

# The Feast Day of the Apostle James, Son of Zebedee

April 30, 2019

**GOSPEL:** Luke 9:1-6

**EPISTLE:** Acts 12:1-11

## James Was Part of Jesus' Extended Family

From the Family Tree of Jesus in Figure 1, five of the Twelve were Jesus' relatives. In addition, James and Joseph, the Lord's stepbrothers, and Simeon, the Lord's cousin, were members of the Seventy. Simon the Zealot, who was the bridegroom<sup>1</sup> at the Wedding Feast at Cana (John 2:1-12), may have been a distant relative. We may infer some blood relationship due to the prominence of Jesus' mother at the wedding, and due to the inclusion of some of Jesus' disciples.

James and John, the sons of Zebedee and Jesus' nephews, were fishermen along with their father Zebedee. Due to the type of nets they used, their business required at least two boats and at least a dozen able-bodied men to haul nets. Thus we see Peter and Andrew as partners with James and John Zebedee (Luke 5:10). In addition, Thomas, Nathanael and probably Philip worked with them also and may have been Zebedee's hired hands (John 21:1-3).

Philip, a native of Bethsaida along with Peter and Andrew, was described as a fisherman<sup>2</sup>, and was a close friend of Nathanael (John 1:43-48). Matthias was not a fisherman or a direct relative of Jesus. But due to his being put forward as a candidate to replace Judas (along with Jesus' step brother Joseph, Jr.), he had spent the last three years going everywhere with them as one of the 70 (Acts 1:21-23). Since Matthias was born in Bethlehem (along with Joseph, the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary), he could have been a distant relative of Joseph.

Thus James, along with his brother John were close to the Lord due to being part of His extended family. This closeness was punctuated by their mother, Salome, Jesus' sister, being very close to Jesus' mother, the Virgin Mary.

## The Calling of James and John, Peter and Andrew

James was among the three Apostles who were closest to Jesus; namely Peter, James and John. As a result, James was present at some very revealing occasions. With his brother, John, James worked as a fisherman for their father, Zebedee. When Jesus called the four Apostles (Luke 5:1-11, Mark 1:16-20), this was actually the second time that they had been called, where this time they were called to something greater than before.

Copyright © Mark Kern 2003

---

<sup>1</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, May 10.

<sup>2</sup> "Four Stichera for Ode IX of Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Philip", November 14<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

The first contact the four Apostles had with Jesus came from the remark by John the Baptist, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36). At this first calling, they left following John the Baptist to follow Jesus. But they had been called as disciples not Apostles. At the first calling (John 1), they were still part-time fishermen. After the second calling, they left everything (Matthew 4:20, 22) and were soon sent to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons by themselves (Matthew 10:1-8).

A miracle preceded this second calling. The four Apostles had worked all night with their trammel nets and caught nothing (Luke 5:1-8). The trammel net (Greek *diktuon*) has three layers as shown in Figure 2 and was used only at night. It was not useful during the day because the fish could see the weaving and avoid it. Beginning in the 20<sup>th</sup> Century, synthetic fiber — which is invisible under water — has made trammel nets useful today in the daytime for fishing on the Sea of Galilee.

In use, the trammel net was spread in a crescent shape roughly parallel to the shoreline. The boat that laid the net then quietly maneuvered toward shore between the net and the shore. All of a sudden, the fishermen in the boat started making racket by beating the water with oars or stamping on the bottom of the boat. The frightened fish headed for deep water — right into the net and became entangled. The trammel net was lowered and hauled up perhaps a dozen times during the night. Early in the morning the net was washed and hung up to dry and repaired — and prepared for the next night’s work. A good night’s catch from working all night, letting down the nets 12-15 times was about 200 pounds.

The miracle associated with this second calling was that they caught a huge catch of fish in the daytime and in deep water, even though the net was useless under both conditions. In the daytime, the fish can see the net and avoid it; in deep water, the fish can swim under the net. Fishermen wouldn’t just go out into deep water and let down their nets in the daytime for a stranger, especially being tired after fishing all night. This indicates their respect for Jesus as “The Messiah” who was pointed out by John the Baptist. Since the fishing boats could probably carry well over 1,000 pounds of fish plus two crewmembers, and since both boats were filled to the point of almost sinking (Luke 5:7), this represented quite a haul!

Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest of the crew were understandably astonished at the size of the catch, especially coming in the daytime. Peter’s remark “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!” (Luke 5:8) is reminiscent of that of Isaiah after having seen the Lord in His temple (Isaiah 6:1-7). Many times, the closer we get to the Lord, the more we realize our own sinfulness. From the Lord’s reply, “Do not be afraid! From now on, you will catch men” (Luke 5:10), there was more than just simple surprise but some fear and trembling also at the magnitude of the Lord’s miracle. One might note Peter’s progression over the course of the event from calling Jesus “Master” (Luke 5:5) to calling Him “Lord” (Luke 5:8).

The calling of the four Apostles had an immediate impact on their lives. Peter was married, while Andrew, James and John weren’t. In leaving everything associated with their livelihood, they now had no income and had to depend on the righteous women for their support (Luke 8:2-

3). Recent scholarship<sup>3</sup> notes there was a high demand and thus high prices for fresh fish. These four Apostles may have been uneducated, but the fishing business paid well, and they had a good income. Prices of fresh fish were so high that later in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century, the Roman government had to institute price controls to prevent fishmongers from gouging people who would pay anything for fresh fish. In leaving a well-paying trade, the four Apostles received no worldly return or benefit (Matthew 19:27).

John Chrysostom described<sup>4</sup> the early life of James and John as follows. “James was from a poor village, and from a land little esteemed, as producing no good thing. For the Scribes spoke evil of Galilee, saying, ‘Search and look, for out of Galilee arises no prophet’ (John 7:52). And ‘the Israelite indeed’ (i.e. Nathanael) speaks ill of Galilee, saying, ‘Can any good thing come out of Nazareth?’ (John 1:46) And being from this land, he was not even from any remarkable place in it. Of this he was, and his father, a poor fisherman, so poor that he took his sons to the same employment. Now you all know that no workman will choose to bring up his son to succeed him in his trade, unless poverty press him very hard, especially where the trade is a humble one. But nothing can be poorer, humbler, more ignorant than fishermen. Yet even among them there are some greater, some less; and even there the Apostles occupied the lower rank, for they did not take their catch from the sea, but passed their time on a certain little lake.

As for worldly instruction, we may learn from these facts that he had none of it at all. Besides, Luke testifies this when he writes not only that he was ignorant, but that he was absolutely unlettered (Acts 4:13), as was likely. For one who was so poor, never coming into the public assemblies, nor falling in with men of respectability, but nailed to his fishing, conversing with fishmongers and cooks, how was he likely to be in a state better than that of the irrational animals?

This fisherman then, whose business was about lakes, and nets, and fish; this native of Galilee; this son of a poor fisherman; this man ignorant, who never learned letters either before or after he accompanied Christ; let us see what he utters, and on what matters he converses with us. Is it of things in the field? Is it of things in rivers? On the trade in fish? For these things, perhaps, one expects to hear from a fisherman. We shall hear none of these; but we shall hear of things in heaven, and what no one ever learned before. For, as might be expected of one who speaks from the very treasures of the Spirit, he is come bringing to us sublime doctrines, and the best way of life and wisdom. It is as though he just arrived from the very heavens; rather such as it was unlikely that all even there should know. Do these things belong to a fisherman? Do they belong to a rhetorician at all? Do they belong to a sophist or philosopher? To every one trained in the wisdom of the Gentiles? By no means! The human soul is simply unable thus to philosophize on that pure and blessed nature; on the powers that come next to it; on immortality and endless life; on the nature of mortal bodies which shall hereafter be immortal; on punishment and the judgment to come; on the inquiries that shall be as to deeds and words, as to thoughts and imaginations.

Jerome referred<sup>5</sup> to Jesus’ calling of James as follows: “Then James and John forsook father and net and ship and followed the Savior; neither kinship nor the world’s ties, nor the care of their home could hold them back. Then were the words heard, ‘Whosoever will come after me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow me’ (Mark 8:34). For no soldier goes with a wife to battle”.

---

<sup>3</sup> Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “Fishes of Fish, Fishes of Men,” *Bible Review*, June 1999

<sup>4</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, II, 1-2.

<sup>5</sup> Jerome, *Letters*, XXII, xxi.

The hymns of the Church address James' life before Jesus called him:

“The tranquility of your undefiled soul<sup>6</sup> was apparent to the Master even before your call, O blessed James. You were shown to be right pleasing to Him, and were a disciple of His providence”.

“Adorned with your sacred life and your splendid kinship with God, O most blessed one, you were shown to be His companion. For from childhood you were shown to dwell with the Word”.

“Called as a preacher<sup>7</sup> of Christ, O divine James, you quickly followed Him, spurning the love of your father and trading transitory things for those which are eternal. Wherefore you have been granted an ineffable heavenly inheritance, O blessed and ever-memorable one”.

### **James Witnesses Jesus Heal Peter's Mother-in-Law**

After teaching on the Sabbath in the synagogue of Capernaum, and healing a man in the synagogue who was demon-possessed (Luke 4:31-37), Jesus left for the house of Peter and Andrew accompanied also by James and John (Mark 1:29). “Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon's house. But Simon's wife's mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them” (Luke 4:38-39).

Some early accounts stated<sup>8</sup> that Andrew and Simon were orphans, and that their fishing business, along with having bought their own boat (Luke 5:3), was a necessity for their support. Poverty and hard work were something that they had grown up with from childhood. Thus from Luke's account, Peter, his wife, Andrew, Peter's parents and Peter's children (if any) all lived in the same house. For them to invite Jesus and some of His Apostles over for a Sabbath meal, the house could not have been one of the small 10 ft. by 10 ft. houses that the poor people of Capernaum lived in. Theophylact stated<sup>9</sup> that it was the custom on the evening of the Sabbath for Jesus to have supper at the house of His disciples.

At the Apostles' request, Jesus rebuked the fever, touched the hand of Peter's mother-in-law (Matthew 8:15), took her by the hand and lifted her up (Mark 1:31). Not only did the fever leave her immediately, but also she needed no recovery time; she immediately got up and began serving the Sabbath meal. Cyril of Alexandria stated<sup>10</sup> that what Jesus rebuked was the demons that had caused her to be sick, just as they had caused considerable grief for Job (Job 1-2).

“Jesus arrived at Simon's house, and found his wife's mother sick of a fever; and He stood, and rebuked the fever, and it left her. Now in what is said by Matthew and Mark, that the fever left her, there is no hint of any living thing as the active cause of the fever (Matthew 8:15, Mark 1:31). But in Luke's phrase that He stood

---

<sup>6</sup> “Ode III for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>7</sup> “Ode IV for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>8</sup> Pseudo-Clement, Recognitions of Clement, VII, 5

<sup>9</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 1, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>10</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily12, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her, we are but compelled to say that that which was rebuked was some living thing unable to sustain the influence of Him Who rebuked it. For it is not reasonable to rebuke a thing without life, and unconscious of the rebuke. Nor is it astonishing that certain powers exist that inflict harm on the human body; nor must we think evil of the soul of those who suffer for being harmed by these beings. For neither when the Devil obtained authority to tempt Job by bodily torments, and struck him with painful ulcers, was Job found fault with, for he manfully contended and nobly endured the blow. If at any time we are tempted by bodily pains, God grant that it touch not our soul (Job 2:6). The Lord then by a rebuke heals those who are possessed”.

“He laid also His hands upon the sick one by one, and freed them from their malady (Luke 4:40-41), so demonstrating that the holy flesh, which He had made His own, and endowed with godlike power, possessed the active presence of the might of the Word. He intended us thereby to learn that though the Only-begotten Word of God became like us, yet even so is He none the less God, and able easily, even by His own flesh, to accomplish all things; for by it as His instrument He wrought miracles. Nor is there any reason for great wonder at this; but consider how fire, when placed in a brazen vessel, communicates to it the power of producing the effects of heat. So the all-powerful Word of God also, having joined by a real union unto Himself the living and intelligent temple taken from the holy Virgin, endowed it with the power of actively exerting His own godlike might. To put the Jews to shame, therefore, He says, ‘If I do not the works of My Father, believe Me not; but if I do, though you believe not Me, believe My works’” (John 10:38).

“He entered, then, into Peter’s house, where a woman was lying stretched upon a bed, exhausted with a violent fever; and when He might as God have said, ‘Put away the disease, arise’, He adopted a different course of action. For, as a proof that His own flesh possessed the power of healing, as being the flesh of God, He touched her hand, and the fever left her”.

“But observe again, I pray, how great is the efficacy of the touch of His holy flesh. For It both drives away diseases of various kinds, and a crowd of demons, and overthrows the power of the devil, and heals a very great multitude of people in one moment of time. And though able to perform these miracles by a word and the inclination of His will, yet to teach us something useful for us, He also lays His hands upon the sick. For it was most necessary for us to learn, that the holy flesh which He had made His own was endowed with the activity of the power of the Word by His having implanted in it a godlike might”.

Later that evening, after sunset, the whole city of Capernaum was gathered together at the door of Peter’s house. “They brought to Him all those who were sick with various diseases; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ And He, rebuking *them*, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ” (Luke 4:32-34). All this was a rather spectacular event for James and the others to witness.

John Chrysostom commented<sup>11</sup> on this, noting that the miracle produced instant health that required no time for recuperation. Similarly, when He calmed the sea, He exhibited complete command of the physical world such that when the winds stopped, the sea was perfectly calm and no time was required for the waves to cease swelling. As a result of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, even the multitudes increased in faith. Chrysostom linked this healing to Christ bearing our sicknesses of soul, since He came as the Lamb of God to bear (Greek *airo*, carry, lift) the sin of the world.

“Jesus used to visit His disciples, as He had done for Matthew, when He had called him (Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17), so honoring them and making them more zealous. But note Peter's reverence towards Him. Even though he had his wife's mother at home lying ill, and very sick of a fever, he did not draw Him into his house, but waited first for the teaching to be finished, then for all the others to be healed (Matthew 8:1-13). And then when He had come in, then he besought Him. Thus from the beginning was he instructed to prefer the things of all others to his own”.

“Having touched her body, He not only quenched the fever, but also gave her back perfect health. Since the disease was an ordinary one, He displayed His power by the manner of healing; a thing which no physician's art could have done. For you know that even after a fever departs, the patients need much time to return to their former health. But in this case all took place at once”.

“And not in this case only, but also in calming the sea (Mark 4:39). There He did not quiet the winds and the storm only, but He also stayed the swelling of the waves; and this also was a strange thing. For even if the wind should cease, the waves continue to swell for a long time. But with Christ it was not so, but all at once was ended; and so it befell this woman also. Wherefore also the evangelist, to declare this, said, ‘She arose and ministered unto Him’ (Matthew 8:15); which was a sign both of Christ's power, and of the disposition of the woman, which she showed towards Christ”.

“Do you see that even the multitude was growing in faith? For even when the time pressed they could not endure to depart, nor did they account it unseasonable to bring their sick to Him in the evening” (Matthew 8:16).

“But mark how great a multitude of persons healed the evangelists pass quickly over, not mentioning them one by one, but in one word traversing an unspeakable sea of miracles. Then lest the greatness of the wonder should drive us again to unbelief, that even so great a people and their various diseases should be delivered and healed by Him in one moment of time, Matthew brings in the prophet also to bear witness to what is going on. He said that Isaiah also spoke of these things, ‘He Himself took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses’ (Isaiah 53:4). He did not say, ‘He did them away’, but ‘He took and bore them’; which seems to me to be spoken rather of sins, by the prophet, in harmony with John, where he said, ‘Behold the Lamb of God, that bears the sin of the world’ (John 1:29).

How then does Matthew here apply it to diseases? Either as rehearsing the passage in the historical sense, or to show that the majority of our diseases arise from sins of the soul. For if the sum of all, death itself, has its root and foundation

---

<sup>11</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVII, 1-2.

from sin, much more the majority of our diseases also; our very capability of suffering originated there.

### **James Characterized as One of the Sons of Thunder**

In late 29 AD, as Jesus began to head slowly toward Jerusalem (Luke 9:51) where He would be crucified, He traveled through Samaria. As He went along, He sent messengers ahead to prepare for Him (Luke 9:52). There were two groups of messengers. The first prepared lodging for Jesus and His entourage, which included the women and the Seventy. The second group He sent out was the Seventy “Lesser Apostles”, where Jesus gave them the authority to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 10:1-17). With the Seventy, the result was a rather spectacular introduction to the Word made flesh. The Seventy told everyone along the way that the Master was coming, and performed many signs to let people know that the One Who was coming was truly worth coming out to see!

However, one Samaritan village did not receive Him. James and his younger brother John, asked Jesus, “Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them, just as Elijah did?” (Luke 9:54) This was a reference to Elijah’s encounter with the ungodly King Ahaziah, who three times sent 50 soldiers to bring Elijah to him by force. Elijah called down fire from heaven on the first two companies of 50. The captain of the third company was wiser than the other two captains. He fell down on his knees before Elijah and begged for his life (2 Kings 1:9-16).

But James and John had misunderstood the Lord’s direction. They thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately (Luke 19:11), and that He needed their help to protect His rightful place in the Kingdom. Later they would come to understand that His glorification was the Cross (John 12:23), and that turning one’s cheek (Matthew 6:39) was the higher road. James and John did call down some thunder later on during their missionary journeys. But the purpose for doing so was the salvation of the people who were turning to the Lord.

Theophylact stated<sup>12</sup> that Jesus called James and John the “Sons of Thunder” because they were great preachers, filled with theology.

Cyril of Alexandria stated<sup>13</sup> that the Lord did what He did intentionally for the instruction of the Apostles. When He sent them out ahead of Him, He knew that they would be rejected by some of the Samaritans. But just as He was heading for Jerusalem to be abused and murdered, so He wanted His disciples to be mindful that they will later encounter similarly minded people. Since they will be sent out as the light of the world (Matthew 5:14), they needed to learn how God Himself behaves in these situations, and to be patient with those that are ignorant of His ways. If they had continually pronounced their condemnation, they would have become the torturers and not the physicians of the sick, and they would be intolerable to men everywhere.

“For *when*, it says, the days were *fulfilled* for *His* being taken *up*, He set His face to go to Jerusalem. He sent messengers to prepare lodging for Him and His

---

<sup>12</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 1, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>13</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 56, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

companions. And when they came to a village of the Samaritans, they were not received. At this the blessed disciples were indignant, not so much on their own account as because the Samaritans did not honor Him, Who is Savior and Lord of all. And what followed? They knew His majesty and power, and said, 'Lord, do You want us to command fire to come down from heaven and consume them?' But Christ rebuked them for so speaking. Christ knew, of course, that the Samaritans would not receive His messengers. Why then, did He command them to precede Him? His custom was to benefit the holy Apostles in every possible way; and for this end His practice sometimes put them to the proof. For instance, sailing upon the lake of Tiberias with the Apostles, he fell asleep purposely; and a violent wind rose on the lake, a rough and unusual storm began to rage, and the boat was in danger, and the crew in alarm. He intentionally permitted the storm and the fury of the tempest to rage against the ship to try the faith of the disciples, and to make manifest the greatness of His power. They, in the littleness of their faith, said, 'Lord, save us! We are perishing!'. And He at once arose and showed that He is Lord of the elements; for He rebuked the sea and the tempest, and there was an exceeding great calm (Matt. 8:25). And so also on this occasion; He knew, indeed, that the Samaritans would not receive those who went forward to announce that he would lodge with them; but He permitted them to go, that this again might be a means of benefiting the Apostles".

"What then, was the purpose of this occurrence? He was going up to Jerusalem, as the time of His passion was already drawing near. He was about to endure the contempt of the Jews; He was about to be set at nought by the Scribes and Pharisees, and to suffer those things which they inflicted upon Him when they proceeded to the accomplishment of all violence and wicked audacity. In order that they might not be offended when they saw Him suffering, He wanted them to understand that He would have them also to be patient, even though men treat them with haughty contempt. He made the contempt they met with from the Samaritans a preparatory exercise. It was the duty of the disciples, treading in the footsteps of their Lord, to bear it patiently as becomes saints, and not to say anything wrathfully. But they were not yet so disposed; but being seized with too hot indignation, they would have called down fire upon them from heaven".

"See here how great is the difference between God and us, for the distance is immeasurable. He is slow to anger and long-suffering, of incomparable gentleness and love to mankind. But we children of earth are quick unto anger, hasty unto impatience, and refuse with indignation to be judged by others when we are found out in committing any wrong act; while we are most ready to find fault with others. Therefore, the Lord of all affirms, 'My thoughts are not as your thoughts, nor your ways as My ways; but as the heaven is far from the earth, so are My ways from your ways, and My thoughts from your thoughts' (Isaiah 55:8-9). We, being readily vexed, and easily led into anger, sometimes take severe and intolerable vengeance upon those who have occasioned us some trifling annoyance; and though commanded to live according to the Gospel, we fall short of the practice commanded by the Law. For the Law said, 'Eye for eye; tooth for tooth; hand for hand: and commanded that an equal retribution should suffice (Exodus 21:22-27). But though we have suffered but a trifling wrong, we would retaliate very harshly,

not remembering Christ, Who said, ‘The disciple is not greater than his teacher, nor the slave than his master’ (Matt 10:24). When He was reviled, reviled not again; when suffering, threatened not; but committed His cause to Him Who judges righteously (1 Peter 2:23). Much-enduring Job also is justly admired as treading this path; for it is written of him, ‘What man *is* like Job, *who* drinks scorn like water?’ (Job 34:7) For their benefit, therefore, He rebuked the disciples, gently restraining the sharpness of their wrath, and not permitting them to murmur violently against those who sinned, but persuading them rather to be long-suffering, and to cherish a mind unmovable by anything of this sort”.

“It benefited them also in another way. They were the instructors of the whole world, and traveled through the cities and villages, proclaiming everywhere the good tidings of salvation. Of necessity, therefore, while seeking to fulfill their mission, they encountered wicked men, who rejected the divine tidings, and, so to speak, did not receive Jesus to lodge with them. Had Christ praised them for wishing that fire should come down upon the Samaritans, and that so painful a torment should be inflicted upon them, they would have acted similarly in many other instances. And when men disregarded the sacred message, they would have pronounced their condemnation, and called down fire upon them from above. And what would have been the result of such conduct? The sufferers would have been innumerable, and no longer would the disciples have been so much physicians of the sick, as torturers rather, and intolerable to men everywhere. For their own good, therefore, they were rebuked, when they were enraged beyond measure at the contempt of the Samaritans. They needed to learn that as ministers of the divine tidings, they must rather be full of longsuffering and gentleness, not revengeful, not given to wrath, not savagely attacking those who offend them”.

“And that the ministers of God’s message actually were longsuffering, Paul teaches us, saying, ‘For I think that God has displayed us, the Apostles, last, as men condemned to death; for we have been made a spectacle to the world, both to angels and to men. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat. We have been made as the filth of the world, the offscouring of all things until now’ (1 Cor 4:9-13). He wrote also to others, or rather to all who had not yet received Christ in them, but so to speak, were still afflicted with the pride of the Samaritans, ‘We implore *you* on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God”’ (2 Cor 5:20).

Ambrose of Milan stated<sup>14</sup>, “Furthermore, Jesus rebuked James and John when they spoke of bringing down fire from heaven to consume those who refused to receive the Lord. He said to them, ‘You know not whose spirit you are of; for the Son of Man is not come to destroy men’s lives but to save them’. To them, indeed, He said, ‘You know not whose spirit you are of’, who were of His spirit; but to you He says, ‘You are not of My spirit, who reject My mercy, who refuse repentance which I willed to be preached by the apostles in My Name”’.

“For it is in vain if you say that you preach repentance and remove the fruits of repentance. For men are led to the pursuit of anything either by rewards or results, and every pursuit grows slack by delay. And for this reason the Lord, in order that the devotion of His disciples might be increased, said that every one who had left all that was his, and followed God, should receive

---

<sup>14</sup> Ambrose, Concerning Repentance, I, xvi, 88-89.

sevenfold more both here and hereafter. First of all He promised the reward here, to do away with the tedium of delay, and again hereafter, that we might learn to believe that rewards will also be given to us hereafter. Present rewards are then an earnest of that hereafter”.

### **James and John Witness the Raising of Jairus' Daughter**

Just prior to the sending of the Twelve out two-by-two to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8, Luke 9:1), Jesus gave the Twelve the last of a series of lessons on how to do this. Jairus, a synagogue ruler at Capernaum, came to Jesus requesting that He heal his only daughter, who was dying (Luke 8:41-42). However, the daughter died before Jesus could arrive. When Jesus arrived at Jairus' house, He commented that the girl was not dead, but just sleeping. The noisy flute players and mourners ridiculed Him, knowing that she was dead. But Jesus had said this so that they could not possibly deny later that the girl was in fact dead. Then He put them all outside and brought just Peter, James and John plus Jairus and his wife inside. Taking the girl by the hand, He raised her from the dead, and asked those who witnessed the event not to tell anyone what had happened (Luke 9:54-56). This occurred in late 28 AD, and the Twelve learned this lesson well. Peter used the same method in raising Tabitha from the dead in c. 38 AD<sup>15</sup>, first putting out all the noisy, weeping widows (Acts 9:36-41).

Theophylact stated<sup>16</sup> that Jesus took Jairus' daughter by the hand to impart His power to her, and that He ordered that something be given to her to eat to prove that her resurrection was not a fantasy.

John Chrysostom compared<sup>17</sup> the raising of Jairus' daughter to raising Lazarus and to the calling of Moses. Lazarus, Christ said, also “slept”, and his resurrection prefigured Christ's own Resurrection. But before Christ called Lazarus out of the tomb, He elicited the statement from Martha that there will be a stench (John 11:39), thus establishing the fact that Lazarus was dead. At the calling of Moses, He was sure to establish what was in his hand before He turned it into a snake (Exodus 4:2). With each event, Christ was careful to establish and identify conditions before and after the miracle so that witnesses remembered what had happened. To be sure that witnesses didn't think the raising of Jairus' daughter was all an illusion, He then commanded that something be given her to eat. Yet in all this Christ was very humble about what He did, and asked the witnesses not to tell what had happened.

“The death pipes and cymbals raising a dirge were noble tokens of the rulers of synagogues! All the rest He cast out, but the parents He brought in; to leave no room for saying that He healed her in any other way. And before her resurrection too, He raised her in His word; saying, ‘The maid is not dead, but sleeps’ (Matthew 9:24). On the sea He expelled tumult from the mind of the bystanders (Matthew 8:23-27), at the same time both signifying that it is easy for Him to raise the dead, which same thing He did with respect to Lazarus also, saying, ‘Our friend Lazarus sleeps’ (John 11:11). By doing this, He taught us not to fear death; for it is not

---

<sup>15</sup> Paul was converted in c. 34 AD, and went to Jerusalem in c. 37 AD (Acts 9:26-31). The raising of Tabitha was the next event recorded in Acts.

<sup>16</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 1, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>17</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 3.

death, but has become a sleep. Since He Himself was to die, He prepared His disciples beforehand, in the persons of others, to be of good courage, and to bear the end meekly”.

“But yet they laughed Him to scorn. He was not indignant; neither did He rebuke their laughter, in order that both it and the pipes, and the cymbals, and all the other things, might be a sure proof of her death. For since after the miracles are done, men disbelieve, He takes them beforehand by their own answers; which was done in the case both of Lazarus and of Moses. For to Moses first He said, ‘What is that in your hand?’ (Exodus 4:2), in order that when he saw it become a serpent, He should not forget that it was a rod before, but being reminded of his own saying, might be amazed at what was done. And with regard to Lazarus He said, ‘Where have you laid him?’ that they who had said, ‘Come and see’, and ‘he stinks, for he has been dead four days’, (John 11:34, 39) might no longer be able to disbelieve His having raised a dead man”.

“And He held her by the hand, assuring the beholders; by that sight to make a way for the belief of her resurrection. For whereas the father said, ‘Lay your hand upon her’ (Matthew 9:18), He on His part does somewhat more, for He lays no hand on her, but rather takes hold of her, and raises her, implying that to Him all things are ready. And He not only raises her up, but also commands to give her food, that the event might not seem to be an illusion. And He does not give it Himself, but commands them; as also with regard to Lazarus He said, ‘Loose him, and let him go’, and afterwards makes Lazarus partaker of His table (John 11:44, 12:2). For so He always established both points, demonstrating alike both the death and the resurrection”.

“But note also His commanding ‘to tell no man’ (Mark 5:43, compare Matthew 9:30); and by all learn this especially, His freedom from haughtiness and vainglory. He cast them that were beating themselves out of the house, and declared them unworthy of such a sight. Let us not go out with the minstrels, but remain with Peter, and John, and James. For then it was not yet clear that death had become a sleep, but now this is clearer than the sun itself”.

Cyril of Alexandria concurred<sup>18</sup> that Jesus set up the situation and endured the scorn of the crowd in order to establish the fact that the girl was dead. As He did this, He taught His disciples the fruits of Faith.

“And having now come to the house of His supplicant, He quiets their lamentations, silences the musicians, and stops the tears of the weepers, saying, ‘The damsel is not dead, *but* rather sleeps’ (Luke 8:52). And they, it says, laughed at Him. Observe here, the great skill of the management. For though He well knew that the damsel was dead, He said, ‘She is not dead, *but* rather sleeps’. Why? That by laughing at Him, they might give a clear acknowledgment that the damsel was dead. For there would be some who always resist His glory, who would reject the divine miracle, and say that the damsel was not yet dead; and that in being delivered from sickness, there was nothing done by Christ very extraordinary. And let no man say that Christ spoke untruly. For to Him, as being Life by nature, there is nothing dead. And this is the reason why we, having a firm hope of the resurrection

---

<sup>18</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 46, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

of the dead, call them ‘those that sleep’ (1 Corinthians 15:51). For in Christ they will arise; and, as Paul says, they live to *Him*, in that they are about to live” (Romans 6:8).

“But observe this also. To teach us to avoid vainglory, when He came to the house in which the damsel was lying dead, He took in with Him but three of the Apostles, and the father and the mother of the damsel”.

“And the manner in which He wrought the miracle was worthy of God. For having taken her, it says, by the hand, He said, ‘Damsel, arise’; and she arose immediately. These are the fruits of faith<sup>19</sup>, for the sake of which the Law also was given to those of old time by the hand of Moses”.

### **James at the Transfiguration**

The Glory of God was revealed to James and the Twelve in progressively greater detail over Jesus’ three year public ministry. At the Transfiguration, Peter, James and John saw Him as He really is. This took place in mid-late summer 29 AD somewhat prior<sup>20</sup> to the Feast of Tabernacles. Prior to the events of the Transfiguration, Jesus had stated that some of His disciples would not taste death until they had seen the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27). Peter, James and John had this experience on the mountain of Transfiguration.

As Jesus was transfigured, He took on an appearance similar to what He had when others saw Him after His Ascension. For example, the same Apostle John who witnessed the Transfiguration, later saw the Lord in a vision on the island of Patmos. The Lord’s appearance then, as at the Transfiguration, was an extraordinary brightness (Revelation 1:9, 16). He did not change His nature; He did not abandon His human body for a while. He was merely revealed as He really is and His disciples’ eyes were opened. His human body remained intact, but “As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered and His robe became white and like lightning” (Luke 9:29). “His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as the light” (Matthew 17:2).

The angels at the tomb are also described as having clothing like lightning (Luke 24:4). The Lord’s appearance at the Second Coming will be “as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven and shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His Day” (Luke 17:24). All these references to “lightning” are translations of the Greek word *astrapto* and its derivatives. Cyril of Alexandria noted<sup>21</sup> this, “He was transformed to so surpassing and godlike a brightness that His garments even glittered with rays of fire, and seemed to flash like lightning”.

The Lord had mentioned a few months earlier that all the righteous would also appear this way in the resurrection, “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their

---

<sup>19</sup> Cyril went on to say that Faith came first, then the Law. Abraham believed God and this faith was counted to him as righteousness (James 2:23). Similarly with the other righteous patriarchs prior to Moses! The Law was added later because of transgressions (Galatians 3:19), where the Law was given as a pedagogue to lead us to Christ (Galatians 3:24), and to Faith.

<sup>20</sup> Compare Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:23-19 with that in John 6:67-69 to harmonize Matthew with John, then note John 7:2.

<sup>21</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Father” (Matthew 13:43, see also Daniel 12:3). The Transfiguration was then a demonstration of what that would be like. And this made a lasting impression on the Apostles.

As He was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared also in glory, talking with Jesus of His exodus (i.e. His crucifixion) which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31). Whereas the Transfiguration occurred in mid-late summer, 29 AD, just before the Feast of Tabernacles, Jesus was crucified at Passover (March-April) the following year. Since Jesus is the culmination of the Law and the Prophets, it is significant that Moses, the Law-giver, and Elijah, representing the Prophets, appeared with Him. The Lord had said earlier (Matthew 5:17-19), “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For till heaven and earth pass away (that is, the Kingdom comes in glory as we get a glimpse at the Transfiguration), one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one portion of a Hebrew letter will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled.”

John Chrysostom gave<sup>22</sup> four reasons why Christ brought forward Moses and Elijah to testify to Peter, James and John.

1. So that His disciples might see the difference between the servants and the Master, and so that Peter might be rightly commended (Matthew 16:17) for confessing Him to be the Son of God.
2. The Transfiguration exposed the blasphemy of the Jewish leaders who had been saying that Jesus was not from God because He did not keep the Sabbath (Matthew 12:2, John 9:16). By the Transfiguration, He demonstrated that He is God.
3. To inform them that He has power over both death and life and is Ruler of both above and beneath (i.e. Heaven and Hades). For this reason, He brought forward both him that died (i.e. Moses, Deuteronomy 34:5-6) and him that never yet suffered this (i.e. Elijah, 2 Kings 2:11).
4. To show them the glory of the Cross, to console Peter and the others in their dread of the Crucifixion and to raise up their minds. Moses and Elijah spoke with the Transfigured Christ, discussing “His departure which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem” (Luke 9:30-31). This “departure” Christ referred to as His “glory” (John 12:23).

Cyril of Alexandria added<sup>23</sup> to this saying that “the standing of Moses and Elijah before Him and their talking with one another was a sort of representation, excellently displaying our Lord Jesus Christ as having the Law and the Prophets for His bodyguard. He is the Lord of the Law and the Prophets as shown by those things, which they proclaimed in mutual agreement. For the words of the Prophets are not at variance with the teachings of the Law”.

Thus James had some insight into the things of God that not all the Twelve were privileged to have. Origen stated<sup>24</sup>,

“Jesus did not admit all His Apostles (to the sight of the Transfiguration), but only Peter, and James, and John. This was because they alone were capable of beholding His glory on that occasion, and of observing the glorified appearance of Moses and Elijah, and of listening to their conversation, and to the voice from the heavenly cloud”.

---

<sup>22</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 3.

<sup>23</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>24</sup> Origen, Against Celsus, II, 64

John Chrysostom added his insight<sup>25</sup> regarding why Jesus took only Peter, James and John up the mountain:

“Why does He take with Him these only? Because these were superior to the rest! Peter indeed showed his superiority by exceedingly loving Him; but John by being exceedingly loved of Him; and James again by his answer which he answered with his brother, saying, ‘We are able to drink the cup’ (Matthew 20:20-23); nor yet by his answer only, but also by his works”.

### **James and John Ask for Honor**

The mother of James and John was Salome, Jesus’ step-sister. She was about the same age as Jesus’ mother, and was also a very close confidant of the Virgin Mary. Along with Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:3), who were quite wealthy, Salome helped contribute to Jesus’ public ministry from the profits of her husband Zebedee’s fishing business. She was also among the Myrrh-Bearing Women at the Cross and at the Tomb (Mark 15:40, 16:1).

Just before Palm Sunday, Salome boldly asked her step-brother if her two sons might sit at Jesus’ right and left hand in His future Kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21). Since they were near Jerusalem, they thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately (Luke 19:11). John Chrysostom<sup>26</sup> and Theophylact<sup>27</sup> both stated that James and John were embarrassed to ask Jesus this themselves, so they got their mother to ask first. They all thought that Christ’s Kingdom was an earthly kingdom, like that of David (Mark 11:10), and they were looking for honor and position in that kingdom, just as the Gentiles of their day did.

Jesus asked first whether they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink. Even though they had no clue what He was talking about, they said that they were able. Jesus prophesied that they would indeed drink His cup, and be baptized with His baptism, but sitting at His right and left was not His to give. In drinking their cups, James was later given a sham of a trial, complete with hired false witnesses, and then beheaded (Acts 12:2). John was beaten, tortured and stoned many times, baptized in his own blood each time.

Jesus had said to the Twelve earlier that they would sit on twelve thrones judging the Twelve Tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). But here, Chrysostom noted<sup>28</sup>, James and John were not asking for anything spiritual. For they prefaced their request with, “Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask!” (Mark 10:35) “But out of shame and confusion of face, and under the influence of a human passion they took Him privately apart from the disciples, and asked Him. For they went ahead, so that the others might not see them, and so said what they wished”.

There has been some confusion about what Jesus meant when He said that sitting at His right and left was not His to give, and there are two aspects to consider. In one sense, no one shall

---

<sup>25</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 2.

<sup>26</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 2.

<sup>27</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 10, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>28</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 2.

sit on His right hand or on His left. John Chrysostom said<sup>29</sup> that that throne is inaccessible to all, not to men only, and saints, and apostles, but even to angels, and archangels, and to all the powers that are on high. To none of the angels has He ever said, “Sit at My Right Hand until I make your enemies your footstool” (Hebrews 1:13). To the Son of God, however, He said, “Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever!” (Hebrews 1:8) So in one sense, asking to sit at the Right Hand of God is asking to take the place of the Son of God. Chrysostom used an illustration to illustrate another sense of this meaning:

“Let us suppose there was some master of the (Olympic) games, and many excellent combatants went down to the contest. Two of the combatants that were most nearly connected with the master of the games came to him and said, ‘Cause us to be crowned and proclaimed’, confiding in their goodwill and friendship with him. He would say to them, ‘This is not mine to give (Matthew 20:23), but it shall be given to them for whom it is prepared, by their labors, and their toils.’ Should we condemn him as powerless? By no means, but we should approve him for his justice, and for having no respect of persons. Should we say that he gave the crown from want of vigor, or as not wishing to corrupt the law of the games and disturb the order of justice? In like manner now I should say that Christ said this to compel them, after the grace of God, to set their hopes of salvation and approval on the proof of their own good works. Therefore He said, ‘For whom it is prepared’. For He Himself has power over the whole, and has the entire judgment. For to Peter He speaks thus, ‘I will give you the keys of the Heavens’ (Matthew 16:16-19, 18:15-20). And Paul also makes this clear where he said, ‘Henceforth is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous judge, will give me in that day; and not to me only, but unto all them also which have loved His appearing’” (2 Timothy 4:8).

John Chrysostom stated<sup>30</sup> that the Apostles were different people after the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. “Do you see how they were all in an imperfect state, when both these were lifting themselves up above the ten, and those envying the two? But, as I said, show me them after these things, and you will see them delivered from all these passions. Hear at least how this same John, he who now came to Him for these things, everywhere gives up the first place to Peter, both in addressing the people, and in working miracles (Acts 3:1-7, 11-12, 4:7-13), in the Acts of the Apostles”.

“And he conceals not Peter’s good deeds, but relates both the confession, which he openly made when all were silent (John 6:68-69), and his entering into the tomb (John 20:6-8), and puts the apostle before himself. For because both continued with Him at His crucifixion, taking away the ground of his own commendation, he said, ‘That disciple was known unto the high priest’” (John 18:15).

“But James survived not a long time<sup>31</sup>, but from the beginning he was so greatly filled with warmth, and so forsook all the things of men, and mounted up to an height unutterable, as straightway to be slain (Acts 12:2). Thus, in all respects, they after these things became excellent”.

---

<sup>29</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, LXV, 3.

<sup>30</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, LXV, 4.

<sup>31</sup> James was martyred about 44 AD.

## James Asks About the Future

On Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the Temple and spoke of the future to Peter, James, John and Andrew (Mark 13:3). This discussion began from Jesus' remark about the Temple's destruction. "Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another<sup>32</sup>, that shall not be thrown down'. Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?'" (Mark 13:3-4) Jesus then went into a long description of the destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Coming (Matthew 24:4-31, Mark 13:5-27, Luke 21:8-28). Following this, He gave several descriptions and parables that describe what He will be looking for when He comes (Matthew 24:32-25:46, Mark 13:28-37, Luke 21:29-36).

There has been a significant difference in the interpretation of Jesus' remarks on the destruction of Jerusalem between ancient times and modern times. In ancient times, the wars and rumors of wars<sup>33</sup>, the lawlessness<sup>34</sup>, the Gospel preached to all nations<sup>35</sup>, the abomination of desolation<sup>36</sup> and the Great Tribulation<sup>37</sup> were seen as referring to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD and 132 AD. In modern times, these remarks are often interpreted as referred to the coming of the Antichrist in the future, just prior to the Second Coming of Christ.

On the other hand, ancient writers stated that there would be a gap in time between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ. Prior to the Second Coming, there will be signs in the celestial bodies (Matthew 24:29, Mark 13:24-25, ), distress of nations (Luke 21:25), upheaval in the seas (Luke 21:25), and men dying out of the fear of coming events (Luke 21:26). Then He will send out His angels with a great trumpet sound to gather the elect (Matthew 24:31, Mark 13:27), and His coming will be like lightning flashing from East to West (Matthew 24:27). To understand this gap in time, the Lord gave the parable of the fig tree: when the fig tree begins to bud, you know that summer is near (Matthew 24:32-33, Mark 13:28-29, Luke 21:29-31).

Theophylact summarized<sup>38</sup> this as follows:

'Many shall come', such as Judas and Theudas (Acts 5:36-37) who said that they had been sent by God. 'You shall hear of wars' (Mark 13:7), such as those which Josephus relates to have

---

<sup>32</sup> In his work *Jewish Wars*, Bk. VII, Ch. 1, the historian Josephus refers to the complete destruction of Jerusalem in 70 A.D., when Vespasian was Emperor. But under the Emperor Hadrian, c. 132 A.D., Jerusalem was again besieged by the Romans, and rebellion put down. Emperor Hadrian had the city and the temple dug up from the foundations. For further discussion, see Theophylact, [The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark](#), Chapter 13, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>33</sup> Matthew 24:6-8, Mark 13:7-8, Luke 21:9-11.

<sup>34</sup> Matthew 24:9-13, Mark 13:11-13, Luke 21:12-19.

<sup>35</sup> Matthew 24:14, Mark 13:10.

<sup>36</sup> Matthew 24:15, Mark 13:14.

<sup>37</sup> Matthew 24:16-22, Mark 13:15-20, Luke 21:20-24.

<sup>38</sup> Theophylact, [The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark](#), Chapter 13, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

occurred before the Romans seized Jerusalem. And the Jewish nation did rise up, and refused to pay tribute to the Romans. So the Romans were angered and mounting frequent campaigns against them, but the end of Jerusalem was not yet. For the Romans showed mercy. But there were not only wars, but also plagues sent by God, and famines and earthquakes. God showing them clearly that it was He Himself, Who was warring against them. All these things were the beginnings of the pangs of labor, that is, of the evils that were about to befall them. ‘But take heed to yourselves, for they shall deliver you up to councils’ (Mark 13:9). He purposefully inserts these words concerning the disciples, that ‘they shall deliver you up to councils’, so that they might take comfort in their own adversities from the disasters that will befall them all.

Then, so that the disciples would not think that these dangers and afflictions would prevent them from preaching, the Lord says that ‘the Gospel must first be preached among all the nations’ (Mark 13:10) and then Jerusalem would be captured. That the Gospel was indeed preached before the capture of Jerusalem, hear what St. Paul says. ‘Their sound hath gone forth into all the earth, and their words unto the ends<sup>39</sup> of the world’. And this also took place for the greater condemnation of the Jews that the Gospel was preached everywhere before the capture of Jerusalem. For when they saw how quickly the preaching spread throughout the world, they ought to have recognized the power of God, and repented, and thus been saved from disaster. But they did not learn, and therefore their condemnation was greater.

Cyril of Alexandria stated<sup>40</sup>, “Some of the Apostles showed Him the mighty works that were in the temple, and the beauty of the offerings; expecting that He would admire as they did the spectacle, though He is God, and heaven is His throne (Isaiah 66:1). But He gave no regard whatsoever to these earthly buildings, trifling as they are, and absolutely nothing, compared to the mansions that are above; and dismissing the conversation respecting them, turned Himself rather to that which was necessary. For He warned them, that however worthy the temple might be accounted by them of all admiration, yet at its season it would be destroyed from its foundations. It was thrown down by the power of the Romans, and all Jerusalem burnt with fire, and retribution exacted of Israel for the slaughter of the Lord. For after the Savior’s crucifixion, such were the things, which it was their lot to suffer.

‘The abomination<sup>41</sup> of desolation’ (Daniel 9:27) is the statue of the captor of the city<sup>42</sup>. For every idol is called an “abomination”. And it is one ‘of desolation’ because after the Romans had captured Jerusalem, they laid waste to it, leaving it desolate, and set up this statue within the sanctuary of the temple. For even Pilate had caused a great stir among the people when he brought by night into the temple an image of Caesar. And this was the beginning of both the war and the desolation of Jerusalem. Therefore, ‘then let them that are in Judea flee to the mountains’ (Mark 13:14). Rightly did He say, ‘them that are in Judea’, for the apostles were not in Judea, but had been driven out from Jerusalem before the war. And let him that is on the housetop not return for anything that is in the house. Happy is that man who saves himself, though he is naked; but woe to those who have children and are with child. Why? Because those with children will be held

---

<sup>39</sup> Romans 10:18. The Epistle of St. Paul to the Romans was written over ten years before the destruction of Jerusalem.

<sup>40</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>41</sup> Theophylact, *The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark*, Chapter 13, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>42</sup> See also John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, LXXV, 2.

back by their compassion for their children, and will not be able to flee, while those who are with child, because of the burden of the pregnancy, will not be able to take flight easily. But I think that this also means that the eating of children will take place. For in the famine that ensued, some of those besieged in the city cooked and ate their own children<sup>43</sup>.

And there will be a more severe affliction than has ever before, or will ever again occur<sup>44</sup>. And if God had not cut short the war with the Romans, ‘no flesh should be saved’ (Mark 13:20), that is, not a single Jew would have survived. ‘But for the elect’s sake’, that is, for the sake of those Jews who believed, or who would later believe, the war was cut short. For God knew that many Jews would come to believe in Christ after the capture of Jerusalem, and therefore He did not allow the whole Jewish race to be destroyed.

John Chrysostom added<sup>45</sup> to this, “By ‘the elect’, He means the believers that were shut up in the midst of them. In order that Jews may not say that because of the Gospel, and the worship of Christ, these ills took place, He showed, that so far from the believers being the cause, if it had not been for them, all would have perished utterly. For if God had permitted the war to be protracted, not so much as a remnant of the Jews would have remained. But lest those of them who had become believers should perish together with the unbelieving Jews<sup>46</sup>, He quickly put down the fighting, and gave an end to the war. Therefore He said, ‘But for the elect’s sake they shall be shortened’. But these things He said to leave an encouragement to those of them who were shut up in the midst of them, and to allow them to take breath, that they might not be in fear, as though they were to perish with them”.

Cyril of Alexandria stated<sup>47</sup>, “Before all these things, He says, they shall lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and to prisons, and bringing you before kings and rulers for My Name’s sake. For before the times of consummation the land of the Jews was taken captive, being overrun by the Roman host; the temple was burnt, their national government overthrown, the means for legal worship ceased. For they no longer had sacrifices, now that the temple was destroyed and the country of the Jews, together with Jerusalem itself, was utterly laid waste. And before these things happened, they persecuted the disciples. They were imprisoned and had part in unendurable trials; they were brought before judges and were sent before kings, for Paul was sent to Rome to appear before Caesar. But these things that were brought upon them were to them for a witnessing<sup>48</sup>, even to win for them the glory of martyrdom”.

After the Lord had finished speaking<sup>49</sup> about Jerusalem, He began to speak of the coming of the Antichrist. The word “then” does not refer to the time immediately following the fulfillment

---

<sup>43</sup> Josephus, Jewish Wars, VI, iii, 4. See also 2 Kings 6:24-29 for a similar account of cannibalism during the siege of Samaria.

<sup>44</sup> For further writing on this subject, see John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 1.

<sup>45</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 2

<sup>46</sup> Compare Genesis 18:23-32, where the Lord would have spared Sodom on account of ten righteous people.

<sup>47</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>48</sup> In the Greek the word for witness is martyr, and St. Cyril interprets our Lord’s declaration in the sense to which the word had been limited in the fourth century “of bearing witness with one’s life.” The original passage rather means, This shall give you an opportunity of bearing testimony of Me in a more public manner, and in places not otherwise accessible to you.”

<sup>49</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 13, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

of the things mentioned above concerning Jerusalem, ‘And *then* if any man shall say to you, Lo, here is Christ; believe him not’ (Mark 13:21). Understand that this is an expression used in Scripture. For example, Matthew says, after the birth of Christ, ‘In those days came John the Baptist’ (Matthew 3:1). Was it in the days immediately following the birth of Christ? No, but some time later! So it is here, that when the Lord says, ‘then’, He does not mean immediately after Jerusalem had been laid waste, but instead, at the time of the coming of the Antichrist, do not be deceived. For many will call themselves Christ, so as to deceive even the elect. After the coming of the Antichrist, all creation will be changed and the lights of heaven will be darkened on account of the exceedingly great light of Christ. The angelic powers will be shaken, that is, will be astonished, to see such a great change taking place, and their fellow servants being judged. And then they shall see the Lord as the Son of Man, that is, in His Body. For what is seen must certainly have a body. But though He comes in the Body as a Man, yet He comes with great power and glory.

‘And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!’ (Mark 13:27-29) The angels therefore will come to gather together the elect so that they can be snatched up into the clouds to meet the Lord (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18). Just as when the fig tree puts out leaves, immediately it is summer (Matthew 24:32-33), so too the oppression of the Antichrist will be followed immediately by the second coming of Christ, with nothing else intervening. For the righteous, Christ’s coming will indeed be like summer after winter; but for sinners it will be like winter after summer. ‘Verily I say unto you, that this generation, by which I mean this generation of believing Christians, shall not pass away till all these things, concerning both Jerusalem and the coming of the Antichrist, take place’. He clearly does not mean the generation of the apostles, for the apostles did not live to the end of the world. In order that they would not think that faith in Christ would disappear altogether because of the great evils that would occur, He says, ‘Take courage, the generation of the faithful shall not pass away or vanish’ (Mark 13:30-31).

John Chrysostom added<sup>50</sup>, “The very creation will then be transfigured, for ‘the sun shall be darkened’ (Matthew 24:29), not destroyed, but overcome by the light of His presence; and the stars shall fall, for what shall be the need of them thenceforth, there being no night? (Revelation 22:5) and ‘the powers of Heaven shall be shaken’. When the stars were made, they trembled and marveled, ‘For when the stars were made, all angels, praised Me with a loud voice’ (Job 38:7 LXX). Much more seeing all things in course of change, their fellow servants giving account, the whole world standing by that awful judgment-seat, those who have lived from Adam unto His coming having an account demanded of them, how shall they but tremble, and be shaken?”

“‘Then shall appear the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven’ (Matthew 24:30); that is, the cross being brighter than the sun, since the sun will be darkened, and that will appear far brighter than the beams of the sun. But why does the sign appear? In order that the shamelessness of the Jews may be silenced! For having the cross as the greatest plea, Christ thus comes to that judgment-seat, showing not His wounds only, but also the death of reproach. ‘Then shall the tribes mourn’, for there shall be no need of an accusation, when they see the cross; and they shall mourn, that by His death they are not benefited; because they crucified Him whom they ought to have adored”.

---

<sup>50</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 3, 4.

And why does He call them by angels, if He comes thus openly? To honor them in this way also! But Paul said, that they ‘shall be caught up in clouds’. And He said this also, ‘For the Lord Himself shall descend from Heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel’ (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). So that when the dead rise again, the angels shall gather them together, and when gathered together the clouds shall catch them up; and all these things are done in a moment, in an instant. For it is not that He calls them from heaven, but He Himself comes with the sound of a trumpet. And what is the meaning of the trumpets and the sound? They are for arousing, for gladness, to set forth the amazing nature of the things going on, and for grief to them that are left.

Cyril of Alexandria stated<sup>51</sup>, “And, to make His prediction yet again more clear, and more plainly to mark the time of its capture, He said, ‘But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies, then know that its destruction is near’ (Luke 21:20). And afterwards again He transfers His words from this subject to the time of the consummation, and says, ‘And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars. And on the earth distress of nations, in perplexity at the sea and the waves roaring. The souls of men will be departing from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken’ (Luke 21:25-26). For inasmuch as creation begins, so to speak, to be changed, and brings unendurable terrors upon the inhabitants of earth, there will be a certain fearful tribulation, and a departing of souls unto death. For the unendurable fear of those things that are coming will suffice for the destruction of many”.

Cyril of Alexandria added<sup>52</sup>, “Then they shall see the Son of Man coming in a cloud with power and great glory. Christ, therefore, will come not secretly nor obscurely, but as God and Lord, in glory such as becomes Deity; and will transform all things for the better. For He will renew creation, and refashion the nature of man to that which it was at the beginning. ‘Now when these things begin to happen, look up and lift up your heads, because your redemption draws near’ (Luke 21:28). For the dead shall rise, and this earthly and infirm body shall put off corruption, and shall clothe itself with incorruption by Christ’s gift (1 Corinthians 15:53), Who grants unto those that believe in Him to be conformed unto the likeness of His glorious body (Philippians 3:21). Therefore, as His disciple says, ‘But the day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat. Both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up’ (2 Peter 3:10). And further, he adds thereunto, ‘Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of *persons* ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness’ (2 Peter 3:11), that we may be found holy, and without blame, and unreprieved before Him? And Christ also Himself says, Always be watching and supplicating (Luke 12:37) that you may be able to escape from all those things that are about to happen, and to stand before the Son of Man. For we shall all stand before *His* judgment seat, to give an account of those things that we have done (Romans 14:10). But in that He is good and loving to mankind, Christ will show mercy on those that love Him”.

Let us also consider<sup>53</sup> the meaning of the words, ‘at evening’, ‘at midnight’, ‘at cockcrowing’ and ‘in the morning’. ‘At evening’ is when the end approaches, when a man grows

---

<sup>51</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>52</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>53</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 13, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

old and dies. ‘At midnight’ a man is middle aged. ‘At cockcrowing’ one’s mind has matured for the rooster signifies our ability to reason, which awakens us from the sleep of incomprehension. Once awakened, a youth begins to live according to reason, and to understand. ‘In the morning’ is the time of childhood. So then, it is necessary that all take heed beforehand of the end. One must even be concerned for a young child, lest he die unbaptized. The Lord commands these things to all, both those in the world and those who have withdrawn to the desert. The Lord says we need two things: to be wakeful and to pray.

### **James with Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane**

After Jesus gave His last instructions to His Apostles (John 14-17), He took His Apostles with Him to the Garden of Gethsemane. Taking Peter, James and John with Him, He went further about a stone’s throw away (Luke 22:41) to pray three times for about an hour each time (Matthew 26:36-46). A few others of the Seventy may have been there also, for Mark mentions himself as being there (Mark 14:51-52).

While He was praying, He was in agony over what He knew was to come, namely the Crucifixion. Sweating profusely, it appeared that there were great drops of blood falling down to the ground (Luke 22:44). During each hour of prayer, Jesus spoke the same words (Mark 14:39), and after each hour of prayer, He returned to find Peter, James and John sleeping (Matthew 26:39-45).

Just as He finished the third hour of prayer, Judas arrived with a detachment of troops and officers (John 18:3), carrying swords, clubs, lanterns and torches from the chief priests, the scribes and the elders (Matthew 26:47, Mark 14:43). Jesus went forward to meet them, asking, “Whom are you seeking?” When they replied “Jesus of Nazareth”, He replied<sup>54</sup> “I AM!” At His reply, they drew back and fell to the ground, so He asked them again (John 18:4-7). Then Judas came forward and betrayed Him<sup>55</sup> with a kiss (Luke 22:47-48, Mark 14:44-45).

The first reaction of Peter, who had just woken up, was to use his sword to strike the servant of the high priest, named Malchus (John 18:10), and cut off his right ear. But Jesus touched the man’s ear and healed him (Luke 22:50-51). As Jesus was arrested, all His disciples fled, including James. James’ brother John, however, followed the troops to the house of Caiaphas, the high priest. John was known to the high priest, and was allowed to enter the courtyard<sup>56</sup> of the house, and he brought Peter in with him (John 18:15-16).

From the courtyard of the house of the high priest, one could observe what was happening in the rooms of the house. In 1<sup>st</sup> Century Palestine, most houses had at least one courtyard on the interior, where windows of the rooms of the house usually opened to the courtyard and not to the outside. Well-to-do houses may have had several courtyards. The houses themselves were constructed out of sun-dried brick and were one-story dwellings. The

---

<sup>54</sup> “I AM” is Name God used for Himself when He spoke to Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Jesus drew the wrath of the Pharisees when He used the Name “I AM” for Himself (John 8:58).

<sup>55</sup> The “kiss” is a warm embrace that conveys brotherly love, and this is used in the Orthodox Liturgy prior to the Lord’s Table to help dispel animosity. Judas’ “kiss” was the epitome of hypocrisy.

<sup>56</sup> Houses for the well-to-do were built around a courtyard, where all the windows of the rooms of the house opened to the courtyard. Houses for the very wealthy may have had several courtyards.

walls were whitewashed inside and outside with lime or gypsum. Windows were small and few, had no glass, and were covered with a latticework that could be opened – probably like simple venetian blinds – to the courtyard.

Theophylact stated<sup>57</sup> that “It was the practice of Jesus always to pray alone, by His example teaching us to seek out quiet for our prayers. He took with Him only those three disciples who also had been witnesses of His glory on the mountain (Mark 9:1-8). Having seen those glorious things Peter, James and John might also see these sad things and understand that the Lord was truly man, and that, like us, He felt sorrow and distress. Since He had assumed our human nature in all aspects, of course He would feel sorrow and distress in His human nature. But He teaches us to ignore our human nature which so urgently presses its demands upon us, and instead to ask for what is pleasing to God. He asked Peter, James and John to watch and pray lest they enter into temptation to deny Him. So much so is our flesh weak, that unless through prayer God gives strength to our flesh, we are in danger of denying Him.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>58</sup> that Jesus did not take all the Apostles with Him that they might not be cast down; but He took Peter, James and John who had been spectators of His glory at the Transfiguration. Peter had said, ‘Even if I have to die with You, I will not deny You!’ Likewise also, it is added, ‘so said all the disciples’ (Matthew 26:35). “Purposely Jesus criticized Peter most (Matthew 26:40), although the others also had slept; this was to make Peter feel by this also, what he had earlier stated. Then because the others also said the same thing, He addresses Himself to all, convicting their weakness. For they who are desiring to die with Him, were not able to sorrow with Him wakefully, but sleep overcame them”.

“And He prayed with earnestness, and sweat flowed over him. There is a sweat like drops of blood, and an angel appeared strengthening Him, and a thousand sure signs of fear” (Luke 22:43-44).

However, we might ask, if Jesus was showing signs of fear, what was He afraid of? John Chrysostom was focusing on what the Scriptures say regarding Christ’s humanity and did not address what the fear consisted of. Cyril of Alexandria had some insight into this. He first mentioned<sup>59</sup> that the Lord had taught His disciples to make no account of the terrors of death, saying, ‘And do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell’ (Matthew 10:28). David also spoke of Him, saying, ‘You send forth Your Spirit, they are created; and You renew the face of the earth’ (Psalm 104:30). How therefore was He grieved, distressed and sorrowful even unto death? (Mark 14:34) He went forward to the Cross as to His glory, expecting to bring forth much fruit (John 12:23-24). As God, He knew what was about to happen, that He would endure death in the flesh and free the inhabitants of the whole earth from death.

Yet as God, He also knew that His chosen people Israel, the firstborn, would be withdrawn from among His servants. He who was the beloved one would be greatly hated; he who had the promises would be utterly stripped of His gifts; the pleasant vineyard with its rich grapes would be a desert without water (Isaiah 5:5-7). What husbandman would feel no anguish when his vineyard was desert and waste? What shepherd would not suffer when his flock was perishing? This was the cause of His grief and sorrow, for He has no pleasure at all that the wicked should

---

<sup>57</sup> Theophylact, The Explanation by Blessed Theophylact of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 14, Chrysostom Press, 1993.

<sup>58</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

<sup>59</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 146, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

die, but that he should turn from his ways and live (Ezekiel 18:23). For this same reason, He wept over the city of Jerusalem saying, ‘If only you had known the things that make for your peace! But now they are hidden from your eyes. For days will come upon you when your enemies will build an embankment around you, surround you and close you in on every side, and level you, and your children within you, to the ground. And they will not leave in you one stone upon another, because you did not know the time of your visitation’ (Luke 19:42-44). While the Word of God the Father is altogether free from all passion, in His humanity, He knew about the hammer that would fall on His chosen people as a result of their treating Him so badly. And it was the anguish over this that caused Him to seek strength in the Garden (Luke 22:43) as the events proceeded to their inevitable conclusion.

Christ did not need strength<sup>60</sup> or help from anyone, since He is Himself the Father’s almighty strength and power. Yet it is the very means of our salvation to watch and fall upon our knees, and to ask for the aid that comes from above, lest we grow weak and suffer shipwreck. When Jesus prayed, ‘Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done’ (Luke 22:42), he made His prayer against temptation. Paul said of this, ‘In the days of His flesh, when He had offered up prayers and supplications, with vehement cries and tears to Him who was able to save Him from death, He was heard because of His godly fear, though He was a Son. *Yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him (Hebrews 5:7-9). For as though one of us, He assigns to His Father’s will the carrying out of whatever was about to be done. While His passion was a voluntary act, in another respect it was grievous, because it implied the rejection and destruction of the synagogue of the Jews. Out of pity for Israel, He would have put off the necessity to suffer; but it was not possible for Him to avoid His passion because God the Father so willed it.

Christ’s anguish in the Garden was over those who were in the process of murdering Him, and over all the others who would scream, “Crucify Him!” the next morning. Therefore while He was nailed to the Cross, He said, “Father forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing” (Luke 23:34). Much earlier, He had instructed His followers to “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you” (Matthew 5:44).

The Twelve did get the message! John Chrysostom pointed out the tone of Peter’s address after Pentecost to the people who had crucified Christ (Acts 2:36). The tone of his address is one of gentleness and humility. He calls them “men of Judea” (Acts 2:14), “men of Israel” (Acts 2:22), “men and brothers” (Acts 2:29), “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36), and concludes with “the promise is to you and your children” (Acts 2:39).

Chrysostom continued<sup>61</sup>, “For this cause also was this prayer. By saying then, ‘If it be possible, let it pass from me’, He showed His humanity; but by saying, ‘Nevertheless not as I will, but as You will’, He showed His virtue and self-command, teaching us even when nature pulls us back, to follow God. See by how many things He showed the reality of the incarnation: by what He spoke, by what He suffered”.

“When Jesus came<sup>52</sup> and found them asleep, it was late at night and their eyes also were weighed down by their despondency. And the third time He went and spoke the same thing in His prayer, establishing the fact that He had become man. For the second and third time is in the

---

<sup>60</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 147, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

<sup>61</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

Scriptures especially indicative of truth; like Joseph said to Pharaoh, ‘Did the dream appear to you the second time? For truth was this done, and that you might be assured that this shall surely be (Genesis 41:32). Therefore He too spoke the same thing three times, for the sake of proving the incarnation”.

“And why did He come back the second time? In order to reprove them, for they were so drowned in despondency, as not to have any sense even of His presence. He did not reprove them again, but stood apart from them a little, showing their unspeakable weakness, that not even when they had been rebuked, were they able to endure. And yet there was need to be wakeful. By what He said, Jesus showed that the Twelve would not bear the sight of the dangers, but would be put to flight and desert Him from their terror; He also showed that He had no need of their help. He said, ‘Sleep on now and take your rest; behold the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is betrayed into the hands of sinners’ (Matthew 26:45). He showed again that what was done belonged to a divine dispensation”.

Referring to Peter’s cutting off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Chrysostom asked, “Why did He allow them<sup>62</sup> to have swords? To assure them that He was to be betrayed. Therefore He said unto them, ‘Let him buy a sword’ (Luke 22:36), not that they should arm themselves, but by this, indicating His being betrayed”.

“And why did He mention a money bag also? He was teaching them to be sober, and wakeful, and to use diligence. For at the beginning, when He sent them out two by two (Matthew 10:1-15), He cherished them, as being inexperienced, but afterwards bringing them forth as young birds out of the nest, He commands them to use their own wings. Then, that they might not suppose that it was out of weakness that He left them alone, He reminded them of the former things. ‘When I sent you without purse, did you lack anything?’ (Luke 22:35), that they might learn His power, both wherein He protected them, and wherein He now left them to themselves”.

When Peter drew his sword He asked, ‘Lord, shall we strike with the sword?’ (Luke 22:49). When he cut off the ear of the servant of the high priest, Jesus rebuked him. “Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled that it must happen thus?” (Matthew 26:52-54) By the healing of the ear<sup>63</sup>, He gave assurance of His power, both from the things present and from the things to come, and showed that it was not a work of their strength to seize Him. Therefore He also added, ‘I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me’ (Matthew 26:55), by this also making it clear that the seizure was of His permission”.

### **James Meets the Risen Christ in Galilee**

James was among the fishermen of the Apostles and he and the others met the risen Christ on the shore of the Sea of Galilee. With James were his brother John, Peter, Andrew, Thomas, Nathanael and probably Philip. Coming in from working all night, where they caught nothing, they met the risen Christ at the shore. Jesus asked if they had any food, and they replied, “No!” Jesus told them to cast the trammel net (Figure 2) on the right side of the boat, and they would find some. They did so, and without having to make noise to scare fish into the net, suddenly they were not able to draw the net in because of the multitude of fish (John 21:1-6).

---

<sup>62</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 1.

<sup>63</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.

This miracle was virtually identical to the one Jesus performed when He called Peter, Andrew, James and John to full-time apostolic work three years earlier. Then, the four Apostles had worked all night with their trammel nets, caught nothing, and were in the process of washing their nets to put them away until the following evening (Luke 5:1-8). Jesus told them to launch out into the deep with the freshly cleaned nets, and they were surprised beyond belief with a huge catch. Peter was so stunned on seeing this that he said, “Depart from me, for I am a sinful man, O Lord!” (Luke 5:8) John, on seeing the same thing happen a second time, immediately recognized Jesus due to the similarity of the miracle. John told Peter and Peter jumped into the water and swam the 100 yards to shore (John 21:6).

The other apostles in the boat slowly brought their catch to shore, and Peter helped drag the net on shore. As soon as they got it on land, they noticed a fire of coals there with cooked fish already on it, along with bread. Jesus said to them, “Come and dine” (John 21:8-13). Just as Jesus had fed the 5000 and the 4000 (Matthew 14:13-21, 15:32-39), creating food out of nothing, so here He had prepared breakfast for the Apostles.

We might also note why the Apostles had gone fishing at this time. They had all left the fishing business three years earlier. Peter and Andrew had owned a boat, and they had probably sold it at that time. James and John may have borrowed a boat from their father Zebedee to do this night’s fishing. During the past three years, the Apostles and the Lord had depended on the Holy Women for their support (Luke 8:1-3), since they had no income during those three years. But now that everyone had been scattered (Matthew 26:31-32, John 16:32), they needed some money to buy food.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>64</sup> that “they no longer had the same boldness, nor were they so confident, nor did they now approach Him with speech; but with silence and great fear and reverence, sat down giving heed to Him. ‘For they knew that it was the Lord’ (John 21:12). And therefore they did not ask Him, ‘Who art You?’ But seeing that His form was altered, and full of much awe, they were greatly amazed, and desired to ask somewhat concerning it. But fear checked the inquiry, and they only ate what He created for them. For here He no longer looked to heaven (Matthew 14:19, 15:36, 26:26, Luke 24:30), showing that those things, which He did, were done by way of condescension. And to show that He did not remain with them continually, John said ‘This was the third time that Jesus appeared to them, after He arose from the dead’ (John 21:14).

And He asked them ‘to bring of the fish’, to show that what they saw was no apparition. At this time, it did not say that He ate with them, but Luke, in another place, said that He did. On the evening of the Resurrection, when Jesus first appeared to the Apostles, He asked for some food, and ate a piece of broiled fish and some honeycomb in their presence (Luke 24:42-43). How He ate is not ours to say; for these things came to pass in too strange a manner. His nature did not now need food, but from an act of condescension, in proof of the Resurrection, He did eat with His disciples”.

All of the above indicates the depth of the illumination Peter, James and John received from their close association with the Lord.

---

<sup>64</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVII, 3.

## James Zebedee in the First Year of the Church

In the first year of the Church, the Book of Acts describes several encounters between the Apostles and the religious leaders. In all cases, either Peter or John is quoted as being the spokesman for the Apostles. On Pentecost, Peter was described “standing with the Eleven” (Acts 2:14) in his message to the people who were confused by the events taking place. When Peter and John healed the lame man, the man held onto both Peter and John, but Peter was the one who spoke to the people about what had happened (Acts 3:1-12). When Peter and John were arrested for this, it was Peter who spoke in their defense (Acts 4:1-8). When the Twelve were arrested and put in prison, an angel let them out during the night. Summoned before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the account reads that Peter *and the other Apostles answered* and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:17-29).

Few details are given in Acts regarding the exact accusations that were brought against the Apostles, or who of the Twelve answered these accusations. Pseudo Clement<sup>65</sup> records one example where James Zebedee responded:

“But a certain Samaritan, speaking against the people and against God, and asserting that neither do the dead rise, nor is the worship of God to be maintained in Jerusalem, but instead on Mount Gerizim<sup>66</sup>. He added also that our Jesus was not He whom Moses foretold as a Prophet to come into the world (Deuteronomy 18:15). Against him and another who supported him in what he said, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, vigorously debated. At this time they did not have a command to enter into Samaritan cities, nor to bring the word of preaching to them (Matthew 10:5). Yet to confine the Samaritan discourse lest it should hurt the faith of others, they replied so prudently and so powerfully, that they put them to perpetual silence. For James made an oration concerning the resurrection of the dead, that was well received by all the people. While John showed that if they abandoned the error of Mount Gerizim, they would come to know that Jesus was indeed He who, according to the prophecy of Moses, was expected to come. Indeed, as Moses wrought signs and miracles, so also did Jesus. And there is no doubt that the likeness of the signs proves Him to be that prophet of whom he said that He should come, ‘like himself.’ Having declared these things, and more to the same effect, they ceased.

In the first year of the Church, Peter, James and John were the undisputed leaders among the Apostles. But they each remembered what their Lord had said when James and John had asked to sit on His Right and Left in His Kingdom. “You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And

---

<sup>65</sup> Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 57.

<sup>66</sup> This Samaritan opinion derived from Moses’ command for the blessing of the people from Mt. Gerizim (Deuteronomy 27:11-13). The Samaritans conveniently ignored the Lord’s other instructions to Moses, such as the instruction for worship centered in Jerusalem. “You shall seek the place where the LORD your God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go” (Deuteronomy 12:5).

whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give His life a ransom for many” (Mark 10:42-45).

Eusebius, quoting a now-lost document by Clement of Rome, stated<sup>67</sup> that Peter, James and John took the Lord’s words to heart, and did not seek their own honor.

“Then James, whom the ancients surnamed ‘the Just’ on account of the excellence of his virtue, is recorded to have been the first to be made bishop of the church of Jerusalem. This James was called the brother of the Lord because he was known as a son of Joseph. But Clement in the sixth book of his Hypotyposes writes<sup>68</sup> thus: ‘For they say that Peter, James (Zebedee) and John after the ascension of our Savior, as if also preferred by our Lord, strove not after honor, but chose James the Just Bishop of Jerusalem’. But the same writer, in the seventh book of the same work, relates<sup>64</sup> also the following things concerning him. ‘The Lord after his resurrection imparted knowledge to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the Apostles, and the rest of the Apostles to the seventy, of whom Barnabas was one’”.

We might note that when Paul referred to “James, Peter and John as being the pillars of the Church in Jerusalem” (Galatians 2:9), the James that Paul referred to was James the Lord’s brother. James the son of Zebedee had left for missionary work abroad by that time.

Origen stated<sup>69</sup> that James’ background as a simple fisherman was a key aspect in the spread of Christianity. If Jesus had selected individuals who were wise according to the apprehension of the multitude, and who were fitted both to think and speak so as to please them, He would most justly have been suspected of employing artifices, like those philosophers who are the leaders of certain sects. But instead, Jesus intentionally chose men who were uneducated and untrained in the skills of oratory (Acts 4:13). For had the doctrine and the preaching consisted in the persuasive utterance and arrangement of words, then faith also, like that of the philosophers of the world in their opinions, would have been through the wisdom of men (1 Corinthians 1:17-21), and not through the power of God. For it was not any power of speaking, or any orderly arrangement of their message, according to the arts of Grecian dialectics or rhetoric, which caused the conversion their hearers. If their speaking had been like the worldly philosophers, the promise respecting the divinity of His doctrine would not have manifested itself.

---

<sup>67</sup> Eusebius, Church History, II, 1.

Clement of Alexandria, “Catena on Luke, edited by Corderius”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 2.

<sup>68</sup> These works of Clement of Rome, who was Bishop of Rome from c. 66 to c. 99 AD, are now lost, and most of the information we have about Clement’s work comes from others who quote him.

<sup>69</sup> Origen, Against Celsus, I, 62.

## The Missionary Work of James in Spain

According to Jerome, James left Jerusalem after the martyrdom of Stephen (one year after Pentecost) “to preach to the 12 tribes in their dispersion up and down the world”. There are many accounts<sup>70</sup> and a strong Spanish tradition that he spent considerable time in Spain. His probable route would have taken him all along the North African coast where Simon the Zealot, James the son of Alphaeus, the Evangelist Mark, Epaenetus of the Seventy and Photina, the woman at the well in Sychar, would soon follow. Many of these North African communities saw not just one person, but one person after another preaching the Kingdom of God in word and in deed.

The people in Spain held James in such high esteem that after his martyrdom in Jerusalem (Acts 12:2-3), his body was returned to Spain for burial<sup>71</sup>. Miraculous healings have been reported over his grave even up to the present day.

John Chrysostom characterized<sup>72</sup> the life of James during his missionary journeys as that of an ascetic. “But James did not survive a long time<sup>73</sup>, but from the beginning he was so greatly filled with warmth, and so forsook all the things of men, and mounted up to an height unutterable, as straightway to be slain”.

The hymns of the Church also speak of James’ missionary work in a number of countries abroad.

“O blessed James<sup>74</sup> who beheld God, when you heard the voice of the Word, you immediately abandoned your love for your father and your desire to please him. Forsaking the tumult of life, and traversing the noetic sea, you troubled it with the teachings of piety and with your heavenly radiance, O you who are blessed of God”.

“You followed after Christ, O godly James, despised the world, hiding His teachings in your treasury, and were shown to be His Apostle. Going to the nations with the commandments of the Savior, you enlightened souls benighted by deception and the passions, that they might believe in the consubstantial Trinity”.

“The glorious Apostle<sup>75</sup> fished for the nations, teaching the ends of the earth to worship You with the Father and the Spirit, O Christ God. For his sake establish Your Church and send down Your blessing upon the faithful, O only Merciful One, Who loves mankind”.

“Afire with zeal<sup>76</sup> like a new Elijah, you desired to burn up those who would not listen to your preaching, O glorious one. Yet He who desires loving kindness restrained you, teaching you

---

<sup>70</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.

Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 73-77. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1908, v. 8, (April) pp. 473-477.

<sup>71</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.

<sup>72</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLV, 4.

<sup>73</sup> I.e. he was martyred in c. 44 AD according to Acts 12:2-3.

<sup>74</sup> “Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>75</sup> “Ode III for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>76</sup> “Ode V for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

gracious meekness. Winged with uttermost virtue, you desired the throne of the Master out of love for higher things, O all-wise one, that you may hold principal things. Not desiring vain glory, you desired to gaze forth in its midst. James has transcended the laws of humanity, O Savior. Arrayed in Your power as in a garment, he poured forth rivers of healing and miracles and illumines the ends of the earth with faith”.

“Following Christ<sup>77</sup> Who called you, you acquired the purpose of Abraham, O you who saw God. And you were His all-radiant minister, chanting to your Creator and Deliverer: You children, bless! You priests, hymn! You people, exalt Him supremely for all ages! Your proclamation of the image of the Law was mightier than the sound of thunder. For throughout the whole world you thundered Christ, our Creator and Deliverer, chanting: You children, bless! You priests, hymn! You people, exalt Him supremely for all ages!”

“O fisher of all the world<sup>78</sup>, holy disciple, laborer of the Savior and recounter of His sufferings! Having traveled around creation with faith, you gathered in the deluded nations and brought them to God, and you were brought up into the heavens. Standing before the Judge, pray that we might be delivered from our iniquities and find salvation from torment on the Day of Judgment”.

### **The Martyrdom of James**

About 44 AD, James returned to Jerusalem. At this time, Christianity was increasing rapidly in Judea. Prior to the death of Stephen in c. 31 AD, “Many of the Levitical priests were becoming obedient to the Faith” (Acts 6:7). By the time of the Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD, even some of the sect of the Pharisees had believed (Acts 15:5). The persecution of Saul was a reaction to this spread of Christianity, but with the conversion of Saul in c.34 AD (Acts 9:1-25), “the Churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified” (Acts 9:31).

From traditional sources<sup>79</sup>, the return of James to Jerusalem created instant controversy among the Jewish leaders.

“Afterwards, James returned to Jerusalem, he was as threatening to the Jews as thunder (Mark 3:17), for he courageously and boldly preached Jesus Christ, proclaiming Him the true Messiah, the Savior of the world. James engaged the Pharisees and scribes in disputations, denouncing and reproaching them for their hard heartedness and unbelief”, similar to how Christ had done so about fourteen years earlier (Matthew 23:13-36).

And they, unable to withstand him, hired a certain sorcerer, named Hermogenes, to engage him in debate and put him to shame. But the magus, a prideful man, did not wish to converse with James, and instead sent his disciple, Philetus by name, saying, ‘Not only myself, but even my disciple will James be

---

<sup>77</sup> “Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>78</sup> “Ode IX for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>79</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 73-77. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1908, v. 8, (April) pp. 473-477.

unable to best in disputation!’ Philetus came and conversed with the Apostle James, but being in no position to oppose the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, with which the apostle was filled, he fell silent as one mute, and was utterly unable to open his mouth to express himself. Recognizing the truth, Philetus was humbled and, returning to his master the magician, he informed him that nothing could overcome James, who even confirmed his words with miracles. Moreover, Philetus advised his teacher to abandon his lore of sorcery and become the disciple of James. But the prideful Hermogenes summoned up demons by his spells and commanded them to hold Philetus in a certain place in bonds, so that he would not be able to move from the spot; and he added, ‘Let us see how your James will deliver you!’”

“Philetus sent word secretly to the Apostle that he was bound by demons through the spells of Hermogenes. On learning this, the Apostle sent him his towel, telling him to take hold of the towel and say the following words, ‘The Lord looses the fettered; the Lord executes judgment for the wronged’ (Ps 146:7 LXX). No sooner did Philetus utter these words, than immediately he was freed from the invisible bonds; for the demons, terrified of the Apostle's towel and the power of the words spoken, loosed their hold on Philetus and fled from him. Then Philetus, laughing at Hermogenes, went to James and, having learned the holy Faith from him, was baptized”.

“But Hermogenes, filled with great rage and anger, conjured up the demons, who served him, and commanded them to bring to him James and Philetus, bound”.

“But when the demons drew near to the dwelling place in which James and Philetus were staying, the angel of the Lord, at the command of God, immediately laid hold of those demons and, bound them with invisible bonds. The demons, tortured by the Presence of God, cried out for all to hear, ‘James, Apostle of Christ, be merciful to us; for we came to bind you and Philetus on orders of Hermogenes; and behold, now we ourselves are bound fast and are suffering!’ James then said to the demons, ‘Let the angel of God, who has bound you, release you from the bonds; and go you and bring here to me Hermogenes, doing him no harm’”.

“Immediately, the demons, loosed from their bonds, seized Hermogenes, and set him, bound, before the apostle in the twinkling of an eye, and asked the Apostle to permit them to avenge their grievances on the wretch. The Apostle asked the demons why they had not bound Philetus as Hermogenes had commanded them to do. To this the demons replied, ‘We cannot even touch a fly in your house’. Then said the Apostle to Philetus, ‘Our Lord has commanded us to render good for evil; for which cause, release Hermogenes and deliver him from the demons’.

“After this, the apostle said to Hermogenes, who had been freed from the bonds of the demons, ‘Our Lord does not desire to have servants under constraint, but desires to have voluntary servants. Wherefore, go you wherever you wish!’ But Hermogenes said, ‘No sooner will I leave your home, than the demons will slay me, for I know how great is their wrath; and I also know that it is impossible for me to escape them, if you will not defend me’. Then the Apostle gave into his hands the staff, which he used when traveling. Hermogenes went to his home with this staff and along the way did not sustain any evil at the hands of the demons. Thus, recognizing the power of Christ, and seeing the impotence of the demons, Hermogenes gathered together all his books of sorcery, brought them to James and,

falling at his feet, cried out, ‘True servant of the true God, who delivers the souls of men from perdition! Have mercy upon me, and accept your enemy as your disciple!’ Having learned the Faith from James, Hermogenes received baptism, burned his books of sorcery on the Apostle's orders, and became a true servant of Christ to such an extent that he performed miracles through the name of Jesus Christ”.

The Jewish leaders, seeing all that had taken place, were exceedingly angry and persuaded King Herod Agrippa to initiate a persecution against the Church of Christ and put James to death.

John Chrysostom gave a reason<sup>80</sup> why Herod chose to execute James as a favor to the Jewish leaders: because of his great zeal.

“When Jesus took Peter, James and John up the mountain for the Transfiguration, why did He take with Him these only? Because these were superior to the rest! Peter indeed showed his superiority by exceedingly loving Him; but John by being exceedingly loved of Him. James again by his answer which he answered with his brother, saying, ‘We are able to drink the cup’ (Matthew 20:22-23); nor yet by his answer only, but also by his works fulfilling, what he said. For so earnest was he, and grievous to the Jews, that Herod himself supposed that he had bestowed herein a very great favor on the Jews, I mean in slaying him”.

What followed is recorded in the Scriptures as follows. “Now about that time Herod the king stretched out *his* hand to harass some from the church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword. And because he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also. Now it was *during* the Days of Unleavened Bread. So when he had arrested him, he put *him* in prison, and delivered *him* to four tetrads<sup>81</sup> of soldiers to keep him, intending to bring him before the people after Passover” (Acts 12:1-4). The implication is that Herod picked the most prominent of the Apostles at the moment (i.e. James), and then proceeded to pick the next most prominent (i.e. Peter).

Eusebius<sup>82</sup>, the 4<sup>th</sup> Century Church Historian, quoted Clement, the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Bishop of Rome<sup>83</sup>, regarding James.

“Caius had held the power not quite four years, when he was succeeded by the emperor Claudius. Under him the world was visited with a famine, which writers<sup>84</sup> that are entire strangers to our religion have recorded in their histories. And thus the prediction of Agabus, according to which the whole world was to be visited by a famine, received its fulfillment. And Luke, after mentioning the famine in the time of Claudius, and stating that the brethren of Antioch, each according to

---

<sup>80</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 2.

<sup>81</sup> A tetrad was a squad consisting of four soldiers. Thus Peter was guarded by sixteen soldiers.

<sup>82</sup> Eusebius, Church History, II, 9.

<sup>83</sup> The document that Eusebius quoted, Clement's “Hypotyposes”, is no longer extant.

<sup>84</sup> Cf. Dion Cassius, LX. 11.  
Tacitus, *Annal.* XII, 13

his ability, sent alms to the brethren of Judea by the hands of Paul and Barnabas Apostles (Acts 11:27-30), adds the following account”.

“Now about that time [it is clear that he means the time of Claudius], Herod the king stretched forth his hands to harass certain of the Church. And he killed James the brother of John with the sword.” And concerning this James, Clement<sup>85</sup>, in the seventh book of his Hypotyposes, relates a story which is worthy of mention; telling it as he received it from those, who had lived before him. He says that the one who led James to the judgment-seat, when he saw him bearing his testimony, was moved, and confessed that he was himself also a Christian. They were both led away together; and on the way he begged James to forgive him. And he, after considering a little, said, ‘Peace be with you’, and kissed him. And thus they were both beheaded at the same time. And then, as the divine Scripture says, Herod, upon the death of James, seeing that the deed pleased the Jews, attacked Peter also and committed him to prison. And he would have slain him if he had not, by the divine appearance of an angel who came to him by night, been wonderfully released from his bonds, and thus liberated for the service of the Gospel. Such was the providence of God in respect to Peter”.

One traditional account adds to this<sup>86</sup> as follows:

“Eusebius, Bishop of Caesaria of Palestine, telling of this James, writes that when he was condemned to death by Herod, a certain man by the name of Josiah was one of those who slandered the Apostle to Herod. Seeing the valor and boldness of James, and perceiving his innocence and holiness, as well as the truth of the words he spoke concerning the coming of Christ the Messiah, he came to believe in Christ and became a confessor of the Lord. Immediately, he was condemned to death, along with James. When they went forth to the place of execution together, they met along the way a paralyzed man lying by the road; and the Apostle healed him. And when they bowed their necks under the sword, Josiah entreated the holy James to forgive him the sin he had committed in his unbelief, that is, that he had slandered him to the King. The apostle, embracing and kissing him, said, ‘Peace be with you!’ And both of them, bowing their heads beneath the sword, ended their lives together. This took place, by God's providence, in the year AD 44”.

“After they were beheaded, the body of the holy Apostle James was taken up by his disciples and, as God permitted, was borne away by them to Spain. Even to this day, healing is given forth from his tomb and miracles worked, to the glory of Christ God Who, with the Father and the Holy Spirit, is glorified by all creation”.

Another traditional account<sup>87</sup> of the martyrdom of James reads as follows:

“Upon his return from Spain, the Jews began to quarrel with James concerning the Holy Scripture and no one was able to withstand him, not even a

---

<sup>85</sup> The document that Eusebius quoted, Clement’s “Hypotyposes”, is no longer extant.

<sup>86</sup> Isaac Lambertsen, *The Lives of the Holy Apostles*, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 73-77. This is a translation from the following:

*The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov*, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1908, v. 8, (April) pp. 473-477.

<sup>87</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.

certain magician Hermogenes. Hermogenes and his disciple Philetus were defeated by the power of truth, which James preached and, both of them were baptized. Then the Jews accused him before Herod and persuaded one Josiah to slander the Apostle. Josiah, seeing the brave conduct of James and listening to his clear explanation about the truth, repented and believed in Christ. When James was condemned to death, this same Josiah was also condemned to death. En route to the place of execution, Josiah implored James to forgive him the sin of slander. James embraced and kissed him and said, ‘Peace and forgiveness be to you!’ Both of them bowed their heads under the sword and were beheaded for the Lord”.

The hymns of the Church speak of the martyrdom of James as follows:

“You drained the cup<sup>88</sup> as you did promise Christ the Master, and were baptized with His baptism, O blessed of God. And to Him you now cry out with fervor, rejoicing: Blessed is the God of our fathers. You were shown to be illumined with the splendor of the vision of God, O James. Wherefore Christ the benefactor adorned you with the crown of the kingdom, and you chant with the angels: Blessed is the God of our fathers. Behold the great Bestower fulfilled the promises He made to you. You have been borne up to Him by your emulation of His sufferings. Standing before Him now, you cry out, rejoicing: Blessed is the God of our fathers”.

“The malefactors and murderers<sup>89</sup> could not bear the sight of you, as before they could not stand to look upon your Master. Denouncing them for their works, you rebuked them by laying down your life. And they slew with the sword you, the emulator of Christ Who was crucified in the flesh for men, O divinely eloquent and all-blessed one. Tortured by the sword of heaven, Herod died afflicted with sores. For the wretched one was not content to slay Your servants and disciples, whom You named Apostles, O Word. Marveling at Your righteous providence, we magnify You”.

### **Results of the Death of James**

The circumstances surrounding the escape of Peter from Herod’s grasp illustrate the character of Herod. Herod had been seeking the favor of the Jewish leaders, and therefore executed James, and imprisoned Peter. But he didn’t want to execute Peter during the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread (of which the Passover was one day) for fear of offending the Jewish leaders regarding purification. Dead bodies laying around on Feast Days can render people unclean (Numbers 19:11-13) and disrupt the festivities. Therefore Herod had Peter locked up and guarded by four tetrads of soldiers.

This was a maximum-security prison. Besides being chained to two guards, there were three sections of the prison, where Peter was in the innermost area. When the angel came to Peter, a light shone in the prison that the guards didn’t notice. When the angel spoke to Peter, the guards didn’t hear him speak. And when Peter’s chains fell off and he got up and got dressed, the guards didn’t notice the disturbance. When the angel led Peter out past the first and second guard posts,

---

<sup>88</sup> “Ode VII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

<sup>89</sup> “Ode IX for Matins of the Commemoration of the Holy Apostle James, the Brother of Saint John the Theologian”, April 30<sup>th</sup>, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

no one noticed them pass. And when they came to the iron gate that leads to the city, the gate opened by itself, but again no one noticed (Acts 12:6-10).

At daybreak, there was a huge controversy about what had become of Peter. The guards couldn't believe that he was gone. King Herod was so upset that he had all sixteen guards executed (Acts 12:18-19).

Shortly thereafter, King Herod died in a very unusual manner. The people of Tyre and Sidon came to Herod asking for peace between them. Josephus stated<sup>90</sup> that Herod spoke to them at Caesarea and that he was clothed in a robe made entirely of silver and wonderfully textured. As the sunlight reflected off Herod's silver garment, the people were stunned. Herod's flatterers cried out that he was a god and not a man, and began asking him for mercy. Luke records that the people kept shouting, "The voice of a god and not of a man!" While he was speaking to the people, an angel of the Lord struck him, and he was eaten by worms and died (Acts 12:20-23).

Josephus stated<sup>91</sup> that when the people began to proclaim Herod as a god, Herod did not rebuke them, but rather enjoyed it. After his oration, Herod saw an owl sitting on a rope above his head, which he interpreted as a sign that he would die shortly. "Immediately a severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner. While Herod was carried into the palace, the people outside began to pray to their gods on his behalf. After five days of intense pain, and completely worn out by his struggle, Herod died at the age of 54".

Origen noted<sup>92</sup> how the sufferings of the Apostles, including James, taught men to despise the life which is eagerly sought after by the multitude and which was illustrated by the life of splendor exhibited by Herod.

"Hear the words of Jesus, when He predicted to Peter, 'When you shall be old, you shall stretch forth your hands', to which the Scripture adds, 'This spoke He, signifying by what death he should glorify God' (John 21:18). Hear how James the brother of John — an apostle, the brother of an apostle — was slain with the sword by Herod for the doctrine of Christ (Acts 12:2). Hear the many instances of boldness displayed by Peter and the other apostles because of the Gospel, and 'how they went forth from the presence of the Sanhedrim after being scourged, rejoicing that they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name' (Acts 5:41). These surpassed many of the instances related by the Greeks of the fortitude and courage of their philosophers. From the very beginning, then, this was taught as a precept of Jesus among His hearers, which taught men to despise the life which is eagerly sought after by the multitude, but to be earnest in living the life which resembles that of God".

John Chrysostom commented<sup>93</sup> on the martyrdom of James as follows.

"Herod 'the king' who did this was not he of Christ's time. And this was a different sort of trial, not now the Jews, nor the Sanhedrim, but the king. The

---

<sup>90</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XIX, viii, 2.

<sup>91</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XIX, viii, 2.

<sup>92</sup> Origen, *Against Celsus*, II, 45.

<sup>93</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, XXVI.

greater the power, the more severe the warfare, and the more it was done to obtain favor with the Jews”.

“When he slew James the brother of John with the sword, he took him at random and without selection. But, should any raise a question why God permitted this, we shall say that it was for the sake of these Jews themselves. First, this was to convince them that even when slain, the Apostles prevail, just as it was in the case of Stephen. Secondly, this gave them opportunity, after satiating their rage, to recover from their madness. Thirdly, this showed them that it was by His permission that this was done”.

““And when Herod saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded further to seize Peter also’. O excessive wickedness! On whose behalf was it that he gratified them by doing murders without plan or reason? ‘It was the Day of Unleavened Bread!’ Again, the idle preciseness of the Jews: to kill was all right, but even on holy days they did such things!”

“This was done both of rage, and of fear. Do you mark the Apostles’ courage? For that none may say that without danger or fear of danger they braved death, as being sure of God’s delivering them, therefore he permitted some to be put to death, and chief men too, Stephen and James. Thereby convincing their slayers themselves that not even these things make them fall away and hinder them”.

“Like a wild beast, Herod attacked everyone indiscriminately and without consideration. This is what Christ said, ‘My cup indeed you shall drink, and with the baptism wherewith I am baptized, shall you be baptized’” (Mark 10:39).

“And how was it he did not kill Peter immediately? It mentions the reason, ‘It was the Day of Unleavened Bread’ and he wished rather to make a display with the killing of him. For their own part, because of Gamaliel’s advice (Acts 5:34-39), they now abstained from bloodshed. And besides, they did not even invent accusations; but by means of others they obtained the same results. This counsel of Gamaliel’s above all was their condemnation, for the preaching was shown to be no longer a thing of men”.

“As Herod proceeded with his plan to kill Peter the Scripture was fulfilled, ‘We are accounted as sheep for the slaughter’ (Psalm 44:22, Romans 8:36). Yet this was a pleasing thing to the Jews. A pleasing thing, bloodshed, and unrighteous bloodshed, wickedness, impiety! Herod ministered to their senseless lusts. For, whereas he ought to have done the contrary, to check their rage, he made them more eager, as if he were an executioner, and not a physician to their diseased minds. And this though he had numberless warnings in the case of both his grandfather and his father Herod, how the former in consequence of his putting the children to death (Matthew 2:13-15) suffered the greatest calamities, and the latter by slaying John raised up against himself a grievous war<sup>94</sup>. But He feared lest Peter, in consequence of the slaying of James, should withdraw; and wishing to have him in safe keeping, he put him in prison. The Stricter the custody, the more wondrous the display”.

---

<sup>94</sup> Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XVIII, v, 1-2. The war was between King Aretas of Arabia Petrea and Herod Agrippa, where Herod Agrippa had divorced Aretas’ daughter in order to marry Herodias (Mark 6:17).

“But this was all the better for Peter, who was thereby made more approved. And it says, ‘But earnest prayer was offered to God for him by the church’ (Acts 12:5). It was the prayer of filial affection; it was for a father they asked. Hear how they were attached to their teachers. No factions, no perturbation; but they began to pray, to that alliance which is indeed invincible”.

John Chrysostom also stated<sup>95</sup> that when Paul said, “And others were tortured, not accepting deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection” (Hebrews 11:35), that this alluded to James and John.

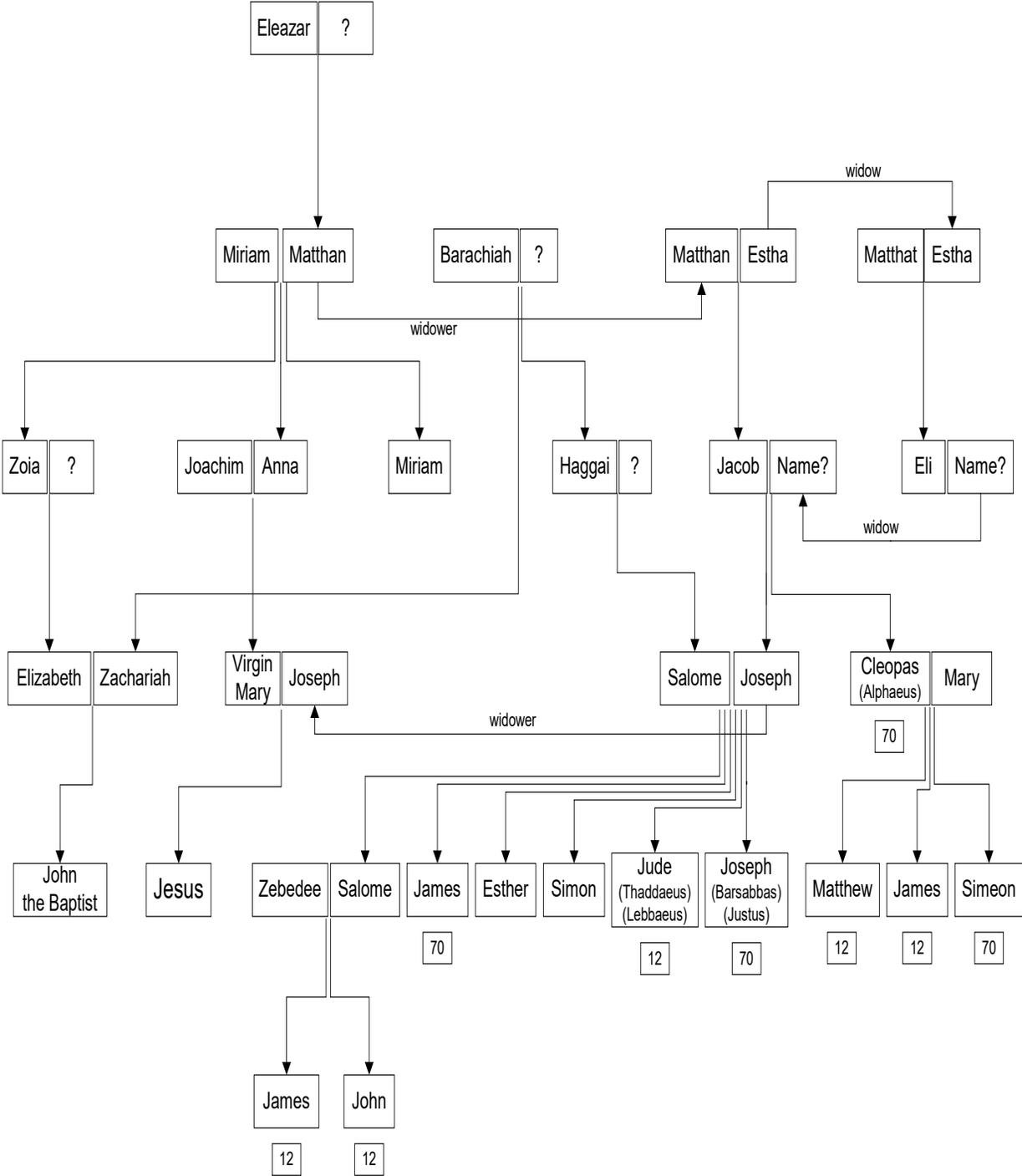
“But we have not obtained a Resurrection yet. I am able however, Paul means, to show that they also were cut off, and did ‘not accept deliverance, that they might obtain a better resurrection’. For why, when it was open to them to live, did they not choose it? Were they not evidently looking for a better life? And they who had raised others from the dead, themselves chose to die; in order ‘to obtain a better resurrection’. Here I think he alludes both to John and to James. For beheading is called ‘torturing’. It was in their power still to behold the sun. It was in their power to abstain from reproving sinners, and yet they chose to die; even they who had raised others chose to die themselves, that they might obtain a better resurrection’.

---

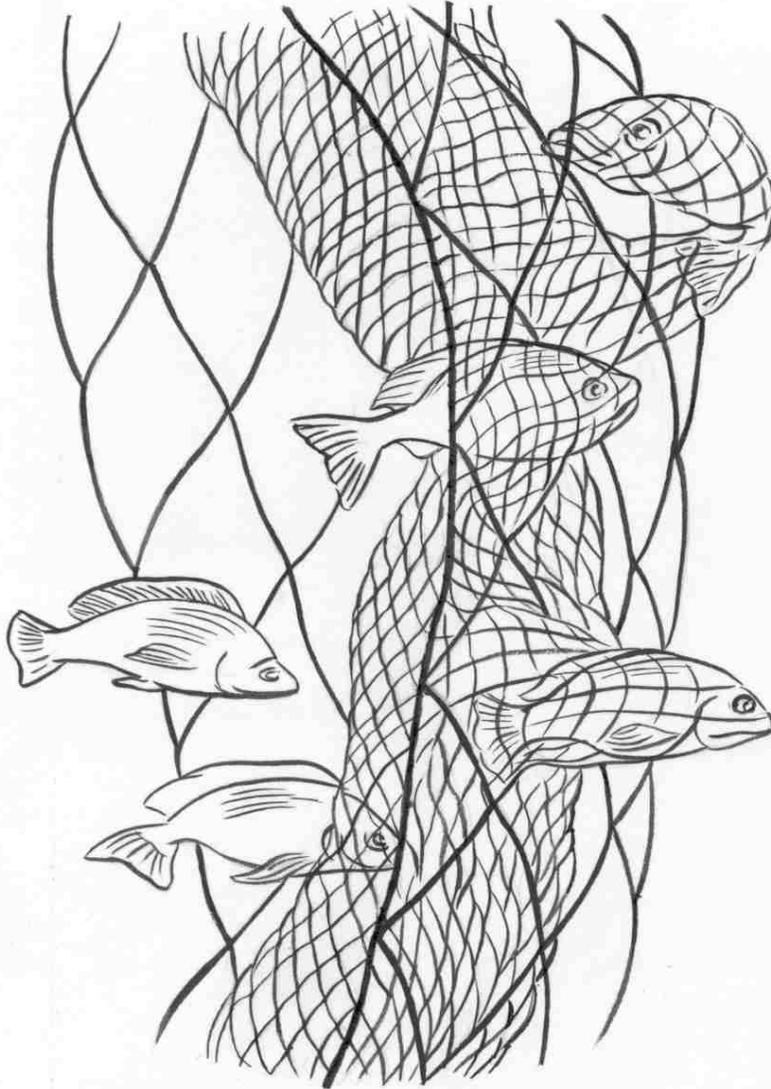
<sup>95</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 5.

Figure 1

# FAMILY TREE OF JESUS



**Figure 2**  
**The Webbing of a Trammel Net**



**Figure 2**  
**Use of a Cast Net**



**Figure 1**  
**Use of a Dragnet or Seine**

