

The Epistle of St James

Objectives

To have a basic understanding of the epistle of St. James

References

“The Epistle of St. James” by Fr. Tadros Y. Malaty

Scriptural Verse

“For as the body without the spirit is dead, so faith without works is dead also” (James 3: 26)

Lesson Outlines

Who is St James?

- ❖ He is the brother of the Lord (His cousin) (Galatians 1:19)
- ❖ He was not a believer, during the life of the Lord Jesus on earth (John 7:5), but believed after the resurrection (Acts 1:14).
- ❖ He was the bishop of Jerusalem until his martyrdom and wrote a liturgy for the Armenians
- ❖ He was called James the Righteous because he loved worship, and from the abundance of his kneeling for prayer, his knees were like the knees of a camel.
- ❖ The Jews greatly feared him and hastened to touch his clothes.
- ❖ In the year 50/52 A.D., he presided over the first Christian council in Jerusalem (Acts 15)
- ❖ He was martyred around the year 62 A.D. The Scribes and Pharisees threw him from the top of the temple, stoned him and a man struck him with a hammer on his head. It was known that God’s wrath came upon them and destroyed Jerusalem in 68 A.D.

To whom is the Epistle written?

It is one of the Catholic letters (general and not directed toward anybody). It was written to the twelve tribes in the dispersion, and mentioning the twelve tribes refers that the Church is the heir to the tribes spiritually.

About the Epistle

It was written around 60 or 61 AD during the time of persecution by the Jews, when all the heresies mentioned in the epistle, were spread.

Purpose:

- ❖ To encourage Christians to endure tribulation and to know the meaning of suffering.
- ❖ To encourage them to be steadfast in faith and to clarify the concept of faith and deeds.
- ❖ To reveal dangers of some sins.

Characteristics:

- ❖ It adopted the practical style regarding the holiness of the Christian life. It connects works with faith and faith with works, with no separation or discrimination.
- ❖ Its expressions are easy and clear.
- ❖ It was strict in rebuking with an overflow of love and compassion.

- ❖ It is related to the Old Testament. It refers to Job and Elijah despite being characterized by the nature of the New Testament “the new birth” (1:18), the perfect Law of liberty (1:25) and the sacraments of the Church (James 5).

Sections of the Epistles

Faith and temptations - chapter 1

- ❖ Types of temptations (Outer and inner)
- ❖ How do we resist temptations (Heavenly wisdom, humility, realizing that the world will pass away)
- ❖ God does not grant other than righteousness
- ❖ Our Stand as children of God (Swift to hear, slow to speak, slow to wrath, remove the seeds of evil and planting the word of God, bridling the tongue, have mercy and keep ourselves undefiled)

Faith and works - chapter 2

As children of God, St James directs our attention to the importance of deeds to faith.

- ❖ Faith and partiality between worshipers
 - ✠ Against God who cares for the poor
 - ✠ Rich people cause problems and hypocritically break the commandments
 - ✠ No mercy for those who do not show mercy
- ❖ Faith and deeds
 - ✠ Examples of dead and living faith
 - ✠ Necessity of deeds joining faith

Faith and the tongue - chapter 3

- ❖ Love of teaching brings stricter judgment
- ❖ Danger of the tongue (like fire and may defile the whole body)
- ❖ Control the tongue (don't curse people with the same tongue that blesses the Lord)

Faith and the earthly lusts - chapter 4

- ❖ It makes us lose our inner peace (No satisfaction)
- ❖ It makes us lose our peace with God (Friendship with the world, is enmity with God)
- ❖ It makes us lose our peace with people (who are you who judge your brother?)
- ❖ It grants us nothing (Life is a vapor that appears for a little time then vanishes away)

Faith and being occupied with worldly riches - chapter 5

- ❖ The danger of being occupied with riches
- ❖ Be patient (Establish your hearts, for the coming of the Lord is at hand)
- ❖ Do not swear lest you fall into judgment
- ❖ Stand firm and pray in all circumstances (Sorrow, Joy, Sickness and Troubles)
- ❖ Turn the sinner from his errors to save a soul from death.

Conclusion

The Epistle of St. James is a practical guide to the Christian on how to live a godly life in faithfulness and with good works.

Activities /Discussion Points

1. Make a list of the sins of the tongue
2. Pick a passage from the epistle and discuss it with the class