he called them.

Analysis

The call of James and John follows the same pattern—Jesus calls, they immediately follow. The detail that they left 'their father Zebedee in the ship with the hired servants' shows they left family responsibilities and business interests. Yet this abandonment was not irresponsible but responsive to a higher calling. Christ's call takes precedence even over family obligations, though not in a way that dishonors God's design for family.

Historical Context

Zebedee's possession of a boat and hired servants suggests the family was relatively prosperous. James and John's willingness to leave this family business for an uncertain future with an itinerant rabbi demonstrates radical faith. They would later be among Jesus' inner circle.

Related Passages

Psalm 19:1 — Heavens declare God's glory

Colossians 1:16 — All things created through Christ

Study Questions

1. How does leaving family business and father illustrate Jesus' teaching that He must be loved above even family (Matthew 10:37)?
2. What does this passage teach about the relationship between legitimate responsibilities and ultimate allegiance to Christ?

Interlinear Text

καὶ	προβὰς	ἐκεῖθεν	εἶδεν	ἄλλους	δύο	ἀδελφὸν
And	going on	from thence	he saw	other	two	brethren
G2532	G4260	G1564	G1492	G243	G1417	G80
Ἰάκωβον	τὰ	τὰ	Ζεβεδαίου	καὶ	Ἰωάννην	τὰ
James	the son of	the son of	Zebedee	And	John	the son of
G2385	G3588	G3588	G2199	G2532	G2491	G3588
ἀδελφὸν	αὐτοῦς	ἐν	τὰ	πλοίῳ	μετὰ	Ζεβεδαίου
brethren	his	in	the son of	a ship	with	Zebedee
G80	G846	G1722	G3588	G4143	G3326	G2199
τὰ	πατρὸς	αὐτοῦς	καταρτίζοντας	τὰ	δίκτυα	
the son of	father	his	mending	the son of	nets	
G3588	G3962	G846	G2675	G3588	G1350	
αὐτοῦς	καὶ	ἐκάλεσεν	αὐτοῦς			
his	And	he called	his			
G846	G2532	G2564	G846			

Additional Cross-References

Mark 3:17 (References John): And James the son of Zebedee, and John the brother of James; and he surnamed them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder:

Matthew 10:2 (References John): Now the names of the twelve apostles are these; The first, Simon, who is called Peter, and Andrew his brother; James the son of Zebedee, and John his brother;

Acts 12:2 (References John): And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.

John 21:2 (Parallel theme): There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas called Didymus, and Nathanael of Cana in Galilee, and the sons of Zebedee, and two other of his disciples.

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