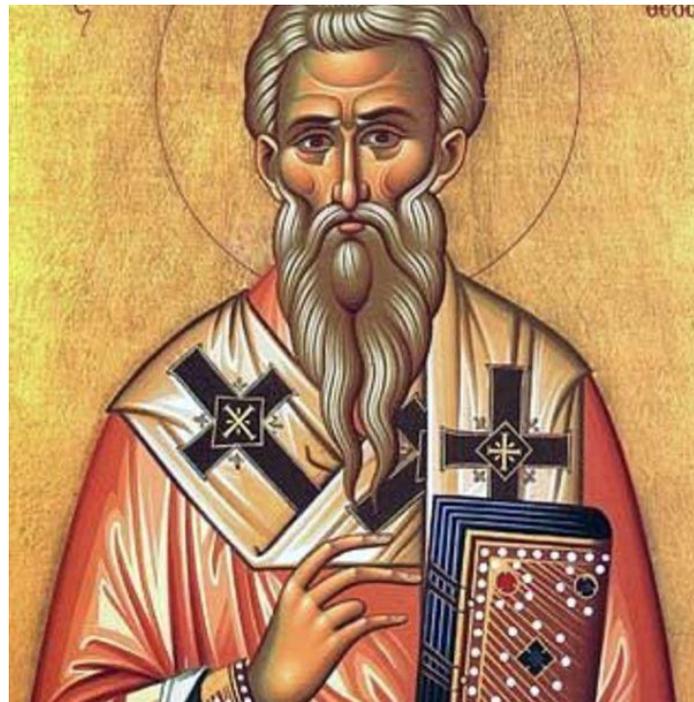


## The Catholic Letters Session 2

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Summer 2021

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## Who Was James?

- Catholic tradition says he was James, “the brother of the Lord”
- Not one of the two apostles named James
- He was a pillar of the Church and led the Christian community in Jerusalem
- The letter is written in excellent Greek so might have been put in its present form by a secretary who followed James
- According to Josephus, James was stoned to death in A.D. 62

## Overall Theme

The overall theme of the Letter of James is:

*The true and wise Christian is the one who has faith in Jesus Christ as the Messiah and Son of God and puts his faith into practice by living a life of love of God and love of neighbor. For, faith without works is dead; the "works" meant here are not external rites but keeping the Commandments and living the Beatitudes – works of love.*

## So What do you Think?

- Read the Book of James
  - Take note of the vivid imagery in the first chapter. Which seem most powerful to you?
  - Can you accept James' advice to ask for wisdom (1:5) and be confident God will give it to you?
  - James says Abraham and Rahab show faith in action (2:23). Who else in the Bible and in our day does that?
  - How does that lesson apply to us?
  - In 3:6-12 James describes the power of words, do you agree?
  - How does James' letter apply to us today?

## James

- James knows that being steadfast in faith isn't easy – sometimes it is very hard
- His intention is to give practical advice to the universal Church on how to overcome problems related to faith
- He is convinced that if we have and use our wisdom, we can be faithful
- Wisdom is a gift from God and we have to ask for it and it will be granted (1:6-8)

- James sees that there are many things that God provides through patience.

**Therefore, patience is important!**

1. We are empowered to persevere.
2. We learn about the power of God.
3. We should be detached from the world.
4. We must ask for the gift of wisdom.



## James

- In closing James returns to prayer
- He urges that we pray for each other, for those in need who suffer from physical or spiritual needs
- In this he notes the Sacrament of the Sick and its power of forgiveness (5:13)
- He gives us Elijah as an example of one who prayed in faith and God responded (5:17)

## James

- James was a book that Martin Luther had problems with because he couldn't reconcile James 2:24 with Romans 3:28
  - James 2:24 – “See how a person is justified by works, and not by faith alone”
  - Romans 3:28 – “For a person is justified by faith apart from works of the law”
- But here “Works” and “Works of the Law” differ
- James is directly addressing those of his time and ours who feel that if they have faith, that's good enough
- James feels that if we really have faith, that faith will be demonstrated tangibly, in works

# James

- James has 5 chapters
  - 1 Pray for wisdom
  - 2 Put faith into action
  - 3 Speak words of blessing
  - 4 Accept the world as a gift
  - 5 Be patient with each other

## James

- When does it take place
  - The Council of Jerusalem ~ 50 AD
  - Death of James, Brother of the Lord ~ 62AD
  - He played a role in the debate over how to handle Gentile converts (Acts 15).
  - The book's appeal for mutual respect and the power of words suggest that it was written during this time
  - It could also be a later work in James' name

## James

### ■ Interesting points

- Twelve Tribes – The address may reference the “new Israel” dispersed among the nations. This time dispersion is good – as opposed to the diaspora.
- A Deadly Thing - Sin is described as a parasite within us that once grown gives “Birth to Death”. The defense against sin is wisdom, protecting against harmful desire.
- Misquote? – In 4:5 James quotes the Bible saying, “He yearns jealously over the spirit that he has made to dwell in us.” It isn’t in the Bible. Similar to Exodus 20:5 – “I the Lord your God am a jealous God...”

## James

### ■ Interesting points

- God Willing – James cautions against presuming too much. We plan every aspect of our lives. We should remember that life is a gift and we are “A mist that appears for a little while and then vanishes (4:14)”
- Anointing of the Sick – This is the basis for the Sacrament of the Sick. “Are any among you sick? They should call for the elders of the church and have them pray over the, anointing them with oil in the name of the Lord (5:14)”

## James

- Interesting points

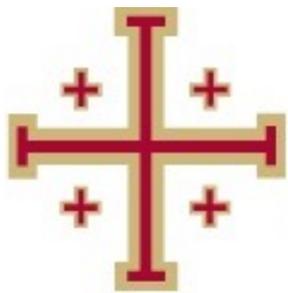
- Which James – According to Tradition, this letter was authored by James the Lesser who is different from James, the son of Zebedee. Acts 12:1-2 depicts the execution of this first James under King Agrippa I (37 – 44 AD). Most likely because of his martyrdom, he was called James the Greater.

## Lessons from James

1. We should put faith into action
2. We should only use words for the purpose of building up the kingdom not for tearing down
3. Suffering can lead us closer to God

## For Next Week

- Read the 1 & 2 Peter
  - Peter tells us that eternal life in heaven awaits us. Do we live our lives like we believe that?
  - We are warned not to “backslide” into a life that isn’t in line with our baptismal promises. What does it mean to us to renew those promises?
  - What hardships to Christians endure today?
  - Peter 2 are his last words. What would you say as a last testament to our community of faith.
  - What dangers would you steer the church from?
  - Peter says that Paul’s letters are hard, do you agree?



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