



Balta Lelija

3. January 2026

EPISTLE OF JAMES

"The Meaning and Essence of Temptation"

With the start of the new year, I would like to begin systematically meditating on a book of the Holy Scriptures again. This time, I have chosen the Epistle of James. As always, we will include links at the end of each text for those who would prefer to listen to a meditation on the reading or gospel of the day.

Jas 1:2-18

Count it all joy, my brethren, when you meet various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces steadfastness. And let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing. If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives to all men generously and without reproaching, and it will be given him. But let him ask in faith, with no doubting, for he who doubts is like a wave of the sea that is driven and tossed by the wind. For that person must not suppose that a double-minded man, unstable in all his ways, will receive anything from the Lord. Let the lowly brother boast in his exaltation, and the rich in his humiliation, because like the flower of the grass he will pass away. For the sun rises with its scorching heat and withers the grass; its flower falls, and its beauty perishes. So will the rich man fade away in the midst of his pursuits. Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him. Let no one say when he is tempted, "I am tempted by God"; for God cannot be tempted with evil and he himself tempts no one; but each person is tempted when he is lured and enticed by his own desire. Then desire when it has conceived gives birth to sin; and sin when it is full-grown brings forth death. Do not be deceived, my beloved brethren. Every good endowment and every perfect gift is from above, coming down from the Father of lights with whom there is no variation or shadow due to change. Of his own will he brought us forth by the word of truth that we should be a kind of first fruits of his creatures.

The Apostle James briefly addresses a topic that may initially seem painful to us. We may be surprised that the Epistle speaks of the great joy we should experience when we are surrounded by temptations, which undoubtedly can harass and overwhelm us. Clearly, this cannot be natural joy because who rejoices in being tempted? We often have to use all our strength to resist them. Some temptations are difficult to identify,

and others have become a heavy burden due to habit, forcing us to carry them to confession repeatedly.

However, in making this statement, the Apostle James focuses on the fruit that is obtained by fighting against temptations. Therefore, he lifts our gaze to the Lord, who allows us to be tested. Our Heavenly Father, who always has the salvation of His own in mind, wants to strengthen us by fighting against temptations. James specifically refers to the patience acquired in this struggle and considers temptations tests that God allows for our spiritual growth. It should be added that we can earn merits by resisting.

Indeed, every temptation we reject strengthens us and weakens the evil powers that tempt us and seek to exploit our weaknesses. From this perspective, we can understand why we should rejoice when we are tempted. Ultimately, it is joy in God, who uses them to form us and who, in a way, shows His trust in us by allowing us to be tested. Therefore, we should consider them as challenges to be overcome.

Having a clear understanding of the meaning of temptation is important because it helps us escape the captivity they want to keep us in. We can hold onto God's hand, who is always there for us, even in the darkness of temptation. According to the Lord's plan, our persevering resistance cooperates in our sanctification, as today's passage emphasizes: *"let steadfastness have its full effect, that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing."*

Further on, he states: *"Blessed is the man who endures trial, for when he has stood the test he will receive the crown of life which God has promised to those who love him."*

The Apostle James also makes it clear that God does not tempt us. In this context, we are talking about God's passive will, or what He allows to happen. Temptations come from ourselves, that is, from the seduction of our disordered and unbridled passions. Therefore, whatever they may be, we must master them and not give them free rein. James describes what happens when they are not restrained: lust gives birth to sin, and sin begets death.

Thus, we are urged to be very vigilant in resisting temptations from the moment they begin to seduce us through prayer and invoking the name of the Lord. The sooner we offer resistance, the easier it will be to emerge victorious in this battle with the Lord's help. Additionally, vigilance should teach us to identify our weak points so that we can protect them through prayer. We must not expose ourselves to situations that could lead us into sin, but consciously avoid them.

NOTE: I have just written a new reflection on the Antichrist entitled 'Will we identify the son of perdition?' I highly recommend it! You can find it at the following link: <https://en.elijamission.net/blog-post/will-we-identify-the-son-of-perdition/>

Meditation on the day's reading: <https://en.elijamission.net/true-justice-2/>

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/this-is-the-son-of-god/>