

**SAINT OF THE WEEK: The Holy Apostle James, the  
Brother of God**



The Holy Apostle James, is known as the Brother of God (Adelphotheos). He was the son of Righteous Joseph the Betrothed, the husband of Mary the Mother of God. According to holy tradition, Joseph had been married before his marriage to Mary and was a widower. James was his son from this previous marriage. As such, James was the older “step” brother of Jesus. From his youth, James was a pious young man, and when he came to maturity made a decision to enter the community of the Nazarenes, a somewhat monastic group that lived together in and followed a life of asceticism. The Nazarenes vowed to preserve their virginity, to abstain from wine, to refrain from eating meat, and not to cut their hair. The vow of the Nazarenes symbolized a life of holiness and purity, commanded formerly by the Lord for all Israel in the Old Testament. When the Savior began to teach the nation about the Kingdom of God, Saint James after a period of deliberation, believed Christ to be the promised Messiah and became His Apostle. He would later be chosen as the first Bishop of Jerusalem.

After Christ's Resurrection, Saint James presided over the Apostolic Council of Jerusalem reported in the Book of Acts Chapter 15 and his word was decisive (Acts 15). In his thirty years as bishop, Saint James converted many of the Jews to Christianity. Annoyed by this, the Pharisees and the Scribes plotted together to kill Saint James. They led the saint up on the pinnacle of the Jerusalem Temple and asked what he thought of Jesus. The holy Apostle began to bear witness that Christ is the Messiah, which was not the response the Pharisees were expecting. Greatly angered, the Jewish teachers threw him off the roof. The saint did not die immediately, but gathering his final strength, he prayed to the Lord for his enemies while they were stoning him. Saint James' martyrdom occurred about 63 A.D.

The Holy Apostle James is credited with compiling the first edition of the Divine Liturgy which was later edited by St. Basil the Great and again by St. John Chrysostom. His Liturgy is still celebrated by many Orthodox churches once a year on the day of his commemoration. The Church has preserved a General Epistle of Saint James in the canon of the New Testament.

His commemoration is celebrated on 23 October/05 November and also, along with St. Joseph the Betrothed, on the Sunday

following Christmas. It is important to understand that the Church distinguishes between the Holy Apostle James the Brother of God, and Saint James the son of Zebedee (April 30) and Saint James the son of Alphaeus (October 9), who were also Apostles of the Lord.

**Troparion — Tone 4**

As the Lord's disciple, you received the Gospel, O righteous James; / as a martyr, you have unflinching courage; / as God's brother, you have boldness; / as a hierarch, you have the power to intercede. / Pray to Christ God that our souls may be saved.

**Kontakion — Tone 4**

When God the Word, the Only-begotten of the Father, / came to live among us in these last days, / He declared you, venerable James, to be the first shepherd and teacher of Jerusalem / and a faithful steward of the spiritual Mysteries. / Therefore, we all honor you, O Apostle.