Ambition of James & John (Matt. 20:20-28; Mk. 10:35-45)

1. Mark records James and John as the questioners (Mk. 10:35), but Matthew records their mother’s mediation (Mt. 20:20).
   a. Zebedee is mentioned 12x in the NT but only one episode features him beyond the references to his paternity of James & John (Mt. 4:21-22; Mk. 1:19-20).
   b. Mrs. Z (the mother of his sons) appears in this episode and at the cross (Mt. 27:56). || texts help to identify her given name as Salome (Mk. 15:40-41; 16:1) and also marks her as the sister of the mother of Jesus (Jn. 19:25).
   c. Although their mother may have voiced it, the request remained theirs, and Jesus’ answer was to question the two disciples (Mt. 20:22; Mk. 10:38).

2. The Sons of Thunder (Mk. 3:17) hoped to score prime seating in glory (Mt. 20:21; Mk. 10:37).
   a. Such seating is the Father’s sovereign choice, and the Son will not manipulate the Father in this.
   b. If the Son will not manipulate the Father how sad is it for the cousins to use their mother in such a way!

3. Jesus’ challenging response indicates that seating assignments are based upon victorious cups and baptisms (Mt. 20:22; Mk. 10:38).
   a. The cup is what is provided (Ps. 23:5). Drinking is the volitional acceptance of that provision (Mt. 26:39; Mk. 14:36; Lk. 22:42; Jn. 18:11).
   b. The cup can also be one of judgment (Ps. 11:6; Isa. 51:17,22,23).
   c. Baptism can have a metaphoric use which speaks of maximum testing (Lk. 12:50; 1st Cor. 10:2) as it contains the imagery of being overwhelmed by a flood (Job 22:11; Ps. 18:16; 69:1-2,15; Isa. 43:2).
   d. The disciples are promised suffering in the name of Christ, but eternal seating precedent remains the Father’s business (Mt. 20:23; Mk. 10:40).

4. The ten became indignant, and Jesus exhorted them to exchange self-exaltation for self-humiliation (Mt. 20:24-28; Mk. 10:41-45).
   a. Indignation has already been detailed (Jesus Blesses Children [LJ&PM33]).
      ἄγανακτεο aganakteō #237
      1) Resentment is the underlying attitude behind this kind of anger.
      2) In most cases, this anger is carnal, but Jesus illustrates a legitimate indignation.
   b. In order to address the indignation of the ten, Jesus had to teach an immediate class to the twelve.
   c. Gentile (Roman) political power plays form the antithetical illustration for Jesus’ humility teaching.
      1) Ruling ones “lord it over” the ruled ones. κατακυριεύω katakurieúō #2634 4x (Mt. 20:25; Mk. 10:42; 1st Pet. 5:3).
      2) Great ones “authority over” the non-great. κατεξουσιάζω katexousiazō #2715 2x (Mt. 20:25; Mk. 10:42).
      3) For disciples of Christ greatness is derived by deacon-service (διακονος diakonos #1249 20x). 4) For disciples of Christ pre-eminence is derived by bond-service (δοῦλος doulos #1401 120x).
      5) Jesus’ personal illustration is to be imitated (Jn. 13:14,15; Phil. 2:5-7).