

**The Baptism of the Cross: Salome Lobbies for Her Sons to Be First but only Jesus Can Drink the Cup of the Cross, Matt 20:20–22; Cup Imagery in the Old Testament, Ps 75:8; Isa 51:7–8; Jer 25:15–17; Jesus’ Prayers to Be Delivered from the Cup, Matt 26:39, 42**

### (1) The Baptism of the Cross

1. This baptism identifies Jesus Christ with the sins of the world. It occurred during the three hours on the cross from high noon to three o’clock on April 3, A.D. 33.
2. This event can also be described as the baptism of the cup. The first mention of the cup related to His spiritual death on the cross is found in Matthew 20:22–23, Mark 10:38–39, Luke 22:42; and John 18:11.
3. The Matthew passage corresponds with our midweek study of the parable of the laborers so we will use its passage as an introduction to this baptism.

**Matthew 20:20** - Then the mother [ **Salome** ] of the sons of Zebedee [ **James & John** ] came to Jesus with her sons, bowing down and making a request of Him.

4. Salome did not grasp the point of the parable of the laborers. The spiritual principle being taught was that rewards are based on grace not legalism. One doesn’t campaign for rewards. They are earned through grace orientation and the production of divine good from genuine humility toward the plan of God. She betrays her ignorance in her response to the Lord in:

**Matthew 20:21** - And Jesus said to her, “What do you wish?” She said to Him, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right hand and one on Your left.”

5. Salome’s first word in response is the aorist active imperative of the verb **εἶπον** (*eipon*): which is translated “grant” in the KJV and NIV. The NASB, however, gets it right with the translation “command.” Here’s why: “*Eipon* sometimes involves the idea of *commanding*.” Here we have an imperative mood “followed by the conjunction **ἵνα** (*hina*) plus the subjunctive mood of the verb **καθίζω** (*kathizō*) : ‘may sit.’”<sup>1</sup>
6. The translation in the NASB is correct, “Command that in Your kingdom these two sons of mine may sit one on Your right hand and one on Your left.”
7. Mamma is ambitious for her boys, so much so she orders the God of the universe about how she wants Him to run His kingdom. The honored position is at the right hand so she doesn’t make clear who is first and who is second.
8. Salome wants rewards for her boys based on her assumed power to influence the One who bestows them. She wants Jesus to be baptized into her.
9. To ask for her boys to be first in the kingdom is to wish them to be last, another indication that she did not pay attention during the Lord’s comments in verses 1–16.

<sup>1</sup> Joseph Henry Thayer, *The New Thayer’s Greek-English Lexicon of the New Testament* (Peabody, MA: Hendrickson Publishers, 1981). 181.

10. The Lord's response is very gracious considering the presumptuousness of her request:

**Matthew 20:22** - But Jesus answered, "You do not know what you are asking. Are you able to drink the cup that I am about to drink?" They said to Him, "We are able."

11. The issue in the parable of the laborers is the first shift's emphasis on rewards by means of legalism. This is expressed by comparing their works with that of others and assuming superiority.
12. The final analysis revealed that the fifth shift operated on grace and was willing to allow the vineyard owner to determine their pay. That is the message James and John should assume in verse 22. If their mother wants to make herself look silly that's her business, but they should have kept their mouths shut.
13. There is work to be done to be number one in the kingdom and that is to drink of the cup which refers to the sins of the world being imputed to Jesus and their judgment in Him.
14. The cup's imagery of judgment has its origin in the Old Testament:

**Psalms 75:8** - "The Lord holds in his hand a cup full of foaming wine mixed with spices, and pours it out. Surely all the wicked of the earth will slurp it up and drink it to its very last drop." (NET)

**Isaiah 51:7** - Rouse yourself! Rouse yourself! Arise, O Jerusalem, you who have drunk from the Lord's hand the cup of His anger; the chalice of reeling.

**v. 8** - There is none to guide her among all the sons she has borne, nor is there one to take her by the hand among all the sons she has reared. (NASB)

**Jeremiah 25:15** - The Lord, the God of Israel, says to me, "Take this cup of the wine of wrath from My hand and cause all the nations of whom I send you to drink it.

**v. 16** - "They will drink and stagger and go mad because of the sword that I will send among them."

**v. 17** - Then I took the cup from the Lord's hand and made all the nations to whom the Lord sent me drink it. (NASB)

15. When the Lord speaks of the cup in Matthew 20 he is referring to the work He is destined to perform when the justice of God pours upon Him the sins of the entire world.
16. To be number one in the kingdom James and John have to drink the cup that is filled with all the sins of the human race.
17. The Lord is functioning inside the prototype divine dynasphere under the principle of kenosis. He is unable to access His divine attributes. He is dependent upon the Father for every aspect of His life during the Incarnation.
18. As a perfect Man, the Lord is adverse to the idea of being identified with sin of any kind, but the prospect of being identified with the sins of the entire world are so imposing that He petitions the Father not once but twice to spare Him the degradation if at all possible

19. His appeals are recorded in Matthew 26:39, 42; Mark 14:35-36; and Luke 22:41-42. We'll note the first:

**Matthew 26:39** - Jesus went a little beyond them [ **His disciples** ], and fell on His face and prayed, saying, "My Father, if it is possible, let this cup pass from Me; yet not as I will, but as You will."

**v. 42** - He went away a second time and prayed, saying, "My Father, if this cannot pass away unless I drink it, Your will be done."