

## ST. JAMES BISHOP OF NISIBIS



We don't know the exact date of the birth and death of St. James of Medzpin. We can only say that he is a man of the 4th century, for he lived and labored until 340s A.D.

His life and figure emerged in the distance of past centuries and has some legendary qualities. He was educated during his childhood with St. Gregory the Enlightener, in Caesarea (of Cappadocia), the famous educational center of Asia Minor. Caesarea is adjacent to Armenia and is known as the Lesser Armenia (Pokr Hayk).

St. James of Medzpin was consecrated Bishop for the See of Medzpin of Mesopotamia by Melidios, Archbishop of Antioch.

He became famous for his most virtuous and pious life and ascetism. He won fame and popularity especially for his "wonder-working" power, for which he is sometimes called "skanchelakordz" which means simply, "wonder-worker".

The most beautiful story linked with his name is the famous tradition of his climbing Mt. Ararat in search of Noah's Ark. He is known as the first man who ever tried to climb Mt. Ararat to quench this strange but devout desire. According to the story, St. James of Medzpin, despite his old age he set out to climb the huge mountain. On the way, becoming very tired, he stopped to rest and fell asleep. In his sleep an angel approached him and told him that he was too old a man and that it would be humanly impossible for him to climb all the way to the top; but to satisfy his desire and deep faith the angel gave a piece of Noah's Ark, saying to him, "Take this and satisfy your desire." St. James, being content with this piece from Noah's Ark, returned to his home.

The feast day of St. James of Medzpin is celebrated in conjunction with two other Saints, the Hermit Maroukeh (from the Church of Mesopotamia), and Commander George from the Church of Nicomedia. Their combined feast day is celebrated immediately prior to the Christmas season in the middle of December. The feast of St. James of Medzpin signifies the name day of those Churches that are named after him, and it becomes a joyful occasion for the name day celebration of the Churches as well as for those whose names are Hagop (Jacob or James).

As an additional note, it is worth mentioning that according to the traditional belief, this piece of Noah's Ark is in our Holy See of Etchmiadzin.

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