

# The epistle of James

The work required in the epistle of James who says he has faith (belief) is the work that perseverance ends (Jas 1: 4), that is, it is to remain believing in the perfect law, the law of freedom (Jas 1:25) .

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### Introduction

James the Just, possibly one of Jesus' brothers (Mt 13:55; Mark 6: 3), is the author of this epistle.

Brother James was only converted after Christ's resurrection (John 7: 3-5; Ac 1:14; 1 Cor 15: 7; Gal 1:19), becoming one of the leaders of the church in Jerusalem, and is appointed as one of the pillars of the church (Gal. 2: 9).

The epistle of James is dated around 45 AD. C., well before the first council in Jerusalem, that took place around 50 d. C., which makes the oldest New Testament epistle. According to the historian Flávio Josefo, Tiago was killed around the year 62 d. Ç.

The addressees of the epistle are scattered Jews converted to Christianity (Jas 1: 1), hence the austere tone and language peculiar to the Jews.

When he wrote this epistle, James sought to oppose the Jewish teaching of having faith in the one God, with the teaching of the gospel, which is to have faith in Jesus Christ, because it is useless to say that he believes in God, but that he does

not obey the commandment of God. God, which is to believe in Christ. James' approach reminds us of what Jesus taught: "DO NOT let your heart be troubled; you believe in God, you also believe in me" (John 14: 1), showing the relevance of the subject addressed in terms of the target audience: Jews converted to Christianity.

However, a misunderstanding about the epistle of James spread throughout Christendom, that he defended salvation by works, opposing the apostle to the Gentiles, who defended salvation by faith.

The misunderstanding of James' approach made Martin Luther loathe this epistle, calling it "straw epistle". He failed to see that James' teaching is no different from that taught by the apostle Paul.

## **Summary of the Epistle of James**

The epistle of James begins with an exhortation to perseverance in the faith, since in perseverance the work of faith is concluded (Jas 1: 3-4). Whoever endures trials without fading is blessed, since he will receive the crown of life from God, which will be given to those who obey (love) him (Jas 1:12).

James uses the term 'faith' in the sense of 'believing', 'believing', 'trusting', unlike the apostle Paul, who uses the term both in the sense of 'believing' and in the sense of 'truth', and this the latter meaning is much more used than that.

Then, James presents the essence of the gospel, which is the new birth through the word of truth (Jas 1:18). After asserting that it is necessary to receive the word of the gospel as an obedient servant, which is the power of God for

salvation (James 2: 21), James exhorts his interlocutors to fulfill what is determined in the gospel, not forgetting the doctrine of Christ (James 2: 21).

James recalls that anyone who is attentive to the truth of the gospel and perseveres in it, not being a forgotten listener, is doing the work established by God: believing in Christ (James 2:25).

In view of the work required by God, James demonstrates that to be religious without restraining what comes from the heart, is to deceive oneself, and that individual's religion proves to be in vain (James 2: 26-27).

Again, James calls his interlocutors brothers, and then he calls them not to show respect to people, since they professed believers in Christ (Jas 2: 1). If someone says that he is a believer in the Lord Jesus, he must proceed according to that belief: not respecting people because of origin, language, tribe, nation, etc. (Jas 2:12)

Tiago's approach changes again through a serious one: – 'My brothers', to ask them if it is beneficial to say that they have faith, if they have no works. Is it possible for a belief without saving works?

The term work in context must be understood according to the view of man of antiquity, which is the result of obedience to a commandment. For men at the time, a master's command and a servant's obedience resulted in work.

The approach changes from people to salvation. First, whoever has faith in Christ cannot respect. Second: Whoever says he has faith that God is one, if he does not do the work required by God, he will not be saved.

The issue is not about someone who claims to have faith in Christ, but someone who claims to have faith is faith in one God. Whoever has faith in Christ will be saved, for this is

the work required by God. You cannot save someone who claims to have faith in God, but who does not believe in Christ, since he is not the doer of the work.

The work required of those who say they have faith (belief) is the work that perseverance ends (Jas 1: 4), that is, it is to remain believing in the perfect law, the law of freedom (Jas 1:25).

As Christian converts among Jews knew that the work required by God is to believe in Christ, by arguing that it is not enough to say that he has faith, James was emphasizing that it is harmless to believe in God and not to believe in Christ.

The approach in chapter 3 changes again when it is said: my brothers (Jas 3: 1). The instruction is aimed at those who wanted to be masters, however, for this ministerial exercise it is essential to be 'perfect'. To be 'perfect' in the context is not to stumble over the word of truth (Jas 3: 2), and thus will be able to lead the body (the students).

After examples of what the word is capable of promoting, again the approach is changed, to address the impossibility of proceeding with different messages from the same person, contrasting the knowledge of God versus the wisdom and human tradition (Jas 3:10 -12).

Finally, the instruction is that Christians converted from among Jews should not speak ill of one another (James 4:11), and, by figure (wealthy), make reference to the Jews who killed Christ.

The epistle is closed by addressing the initial theme: perseverance (Jas 5:11), encouraging believers to be patient in suffering.

# The main misconceptions of interpretation

1. Understand that Tiago is concerned with issues such as social justice, income distribution, charitable actions, etc;
2. To consider the severe rebuke to the 'rich' who accumulate goods as a rebuke to those who held material wealth is to fail to observe that the term 'rich' is a figure that applies to Jews;
3. Understand that James' letter is antagonistic to the teaching of the apostle Paul, who presents salvation by faith in Christ Jesus. In fact, James shows that believing in God is not what God requires for salvation, but rather, believing that Jesus is the Christ, the work of faith;
4. Understand that good deeds are required to authenticate those who have genuine faith. Whoever has faith in Christ according to the Scriptures, has genuine faith, for this is the work required by God;
5. Confuse good works with the fruit by which the tree is identified.