

## **PETER, JAMES AND JOHN**

There are three instances in the gospels where Jesus only took Peter, James and John with Him into a certain situation. We know that the Lord does nothing without meaning, and that there must be more to this than some general, vague need for an “inner circle”

The three passages in question were all very significant events, being the healing of the little girl, the transfiguration, and the garden of Gethsemane.

**While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue’s house who said, “Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?”<sup>36</sup> As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, “Do not be afraid; only believe.”<sup>37</sup> And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. (Mark 5:35-37)**

**Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them.<sup>3</sup> His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. (Mark 9:2-3)**

**Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.”<sup>33</sup> And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed.<sup>34</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.” (Mark 14:32-34)**

There are other occasions where Andrew is mentioned as a fourth, but the above three passages are the only ones to have just Peter, James and John following Jesus.

## **EARTHLY ISRAEL**

But why only the three of them? And why those occasions? I have come to believe that there is more than one layer to the answer, the first of which pertains to Israel. For we know that the twelve apostles are linked to the twelve tribes.

**So Jesus said to them, “Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. (Matthew 19:28)**

Now, preeminent among the tribes in a governmental sense is Judah, who received the ruling birthright after Reuben, Simeon and Levi were rejected, with the heritage of the Messiah ultimately running through this tribe, more specifically through the line of David. Now, there is a manner in which the apostle most symbolic of Judah is Judas Iscariot, who has the same name (Judah and Judas are the same in Hebrew) and betrayed Jesus in a very similar manner than the original Judah betrayed Joseph.

**So Judah said to his brothers, “What profit is there if we kill our brother and conceal his blood?<sup>27</sup> Come and let us sell him to the Ishmaelites, and let not our hand be upon him, for he is our brother and our flesh.” And his brothers listened.<sup>28</sup> Then Midianite traders**

passed by; so the brothers pulled Joseph up and lifted him out of the pit, and sold him to the Ishmaelites for twenty shekels of silver. And they took Joseph to Egypt. (Genesis 37: 26-28)

Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests <sup>15</sup> and said, “What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?” And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. <sup>16</sup> So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him. (Matthew 26:14-16)

This is also reflected in the way that the tribe of Judah betrayed their king:

Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And he said to the Jews, “Behold your King!”

<sup>15</sup> But they cried out, “Away with Him, away with Him! Crucify Him!”

Pilate said to them, “Shall I crucify your King?”

The chief priests answered, “We have no king but Caesar!”

<sup>16</sup> Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led Him away. (John 19:14-16)

So in all this we see how Judas undoubtedly was a symbol of the tribe of Judah as a whole. However, he was replaced as one of the twelve, and so there still remains a faithful Judah, who in my belief is symbolized by *Peter*, for this apostle became the preeminent among the others, as can be seen in many places, not least by the honor of him being the first to preach the gospel at Pentecost. There is also the prior confession of Jesus as the Son of God, which brought forth the following declaration from the Lord:

Jesus answered and said to him, “Blessed are you, Simon Bar-Jonah, for flesh and blood has not revealed this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. <sup>18</sup> And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it. <sup>19</sup> And I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Matthew 16:17-19)

Now, among the sons of Israel, Joseph was also prominent, as the son of Jacob’s love, and the firstborn of Rachael. He became two tribes, Ephraim and Manasseh, and the younger son, Ephraim, was given the birthright over his brother. Ephraim also became the preeminent northern tribe, as a kind of parallel sovereign to Judah in the south, and they are often mentioned together in scripture:

Gilead is Mine, and Manasseh is Mine; Ephraim also is the helmet for My head; Judah is My lawgiver. (Psalm 60:7)

He will set up a banner for the nations,  
And will assemble the outcasts of Israel,  
And gather together the dispersed of Judah  
From the four corners of the earth.

<sup>13</sup> Also the envy of Ephraim shall depart,  
And the adversaries of Judah shall be cut off;

**Ephraim shall not envy Judah,  
And Judah shall not harass Ephraim.**

**<sup>14</sup> But they shall fly down upon the shoulder of the Philistines toward the west;**

**Together they shall plunder the people of the East;  
They shall lay their hand on Edom and Moab;  
And the people of Ammon shall obey them. (Isaiah 11:12-14)**

And again:

**Again the word of the LORD came to me, saying, <sup>16</sup>“As for you, son of man, take a stick for yourself and write on it: ‘For Judah and for the children of Israel, his companions.’ Then take another stick and write on it, ‘For Joseph, the stick of Ephraim, and for all the house of Israel, his companions.’ <sup>17</sup> Then join them one to another for yourself into one stick, and they will become one in your hand. (Ezekiel 37:15-17)**

It is my belief that James and John are symbols of Manasseh and Ephraim, with John (as supposed to be the younger, like Ephraim), ultimately becoming more prominent, as we see the three apostles in the gospels become just Peter and John more often in the book of Acts:

**Now Peter and John went up together to the temple at the hour of prayer, the ninth hour. (Acts 3:1)**

**Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them... (Acts 8:14)**

Indeed, we even see this partnership of Peter/Judah and John/Ephraim prefigured before the crucifixion:

**And He sent Peter and John, saying, “Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat.” (Luke 22:8)**

So then, in all these things we see the dynamic between Judah, Ephraim and Manasseh reflected in Peter, John and James.

## **THE ELECT OF GOD**

Now, in the same way that the apostles are connected to earthly Israel, we also see them connected to the New Jerusalem, serving symbolically as foundation layers, the in vision of Patmos:

**Now the wall of the city had twelve foundations, and on them were the names of the twelve apostles of the Lamb. (Revelation 21:14)**

With the twelve then running parallel to the spiritual house of God in addition to Israel after the flesh, it is my belief that Peter, James and John pertain to the remnant, firstfruits, elect or

overcomers among God's spiritual people. With this in mind, let us examine the three passages of scripture used above to search out further types and symbols. First of all, let us look at the passage of the woman with the flow of blood, and the raising of the dead girl:

Now when Jesus had crossed over again by boat to the other side, a great multitude gathered to Him; and He was by the sea. <sup>22</sup> And behold, one of the rulers of the synagogue came, Jairus by name. And when he saw Him, he fell at His feet <sup>23</sup> and begged Him earnestly, saying, "My little daughter lies at the point of death. Come and lay Your hands on her, that she may be healed, and she will live." <sup>24</sup> So Jesus went with him, and a great multitude followed Him and thronged Him.

<sup>25</sup> Now a certain woman had a flow of blood for twelve years, <sup>26</sup> and had suffered many things from many physicians. She had spent all that she had and was no better, but rather grew worse. <sup>27</sup> When she heard about Jesus, she came behind Him in the crowd and touched His garment. <sup>28</sup> For she said, "If only I may touch His clothes, I shall be made well."

<sup>29</sup> Immediately the fountain of her blood was dried up, and she felt in her body that she was healed of the affliction. <sup>30</sup> And Jesus, immediately knowing in Himself that power had gone out of Him, turned around in the crowd and said, "Who touched My clothes?"

<sup>31</sup> But His disciples said to Him, "You see the multitude thronging You, and You say, 'Who touched Me?'"

<sup>32</sup> And He looked around to see her who had done this thing. <sup>33</sup> But the woman, fearing and trembling, knowing what had happened to her, came and fell down before Him and told Him the whole truth. <sup>34</sup> And He said to her, "Daughter, your faith has made you well. Go in peace, and be healed of your affliction."

<sup>35</sup> While He was still speaking, some came from the ruler of the synagogue's house who said, "Your daughter is dead. Why trouble the Teacher any further?"

<sup>36</sup> As soon as Jesus heard the word that was spoken, He said to the ruler of the synagogue, "Do not be afraid; only believe." <sup>37</sup> And He permitted no one to follow Him except Peter, James, and John the brother of James. <sup>38</sup> Then He came to the house of the ruler of the synagogue, and saw a tumult and those who wept and wailed loudly. <sup>39</sup> When He came in, He said to them, "Why make this commotion and weep? The child is not dead, but sleeping."

<sup>40</sup> And they ridiculed Him. But when He had put them all outside, He took the father and the mother of the child, and those who were with Him, and entered where the child was lying. <sup>41</sup> Then He took the child by the hand, and said to her, "Talitha, cumi," which is translated, "Little girl, I say to you, arise." <sup>42</sup> Immediately the girl arose and walked, for she was twelve years of age. And they were overcome with great amazement. <sup>43</sup> But He commanded them strictly that no one should know it, and said that something should be given her to eat. (Mark 5:21-43)

Now this is a most interesting and illuminating passage with regards to the relationship between the sick woman and the dead girl. For the woman's flow of blood had been for twelve years, and with the dead girl being twelve years old, this means that *the woman's flow of blood started around the time the girl was born!* With the number twelve being closely associated with the people of God, it is my belief that the woman is earthly Israel/Judah, and the little girl is the church, and that this whole scenario symbolizes the end of the age.

Firstly, who can deny that Israel has had severe affliction ever since the death and resurrection of our Lord and birth of the church? The Jews have been hounded from pillar to post, and a “flow of blood” is a perfect description of the terrible persecutions they have suffered from that time up to the present day. We also see her come to faith, in a manner of speaking, as Jesus is passing by, and thus it appears she touches the hem of His garment from the side or behind, which would symbolize the Jews finally believing in their Messiah long after the incarnation.

Now with regards to the girl, she appears to stand for the church at the end of the age, immature (hence the tender years), and giving an appearance of death, though the Lord knows she is only asleep and can indeed be woken up. It is also interest to note that He commands her to be given something to eat once she has been raised, perhaps indicated a church that has not been properly feeding upon Christ, the true bread from heaven, up until that time.

So what is the significance of Peter, James and John being present here? It is my belief that, as a symbol for the overcomers, they are not asleep like the girl, but rather awake and present at her arising, even as God always reserves a remnant to Himself in times of apostasy. But even in this elect state, it is important to see that the result of this sequence of events was full health and life for the woman and the girl, in addition to those three apostles who were already both healthy and alive.

## THE TRANSFIGURATION

Next, we come to one of the most noteworthy events described in the gospels, that of the transfiguration, or metamorphosis, of Jesus Christ.

**And He said to them, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the kingdom of God present with power.”**

**<sup>2</sup> Now after six days Jesus took Peter, James, and John, and led them up on a high mountain apart by themselves; and He was transfigured before them. <sup>3</sup> His clothes became shining, exceedingly white, like snow, such as no launderer on earth can whiten them. <sup>4</sup> And Elijah appeared to them with Moses, and they were talking with Jesus. <sup>5</sup> Then Peter answered and said to Jesus, “Rabbi, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah”— <sup>6</sup> because he did not know what to say, for they were greatly afraid.**

**<sup>7</sup> And a cloud came and overshadowed them; and a voice came out of the cloud, saying, “This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!” <sup>8</sup> Suddenly, when they had looked around, they saw no one anymore, but only Jesus with themselves. (Mark 9:1-5)**

Now in this passage, we again have an indicator of this symbolizing the end of the age, namely that Jesus took them up after six days, which are types of the six millennia from Adam to the end of the church age. It is important to note here, that the other apostles are down at the base of the mountain, trying in vain to cast the demon out of the boy. But the overcomers have symbolically been taken to a higher place in the Spirit, where they receive a surpassingly great revelation of Christ, seeing Him as He is:

**Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. (1 John 3:2)**

So then, even as the dead girl stood for the sleeping church in the prior illustration, so we have the other nine apostles, still contending with evil in lower places, standing for the church in this passage. However, lest elitism should take hold and we should start to see the remnant as more beloved and worthy, we find that later in the same chapter, the disciples indeed fall into disputing who is the greatest among them, which brought forth the following response from our Lord:

**And He sat down, called the twelve, and said to them, “If anyone desires to be first, he shall be last of all and servant of all.” (Mark 9:35)**

So indeed, though the remnant are given greater honor for a time, they are all of One with the rest of God’s people, and whatever they are given, it is given that it may be passed on, even as the blessings of the church as a whole are given ultimately to be passed on to the residue of mankind. For the people of Christ are shaped to be conduits of His love and power, not closed containers.

## **THE GARDEN**

Finally, we come to the Garden of Gethsemane, and the withdrawing of Jesus from the apostles to pray, yet again taking with Him just Peter, James and John:

**Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, “Sit here while I pray.” <sup>33</sup> *And He took Peter, James, and John with Him*, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. <sup>34</sup> Then He said to them, “My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.”**

<sup>35</sup> **He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. <sup>36</sup> And He said, “Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.”**

<sup>37</sup> **Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, “Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? <sup>38</sup> Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.”**

<sup>39</sup> **Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. <sup>40</sup> And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him.**

<sup>41</sup> **Then He came the third time and said to them, “Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. <sup>42</sup> Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.” (Mark 14:32-42)**

It is my belief that in the context of Peter, James and John as the remnant, this passage pertains to the fellowship of Christ’s suffering. For these three were literally selected to watch and pray with Him in the time of His anguish and distress. Indeed, one might again place the symbolism at the end of the age, as the birth pains begin to increase in pace and volume. This

fellowship with the Lord's suffering is one of the most vital aspects of our relationship, and is beautifully pictured in this withdrawing into the recesses of the garden. We see this fellowship stated in scripture clearly, no more so than Paul to the *ekklesia* in Philippi:

**For to you it has been granted on behalf of Christ, not only to believe in Him, but also to suffer for His sake... (Philippians 1:29)**

**But what things were gain to me, these I have counted loss for Christ. <sup>8</sup> Yet indeed I also count all things loss for the excellence of the knowledge of Christ Jesus my Lord, for whom I have suffered the loss of all things, and count them as rubbish, that I may gain Christ <sup>9</sup> and be found in Him, not having my own righteousness, which is from the law, but that which is through faith in Christ, the righteousness which is from God by faith; <sup>10</sup> that I may know Him and the power of His resurrection, and the fellowship of His sufferings, being conformed to His death, <sup>11</sup> if, by any means, I may attain to the resurrection from the dead. (Philippians 3:7-11)**

And yet again, lest the remnant would appear to be overly exalted, we see here that Peter, James and John fell short of their commission in this hour, falling asleep from sorrow instead of watching, and letting the weakness of the flesh override the willingness of the Spirit.

#### **CONCLUSION:**

Though this article may seem somewhat speculative, it is important to remember that the scriptures are full of symbols and parables, and that the Lord does nothing without purpose. Whether or not these types appear accurately drawn, the most important truth is in the antitypes, and we know that the Lord does indeed ever reserve a remnant to Himself, and that Israel's flow of blood shall be stopped, the sleeping church shall awake, His people shall receive a higher revelation of Him, and ever walk in fellowship with His sufferings, that we all might also experience His resurrection Life.

Amen!