

ONE OF THE 'SONS
OF THUNDER' AKA
'THE BELOVED
APOSTLE'

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WHO IS John Zebedee?

Key Quote By Jesus	“Anyone who is not against you is for you.” Jesus to John, Luke 9:50 When Jesus saw his mother standing there beside the disciple he loved, he said to her, “Dear woman, here is your son.” And he said to this disciple, “Here is your mother.” And from then on this disciple took her into his home. John 19:25-27
Key Characteristics	• Brother and Friend. • Loving. • Unique thinker. • Dependable and Committed. • Humbled with maturity.
His Names	• Means “Jehovah is a gracious giver” or “whom Jehovah loves” • Jesus nicknamed him and his brother James, “The Sons of Thunder” (Boanerges)
Family	Son of Zebedee and Salome, brother of James
His Profession	Fisherman, Fishing partners with Simon Peter and Andrew
His Home	From Galilee (probably Capernaum.)
Did You Know	He is NOT John the Baptist and NOT John Mark author of the gospel of Mark. The Gospel of John as well as 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John have traditionally been attributed to the apostle John however in 2nd and 3rd John, the author names himself as “John, the elder” (2 John 1, 3 John 1) while the Gospel of John and 3rd John do not specifically name their author. While it may be, as traditional asserts, that the apostle John wrote all five documents, it appears more likely, however, that four of the five writings were actually penned not by John the apostle but by John the elder, a disciple and friend of John’s who relied directly on the apostle’s testimony as he wrote the documents. This would explain those passages in the gospel which speak about the beloved disciple who presumably is John the apostle. John 19:35, 21:24.
Specifically Mentioned In The Bible (Key incidents only)	• The call: Matthew 4, Mark 1, Luke 5 • Listed: Matthew 10, Mark 3, Luke 6 • Transfiguration: Matthew 17, Mark 9, Luke 9 • Other Teachers: Mark 9:49-50 • The Favor: Matthew 20, Mark 10 • Gethsemane: Matthew 26, Mark 14

	• Mom: Matthew 20, Matthew 27 • Jairus' Daughters: Mark 5, Luke 8 • At the Mount of Olives: Mark 13 • With the group: Acts 1
Actual Quotes (only key ones mentioned)	• “Tell us, when will all this happen? What sign will show us that these things are about to be fulfilled?” (Mark 13:4) • “Lord, who is it?” (John 13:25) • “Oh yes, we are able!” (Matthew 20:22) • “Teacher, we want you to do us a favor.” (Mark 10:35) • “When you sit on your glorious throne, we want to sit in places of honor next to you, one on your right and the other on your left.” (Mark 10:37) • “Lord, should we call down fire from heaven to burn them up?” (Luke 9:54) • “Teacher, we saw someone using your name to cast out demons, but we told him to stop because he wasn’t in our group.” (Mark 9:38) • “It’s the Lord!” (John 21:7) • “Do you think God wants us to obey you rather than him? We cannot stop telling about everything we have seen and heard.” (Acts 4:19) • I, John, am the one who heard and saw all these things. And when I heard and saw them, I fell down to worship at the feet of the angel who showed them to me. (Revelations 22:8)
Best Known For	• Being part of the “privileged” inner circle of the apostles: Jarius’ daughter (Mark 5:21-43), The transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-13), in Gethsemane (Matthew 26:37) • Being known as the “beloved” apostle – John 13:23, 20:2, 21:7 • Being commissioned by Jesus from the cross to care for Jesus’ mother, Mary. John 19:26 • Being the apostle rumored to never die John 21:22-23

Having written so much about the Zebedee brothers in James Zebedee’s chapter it would at first seem that there is nothing much else to include about John Zebedee. How untrue!

Like Simon Peter who managed to distinguish himself from his brother Andrew despite such close affiliation, John Zebedee managed to do the same with his brother James. And while not as colorful as Simon Peter, John Zebedee nonetheless managed to distinguish himself almost as vividly.

He was a thinker not a talker; seemingly content to let others be the voice – as long as he was part of the critical group. Not shy, he allowed others take the limelight; while at the same time enjoying a steadily growing reputation of being unique even among the Twelve. And though indeed an equal half of the “Sons of Thunder,” John Zebedee showed undeniable humility and tenderness as he matured.

John Zebedee is one of the Gospel writers. Unlike the other three writers’ accounts (Matthew, Mark and Luke), John’s writing is uniquely different in style and in content while at the same time never contradicting any of the other’s reported facts. John’s writing sought to move past the obvious facts of Jesus’ life to a deeper, more profound meaning. While events and miracles were accounted, they were kept to a minimum and used only as springboards for lengthy discussions that

reveal important truths about Jesus of Nazareth. John's account offered a unique view of Jesus of Nazareth: one that offered far more spiritual ideas in a much more spiritual language.

Throughout his account, John makes reference to "the beloved disciple." Forever anonymous were it not for corresponding facts provided by the other contributing writers, when examined, this beloved apostle shines brightly:

- John 13:23: Sitting next to Jesus at the last supper, this disciple is the one who asks Jesus directly who will be the betrayer ... and gets an answer.
- John 19:26-27: At the foot of the cross, Jesus gives this disciple the responsibility of caring for his mother, Mary, after his death.
- John 20:2-10: First to reach the empty tomb, this disciple is first to comprehend the prophecies of the Scriptures regarding resurrection.
- John 21:7: First disciple to recognize the risen Jesus from a distance.
- John 21:20-24: Regarding this disciple, Jesus said, "If I want him to remain alive until I return, what is that to you?"



**A patient
apostle knows
that anything
is possible for
those who
believe.**



What a beautiful picture these instances of this "beloved disciple" paint – and all of them happen during Holy Week and the time immediately after Jesus' resurrection. *This disciple* had a closer, more intimate relationship with Jesus than perhaps any of the others although it was subtly and carefully revealed. Perhaps the understandable jealousy among the apostles required it. Perhaps the necessary maturity and insight required didn't occur until that final agonizing week. Perhaps it wasn't until writing in retrospect that the disciple was able to piece together these brief instances and realize the special distinction he had been given.

For whatever reason "the beloved disciple" wished to keep his identity secret (and, in all fairness, I must acknowledge that it is impossible to categorically confirm), it is not difficult to make an educated assumption that John Zebedee is indeed the "beloved apostle." It is the writer's opinion that when John's account of these events were written he was unaware that the other three contributing writers were also keeping a written account. Had these three other accounts not been available, it would not be possible to identify this "beloved apostle" and yet by cross referencing carefully the beloved apostle's identity is most assuredly John Zebedee.

John Zebedee the common fisherman turned erudite apostle, showed the most profound transformation of all the apostles beginning as a brash, egocentric fanatic and ending up as a profoundly thoughtful, spiritually intellectual follower of Jesus of Nazareth. There is no doubt that his impact on the ministry of Jesus of Nazareth was blessed because of his commitment.

Questions for Discussion:

1. What characteristics did John exhibit that his brother James did not? John 19:25, John 21:7
2. Do you think that John liked or disliked his nickname of "Son of Thunder"? Why?
3. Why do you think that John referred to himself as "the disciple that Jesus loved" rather than specifically by name? ***John 13, 19, 20, 21***