

2020-2021 Bible Study

#31

5/25/21

The Catholic Church (Cont)

- Hierarchy of the Church
 - **Pope** – the head of the universal Church
 - **Bishop** – the head of a See or geographical area
 - **Priest** – one who assists their bishop by teaching and serving the people within a parish
 - **Deacon** – one who assists the priest in their work
 - **Laity** – God's people who are baptized into His Church

The Catholic Church (Cont)

- Pope
- Bishop
- Priest
- Deacon
- Lay person
- Holy Orders
- Confirmation
- Penance
- Eucharist
- Sacrament of the Sick
- Matrimony
- Baptism

Review of our Last Class

- In our last class, we looked at Paul's Pastoral Epistles
- These were Paul's two letters to Timothy (the Bishop at Ephesus) and one letter to Titus (the Bishop at Crete), and the Letter of the Hebrews
- They were pastoral in nature as Paul was giving advice on how to administer to their respective flocks
- It looks like he wrote the first two letters from Macedonia (most likely at Philippi) and 2nd Timothy from his final incarceration in Rome

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- He reminded Timothy of the importance of everyone praying for all in authority as all would be saved through faith in Jesus
- He also advised Timothy on the criteria for selecting and appointing other bishops (and deacons) for the new and smaller churches being formed
- Paul also discussed the Churches understanding of celibacy (especially as it impacted young widows)
- Next, we saw Paul's instructions to Titus concerning the criteria for salvation (confession of sins and baptism)

Review of our Last Class (Cont)

- Then, we briefly looked at 2nd Timothy which appears to have been Paul's last will and testimony
- Father pointed out how once again, Luther misunderstood what Paul was saying concerning the scriptures as he believed it was about the Bible!
- Finally, we discussed the Book of Hebrews as either being written by Paul or someone very close to him
- One of its major themes dealt with Paul's fear that some of the Jewish Christians might apostatize

The Catholic Epistles

The Catholic Epistles

- “Catholic” here means “universal” as they are very specific in their intended audience
- It is not universal as in a global sense, but they were written primarily for all of the churches in Asia Minor
- They are very general in nature and were not written to any individual by name
- Because of this, they were labeled as the “Catholic Epistles”

The Catholic Epistles (Cont)

- These include: **James; 1st and 2nd Peter; 1st, 2nd, and 3rd John**
- The Johannine letters are not really like the other Catholic epistles, as they were specifically written to the churches John was taking care of on the East coast of Asia Minor (as discussed in **Revelations 1**) – the seven churches, but there was no other place to put them in the Bible

James

James

- Father said that the author for this epistle was named “*James*” (*Jacob* in Hebrew, *Iakobos* in Greek, *Iacobus* in Latin)
- This was a very common name in the 1st century
- This James was not just a Jew, but a Christian
- The question is, which Christian James was it?
- Jesus picked two among the 12 Apostles with that name (also two named Simon and two named Judas)

James (Cont)

- It might have been James the greater (son of *Zebedee*, first martyr among the apostles)
- Most likely, it was James the lesser (bishop of Jerusalem) who wrote this letter
- This James was even discussed by *Josephus*, the first century historian who talked about James and his death (martyrdom)
- If the bishop of *Jerusalem* wrote this letter, it was written sometime in the late 50s A.D., and it has always been a part of the reading cycle in the early church

James (Cont)

- It's canonicity only began to be doubted when questioned by Martin Luther, who considered it the "epistle of straw," and initially left it out of his translation of the New Testament into German because it did not agree with his theology (it was later restored to the Protestant bible) ¹
- Father said that the *Epistle of James* sounds very Jewish, much like the wisdom literature of the Old Testament
- This fits with the idea that the author was the bishop of *Jerusalem*
- The first chapter kind of summarizes the entire letter

James 1

- **James 1:1-2** *“James, a servant of God and of the Lord Jesus Christ, to the twelve tribes of the Dispersion:...for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness”*
 - We know that members of the early church understood themselves to be the “New Israel”
 - As we saw earlier, Paul had said that “we are the new Israel, with a circumcision not made by human hands but through our baptism in Jesus”
 - Father said what James was talking about was that the 12 tribes were the “church in the dispersion”

James 1 (Cont)

- This can be seen in two ways, the state of Christians between Baptism until the second coming of Christ, or Christians who have been dispersed
- We know that from the earliest time, the Christians in *Jerusalem* were fleeing persecution (discussed in the **Book of Acts**)
- It might be that as the Bishop of *Jerusalem*, he was writing to Christians who had fled *Jerusalem* while he remained and was martyred

James 1 (Cont)

- Some of the early Christians fled to *Egypt*, but most went into *Asia Minor*, where they would have encountered the Pauline communities, and heard Paul's **Letter to the Galatians** being read at Mass
- Father suggested that James wrote this letter to clarify what Paul meant by salvation (which was that one was not simply saved by what one believed, but one must live the life of a Christian once they believed)
- James meant that one was saved by works (but not the works of the Torah)

James 1 (Cont)

- Father reminded us that Paul made the point many times that we have been saved so that we can walk in good works
- This was followed by a discussion on faith, and the need for faith

James 1 (Cont)

- **James 1:9-10** *“Let the lowly brother boast in his exultation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like the flower of the grass he will pass away”*
 - Here, James talks about the life of a Christian and whether they should seek wealth or virtue
 - He asked: What was the value of wealth?
 - He explained that God gives wealth so one can take care of those who do not have it
 - Further, he pointed out that the purpose of being tested was to bring a person to perfection

James 1 (Cont)

- **James 1:19** *“Know this, my beloved brethren. Let every man be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger, for the anger of man does not work the righteousness of God”*
 - The “righteousness of God” is a term that we saw in Paul’s **Letter to the Romans**
 - James used a similar argument as Paul did concerning “faith vs. works”
 - Once again, this is another area where Luther misread the context of the letter (James) as he had previously done with Paul’s **Letter to the Romans**
 - As a result, many people today continue to misunderstand this text

James 1 (Cont)

- **James 1:22-27** *“But, be doers of the word, and not hearers only, deceiving yourselves...and to keep oneself unstained from the world”*
 - James was saying that the one who hears the Law but does not do it, is like one who looks in the mirror, sees himself, and then walks away as if it did not make any difference
 - While, for those who hear the Law and do it, are like those who look at the Law as “the word of God”
 - They then look at Jesus, see His reflection, and understand that they have to fix the things that need fixing
 - Thus, they change their lives after reflecting upon the Law, and go out and take care of orphans, widows, and others in need

James 2

- **James 2:14** *“What does it profit, my brethren, if a man says he has faith but has not works? Can his faith save him?”*
 - In this chapter, James explains why we must pursue virtues rather than riches
 - He explained that the rich tend to push their power around and oppress the poor
 - On the other hand, the poor tend to try to appease and help those around them
 - James stressed that James is not using the term “works” here to speak about “circumcision” and “kosher laws”
 - Instead, he was talking about how one was to live his life as a Christian in relationship to other Christians

James 2 (Cont)

- **James 2:15-17** *“If a brother or sister is ill clad and in lack of daily food,...So faith by itself, if it has no works, is dead”*
 - James pointed out that a person may be demonstrating great faith, while at the same time, he has not done anything to help his brother
 - A person’s “work” must go with his “faith”
 - If one says to his brother, “God bless you,” and then hands him a blanket, he will have provided him with warmth
 - It will be through what you do that God’s Word will be fulfilled
 - We are to act as the hands, mouth, and feet of Jesus
 - One cannot separate faith in Jesus from walking in the ways of Jesus (your works)

James 2 (Cont)

- **James 2:18** *“But someone will say, you have faith and I have works. Show me your faith apart from your works, and I by my works will show you my faith”*
 - Father discussed the nonsense in how some people speak of different “spiritualities”
 - James taught that “God is one,” so there are not different “spiritualities”
 - Basically, a Christian has a hint of what is right, and then tries to do something about it (to walk in the way of the Lord)

James 2 (Cont)

- **James 2:21** “Was not *Abraham* our father justified by works, when he offered his son *Isaac* upon the altar?”
 - We saw Paul speak of “faith versus works” in his writing to the **Galatians** and **Romans**
 - Abraham was a man of great faith who was saved without “circumcision” or the “Law”
 - Father pointed out that if one does not know this about Abraham one can easily misread (as did Luther) the idea of works in **James**
 - We need to look at Paul’s teaching on this very carefully to properly understand what James is saying

James 2 (Cont)

- **James 2:24-26** *“You see that a man is justified by works and not by faith alone...For as the body apart from the spirit is dead so faith apart from works is dead”*
 - Father pointed out that this is the only place in the Bible where “faith alone” appears
 - This explains why Luther did not like the **Letter of James**
 - Luther misread Paul and then he misread James who saying the exact opposite of what James was saying
 - Father pointed out that James was saying the opposite of what Paul was saying, and unfortunately, he was saying the opposite of what Luther thought Paul had said
 - These issues are explained in greater detail in Father’s Apologetics course

James 5

- **James 5:14-15** *“Is any among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church,...and if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven”*
 - James was telling the church to call on the elders when someone was sick so they might anoint him
 - This has always been understood to be a reference to the “sacrament of Anointing of the Sick”
 - The only other place this is mentioned is in **Mark 6:13** where Jesus sent his Apostles to preach to the people of Israel, and told them to anoint the sick to heal them
 - This practice has been in the church since the beginning