

THE APOSTLES OF CHRIST JOHN, BROTHER OF JAMES



The fourth apostle, John, wears many titles throughout the gospel accounts. He refers to himself as “the disciple Jesus loves” two times in his own gospel (John 13:23; 21:20). Jesus calls John and his brother the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17). The Apostle Paul refers to John as one of the “pillars” of the early church (Galatians 2:9). Such titles imply a certain quality of character for the man who wears them. Consider what these three titles of John may indicate about him.

The Disciple Whom Jesus Loves

The word “disciple” means “learner” or “follower.” This title alone is quite a compliment. It indicates John was willing to learn. Yet, even more than “learn” he “lived” the great lessons he was taught. His willingness to learn is seen in how often he was in the presence of Jesus.

John is on the scene during several miracles such as: the healing of Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:14-15); raising of the daughter of

Jairus (Mark 5:37); the two miraculous catches of fish (Luke 5:10; John 21:1-7); the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1). He also is with Jesus in the garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37), at the Jewish trial (John 18:15-16), the crucifixion (John 19:26-27), and at the tomb on resurrection day (John 20:2-8).

The church will only find good disciples if it is filled with willing learners—people who crave opportunities to grow, to study and to develop a deeper relationship with the Lord daily. These types of dedicated disciples can make a difference, as John did! Because of His intimate knowledge of the Lord, he authors five of the New Testament books (almost 1/5th).

Yet, not only was he “a disciple” but he was also the “disciple whom Jesus loved.” Jesus shows his love and admiration for John in many ways. He calls John to be His disciple (Matthew 4:21-22). He takes the time to patiently instruct John’s incorrect thinking (Luke 9:49-56; Matthew 20:20-24). He

eats with John and His other disciples (John 13:23-26). He entrusts the care of His mother to John at His crucifixion (John 19:26-27). He appears to John while he is exiled on the isle of Patmos to reassure his friend and disciple (Revelation 1:9-11). What a wonderful thing to know discipleship is a loving, two-way relationship!

Son of Thunder

Along with his brother, James, John is titled one of the “Sons of Thunder” by Jesus (Mark 3:17). As with James, this title may imply the passion and fiery disposition of the zealous Zebedee boys.

Only a passionate believer would give up his job in a prosperous fishing business to follow the Lord (Mark 1:19-20). Only a devoted follower would be violently insulted when hospitality was rejected to his Lord (Luke 9:51-55). Only a fervent disciple, like John, would boldly write a letter like the Apocalypse pronouncing judgment upon a godless government while sitting in exile on the isle of Patmos himself!

Pillar of the Church

Paul ascribes a third nickname to John in Galatians 2:9 call him a “pillar.” John was a leading figure in the church at Jerusalem (Galatians 2:1).

Yet, what does it mean to be a “pillar?” A “pillar” is a support or a post holding all the weight of a structure. One does not use faulty, scrap material as a pillar. We use reliable material that will hold strong through the storms.

John was that type of person. As the early church was established and persecution soon followed, John willingly endured the persecution by the Jewish authorities (Acts 4). He is one of the first people to go to Samaria, a people viewed with disdain by many Jews, and help the church (Acts 8:14-15). As John’s brother died, martyred by Herod, John does not allow such discouraging circumstances to stop him. Instead, he faithfully does his work and, even in his old age, he pens most of his letters as a means to encourage the church. That’s being a pillar!

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THUNDER