

## Women of the Bible: Salome

Pilgrim Lutheran Church Mary/Martha Society Gathering – 2026 June 14

Rev. Dr. Jayson S. Galler, Pastor

- Invocation and Prayer
- Last time, May 17, 2026, we considered the prophetess Anna, who encountered the 40-day-old Jesus. Today, we take a closer look at another woman who may have known Him when He was relatively young, namely, Salome (sal-**o**-may, by the pronunciation of her name in Greek, or sə-lō'-mī, as it might be pronounced in English). The name is apparently a feminine derivative of the Hebrew word *shalom* meaning “peace”, and so is said to mean “peace”, “peaceful”, or “wellbeing”, like the name “Solomon” for “Jedidiah” (2 Samuel 12:24-25). (See the page on Pilgrim’s website with the working chronological list of all the women whom we both have studied and will study, linking our handouts when available: [www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/women-of-the-bible](http://www.pilgrimlc.org/bible-studies/women-of-the-bible).)
- Salome is usually held to be the wife of Zebedee and the mother of his sons, the disciples-turned-apostles James the Elder and John, “whom Jesus loved” (for example, John 19:26). Salome possibly may be also the sister of the Virgin Mary (using John 19:25), and so she would be the aunt of Jesus, which would make James and John be Jesus’s first cousins (perhaps a factor in Jesus’s entrusting the Virgin Mary to John’s care instead of to His at that time unbelieving “kinsmen”). Salome is mentioned by name only in Mark 15:40 and 16:1, but she seems to be in view in other passages, as well, one of which passages is where we begin.
- Salome, though unnamed in the account, and/or her sons James and John ask Jesus for them to sit on His right and left in His Kingdom/glory (Matthew 20:20-28 and Mark 10:35-45; compare Luke 22:24-27 and John 13:4-5, 12-17). Although *The Lutheran Study Bible* does not touch the matter, like all alleged seeming-contradictions in the Divinely-inspired and therefore inerrant Holy Scriptures, there are plausible explanations for Matthew’s mentioning Salome’s making the request on her sons’ behalf and Mark’s mentioning the sons’ making the request themselves. One such explanation is that Mark simply does not mention Salome as the agent of the sons’ request, just as Matthew does not rule out the request’s being that of the sons, even though their mother made the request of Jesus (for example, Robert G. Hoerber). The *Concordia Self-Study Bible* at least says, “The three joined in making the petition.” Commentators who have a lower view of Scripture might grant a substantive difference and posit other explanations. For example, E.P. Blair (*TIDotB*) says Matthew’s account transfers the blame for the request from James and John to their mother in order to protect the apostles’ reputation (confer Davies and Allison), not that the alleged transfer does anything for *Salome*’s reputation or that her sons’ standing there while she asks on their behalf allows them much distance from the request, whether they are explicitly named, as in Mark, or not, as in Matthew. The Church Father Gregory of Nazianzus spoke about Salome’s “parental affection” and “excess of love”, while the Church Father Chrysostom understood Salome’s words as discrediting her sons, as if they were ashamed to ask and put her forward. We also may have sinful ambitions and manipulate others, but Jesus came to serve by ransoming also us.

- Jesus's death, burial, and empty tomb/resurrection were witnessed by a number of women, apparently including the mother of the sons of Zebedee, Salome (Matthew 27:55-56, 57-61; 28:1-8, 9-10; Mark 15:40-41, 42-47; 16:1-8; Luke 23:49, 50-56; 24:1-12 [confer Luke 8:1-3]). The different Divinely-inspired evangelists seem to refer to at least two of the women by different names/titles, which at least in Salome's case may reflect their "personal connection" to her (confer John Wenham, *Easter Enigma*). To what extent Salome, by any name, supported Jesus and the Twelve, which group included her sons, is not explicitly clear. Like Salome, "The other Mary", apparently the wife of Clopas (perhaps Jesus's guardian Joseph's brother and so Jesus's "uncle") and the mother of James the younger and Joses, may also have been family and involved. After the events of Holy (Maundy) Thursday, Wenham puts Zebedee and Salome, Clopas and Mary, the Virgin Mary, and Peter with John at John's home (or, perhaps, we would say Zebedee and Salome's home in Jerusalem). After at least some of the events of Good Friday, Wenham again has John, Salome, and the Virgin Mary at that home, and, after Jesus's burial, Wenham also has Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas there. After the Sabbath was over, Wenham has Salome buying burial spices for Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas, since Salome may have known the Jerusalem market the best of the three, and Wenham puts Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas with her husband on a trip to Bethany. Then, on Easter Sunday, Wenham has Mary Magdalene and Mary of Clopas with her husband leave Bethany while it is still dark to meet Salome at John's house, where Clopas stays, while the women proceed to the garden and see the tomb open. Wenham suggests Joanna and "Susanna" come from the Hasmonean palace to join them in the garden and lead Salome and Mary of Clopas into the tomb, hear the angels' message, and go back to John's house. Then, Wenham suggests, Mary of Clopas and Salome set off for Bethany to tell the news of the resurrection to those there and are met by Jesus on the way. Again, all seeming-contradictions from the four accounts of the one Gospel can be harmonized, and we can be certain that Jesus is risen and so we, too, shall live!
- The daughter of Herodias who danced for Herod Antipas and then asked for the head of John the Baptizer is called "Salome" in Jewish Historian Josephus's *Antiquities* (XVIII:4), but the Gospel accounts do not give the daughter's name (Matthew 14:6; Mark 6:22).
- About what else does our consideration of Salome raise questions or prompt discussion?
- Concluding Prayer, *LSB* 855 (stanzas 1, 3, and 4), and Benediction.
- Next time (July 19) on The Woman at the Well (John 4:1-45).