

## ZEBEDEE, Who is He?

### What Kind of Man is He?



Today, May 6, 2025 is the **Feast of St. John at the Latin Gate**. He is one of the original twelve Apostles of Our Lord Jesus Christ and the closest one to Him. St. John is also one of the four Gospel writers.

Today's Gospel (Matthew 20: 20-23) for the Feast of St. James, reads thus: "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons, adoring and asking something of Him. Who said to her: What wilt thou? She saith to Him: Say that these my two sons may sit, the one on Thy right hand, and the other on Thy left, in thy kingdom. And Jesus answering, said: You know not what you ask. Can you drink the chalice that I shall drink? They say to Him: We can. He saith to them: My chalice indeed you shall drink; but to sit on My right or left hand, is not Mine to give to you, but to them for whom it is prepared by My Father."

The first verse of this Gospel reading, "Then came to Him the mother of the sons of Zebedee with her sons...", kindled my interest in Zebedee, for of all the apostles' fathers, his name is always mentioned whenever James and John are noted together in the Scriptures. Research shows that his name is mentioned **eleven (11) times** in the Scriptures. The father of St. Peter, the head of the chosen group, was mentioned

only twice. It is intriguing that Zebedee is given this recognition by these many passages. The only other father of the rest of the apostles mentioned is Alpheus, the father of James the Less. Here are the excerpts of those verses that mentioned Zebedee:

1. "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. [Matthew 4:21]
2. "James **the son of Zebedee**, and John his brother, Philip and Bartholomew, Thomas and Matthew the publican, and James the son of Alpheus, and Thaddeus, [Matthew 10:3]
3. "Then came to him the mother of **the sons of Zebedee** with her sons, adoring and asking something of him. [Matthew 20:20]
4. "And taking with him Peter and **the two sons of Zebedee**, he began to grow sorrowful and to be sad. [Matthew 26:37]
5. "Among whom was Mary Magdalen, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph, and the mother of **the sons of Zebedee**. [Matthew 27:56]
6. "And going on from thence a little farther, he saw James **the son of Zebedee**, and John his brother, who also were mending their nets in the ship: [Mark 1:19]
7. "And forthwith he called them. And leaving **their father Zebedee** in the ship with his hired men, they followed him. [Mark 1:20]
8. "And James **the son of Zebedee**, and John the brother of James; and he named them Boanerges, which is, The sons of thunder: [Mark 3:17]
9. "And James and John **the sons of Zebedee**, come to him, saying: Master, we desire that whatsoever we shall ask, thou wouldst do it for us: [Mark 10:35]
10. "And so were also James and John, the **sons of Zebedee**, who were Simon's partners. And Jesus saith to Simon: Fear not: from henceforth thou shalt catch men. [Luke 5:10]
11. "There were together Simon Peter, and Thomas, who is called Didymus, and Nathanael, who was of Cana of Galilee, and **the sons of Zebedee**, and two others of his disciples. [John 21:2]

The Scriptures do not give any other information on this highly esteemed man except for those passages. This intentional and specific description of the two

brothers as the sons of Zebedee makes one wonder, "Who is Zebedee and what kind of man is he?"

## OUR GRATEFUL GOD

The way those verses were written showed that the intention is to make the reader appreciate that Zebedee is a man to be honored and appreciated for having two of Jesus' apostles.

There must be a justifiable reason for this. The Scriptures do not give deference to any man due to material wealth or reputation **but for the person's virtues or virtuous life**. Specifically, the Scriptures extol the following virtues or characteristics that are pleasing to God:

1. Those who "fear God".

"The Lord taketh pleasure in them that fear Him: and in them that hope in His mercy. (*Psalms 146:11*)

2. A contrite and humbled heart.

"A sacrifice to God is an afflicted spirit: a contrite and humbled heart, O God, Thou wilt not despise. (*Psalms 50:19*) Also, "The Lord is nigh unto them that are of a contrite heart: and He will save the humble of spirit. (*Psalms 33:19*)

3. Being a just man.

"And if a man be just<sup>1</sup>, and do judgment and justice, Hath walked in My commandments, and kept My judgments, to do truth: he is just, he shall surely live, saith the Lord God. (*Ezekiel 18:5,9*)

4. Those who love God.

"I love them that love Me: and they that in the morning early watch for Me, shall find Me." (*Proverbs 8:17*)

5. Those who hope in God and seek Him.

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<sup>1</sup> Just is defined as 'behaving according to what is morally right and fair'

**"The Lord is good to them that hope in Him, to the soul that seeketh Him." (Lamentation 3:25)**

Our True-Ever Living God is a grateful God. Those who strive to always obey His commandments and do His will, He rewards bountifully in this world and in the next. He makes sure that these children of His who please Him are remembered and honored till the end of time.

For thus, it is written: "Many shall praise his wisdom, and it shall never be forgotten. The memory of him shall not depart away, and his name shall be in request from generation to generation. ...he shall leave a name above a thousand: (Ecclesiasticus 39:12, 13, 15)

Also, "Let us now praise men of renown, and our fathers in their generation. The Lord hath wrought great glory through his magnificence from the beginning. Such as have borne rule in their dominions, men of great power, and endued with their wisdom, shewing forth in the prophets the dignity of prophets, And ruling over the present people, and by the strength of wisdom instructing the people in most holy words. Rich men in virtue, studying beautifulness: living at peace in their houses. All these have gained glory in their generations, and were praised in their days. They that were born of them have left a name behind them, that their praises might be related: But these were men of mercy, whose godly deeds have not failed: Good things continue with their seed. Their posterity are a holy inheritance, and their seed hath stood in the covenants. And their children for their sakes remain for ever: their seed and their glory shall not be forsaken. Their bodies are buried in peace, and their name liveth unto generation and generation. Let the people shew forth their wisdom, and the church declare their praise.(Ecclesiasticus 44:1-4, 6-8, 10-15)

Zebedee must have taught James and John the virtues of fear of God, obedience to His commandments and to love God, for they turned out to be good disciples and preachers of Our Lord Jesus Christ. It is fair to say that Zebedee was a good father that God loves and honors for his contribution to His salvific plan by giving Him, James and John, God-fearing and obedient sons; whom Jesus called 'sons of thunder' due to their fiery evangelical zeal, boldness, and reactive tempers.

## THE REVEALING DEVOTION TO ST. JOHN, APOSTLE and EVANGELIST

There is a devotion to St. John that was given in the book, 'Prayers and Heavenly

**Promises'**, Joan Carroll Cruz, TAN Books and Publishers, Rockford, Illinois, that promises St. John's assistance for a holy death to anyone who practices it daily. It is a simple and easy devotion - To pray one "Our Father" in honor of the love and reverence in St. John's heart when our Lord Jesus Christ taught them The Lord's Prayer.

Whereas, prior to this event, from time immemorial, God has been feared more than revered, due to the history of the terrible chastisements He has sent down upon the earth to correct man from his erratic, sinful ways. Then Jesus gives this prayer which starts with "Our Father..." To St. John these sweet, first words evoked loving memories of his father, Zebedee. He was thrilled and exulted to know that God, The Father, is like his own father - loving, honorable, generous, forgiving and more.

His thoughts on how generous and loving God the Father is, he memorialized in his Gospel, in John 3:16, "For God so loved the world, as to give His only begotten Son; that whosoever believeth in Him, may not perish, but may have life everlasting."

The repeated bringing up of Zebedee's name in the New Testament is also an invitation to all fathers to emulate his good fatherhood and examples so that we could all contribute to the generation of children that God will call His own inheritance.



### Abba, Our Father

As He appeared to Mother Eugenia Ravassio on July 1, 1932 In Grenoble, France

"Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of mercies, and the God of all comfort, Who comforteth us in all our tribulation." (2 Corinthians 1:3,4)