

**Universal Truth:
The Catholic Epistles of James, Peter, Jude & John
By Fr. Lawrence R. Farley
The St. Luke Bible Group
Summary of the Four
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Highlights of the Epistle of St. James

- **The Early Church was one of brotherhood: Submit to the same teaching was the cry from James. We are being tested for our belief.**
- **Persevere: Do not compromise to avoid suffering; God loves a pure heart.**
- **Do not blame God for suffering: He test no one; “All good giving and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights...” James 1:17**
- **“Be doers of the Word, and not hearers only, deluding yourselves.” James 1:22
....but a doer of the work, this one will be blessed in his doing.” James 25**
- **Religion pure and undefiled before God, even the Father, is this: TO visit orphans and widows in their tribulation and to keep oneself unstained from the world.” James 1:27**
- **Show NO partiality ANYONE or any group and especially the rich. James 2:8-10**
- **If we have True Liberty and show mercy, your judgment by the Savior at the Last Judgment will be good.**
- **Mankind is saved by Works and not Faith alone. James 2:17**
 - One’s inner faith is most important.**
 - St. Paul agrees in Ephesians 2:10 “created in Christ Jesus for good works.”**
 - We are not saved by good works but FOR GOOD WORKS!**
(See also Matthew 5, The Beatitudes & 25 on Judgment)
- **The famous quote of Maximos the Confessor (AD580-662) – “God searches our purpose ... he bestows blessings only when something is done for the right purpose. For God looks not at the actions, but at the purpose behind them.”**
- **Control of the tongue is pivotal for it can do much damage. James 3:5-10 and 5:12.**
- **Handout: “Perseverance and Godly Independence’ by Fr. Joseph Allen**

The example of Mother Theresa. What is your example?

Godly Independence – the lessons of Christ to bear fruit, do good works that glorifies God and remember the poor. Hospitality.

- **Confession** - “Confess your sins to one another and pray for one another that you may be cured.” James 5:16

Other references on confession: 2Peter3:9; 1John1:19; Matthew 10:23
1Timothy 5:12 and 1Corinthians 11:27-29.

Highlights of St. Peter’s Epistles

In his First Letter Peter encourages everyone to remember their baptism. In their suffering Christians must accept death in this life in order to grow in the life to come. We must accept the hardships of this life with a spirit of joy. Be patient in our suffering and be disciplined in the unity of the church. Christians of this era were ill-treated and forced to leave to the five provinces of Asia Minor.

The Second Letter is concerned with the church being infiltrated by Gnostic teaching – the teaching that faith alone saves without true repentance, works or even virtue. There was a denial of the Second Coming as a physical event and moral behavior is irrelevant to salvation. These false teachers were self-centered and greedy along with seeking sensual pleasure. Peter argues that the Second Coming is at hand and that morality is connected to salvation. Look what happened to disobedient angels, Noah’s contemporaries and Sodom & Gomorrah.

The First Epistle

“But you are a chosen race, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, and His own special people, that you may proclaim the praises of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light.” 1Peter2:9

- **Chosen:** Jews and Gentiles alike who are the true believers.
- **Royal Priesthood:** Set apart as community with access to His presence. Royal for we share in his kingdom and priesthood for we offer prayers to God. Royal by the sign of the cross and priest by the anointing of the Holy Spirit.
- **Holy Nation:** protected by God; His own valued treasure. Hosea 1:10 and 2:23 formed by people from every corner of the earth.
- **Abstain from fleshly desires; Have good conduct and by your good works muzzle the ignorance of senseless men. 2:12**
- **Christians accused of incest, murder and cannibalism.**
- **House-slaves submit to your masters when you suffer persevere to find grace with God. Isaiah 53:9**

- Consider yourselves aliens on earth occupying the middle ground between heavenly and earthly delights.

Example today: Consider today's plight in the light of St. Peter's teaching of the Coptic Christians of Egypt, and the Orthodox and Maronite Catholics in Palestine, Lebanon, Syria and Jordan under Muslim rule!

- **WIVES** submit to their husbands as co-equals. Christian wives are co-heirs to the same grace of eternal life as their husbands. 1Peter 3:7
- The proper beauty of a woman is not outward matter but a matter of the purity of the heart. Nothing wrong with fine clothing but dress should be modest.
- **Husbands** have duty to protect their wives. Bear patiently with wives so that their prayers may not be hindered.
- The end is drawing near. **Have fervent love for one another** for love covers a multitude of sins. **Be Hospitable to one another.**

Rejoicing in Persecution (1Peter 4:12-19)

- Share in Christ's suffering
- If you are reproached blamed for Christ, you are blessed!
- Do not be ashamed.
- Do good works in God's name.

Unity: Peter sees everyone on equal terms under Christ – presbyter/bishop and lay person.

“Remember those who rule over you, who have spoken the word of God to you, whose faith follow, considering the outcome of their conduct for Jesus is the same yesterday, today and tomorrow.” Hebrews 13:7-8

“The Five Elements of Godliness” by Fr. George Morelli, Ph.D

- Love Prayer Work Silence Hospitality

Second Peter

“knowing this first, that no prophecy of scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy never came by the will of man, but by holy men of God spoke as they were moved by the Holy Spirit.” 2Peter 1:20

- The Holy Transfiguration (Matthew 17) is a foretaste of the Second Coming.
- **Heresy:** False teachers love to twist the scriptures, interpreting according to their own ideas. 2Peter 3:16 & Jude 19. (False prophets too.)

- **Just because Christ has not returned does not mean he is slow about his promise. Rather he is patient, merciful and gives mankind time to repent and be saved. He will come as a “thief in the night” 2Peter 3:8-10**
- **At the Second Coming a new heaven and new earth will be put in place. Joy in a new age with righteousness! 2peter3:13**

St. Jude

- **Jude’s letter is against corrupters of the faith, those false teachers that Peter condemns.**
- **Do not be surprised by error in the Church because the apostles had predicted this too. See St. Paul’s exhortation Acts 20: 28-30 and 2Peter 3:3**

Solved by:

- **Maintaining the orthodox faith;**
- **Live a pure life ;**
- **Evangelizing others.**

Jude 17-23.

- **Jude refutes those who believe that the Son is inferior to the Father.**
- **According to the Venerable Bede: “While the Christian garment can get soiled, the cleansing of it cannot be done on our own strength but by the power of God.”**
- **Do you have an example of this in your life?**

Highlights of the Epistles of St. John

Again the church is faced with false teaching with a Gnostic bent. Gnostics were famous for using Christian words with redefined meanings. Christ’s spirit fled from him before his passion so that the human Jesus suffered and was buried. Therefore, Christ came by water not blood and sacrament, morality and suffering have no place in the true spiritual life. His suffering on the cross had no saving value. These Gnostics saw themselves as superior to the Apostles with special access to God and prophecy from the Holy Spirit. They fought against the incarnation of Christ and the Trinity.

John combat’s this false teaching claiming to be an eyewitness to the events of Christ’s passion and resurrection and asks them to confess Jesus as the true Christ, who came in the flesh and shed his blood to bring us back to the Father. (See John 21; 24 and 1John 1:103)

- **Written to the 7 churches of Asia under his authority as bishop.**
- **To be sure we know Him is to keep His Commandments.**
- **Hold to the orthodox belief that the Son of God had become incarnate.**
- **The Lord is our advocate – he intercedes with the Father for sins.**

- **When the advocate is the Holy Spirit it means he is a comforter. He provides comfort to our souls.**
- **The grace of the Lord is loaded with so love that he continually raises us again.**
- **The Bible does not say whoever is born of God will not sin. It says that we will not sin if we walk in the way of righteousness.**
- **To hate another is to murder oneself. Lay down your life for you brother or at least share your resources with him.**
- **It is not enough to have good words or intentions. You must put them into actions with a good heart. Thus we will be on the right track with HIM.**
- **Perfect Love: confess the incarnation of Christ and that God is love.**
- **The antichrist is someone who denies Christ as God taking on human flesh as a servant.**
- **John counters Gnostic teaching by his apostolic witness that Christ in his baptism and resurrection.**
- **The sin leading to sure death is the sin of schism or apostasy.**
- **To leave Christ and His Apostolic church is to leave God and the hope of eternal life.**

Second and Third John

- **The best defense against the heretics is truth and love of the incarnate God.**
- **True Christian leaders will adhere to the faith and respect those who passed it on to them.**
- **John notes again the importance of the incarnation and Christian love.**

+++++++The End+++++++