

To Drink from Jesus' Cup

The following article is an excerpt from
"A Study of the Teachings of Jesus Christ"

Written by Joseph F. Harwood

Copyright 2021

<https://www.abookofbiblestudy.net/>

[Scripture quotations taken from the NASB](#)

In Mark 10, James and John came to Jesus asking a favor. Beginning in verse 35 we read:

James and John, the two sons of Zebedee, came up to Jesus, saying, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask of You." And He said to them, "What do you want Me to do for you?" They said to Him, "Grant that we may sit, one on Your right and one on Your left, in Your glory." But Jesus said to them, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?" They said to Him, "We are able." And Jesus said to them, "The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared." (Mark 10:35-40)

When James and John asked Jesus that one of them would sit at His right hand and the other at His left in His glory, they were in fact asking to have the places of highest honor in Heaven that any servant of Christ could have, being seated next to Jesus himself. Jesus answered them by saying that they did not know what they were asking. He then began to explain what is involved and what will be required of those who will be considered great in the kingdom of God by putting this question to them: "Are you able to drink the cup that I drink, or to be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized?"

The “cup” that Jesus drank, or the “baptism” with which He was baptized, are metaphors that Jesus used to symbolize the sufferings He would endure in order to fulfill His Father’s will and purpose for His life. In Jesus’ reply to the request of James and John, He was teaching them that those who would be great in the kingdom of Heaven must follow Him (John 12:26), sharing in His sufferings in order to share in His eternal glory (Romans 8:17).

When James and John brought their request to Jesus, they had no idea that their future glory in the kingdom of Heaven could be realized only if they experienced a share in His sufferings. Even though they did not yet understand these things, Jesus told them that they would indeed drink from His cup and be baptized with His baptism, sharing in His sufferings in order that they would also receive a share in His glory, all according to God’s particular plan and purpose for their lives.

Many times, especially as young believers, we pray that we might be used of God mightily for some great purpose of His. God answers these prayers according to His will for our lives, even though we may have no idea or understanding at the time that the fruit born as God grants our request to be used in His service will involve for us a share in the sufferings of His Son Jesus Christ, drinking from the cup and being baptized with the baptism of His sufferings. These sufferings will involve the “death”, or relinquishment, of our own desires and plans for our lives, and possibly the relinquishment of many of the “good things” that we hoped God would bless us with in this life, if He should require it of us (John 12:24-26, Luke 9:23-24).

After Jesus asked James and John if they were able to drink from His cup, or be baptized with His baptism, they answered Him saying that they could. They did not yet understand what was involved and what would be required of them for their request to be granted, but they were willing. Even though Jesus knew that they did not yet understand these things, still He granted their request for a place of glory and honor in Heaven when He replied to them: “The cup that I drink you shall drink; and you shall be baptized with the baptism with which I am baptized. But to sit on My right or on My left, this is not Mine to give; but it is for those for whom it has been prepared.” (Mark 10:39-40).

In addition to granting their request for a place of honor and glory in Heaven through their sharing in His sufferings, Jesus at the same time taught them that the places of highest honor in Heaven belong to those “for whom it has been

prepared". In other words, it is determined by the plan and purpose of our sovereign God who will occupy those places of highest honor.

A point to be made again is that even though Jesus told James and John that the places in Heaven at His right hand and His left were not for Him to grant, but for the Father, He did grant their request for a place of honor in the kingdom of God. The lesson here for all of us as believers is that when we bring such requests to God in prayer, it is the Spirit of God who motivates such prayers, and we should understand that our request for a place of honor in God's kingdom will be answered and granted as He has ordained for each of us individually. We should also understand that in granting our request, we will be required to drink from the cup and be baptized with the baptism of the Jesus' sufferings.