Holy Monday Bridegroom Matins
Parables about the Rejection of the Son of God

Revision B

Gospel: Matthew 21:18-43

The Study for Holy Week picks up right after the Lord's entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday. At this point, the Jewish leaders had rejected Jesus, and they were plotting His death. During Holy Week, the Lord puts the Jewish leaders on notice that He is going to reject them in a most dramatic way. Their attitude is one of indifference; what can this one man do to them? They just have no clue regarding Who it is that they're dealing with.

Most of the Twelve aren't all that much better off. They understood Jesus as the Messiah and as a prophet. Even after the Resurrection, they asked Him if He would restore the Kingdom to Israel at this time (Acts 1:6). In fact, He was about to do the opposite; take the Kingdom away from Israel and give it to the Gentiles, where the Twelve would be the new government of this Kingdom.

The Readings for Holy Week switch back and forth between glimpses of Jesus' humility in His humanity, and His exalted Majesty in His Deity. This is intentional in that it is the same person of the Son of God that is the focus of the Readings. As we work our way through these Readings, we come away with a much deeper appreciation of what the Lord did at His passion.

The Cleansing of the Temple

As Jesus drew near to Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He began to weep over the city, saying, "If only you had known the things that make for your peace!" He continued to say that, "because you did not know the time of your visitation", that the days will come when your enemies will level you to the ground (Luke 19:41-44).

Arriving in Jerusalem, Jesus went straight to the Temple and drove out the moneychangers and those who sold doves saying, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations! But you have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:15-17). These people were there at the Temple because of the Lord's command for all Jewish men to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:16-17). The pilgrims were to bring their tithes with them and rejoice before the Lord with their household. If they came from a great distance and couldn't bring the tithe of their livestock, they were to convert it to money before they came and spend the money in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 14:22-27). The moneychangers served as the foreign currency exchange for all the people from distant countries. But it was more than just that. Foreign money could not be used to buy any animal sacrifices; one had to use the shekel of the sanctuary (Leviticus 5:15). In addition, there was the "temple tax" (Exodus 30:11-16) that Jesus paid even though He didn't have to (Matthew 17:24-27). This "temple tax" was required from foreigners - payable in shekels of the sanctuary - before they could bring any offering forward. And the moneychangers could charge anything they saw proper to perform this "service".

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The Mosaic Law, however, strictly forbade making profits off people trying to be godly. For example, the Mosaic Law specified that if a citizen of Israel or a foreign visitor were to become poor, he was to be supported and no interest charged (Leviticus 25:35-37). This became a big issue during Nehemiah's time and Nehemiah extracted an oath from the priests that they would refrain from any interest or markup charged against their brothers during a famine (Nehemiah 5:1-13). Following the cleansing of the temple (where Jesus would not allow any vendors to hawk their wares in the temple, Mark 11:16), Jesus left the city for the night to frustrate nighttime assassination attempts by the scribes and chief priests (Mark 11:18-19).

This was actually the second time that Jesus drove the moneychangers out of the Temple. He had done it once before at the beginning of His public ministry (John 2:13-17).

Jesus Curses the Barren Fig Tree

Following the driving out of the moneychangers, Jesus returned to Jerusalem from Bethany the next morning. He was hungry and looked for some figs on a fig tree. Many fig

trees have two crops, one in the spring and another in the fall. This occurred in the early spring when it was likely that there might be some unripe figs present, but "it was not yet the season for figs" (Mark 11:13). Finding nothing but leaves, the Lord said, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (Mark 11:12-14). The next day as they passed the same fig tree, they saw it withered up from the roots. Peter was stunned, and remarked, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that You cursed has withered away!" (Mark 11:20-22).

John Chrysostom addressed[1] why Jesus cursed the fig tree for being fruitless when figs were not yet in season. At this point, Jesus had healed multitudes, but He had punished no one. And now He was going to be crucified in a few days. Chrysostom stated:

> "He needed to show His disciples demonstrative proof of His power to take vengeance also, that both the disciples might learn that, although He was able to blast them that crucified Him, of His own will He submitted, and did not".
>
> "He went to the fig tree, not so much for hunger, but for His disciples' sake, who indeed marveled exceedingly, although many greater miracles had been done. But this was strange, now for the first time He showed forth His power to take vengeance. Wherefore not in any other plant, but in the moistest of all planted things[2] did He work the miracle, so that hence also the miracle appeared greater".
>
> "And that you might learn, that for their sakes this was done, that He might train them to feel confidence, hear what He said afterwards. 'Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive'" (Matthew 21:21-22).
>
> "Do you see that all is done for their sake, so that they might not be afraid and tremble at plots against them? Wherefore He repeated this a second time also (Mark 11:23-24), to make them cleave to prayer and faith".

Theophylact, writing in the 11th Century, interpreted[3] the lesson of the fig tree as follows: "This fig tree is a symbol of that assembly of the Jews which had only leaves; that is, which had the Law which gave only shade to them, but which bore no fruit. Jesus hungered for their salvation, for He said, 'My food is to do the Will of My Father' (John 4:34). It is the Will of God that sinners turn back and repent. Therefore since this assembly did not bear the fruit of repentance, God's blessing was withheld and it withered, for thereafter the unrepentant Jews had neither prophet nor teacher".

Jesus Confronted: The Baptism of John

After cursing the fig tree, Jesus entered the Temple and was confronted by the chief priests and the elders. They demanded to know by what authority He did what He did, such as the cleansing of the Temple yesterday, but also regarding all His teaching. Jesus had already told them the answer to that question, and they wouldn't receive it, nor would they receive it now.

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[1] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 1-2.

[2] See also Theophylact, "The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark", Chapter 11.

[3] Theophylact, "The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark", Chapter 11, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 63051, 1997, p. 97.

> "So Jesus answered and said to them, 'I also will ask you one thing, which if you tell Me, I likewise will tell you by what authority I do these things. The baptism of John -- where was it from? From heaven or from men?' And they reasoned among themselves, saying, 'If we say, 'From heaven,' He will say to us, 'Why then did you not believe him?' But if we say, 'From men,' we fear the multitude, for all count John as a prophet'. So they answered Jesus and said, 'We do not know'. And He said to them, 'Neither will I tell you by what authority I do these things'" (Matthew 21:24-27).

It is important to understand what the perception of John was at this time. John the Baptist and his cousin, Jesus, most likely had loud voices that carried well outdoors. Not everyone can speak to 5,000 men plus women and children outdoors and still be heard over the disruptive noise of squirming children as Jesus did (Matthew 14:13-21). John had probably a similar kind of "presence" when he spoke. John was so influential that everyone from Judea went out to be baptized by him (Matthew 3:5).

John was also very outspoken. To call the religious leaders of his day a bunch of snakes and tell them they were going to hell took courage (Matthew 3:7-12, Luke 3:7-9). John did not confine his outspokenness to religious leaders. He also publicly criticized Herod the Tetrarch (the son of his father's murderer) for the incest of marrying his brother Philip's wife Herodias (Matthew 14:3-4). According to tradition, after he was beheaded, John then continued his announcement of the coming of Messiah to souls in Hades, and John is considered a forerunner there as well as on earth. This is important to Holy Week, since Christ will be coming to Hades following the Crucifixion, where He will lead captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8-10, 1 Peter 3:18-20).

To the people of his day, John was considered to be a prophet, and one of the greatest of the prophets. Not only did the people consider John to be a prophet, but also this belief was so strongly held that they would have stoned their religious leaders for blasphemy if they denied it. After all, these people were the same ones that had come out to be baptized by John.

Jesus confirmed what the people felt. He stated flatly that John the Baptist was the greatest of the prophets (Luke 7:24-28, Matthew 11:8-14). Yet Jesus went on to say that the least in the kingdom of God is greater than John (Luke 7:28). John was filled with the Holy Spirit from his mother's womb (Luke 1:15). But the least in the kingdom of God has a body that is the Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) and united in one new man with the risen Christ (Ephesians 2:15-21). This was not possible under the Old Covenant; God provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us (Hebrews 11:40).

This entire exchange indicates the hardness of heart among the Jewish leaders. They knew that John was a prophet and his baptism was from heaven. They even sought to be baptized by John (Matthew 3:7-12) but John refused to baptize them because they rejected the will of God for themselves (Luke 7:30).

The Parable of the Two Sons in the Vineyard

After the confrontation in the Temple, Jesus directed two parables at the Jewish leaders, the parable of the two sons in the vineyard, and the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants. Both were directed at them, where Jesus gave the Jewish leaders the opportunity to pronounce their own judgment. This was similar to what happened to King David after his murder of Uriah and subsequent marriage to Bathsheba, Uriah's wife. The Lord sent the Prophet Nathan to David with an opportunity to pronounce his own judgment (2 Samuel 11:14-12:10). For David, this ushered in a time of profound repentance, which we commemorate in Psalm 51 during Matins; for the Jewish leaders, it was a time of further blindness and hardening of heart.

The Lord phrased it like this: "But what do you think? A man had two sons, and he came to the first and said, 'Son, go, work today in my vineyard'. He answered and said, 'I will not', but afterward he regretted it and went. Then he came to the second and said likewise. And he answered and said, 'I *go*, sir', but he did not go. Which of the two did the will of *his* father?" They said to Him, 'The first'. Jesus said to them, "Assuredly, I say to you that tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you". For John (the Baptist) came to you in the way of righteousness, and you did not believe him; but tax collectors and harlots believed him; and when you saw *it*, you did not afterward relent and believe him" (Matthew 21:28-32).

This incident was rather personal to the author, Matthew, since he was one of the tax collectors that had entered the kingdom of God.

John Chrysostom explains[4] it thus: John the Baptist came to them and they did not accept him. He did not come to the tax collectors and harlots, but they received him. Even after this, the Jewish leaders did not become jealous and enter in. Thus the Lord said, "The first shall be last and the last first" (Matthew 19:30). Chrysostom's words are:

> "Again He convicts them by a parable, intimating both their unreasonable obstinacy, and the submissiveness of those who were utterly condemned by them. For these two children in the parable declare what came to pass with respect to both the Gentiles and the Jews. For the former, neither undertaking to obey, or becoming hearers of the law, showed forth their obedience in their works. And the latter having said, 'All that the Lord shall speak, we will do, and will hearken' (Exodus 19:8), in their works were disobedient. And for this reason, let me add, that they might not think the law would benefit them, He shows that this self-same thing condemns them, as Paul also said, 'Not the hearers of the law are just before God, but the doers of the law shall be justified' (Romans 2:13). For this intent, that He might make them self-condemned, He causes the judgment to be delivered by themselves".

In the parable of the two sons in the vineyard, the issue is what do we do about our human will. Do we conform our human will to the Will of God as Jesus did in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:39-42; Mark 14:36; Luke 22:42)? He did not seek His own (human) will, but the Will of the Father Who sent Him (John 5:30, 6:38, 4:34; Hebrews 10:7-9). By conforming our will to the Will of God, we will be illumined about the things of God (John 7:17). Thus it matters what we will to do regarding the Will of God.

[4] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 2.

The Parable of the Vineyard Tenants

The imagery of the vineyard was carried over into the second parable also; where the vineyard represents the entire Old Covenant relationship of Israel to the Lord. Isaiah used a very similar parable (Isaiah 5:1-7) where "the vineyard of the Lord of Hosts is the house of Israel" (Isaiah 5:7). John the Baptist was one of the messengers the Lord sent to His vineyard. In iconography, John is depicted having wings like an angel since the word "angel" means messenger (Malachi 3:1).

In the second parable Jesus told about a certain landowner, who planted a vineyard, set a hedge around it, dug a winepress in it and built a tower. Recent excavations[5] have shown that the purpose of the tower was similar to that of a wine cellar today for aging wine. The expectation, then, was quality wine! He then leased it to vinedressers and went to a far country. At various times He sent His servants to receive fruit from it but the vinedressers beat, killed and stoned them. Finally, He sent His Son saying, "They will respect My Son." But the vine dressers said, "This is the Heir, let us kill Him and seize His inheritance"; and they did so (Matthew 21:33-39).

Jesus then asked them what the owner of the vineyard will do to the vinedressers when He comes. They replied, "He will destroy those wicked men miserably and lease His vineyard to other vinedressers who will render to Him the fruits in their seasons" (Matthew 21:40-41).

Taking them at their own words, just as the Prophet Nathan had done with King David (2 Samuel 12:1-10; compare Luke 19:22), the Lord said, "Have you never read in the Scriptures: "The stone which the builders rejected has become the chief cornerstone. This was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:22, 23; compare Isaiah 28:16). He continued, "The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it." "And whoever falls on this (corner) stone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (vv.42-44).

At this, they tried to lay hands on Jesus, but couldn't do it publicly because the crowds regarded Jesus as a Prophet (Matthew 21:46). Two days later on Holy Thursday, they were able to lay hands on Him at night, thanks to Judas' betrayal (Matthew 26:47ff).

In this parable there is some important imagery that applies to us today. The vineyard is the Kingdom of God on earth, and the vinedressers then were the chief priests and the elders. Jesus said, "The Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43). The Church is now that nation as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16) and has been given the keys to the Kingdom of Heaven (Matthew 16:19, 18:18).

The hedge around the vineyard was the Mosaic Law, which tended to keep outsiders out and the faithful in. The fruit produced by the vineyard, in the words of John Chrysostom[6] was "their obedience, the proof of it by their works". To this end the vineyard had a winepress (Matthew 21:33) to help extract the maximum from the fruit and a tower as a beacon to the world (Exodus 19:5-6; Deuteronomy 28:1, 28:12; Isaiah 42:6).

[5] Walsh, Carey, "God's Vineyard" Bible Review, Aug. 1998, pg. 43-49.
[6] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 2.

John Chrysostom comments[7] on this parable as follows:

> "He left little for them to do but to take care of what was there and to preserve what was given to them. For when they came forth out of Egypt, He gave a Law, and set up a city, and built a Temple and prepared an altar. By His going into a far country, He means His great long-suffering and not always bringing the punishments close upon their sins".
>
> The servants He sent to receive the fruits were the prophets. "But they even here showed their wickedness, not only failing to give the fruit, after having enjoyed so much care, but also by showing anger towards them that came. They not only were angry for no reason, but even filled their hands with blood; and while deserving punishment, themselves inflicted punishment (compare Matthew 23:37). Therefore He sent both a second and a third company both that the wickedness of these might be shown, and the love towards man of Him who sent them".

Today we have a similar situation, where the priests and bishops have taken the place of the prophets as the Lord's servants sent to receive the fruit of the vineyard. How many times do they urge us to forgive one another, to embrace and to be reconciled within the Body of Christ (the vineyard), but we refuse. In the Lord's eyes, refusal to reconcile and forgive is as bad as murder (Matthew 5:21-26).

Finally, the landowner sent His son, saying, "They will respect My Son" (v.37). Why should He say this after such a long history of abusing the prophets? Chrysostom's comments[8] are (1) that this is what they ought to have done, (2) that this is another extension of the Lord's long-suffering, and (3) that they might fill up the measure of their fathers' guilt (Matthew 23:29-32) and be without excuse (compare Isaiah 1:15, Hosea 4:2, Micah 3:10). To this one might add in all the incredible miracles Jesus performed. Certainly this should have generated considerable respect.

The inheritance that the vinedressers – and the chief priests – wanted to seize was control of the Kingdom of God on earth. This was why Satan was so eager to crucify the Son of God (1 Corinthians 2:7-8) and why he was willing to trade all the kingdoms of the world for it (Matthew 4:8-10).

As to what the landowner will do to the wicked vinedressers, the chief priests' reply was prophetic. They themselves are now in hell (Matthew 23:34-36) and the vineyard has been leased to other vinedressers who are expected to render to Him the fruits in their seasons (Matthew 21:41-43). The fruits vary from season to season: sometimes fasting and repentance, other times feasting and thanksgiving. If we, like them, refuse to render to Him the fruit He expects, He may lease the vineyard to others also. Paul uses a similar analogy: the grafting of the Gentiles as branches into a cultivated olive tree and cutting off the natural branches. "Do not be haughty, but fear. For if God did not spare the natural branches, He may not spare you either" (Romans 11:16-26).

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[7] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 1.
[8] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 1.

The chief priests realized the impact of what Jesus was saying; that is, the Kingdom of God will be given to others. Luke records their reaction as "May it never be!" (Luke 20:16). But the Lord spoke about the Stone which the builders (the chief priests) rejected becoming the chief cornerstone and how "this was the Lord's doing and it is marvelous in our eyes" (Psalm 118:23, Matthew 21:42). This Psalm was also quoted by the Apostle Peter in testifying before the Sanhedrin a few months later (Acts 4:8-12) and by Peter in his first Epistle (1 Peter 2:6-8; see also Ephesians 2:20).

Jesus concluded the parable by combining some prophecies about Himself. He said, "Whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44). The falling and being broken is explained by Isaiah as Israel stumbling over the stone (Isaiah 8:14-15; quoted in 1 Peter 2:8). Chrysostom says[9] this stumbling includes being offended by the stone. If, due to the hardness of our heart, we stumble over what Christ says, we will be broken, not Him. Christ will prevail!

The grinding to powder is a reference to Daniel's prophecy about the stone that was cut out of the mountain without hands (Daniel 2:31-45). This stone promptly crushed all the great kingdoms of the world until no trace was found of them and the wind carried them away (like dust blows away). Daniel's prophecy refers especially to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and is also applicable to the end of the age.

Impact on the Destruction of Israel

The disciples had watched and heard the Lord but yet they had not understood fully the rejection of Israel. The Jews, who had rejected their Messiah, now were being rejected by Christ. Jesus had made his triumphal entry into the city, cleansed the Temple and left. He returned the next morning, cursed the barren fig tree, was confronted by the Jewish leaders who challenged his authority, and responded with some of his most pointed parables and declarations (cf. Matthew 21-23); culminating in the awful pronouncement:

> "And so, on you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar. Assuredly, I say to you, all these things will come upon this generation" (Matthew 23:35-36).

To understand the thrust of Jesus' action recorded in Matthew we need to remember His previous parable in Luke and the preaching of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:8-10).

> "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard; and he came looking for fruit on it, and he found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look for three years I have come looking for fruit on this tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Lord, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it; and if it bears fruit, fine. But if not, after that you can cut it down'" (Luke 13:6-9).

Jesus, the Lord of the Vineyard, spent three years of His ministry traveling through Israel seeking fruit. Now it was time to cut it down. John the Baptist had warned the Jews that the vineyard of Israel was running out of time:

[9] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 2.

> "Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance. And do not think to say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father,' for I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones. And even now the ax is laid to the root of the trees. Therefore every tree which does not bear fruit is cut down and thrown into the fire" (Matthew 3:8-10).

In this context Jesus makes His declaration of judgment, excommunication and destruction. The generation that crucified the Lord and persecuted His apostles was truly the "terminal generation". This was a final warning. Israel, as the Covenant People, was to be destroyed, finally and irrevocably. Years later, shortly before the holocaust of AD 70 descended on Israel, the Apostle Paul wrote:

> "The Jews killed both the Lord and their own prophets, and have persecuted us. They do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins; but wrath has come upon them to the[10] uttermost" (1 Thessalonians 2:14-16).

The multitudes that welcomed Jesus into Jerusalem with hosannas were screaming for His blood in less than a week. Jesus portrayed their attitude in one of His parables: "We will not have this man to reign over us!" (Luke 19:14). The chief priests revealed the faith of the nation when they vehemently denied the Lordship of Christ and affirmed, "We have no king but Caesar!" (John 19:15). And finally the chilling cry of a sin-blinded people: "His blood be on us and our children!" (Matthew 27:25).

Because Israel had committed the supreme act of covenant-breaking when she rejected Christ, God rejected Israel herself. The covenant people inherited the covenant curse.

> "And it shall come about that as the Lord delighted over you to prosper you, and to multiply you, so the Lord will delight over you to make you perish and to destroy you" (Deuteronomy 28:63-67).

The awful curses pronounced by Moses, the prophets, and Jesus were fulfilled in the terrible destruction of Jerusalem, with the desolation of the Temple and the obliteration of the covenant nation in AD 70. Athanasius observed[11] concerning Israel's response to Christ's coming:

> "He was like those sent by the householder to receive the fruits of the vineyard from the husbandmen; for he exhorted all men to render a return. But Israel despised Him and would not give, for their will was not right; moreover they killed those that were sent; not even before the Lord of the vineyard were they ashamed, but even He was slain by them. Therefore when He came and found no fruit in them, He cursed them through the fig tree, saying, 'Let there henceforth be no fruit from you' (Matthew 21:19); and the fig-tree was dead and fruitless, so that even the disciples wondered when it withered away".
>
> "Then that which was spoken by the prophet was fulfilled. 'I will take away from them the voice of joy and the voice of gladness, the voice of the bridegroom and the voice of the bride, the scent of myrrh, and the light of a lamp,

[10] ***eis telos***, to the end, forever
[11] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VI, 5-6.

and the whole land shall be destroyed' (Jeremiah 25:10). For the whole service of the Law has been abolished from them, and henceforth and forever they remain without a feast".

Parables From the Old Testament: Ezekiel 1:1-20 "The Four Living Creatures"

This Reading is used for Sixth Hour Prayers for Holy Monday, and it describes the Four Living Creatures who surround the Throne of God. While the heavenly creatures may be very impressive in all their activity as they serve the Lord, they are not God. They surround the Throne of God, but it is the Son of God Who is seated on the Throne. This is relevant to Holy Week because it is this same Son of God who is being rejected by His chosen people. His chosen people just have no clue Who it is that they're dealing with. In Ezekiel's vision of the Throne of God, he was not seeing the true essence of God, but something tailored to the weakness of his human body. The Son of God, however, is the true essence of God with the Father and the Holy Spirit, and in His humanity, He is being rejected and crucified by His people.

These Four Living Creatures who surround the Throne of God are called the Cherubim (Ezekiel 10:1-3). Some of their characteristics from Ezekiel 1 are:

- They have human form, including legs and hands.
- Each had four faces and four wings.
- The four faces resemble a man, a lion, a bull and an eagle.
- Their feet were like a calf's hoofs.
- As they moved, two wings touched another's wings and two covered their bodies.
- They never turned their faces as they moved.
- Beside them were wheels within wheels, full of eyes.
- Within the wheels were fire and lightning flashes.
- The spirit of the four living creatures was in the wheels.

The Apostle John also had a vision of the Cherubim that surround the Throne of God. He described them as having an appearance very similar to what Ezekiel described, and he also mentioned that they do not rest day or night (Revelation 4:6-9), continually addressing the Son of God and saying:

Holy, Holy, Holy
Lord God Almighty
Who was and is and is to come.

Daniel the Prophet had a vision of the Throne of God in the last days when judgment is to occur:

"I beheld until the thrones were set, and the Ancient of days sat; and his raiment was white as snow, and the hair of his head, as pure wool: his throne was a flame of fire, *and* his wheels burning fire. A river of fire rushed forth before him: thousand thousands ministered to him, and ten thousands of myriads, attended upon him: the judgment sat, and the books were opened" (Daniel 7:9-10 LXX).

Gregory of Nazianzen stated[12] that when Isaiah and Ezekiel "saw God", it was not the essence of God that they saw. It was some other form, because "no man can see God and live" (Exodus 33:20).

> "Isaiah was an eyewitness of very great mysteries; for he saw the Lord of Sabaoth sitting on the Throne of glory, and encircled and praised and hidden by the six winged Seraphim, and was himself purged by the live coal, and equipped for his prophetic office (Isaih 6:1-10). Ezekiel described the Cherubic Chariot of God, and the Throne upon them, and the Firmament over it, and Him that showed Himself in the Firmament, and Voices, and Forces, and Deeds (Ezekiel 1:4-28). Perhaps this was an appearance by day, only visible to Saints, or an unerring vision of the night, or an impression on the mind, holding converse with the future as if it were the present. Perhaps it was some other ineffable form of prophecy, I cannot say; the God of the Prophets knows, and they know who are thus inspired. But neither these of whom I am speaking, nor any of their fellows ever stood before the Essence of God or saw the Nature of God".

Irenaeus stated[13] that when the prophets saw their various visions of God and the Throne of God, they did not actually see God Himself, but the likeness of God. On the other hand, Christ came to declare the Father (John 1:18), and he who has seen Christ has seen the Father (John 14:9).

> "The prophets saw the dispensations of God in part, but not actually God Himself. For Ezekiel saw the vision of God, and the cherubim, and their wheels, and he recounted the mystery of the whole of that progression. He beheld the likeness of a throne above them, and upon the throne a likeness as of the figure of a man, and the things which were upon his loins as the figure of amber, and what was below like the sight of fire. He set forth all the rest of the vision of the thrones, but lest any one might happen to think that in those visions he had actually seen God, he added, 'This was *the appearance of the likeness* of the glory of God'" (*italics mine*).
>
> "Then neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Ezekiel, who all had many celestial visions, saw God; but what they saw were similitudes of the splendor of the Lord, and prophecies of things to come. It is manifest that the Father is indeed invisible, of whom also the Lord said, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18, 14:9, 1 Timothy 6:16). But His Word, as He Himself willed it, and for the benefit of those who beheld, did show the Father's brightness, and explained His purposes. The Lord said, 'The only-begotten God, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (John 1:18)".

Ambrose of Milan, commenting[14] on Isaiah and Ezekiel's visions of the Lord (Isaiah 6:1-10, Ezekiel 1, 10), stated that the wheel within a wheel represents life under the Law, which is included in grace, since the Old Testament saints are included in the Church. It is a mystery of spiritual wisdom how God can be eternally at rest, even though times and seasons fly past.

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[12] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 28, The Second Theological Oration, XIX.
[13] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xx, 10-11.
[14] Ambrose, On the Holy Spirit, III, xxi, 161-164.

"But as the prophet saw a wheel running within a wheel, which certainly does not refer to any appearance to the bodily sight, but to the grace of each Testament. For the life of the saints is polished, and so is consistent with itself such that later portions agree with the former. The wheel, then, within a wheel is life under the Law, life under grace; inasmuch as Jews are within the Church, the Law is included in grace. For he is within the Church who is a Jew secretly; and circumcision of the heart (Deuteronomy 10:16) is a sacrament within the Church. But that Jewry is within the Church of which it is written, 'In Jewry is God known' (Psalm 76:1); therefore as wheel runs within wheel, so in like manner the wings were still, and the wings were flying".

"In like manner, too, the Seraphim were veiling their faces with two wings, and with two were veiling their feet, and with two were flying. For here also is a mystery of spiritual wisdom. Seasons stand, seasons fly; the past stands, the future is flying, and like the wings of the Seraphim, so they veil the face or the feet of God. In God, Who has neither beginning nor end, the whole course of times and seasons are at rest, from this knowledge of its beginning and its end. So, then, times past and future stand, the present flies. Ask not after the secrets of His beginning or His end, for there is neither. You have the present, but you must praise Him, not question Him".

"The Seraphim with unwearied voices praise God, and do men question Him? And certainly when they do this they show us that we must not sometimes question God, but always praise Him".

John Chrysostom stated[15] that we must listen carefully and attentively to statements in the Scriptures describing God, to avoid misinterpreting references to His humanity as references to His Deity. David and the sons of Korah titled some of their Psalms "For Contemplation" (Psalm 32, 42) and Solomon urges "seeking out Wisdom as silver and as hidden treasure" (Proverbs 2:2-4, 3:13-15). As we contemplate Him, we will come to understand that only the Son beholds the Essence of God, and it is the Son who reveals God to mankind.

"For if anyone listens to what is said in the Scriptures without inquiring into the meaning, he will suppose many unseemly things of God. He may think that He is a man, that He is made of brass, is wrathful, is furious, and many opinions yet worse than these (Revelation 1:15). He may think that God has a bosom (John 1:18), a thing proper to bodily substances, yet no one is so insane as to imagine, that He who is without body is a body. In order then that we may properly interpret these passages according to its spiritual meaning, let us search it through from its beginning".

"Christ said, 'No man has seen God at any time'. What then shall we answer to Isaiah, when he says, 'I saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up' (Isaiah 6:1); and to John testifying of Isaiah, that 'he said these things when he had seen His glory?' (John 12:41)

Ezekiel too beheld Him sitting above the Cherubim (Ezekiel 1 and 10). Daniel said, 'The Ancient of days did sit' (Daniel 7:9). Moses himself said, 'Show me Your Glory, that I may see You so as to know You' (Exodus 33:18, 13). Jacob took his name from this very thing, being called "Israel"; for Israel is 'one that sees God' (Genesis 32:26-30). How then does John say, 'No man has

[15] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XV, 1.

seen God at any time?' (John 1:18) It is to declare that all these were instances of His condescension, not the vision of the Essence itself unveiled. For had they seen the very Nature, they would not have beheld It under different forms. It does not sit, or stand, or walk; these things all belong to bodies. How He is, only He knows. And this He declared, saying, 'I have multiplied visions, and used similitudes by the hands of the prophets' (Hosea 12:10); that is, 'I have condescended, I have not appeared as I really was'".

"For since His Son was about to appear in the flesh, He prepared them from old time to behold the substance of God, as far as it was possible for them to see It. But what God really is, not only haven't the prophets seen, but not even angels or archangels. If you ask them, you shall not hear them answering anything concerning His Essence, but sending up, 'Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good will towards men' (Luke 2:14). If you desire to learn something from the Cherubim or Seraphim, you shall hear the mystic song of His Holiness, and that 'heaven and earth are full of His glory' (Isaiah 6:3). If you inquire of the higher powers, you shall but find that their one work is the praise of God. 'Praise Him', said David, 'all His hosts' (Psalm 148:2). But only the Son beholds Him, and the Holy Spirit. The attribute of being incorporeal and uncreated belongs not to the Father only, but also to the Son. Paul declares this point, that He 'is the Image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15). When Paul said, 'God was manifested in the Flesh' (1 Timothy 3:16); this means that the manifestation took place by means of the flesh, not according to His Essence".

Jerome made an analogy, where he compared[16] the four Gospels to the four Cherubim saying, "Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are the Lord's team of four, the true cherubim or store of knowledge. With them the whole body is full of eyes, they glitter as sparks, they run and return like lightning, their feet are straight feet and lifted up, their backs also are winged, ready to fly in all directions. They hold together each by each and are interwoven one with another: like wheels within wheels they roll along and go wherever the breath of the Holy Spirit conveys them".

God as Fire and Light

God Himself is sometimes described as a consuming fire, and it was this aspect of the Son of God that Israel saw when He gave them the Law on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 24:17). As He spoke the words of the Law, He spoke from the midst of a huge fire on the top of the mountain (Deuteronomy 4:12-13). Israel knew God in the Pillar of Fire by night and the Pillar of Cloud by day (Exodus 13:21-22). These two pillars are both the same things. By night the fire was clearly visible; by day the fire was not seen as easily due to the bright sunlight, and the appearance of the Pillar looked like a cloud of smoke. On the top of Mt. Sinai, the appearance of the Pillar made the mountain top look like it "burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens" (Deuteronomy 4:11). This made a very awesome spectacle, accompanied by the thunder, the lightning and the very loud trumpet sound (Exodus 19:16), in addition to the earthquake (Psalm 114:4), all of which Basil attributed[17] to the angels around the Throne of God.

[16] Jerome, Letters, LIII, 9.
[17] Basil, On the Spirit, 14.

God revealed Himself as fire on many occasions throughout the Scriptures. This fire is not necessarily physical fire, which requires a continuous supply of fuel to sustain itself. The uncreated fire of God at the burning bush was a marvel to Moses in that the bush was burning with what looked like physical fire, yet it was not consumed (Exodus 3:2-3). A similar case was the tongues of fire on each of the 120 disciples at Pentecost, 30 AD (Acts 2:3).

The Lord is also described as a refiner's fire (Malachi 3:2). Fire has a cleansing effect on things, like the spoils of war that had been polluted by association with idols and demons (Numbers 31:23). Idols captured in war were required to be destroyed by fire (Deuteronomy 7:5, 25, 12:3). If anything could not stand the fire, it was purified with water (Numbers 31:23). In like manner, Ambrose linked[18] the fire and the water, where the fire is the spiritual grace of the Holy Spirit and the water is baptism. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote[19] that the servant of God should burn like a flame with an ardent spirit so as to destroy all carnal sin in drawing near to God. For this reason angels are called "a flame of fire" (Psalm 104:4), and Paul (1 Thessalonians 5:19) advises us not to "quench the Spirit".

Ambrose of Milan linked[20] the Consuming Fire with the Light of God, where the Father, Son and Holy Spirit are all Light. He is also the true Light that enlightens every man (John 1:5-9, Psalm 36:9, Hebrews 1:3). When Jesus began His public ministry, the Scriptures describe it as a Great Light dawning on Zebulun and Naphtali (Matthew 4:15-16, Isaiah 42:6-7). The Uncreated Light at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-5) is a manifestation of this Light.

Fire is also associated with the Lord's judgment at the close of this age. All men's works are to be judged by this fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15), where the fire is an uncreated fire. The uncreated fire of God has already judged some people. Examples of this are the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24), 250 men in Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16:35, 26:10), and the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:2). Others will be judged in the Lake of Fire at the close of this age (Revelation 20:13-15, 21:8).

When the New Jerusalem comes, there will be no night; nor will there be any sun or moon to give light (Revelation 21:22-25). The Glory of God illumines everything. This obviously refers to the uncreated light of God.

In iconography, the Archangel Michael is "written" (Icons are written, not painted!) with a sword at his side, where the archangels are another of the beings that surround the Throne of God. Yet angels are non-physical beings. The sword, then, is not representative of a piece of steel that he carries, but of his execution of the Power of God. From this point of view, Michael's "sword" makes star wars weapons look like Tinker Toys!!

[18] Ambrose, Duties of the Clergy, III, xviii, 103
[19] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter III, 3.
[20] Ambrose, On the Holy Spirit, I, xiv, 160-164.

Holy Monday Presanctified Liturgy
Prophecy of Judgment on Jerusalem

Revision B

Gospel: Matthew 24:3-35

The Gospel lesson from Matthew, along with the parallel accounts in Mark 13 and Luke 21, foretells primarily the Destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. There are many different aspects of this, which are sometimes difficult to discern. One overriding aspect of the destruction of Jerusalem is the importance of the Church following 70 AD as the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). The Church had been so before that, but the emphatic judgment of God on Jerusalem in 70 AD lent great emphasis to its importance.

Preliminary Events: Matthew 24:3-8

On Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus departed from the Temple and His disciples came up to show Him the buildings of the Temple. Jesus said to them,

> "Do you not see all these things? Assuredly, I say to you, not *one* stone shall be left here upon another, that shall not be thrown down". Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives, the disciples came to Him privately, saying, "Tell us, when these things will be! And what *will be* the sign of Your coming, and of the end of the age?" (Matthew 24:2-3)

For Jesus to say that the Temple would be utterly destroyed came as a shock to the disciples. From Jesus' own words, they saw the Temple as "a house of prayer for all nations" (Mark 11:17). From the list of nations present during Peter's sermon on Pentecost (Acts 2:9), some had come to Jerusalem from 1000 miles away. It was customary at the Temple even to offer up prayer for the Emperor in Rome.

The Twelve were looking for Jesus to bring in the Kingdom of God in glory, and they still asked Him about this just prior to the Ascension (Acts 1:6). Their question about the sign of His Coming indicates confusion on their part between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ. When Jesus referred to the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 AD and again in 135 AD), where one stone was not left upon another, His disciples thought He was referring to establishing the Kingdom of God in glory. They had no concept that the end of the age would come in a few years with the destruction of Jerusalem or that His Second Coming to bring in the Kingdom of God in glory wouldn't occur for thousands of years. Thus there was a major gap in understanding here that needed to be overcome.

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Cyril of Alexandria stated[21] that when His disciples asked, "When will these things be?" (Luke 21:7, Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:4), Jesus answered their immediate questions first (Luke 21:8-11, Matthew 24:4-8, Mark 13:4-8), and then went back to speak of the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:12-33, Matthew 24:9-35, Mark 13:9-23). As He spoke, He compared and contrasted the immediate events with the more distant events of the Second Advent (Luke 21:25-28, Matthew 24:27-31, Mark 13:24-27). In answering their immediate questions, Jesus stated some general warnings that may apply both to the destruction of Jerusalem and to His Second Advent.

John Chrysostom stated[22] that Jesus first directed His disciples' attention to some things that they needed to understand before they would be ready to understand either the destruction of Jerusalem or the Second Advent. In doing so, He spoke of things that they would need to be mindful of prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

> "Jesus answered nothing directly to their question, but first spoke of those other things that are urgent, and which it was needful for them to learn first. For neither concerning Jerusalem straightway, nor of His own Second Advent, did He speak, but touching the ills that were to meet them at the doors. Wherefore also He makes them earnest in their exertions, by saying, 'Take heed that no man deceive you; for many shall come in my name, saying, I am Christ'".
>
> "Afterwards, He roused them to listen about these things; and made them energetic, and prepared them to be watchful. Having spoken first of the false Christs, then He spoke of the ills of Jerusalem, assuring them ever by the things already past, foolish and contentious though they were, of those which were yet to come".

Jesus responded to his disciples' request by giving them a number of signs of the end, where "the end" refers to *the end of the age*, the end of the Temple, the sacrificial system, the covenant nation of Israel, and the last remnants of the pre-Christian age. There is a progression in the signs in that they seem to become more specific and pronounced until we reach the final, immediate precursor of the end the age.

The first three signs are described as "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 23:8). These should not be taken as signals of an imminent end; the disciples should guard against being misled at this point (Matthew 23:4). The end is not yet (Matthew 23:6). However, these are the beginnings of the great NEW THING, which God will bring forth.

False Prophets and False Messiahs: Matthew 23:5

The Jews having rejected Christ were particularly prone to look for false deliverers. This became especially intense as problems with Rome increased. Christians should avoid their folly. Eusebius, Justin, Origen, Josephus, and others, tell of the deception and delusion among the Jews. Josephus stated, "Now as for the affairs[23] of the Jews, they grew worse and worse continually, for the country was filled with robbers and *impostors*, who deluded the multitude.

[21] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 139.
[22] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 1.
[23] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, iv, 1-3, II, xii, 1-6, II, xiii, 1-7.

Yet Felix did catch and put to death many of those impostors every day, together with the robbers".

Some of these signs may be duplicated prior to the Second Advent, such as false prophets and false Christs. This will be covered in more detail later. But the primary reference here is to the events that were precursors to the destruction of Jerusalem.

Wars and Rumors of Wars: Matthew 23:6-7

Jesus spoke at a time of relative peace in the Roman Empire; the next few decades were to bring trouble with several Roman emperors toppling from the throne and special trouble for the Jews. When Jesus said this, He and the disciples were sitting on the Mount of Olives looking over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:3). John Chrysostom stated[24] that the immediate reference here is not to the wars of the world over the centuries, but to wars in Jerusalem. Even the more distant skirmishes against the Jews tended to come home to Judea and Jerusalem.

Josephus stated[25] that there were uprisings against them in Alexandria, where 50,000 were slain. In Caesarea[26] a battle between Syrians and Jews brought death to about 20,000 Jews. The fight between Jews and Syrians divided many villages and towns into armed camps. Constant rumors of wars kept the Jewish people in an unsettled state. Josephus mentions[27] how Caligula, the Roman Emperor, made orders that his statue be placed in the Temple of Jerusalem. Because the Jews refused to allow this, they lived in constant fear that the Emperor might send an army into Palestine. Some Jews lived in such fear that they dared not even plow and seed the ground.

Famines, Pestilence and Earthquakes: Matthew 23:7-8

Some of these predicted elements can be found in the documents of the New Testament; there are more detailed accounts in outside sources. There are the references in the epistles and *Acts* of churches sending aid to those suffering famine in Judea. Agabus prophesied of a great famine that took a heavy toll in Judea.

> "Now in these days prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. And one of them, named Agabus stood up and foretold by the Spirit that there would be a great famine over all the world (***oikoumenen***); and this took place in the days of Claudius. And the disciples determined, every one according to his ability, to send relief to the brethren who lived in Judea; and they did so, sending it to the elders by the hand of Barnabas and Saul" (Acts 11:27-30).

On February 5, 63 AD, the famous earthquake that damaged the city of Pompeii took place. At this same time other quakes were recorded in Samos, Chios, Miletus, Laodicea, Hierapolis, Campania, Colossae, Rome and Judea. Speaking of all these preliminary events

[24] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 1.
[25] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, xviii, 7-8.
[26] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, III, ii, 1-3.
[27] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, x, 1.

might disturb the disciples; Chrysostom points out[28] that these so called "natural" disasters are to be understood quite differently.

> "Henceforth the Roman armies were a matter of anxiety. Since then these things also were sufficient to confound them [the disciples], He foretells them all. Then to show that He Himself will assail the Jews with them, and war on them, He speaks not of battles only, but also of plagues sent from God, famines, and pestilence, and earthquakes. He showed that the wars also He Himself permitted to come upon them, and that these things do not happen for no purpose according to what before has been the accustomed course of things among men, but *proceed from the wrath on high*. Therefore they shall not come by themselves or at once, but with signs. For that the Jews may not say, that they who then believed [Christian Jews] were authors of these evils, therefore He has told them also of the cause of their coming upon them. 'For verily I say unto you,' He said before, 'all these things shall come upon this generation,' (Matthew 23:36) having made mention of the stain of blood on them"

Jesus warned His disciples that these events were merely general tendencies characterizing the final generation, and not signs of the destruction. Without the warning they might have been confused.

Events Leading to the Destruction of Jerusalem: Matthew 24:9-14

Other signs, while they still characterize the period from the Ascension of Christ to the Destruction of Jerusalem - AD 30-70 - as a whole, bring us to a point nearer to the end of the age. These are circumstances that threaten the Church from without and within: *persecution and apostasy*.

Persecution of Christians for Christ's Name's Sake: Matthew 24:9

Jesus had said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before *it hated* you. Remember the word that I said to you, 'A servant is not greater than his master'. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18, 20). Therefore, the Christians will undergo persecution because they are united to Christ and faithful to Him. It is persecution for the sake of the Name of Christ.

The story[29] of the Acts of the Apostles traces the progress of the Gospel from Jerusalem to Rome (cf. Acts 19:21; 28:14). Jewish opposition to the Gospel is repeatedly set forth as one of Jewish persecution, murder and repudiation of those of their number who became believers[30]. The persecution increases as time passes and extends itself to the Jewish communities throughout the empire. At the same time Luke seeks to show that the Roman government refused to be stampeded - by the Jews - into repressive measures against the Christians. The Jews enjoyed the right of religious propaganda under Roman protection and were quite irked to see the Christians, who at the first were all Jews, take advantage of the situation and presume on

[28] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 1.

[29] From Robert Newsom, The King Judges His People: Jesus, Jerusalem and Judgment, Unpublished Work, Copyright 2002.

[30] This can be seen if one takes a concordance and reads the references to "Jews" in the Book of Acts.

the same privilege themselves. At Rome itself Paul had liberty to evangelize (Acts 28:30-31). Acts reveals that the great enemies of the Church in the period from AD 30-63 were the Jews who, having killed Christ, sought to destroy His follows. But the persecutions from without would not destroy the Church nor derail her from her commission.

First Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 1:1-20 "Persecution of the Saints"

The First Reading illustrates the groaning of Israel in Egypt under the oppression of Pharaoh. During this time, "The children of Israel were fruitful and increased abundantly, multiplied and grew exceedingly mighty; and the land was filled with them" (Exodus 1:7). Similarly this was a time when the Church multiplied greatly also (Acts 9:31). The text from Exodus reads:

> "These are the names of the sons of Israel that came into Egypt together with Jacob their father; they came in each with their whole family. Ruben, Simeon, Levi, Judah, Issachar, Zebulun, Benjamin, Dan and Naphtali, Gad and Asher! But Joseph was in Egypt. And all the souls *born* of Jacob were seventy-five. And Joseph died, and all his brethren, and all that generation. And the children of Israel increased and multiplied, and became numerous and grew exceedingly strong, and the land multiplied them".
>
> "And there arose up another king over Egypt, who knew not Joseph. And he said to his nation, Behold, the race of the children of Israel is a great multitude, and is stronger than we. Come then, let us deal craftily with them, lest at any time they be increased, and whenever war shall happen to us, these also shall be added to our enemies, and having prevailed against us in war, they will depart out of the land. And he set over them task-masters, who should afflict them in their works; and they built strong cities for Pharaoh, both Pithom, and Raamses, and On, which is Heliopolis. But as they humbled them, by so much they multiplied, and grew exceedingly strong; and the Egyptians greatly abhorred the children of Israel. And the Egyptians tyrannized the children of Israel by force. And they embittered their life by hard labors, in the clay and in brick-making, and all the works in the plains, according to all the works, wherein they caused them to serve with violence".
>
> "And the king of the Egyptians spoke to the midwives of the Hebrews; the name of the one was Shiphrah; and the name of the second, Puah. And he said, 'When you do the office of midwife to the Hebrew women, and they are about to be delivered, if it be a male, kill it; but if a female, save it'. But the midwives feared God, and did not as the king of Egypt appointed them; and they saved the male children alive. And the king of Egypt called the midwives, and said to them, 'Why is it that you have done this thing, and saved the male children alive?' And the midwives said to Pharaoh, 'The Hebrew women are not as the women of Egypt, for they are delivered before the midwives go in to them'. So they bore children. God did well to the midwives; and the people multiplied, and grew very strong" (Exodus 1:1-20 LXX).

Just as Israel was persecuted by the Egyptians, so the Church was persecuted by the Jewish leaders throughout the world. Part of this persecution over the first three years came from Saul (later the Apostle Paul) as he "persecuted the Way to the death, binding and delivering

into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). He "punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, he persecuted them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:11). The Church had peace for a time after Paul's conversion in c. 34 AD (Acts 9:31), but the persecution came back strongly a few years later (Acts 12:1-3).

Paul wrote to Timothy about a partially hidden agenda in our dealing with the world, "All who desire to live piously in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution" (2 Timothy 3:12) i.e. like Moses and like Paul himself. The Lord spelled out the reasons for this in John 15:18-16:4: some people simply hate God! And this is the partially hidden agenda that we face. Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you", and "If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also" (John 15:18, 20). And why does the world hate God? Because He exposes its inadequacy just as Moses and Aaron exposed the inadequacy and impotence of the secret arts of Jannes and Jambres[31]!

This happens to us also, without our even trying. Jesus said, "If anyone loves Me, he will keep My Word; and My Father will love him and We will come to him and make Our abode with him. He who does not love Me does not keep My words" (John 14:23-24). The world, on the other hand, loves the lust of the flesh, the lust of the eyes, and the pride of life (John 2:5-17). By loving God, we testify that all this is passing away and is inadequate and impotent - whether we say anything or not!

This was true in Paul's experience also and he reminded Timothy of this (2 Timothy 3:10-11). Timothy was evidently familiar with what happened to Paul on his first missionary journey (Acts 13:44-14:20) in Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium and Lystra. The persecution by the unbelieving Jews grew worse as Paul and Barnabas went along. The more miracles Paul performed, the greater the persecution. In Lystra, Paul was stoned by the Jews and left for dead (Acts 14:19).

So what did Paul say Timothy should do, knowing that persecutions will come? "But you must continue in the things which you have learned: the Holy Scriptures which make you wise to salvation" Paul continues, "All Scripture is God-breathed and is profitable for teaching, for reproof, for correction, for training in righteousness that the man of God may be equipped for every good work" (2 Timothy 3:14-17). The Scriptures are also encouraging in that we see that we have a lot of company: "Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely (i.e. lying) for My sake. Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you" (Matthew 5:11-12).

Apollinarius of Hierapolis, writing against the Montanist heretics, asserted[32]: "Let them tell us, before God, who of all their prophets, beginning with Montanus and his wives, has been persecuted by the Jews and killed by the ungodly. No one! Who among them has been arrested for the Name of Christ, and crucified? Again no one!" Bishop Nicholai Velimirovic adds[33] to

[31] Jannes and Jambres were the magicians that opposed Moses in Egypt. They were able to duplicate Moses' sign where he turned Aaron's staff into a snake (Exodus 7:8-13), and also the first two plagues (Exodus 7:14-8:7). But the third and following plagues they recognized as the "finger of God" (Exodus 8:19). But still they didn't repent.

[32] Quoted by Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 27..

[33] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 27.

this: "Heresies are usually closer to the worldly and demonic spirit, and therefore the world and the demons do not persecute their own. To be constantly under persecution - with short breathing spaces - is a distinguishing mark of the Faith and of the Orthodox Church. This persecution has existed throughout the whole of history, whether externally or internally; externally from unbelievers and internally from heretics".

Paul warned Timothy of trouble ahead in Ephesus, "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). The Apostle John had to deal with one of these men over 20 years later in ex-deacon Nicolas (Acts 6:5) who tolerated idolatry and encouraged fornication (Revelation 2:6, 15) as did other heretics.

Addressing times when the evil men seem to prevail, Chrysostom added[34], "Let none of these things, he says, disturb you, if they are in prosperity and you in trials. Such is the nature of the case. From my own instance you may learn that is impossible for man, in his warfare with the wicked, not to be exposed to tribulation. One cannot be in combat and live luxuriously; one cannot be wrestling and feasting. Let none therefore of those who are contending seek for ease or joyous living. Again, the present state is contest, warfare, tribulation, straits and trials, and the very scene of conflicts. The season of rest is not now; this is the time for work and labor".

Velimirovic continued[35], "The Lord Jesus both foretold this and showed it by His own example. And the Apostles said it, and showed it by their own example. And all the God-bearing Fathers of the Church, and confessors and martyrs, said this, and showed it by their own example. Can we have any further doubt that it is by the narrow gate that one enters into the Kingdom of God?" For more discussion on the subject of persecution by men who hate God, see the Feast Days of Demetrius and George and the Feast Day of the Exaltation of the Cross with the Sundays Before and After.

Second Parable From the Old Testament: Job 1:1-12 "Satan Asks to Sift Job"

The second Old Testament Reading, Job 1:1-12, illustrates the request by Satan to sift the Patriarch Job, just as he sifted Peter just prior to the Crucifixion (Luke 22:31-32) and the Twelve Apostles later on. Satan had tried to do the same to Christ for three years and had failed. He recognized that Job was "a man blameless, true, godly, abstaining from everything evil" (Job 1:8 LXX). Yet Satan felt that all Job's righteousness could be attributed to the Lord's physical blessings in his life. So the Lord allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions in sifting him. Similarly in the 1st Century, the Jewish leaders, who were acting on behalf of their master, Satan, sought to sift the Church. The text of the reading from Job is:

> "There was a certain man in the land of Uz[36], whose name *was* Job; and this man was true, blameless, righteous, *and* godly, abstaining from everything evil. And he had seven sons and three daughters. And his cattle consisted of seven thousand sheep, three thousand camels, five hundred yoke of oxen, five hundred she-asses in the pastures, and a very great household, and he had a great husbandry on the earth; and that man was *most* noble of the *men* of the east. And

[34] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, VIII, verse 13.
[35] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 27.
[36] Uz was adjacent to Mt. Seir, the later home of the descendants of Esau. At one time, the people of Mt. Seir also occupied Uz.

his sons visiting one another prepared a banquet every day, taking with them also their three sisters to eat and drink with them. And when the days of the banquet were completed, Job sent and purified them, having risen up in the morning, and offered sacrifices for them, according to their number, and one calf for a sin-offering[37] for their souls: for Job said, 'Lest my sons have thought evil in their minds against God'. Thus, then Job did continually. And it came to pass on a day, that behold, the angels of God came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came with them. And the Lord said to the devil, 'Where have you come from?' And the devil answered the Lord, and said, 'I am come from compassing the earth, and walking up and down in the world'. And the Lord said to him, 'Have you diligently considered my servant Job, that there is none like him on the earth, a man blameless, true, godly, and abstaining from everything evil?' Then the devil answered, and said before the Lord, 'Does Job worship the Lord for nothing? 'Have you not made a hedge about him, and about his household, and all his possessions round about? And have you not blessed the works of his hands, and multiplied his cattle upon the land? But put forth your hand, and touch all that he has: verily he will bless[38] you to *your* face'. Then the Lord said to the devil, 'Behold, I give into your hand all that he has, but touch not himself'. So the devil went out from the presence of the Lord" (Job 1:1-12 LXX).

Job was a descendant of Esau who lived during the years that Israel was in Egypt. His ordeals began with the Lord pointing out to Satan that Job was unique on the earth, "a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness. Job even offered prayers and offerings for his ten children, consecrating them just in case they had sinned in their heart (Job 1:6). Satan felt that if Job were poor and destitute, he would curse God to His face (Job 1:11).

Satan recognized Job's godliness, just as he recognized Christ (Matthew 4:1-10). Yet Satan felt that all Job's righteousness could be attributed to the Lord's physical blessings in Job's life. So the Lord allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions in sifting him.

Similarly, Satan asked to sift Peter just prior to the Crucifixion. Peter offered to fight, and didn't realize that he was no match for Satan without the Holy Spirit.

> "And the Lord said, 'Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren'. But he said to Him, 'Lord, I am ready to go with You, both to prison and to death'. Then He said, 'I tell you, Peter, the rooster shall not crow this day before you will deny three times that you know Me'" (Luke 22:31-34).

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[37] The sin-offering had not yet been defined by Moses, since Israel was still in Egypt during Job's lifetime. How did Job know the Law? He knew it the same way Abraham knew it; he lived according to the Law that had been handed down from Adam. Tertullian said, "For in this law given to Adam, we recognize in embryo all the precepts which afterward sprouted forth when given through Moses. That is, You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and out of your whole soul; you shall love your neighbor as yourself; you shall not kill, etc." (Answer to Jews, I, iii, 2). John Cassian added that the saints prior to Abraham observed the commands not only of the Law but even anticipated those of the Gospel (Conferences I, viii, 23).

[38] The Hebrew text says "curse" instead of "bless". In the LXX text, Satan is being sarcastic to God.

The Falling Away from the Church: the Great Apostasy: Matthew 24:10-13

Jesus declares that one of the increasing characteristics of the age preceding the destruction of Jerusalem and the overthrow of Israel was to be apostasy within the Christian Church.

We generally think of the apostolic period as a time of tremendously explosive evangelism and church growth, a "golden age" when astonishing miracles took place every day. This common image is substantially correct, but it is flawed by one glaring omission. We tend to ignore one aspect of the New Testament evidence. The early Church was the scene of the most dramatic outbreak of heresy in world history.

The infiltration by heresy began early. Acts 15:1 refers to those who were teaching that one could not be saved who did not observe the circumcision of the flesh according to the Law of Moses. This was no minor matter as Paul called it "another Gospel" and pronounced damnation upon the false brethren who taught the heresy (Galatians 1:6-9; 2:5, 11-21; 3:1-3; 5:1-12). Later Paul warned the elders from Ephesus that heresy would invade and affect the churches of Asia Minor. They should "be on guard for yourselves and for all your flock" because "I know that after my departure savage wolves will come in among you, not sparing the flock; and from among your own selves men will arise, speaking perverse things, to draw away disciples after them " (Acts 20:28-30). While Paul wrote to the Church in Corinth, "The churches of Asia greet you" (1 Corinthians 16:19), he later mourns, "This you know, that all those in Asia have turned away from me" (2 Timothy 1:15). By the time of the writing of the Revelation some churches had become almost completely ruined through the progress of heretical teaching and resulting apostasy (cf. Revelation 2:2, 6, 14-16, 20-24; 3:1-4, 15-18).

The problem was not limited geographically or culturally, but was widespread. Some heretics taught the Resurrection had already taken place (2 Timothy 2:18), while others claimed that resurrection was impossible (1 Corinthians 15:12). Some taught strange doctrines of extreme asceticism and angel worship (Colossians 2:8, 18-23; 1 Timothy 4:1-3), while others advocated all kinds of immorality and rebellion in the name of "liberty" (2 Peter 2:1-3, 10-22; Jude 4, 8, 10-13, 16). Repeatedly the Apostles found themselves issuing stern warnings against tolerating false teachers and "false apostles" (Romans 16:17-18; 2 Corinthians 11:3-4, 12-15; Philippians 3:18-19; 1 Timothy 1:3-7; 2 Timothy 4:2-5). These had been the cause of massive departures from the faith, and the extent of apostasy was increasing as the era progressed (1 Timothy 1:19-20; 6:20-21; 2 Timothy 2:16-18; 3:1-9, 13; 4:10, 14-16). One of the last New Testament books to be written, Hebrews, was written to an entire Christian community on the brink of wholesale abandonment of Christianity. Faith and miracles did not only characterize the Church of the first generation; it was also characterized by increasing lawlessness, rebellion, and heresy from with the Christian community itself. Jesus not only had warned His disciples but had also given them great assurance: "And at that time many will fall away and will betray one another and hate one another. And many false prophets will arise to mislead many. And because lawlessness is increased, the love of many will grow cold. But the one who endures to the end, he shall be saved" (Matthew 24:10-13).

Later Church Fathers laid the source of most of these heresies at the feet of the Heresiarch Simon Magus[39]. Simon Magus was originally a follower of John the Baptist, but he learned his black arts in Egypt. Luke introduces us to him when he tried to purchase the Holy Spirit to supplement his magic (Acts 8:9-23). A number of Church Fathers tell[40] of some of his claims: that he was the Father, or the Son, or the Comforter, or the God over all, and that the world was formed by his angels. Simon's heretical onslaught became so intense that Emperor Claudius (reigned 41-54 AD) erected a statue of Simon[41] in Rome with the title "To Simon, the Holy God".

The Rise of Antichrist.

The Christians had a name for this apostasy; they called it antichrist. The term "antichrist" is defined quite well in the Epistles of the Apostle John, and are listed below. See Appendix A for a concise definition of "Antichrist" from the Epistles of John.

From the Apostle John's definition, we can draw some important conclusions that may help understand what the Church understood regarding the term "antichrist".

a) Christians had already been warned about the coming of antichrist before John wrote (1 John 2:18; 4:3).
b) There was not just one, but "many antichrists" (1 John 2:18)
c) Antichrist was already working, as John wrote, "Even now many antichrists have arisen" (1 John 2:18). "I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you" (1 John 2:26). "You have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world' (1 John 4:3). "Many deceivers have gone out into the world. This is the deceiver and the antichrist" (2 John 7). The "antichrist" was already present in the 1st Century; whether he was some individual personal figure who would arise at the end of the world is not addressed.
d) Antichrist was a system of unbelief, particularly the heresy of denying the person and work of Jesus Christ. Although the antichrists apparently claimed to belong to the Father, they taught that Jesus was not the Christ (1 John 2:22). In union with the false prophets (1 John 4:1), they denied the Incarnation (1 John 4:3; 2 John 7, 9); and they rejected Apostolic doctrine (1 John 4:6).
e) The antichrists had been members of the Christian Church, but had apostatized (1 John 2:19). Now these apostates were attempting to deceive other Christians, in order to sway the Church as a whole away from the Lord Jesus Christ (1 John 2:26; 4:1; 2 John 7, 10).

In summary, we can see that antichrist is a description of both the system of apostasy and individual apostates. "Antichrist" was a fulfillment of Jesus' prophecy that a time of great apostasy would come (Matthew 24:10-11). John said that Christians had been warned of coming antichrists; and, sure enough, "many antichrists" had arisen. For a time they had believed the

[39] For more information on the influence of Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002.

[40] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, II, Preface, 1, II, ix, 1, III, Preface.
Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VI, 14.
Ignatius, "To the Trallians", 10-11, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 1.
Vincent of Lerins, The Commonitory, XXIV, 62-63.
These references are summed up in Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002, p. 40.

[41] Justin Martyr, First Apology, XXVI, LVI.
Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VI, 14.

Gospel; later they had forsaken the faith, and then went about trying to deceive others[42], either by starting new cults or, more likely, seeking to draw Christians back into Judaism - the false religion which claimed to worship the Father while denying the Son. When the doctrine of antichrist is understood, it fits in perfectly with what the rest of the New Testament tells us about the "terminal generation".

When the Lord later refers to His Second Advent, He speaks of a similar apostasy accompanied by great signs and wonders designed to deceive, if possible, even the elect (Matthew 24:24). Paul refers to "The man of sin" and the "lawless one" (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 8), and the Church Fathers often refer to this individual as "The Antichrist" who will come just prior to the Second Advent. See Appendix B for commentary on "The Antichrist" by the Church Fathers.

Antichrist Will Deceive Many.

As one of the most prominent sources of heresy in the 1st Century, Simon Magus was responsible for the falling away of four of the Original Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-20). As a master magician, Simon used his illusions to give himself the appearance of being able to perform great miracles – and thus he appeared to have Apostolic authority. Those in the Early Church that became his disciples[43] are as follows:

- **Nicolas** of Antioch was one of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:5) and one of the original Seventy (Luke 10:1-20). When Simon came to Antioch, Nicolas began to follow his teachings, and Nicolas was later rebuked very strongly by the Apostle John (Revelation 2:14-15).
- **Demas** was a companion of Paul and Luke at the time that Paul was under house arrest in Rome (c. 62 AD), and was mentioned by Paul as he drafted his Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 1:24). However, Demas began following the teachings of Simon shortly afterward, and within 5 years, Paul stated that Demas "had forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). Hippolytus stated that Demas became "a priest of idols"[44]
- **Phygellas and Hermogenes**: Just before his death in c. 67 AD, Paul wrote that Phygellas and Hermogenes had turned away from him (2 Timothy 1:15). Hippolytus stated that these two of the Seventy began to follow Simon's teachings, and were therefore deleted from the ranks of the Seventy[45]
- **Alexander** was the son of Simon of Cyrene, who helped to carry Jesus' Cross (Mark 15:21). Together with his father and brother Rufus, who was one of the Seventy, Alexander helped to found the Church in Antioch (Acts 11:20). By the mid 60's AD, Alexander had become a follower of Simon, and Paul delivered him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh[46] on account of his

[42] For more information on the spread of heresy in the 1st Century, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002.
[43] Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002, p. 56.
[44] Hippolytus, "On the Seventy Apostles", Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 5.
[45] Hippolytus, "On the Seventy Apostles", Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 5.
[46] Compare 1 Corinthians 5:4-5. The intent was the eventual salvation of the individual through a greater recognition of who it is that he's in league with.

blasphemy (1 Timothy 1:20). A year or two later, Alexander was instrumental in affecting Paul's martyrdom (2 Timothy 4:14-15).

- **Hymenaeus** was associated with Alexander and was also delivered over to Satan by Paul (1 Timothy 1:20). A year or two later, Hymenaeus was still busy teaching Simon's doctrine of the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:17-18).
- **Philetas** was an associate of Hymenaeus who also taught Simon's doctrine (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

Christ's Advent and "Antichrist", "the Last Days", and "the Last Hour".

John stresses one further significant point when referring to the "spirit of antichrist". As Jesus foretold, the coming of the great apostasy, antichrist, is a sign of "the end" (Matthew 24:10-13). "Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that antichrist is coming, even now many antichrists have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour" (1 John 2:18). The connection people often make between the antichrist and "the last days" is correct enough. But what is often missed is the fact that the expression the last days, and similar terms, are used in the Bible to refer, not only to the end of the physical world, but to the last days of the Old Covenant, the last days of the nation of Israel, the "last days" which ended with the destruction of the Temple in AD 70. The New Testament authors unquestionably used end times language when speaking of the period in which they were living before the fall of Jerusalem. The period spoken of in the Bible as "the last days" (or "last times", or "last hour") is often the period between Christ's birth and the destruction of Jerusalem. The early Church was living at the end of the old age and the beginning of the new. The Fathers, for the most part, clearly understood this. Athanasius, for example, said[47]:

> "And when He Who spoke to Moses, the Word of the Father, appeared *in the end of the world*, He also gave this commandment, saying, 'But when they persecute in this city, flee into another (Matthew 10:23). And shortly after He says, 'When you therefore shall see the abomination of desolation spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing in the holy place (whoever reads, let him understand); then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains' (Matthew 24:15). Knowing these things, the saints regulated their conduct accordingly".

This whole period is to be considered as the time of Christ's "First" Advent. In both the Old and New Testament, the promised destruction of Jerusalem is considered to be an aspect of the work of Christ, intimately connected with His work of redemption. Moreover, Christ's birth, life, death, resurrection, ascension, outpouring of the Holy Spirit, present session in Heaven, gathering of His people from the ends of the earth, building His new Temple the Church, coming to raise the dead and judge the world, are all parts of His one work of bringing in His Kingdom.

The radical separation of Christ's "first" and "second" comings tends to give support to the idea that nothing is going on during the time in between - the present age. Nothing could be farther from the truth. The Lord will accomplish His purpose throughout the age; and His Church will accomplish Her initial task of preaching the Gospel of the Kingdom even in the face of *persecution from without* and *apostasy from within*.

[47] Athanasius of Alexandria, Defense of His Flight, 11.

The Gospel Shall Be Preached as a Witness to All Nations: Matthew 24:14

Jesus stated, "And this gospel of the kingdom will be preached in the entire world as a witness to all the nations, and then the end will come" (Matthew 24:14). The "end" referred to here is the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD.

Some may say that this preaching in the entire world certainly did not take place before AD 70. The Fathers, following the Scriptures, have quite a different understanding. For example, John Chrysostom comments[48]:

> "Then indicating that these things will in no degree harm the noble and the firm, He said, 'Fear not, neither be troubled. For if you show forth the patience that becomes you, the dangers will not prevail over you. You shall both live and preach everywhere'. Therefore He added moreover, 'And this gospel shall be preached in the whole world for a witness to all nations, and then shall the end come', of the downfall of Jerusalem".
>
> "For in proof that He meant this, and that before the taking of Jerusalem the gospel was preached, hear what Paul said, 'Their sound went into all the earth' (Romans 10:18); and again, 'The gospel which was preached to every creature which is under Heaven' (Colossians 1:23). And do you see him running from Jerusalem to Spain? (Romans 15:24, 28) And if one took so large a portion, consider what the rest also wrought. For writing to others also, Paul again said concerning the gospel, that 'it is bringing forth fruit, and growing up in every creature which is under heaven'" (Colossians 1:6).
>
> "But what does it mean, 'For a witness to all nations?' Although it was everywhere preached, yet it was not everywhere believed. It was for a witness, He said, to them that were disbelieving, that is, for conviction, for accusation, for a testimony. And for this cause, after the gospel was preached in every part of the world, Jerusalem was destroyed, that they may not have so much as a shadow of an excuse for their perverseness".
>
> "This is also a very great sign of Christ's power, that in twenty or at the most thirty years the word had reached the ends of the world. 'After this therefore', said He, 'shall come the end of Jerusalem'".

The Fathers listened[49] to the words of Christ and saw it fulfilled in the works of Christ. The Scriptures proclaim, the Fathers confirm, and the Church commemorates that the Gospel indeed was preached to the whole world before Jerusalem was destroyed in AD 70. This is the message contained in the Prokiemenon which is sung in commemoration of Apostles everywhere: "Their voice has gone out into all the earth and their words to the ends of the world!"

The continuation of the Jerusalem Temple and the presence of Jewish synagogues and religious life throughout the Roman Empire provided a highway for the preaching of the Apostles. The message was to the Jew first and also the Gentiles. When the initial work of preaching had been accomplished and Churches were established distinct from the Jewish

[48] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 2.

[49] From Robert Newsom, The King Judges His People: Jesus, Jerusalem and Judgment, Unpublished Work, Copyright 2002.

synagogues there would longer be a need for the husk of Judaism to remain. Then would come to pass "the days of vengeance to fulfill all that was written" (Luke 21:22); and the wrath of the Lamb would reveal that the earthly Jerusalem was no longer the city of God.

The Abomination of Desolation: Matthew 24:15

Daniel the Prophet, writing during the Babylonian Captivity, had predicted the destruction of Jerusalem and the desecration of the Temple. Daniel wrote:

> "Seventy weeks have been determined upon your people, and upon the holy city, for sin to be ended, to seal up transgressions, to blot out the iniquities, to make atonement for iniquities, to bring in everlasting righteousness, to seal the vision and the prophet, and to anoint the Most Holy. And you shall know and understand, from the going forth of the command for the answer and for the building[50] of Jerusalem until Christ the prince, *there shall be* seven weeks, and sixty-two weeks. And then *the time* shall return, and the street shall be built, and the wall and the times shall be exhausted. And after the sixty-two weeks, the anointed one shall be destroyed, and there is no judgment in him. And he shall destroy the city and the sanctuary with the prince that is coming: they shall be cut off with a flood, and to the end of the war which is rapidly completed he shall appoint *the city* to desolation. And one week shall establish the covenant with many: and in the midst of the week my sacrifice and drink offering shall be taken away. And on the temple *shall be* the abomination of desolation; and at the end of time an end shall be put to the desolation" (Daniel 9:24-27 LXX).

Athanasius of Alexandria appealed to Daniel's prophecy, and its fulfillment in AD 70, to refute the Jews, who were saying that they were still waiting for the Messiah.

> "But they [the Jews] shall be refuted[51] on this supreme point more clearly than on any, and that not by ourselves but by the most wise Daniel, for he signifies the actual date of the Savior's coming as well as His Divine Advent in our midst. 'Seventy weeks are cut short upon your people and upon the holy city, to make a complete end of sin and for sins to be sealed up and iniquities blotted out, to make reconciliation for iniquity, to seal vision and prophet, and to anoint a Holy One of holies. You shall know and understand from the going forth of the Word to restore, and to build Jerusalem, until Christ the Prince' (Daniel 9:24, 25). In regard to other prophecies, they may possibly be able to find excuses for deferring their reference to a future time, but what can they say to this one? Not only does it expressly mention the Anointed One that is the Christ, it even declares that He Who is to be anointed is not man only, but the Holy One of holies! And it says that Jerusalem is to stand until His coming, and that after it prophet and vision shall cease in Israel. Nor is it any use for the Jews to take refuge in the Captivity, and say that Jerusalem did not exist then, for what about the Prophets? It is a fact that at the outset of the Exile Daniel and Jeremiah were there, and Ezekiel and Haggai and Zechariah also prophesied.

[50] The Hebrew reads "To restore and build"
[51] Athanasius, On the Incarnation, XXXIX, 2-5.

"So the Jews are indulging in fiction[52], and transferring present time to the future[53]. It is, in fact, a sign and notable proof of the coming of the Word that Jerusalem no longer stands. The plane fact is, as I say, that there is no longer any king or prophet nor Jerusalem nor sacrifice nor vision among them. Yet the whole earth is filled with the knowledge of God, and the Gentiles, forsaking atheism, are now taking refuge with the God of Abraham through the Word, our Lord Jesus Christ".

"This will give you a beginning[54], and you must go on to prove its truth by the study of the Scriptures. They were written and inspired by God; and we, who have learned from inspired teachers who read the Scriptures and became martyrs for the Godhead of Christ, make further contribution to your eagerness to learn. From the Scriptures you will learn also of His second manifestation to us, glorious and divine indeed, when He shall come not in lowliness but in proper glory".

To this one might add that Matthew wrote his Gospel long before 70 AD when the events took place[55]. Therefore Matthew includes the code words "Whoever reads, let him understand" so that future readers of his Gospel account might understand what it means. The "abomination of desolation" occurred when the Roman general Titus entered Jerusalem after the Temple had been burned. Before burning Jerusalem to the ground, his soldiers set up the Roman "gods" by the Eastern Gate of the Temple and offered sacrifices to them[56]. As conqueror, Titus offered to spare the lives of the remaining Jews if they would throw down their arms. They refused; so Titus said that would therefore spare no one, and proceeded to burn down the city[57].

The Parallel Account in Luke

In Luke's account, the abomination of desolation[58] may be translated as the abomination, which desolates. Two elements are involved: first, it will be repulsive to the religious sense of the people (cf. reference to the holy place); second, it will bring a horrible destruction. Mark and Matthew use the expression abomination of desolation, but Luke explains this by interpreting Daniel for his largely gentile audience, which might not be familiar with the Old Testament. He identifies it as the pagan army of Rome:

"But when you see Jerusalem surrounded by armies[59], then you know that its desolation is near". "Then He said to flee!" (Luke 21:20, 21).

Armies before had surrounded the city; sometimes they were conquered, sometimes they were delivered. But when the idolatrous standards of the Roman army are seen, it means the final day for Jerusalem. There will be no deliverance; they have rejected their Messiah and the Christ of the Living God has rejected them. It is important for Jesus' disciples to understand then

[52] Athanasius, On the Incarnation, XL, 1-5.
[53] This is still happening today!
[54] Athanasius, On the Incarnation, LVI, 1-3.
[55] For a study on the life of the Apostle Matthew, including his drafting his Gospel in the Hebrew language in the early 30's AD prior to leaving for his missionary journeys, see Mark Kern, The Apostle Matthew, Unpublished Work, 2002.
[56] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, vi, 1.
[57] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, vi, 2-3.
[58] G. R. Beasely-Murray, "Abomination of Desolation", Dictionary of New Testament Theology, Grand Rapids: Zondervan Publishing House 1988, Vol. 1, p.74-75.
[59] The Greek reads: When you see Jerusalem ***being surrounded*** by armies then know that its desolation ***has drawn*** near.

will be the last opportunity to flee the city. Athanasius reminds[60] us that they did remember and they did flee; a very practical benefit gained by understanding this passage!

Cyril of Alexandria commented[61] on the events leading up to the destruction of Jerusalem.

> "But in the middle of His account, the Savior places what refers to the capture of Jerusalem (Luke 21:12-24); for He mixes the accounts together in both parts of the narrative. For before all these things, He says, they shall lay their hands upon you, and persecute you, delivering you up to synagogues and to prisons, and bringing you before kings and rulers for My Name's sake. But this shall prove unto you a witnessing".
>
> "Before Jerusalem was laid waste, the blessed disciples were persecuted by them. They were imprisoned and had part in unendurable trials; they were brought before judges and were sent unto kings; for Paul was sent unto Rome to Caesar. But these things that were brought upon them were to them a witness to win for them the glory of martyrdom"[62].

Captivity for Seventy Years

Before going into the Destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD, it is important to understand the Destruction of Jerusalem in the 6th century BC. Daniel was one of the captives who were carried away to Babylon in the 6th century BC; but he understood that the Time of the Judgment of Jerusalem under the Babylonians would be Seventy Years (Daniel 9:1-2; Jeremiah 25:11-12).

"And this whole land shall be desolation and astonishment, and these nations shall serve the king of Babylon seventy years. Then it will come to pass, when seventy years are completed, that I will punish the king of Babylon and that nation, the land of the Chaldeans, for their iniquity, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 25:11-12). The period probably is to be counted from the second and final deportation of the Jews, 586 BC, until about 516 BC with the rebuilding of the Temple.

Forgiveness for Israel

Daniel first confessed the Sin of the People and of the City; then he prayed for Forgiveness and Blessing. This prayer is a calling upon the mercy of the Lord God of the Covenant to remember His people, His city and His promised redemption (Daniel 9: 4, 9, 17-19, esp. 19). As Daniel had begun to pray, the Lord sent His angel Gabriel with a message of hope and encouragement. God would deliver His people by bringing to pass the coming of the Messiah. This would differ from much of the popular understanding. Messiah would come after a long and turbulent period, but He would come. The exact time of the coming of Messiah is revealed here to Daniel

[60] Athanasius, Defense of His Flight, 11.

[61] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 139.

[62] In the Greek the word for witness is martyr, and Cyril interprets our Lord's declaration in the sense to which the word had been limited in the fourth century "of bearing witness with one's life." The original passage rather means, "This shall give you an opportunity of bearing testimony of Me in a more public manner, and in places not otherwise accessible to you."

Gabriel Brings an Answer

Daniel Received the Lord's Answer through the Archangel Gabriel (Daniel 9:20-27), and the revelation is the direct response to Daniel's prayer. It was sent that Daniel, who is greatly beloved of God, might have insight and understanding; a message of great prophetic import (Daniel 9:20-23).

The Message of the Seventy-sevens or Seventy weeks (Daniel 9:24-27) are understood as weeks of years in keeping with the use of years in Daniel 9:1-2 and the actual arrival of the Lord's Messiah. "A period of seventy weeks is determined for your people and for your holy city" (Daniel 9:24). The verb is singular and the period is treated as a unit. The message: Within a period of 490 years the Messiah will come and accomplish certain things with reference to redemption. The prophecy and the fulfillment, Daniel and the New Testament, are compared in Table 1.

Daniel had cried: "O Lord, hear! O Lord, forgive! O Lord, listen and act! Do not delay for your own sake, my God, for Your city and Your people are called by Your Name" (Daniel 9:19). The Messiah will come and redeem His people; it will happen near the end of a 490-year period. 70 x 7 is a symbol of "full" fullness; the fulfillment was always the Messiah and the salvation which He would bring (Matt 18:22).

Table 1
Daniel 9 Versus the New Testament

DANIEL 9 PROPHECY	FULFILLMENT
To finish the transgression	Refers to Christ's work of atonement
To make an end of sins, make reconciliation for iniquity, or to make atonement for iniquity	At the Cross (cf. Hebrews 9:24-28; *et a l.*)
To bring in everlasting righteousness	Righteousness is the result of Christ's work, (cf. Romans 1:17; 3:21; 8:4; 10:14; Philippians 3:9; *et al.*).
To seal up vision and prophecy	Fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecies and the Cessation of Prophecy and Revelation as *Scripture*
To anoint the Most Holy	Messiah is "Anointed one": Baptism to Ascension; anointed with the Holy Spirit as prophet (Isaiah 61:1; Luke 4:18); priest (Hebrews 7:23- 24) and king (Hebrews 1:9); but especially at the descent of the Spirit at Jesus' Baptism.

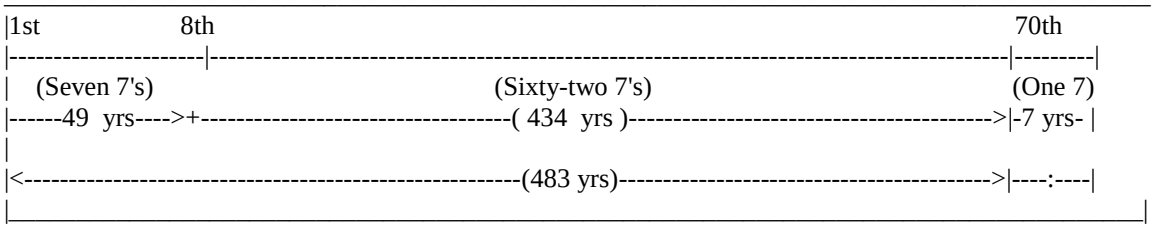
Messiah-City Parallelism in Daniel's Prophecy[63]

The prophecy is then expanded giving details in connection with Messiah the Prince (Daniel 9:25-26). There is a parallelism in each verse: *first*, a word about the Messiah, Jesus; *second*, a word about the city, Jerusalem and judgment. It is important to follow the Messiah - City parallelism to aid in understanding what is being said.

[63] This section follows Robert Newsom, The King Judges His People: Jesus, Jerusalem and Judgment, Unpublished Work, Copyright 2002.

A structure is revealed about the weeks; they are identified as *7 weeks*, *62 weeks*, and *one week*. The prophetic focus is on events taking place in the first and last periods, the first seven weeks and the last, the seventieth week.

The Seventy Weeks of Years



The Messiah

Messiah shall begin His ministry 483 years (69 weeks) after the order to rebuild Jerusalem; He will inaugurate His ministry at the beginning of the 70th week (Daniel 9:25). Jesus came to be baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit in the fullness of time (Matthew 3:13-17). Jesus began His ministry in 27 AD; 483 years earlier is 456 BC.

In Ezra 1:1-4 we find that the Lord stirred up the spirit of Cyrus, King of Persia, to rebuild His Temple in the king's first year (538 BC) when he conquered Babylon. But the decree to rebuild that is spoken of here is that of the 7th year (457-56) of Artaxerxes and involves the mission of Ezra (Ezra 7:8 ff). Ezra's mission was confirmed and extended in the twentieth year of Artaxerxes (446-45 BC), when Nehemiah was commissioned to go to Jerusalem and rebuild the city walls (Nehemiah 1-2).

"On the traditional view[64], the 69 weeks (483 years) mark the interval from the decree to rebuild Jerusalem till the appearance of Christ. And if the decree in question is taken to be that of the 7th year of Artaxerxes (457-56 BC, the 483 years run out about 27-28 AD, when our Lord's public ministry began.

On the other hand, the view which supposes that the Book of Daniel belongs wholly to the Maccabean age, and does not here contain genuine prediction, is under the necessity of making the 490 years terminate with the reign of Antiochus Epiphanes (171-164 BC). And this, it is admitted, cannot be done[65].

Therefore Jesus came to be baptized by John and anointed with the Holy Spirit at the exact time prophesied by the prophet Daniel (Matthew 3:13-17).

The City

The city shall be rebuilt in troublesome times. The books of Ezra and Nehemiah describe these troublesome times connected with the rebuilding of the City and its wall.

[64] Pusey, Daniel the Prophet, Lectures II, III, IV

[65] James Orr, "Seventy Weeks" , The International Standard Bible Encyclopedia, Wm. B. Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, 1952, Vol. IV, p. 2744.

The Messiah

After the 69th week of years (i.e. sometime in the 70th week) he will be put to death - "cut off" (Daniel 9:26). The phrase "cut off" is that of Isaiah 53:8, “For he was cut off out of the land of the living; for the transgression of my people was he stricken”. He was utterly rejected by God and man. “Shall have nothing” may refer to the city and Temple in the light of the following context (cf. Matthew 23:37).

The City

As a consequence of the Messiah's death the city shall be destroyed by the people of another ruler; terrible devastation after a siege. No deliverance for it has been determined. This destruction was done against the orders of the Roman General Titus who had wanted to spare the Temple from destruction[66]. The means are the people, not the prince. The cause is the rejection of the Messiah. (cf. Parable of the Wicked Wine-growers in Matthew 21:33-46).

The thought of the Messiah's death could only bring alarm (Daniel 9:27). What about His work spoken of (Daniel 9:24) and summarized in Table 1? The parallel is still Messiah, City. The “he” referred to (Daniel 9:27) is Messiah. Some try to make the pronoun refer to “the prince” in the phrase “the people of the prince who is to come” (Daniel 9:26); it is not the grammatical precedent and would destroy the pattern of the message. The point[67] of the passage is this: The fulfillment of the coming of the Messiah and His acts; and then, consequently, what befalls the City.

The Messiah

His work will be successful; He will make a firm covenant with the many for one week, i.e., the remainder of the indicated time. “The many” is covenantal language describing Christ and His people (cf. Romans 5:12-20). Our Lord spoke of this saying: “Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the covenant which is shed for many for the remission of sins’” (Matthew 26:27-28; cf. Luke 22:20).

The result and the time of Messiah's death are revealed: in the middle of the 70th week, i.e., three and one-half years after His anointing. This is the period recorded in the Gospels of our Lord's earthly ministry - from His Baptism to His Crucifixion. After His death no other sacrifice was acceptable to God; the rent temple veil spoke eloquently and clearly (Matthew 27:51; Mark 15:38; Luke 23:45). Soon, there would be no temple for false sacrifices.

The City

Its temple would be destroyed and the worship that was unacceptable would no longer be possible. The City was leveled; the Temple destroyed; the Jews scattered. The “wing of abominations” may be a reference to the Roman Army ensign, which was considered idolatrous. The destruction was to be utter desolation; a full and complete end will be poured out on the devastated city[68].

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[66] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, iv, 6-7.

[67] A very helpful article, "Seventy Weeks", A. A. Hoekema, *International Standard Bible Encyclopedia (Revised)*. (Grand Rapids: William B. Eerdmans Publishing Company). 1988, pp. 427-428

[68] The exact time of the desolation of the City is NOT stated; only, that it will follow the death of the Messiah. The death of the Messiah is the last DATED time point in the prophecy. Remember "70x7" is an expression of the ultimate "fullness" which is applied to the coming of the Messiah. The Fathers saw a chronological as

Our Lord not only adds the definitive element of when (Matthew 24:34), but also what! It is characteristic of Biblical prophecy that everything is not revealed all at once. Daniel heard some things he did not understand and when asked about them he was told, "Go, Daniel! For the words are sealed up and closed until the end time" because their fulfillment is distant (cf. Daniel 12:8-9; Revelation 10:5-7). In the New Testament, especially the Book of Revelation, these things are "open" and "unsealed" because the fulfillment is near (cf. Revelation 22:10); there are also some things in it which are "sealed" from our knowledge because their fulfillment is distant (Revelation 10:3-4). So the elements of this part of Daniel are completely in keeping with the rest of the biblical usage. See Appendix C, Secret Things and Revealed Things.

Daniel is to rejoice and have hope; the Messiah is coming to bring about full redemption. However, Jerusalem will reject the Messiah and that act will be fatal. It is clear that there will be no hope in the City or the Temple of Jerusalem. The only hope is in the Lord of the New Jerusalem; not in the blood of bulls and goats, but in the precious blood of our Lord Jesus Christ shed for His people. It is foolish and sinful to point men to hope in a restored temple and its sacrifices; to turn from Christ to the city.

"For by one offering He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified". "But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the Living God, the heavenly Jerusalem; to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in Heaven, to God the Judge of all. To the spirits of just men made perfect, to Jesus the Mediator of the new covenant, and to the blood of sprinkling that speaks better things than that of Abel" (Hebrews 10:14; 12:22-24).

The Great Tribulation: Matthew 24:15-28

Jesus' instruction regarding what will occur in Jerusalem is not simply to satisfy prophetic curiosity; it is very practical and extremely critical regarding the lives of Christians. It has to do with the provision for the protection of the Church and the continuation of her ministry in the world.

Christ commands Christians to flee Jerusalem: Matthew 24:15-20

Christ's words are to flee, and to flee at once; nothing is to stand in the way of an immediate escape once the city has become the object of an armed invasion. During the Jewish Wars, 66-70 AD, Jerusalem had been approached by heathen armies on several occasions. The specific event referred to as THE SIGN TO FLEE is, probably, the attack by the Edomites (Idumeans) upon Jerusalem in 68 AD.

Several times in Israel's history, as she was being attacked by heathen enemies, the Edomites had broken in to ravage and desolate the city, thus adding greatly to Israel's misery (2 Chronicles 20:2; 28:17; Psalm 137:7; Ezekiel 35:5-15; Amos 1:9, 11; Obadiah 10-16). Remaining true to form, their characteristic behavior was repeated during the Great Tribulation

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well as symbolic element in passage (cf. Athanasius the Great, above). In the Scriptures, the fulfillment always sheds light on the prophecy; the Lord's Christ had come. The Lord's death in the middle of the 70th Week - after 3 1/2 years of ministry speaks of "incompleteness".

of Jerusalem. One evening in 68 AD they surrounded the city with 20,000 soldiers. As they lay outside the city wall, Josephus wrote[69]: "There broke out a storm in the night, with the utmost violence, and very strong winds, with the largest showers of rain, with continual lightning, terrible thundering, and amazing concussions and bellowing of the earth, that was an earthquake. These things were a clear indication that some destruction was coming upon men, when the system of the world was put in this disorder; and anyone would guess that these wonders foreshadowed some grand calamities that were coming".

Many of the Church Fathers[70] refer their readers to the account of Josephus for the vast, astonishing, and horrific descriptions of the fulfillment of our Lord's prophecy of the Great Tribulation, the destruction of Jerusalem, 70 AD, and the events leading up to and following it. In his Preface, Flavius Josephus wrote[71]: "Accordingly it appears to me, that the misfortunes of all men, from the beginning of the world, if they were compared to these of the Jews, are not as bad as they were. See Appendix D, "Josephus and the Destruction of Jerusalem", for a suggested list of relevant sections for reading. The early Church Fathers held the reports of Josephus in very high regard and directed the attention of their hearers to them on many occasions. It would be very worthwhile for modern Christians to read these accounts.

This was the last opportunity to escape from the doomed city of Jerusalem. Anyone who wished to flee had to do so immediately, without delay. The Edomites burst into the city and went directly to the Temple, where they slaughtered 8,500 people by slitting their throats. As the Temple overflowed with blood, the Edomites rushed through the city streets, plundering houses and murdering everyone they met, including the high priest. Josephus said[72] that this event marked "the beginning of the destruction of the city. From this date may be dated the overthrow of her wall, and the ruin of her affairs". Jesus said, "This is the sign! Don't be misled by anything else! Know what it means! Run for your life!"

Without any delay those in Jerusalem are to flee to the hill country, where the caves that concealed the people in 173 BC from Antiochus Epiphanes would shield them again. If you are on a rooftop, go on across the roofs and out of the city. Take nothing for nothing is worth your life. Pray that you may be without hardship, handicap or hindrance. Pregnant women and suckling babes will have difficulty in travel; there will be no help from their countrymen.

Christ Reveals This as the Great Tribulation of Jerusalem: Matthew 24:21-22

Understand, there never has been, nor will there be, anything like this! The Great Tribulation was to take place, not at the end of history, but in the middle, for nothing similar had occurred "from the beginning of the world until now, or ever shall". Luke adds something, but sees it as a middle-of-history event.

> "For these are days of vengeance, that all things that are written may be fulfilled. Woe unto to them that are with child and give suck in those days! There shall be great distress upon the land and wrath upon this people. And they shall fall by the edge of the sword, and shall be led captive into all nations: and

[69] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, IV, iv, 5.
[70] For example, Eusebius, Athanasius and John Chrysostom
[71] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, Preface, 4.
[72] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, IV, v, 1-2.

Jerusalem shall be trodden down of the Gentiles, until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled" (Luke 21:22-24, RV).

The prophecy of the Great Tribulation refers to the destruction of the Temple in that generation alone. It cannot be made to fit some "double-fulfillment", "parenthesis" or "postponement" scheme of interpretation: the Great Tribulation of 70 AD was an absolutely unique event, never to be repeated. John Chrysostom says[73]:

> "Jesus is speaking of the ills that should overtake them. The Apostles were not to keep the Sabbath day, neither to be there when Vespasian did those things. Some of the Apostles had already departed this life. Those that were left were dwelling in other parts of the world. And let not any men suppose this to have been spoken hyperbolically; but let him study the writings of Josephus, and learn the truth of the sayings. Note how bad things got; when compared with the time before, they appear more gruesome, but also with all the time to come. Therefore He said, 'There shall be tribulation such as never was, nor shall be'".

In a modern commentary[74] on the Great Tribulation of 70 AD, the horror of the event exceeds even the Holocaust of World War II.

> "Considering the physical, moral and religious aspects of this horrible happening in history, one may safely say that the Jews have never experienced such a tribulation even up to this day. We must remember that Jesus is speaking about a tribulation to be experienced only by the Jewish nation. The Jews have suffered a great many tribulations since the destruction of Jerusalem, and particularly do we remember their sufferings during the Second World War; yet these times cannot compare with that which Jesus described in his Olivet Discourse".

The loss of life was enormous, although the siege lasted only four or five months, from April or May until September, 70 AD. Titus, the Roman general, an experienced military commander, made the following comment[75] after the destruction.

> "We have certainly had God for our assistant in this war, and it was no other than God who ejected the Jews out of these fortifications, for what could the hands of men, or any machines, do toward overthrowing these towers".

The atrocities which the Jews within the city committed on each other[76], plus the crimes against them by their neighbors only add a nearly unbelievable element to this time of trial, were it not for our Lord's own words as to its intensity.

> "But the famine was too hard for all other passions, and it is destructive to nothing so much as modesty. For what was otherwise worthy of reverence was in this case despised. Children pulled the very morsels that their fathers were eating out of their mouths, and what still more to be pitied, so did the mothers do as to their infants. When those that were most dear were perishing under their hands,

[73] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 1.
[74] J. Marcellus Kik, Matthew Twenty Four, The Presbyterian and Reformed Publishing Company, Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, p.59.
[75] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, ix, 1.
[76] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, x, 3.

they were not ashamed to take from them the very last drops that might preserve their lives".

Josephus gives[77] a horrible example of cannibalism, which could be multiplied with others even more unfit to hear. Here is an example of the wrath that the people had called down on themselves (cf. Matthew 27:25).

> "A wealthy and cultured woman had stored up a great deal of food, but during the siege, she was robbed, as was very common. Cursing the villains in her despair, she then attempted a most unnatural thing. Snatching up her son, who was a child suckling at her breast she said, 'O miserable infant: for whom shall I preserve you in this war, in this famine, in this sedition? Come on: you be my food, and you be a fury to these seditious varlets, and a by-word to the world, which is all that is now lacking to complete the calamities of the Jews'. As soon as she said this, she slew her son, and then roasted him, and ate one-half of him, and kept the other half concealed. After this the seditious came in, and smelling the scent of this horrid food, they threatened her that they would cut her throat immediately if she did not show them what food she had gotten ready. She replied that she had saved a very fine portion of it for them, and then uncovered what was left of her son. Seeing this they were seized with a horror and amazement of mind, and stood astonished at the sight; when she said to them, 'This is my own son, and what has been done was my own doing! Come, eat of this food; for I have eaten of it myself. Do not pretend to be either more tender than a woman, or more compassionate than a mother; but if you be so scrupulous, and do not abominate this my sacrifice, as I have eaten the one-half, let the rest be reserved for me also'. After this those men went out trembling, never having been so alarmed at anything as they were this, and with some difficulty they left the rest of that meat to the mother".

The fury of the Roman soldiers was kindled against the Jews; and their greedy neighbors also showed them no mercy. Josephus also tells of warring parties in the city. Not even the Temple was spared but was used as a battleground by these warring parties. Worshippers were killed before the altar and hundreds of dead were strewn within the Temple. Josephus laments the horrible situation:

> "O most wretched city[78], what misery so great as this did you ever suffer from the Romans, when they came to purify you from your intestine hatred! For you could be no longer a place fit for God, nor could you continue to exist very long, after you had been a sepulcher for the bodies of your own people, and had made the holy house a burying-place in this civil war of yours".
>
> "It is therefore impossible[79] to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind at once here briefly -- no other city ever suffered such miseries, nor did any age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world" (cf. Acts 2:40).

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[77] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, iii, 4.
[78] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, i, 3.
[79] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, x, 5.

Some of the Jews sought to escape to the Romans, hoping to find some safety from the horrors of the city by way of their surrender; but they experienced something quite different[80] when they were crucified in jest.

> "They were first whipped and then tortured with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were then crucified before the walls of the city. So the soldiers, out of wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest, when their multitude was so great, that room was lacking for crosses, and crosses lacking for bodies".

Some of those who deserted the city had swallowed gold; seeking to preserve some things[81] they lost everything. Many thousands were dissected as they left the city.

> "But when this contrivance was discovered in one instance and the fame of it filled several camps; people thought that the deserters who came to them were filled with gold. So then the multitude of the Arabians and Syrians cut up those that came as supplicants and searched their bellies. Nor does it seem to me that any misery befell the Jews that was more terrible than this, since in one night's time about two thousand deserters were thus dissected".

The final days of Jerusalem were a time when "the day-time was spent in the shedding of blood, and the night in fear". It was "common to see the city filled with dead bodies". Jews panicked and began indiscriminately killing each other; fathers tearfully slaughtered their entire families, in order to prevent them from receiving worse treatment from the Romans. In the midst of terrible famine, mothers killed, roasted, and ate their own children (cf. Deuteronomy 28:53). The whole land "was all over filled with fire and blood". The lakes and seas turned red, dead bodies floating everywhere, littering the shores, bloating in the sun, rotting and splitting apart. Roman soldiers captured people attempting to escape and then crucified them at the rate of 500 per day. See Appendix D for an outline of a number of chapters in Josephus' Wars of the Jews that describe these events in detail.

"Let Him be crucified! Let Him be crucified! His blood be on us and our children!" the apostates had cried forty year earlier (Matthew 27:22-25). And when it was all over, more than a million Jews had been killed in the siege of Jerusalem. Close to a million more were sold into slavery throughout the empire, and the whole land of Judea lay smoldering in ruins, virtually depopulated. The days of vengeance had come with horrifying, unpitying intensity. In breaking her covenant, the holy city had become the whore of Babylon; and now she was a desert. She had become[82] "the habitation of devils, and the hold of every foul spirit, and a cage of every unclean and hateful bird" (Revelation 18:2). Jesus, on the way to His Cross, had warned the women of Jerusalem to mourn for themselves.

> "Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for me, but weep for yourselves, and for your children. For, behold, the days are coming, in which they shall say,

[80] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, xi, 1.
[81] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, xiii, 5.
[82] David Chilton, Paradise Restored, Fort Worth, Texas, Dominion Press, 1985, pp. 93-94. This book contains 24 chapters, where each is introduced by a lengthy quotation from St. Athanasius: 23 from On the Incarnation and one from Defense of His Flight.

blessed are the barren, and the wombs that never bore, and the breasts which never gave suck" (Luke 22:28-29).

The Warfare Will Be Cut Short: Matthew 24:22

If the war had continued, it would have spread to the caves of the hill country and beyond. "For the elect's sake" -- for Christians, those who believed, the days were cut short. There is no record of any Christian dying in the destruction of Jerusalem. The Lord was faithful in forewarning His own and kept His promise to grant security to those in the designated place of refuge. Spiritually, that place of refuge is Jesus Christ; in Him, no one shall perish; outside of Him, there is only death and destruction. And God's vengeance was tempered with mercy even to the Jews who had refused the Father's invitation to the marriage feast and rejecting His Son (cf. Matthew 22:1-14). Chrysostom comments[83] on the parable as a picture of the vengeance of God in 70 AD.

> "What then did He do after these things? Since they were not willing to come, and also slew those who came to them, He burned up their cities, and sent His armies and slew them. These things He said, declaring beforehand the things that took place under Vespasian and Titus, and that they provoked the Father also, by not believing in Him; it is the Father at any rate who is avenging. For this reason let me add, it was not immediately after Christ was slain that the capture take place, but after forty years, that He might show His long suffering; when they had slain Stephen, when they had put James to death, when they had spitefully treated the Apostles".

False Prophets and Unheeded Warnings Make the Slaughter Worse

Josephus also records[84] proclamations of false prophets within the city during the siege. There were a great number of them and their only purpose was to keep the people from deserting.

> "A false prophet was the occasion of these people's destruction; he had made a public proclamation in the city that very day, that God commanded them to get up upon the Temple[85], and that there they should receive miraculous signs of their deliverance. Now there were then a great number of false prophets suborned by the tyrants to impose upon the people that they should wait for deliverance from God. This was in order to keep them from deserting, and that they might be buoyed up above fear and care by such hopes. Now a man that is in adversity easily complies with such promises. For when such a seducer makes him believe that he shall be delivered from those miseries which oppress him, then the patient is full of hope of such deliverance. Thus were the miserable people persuaded by these deceivers and such as belied God Himself".

[83] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXIX, 1.
[84] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, v, 2-3.
[85] The top of the Temple, called the pinnacle of the Temple (Luke 4:9), had a flat roof, and was about 6 stories high.

Josephus also adds[86] that there were signs in the skies and on the ground that destruction was immanent, and there was one courageous man that warned the city for seven years about pending doom. But all this was to no avail.

> "They did not listen, nor give credit, to the signs that were so evident, and which so plainly foretold their future desolation. Like men infatuated, without either eyes to see or minds to consider, they did not regard the denunciations that God made to them. There was a star resembling a sword, which stood over the city and a comet that continued for a whole year. The year before the Jews' rebellion, when the people came in great crowds to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the 8th Day of the month Nisan and at the 9th hour of the night, a great light shone around the altar and the Holy House that it appeared to be daytime for half an hour. This light seemed to be a good sign to the unskillful, but was so interpreted by the sacred scribes as to portend those events that that followed immediately upon it".
>
> "At the same festival, a heifer that was being led to slaughter by the high priest gave birth to a lamb in the midst of the Temple. Moreover, the Eastern Gate of the Inner Court, which was of brass and vastly heavy, and which was with difficulty shut by 20 men, was seen to be opened of its own accord about the 6th hour of the night. This also appeared to the vulgar to be a very happy prodigy, as if God opened to them the gate of happiness. But the men of learning understood the warning: the security of their Holy House was dissolved of its own accord, and the gate was opened for the advantage of their enemies. So these publicly declared that desolation was coming on them".
>
> "Besides these, a few days after that Feast, on the 21st of Ayar, a certain prodigious and incredible phenomenon appeared. I suppose that the account of it would seem to be a fable, were it not related by those that saw it, and were not the events that followed it of so considerable a nature as to deserve such signals. Before sunset, chariots and troops in their armor were seen running about among the clouds, and surrounding the cities. Moreover, at Pentecost that followed shortly, as the priests were going by night into the Court of the Priests, as their custom was to perform their sacred ministrations, they said that they felt a quaking and heard a great noise. After this they heard a sound as of a great multitude saying, 'Let us get out of here!'"
>
> "But what is still more terrible, there was a man, Jesus, the son of Ananus, a plebian and a vine grower, who came to the Feast of Tabernacles four years before the war began when the city was in great peace and prosperity. He began to cry aloud, 'A voice from the East, a voice from the West, a voice from the four winds, a voice against Jerusalem and the Holy House, a voice against the bridegrooms and the brides, and a voice against this whole people!' With this cry, he went about by day and by night in all the lanes of the city. Certain of the most eminent among the populace had great indignation at this dire cry of his and gave him a great number of severe stripes. Yet he didn't say anything for himself in defense, or anything to those who chastised him. They brought him to the Roman procurator, Albinus, where he was whipped until his bones were laid bare. Yet he did not make any supplication for himself, nor shed any tears, but turning his voice to the most lamentable tone possible, at every stroke of the whip, his answer

[86] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, v, 2-3.

was, 'Woe, woe to Jerusalem!' His cry was the loudest at the festivals and he continued for seven years and five months without growing hoarse. During the siege, he was going around on the walls, saying with utmost force, 'Woe to the city again, and to the people and to the Holy House, and woe to myself also!' Just then, a large stone came from one of the siege engines and struck him, killing him instantly".

Christ Warns About Reports of Messianic Deliverance: Matthew 24:23-28

Jesus had warned about reports of a local and personal coming of Messiah; He said, "Do not believe it!" (Matthew 24:23). And He contrasted His Second Advent with false reports that would be given out saying that He had come. Many Jews expected messianic deliverance and were enthusiastic. The city was jammed with religious pilgrims; and there were many false reports that created all sorts of negative and positive excitement. Most were sure that the Lord would not let them be attacked during the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The translator of Josephus, William Whiston comments[87] on this as follows:

> "What is here chiefly remarkable is this, that no foreign nation ever came to destroy the Jews at any of their solemn festivals, from the days of Moses until this time [70 AD]. But now we have their apostasy from God, and from disobedience to him. God had promised protection during the festivals (Exodus 34:23-24). The fact that God did not observe this promise any longer is another indication that Israel had been excommunicated from the covenant".

When Jesus said, "Do not believe it!" (Matthew 24:26-27), He contrasted the local character of the siege of Jerusalem with the universal nature of His appearance at His Second Advent -- His Parousia[88]. When the Lord comes in His glory at the Second Advent, He will appear such that everyone can see, and it will be like lightning flashing. "For as the lightning comes from the east and flashes to the west, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be" (Matthew 24:27).

John Chrysostom commented[89] on the dramatic effect of Christ's Second Advent as follows: (Matthew 24:31).

> "How then does the lightning shine? It does not need one to talk of it, it does not need a herald, but even to those that sit in houses, and to those in chambers it shows itself in an instant of time throughout the whole world. So shall that coming be, showing itself at once everywhere by reason of the shining forth of His glory".

The Gathering of the Eagles

The Lord gave a concluding proverb: "Wherever the carcass is, there the eagles will be gathered together" (Matthew 24:28). There are two aspects of this gathering: one for the unrighteous and another for the righteous. For the unrighteous, birds of prey, not deliverers

[87] David Chilton, Paradise Restored, Fort Worth, Texas, Dominion Press, 1985, p 290.
[88] This expression (*he parousia tou huiou tou anthropou))* is used here, v. 27 and in v. 37, and v. 39 in reference to the Second Advent.
[89] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 3.

come to spiritually dead Jerusalem. Vultures and eagles are Old Testament symbols of foreign nations coming to attack and destroy, not to deliver[90]. "The lifeless corpse[91] of Judaism will naturally attract to itself the carrion eagles of Rome -- attract them to a definite spot". These signs will enable the Church to see this approaching day of vengeance (Hebrews 10:23-27; esp. v.25).

But there is another meaning for the righteous, since they will not be attracted to Jerusalem. John Chrysostom noted[92] that the gathering of eagles is the gathering of the saints by the angels (Matthew 24:31).

> "But He mentions also another sign, 'where the carcass is, there also shall the eagles be'; meaning the multitude of the angels, of the martyrs, of all the saints".

Irenaeus connected this gathering[93] to the Lord's plans throughout the ages regarding fellowship with God and the Salvation of men.

> "For this reason God demands service from men, in order that, since He is good and merciful, He may benefit those who continue in His service. Wherefore also did the Lord say to His disciples, 'You have not chosen Me, but I have chosen you' (John 15:16); indicating that they were glorified by Him. Of this, Isaiah says, 'I will bring your seed from the East, and will gather you from the West. And I will say to the north, Give up; and to the south, Keep not back; bring My sons from afar, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; all, as many as have been called in My name. In My glory I have prepared, and formed, and made him' (Isaiah 43:5-6). Inasmuch as then, 'wherever the carcass is, there shall also the eagles be gathered together' (Matthew 24:28), we do participate in the glory of the Lord, who has both formed us, and prepared us for this, that when we are with Him, we may partake of His glory".

Ambrose linked[94] the gathering of "eagles" to the gathering of the saints at the Second Advent.

> "Let us, then, seek the body of Christ which the voice of the Father from heaven has shown to you at the time when the Jews said that it thundered (John 12:29); the body of Christ, which again the last trumpet shall reveal. For 'the Lord Himself shall descend from heaven at the voice of the Archangel, and at the trumpet of God, and they that are dead in Christ shall rise again' (1 Thessalonians 4:16). For 'where the body is, there too are the eagles', where the body of Christ is, there is the truth".

One can conclude from this that to refuse God is a horrible thing; it is also dangerous. It places a person, or city or nation in the focal point of divine judgment. These are weighty but true words; history is an eloquent witness of what Paul declared:

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[90] See for example Jeremiah 15:3-4, Ezekiel 31:6, 13, 32:4.
[91] Knox, R. A. The Epistles and Gospels, 1946. p.278.
[92] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 3.
[93] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xiv, 2.
[94] Ambrose, Two Books on the Decease of His Brother, Saytrus, II, 108.

> "Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God under foot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of Grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine; I will repay, says the Lord'. And again, 'The Lord will judge His people'. It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God". (Hebrews 10:29-31*)*:

One might note that none of the above involves Anti-Semitism. Not a continuing race of persons but a single generation was punished by God for its sin. The Gospel was preached to Jews and Gentiles; and the first Christians all were Jews. The Scriptures forbid personal hatred and bigotry in the name of Christ. But also, in being honest with God's Word, the testimony of Christ's Church, and the reports of eye witnesses, we may say that this generation of the nation of Israel was accountable for rejecting Christ, and that it was an object of God's wrath.

Christ Comes on the Clouds of Heaven: Matthew 24:29-31

Signs in the Heavens

As a contrast to the destruction of Jerusalem and all the announcements by the false prophets, Jesus stated that His Second Advent will be entirely different. At this time, Jesus spoke of His Second Advent from the viewpoint of what to expect in the heavens. There will be tremendous signs in the heavens, where these signs will be much greater than what was reported by Josephus at the destruction of Jerusalem.

> "Immediately after the tribulation of those days the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars will fall from heaven, and the powers of the heavens will be shaken. Then the sign[95] of the Son of Man will appear in heaven, and then all the tribes of the earth will mourn, and they will see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven with power and great glory. And He will send His angels with a great sound of a trumpet, and they will gather together His elect from the four winds, from one end of heaven to the other" (Matthew 24:29-31).

In this account from Matthew, he uses the phrase "immediately after the tribulation of those days". This can be interpreted several ways. Luke, however, adds more detail and clarifies the time frame regarding when the signs in the sky will appear. A time will intervene between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Advent that is called "the times of the Gentiles" during which Jerusalem will be trampled. We are in that period right now.

> "And they will fall by the edge of the sword, and be led away captive into all nations. And Jerusalem will be trampled by Gentiles until the times of the Gentiles are fulfilled. And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken" (Luke 21:24-26).

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[95] This sign in the heavens has been interpreted to mean the sign of the Cross. See for example:
John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 3.
Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 22.

During His "trial" before the Sanhedrin, Jesus also spoke of coming on the clouds of heaven. As many false witnesses came forward to testify against Him, Jesus said nothing as the witnesses all contradicted each other (Matthew 26:59-60). The chief priests, the elders and all the council were searching for two or three witnesses whose testimony agreed so that they could convict Him of some charge punishable by death (Deuteronomy 19:15-21). Finally, the high priest placed Jesus under oath so that He had to answer, and He spoke to them of "coming on the clouds of heaven".

> "'I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!' Jesus said to him, 'It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven'. Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, 'He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy! What do you think?' They answered and said, 'He is deserving of death'" (Matthew 26:63-66; cf. Mark 14:62-64; Luke 22:69-71).

The Coming of Christ on the clouds of heaven has been universally interpreted[96] as His Second Advent, His *Parousia*. John Chrysostom stated[97] that there is an implication for the end of time that one can infer from the events of the "Great Tribulation" of 70 AD. Jesus stated that this "Great Tribulation" will be unique in world history, and no future event will be as horrible (Matthew 24:21). But at the Second Advent, there will be a lesser tribulation led by Antichrist and the coming false prophets. The false prophets and false christs shall cause confusion, and no small turmoil in the world. At this time, 'the powers of Heaven shall be shaken' (Matthew 24:29), and 'the sign of the Son of Man in Heaven shall appear' (Matthew 24:30); that is, the Cross shall appear in heaven being brighter than the sun, since the sun will be darkened, and hide itself. And the Cross will appear when it would not appear, unless it was far brighter than the beams of the sun. Then 'they shall see the Son of Man coming'; no longer is He on the cross, but 'in the clouds of Heaven, with power and great glory'. He comes in a cloud as He was taken up (Acts 1:9), and the tribes seeing these things mourn. By saying all this He roused His disciples, and indicated from how many evils they should be delivered, and how many good things they shall enjoy. This was important to them since they were despondent at the thought of Jesus going to the Cross.

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[98] that "the sign of the Son of Man" is the Cross and this will be a terror to His enemies:

> "What is the sign of His coming, lest a hostile power dare to counterfeit it. 'And then shall appear', He says, 'the sign of the Son of Man in heaven'. Now Christ's own true sign is the Cross; a sign of a luminous Cross shall go before the King, plainly declaring Him who was formerly crucified. The Jews who before pierced Him and plotted against Him, when they see it, may mourn tribe by tribe, saying, 'This is He who was beat up, this is He whose face they spat on, this is He whom they bound with chains, this is He whom of old they crucified. 'Where',

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[96] For example:
Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation of the Word, 56.
Justin Martyr, First Apology, LI; Dialog with Trypho, XIV, XXXI.
Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xix, 2; V, xxx, 3-4.

[97] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 3.

[98] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 22.

they will say, 'shall we flee from the face of Your wrath?' The sign of the Cross shall be a terror to His foes; but joy to His friends who have believed in Him, or preached Him, or suffered for His sake".

Cyril of Alexandria contrasted[99] Jesus' first coming with His Second Advent. While He was largely unnoticed to most of the world in the 1st Century, His Second Advent will be quite different.

> "Prior to the Second Advent, various false christs and false prophets will appear preceding Him, falsely assuming to themselves His person, and coming into the world like eddies of smoke springing up from a fire about to break forth".
>
> "It was necessary that He should remain unknown during the time that preceded His passion; but His Second Advent from heaven will not happen secretly as did His coming at first, but will be illustrious and awesome. He shall descend with the holy angels guarding Him, and in the glory of God the Father, to judge the world in righteousness. He gives us clear and evident signs of the time when the consummation of the world is near. There shall be wars and tumults and famines and pestilence everywhere; and terrors from heaven, and great signs. All the stars shall fall; and the heaven shall be rolled up like a scroll, and its powers shall be shaken" (Matthew 24:29). This is a quote from Isaiah, "And all the powers of the heavens shall melt, and the sky shall be rolled up like a scroll: and all the stars shall fall like leaves from a vine, and as leaves fall from a fig-tree" (Isaiah 34:4 LXX).
>
> "After His discussion of the destruction of Jerusalem, He transfers His words from this subject to the time of the consummation, and says, 'And there shall be signs in the sun, and in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations in perplexity; from the sound of the sea, and its surging, as the souls of men depart from fear and expectation of the things which are coming upon the world. The hosts of heaven shall be shaken' (Luke 21:25-26). Inasmuch as creation begins to be changed, and brings unendurable terrors upon the inhabitants of earth, there will be a certain fearful tribulation, and a departing of souls to death. The unendurable fear of those things that are coming will suffice for the destruction of many. Then, He says, they shall see the Son of man coming in a cloud with power and great glory".

The Rise of "The Antichrist"

Cyril of Jerusalem commented on these things at length. Regarding false prophets[100] and false christs (Matthew 24:24), "This has happened in part: for already Simon Magus has said this, and Menander, and some others of the godless leaders of heresy; and others will say it in our days, or after us". Yet something similar will occur[101] prior to the Second Advent:

> "Since the true Christ is to come a second time, the adversary, taking occasion by the expectation of the simple, and especially of them of the circumcision, brings in a certain man who is a magician and expert in sorcery and enchantments of beguiling craftiness. He shall seize for himself the power of the Roman Empire, and shall falsely style himself Christ; by this name of Christ

[99] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 139.
[100] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 5.
[101] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 11-12.

deceiving the Jews, who are looking for the Anointed, and seducing those of the Gentiles by his magical illusions. But this Antichrist is to come when the times of the Roman Empire shall have been fulfilled (Luke 21:24), and the end of the world is now drawing near".

Simon Magus was well on his way toward accomplishing what Cyril mentioned, until he was stopped in his tracks by the Apostles Peter and Paul. Simon was about to demonstrate to Emperor Nero that he would ascend back to his father in heaven and return to bring good things. Peter and Paul realized that stopping him would result in their martyrdom, but they proceeded anyway. As a result of their prayers, Simon fell from a great height as he ascended, and died of his injuries. Nero then imprisoned the Apostles; Peter was crucified and Paul was beheaded[102].

The Apostle John defined the term "antichrist" as those who deny the Incarnation along with denying the Father and the Son. See Appendix A for more details. While John said that many "antichrists" have arisen (1 John 2:18), Cyril quoted[103] Paul to say that there will be one major antichrist who gains prominence just prior to the Second Advent, and that this will occur in a new way that did not occur in the 1st Century. Paul had said:

> "Let no one deceive you by any means; for that Day will not come unless the falling away comes first, and the man of sin is revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshiped, so that he sits as God in the temple of God, showing himself that he is God" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4).

Cyril identified this "man of sin" as "*The* Antichrist" who comes just before the Second Advent of Christ; and there are similarities between "Antichrist" and Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24), who was also a master of sorcery. Cyril wrote during the Arian controversy, where Arius (in the 4th Century) taught some of the same heresies that Simon Magus had taught in the 1st Century. There were many Arian Bishops in Cyril's day, and Cyril described his times as a time of falling away from the Faith. To Cyril, it looked so bad that he thought the time must be just preceding the Second Advent. However, righteous men persevered in identifying the error of the followers of Arius, and the situation in the Church was reversed. Cyril wrote:

> "Thus wrote Paul, and now is the falling away. For men have fallen away from the right faith; and some preach the identity of the Son with the Father, and others dare to say that Christ was brought into being out of nothing. Formerly the heretics were clear; but now the Church is filled with heretics in disguise. For men have fallen away from the truth, and have itching ears (2 Timothy 4:3). Most have departed from right words, and rather choose the evil, than desire the good".

Irenaeus also referred[104] to the person he called "Antichrist" and some of the evil that he will bring upon the earth. Irenaeus implies that there is a severe demonic influence working in this "Antichrist" as if he were not even human, which is not the case, but may seem so.

> "We will not incur the risk of pronouncing the name of Antichrist; for if it were necessary that his name should be distinctly revealed in this present time, it would have been announced by him (i.e. the Apostle John) who beheld the

[102] For more details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2002.
[103] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 11-12.
[104] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, xxx, 3-4.

apocalyptic vision. For that was seen not very long ago, but almost in our day, towards the end[105] of Domitian's reign".

"But he indicates the number of the name now, that when this man comes we may avoid him, being aware who he is: the name, however, is suppressed, because it is not worthy of being proclaimed by the Holy Spirit. But now as 'he was, and is not, and shall ascend out of the abyss, and goes into perdition' (Revelation 17:8), as one who has no existence; so neither has his name been declared, for the name of that which does not exist is not proclaimed. But when this Antichrist shall have devastated all things in this world, he will reign for three years and six months, and sit in the temple at Jerusalem. And then the Lord will come from heaven in the clouds, in the glory of the Father, sending this man and those who follow him into the lake of fire. But He will bring in for the righteous the times of the kingdom, that is, the rest, the hallowed seventh day. And He will restore to Abraham the promised inheritance, in which kingdom the Lord declared, that 'many coming from the East and from the West should sit down with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob' (Matthew 8:11).

Cyril continued to describe[106] the difficulties of the times preceding the Second Advent for those who remain faithful to the Lord. There will be a great many martyrs and they will face a time of great deception, greater than during the days preceding the destruction of Jerusalem.

"Who then is the blessed man, that shall at that time devoutly witness for Christ? For I say that the Martyrs of that time excel all martyrs. For the previous Martyrs have wrestled with men only; but in the time of Antichrist they shall do battle with Satan in his own person. Former kings that persecuted the saints only put to death; they did not pretend to raise the dead, nor did they make false shows of signs and wonders. In his time there shall be the evil inducement both of fear and of deceit, so that if it be possible, the very elect shall be deceived (Matthew 24:24). Let it never enter into the heart of any then alive to ask, 'What did Christ do more than him?' For by what power does this man work these things? Were it not God's will, He would not have allowed them. The Apostle warns beforehand, 'For this cause God shall send[107] them a working of error; not that they might make excuse, but that they might be condemned. They, he says, who believed not the truth, that is, the true Christ, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 2:11-12), that is, in Antichrist."

Matthew stated that the Great Tribulation of 70 AD would be unmatched in world history (Matthew 24:21). The tribulation prior to the Lord's Second Advent does not match the horrors of the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, but exceeds all previous generations in the fear of the expectation of what is about to happen.

"And there will be signs in the sun, in the moon, and in the stars; and on the earth distress of nations, with perplexity, the sea and the waves roaring; men's hearts failing them from fear and the expectation of those things which are coming on the earth, for the powers of heaven will be shaken" (Luke 21:25-26).

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[105] Irenaeus is referring to the time that the Apostle John received the revelation that we call the Book of Revelation. Domitian reigned from c. 81 to 96 AD, and Irenaeus wrote in about 180 AD.

[106] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 17.

[107] Send, that is, shall allow to happen

The Apostle John gives us some more details of these signs that are to take place, where the earthquake will be more severe than anything in the past. Since history records earthquakes from impacts of large meteors that created craters miles in diameter, this is quite a statement to say that nothing in human history matches it.

> "And there were noises, thunder and lightning; and there was a great earthquake, such a mighty and great earthquake as had not occurred since men were on the earth. Now the great city was divided into three parts, and the cities of the nations fell. And great Babylon was remembered before God, to give her the cup of the wine of the fierceness of His wrath. Then every island fled away, and the mountains were not found. And great hail from heaven fell upon men, each hailstone about the weight of a talent[108]. Men blasphemed God because of the plague of the hail, since that plague was exceedingly great" (Revelation 16:18-21).

John Chrysostom also stated[109] that the deception will be exceptionally intense just prior to the Second Advent of Christ.

> "Notice here He said nothing of war, but only of those that attempt to deceive. For some in the days of the Apostles deceived the multitude, 'for they shall come, and shall deceive many' (Matthew 24:5, 11); and others shall do so before His Second Advent, and these shall be more grievous than the former (Matthew 24:24-26). 'For they shall show', He said, 'signs and wonders, so as to deceive if possible the very elect' (Matthew 24:24-26). Here He is speaking of Antichrist, and indicates that some also shall minister to him. Of him Paul too speaks. Having called him 'man of sin', and 'son of perdition', he added, 'Whose coming is after the working of Satan, with all power, signs and lying wonders; and with all deceitfulness of unrighteousness in them that perish' (2 Thessalonians 2:3, 9-10). Notice how He secures them; 'Do not go forth into the deserts, enter not into the secret chambers' (Matthew 24:26). He did not say, 'Go, and do not believe'; but, 'Do not go forth, neither depart from there'. For great then will be the deceiving, because even deceiving miracles are done".

Chrysostom continued[110] to say that even Creation will be in the process of being transfigured in anticipation of the Second Advent. And if the days were shortened due to the Jewish war, much more so now!

> "Then He tells of fearful prodigies. For there shall be great tribulation, there being so many deceivers. But it is not protracted to a length of time. For if the Jewish war was shortened for the elect's sake, much more shall this temptation be limited for these elect's sake. Therefore, He didn't say, 'after the tribulation', but IMMEDIATELY 'after the tribulation of those days shall the sun be darkened', for almost at the same time all things come to pass. The false prophets and false christs shall come and cause confusion, and immediately He Himself will be here. No small turmoil is then to prevail over the world".

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[108] A talent was the maximum weight that a grown man could carry, or about 75 pounds.
[109] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 2.
[110] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVI, 3.

> "Even Creation will then be transfigured, for 'the sun shall be darkened', not destroyed, but overcome by the light of His presence; and the stars shall fall, for what shall be the need of them if there being no night? (Revelation 21:25, 22:5). 'The powers of Heaven shall be shaken', in all likelihood, from seeing so great a change come to pass. For, 'When the stars were made, all my angels praised me with a loud voice' (Job 38:7 LXX) and the angels marveled at His work. Much more seeing all things in course of change, and their fellow servants giving account, and the whole world standing by that awesome judgment-seat, and those who have lived from Adam to His coming, having an account demanded of them for all that they did, how shall they but tremble, and be shaken?"

See Appendix B for an extended quote from John of Damascus, who summarized the mind of the Fathers, who preceded him, on "The Antichrist". Also in Appendix B is an extended quote from John Chrysostom on Paul's references to "The Antichrist" in his letters to the Thessalonians.

The Lesson of the Fig Tree: Matthew 24:32-35

From the Old Testament

The illustration of the fig tree has been used in the Old Testament to picture the nation of Israel in peace and prosperity, and Jesus used the same illustration several times. Israel was pictured as dwelling underneath her vine and fig tree for both shade and nourishment (1 Kings 4:25, 2 Kings 18:31). In times of apostasy, the vine and fig tree were described as withered (Joel 1:12, Habakkuk 3:17), and the vine and the fig tree no longer yielded their strength (Joel 2:22).

Fruit was expected from the nation of Israel. Jesus illustrated this by the Parable of the Vineyard Tenants, where He expected fruit in its season (Matthew 21:34, Mark 12:2, Luke 20:10). This fruit is not expected of the heathen, since one doesn't expect to find grapes and figs on thorn bushes and thistles (Matthew 7:16, Luke 6:44). Jesus used a parable of a man who sent his two sons out to work in his vineyard. The son that actually went to work was acknowledged by the chief priests and elders as doing the Will of his Father. Jesus connected the son that actually went to work to the tax collectors and harlots who believed, and the son that didn't go to work to the Scribes and Pharisees (Matthew 21:28-32).

The Fig Tree That Didn't Produce

To illustrate Jesus' care and concern for His people, He gave a parable of a fig tree that didn't produce fruit. He requested from the Father more time to fertilize it that it might come to produce fruit. He spoke this parable:

> "A certain man had a fig tree planted in his vineyard, and he came seeking fruit on it and found none. Then he said to the keeper of his vineyard, 'Look, for three years I have come seeking fruit on this fig tree and find none. Cut it down; why does it use up the ground?' But he answered and said to him, 'Sir, let it alone this year also, until I dig around it and fertilize it. And if it bears fruit, fine! But if not, after that you can cut it down'" (Luke 13:6-9).

Irenaeus said that this[111] parable points out our heavenly Father as seeking fruit from His people, both under the Old and the New Covenant:

> This truth was clearly shown forth by the parable of the fig-tree, of which the Lord says, 'Behold, now these three years I come seeking fruit on this fig-tree, but I find none' (Luke 13:7). He was pointing onwards, by the prophets, to His Advent, where He came seeking the fruit of righteousness from them. Since he did not find it, the fig-tree should be cut down. And, without using a parable, the Lord said to Jerusalem, 'O Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you that kill the prophets, and stone those that are sent to you; how often would I have gathered your children together, as a hen gathers her chickens under her wings, and you would not! Behold, your house shall be left to you desolate' (Matthew 23:37). For that which had been said in the parable, 'Behold, for three years I come seeking fruit', and, 'How often would I have gathered your children together', is false, if we do not understand that He came to them but once, and then for the first time. But He who chose the patriarchs and those who lived under the first covenant, is the same Word of God who both visited them through the prophetic Spirit, and us also who have been called together from all quarters by His Advent. In addition, He truly declared, 'Many shall come from the East and from the West, and shall recline with Abraham, and Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven. However, the children of the kingdom shall go into outer darkness; there shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth' (Matthew 8:11-12). If, then, those who do believe in Him through the preaching of His Apostles throughout the East and West shall recline with Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob, in the kingdom of heaven, partaking with them of the heavenly banquet, one and the same God is set forth as He who did indeed choose the patriarchs, visit the people, and call the Gentiles.

The Cursed Fig Tree

To make this illustration of fruit even more dramatic, Jesus came to a fig tree on Monday of Holy Week looking for figs, even though they weren't in season. Seeing none, He cursed the fig tree, "Let no fruit grow on you ever again" (Matthew 21:18-22). This cursing of the fig tree spoke of the coming judgment on the nation of Israel in 70 AD. For a detailed study of the Cursed Fig Tree, see the Study for Holy Monday Bridegroom Matins.

The Fig Tree Illustrates Spiritual Development

To illustrate this even further, Jesus gave a parable using the growth cycle of a fig tree to illustrate how one knows what spiritual developments are coming. In the growth cycle of fig trees, they lose their leaves in the winter, and leave only buds on the branches. In the Spring, the buds start to swell and leaves begin to appear. He used this imagery to speak about both the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Advent.

> "Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender and puts forth leaves, you know that summer *is* near. So you also, when you see all these things, know that it is near — at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take

[111] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxvi, 8.

place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Matthew 24:32-35).

John Chrysostom stated[112] that by considering the growth of the fig tree, it will be plain to those of God what is about to happen. His disciples do not need to know exactly when things will occur as they had asked to know (Matthew 24:3).

> "Christ had said, 'immediately after the tribulation of those days' (Matthew 24:29). But they sought of this, after how long a time it should be, and desired to know in particular the exact day. Therefore He gives them the example of the fig tree, indicating that the interval was not great, but that in quick succession would occur His Advent also. And this He declared not by the parable alone, but by the words that follow, saying, 'know that it is near, even at the doors'" (Matthew 24:33).
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> "Whereby He foretells another thing also, a spiritual summer, and a calm that should be on that day (after the present tempest) for the righteous; but to the sinners the contrary, winter after summer, which He declares in what follows, saying, that the day shall come upon them, when they are living in luxury".

Daniel's Prophecies and the Church Age

The prophecies of Daniel were used by the Fathers of the Church[113] to refute the Jews who rejected Jesus as the Messiah promised in the Old Testament. Interestingly, it was Jesus' reference to coming on the clouds of heaven that brought down upon Him the wrath and judgment of Caiaphas and the Sanhedrin; for with it our Lord clearly set forth who and what He is (Cf. Matthew 26:64-66; Mark 14:62-64; Luke 22:67-71). Jesus said to Caiaphas:

> "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven" (Matthew 26:64, Daniel 7:13-14).

To Daniel were given many answers to questions concerning the time and circumstances of Messiah's "first" coming. Daniel sets the stage, presents the figures, and interprets the language which our Lord applies to Himself in the Gospels.

The Consideration of the Kingdom of God in the Book of Daniel

Daniel's message is that the kingdoms of this world are not beyond God's control; one day they will be replaced by God's own kingdom. "In the days of those kings, the God of heaven will set up a kingdom that shall never be destroyed, and this kingdom shall not be left to another people. It shall crush these kingdoms and bring them to an end, and it shall stand forever" (Daniel 2:44).

The book of Daniel is made up of two sections, chapters 1-6, and 7-12. Chapters 1-6 have to do with the history of Daniel and his friends. It is a very selective history that was designed to point the readers -- the Jews, the covenant people -- toward the God of the kingdom.

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[112] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 1.
[113] See for example Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation of the Word, 39-40.

A clear pattern is evident in these chapters. An event takes place -- a dream, a fiery furnace, the handwriting on the wall -- and an interpretation is given. The results:

- The king expresses faith in Daniel's God as "God of gods" (Daniel 2:47), "Most High" (Daniel 4:34), "the living God enduring forever" (Daniel 6:26);
- He issues a decree that no one speak against this God (Daniel 3:29);
- He orders everyone to tremble and fear "before the God of Daniel" (Daniel 6:26). The pattern serves to point readers to God[114].

Chapters 7-12 have to do with visions that speak of the future and the coming of the kingdom of God. Two messages are set forth. The Kingdom of God will be established after a long period of the rise and fall of several world empires; and, the people of God are to be encouraged in a coming great time of trouble which awaits them before the coming of Messiah, the Prince. This persecution took place under Antiochus Epiphanes c. 173 BC, and is the subject of a very detailed prophecy which makes up the greater portion of chapters 10-11.

The Establishment of the Kingdom of God after Four World Empires

Daniel speaks of the four empires that are to rise before the Kingdom of God is established (Daniel 2:44). They are pictured under the figure of different metals (Daniel 2), and they are portrayed as various beasts (Daniel 7). There is an elaboration of the second and third of these empires represented as a ram and he-goat (Daniel 8). Finally he speaks of the time that is to elapse before Messiah comes and tells what Messiah will accomplish under the figure of 70 sevens (Daniel 9).

Table 1
The Kingdoms of Daniel

Kingdom	NEO-BABYLON	MEDO-PERSIA	GREECE	ROME
Time	606-538 B.C., 68yrs	538-333 B.C., 205yrs	333-63 B.C,. 270yrs	63 B.C. - ?
Chapter 2	Gold (head)	Silver (trunk)	Brass (thighs)	Iron/clay (leg)
Chapter 7	Lion	Bear	Leopard	"Dreadful"
Chapter 8		Ram	He-goat	
Chapter 9	70 SEVENS AND MESSIAH THE PRINCE			

The first three empires are named in Daniel 2:38; 8:20, 21. “Rome” is not named in Daniel but there is little doubt that it is the fourth empire, the Dreadful beast, under which Christ came.

Daniel's message is like that of Habakkuk: "If it seems slow, wait for it; it will surely come, it will not delay" (Habakkuk 3:2). The Kingdom of God will begin as a smiting-stone cut without human hand[115] which will destroy the kingdoms of the world and will itself become a

[114] LaSor, William Sanford, David Allan Hubbard, and Frederic William Bush, Old Testament Survey, Eerdmans Publishing Company, Grand Rapids, MI, 1982, p.572.

[115] The stone cut out without human hand is Christ according to the flesh, since He had no human father. See Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 28.

great mountain -- biblical symbol for a kingdom -- that will fill the whole earth (Daniel 2:34-35, 44; cf. Matthew 13; Isaiah 2:2; 25:6-8; 65:25; *et. al.*).

Coming on the Clouds

Christ's sitting at the Right-Hand of the Father (that is, in His human flesh) began with the Ascension. In His Deity, He has always been sitting on the Throne with the Father. In His humanity, He had a point in time when He began to sit on the Throne with the Father.

John of Damascus, reflecting the understanding of the Church, stated[116] that the Throne of God is not an actual place, but the glory and honor of the Godhead. See Appendix E for more details of this.

> We hold, moreover, that Christ sits in the body at the right hand of God the Father, but we do not hold that the right hand of the Father is actual place. For how could He that is uncircumscribed have a right hand limited by place? Right hands and left hands belong to what is circumscribed. But we understand the right hand of the Father to be the glory and honor of the Godhead in which the Son of God, who existed as God before the ages, and is of like essence to the Father, and in the end became flesh, has a seat in the body, His flesh sharing in the glory. For He along with His flesh is adored by all creation[117].

Jesus came to the Father's presence with the clouds of heaven. This was the appearance that the disciples saw when He ascended. "He was taken up, and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

"Coming on the Clouds" is a powerful and well-known biblical figure. Throughout the Old Testament God was "coming on the clouds" in the salvation of His people and the destruction of His enemies: "He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind" (Psalm 104:3). Isaiah speaks of the judgment of Egypt along with other nations, saying: "Behold, the Lord is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt; the idols of Egypt will tremble[118] at His presence" (Isaiah 19:1). The prophet Nahum spoke similarly of God's destruction of Nineveh: "In whirlwind and storm is His way, and clouds are the dust beneath His feet" (Nahum 1:3). God's "coming on the clouds of heaven" is an almost commonplace Scriptural symbol for His presence, judgment, and salvation, and it is not limited to Christ's Second Advent. John Chrysostom remarks[119] on the Transfiguration: "The Father utters a voice out of the cloud. Why out of the cloud? Thus does God ever appear".

Now we can see why the Out-pouring of the Holy Spirit in 30 AD and the Destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD are so very prominent in the Scriptures. Each is an evidence of the exalted position of our Lord Jesus Christ as the One who accomplishes the salvation of His People and the judgment of His enemies: Pentecost and Holocaust! All this comes from the throne of the Highest One who holds the scepter of the Kingdom in a nail-pierced hand for the ultimate benefit

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[116] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 2.

[117] Athan. Jun., p. 45, ad Ant. (Incrn of Word 17); Basil, De Spiritu Sancto, ch 6

[118] This happened exactly as the prophet said during the Lord's flight into Egypt with His parents, following the visit of the Magi (Matthew 2:13-15). For details, see Mark Kern, The Life of the Virgin Mary, Unpublished Work, 2000.

[119] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 5.

of His People. "The saints of the Highest One will receive the kingdom forever, for all ages to come" (Daniel 7:18).

"Therefore, since we are receiving a kingdom which cannot be shaken, let us have grace, by which we may serve God acceptably with reverence and godly fear. For our God *is* a consuming fire" (Hebrews 12:28-29).

Appendix A: New Testament Texts Defining the Term "Antichrist"

"Children, it is the last hour; and just as you heard that **antichrist** is coming, even now many **antichrists** have arisen; from this we know that it is the last hour. They went out from us, but they were not of us; for if they had been of us, they would have remained with us; but they went out, in order that it may be shown that they all are not of us."

"Who is the liar but the one who denies that Jesus is the Christ? This is the **antichrist**, the one who denies the Father and the Son. Whoever denies the Son does not have the Father; the one who confesses the Son has the Father also."

"These things I have written to you concerning those who are trying to deceive you" (1 John 2:18-19, 22-23, 26).

"Beloved, do not believe every spirit, but test the spirits to see whether they are from God; because many false prophets have gone out into the world. By this you know the Spirit of God: every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God. And every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not from God; and this is the spirit of the **antichrist**, of which you have heard that it is coming, and now it is already in the world. You are from God, little children, and have overcome them; because greater is He who is in you that he who is in the world. They are of the world; therefore they speak as from the world, and the world listens to them. We are from God; he who knows God listens to us; he who is not from God does not listen to us. By this we know the Spirit of truth and the spirit of error" (1 John 4:1-6).

"For many deceivers have gone out into the world, those who do not acknowledge Jesus Christ as coming in the flesh. This is the deceiver and the **antichrist**. Watch yourselves that we may not lose what we have accomplished, but that we may receive a full reward. Anyone who goes too far and does not abide in the teaching of Christ, does not have God; the one who abides in the teaching, he has both the Father and the Son. If anyone comes to you and does not bring this teaching, do not receive him into your house, and do not give him a greeting; for the one who gives him a greeting participates in his evil deeds" (2 John 7-11).

Appendix B: Comments on "The Antichrist" by the Church Fathers

John of Damascus wrote a summary work on what the Church believed in his day. In this work, he referred to many of the writings of the Church Fathers that preceded him. Following[120] is what he wrote regarding "The Antichrist".

> It should be known that the Antichrist is bound to come. Every one, therefore, who confesses not that the Son of God came in the flesh and is perfect God and became perfect man, after being God, is Antichrist. But in a peculiar and special sense he who comes at the consummation of the age is called Antichrist[121]. First, then, it is requisite that the Gospel should be preached among all nations, as the Lord said (Matthew 24:14), and then he will come to refute the impious Jews. For the Lord said to them, 'I am come in My Father's Name and you receive Me not. If another shall come in his own name, him you will receive'

[120] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 26.
[121] See also Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, 25; Gregory Nazianzen, Orations, 47.

(John 5:43). And the Apostle says, 'Because they received not the love of the truth that they might be saved, for this cause God shall send them a strong delusion that they should believe a lie: that they all might be damned who believed not the truth, but had pleasure in unrighteousness' (2 Thessalonians 2:10-12). The Jews accordingly did not receive the Lord Jesus Christ who was the Son of God and God, but receive the impostor who calls himself God[122]. For that he will assume the name of God, the angel teaches Daniel, saying these words, 'Neither shall he regard the God of his fathers' (Daniel 11:37). And the Apostle says, 'Let no man deceive you by any means. For that day shall not come except there come a falling away first, and that man of sin be revealed, the son of perdition, who opposes and exalts himself above all that is called God or that is worshipped. So that he sits in the temple of God (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4), showing himself that he is God. In the temple of God he said; not our temple, but the old Jewish temple[123]. He will come not to us but to the Jews; not for Christ or the things of Christ, wherefore he is called Antichrist[124].

First, therefore, it is necessary that the Gospel should be preached among all nations (Matthew 24:14). And then shall that wicked one be revealed, even him whose coming is after the working of Satan with all power and signs and lying wonders, with all deceit of unrighteousness in them that perish, whom the Lord shall consume with the word of His mouth and shall destroy with the brightness of His coming (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10). The devil himself[125], therefore does not become man in the way that the Lord was made man. God forbid! But he becomes man as the offspring of fornication and receives all the energy of Satan. For God, foreknowing the strangeness of the choice that he would make, allows the devil to take up his abode in him[126]. He is, therefore, as we said, the offspring of fornication and is nurtured in secret, and on a sudden he rises up and rebels and assumes rule. And in the beginning of his rule, or rather tyranny, he assumes the role of sanctity. But when he becomes master he persecutes the Church of God and displays all his wickedness. But he will come with signs and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9), fictitious and not real, and he will deceive and lead away from the living God those whose mind rests on an unsound and unstable foundation, so that even the elect shall, if it be possible, be made to stumble (Matthew 24:24). But Enoch and Elijah the Tishbite shall be sent and shall turn the hearts of the fathers to the children (Malachi 4:6, Revelation 11:3), that is, the synagogue to our Lord Jesus Christ and the preaching of the Apostles. And the Lord shall come out of heaven, just as the holy Apostles beheld Him going into heaven, perfect God and perfect man, with glory and power, and will destroy the man of lawlessness, the son of destruction, with the breath of His mouth (2 Thessalonians 2:8). Let no one, therefore, look for the Lord to come from earth, but out of Heaven, as He himself has made sure (Acts 1:11).

[122] See also John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, IV.
[123] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, 15
[124] Irenaeus, Cyril Hieros., Catechetical Lectures 15; Gregory Nazianzen, Loc. Cit.
[125] Jerome on *Daniel*, ch vii
[126] See also John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, III.

John Chrysostom also had a great deal to say about "The Antichrist" that he linked to what Jesus said about His Second Advent prior to His Crucifixion. These are great mysteries, and the Thessalonians were perplexed over what they meant. Some of the "Antichrist" imagery Chrysostom directs at Nero in the 1st Century and some he directs to the Second Advent.

> "Christ, being seated[127] on the Mount, with great particularity discoursed to His disciples upon the Consummation. Why? He said this in order that there might be no room for those who introduce Antichrists and false Christs. And He Himself also gives many signs; one indeed, and that the most important, saying, when 'the Gospel shall be preached to all nations' (Matthew 24:14), and another also, that they should not be deceived with respect to His coming. 'As the lightning' (Matthew 24:27), He says, shall He come; not concealed in any corner, but shining everywhere. It requires no one to point it out, so splendid will it be, even as the lightning needs no one to point it out. And He has spoken in a certain place also concerning Antichrist, when He said, 'I am come in My Father's name, and you receive Me not; if another shall come in His own name, Him you will receive' (John 5:43). And He said that those unspeakable calamities one after another were a sign of it, and that Elijah must come".
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> "The Thessalonians indeed were then perplexed, but their perplexity has been profitable to us. For not to them only, but to us also are these things useful, that we may be delivered from childish fables and from old women's fooleries. And have you not often heard persons talking much even about the name of Antichrist, and about his bending the knee? For the devil scatters these things in our minds that the doctrine may grow up with us, and that he may be able to deceive us. For he will not come so bending his knees, but 'exalting himself against all that is called God, or that is worshipped; so that he sits in the temple of God, setting himself forth as God' (2 Thessalonians 2:4). As the devil fell by pride, so he who is wrought upon by him is anointed unto pride".

> "Paul discourses[128] concerning the Antichrist, and reveals great mysteries. What is 'the falling away'? He calls him Apostasy, as being about to destroy many, and make them fall away. He warns that, if it were possible, the Elect should be offended (Matthew 24:24). And he calls him 'the man of sin'. He shall do numberless mischief, and shall cause others to do them. But he calls him 'the son of perdition', because he is also to be destroyed. But who is he? Is it then Satan? It is not Satan, but some man that admits his fully working in him. For he is a man! 'And exalts himself against all that is called God or is worshipped' (2 Thessalonians 2:4). For he will not introduce idolatry, but will be a kind of opponent to God. He will abolish all the gods, and will order men to worship him instead of God, and he will be seated in the temple of God, not in Jerusalem only, but also in every Church. 'Setting himself forth' (2 Thessalonians 2:4), he says; he does not just speak these things, but endeavors to show it. For he will perform great works, and will show wonderful signs".

[127] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, I.
[128] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, III.

One may naturally[129] inquire, what is that which restrains (2 Thessalonians 2:6), and after that would know, why Paul expresses it so obscurely. What then is it that restrains, that is, hinders him from being revealed? Some say, the grace of the Spirit, but others the Roman empire, to whom I most of all agree. Why? Because if he meant to say the Spirit, he would not have spoken obscurely, but plainly, that even now the grace of the Spirit, that is the gifts, restrain him. And otherwise he ought now to have come, if he was about to come when the gifts ceased; for they have long since ceased. But because he said this of the Roman Empire, he naturally glanced at it, and speaks covertly and darkly. He did not wish to bring upon himself superfluous enmities, and useless dangers. For if he had said that after a little while the Roman empire would be dissolved, they would be warring to this end. And he did not say that it will be quickly, but 'that he may be revealed in his own season' (2 Thessalonians 2:6). 'For the mystery of lawlessness does already work' (2 Thessalonians 2:7). He speaks here of Nero, as if he were the type of Antichrist. He too wished to be thought a God. And he has well said, 'the mystery'; that is, it works not openly, as the other, or without shame. For if there was found a man before that time, who was not much behind Antichrist in wickedness, what wonder if there shall be one now? But he did not also wish to point him out plainly, and this not from cowardice, but instructing us not to bring upon ourselves unnecessary enmities, when there is nothing to call for it. So indeed he also says here, 'Only there is one that restrains now, until he be taken out of the way' (2 Thessalonians 2:7), that is, when the Roman empire is taken out of the way, then he shall come. For as long as the fear of this empire lasts, no one will willingly exalt himself; but when that is dissolved, he will attack the anarchy, and endeavor to seize upon the government both of man and of God. For as the kingdoms before this were destroyed, for example, that of the Medes by the Babylonians, that of the Babylonians by the Persians, that of the Persians by the Macedonians, that of the Macedonians by the Romans, so will this also be by the Antichrist, and he by Christ, and it will no longer restrain. And these things Daniel delivered to us with great clearness. 'And then shall be revealed the lawless one' (2 Thessalonians 2:8). What after this? The consolation is at hand. 'Whom the Lord Jesus shall slay with the breath of His mouth, and bring to nothing by the manifestation of His coming, even he whose coming is according to the working of Satan' (2 Thessalonians 2:8-10). For as fire coming on even before its arrival consumes the little animals that are afar off, so also Christ, by His commandment only, and Coming. It is enough for Him to be present, and all these things are destroyed. He will put a stop to the deceit, by only appearing.

Appendix C: Secret Things and Revealed Things: Daniel and Revelation[130]

[129] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, IV.

[130] From Robert Newsom, The King Judges His People: Jesus, Jerusalem and Judgment, Unpublished Work, Copyright 2002.

"The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things that are revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may do all the words of this law" (Deuteronomy 29:29). Perhaps the most profound and basic principle we can grasp when it comes to understanding the nature and purpose of God's scriptural revelation. Revelation bestows knowledge, and knowledge obligates to obedience. Our Lord said, "If you know these things, happy are you if you do them" (John 13:17). Unfortunately, men more often are prompted by curiosity rather than by obedience.

There are secret things as well as revealed things. Some things God does not reveal because it is not His purpose that we should know them, ever. Some things God keeps from His people at one point in time, but reveals them at a later point. This is true especially in the unfolding of prophetic revelation; we have a good example in the books of Daniel and Revelation.

Daniel received a great deal of detailed prophecy, which was painstakingly explained to him so he might communicate it to the people of God because the time of its fulfillment was near. One of the biblical tests for a prophet was that he prophesy truthfully about something that would shortly come to pass (cf. Deuteronomy 18:22). But, on one occasion, when Daniel heard some things he did not understand and asked about them, he was told, "Go, Daniel! The words are “sealed up” and “closed” until the end time because their fulfillment was distant (cf. Daniel 12:4, 8-9; Revelation 10:5-7). In the New Testament, especially the Book of Revelation, these very things are “open” and “unsealed” because the fulfillment is near. A comparison of Revelation 10:5-7 with Daniel 12 indicates that what was sealed in Daniel is opened in Revelation. The reference is the accomplishing of the mystery of God (Revelation 10:7).

The angel witness (Revelation 10:5-7) swears that there shall be delay[131] no longer, but in the days of the seventh trumpet-bearing angel, when he is about to sound, then the mystery of God is accomplished. Mystery does not mean something "mysterious" in our modern sense, but rather something formerly concealed and now unveiled. It is revelation: knowledge that God formerly withheld, but has now “revealed to his holy apostles and prophets in the Spirit” (Ephesians 3:5), a mystery “that has been hidden from the past ages and generations, but has now been manifested to His saints” (Colossians 1:26). This “Mystery” is a major aspect of the letters to the Ephesians and Colossians: the union of believing Jews and Gentiles in the Church, without distinction. “That the Gentiles are fellow heirs and fellow members of the body and fellow partakers of the promise in Jesus Christ through the Gospel” (Ephesians 3:6). Gentiles, who had been strangers and aliens from the commonwealth of Israel and from the covenantal promises, are now, through the work of Christ, full sons of Abraham, heirs of the Covenant, on an indistinguishable standing with believing Jews (Ephesians 2:11-22; Galatians 3). They form one “new man”, one Church, one Body of Christ, in the New Covenant. And this one covenantal Kingdom, the fulfillment of the Old Testament promises, will have universal dominion: All nations will now flow to the Mountain of the Lord, as the kingdoms of the world become the one Kingdom of Christ (Revelation 11:15). The Mystery of God, the universality of the Kingdom of God, to be accomplished -- as He preached the Gospel[132] to His servants the prophets

[131] “The sense here is not an abolition of time and its replacement by timelessness, 'no more time' from the words of the angel until the completion of the divine purpose”. James Barr, *Biblical Words for Time* (Naperville, IL: Alec R. Allenson, Inc., revised edition 1969), p. 80.

[132] Greek, **eueggelisen**, preach the Gospel, is the literal translation of the Greek rather than “declare”, or “proclaim”.

(Revelation 10:7). The Mystery is simply the revelation of the message of the Gospel. In the Book of Revelation, just like Matthew 24, the context is the end of the age and the Old Jerusalem, and the coming of the new age and the New Jerusalem. These are not sealed-up because they are not in the far distant future. The angel told John, "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy, for the time is near" (Revelation 22:10). The message of the "Little Apocalypse" (Matthew 24) and the "Big Apocalypse" (Revelation) is the same.

But there are also some things in Revelation which are SEALED from our knowledge because their fulfillment is distant: for example, the Message of The Seven Thunders (Revelation 10:3-4). What did they say? We can never know the answer in this life. Saint John was about to write down what the thunders had spoken when he heard a voice from heaven which said, "Seal up the things that the seven thunders have spoken and do not write them" (cf. Revelation 10:1-4). The message was intended for John's ears only; it was not intended for the Church at large. What is important here is that Lord wanted John to record the fact that he was not supposed to reveal whatever the Seven Thunders said! God wanted the Church to know that there are some things (actually many things!) that God has no intention of telling us beforehand. This is a warning against a curious searching into things that God has not revealed. Remember that the secret things belong to God; and try as we may, we do not have any way of forcing God to talk! We, rather, should give careful attention to the things He has revealed: to accepting His testimonies, believing His promises, heeding His warnings, and obeying His commands.

We can learn something about the purpose of the Book of Revelation from that instruction given to John in the final chapter. "Do not seal up the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is near" (Revelation 22:10). The message of the book as a whole is contemporary in nature, referring to events about to take place. In contrast, however, the message of the Seven Thunders points us to the far distant future. Recall that Daniel was told to "conceal these words and seal up the book until the time of the end" (Daniel 12:4), for the reason that the time of its fulfillment was not at hand. Similarly, when John is instructed to seal up the words spoken by the Thunders, it is an indication (among many others) that the purpose of the Book Revelation is not "futuristic". The prophecy refers to the time of the establishment of the New Covenant, and points beyond itself to a "time of the end" that was still very distant from John and his readers.

We are taught two things: First, the Book of Revelation is a contemporary prophecy, concerned almost entirely with the redemptive-eschatological events of the 1st century; second, the events of the 1st century were not exhaustive of eschatology.

Contrary to the theories of some interpreters, the Fall of Jerusalem did not constitute the Second Advent of Christ, the end of the world, and the final[133] resurrection. There is more to come.

This should whet our appetite for a study setting forth a chapter-by-chapter summary statement of the Revelation!

[133] The Orthodox Church and historic orthodox Christianity everywhere, with one voice, has always taught that "Christ shall come again, with glory, to judge both the living and the dead" (*Nicene Creed*). This is a non-negotiable article of the Christian faith.

Appendix D: Josephus' History of the Destruction of Jerusalem

The following references to excerpts from Flavius Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, and his astonishing record of the Great Tribulation of the Jews, are given here to guide the reader into his own research. The references are to any standard edition of Josephus' works. The excerpts begin by describing some of the background to the Jewish Revolt, and end with the suicide at Masada on the 15th of Nisan, AD 74 - Passover.

Factions and False Prophets ..... II, xiii, 2-6
The Tyranny of Gessius Florus ..... II, xiv, 2
Massacre in Jerusalem ..... II, xiv, 8-9
"The Day-Time Was Spent in the Shedding of Blood" ..... II, xviii, 1-5
50,000 Jews Slaughtered in Alexandria, AD 66 ..... II, xviii, 7-8
John of Gischala ..... II, xxi, 1-10
Galilee "Filled with Fire and Blood" ..... III, iv, 1
The Destruction of Jotapata ..... III, vii, 36
The Sea Turns to Blood ..... III, ix, 2-4
"Slain on Every Side" ..... III, x, 3
The Sea of Galilee "Full of Dead Bodies" ..... III, x, 9
The Edomites' Slaughter and Desolation of the Temple ..... IV, v, 1-4
How the Zealots Fulfilled Prophecy ..... IV, vi, 3
Simon's "Perpetual Bloodshedding" ..... IV, ix, 7-8
"God Turned Their Opinions to the Worst Advice" ..... IV, ix, 10-11
Lakes of Blood in the Temple ..... V, I, 3-5
Josephus Rebukes the Jews ..... V, ix, 4
The Horrors of the Famine ..... V, x, 3
The Worst Generation ..... V, x, 5
The Rate of Crucifixions: 500 Per Day ..... V, xi, 1-2
They Died "With Their Eyes Fixed Upon the Temple" ..... V, xii, 3-4
The Murder of the Chief Priest ..... V, xiii, 1
Deserters Dissected Looking for Gold ..... V, xiii, 4
"It Was God Who Condemned the Whole Nation" ..... V, xiii, 5-6
Jerusalem Area Becomes a Wilderness ..... VI, i, 1
"It Is God Himself Who Is Bringing This Fire on Jerusalem" ..... VI, ii, 1
A Mother Becomes a Cannibal ..... VI, iii, 3-4
The Temple Is Burned ..... VI, iv, 5-7
The Temple is Plundered ..... VI, v, 1-2
Chariots in the Clouds (35) ..... VI, v, 3
The Burning of Jerusalem ..... VI, vi, 3
Hiding In the Caves and Among the Rocks ..... VI, vii, 1-3
A Surplus of Jewish Slaves ..... VI, viii, 2
"The Power of God Exercised on These Wicked Wretches" ..... VI, viii, 4-5
The Last Passover "Sacrifice" ..... VI, ix, 3
Caesar's Birthday Party Celebrated by Slaying Jews ..... VII, iii, 1
Suicide at Masada ..... VII, ix, 1

Appendix E: The Understanding of the Church Fathers on the Ascension

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[134] that we must be careful not to forget that the Son has always been seated[135] at the Right Hand of the Father in His Deity. In His humanity, He had a beginning in time, and therefore a beginning seated at the Right Hand of the Father following the Ascension.

> "Let us not curiously pry into what is properly meant by the throne; for it is incomprehensible. But neither let us endure those who falsely say, that it was after His Cross and Resurrection and Ascension into heaven, that the Son began to sit on the right hand of the Father. For the Son gained not His throne by advancement. But throughout His being, and His being is by eternal generation, He also sits together with the Father. And this throne the Prophet Isaiah, having beheld before the incarnate coming of the Savior, says, 'I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, high and lifted up', and the rest (Isaiah 6:1-6). For no man has seen the Father at any time, and He who then appeared to the Prophet was the Son. The Psalmist also says, 'Your throne is prepared of old; You are from everlasting'" (Psalm 93:2).

John of Damascus, reflecting the understanding of the Church, stated[136] that the Throne of God is not an actual place, but the glory and honor of the Godhead.

> We hold, moreover, that Christ sits in the body at the right hand of God the Father, but we do not hold that the right hand of the Father is actual place. For how could He that is uncircumscribed have a right hand limited by place? Right hands and left hands belong to what is circumscribed. But we understand the right hand of the Father to be the glory and honor of the Godhead in which the Son of God, who existed as God before the ages, and is of like essence to the Father, and in the end became flesh, has a seat in the body, His flesh sharing in the glory. For He along with His flesh is adored with one adoration by all creation[137].

Basil the Great[138] stated that we need to understand that when Christ sat down with the Father on His throne, that this was not a physical place. When the Scripture refers to the Throne of God, it speaks of incorporeal things.

> "God fills all things (Ephesians 4:10); but they who divide their up and down between the Father and the Son do not remember even the word of the Prophet, 'If I climb up into heaven You are there; if I go down to hell You are there also' (Psalm 139:8 PB). There are some who, out of ignorance, predicate a place for incorporeal things. What excuse can be found for their attack upon Scripture in the passages, 'Sit on my right hand' (Psalm 110:1) and "Sat down on the right hand of the majesty of God?' (Hebrews 1:3) The expression 'Right

[134] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIV, 27.
[135] See also John Cassian, Seven Books on the Incarnation, VII, 22.
[136] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 2.
[137] Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation of the Word, 17:1-5.
Basil, On the Holy Spirit, VI, 13-15.
[138] Basil, On the Holy Spirit, VI, 15.

Hand' does not indicate the lower place, but equality of relation. It is not understood physically, in which case there might be something sinister about God, but Scripture puts before us the magnificence of the dignity of the Son by the use of dignified language indicating the seat of honor. 'Christ is the power of God and wisdom of God', (1 Corinthians 1:24) and 'He is the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15) and 'brightness of his glory', (Hebrews 1:3) and 'Him has God the Father sealed', (John 6:27) by engraving Himself on Him"[139].

"Now are we to call these passages, and others like them, throughout the whole of Holy Scripture, proofs of humiliation, or public proclamations of the majesty of the Only Begotten, and of the equality of His glory with the Father? We ask them to listen to the Lord Himself, distinctly setting forth the equal dignity of His glory with the Father, 'He that has seen me has seen the Father' (John 14:9) and again, 'When the Son comes in the glory of his Father' (Mark 8:38) that they 'should honor the Son even as they honor the Father' (John 5:23). 'We beheld his glory, the glory as of the Only Begotten of the Father' (John 1:14); and 'the only begotten God which is in the bosom of the Father' (John 1:18). Of all these passages they take no account, and then they assign to the Son the place set apart for His foes. A father's bosom is a fit and becoming seat for a son, but the place of the footstool is for them that have to be forced to fall" (Psalm 110:1).

Irenaeus of Lyons stated that one of the main purposes of Christ's First Advent was to gather into the Father's fold the children scattered abroad. He did this that they might share in His glory.

"The Jews do not recognize[140] the Advent of Christ, which He accomplished for the salvation of men, nor are they willing to understand that all the prophets announced His two Advents. At the one, He became a man subject to stripes, knew what it is to bear infirmity, sat upon the foal of an ass, was a stone rejected by the builders, was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and by the stretching forth of His hands destroyed Amalek. He gathered from the ends of the earth into His Father's fold the children who were scattered abroad, remembered His own dead ones who had formerly fallen asleep, and came down to them that He might deliver them. But at the Second Advent, He will come on the clouds, bring on the day which burns as a furnace, smite the earth with the word of His mouth, slay the impious with the breath of His lips, have a fan in His hands for cleansing His floor, and gather the wheat into His barn, but burning the chaff with unquenchable fire".

When Jesus[141] said, 'I will, that where I am, there they also may be, that they may behold My glory' (John 17:24), He was not vainly boasting because of this, but desiring that His disciples should share in His glory. Isaiah also says, 'I will bring your seed from the East, and will gather you from the West; and I will

[139] Philip Schaff note: The more obvious interpretation in John 6:27 would be sealed with a mark of approval, as in the miracle just performed. Basil explains "sealed" by "stamped with the image of His person". Basil, at the end of chapter 26 of this work, calls our Lord the "express image and seal graven to the like" of the Father. Athanasius (Ep. I. Ad Serap. Xxiii.) writes, "The sealhas the form of Christ the sealer, and in this the sealed participate, being formed according to it." Cf. Galatians 4:19, 2 Peter 1:4.

[140] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxi, 1.

[141] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xvi, 1.

say to the North, Give up; and to the South, Keep not back. Bring My sons from far, and My daughters from the ends of the earth; all, as many as have been called in My name. For in My glory I have prepared, and formed, and made him' (Isaiah 43:5-7). Inasmuch as then, 'wherever the carcass is, there shall also the eagles be gathered together' (Matthew 24:28), we do participate in the glory of the Lord, who has both formed us, and prepared us for this, that, when we are with Him, we may partake of His glory.

Leo the Great stated that not only were the disciples strengthened with joy at the Ascension, but they understood that Christ had placed them at the Right Hand of the Father along with Himself.

"The disciples[142] were so strengthened by the clearness of the truth that when the Lord entered the heights of heaven, not only were they affected with no sadness, but were even filled with great joy. The Nature of mankind went up, to pass above the archangels' heights, and to have Its uplifting limited by no elevation until, received to sit with the Eternal Father, It should be associated on the throne with His glory, to Whose Nature It was united in the Son".

"Since we had been driven out from the bliss of our first abode, the Son of God has made us members of Himself and placed us at the right hand of the Father, with Whom He lives and reigns in the unity of the Holy Spirit, God for ever and ever. Amen".

"Our humility[143] was in Christ raised to a place above all heavens at the Father's right hand. But Christ, Who with the Father is that which the Father is, abides undivided with His Father, and in coming from Him to you He did not leave Him, even as in returning to Him from us He did not forsake us. Rejoice, therefore, 'because I go to the Father, because the Father is greater than I' (John 14:28). For I have united you with Myself, and became Son of Man that you might have power to be sons of God".

John of Damascus emphasized[144] that it was the two Natures of Christ that made this possible.

"But if our interrogators should hint that He Who is begotten of the holy Mother of God is two natures, we reply, 'Yes! He is two natures; for He is in His own person God and man. And the same is to be said concerning the Crucifixion and Resurrection and Ascension. For these refer not to nature but to subsistence".

John Chrysostom stated[145] that the fact that Christ sits together with the Father on the Throne implies equality with the Father.

"When it says, 'He sat on the right hand of the Majesty on high' (Hebrews 1:3), what is this 'on high' and does he enclose God in a place? No! When he said, 'on the right hand', he did not describe Him as having figure, but showed His equal dignity with the Father. So, in saying 'on high', he did not enclose Him there, but expressed the being higher than all things, and having ascended up

[142] Leo the Great, Sermons on the Lord's Ascension, LXXIII, 4.
[143] Leo the Great, Sermons on Whitsuntide, LXXVII, 5.
[144] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 7.
[145] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, II, 2.

above all things. That is, He attained even unto the very throne of the Father; as therefore the Father is on high, so also is He. For the 'sitting together' implies nothing else than equal dignity. But if they say that He said, 'Sit' (Psalm 110:1), we may ask, did He speak[146] to Him standing? For had he intended to signify inferiority, he would not have said, 'on the right hand', but on the left hand".

Leo added[147] that Christ's Resurrection meant that His disciples needed to treat their Lord a little differently, and with spiritual understanding.

"While the Nature of the glorified Body still remained, the faith of believers was called upon to touch not with the hand of flesh, but with the spiritual understanding the Only-begotten, Who was equal with the Father. Hence comes that which the Lord said after His Resurrection, when Mary Magdalene, representing the Church, hastened to approach and touch Him. 'Touch Me not, for I have not yet ascended to My Father' (John 20:17). That is, I would not have you come to Me as to a human body, nor yet recognize Me by fleshly perceptions. I put you off for higher things; I prepare greater things for you. When I have ascended to My Father, then you shall handle Me more perfectly and truly, for you shall grasp what you can not touch and believe what you can not see".

John Chrysostom noted[148] that this was why a cloud received Him out of their sight. The cloud is associated with God. In His divinity, He was seen "going up into heaven". In His flesh, He was "taken up into heaven".

"But why did 'a cloud receive Him?' This too was a sure sign that He went up to Heaven. Not fire, as in the case of Elijah, nor fiery chariot (2 Kings 2:11) but 'a cloud received Him' (Acts 1:9). This was a symbol of Heaven, as the Prophet says; 'Who makes the clouds His chariot' (Psalm 104:3); it is of the Father Himself that this is said. Therefore he says, 'on a cloud'. In the symbol, he would say, of the Divine Power, for no other Power is seen to appear on a cloud. For hear again what another Prophet says, 'The Lord sits upon a light cloud' (Isaiah 19:1).

At the Ascension, there were Angels in the form of men. But why does not Christ Himself tell them these things, instead of the Angels? He had beforehand told them all things, 'What if you shall see the Son of Man going up where He was before?' (John 6:62) Moreover the Angels did not say, 'whom you have seen taken up,' but, 'going into heaven' (Acts 1:11). Ascension is the word, not assumption; the expression 'taken up', belongs to the flesh. For the same reason they say, 'He which is taken up from you shall thus come', not 'shall be sent'. 'He that ascended, the same is he also that descended' (Ephesians 4:10). So again the expression, 'a cloud received Him' (Acts 1:9), for He Himself mounted upon the cloud. Of the expressions, some are adapted to the conceptions of the disciples, some agreeable with the Divine Majesty. Now, as they behold, their conceptions are elevated; He has given them no slight hint of the nature of His Second Advent".

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[146] It was customary for the king, dignitary or the person in charge to sit while everyone else stood by him.
[147] Leo the Great, Sermons on the Lord's Ascension, LXXIV, 2.
[148] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, II.

Irenaeus recounted[149] how the prophets had spoken not just of Christ's Resurrection, but also of His reception into heaven in His humanity. And it is in His humanity that He comes in righteous judgment.

> "The prophets spoke of His having slumbered and taken sleep, and of His having risen again because the Lord sustained Him (Psalm 3:5), and who enjoined the principalities of heaven to set open the everlasting doors, that the King of glory might go in (Psalm 24:7). These proclaimed beforehand His resurrection from the dead through the Father's power, and His reception into heaven. They expressed themselves thus, 'His going forth is from the height of heaven, and His returning even to the highest heaven; and there is no one who can hide himself from His heat' (Psalm 19:6 LXX). They announced that very truth of His being taken up again to the place from which He came down, and that there is no one who can escape His righteous judgment. And those who said, 'The Lord has reigned; let the people be enraged: even He who sits upon the cherubim; let the earth be moved' (Psalm 99:1 LXX), were thus predicting partly that wrath from all nations which after His ascension came upon those who believed in Him, with the movement of the whole earth against the Church. They were also predicting partly the fact that, when He comes from heaven with His mighty angels, the whole earth shall be shaken, as He Himself declares, 'There shall be a great earthquake, such as has not been from the beginning' (Matthew 24:21). And again, when one says, 'Whosoever is judged, let him stand opposite; and whosoever is justified, let him draw near to the servant of God', and 'Woe unto you, for you shall wax old as does a garment, and the moth shall eat you up' (Isaiah 50:8-9 LXX loosely quoted), and 'All flesh shall be humbled, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in the highest' (Isaiah 2:17 LXX). It is thus indicated that, after His passion and ascension, God shall cast down under His feet all who were opposed to Him, and He shall be exalted above all, and there shall be no one who can be justified or compared to Him".

[149] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxiii, 13.

Holy Tuesday Bridegroom Matins
Challenges to Jesus

Revision B

Gospel: Matthew 22:15-23:39

Is It Lawful to Pay Taxes?

After Jesus gave the Parable of the Marriage[150] Feast (Matthew 22:1-14), the Pharisees came with the Herodians to try to trap Him.

> "Tell us, therefore, what do You think? Is it lawful to pay taxes to Caesar, or not?" But Jesus perceived their wickedness, and said, "Why do you test Me, *you* hypocrites? Show Me the tax money." So they brought Him a denarius. And He said to them, "Whose image and inscription *is* this?" They said to Him, "Caesar's." And He said to them, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's." When they had heard *these words,* they marveled, and left Him and went their way (Matthew 22:17-22).

This encounter between the Jesus and the Pharisees illustrates some very interesting bedfellows. The Pharisees sent their disciples to Jesus along with the Herodians to try to entangle Jesus in His talk. The Herodians are significant in that they believed Herod was the Christ, and if anyone were to say anything that disparaged their "messiah", one could expect swift political retribution. On the other hand, the Pharisees had an intense hatred for the Gentile authorities that oppressed them. To the Pharisees, the Herodians were Jews who had sold out to the "enemy", and were nothing less than traitors. But what united the Pharisees and the Herodians was their hatred of Jesus.

As they came to Jesus, they acknowledged that He came in the true spirit of the Levitical judges. They said, "Teacher, we know that you are sincere, and teach the way of God in accordance with truth, and show deference to no one; for you do not regard people with partiality" (Matthew 22:16 NRSV). This statement has a great deal to say regarding who they admitted Jesus was, and even cast themselves in a negative light, since this was what they were supposed to be doing as members of the Sanhedrin (Matthew 23:1-4).

The Law required the Levitical judges who later took Moses' place to institute righteous judgment. Just as Moses stood as an intercessor between Christ and men (Deuteronomy 5:27, Exodus 20:19), so the judges who came later did. To reject them was to reject Christ, as was the case with Samuel when Israel demanded a king (1 Sam. 8:7). The early Church applied this to its bishops and priests. Cyprian stated[151] in this regard, "Nor let them think that the way of life or of salvation is still open to them, if they have refused to obey the bishops and priests".

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[150] This parable is similar to the Parable of the Great Supper (Luke 14:15-24) which was given on a different occasion.

[151] Cyprian, Epistles 61:4, 39:7.

An important aspect[152] of their duty was rightly dividing the Word of God in the exposition of the Law and the Prophets, such that it corresponded to the teachings of Christ in the Gospels. Cyprian pointed out[153] that Christ and the Apostles showed considerable respect for the Levitical judges of their day, even if these judges were false or had crucified Christ (John 18:20-23, Acts 23:2-5).

The judges were to hear the cases between their brethren. This was what initiated the Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD. A major dispute arose between Paul and certain men from Judea (Acts 15:2). Because the Law required diligent inquiry (Deuteronomy 19:18), they took the matter to Bishop James, who gave his judgment as the decision of the Council (Acts 15:19). On the other hand, the Pharisees were unwilling to do this regarding Jesus (John 7:50-52). When Nicodemus challenged them, they said to him, "Are you also from Galilee? Search and look, for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee" (John 7:52). The bishops of the early Church were encouraged to keep one ear open for the accused or for the absent. They were not to believe the slander uttered against the absent[154].

The judges were not to be respecters of persons, but were to judge the rich and the poor evenhandedly, neither showing partiality to the poor nor deferring to the great (Leviticus 19:15). They were forbidden from taking a bribe, since "a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous" (Deuteronomy 16:19). Christ was well known for His impartiality (Matthew 22:16), and James called partiality "sin" and a transgression of the Law (James 2:9). Early Christian tradition applied this to the Bishop: "For the bishop[155] must not only himself give no offense, but must be no respecter of persons; in meekness instructing those that offend. But if he himself has not a good conscience, and is a respecter of persons for the sake of filthy lucre, he disregards the voice of God".

If the matter were too difficult for the Levitical Judges (Exodus 18:26), they were to bring it into the Holy of Holies before the Lord and He would decide it for them. This was done by the High Priest who came into the Holy of Holies to inquire of the Lord with the Urim and Thummim (Hebrew: lights and truth) over his heart (Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 28:6). Anyone who wouldn't accept the Lord's decision was to be executed as a traitor (Deuteronomy 17: 8-12).

Two or Three Witnesses represented confirmation of a matter as being true, even if the matter involved capital punishment (Deuteronomy 19:15, Hebrews 10:28), and the witnesses were to cast the first stone in the execution of the condemned person (Deuteronomy 13:9). Paul quoted this passage (Deuteronomy 17:7) with regard to an errant brother in the Church of Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:13). Christ stated that since God the Father bore witness to Him, therefore His testimony was true (John 8:17). He also instructed the Church to confirm everything with two or three witnesses, whether the matter involved an errant brother (Matthew 18:16) or a presbyter (1 Timothy 5:19). At Christ's trial before the Sanhedrin, the witnesses did not agree (Mark 14:59), but He was crucified anyway. On the other hand, Christ brought three witnesses to His Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1), and many were witnesses to His Resurrection

[152] Apostolic Constitutions II, iv, 36; II, v, 41; II, iii, 13
[153] Cyprian, Epistles 68:3; 64:1; 54:4.
[154] See for example Basil, Letters, 244, 1-2.
[155] Apostolic Constitutions II, iii, 9; II, ii, 5; II, vi, 45

(1 Corinthians 15:4-7). There were even two angels as witnesses of His Resurrection at the tomb (Luke 24:4).

Jesus referred to Himself as the door to the sheepfold. The Scribes and Pharisees, "climbed up some other way" (John 10:1) to get into the sheepfold. They interpreted the Law such that they could avoid honoring their father and mother (Matthew 15:3-6) and taught as doctrines the commandments of men (Matthew 15:9, Isaiah 29:13 LXX). They did not keep the Law and sought to murder Jesus because He did (John 7:19).

Gamaliel, who was a member of the Sanhedrin but later became a Christian, referred to Judas and Theudas as some nationalist-minded revolutionaries who were caught, executed and had their followers dispersed (Acts 5:36-37). These did not enter by the door either, and when they were dead, people quit believing in them. Jesus, on the other hand, did not advocate a revolt and when the people wanted to make Him king, He departed (John 6:15). When they tried to corner Him about paying tribute to Caesar, He said to pay it (Matthew 22:17-22). He taught consistently that His Kingdom was not of this world, and if it were, His servants would fight (John 18:36, Matthew 26:51-53).

John Chrysostom noted[156] that the Pharisees dug a precipice on either side. If Jesus answered in favor of not paying taxes, they could link Him to revolutionaries like Judas and Theudas and have Him executed. If Jesus answered in favor of paying taxes, they could link Him to the hated Gentile occupation forces. Yet they came to Him in utter falsehood. Earlier they had said that He was a deceiver, that He deceives the people (John 7:12), that He has a demon (John 8:48) and that He is not of God (John 9:16). They were breathing anger and hatching a plot against Him, yet they pretended respect.

Jesus, being God, was deceived by none of these things and His rebuke was not the result of conjecture, but a sign of His knowing their secret thoughts. He steered artfully and gently between their hurdles, stopped their mouths and left them marveling. Paul later said the same thing, but more plainly, "Render therefore to all their due: taxes to whom taxes *are due,* customs to whom customs, fear to whom fear, honor to whom honor" (Romans 13:7). Chrysostom noted that He was speaking only of those things which are no detriment to godliness; since if it was anything else, such a thing would be no longer Caesar's tribute, but the devil's.

The Sadducees Challenge Jesus Regarding the Resurrection

After the Pharisees and the Herodians left, the Sadducees came with a religious challenge. The Sadducees were the priests, the descendants of Aaron, who were in charge of the worship of God in the Temple. Yet they didn't believe in the resurrection of the flesh. They posed a question regarding how the Levirate Marriage Law applied to the Kingdom of God. In their minds, there was no answer to their question, because there was no resurrection of the dead.

The Levirate Marriage Law reads:

"If brothers dwell together, and one of them dies and has no son, the widow of the dead man shall not be married to a stranger outside the family. Her husband's brother shall go in to her, take her as his wife, and perform the duty of a husband's brother to her. And it shall be that

[156] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXX, 1-2.

the firstborn son, which she bears, will succeed to the name of his dead brother, that his name may not be blotted out of Israel. But if the man does not want to take his brother's wife, then let his brother's wife go up to the gate to the elders, and say, 'My husband's brother refuses to raise up a name to his brother in Israel. He will not perform the duty of my husband's brother'. Then the elders of his city shall call him and speak to him. But if he stands firm and says, 'I do not want to take her,' then his brother's wife shall come to him in the presence of the elders, remove his sandal from his foot, spit in his face, and answer and say. 'So shall it be done to the man who will not build up his brother's house'. And his name shall be called in Israel, 'The house of him who had his sandal removed'" (Deuteronomy 25:5-10).

Under Old Testament Law, a man's inheritance remained with his family forever. Even if his land was sold, title reverted back to the man's family during the Year of Jubilee. Levirate Marriages were intended to assure that a man's posterity continued even if he died before begetting any children. A brother who did not wish to build up his brother's house (Deuteronomy 25:9) lost his own inheritance. Boaz did such in his Levirate marriage to Ruth (Ruth 4:7-10). Someone who didn't care about his brother is very much like Cain who claimed he wasn't his brother's keeper (Genesis 4:9). On the contrary, those of Christ are called members of one another (Ephesians 4:25). There were several Levirate marriages in the genealogy of Jesus. For example, Joseph, Jesus' stepfather, is called the son of Heli (Luke 3:23) and also the son of Jacob (Matthew 1:16). Heli was Jacob's brother who died childless; Jacob married his brother's widow and raised up Joseph as a son for his brother. Thus Joseph was the biological son of Jacob, but the legal son of Heli.

Gregory the Great showed[157] how the Levirate marriage illustrates both Christ and the Church, where the Church lives not for herself, but for Him who died and rose again (2 Corinthians 5:15). Referring to Jesus' question to Peter, "Do you love Me?" (John 21:15-19), Gregory stated:

> "If, then, the care of feeding is the proof of loving, whoever abounds in virtues, and yet refuses to feed the flock of God, is convicted of not loving the chief Shepherd". This relates to the Levirate marriage as follows. "Now the deceased brother is He who, after the glory of the resurrection, said, 'Go tell My brethren' (Matthew 28:10). For He died as it were without children, in that He had not yet filled up the number of His elect. Then, it is ordered that the surviving brother shall have the wife assigned to him, because it is surely fit that the care of the holy Church be imposed on him who is best able to rule it well. But, should he be unwilling, the woman spits in his face (Deuteronomy 25:9), because whoever cares not to benefit others out of the gifts which he has received, the holy Church expropriates even what he has of good, and, as it were, casts spittle on his face. And from one foot the shoe is taken away, inasmuch as it is written, 'Your feet shod in preparation of the Gospel of Peace' (Ephesians 6:15). If, then, we have the care of our neighbor as well as of ourselves upon us, we have each foot protected by a shoe. But he who, meditating his own advantage, neglects that of his neighbors, loses with disgrace the shoe of one foot".

[157] Gregory the Great, Pastoral Rule I, 5.

With this as a background, the Sadducees posed a question to Jesus where seven brothers in succession had the same woman as a wife, each dying childless. Whose wife, they asked, would she be in the resurrection?

> Jesus answered and said to them, "You are mistaken, not knowing the Scriptures or the power of God. For in the resurrection they neither marry nor are given in marriage, but are like angels of God in heaven. But concerning the resurrection of the dead, have you not read what was spoken to you by God, saying, 'I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob'? God is not the God of the dead, but of the living." And when the multitudes heard this, they were astonished at His teaching (Matthew 22:29-33).

When Jesus said this, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob had been "dead" c. 1800 years. If they're not really "dead", but living somewhere, it behooves us to get in touch with the abode where they are and see things from their point of view. In this life, we all have roles to play, such as husband and wife, based on what we've been given; but that will change in the resurrection.

We can see another example of this in connection with the slaughter of the 14,000 children at Bethlehem by Herod following Jesus' birth. Matthew quoted a prophecy of Jeremiah. "A voice was heard in Ramah, lamentation, weeping, and great mourning; Rachel weeping for her children, refusing to be comforted because they are no more" (Matthew 2:18, Jeremiah 31:15). Rachel was the wife of Jacob and mother of Joseph and Benjamin. Rachel had been barren for a long time prior to Joseph's birth and had given her maid to her husband because of her barrenness; her children were very important to her (Genesis 30:1-8). As Jacob and his family were traveling back to Canaan from Mesopotamia, Rachel gave birth to Benjamin just before they arrived in Bethlehem. Rachel died in childbirth and was buried there (Genesis 35:16-20). Later, when the promised land was divided among the twelve tribes of Israel, Ramah along with Bethel, Jerusalem and Bethlehem were among the cities within the land allocated to the tribe of Benjamin (Joshua 18:21-28).

Thus, Jeremiah's prophesy goes beyond the weeping of the mothers of the slaughtered children; even Rachel, herself, was weeping inconsolably. One might object that Rachel had been dead for c.1800 years; how could she weep? To understand this, one needs to understand the Lord's viewpoint concerning who's dead. As proof of the Resurrection, the Lord had said, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. God is not the God of the dead but of the living" (Matthew 22:32). If Jacob is not dead, neither is Rachel.

John Chrysostom noted[158] that Jesus did not answer the Sadducees in the same manner as He did the Pharisees. To the Pharisees, He answered, "You hypocrites!" because they came to him deceitfully. To the Sadducees, He answered, "You are mistaken!" because their question was rather one of ignorance. Since they were asking in ignorance, Jesus did not stop at their question, but answered their thought also

[158] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXX, 2.

The Greatest Commandment

When the Pharisees heard that Jesus had silenced the Sadducees, they gathered together to corner Jesus with a tough question. They asked Him which the greatest commandment is in the Law. In Matthew's account, a lawyer asked Jesus the question (Matthew 22:36). In Mark's account, a Scribe asked this question (Mark 12:28). Both could be true since lawyers and Scribes were both Mosaic Law experts. As one notes in reading through early Jewish writings such as the Talmud, it was common for Jewish legal scholars to debate the intricacies of fine points of the Law.

The Greatest Commandment as stated by Jesus (Matthew 22:37-39) is:

- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind.
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself.

Jesus called these two parts "the first" and "the second", where the second is like the first. These words did not just fall out of the sky; they had been an integral part of the Mosaic Law from the beginning (Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 30:6, Leviticus 19:18). Israel was instructed to teach this to their children diligently (Deuteronomy 6:7). They were instructed to bind them into phylacteries on their foreheads (Deuteronomy 6:8) and write them on the doorposts of their houses (Deuteronomy 6:9).

What Does the Mosaic Law Include?

The Mosaic Law consisted of Commandments, Statutes, Judgments and Testimonies, where the core of the Law was what Jesus called the "Greatest Commandment". Tertullian described[159] the Greatest Commandment as having been given in embryo to Adam in the Garden of Eden, and that if Adam and Eve had obeyed it, they would not have fallen. Thus the Gentiles had the Law prior to Moses. But the Mosaic Law bridged a gap until the coming of Christ when the Law would be written on men's hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and the Holy Spirit would take up residence in men's bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Until then the Lord commanded that the Law should be written in stone on Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:1-8) as medicine for an obstinate people who were forgetful and ungrateful, and who were prone to fall into idolatry.

The Law is still useful today, especially for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), and early Apostolic teaching warned[160] people about speaking evil of the Law. When Christ came, He stated, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets" (Matthew 5:17). Tertullian stated[161],

> "Plainly we assert that the Law has deceased in one sense that its burdens, which not even the fathers were able to sustain, have wholly ceased. Such parts, however, as relate to righteousness not only permanently remain reserved, but even amplified, in order that our righteousness may be able to redound above the righteousness of the scribes and of the Pharisees".

[159] Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2.
[160] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, IV, xix.
[161] Tertullian, On Monogamy IV, vi, 7.

The Mosaic Law consisted of:

Commandments.

- The Ten Commandments, which give details of the Greatest Commandment (Deuteronomy 5:6-21)
- Atonement for sin in anticipation of the work of Christ (Leviticus 4, 5, Numbers 15)
- Separation from the world; no intermarriage with Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-11, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)
- Tithes and Alms to guard against greed (Deuteronomy 26, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15)
- The year of remission to teach forgiveness (Deuteronomy 15:1-18, Mark 11:25, James 2:13)
- Manna to teach about real food (Deuteronomy 8:1-10, John 6:31-58)
- Blessings for those who obey; curses for those who don't (Deuteronomy 28, Matthew 25:14-46)

Statutes.

- The Major Festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles
- Portions for the priests (Leviticus 6:14-30, 7, 10:12-20, Numbers 18:8-24, 1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- Duties of the priests before God in the House of God (Exodus 27-30, Leviticus 10:8-11)
- Maintain holiness and avoid uncleanness (Leviticus 20, Numbers 19, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, 1 John 2:6)
- Evenhandedness for Jew and Gentile (Numbers 15:14-16, Leviticus 19:33-34, Ephesians 2:11-22)

Judgments.

The Judgments represent "case law" that resolved some uncertainty on how to interpret the Mosaic Law. Some examples are the question of inheritance brought by the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11), and the question of working on the Sabbath during the 40 years in the wilderness (Numbers 15:32-36). Difficult cases were brought to the Levitical Judges in Jerusalem for a decision, and if the Levitical Judges had difficulty, they brought the case before the Lord Himself in the Holy of Holies for a decision (Deuteronomy 17:8-13, 19:15-21, 1:17 Numbers 28:21).

Testimonies.

The Testimonies or Witnesses (i.e. plural) are the recorded deeds and mercies of God among His people coming from His Presence on the Ark of the Testimony. Part of the Mosaic Law was teaching future generations what the Lord had done (Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

The Greatest Commandment as a Creed

The Mosaic Law defined keeping the Greatest Commandment as being "circumcised in heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6, 10:16). If they obeyed the Lord and kept this commandment (and its corollaries), the Lord promised to bless them above all the nations of the earth. He would open for them His good storehouse to bless them so that they could lend to and evangelize the nations (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 12). The Greatest Commandment was even used as a Creed in the Synagogue worship, and it was one of the first things children learned in school[162]. Thus, in questions with the Jewish leaders, there was no argument about what is the Greatest Commandment. This was so fundamental to the Mosaic Law that it was obvious.

[162] Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, p. 245, 101-104.

The subject of the Greatest Commandment came up about six months earlier also. On the earlier occasion, a lawyer (that is, one skilled in interpreting the Mosaic Law) asked Jesus "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) Jesus asked him what the Law said; the lawyer replied with the Greatest Commandment. Jesus answered, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28). Wishing to justify himself, the lawyer replied, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus then proceeded with the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate the second part of the Greatest Commandment.

In Mark's account, Jesus prefaced His response with the introduction to the Creed used in the Synagogue worship, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). After reciting the Greatest Commandment, Jesus concluded, "There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31).

The Ten Commandments can be seen as a subdivision of the Greatest Commandment as follows:

Commandment	Exodus 20	Deuteronomy 5
Love the Lord with all your heart, soul and strength (Deuteronomy 6:5)		
1. Have no gods before Me	v. 3	v. 7
2. Do not make or serve idols	vv.4-6	vv.8-10
3. Do not take the Name in vain	v.7	v.11
Love your neighbor as yourself (Leviticus 19:18)		
4. Keep the Sabbath Day holy	vv.8-10	vv.12-15
5. Honor your parents	v.12	v.16
6. Do not murder	v.13	v.17
7. Do not commit adultery	v.14	v.18
8. Do not steal	v.15	v.19
9. Do not lie	v.16	v.20
10. Do not covet	v.17	v.21

Jesus summarized the Greatest Commandment by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

Christ Fulfilled the Law

The Lord Himself stated that, "Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one point (small part of a Hebrew letter) will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). The Lord went on to describe how we need to take the precepts of the Law to heart and apply them to our thoughts and intentions as well as to our deeds (Matthew 5:21-48).

John Chrysostom mentioned[163] three ways in which Christ fulfilled the Law.

1. He transgressed none of the precepts of the Law, and thus "fulfilled" the Law by keeping it perfectly. There are a number of occasions where the Scripture states[164] this.
2. He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:3-4). "Since the law[165] was laboring to make man righteous, but had not power, He came and brought in the way of righteousness by faith, and so established that which the Law desired; and what the Law could not do by letters, this He accomplished by faith. On this account He said, 'I am not come to destroy the Law'" (Matthew 5:17).
3. He upgraded the Law to what was the original intent, and Chrysostom called this the "future code of laws". "Do not murder" became "Do not even be angry" (Matthew 5:21-22); "Do not commit adultery" became "Do not even lust in your heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Sometimes overlooked in Paul's famous argument of Law vs. Grace are Paul's statements: "Therefore the Law is holy and the Commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12). "For we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14). "I agree with the Law that it is good" (Romans 7:16).

On the other hand, Paul argues, "I am fleshly, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). "I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22, 23).

Abraham and the Law

Paul continued, "Therefore the Law has become our pedagogue[166] until Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). Justification always has been by faith; the Law, by itself, cannot determine a condition of the heart. "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). "Yet we know that the law is good if one uses it lawfully; knowing this: that the law is not made for a righteous person, but for the lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, etc." (1 Timothy 1:8-9). Abraham is an excellent example of this!

Old Testament and New Testament writers alike used the life of Abraham as the model of a righteous life and a close walk with God. He was called "The friend of God" (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:21-24), and because of his faith, Israel inherited the Promised Land. The Church, with Christ as Head, has inherited the blessing of Abraham in the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:14). By faith Abraham obeyed and he had the vision to wait for the city which has foundations, whose craftsman and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8-10). Abraham believed God, and the belief (i.e. faith) was reckoned to him as righteousness. He is called the father of all who believe and the heir of the world (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:11ff). Thus Abraham exemplifies the Grace of God. Abraham received faith according to grace (Romans 4:16), just as all who since him have received faith.

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[163] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XVI, 3-4.
[164] For example Matthew 3:15, John 8:46, John 14:30, Isaiah 53:9.
[165] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XVI, 3-4.
[166] A pedagogue was a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys.

Abraham did not need the details of the Law because his heart was right. In light of this, Irenaeus wrote[167], "The righteous fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls; that is, they loved the God who made them, and did no injury to their neighbor. There was therefore no occasion that they should be cautioned by prohibitory mandates, because they had the righteousness of the law in themselves". The Early Church taught[168] that the purpose of all the details of the Mosaic Law was as medicine for an obstinate people who were forgetful and ungrateful, and who were prone to fall into idolatry, like the Golden Calf, at any moment. For these people and others like them the details of the Law were necessary and He bound them with bonds, a burden and a hard collar. When Christ came in the flesh, He did not take away the Law but the bonds and the collar.

The Law and Grace

John Chrysostom pointed[169] out that the Lord had said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Chrysostom continued, "But His commandments and the sum of them are, 'You shall love the Lord your God, and your neighbor as yourself'. If therefore to love God is to love one's neighbor, 'For if you love Me', He said, 'O Peter, feed My sheep' (John 21:16, 17). But to love one's neighbor works a keeping of the commandments. With reason does He then say, "On these hang all the Law and the Prophets".

Sometimes overlooked in Paul's famous argument of Law vs. Grace are Paul's statements: "Therefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12). "For we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14). "I agree with the Law that it is good" (Romans 7:16).

On the other hand, Paul argues, "I am fleshly, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). "I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22, 23).

The guiding principle of the Mosaic Law was the "Greatest Commandment". The use of the "Greatest Commandment" as a creed in the synagogues in the 1st Century, was in itself in obedience to one of the commandments (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Taken as a whole, the Law contained all the elements of Grace as described with the advent of Christ as Messiah in the New Testament, and the Law pointed toward the work that Christ accomplished (Galatians 3:24). The intent of the Law was that God might cause His people to know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man shall live by every word coming out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4). The expectation of the Law was Christ, and the Prophets understood this. Jeremiah wrote: "Behold, days are coming," declares the Lord, "when I will make a New Covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put My Law within them, and on their heart I will write it; and I will be their God and they shall be My people. And they shall not teach again each man his neighbor and each man his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', for they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:31-33, Hebrews 8:8-12).

[167] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xvi, 3.
[168] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, iv, 20-21
[169] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXI.

The Law aimed at establishing faith and the condition of man's heart, and the command was to circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16, Colossians 2:11) as well as their flesh. But the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out (Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:16-18). In anticipation of the Lamb of God, He commanded that offerings for sin should be established using the blood of bulls and goats (Compare Hebrews 9:13) for sins done in ignorance (Leviticus 4), and using the blood of a lamb for sins done willfully (Leviticus 5). These offerings had to be performed repeatedly, because sin was repeated (Hebrews 7:26-28). It took a vision to see the end result of Christ's one sacrifice, where He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Following the Law with all one's heart and soul was not supposed to be difficult. "For this commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. For the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it" (Deuteronomy 30:11-15). Jesus said the same thing: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). With the coming of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29-36), the Holy Spirit is now resident within us (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20) and Law is written on our hearts. Our illumination regarding the things of God has greatly increased, and Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:1-8) along with the offerings for sin is unnecessary. This doesn't mean that the Mosaic Law is useless now that Grace has taken its place. As John Chrysostom stated[170], "The Law is not the adversary but the fellow worker of Grace. But if when Grace is come, the Law continues to hold us down, it becomes an adversary. For if it confines those who ought to go forward to Grace, it is the destruction of our salvation. If a candle which gave light by night kept us, when it became day, from the sun, it would not only cease to benefit us, but would injure us. And so does the Law if it stands between the greater benefits of Grace and us. Just so a pedagogue makes a youth ridiculous, by retaining him with himself, when time calls for his departure".

Men under Grace have a greater responsibility than do men under the Law; because more has been given, more is expected (Luke 12:48, Matthew 25:29). John Cassian stated[171],

> "How can those men be partakers of the grace of the gospel who disregard the fulfillment even of the lighter commands of the Law, to the easy character of which the words of the lawgiver bear testimony?"

Irenaeus stated[172] that while the Law had been given for bondage to Israel, its scope has been widened for those under Grace that we might have greater love for our Father.

> "He has increased and widened those laws, granting to men, by means of adoption, to know God the Father. We love Him with the whole heart, while we abstain not only from evil deeds, but even from the desire after them. But He has also increased the feeling of reverence; for sons should have more veneration than slaves, and greater love for their Father. We shall give account to God not of deeds only, as slaves, but even of words and thoughts. We have truly received the power of liberty, in which condition a man is more severely tested, whether he will reverence, fear, and love the Lord".

[170] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 3
[171] John Cassian, Conferences III, 21, 5
[172] Irenaeus, Against Heresies IV, xvi, 5

David's Son Is David's Lord

Mark's account of the lawyer's question about the "Greatest Commandment" includes some additional details. After Jesus had spoken, the Scribe responded by saying, "Well said, Teacher. You have spoken the truth, for there is One God, and there is no other than He. And to love Him with all the heart, with all the understanding, with all the soul, and with all the strength, and to love one's neighbor as one's self, is more than all of the whole burnt offerings and sacrifices". Jesus then exclaimed, "You are not far from the Kingdom of God!" (Mark 12:32-34). The Scribe had understood that the Lord desires mercy not sacrifice (Hosea 6:5, Isaiah 1:11-17).

But the Scribe lacked one thing: the knowledge of Who it was he was talking to. Therefore "Jesus answered and said while He taught in the Temple" (Mark 12:35). 'What do you think about the Christ? Whose Son is He?' They said to Him, 'The son of David'. He said to them, 'how then does David in the spirit call Him Lord, saying: The Lord said to My Lord, sit at My Right Hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool. If David then calls Him Lord, how is He his Son?' (Matthew 22:42-45). The answer was the Incarnation, which they were unwilling to accept. By comparing the accounts in Matthew and Mark, we can see the drama of this conversation unfold.

The Scribe had responded to Jesus, "There is One God and there is no other than He" (Mark 12:32). This statement was part of the Law (Deuteronomy 4:39) and the Ten Commandments (Deuteronomy 5:7, Exodus 20:3). But its context was always associated with the worship of idols.

Therefore, the Lord pointed out that David's Lord was God and Messiah, but yet He was also David's Son (meaning David's descendant). This, the Scribes and Pharisees were unwilling to admit, and this was one of the reasons they used to crucify Him (Mark 14:61-64). In this context, however, the Scribes (and Pharisees, Matthew 22:41) were unable to deny the Scriptures and did not dare to question Jesus any more (Matthew 22:46).

This turned out to be an advantage for the multitudes, for "the common people heard Him gladly" (Mark 12:37). Jesus then went on to warn the people about the Scribes and about how they love recognition and honor, but devour widows' houses and make long pretentious prayers (Mark 12:38-40) very obviously violating both points of the Greatest Commandment.

Understanding Psalm 110

The Pharisees knew exactly where Jesus was going when He asked His question of them. Jesus was quoting from Psalm 110, which is a Messianic Psalm that addresses the Father's relationship to the Son. David began, "The Lord said to My Lord, 'sit at My Right Hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool' (Psalm 110:1). The Pharisees liked the idea of their enemies being a footstool. But this Psalm fit hand-in-glove with Jesus' claim that He was God (John 10:33, 8:58), and this implied that they needed to obey Him, which they didn't like.

Psalm 110 is also quoted in Hebrews in a comparison of the Son of God with angels (Hebrews 1:13). While angels may be awesome and majestic (Daniel 10:4-8), they were created

by the Son of God (Hebrews 1:7, Psalm 104:4) and "they are all ministering spirits sent forth to minister for those who will inherit salvation" (Hebrews 1:14).

Psalm 110 also mentions the priestly role of Christ that began with the Incarnation: "The Lord (i.e. the Father) has sworn and will not change His mind; You are a priest forever after the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). Melchizedek was a messianic figure whose priesthood predated that of Levi and the Levitical priesthood. Paul quotes Psalm 110 in his discussion (Hebrews 5:6) of the Levitical priesthood as compared to the Melchizedek priesthood.

Who Is Melchizedek?

Many debates have been generated on the identity of Melchizedek. Melchizedek's name means King of righteousness and he is described as King of Peace (Genesis 14:18, Hebrews 7:2); this illustrates our Great High Priest (Hebrews 4:14ff, 6:20). In the Scriptures, righteousness and peace come together in the person of Messiah (Psalm 85:10).

Paul points out (Hebrews 7:7) that the lesser (Abraham) is always blessed by the greater (Melchizedek). We might ask, "Could Melchizedek have been an angel?" The giving of a tithe by Abraham was an acknowledgment by Abraham that Melchizedek's priesthood was of God, and Abraham seemed to recognize Melchizedek as someone greater than himself, since the tithe was customarily presented to Deity (Leviticus 27:30-32, Deuteronomy 26:12-15). While angels' appearance often resembles that of the Son of God, angels are not spoken of as priests but as messengers ("Angel" means messenger) and as deacons (Hebrews 1:14, Greek).

Ambrose stated[173] that Melchizedek was not an angel but was a holy man and a priest of God who prefigured Christ as a "type" or a shadow of the Truth. Cyprian stated[174], "Melchizedek bore a type of Christ; He offered bread and wine and blessed Abraham. Who is more of a priest of the Most High God than our Lord Jesus Christ is, Who offered Himself as a sacrifice to God the Father. He offered the very same thing that Melchizedek offered; that is, bread and wine, namely, His body and blood".

The person Melchizedek was tied intimately with the person of the Messiah in Old Testament prophecy and in First Century expectation. When Jesus asked the Pharisees, "If David then calls Him 'Lord', how is He his Son?" This was very embarrassing for them and no one dared question Jesus any more (Matthew 22:41-46). The answer, of course, is that Christ is the Son of God in His Person and the Son of David in His humanity.

Thus everyone agreed that Psalm 110 was addressing the Messiah. In this light, Psalm 110 also states, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). This passage was quoted by Paul in saying that Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of David in becoming High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:21). The prophet Zechariah also foretold that Messiah would be both a ruler (i.e. King) and a priest (Zechariah 6:12-13).

Paul was using the figure of Melchizedek to compare the Levitical priesthood to that of Christ. In doing so, he described Melchizedek as having no father and mother, no genealogy and

[173] Ambrose, Of the Christian Faith, III, xi, 87-89.
[174] Cyprian, Epistles, LXII, 4.

neither beginning of days nor end of life (Hebrews 7:3,6,16). John Chrysostom stated[175] that when Paul described Melchizedek in these terms, he was speaking in comparison to the Levitical priesthood, and he meant that information about Melchizedek's parents, his birth and his death wasn't available. Records that were kept in the Temple in Jerusalem for determining the Levitical priests would not include Melchizedek if he were not a descendant of Shem. Similarly, genealogical records for Job, a descendant of Esau, were not kept in the Temple either. The point was that if Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and was a type of Christ, then Christ is far greater than Abraham is, the priesthood of Christ is far greater than the Levitical priesthood, and genealogies are irrelevant.

The Abuse of Authority by the Scribes and Pharisees

The Scribes and Pharisees Sat in Moses' Seat

On Tuesday of Holy Week, Jesus gave a long address to the multitudes in the Temple (Matthew 24:1), where the Scribes and Pharisees were present as He spoke. He began by saying that the Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat.

> "Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, observe and do that, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do. For they bind heavy burdens, hard to bear, and lay them on men's shoulders; but they themselves will not move them with one of their fingers. But all their works they do to be seen by men" (Matthew 23:3-5).

Moses' seat is the place of judgment, where Moses acted as an arbiter for settling disputes among the people. Later the Levites took Moses' place[176] in these matters. Similarly within the Church, we are instructed to "obey those who rule over us and be submissive, for they watch out for our souls as those who must give account" (Hebrews 13:17). We are instructed to "follow their faith, considering the outcome of their conduct" (Hebrews 13:7, see also 1 Peter 5:5). This is not a master-slave relationship, since the Lord had said that whoever desires to be the greatest in the Kingdom of God, let him be the slave of all (Matthew 20:25-28, 23:11-12). Therefore in "obeying those who rule over us", we are instructed to imitate their humility, and to be persuaded by their example.

Hierarchs in the Church Now Sit in Moses' Seat

Referring to the priest watching out for our souls, John Chrysostom said[177], "While the steersman continues in good courage, the crew also will be in safety. But if he is tired out by their reviling him and showing ill will against him, he cannot watch equally well, or retain his skill; and without intending it, throws them into ten thousand mischiefs. So too the priest! If he enjoys honor from you, he will be able well to order your affairs. But if you throw them into despondency, you weaken their hands and render them, as well as yourselves, an easy prey to the waves, although they are very courageous. Consider what Christ said concerning the Jews. 'The Scribes and the Pharisees sit in Moses' seat (Exodus 18:13); therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do' (Matthew 23:2). Now we have not to say 'the priests sit on Moses' seat' but 'on that of Christ'; for they have successively received His doctrine.

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[175] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XII, XIII.
[176] See the earlier discussion under "Is it Lawful To Pay Taxes?" for more details.
[177] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVI, 4.

In the New Testament, Paul and Barnabas, (and Paul and Silas) appointed presbyters (Greek *presbuteros*) at the Churches they established (Acts 14:23, 20:17, 1 Timothy 4:14, 5:17, Titus 1:5). The Greek word *presbuteros* implies elders and is used to refer to the elders (or presbyters) of the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30, 15:2-6, 15:22-23, 16:4, 21:18) and the Jewish elders who opposed Paul and crucified Christ (Matthew 21:23, 26:3, 26:57, Acts 23:14, 24:1, 25:15). Thus, government in the Church was similar organizationally to that in Jewish society. Today the terms presbyter and priest are used interchangeably in the Orthodox Church and in some Western Churches.

When Paul said, "Obey those leading you and submit to them" (Hebrews 13:17) and "Looking at the outcome of their conduct, imitate their faith" (Hebrews 13:7), what should we do if they are wicked? Should we obey?"

In this respect, John Chrysostom distinguishes[178] between whether the hierarch is wicked in faith or in life. That is, does he teach heresy and is he therefore wicked in faith; or does he have a corrupt life to go with a correct faith? "If indeed he is wicked in regard to faith, flee and avoid him; not only if he is a man, but even if he were an angel come down from heaven". For Paul said, "Satan transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his servants transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Corinthians 11:14-15). Similar to the "angel of light" is a hierarch with a heretical faith: "The evil is not clear to all, and the wicked (hierarch) will not shrink from teaching it".

If the hierarch is wicked in having a corrupt life, Chrysostom advised first to avoid being overly curious to ferret this out. Chrysostom took his cue from Christ in his response to the Scribes and Pharisees. He had said, "The Scribes and Pharisees sit in Moses' seat. Therefore whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do; but do not do according to their works; for they say (what is right) but do not do it" (Matthew 23:2, 3). In this regard, it would be hard to imagine a more corrupt life than that of the Scribes and Pharisees. They openly plotted to murder the Lord and persecute the Apostles (Matthew 26:4, Acts 7:56-60, 9:1-2). They devoured widows' houses in the name of upholding the Mosaic Law (Matthew 23:14). They tithed on all their income, but neglected justice and mercy and faith (Matthew 23:23).

The same applies to hierarchs with a corrupt life. Chrysostom said, "They have the dignity of office, but are of an unclean life. Do however attend to their words, but not to their life. For as regards his character, no one would be harmed thereby, because his character is clear to all. And also because, though he was ten thousand times as wicked, he will never teach what is wicked".

In this respect, Chrysostom applied the Lord's words, "Judge not that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1) to a hierarch with a corrupt life since this applies to one's life and not to one's faith. The words that follow he said make this plain: "And why do you look at the speck in your brother's eye, but do not consider the plank in your own eye?" (Matthew 7:3).

[178] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXXIV, 1.

The Monastic Life

John Chrysostom stated[179] that it was to concentrate on a life of humility that many people of his day had chosen the monastic life.

> "Nothing is equal to the practice of modesty, wherefore He continually reminded them of this virtue, and He used children as an example (Mark 9:36-37). He began with the beatitudes (Matthew 5:3-12). And in this place, He plucked arrogance up by the roots, saying, 'He that abases himself shall be exalted'. Do you see how He draws off the hearer right over to the contrary thing? He not only forbids him to set his heart upon the first place, but requires him to follow after the last. And where shall we find this humility? Do you want us to go again to the city of virtue, the tents of the holy men, the mountains and the groves? There too shall we see this height of humility".
>
> "For men, some illustrious from their rank in the world, some from their wealth, in every way put themselves down, by their vesture, by their dwelling, by those to whom they minister; and, as in written characters, they throughout all things inscribe humility".
>
> "And the things that are incentives of arrogance, as to dress well, and to build houses splendidly, and to have many servants, things which often drive men even against their will to arrogance; these are all taken away. For they themselves light their fire, they themselves cleave the logs, themselves cook, themselves minister to those that come there".
>
> "No one can be heard insulting, or seen insulted, or commanded, or giving commands. But all are devoted to those that are waited on, and every one washes the strangers' feet, and there is much contention about this. And he does it, not inquiring who it is, neither if he is a slave, nor if he were free; but in the case of every one fulfills this service. No man there is great or lowly. What then? Is there confusion? Far from it, but the highest order! If anyone is lowly, he that is great sees not this, but has accounted himself again to be inferior even to him, and so becomes great. There is one table for all, both for them that are served, and for them that serve; the same food, the same clothes, the same dwellings, and the same manner of life. He is great there, who eagerly seizes the lowly task. There is not yours, and mine but this expression is exterminated".

Humility is a consistent theme throughout the Scriptures. For example, Israel in the desert was arrogant and stiff-necked. As a result, the Lord humbled them by letting them all die there even though they were miraculously provided for -- and all the surrounding nations knew it (Deuteronomy 8:1-6). On the other hand, Moses was the most humble man on earth and wouldn't even defend himself when his brother and sister (Aaron and Miriam) spoke against him. But the Lord defended Moses and, in doing so, exalted him (Numbers 12:1-11).

Eight Woes or Judgments on the Scribes and Pharisees

Jesus finished His long address in the Temple with a series of eight "woes", which were denunciations in the sense of grief, not in the sense of cursing or anathema. The eight are summarized in Table 1.

[179] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXII, 3.

Table 1
Jesus' Denunciation of the Scribes and Pharisees

Number	Problem
1	Shut Door to Kingdom of Heaven Against Men
2	Devour Widows' Houses; Long Phony Prayers
3	Travel Far for Converts; Make Them Worse Than Yourselves
4	Ignore the Sanctity of the Temple
5	Pay Tithes, But Ignore Justice, Mercy and Faith
6	Clean on the Outside, But Extortionists on Inside
7	Like Whitewashed Tombs; Hypocrites and Lawless Inside
8	Build Tombs for Prophets; Have Become Just Like Their Murderers

Shutting the Door to the Kingdom:

Early in Jesus' ministry, He was teaching in a house in Capernaum, where the Scribes and Pharisees were present (Mark 2:6, Luke 5:21). Four men arrived, carrying a paralytic, and couldn't get into the house because of the crowd. So they opened up the roof above where Jesus was teaching and lowered the paralytic in front of Jesus (Luke 5:19). Jesus did three things that only God can do.

First, He forgave the sins of the Paralytic (Matthew 9:2). Secondly He read the thoughts of the Scribes. "Knowing their thoughts, Jesus said, 'Why do you think evil in your hearts?'" (Matthew 9:4). And third, to prove that this was God and that He had the authority to forgive sins, He said, "Which is easier to say, 'your sins are forgiven', or to say, 'arise and walk'"? Jesus continued, just to dispel any doubts, "But that you (the Scribes and Pharisees) may know that the Son of Man has power on earth to forgive sins" – then He said to the paralytic – "Arise, take up your bed and go to your house" (Matthew 9:6).

The reaction of the crowd was one of marvel; they "glorified God who had given such power to men" (Matthew 9:8), and they said, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:12).

Unfortunately, Jesus' warm reception in Capernaum was short-lived. A few months later, Jesus rebuked the cities of Chorazin, Bethsaida and Capernaum because they didn't repent (Matthew 11:20-24). Perhaps this was because of the Scribes and Pharisees who were present. They didn't enter the Kingdom of Heaven themselves (Matthew 23:13) and by their undercutting and false teaching, they didn't allow some of those who were entering to go in. This can be compared to the parable of the Sower where some seed fell on the wayside and some fell on rocky ground (Matthew 13:18-21). The Scribes and Pharisees snatched the Word away before the people understood it (i.e. the wayside); or if the people did understand it, the Pharisees threatened to put them out of the Synagogue (John 9:34-35) if they continued (i.e., the rocky ground).

One might ask how the Gospel writers came to know that Jesus read the thoughts of the Scribes and Pharisees. Since they were so hostile to Him, it is unlikely that they would admit this. However, included among the Pharisees were Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea who

later believed and performed the burial rite for Jesus (John 19:38-42). They may have been present at Capernaum at this time, and were certainly included in private discussions among the Pharisees after this event.

Cyril of Alexandria asked[180] why Jesus forgave the sins of the paralytic first. The answer is that sin is often the cause of physical diseases.

> "Now someone, I imagine, may say to this: what he wanted was to be delivered from his disease; and why, then, does Christ announce to him the forgiveness of his sin? It was that you may learn that God silently and noiselessly observes the affairs of men, and watches the course of each one's life; and so it is written, 'the paths of a man are before the eyes of God; and He looks at all his tracks' (Proverbs 5:21). As He is good, and wills that all men should be saved; He often purifies those who are entangled in sins by inflicting sickness upon their body. He says by the voice of Jeremiah, 'You shall be taught, O Jerusalem, by labor and the scourge' (Jeremiah 6:8). The writer of the book of Proverbs also has said, 'my son, despise not the teaching of the Lord, nor faint when you are convicted by Him; for whom the Lord loves, He chastens and scourges every son whom He accepts' (Proverbs 3:11). Therefore Christ announced that He would cut away the cause of the disease, and the very root, as it were, of the malady, even sin. If this is removed, necessarily must the disease which sprung from it be also at the same time taken away".

Devouring Widows' Houses:

According to Hebrew custom[181], the oldest son in a family had the "birthright" and was given a double portion of the inheritance. For example, in a family of five sons, the oldest got a two-sixths share and the others got one-sixth shares. However, the oldest was required to provide for their mother for the rest of her life and for any sisters until they got married (this included the sister's dowry!) out of his extra share. This was to be the case even if the oldest was the son of a wife who was not the father's favorite (Deuteronomy 21:15-17). Thus, in the case of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-13), the Prodigal got one third and the older son got two thirds.

If the breadwinner of a family died early and unexpectedly, there were several options for his widow and children. The man's oldest unmarried brother was required to take his wife and raise up children for his brother. If the man who died had children, this didn't apply and the children needed to help their mother. Special provisions were made under Mosaic Law for widows and orphans (Deuteronomy 24:19-21; 16:10-11) and a special third tithe was set aside for them (Deuteronomy 14:29; 26:12). While they were not supposed to be neglected (Ezekiel 22:7, Malachi 3:5), the Scribes and Pharisees of Jesus' day did just that under the pretense of legality (Matthew 23:14, Mark 12:40, Luke 20:47). As soon as the struggling widow ran out of money, they foreclosed on her house and seized her property. This was in violation of the Mosaic Law. People were to freely open their hand to the poor and generously lend him sufficient for his needs (Deuteronomy 15:7-8). To not do so was a sin and the poor man may cry to the Lord against his rich neighbors. In being generous to him, however, "the Lord will bless them in all their work and in everything they do" (Deuteronomy 15:9-11). The widow of Nain,

[180] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke, Chapter 5.
[181] Merrill Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, pp **376-378.**

whose only son had just died, was probably in dire straits and could expect to lose everything in a short time.

Converting Proselytes:

Jesus said to the Pharisees, "You travel land and sea to win one proselyte, and when he is won, you make him twice as much a son of hell as yourselves". The Pharisees didn't have to travel to other countries much to do this, since there were so many Hebrew visitors to Jerusalem every year from outlying areas. The Apostles spoke to people from 15 different countries just on Pentecost (Acts 2:9-11).

John Chrysostom stated[182] that the long-term result of the conversion of proselytes by the Pharisees was a collection of disciples who were worse than they were.

> "They are unprofitable for the salvation of the many, and need much work in order to win over even one. They were even remiss in the preservation of him whom they had gained, by the wickedness in their life corrupting him, and making him worse. When the disciple sees his teachers to be such as these, he becomes worse than they do. He does not stop at his teacher's wickedness; but as when his teacher is virtuous, he imitates him, so when he is bad, he even goes beyond him, by reason of our proneness to what is evil. Because they labor to instill into their disciples a greater wickedness, they harden them to a much greater depravity than they have, and this is above all a mark of a depraved soul.

Ignore the Sanctity of the Temple:

Jesus spoke to the Scribes and Pharisees, "You say, 'Whoever swears by the temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the temple, he is obliged to perform it. Fools and blind! Which is greater, the gold or the temple that sanctifies the gold?' And, 'Whoever swears by the altar, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gift that is on it, he is obliged to perform it'. Fools and blind! Which is greater, the gift or the altar that sanctifies the gift?" (Matthew 23:16-19)

The focus of the Scribes and Pharisees was on the things of this life and they had no concept of the value of spiritual things. Even the Temple itself, to them, was just the sum of the valuables it contained. Jesus pointed out that the real valuable item in the Temple was the Presence of God that sanctified it. In this and other contexts, Jesus taught that one thing sanctifies another, and that physical objects can be used for spiritual purposes.

For example, a woman touched the hem of His garment, and was immediately healed of her hemorrhage (Luke 8:43-45). The Master sanctified the garment and the garment sanctified the hem. Similarly during the two years that Paul was in Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey, handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul's body were used to heal diseases and cast out evil spirits (Acts 19:12). Perhaps the most dramatic example of sanctified physical objects was the man who was raised from the dead by touching the bones of Elisha. In this account, it was completely unintentional; no faith at all existed on the part of the burial crew (2 Kings 13:20-21). The relics of Elisha had been sanctified by the power behind the life of Elisha. Thus, one thing sanctifies another. This is also the case with icons, holy water, holy oil and many instances of relics of the saints.

[182] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIII, 1.

Pay Tithes, But Ignore Justice, Mercy and Faith:

The practice of tithing was well established at the time of Abraham when Abraham (Abram) gave a tithe to Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:1-6). Sacrifice had already been established before Cain killed Abel, and it was jealousy over the Lord's acceptance of Abel's offering that led Cain to kill Abel (Genesis 4:2-5). This suggests that Cain and Abel may also have been instructed about tithes.

Tithing was given more definition in the Mosaic Law, however. Three tithes are mentioned: The first tithe was part of the "Covenant of Salt" between the Lord and the Levites, who had no land for an inheritance (Numbers 18:20-24). The other tribes had defined land and boundaries for their inheritance which reverted back to their families even if it was sold (Leviticus 25:13-28). In their agricultural economy every 10th sheep at the time of tithing coming into the sheepfold was offered to the Lord (Leviticus 27:30-33) and was received by the Levites. The 1st tithe was part of an income for them that derived from the services they performed.

A second tithe was used at the festivals of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, where everyone rejoiced before the Lord; it was used by everyone, not just the Levites (Deuteronomy 12:12-19). The tithes and other vows, alms and freewill offerings were also brought to Jerusalem at this time.

Every third year, an additional tithe was set aside for the alien, the orphans, the widows and the Levites (Deuteronomy 14:28-29, 26:12-13). Following the giving of this third tithe, the people were to say "before the Lord" that they have not withheld any and to ask the Lord for a blessing that they might continue to have a land flowing with milk and honey (Deuteronomy 26:12-15). The righteous Tobit in his almsgiving describes these three tithes (Tobit 1:5-8 LXX).

The Prophet Malachi spoke to the people of his day about robbing God by refusing to contribute their tithes: "But you say, 'How have we robbed You?' In tithes and offerings! You are cursed with a curse, for you are robbing Me, the whole nation of you. Bring the whole tithe into the storehouse, so that there may be food in My house. And test Me now in this, says the Lord of Hosts, if I will not open for you the windows of heaven and pour out for you a blessing until it overflows" (Malachi 3:8-10: compare Deuteronomy 26:12-15).

In the Early Church, people gave not just a Tithe, but they sold everything they had and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet to do as the Apostles pleased (Acts 2:45, 4:36-37). This demonstrates a singular detachment from worldly possessions among members of the Early Church.

Yet tithing shouldn't be a thing that we are forced to do, but a thing that we want to do. John Chrysostom said[183], that almsgiving is the characteristic of Christianity and the medicine for our sins

> "If one is doing work of virtue, and yet all that is done is of necessity, it is shorn of its reward."

[183] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XIX, 9:7

"Almsgiving is the mother of love, where love is the characteristic of Christianity. It is the medicine of our sins, the cleansing of the filth of our souls, the ladder fixed to heaven; it binds together the Body of Christ".

Clean on the Outside, But Extortionists on the Inside:

Jesus stated to the Scribes and Pharisees, "Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you cleanse the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of extortion and self-indulgence. Blind Pharisee, first cleanse the inside of the cup and dish, that the outside of them may be clean also" (Matthew 23:25-26). By the inside of the cup or dish, He is referring to the soul, and the outside of the cup is the body.

Jesus gave a similar instruction to a Pharisee almost a year earlier when the Pharisee invited Jesus to his house for dinner (Luke 11:37-51). Jesus went in and sat down, but didn't wash His hands (perhaps purposely!), and the Pharisee noticed this. Cyril of Alexandria stated[184] that the Pharisees had a form of faith that was superficial only, and they were not lovers of God.

"Jesus had the reputation among them of a righteous man and a prophet, yet He did not conform Himself to their customs. They washed before meals as though this freed them from all pollution. But washing with water is useful for cleaning the body, but how can it free men from the defilement of the mind and heart? Tell us, O Pharisee, where Moses gave you this precept? What commandment ordained by God requires men to wash before meals? The priests were bathed in water to declare, by means of the baptism enacted in shadow, that even they did not have sufficiency for sanctification. They needed Holy Baptism for the true cleansing".

On the other hand, "The Pharisees went about with sad looks, as though pale from fasting, and stood praying in the streets, wishing rather to have praise of men than God. They exhibited themselves to the onlookers as the very pattern of the life of virtue that is by the Law; and in doing so, they withdrew in every way possible from being lovers of God".

John Chrysostom stated[185] that their uncleanness is exhibited by their behavior toward others:

"But these things He said, intimating their mad desire of glory, and their frenzy concerning this. This became a cause of all their evils, namely, that they did all things for display and appearance. This both led them away from the Faith, and caused them to neglect what really is virtue, and induced them to busy themselves about bodily purifying only, neglecting the purification of the soul. So therefore to lead them into what really is virtue, and to the purifying of the soul, He makes mention of mercy, judgment and faith. These are the things that comprise our life, these are what purify the soul, justice, love for man, and truth. These incline us to pardon others and restrain us from being excessively severe and unforgiving to them that sin. If we do this, we gain doubly, both becoming kind to man, and hence obtaining also ourselves much kindness from the God of all.

[184] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 83, Studion Publishers, 1983.
[185] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVIII, 2.

We see this throughout the Scriptures, as holiness and sacred things are contrasted with uncleanness, defilement and contamination. The Scriptures refer to things, animals, and people as being holy, but always by association with a Holy God. Made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, Ephesians 4:24), His people were to be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 19:2), and they are to be partakers of His Holiness (Hebrews 12:10). Consequently, the Tabernacle and all its furnishings and utensils were anointed with holy oil (Exodus 40:9) in preparation for the Presence of God dwelling there (Exodus 29:43-46, Numbers 7:89). Holy clothing was worn by the priests (Exodus 28:2) in serving God, and holy water was used by the priests in performing the judgments of God both for discernment in concealed sin (Numbers 5:17ff) and for removing uncleanness (Numbers 19:9). The offerings to the Lord were also holy, whether animal or vegetable (Exodus 29:33, Leviticus 2:3, 6:25). Even the ground was holy if the Lord's Presence was there (Exodus 3:4, Joshua 5:15), and the camp of Israel was not allowed to become defiled (Deuteronomy 23:14, Numbers 5:2-3) because of the Tabernacle and the Presence of God in its midst. The Commandments, Statutes and Judgments of the Lord were similarly holy (Romans 7:12, Psalm 19:7-10) because they represented the Word of God for His people (Deuteronomy 4:8, Leviticus 18:26-28, Psalm 105:42). All this carries over into the New Testament, where the people of God "are not called to uncleanness but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Ambrose stated[186] that the Church is the holy ground, fruitful with sanctity and fertile with virtues. Christ in us is like the burning bush, consuming our thorns, showing us Grace.

In contrast to the holiness in Israel, things associated with idols and demons were unclean, defiled and polluted (Genesis 35:2, Leviticus 18:30, Ezekiel 36:22-25). In the New Testament, demons are called "unclean spirits" more often than they are called "evil spirits", even though both are true. As the people of God associated themselves with idols and demons, they became similarly unclean, defiled and polluted (Deuteronomy 32:15-18, Jeremiah 7:30, 16:18). Anyone who was unclean for any reason had to remain outside the Camp until his uncleanness was rectified (Leviticus 13:46, Numbers 31:19, Deuteronomy 23:10). Because the Lord was present in the Camp (Deuteronomy 23:14, Numbers 5:3), any uncleanness in the Camp affected everyone. A dramatic example of this was given by the actions of Achan, who, out of greed, brought polluted objects into the Camp of Israel (Joshua 7).

Anyone from Israel who offered sacrifices to idols and demons both violated God's holiness **(**Leviticus 20:2-7), defiled the Sanctuary (Leviticus 20:3, Ezekiel 5:11) and joined the one doing so to the demons (1 Corinthians 10:19-22). Similarly, participating in the practices of the Canaanites, such as fornication and witchcraft, rendered a person unclean (Deuteronomy 18:9-12). The Apostle Paul had similar words to say to the Corinthians regarding joining the temple of God, their body, to harlots (1 Corinthians 6:15-20). As the people of God were unfaithful, and continued in their uncleanness, defilement and pollution (1 Kings 11:5-7), the Lord gave them over to more of the same in order to wake them up (Ezekiel 16:36-37, 23:7-30). Paul wrote that the Lord continues to do this in the New Testament (Romans 1:24). As in the Parable of the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-24), it often takes time for a person to realize the filth he's enmeshed in before he desires to return to his Father's house (Luke 15:16-17). Quoting Isaiah 52, Paul stated, "'Therefore come out from their midst and be separate', says the Lord, 'and do not touch what is unclean; and I will welcome you'". "Beloved, let us cleanse ourselves

[186] Ambrose, Epistle 63, 41-42.

from all defilement of flesh and spirit, perfecting holiness in the fear of God" (2 Corinthians 6:17-7:1).

All of the above breaks down, however, if the leaders of Israel, the Scribes and Pharisees, have no spiritual discernment in these matters, and have no vision beyond things physical.

Like Whitewashed Tombs; Hypocrites and Lawlessness Inside:

John Chrysostom stated[187] that Jesus derided the Scribes and Pharisees for their vainglory; in calling them 'whitewashed sepulchers' and 'hypocrites', He was pointing out the cause of all their evils. The prophets constantly laid this to their charge, that they spoil, that their rulers judge not according to the rule of justice; everywhere you may find their sacrifices refused, but these external things required. So that there is nothing strange, nothing new, neither in the law giving, nor in the accusation, or even in the comparison to a sepulcher. David did not merely call them a sepulcher, 'but their throat is an open sepulcher' (Psalm 5:9, Romans 3:13).

Chrysostom also compared people in his days to the Scribes and Pharisees, and this is a good thing to contemplate during the season of Lent.

> "Many men now are like them also, decking themselves indeed outwardly, but full of iniquity within. Today there is many a care for outward purification, but of those in the soul, none. But if anyone should tear open each man's conscience, many worms and much corruption would he find, and an ill savor beyond utterance; unreasonable and wicked lusts I mean, which are more unclean than worms. He in whom Christ dwells, and the Holy Spirit has worked, and such great mysteries, that this man should be a sepulcher, what wretchedness is this? What mourning and lamentation does this call for, when the members of Christ have become a tomb of uncleanness?"
>
> "And how does someone even dare to set foot in the churches of God, and in holy temples, when they have the savor of so much abomination? For if one carrying a dead body into the king's courts and burying it there would have suffered the utmost punishment, setting your foot in the sacred courts and filling the house with so much bad odor, consider what a punishment you will undergo. The Psalmist says, 'Let my prayer be set forth in Your sight as incense' (Psalm 141:2). When not incense, but a stinking smoke arises from you, and from your deeds, what punishment do you not deserve to undergo?"
>
> "What then is the stinking smoke? Many come in gazing about at the beauty of women; others, as pedophiles, curious about the blooming youth of boys. After this, do you not marvel, how thunderbolts are not launched, and the whole Church is not plucked up from its foundations? Worthy both of thunderbolts and hell are the things that are done; but God, who is long -suffering, and of great mercy, delays His wrath, calling you to repentance and amendment. What are you doing, man? Are you curiously looking after women's beauty, and do you not shudder at doing this despite being in the temple of God? Does the Church seem to you a brothel? In God's temple, when God Himself is discoursing to you, and threatening about these things, you are committing adultery at the same time in which you are being told not to do this. Do you not shudder or stand amazed? These things do the spectacles of wantonness teach

[187] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIII, 2-4.

you, the grievous snares of the thoughtless, and the pleasurable destruction of the unchaste."

"Did you not hear that the men and women were gathered together in the upper room (Acts 1:14-15), and that congregation was worthy of the heavens? And very reasonably! The women then practiced much self-denial, and the men gravity and chastity. Hear, for instance, the seller of purple saying, "If you have judged me to be faithful to the Lord, come in, and stay with me" (Acts 16:15). Hear the women, who went about with the Apostles, having taken in themselves manly courage, Priscilla, Persis, and the rest[188]; from whom our present women are as far removed as our men from their men."

"Even traveling into far countries women didn't bring not on themselves evil report; but now even though brought up in a chamber, they hardly escape this suspicion. These things arise from their decking of themselves, and their luxury. Then the business of those women was to spread the word; but now to appear beautiful and fair in countenance. This is glory to them; this is salvation; but of lofty and great works they do not even dream."

"I therefore beg you not to seek after wealth and affluence, but a good disposition, and gentleness. Seek for a pious and self-denying damsel, and these will be to you better than countless treasures. If you seek the things of God, these others will come also; but if you pass by the things of God, don't expect anything."

Building Tombs for Prophets, Just Like Their Murderous Fathers:

In all ages, it has been customary to exhibit the gravesites of national heroes. In their pretense of spirituality, the Scribes and Pharisees honored the gravesites of the prophets. All this while, they sought to kill Jesus, who had sent the prophets to them. Jesus cornered them on this point:

"Therefore you are witnesses against yourselves that you are sons of those who murdered the prophets. Fill up, then, the measure of your fathers' guilt. Serpents, brood of vipers! How can you escape the condemnation of hell? Therefore, indeed, I send you prophets, wise men, and scribes: some of them you will kill and crucify, and some of them you will scourge in your synagogues and persecute from city to city. On you may come all the righteous blood shed on the earth, from the blood of righteous Abel to the blood of Zechariah, son of Berechiah, whom you murdered between the temple and the altar (Matthew 23:31-35).

Cyril of Alexander stated[189] that the ancestors of the Scribes and Pharisees had been the ones who put to death the holy prophets who were bringing them the word of God and who were leading them to the right way. As the descendants of the murderers, they acknowledged that the prophets were holy and venerable men by building over them ornate sepulchers. Thus they became the judges of their fathers and accused their fathers of having done wrongfully. Ironically, the Scribes and Pharisees, who condemned their fathers for such cruel murders, were about to incur the guilt of even more abominable offenses: the murder of the Prince of Life. As

[188] From the context, these women seem to be some of the women of Philippi (Acts 16:13).
[189] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 85, Studion Publishers, 1983.

if this weren't enough, they followed in short order with the murder of the Archdeacon Stephen, for no other reason than his speaking to them the words of the Scriptures.

Zechariah, the son of Berechiah, was the father of John the Baptist, and also Jesus' uncle, which means that the murderous frenzy of the Scribes and Pharisees had gotten very personal with Jesus. The occasion of this murder was Jesus' own conception by the Virgin Mary. Zechariah, after diligent inquiry, which included divine inspiration (Luke 1:39-45), concluded that Mary was still a virgin and he asserted this[190] in the Temple. When it was his turn to preside at the Temple he had Mary take her place in that part of the Temple reserved for virgins. The Scribes and Pharisees were so angry with Zechariah over this that they began plotting with Herod to kill him. They got their opportunity when the Magi arrived to worship the infant Christ. Herod thought that the infant John the Baptist was the new King that the Magi were seeking, and ordered his execution. When Herod's soldiers couldn't find John (Zechariah had sent him into the desert with Elizabeth), they struck Zechariah down between the Temple and the altar.

In one of these accounts[191], Zechariah prophesied before the birth of Christ that Mary would be the mother of God and that her child would be 'God the Savior, Jesus Christ, the King and Ruler of their race'.

Even though John the Baptist was only an infant when his father, Zechariah, was murdered, John seems to be aware who was responsible for his death. He was also very aware of the spiritual character of the Scribes and Pharisees.

> "Then Jerusalem, all Judea, and all the region around the Jordan went out to him and were baptized by him in the Jordan, confessing their sins. But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to his baptism, he said to them, 'Brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the wrath to come? Therefore bear fruits worthy of repentance'" (Matthew 3:5-8).

Jesus referred to the Scribes and Pharisees using the same words as His cousin John.

John Chrysostom commented[192] that the significance of the mention of the "blood of righteous Abel" was that they should have learned from the example of righteous Abel that the shedding of innocent blood will not go unnoticed. Lamech had said that he should be avenged seventy-sevenfold for murdering a man (Genesis 4:23-24), compared to Cain's vengeance of just sevenfold (Genesis 4:15). In other words, Lamech was more deserving of punishment than Cain was. This is noteworthy in that Lamech was not brought to a better mind by Cain's example, but became worse. They who, after many people sin and have been punished, have not grown better from hearing of their example, but have committed the same offenses, are justly worthy to suffer their punishments also.

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[190] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 29, discussion.
Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Buena Vista, CO, 2002, September 5, p. 215.
Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 85, Studion Publishers, 1983, footnote, p. 345. This account is attributed to the historian Sulpitius Severus.

[191] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 85, Studion Publishers, 1983, footnote, p. 345. This account is attributed to the historian Sulpitius Severus.

[192] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIV, 2.

Speaking about the Scribes and Pharisees, Chrysostom said[193] that they didn't learn from the past, but murdered holy men in a holy place.

> "Abel was murdered likewise out of envy. What do you have to say? Don't you know what Cain suffered? Did God not exact the severest penalty? Did you not hear what things your fathers suffered when they slew the prophets; were they not delivered over to punishments, and infliction of vengeance without number? How then did you not become better? And why do I speak of the punishments of your fathers, and what they suffered? You who yourself condemn your fathers, how is it you do worse? For even you yourselves have declared that 'He will miserably destroy those wicked men'" (Matthew 21:41).
>
> "The outrage regarding the Scribes and Pharisees was twofold. Not only did they slay holy men, but also in a holy place. And saying these things, He did not only alarm them, but also comforted His disciples, showing that the righteous men who were before them suffered these things. But these He alarmed, foretelling that as their fathers paid their penalty, even so they should suffer the utmost extremities. The prophets also laid this to their charge, saying, 'They mingle blood with blood' (Hosea 4:2 LXX). Which He said to Noah likewise, 'I will require all blood that is shed'" (Genesis 9:4-6). For not merely ordinary persons did they slay, but prophets and wise men. And by these He means the Apostles and those after them, for, indeed, many prophesied.

When Jesus said, "How can you escape the condemnation of hell?" (Matthew 23:33), the term "hell" is the word *Gehenna*, the smoldering garbage dump outside the city of Jerusalem. Basil the Great suggests[194] another aspect of "hell". He suggests that the "cutting in half" of the ungodly on Judgment Day (Matthew 24:51, Luke 12:46) refers to the eternal alienation of the soul from the Spirit. "Thus in hell there is no one who confesses, no one in death who remembers God, because the help of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3, Matthew 16:17) is no longer available".

Jesus concluded, "Behold your house is left desolate" (Matthew 23:38). Chrysostom commented[195], "They will be stripped of the aid which comes from Me. Surely it was the same One Who also was protecting them before, and holding them together, and preserving them; surely it was He who was ever chastening them. And He appointed a punishment, which they had ever dreaded exceedingly; for it declared the entire overthrow of their government.

Jesus' final words were, "For I say to you, you shall see Me no more till you say, 'Blessed *is* He who comes in the name of the Lord!'" (Matthew 23:39) "And this is the language of one that loves earnestly, not merely warning them by the past; for of the future day[196] of His Second Coming does He here speak".

"He made it plain even to the utterly unbelieving, that they should worship Him. He spoke of many things that were to be first, that He should send prophets and that they should kill them; that it should be in the synagogues. He included that they should suffer the utmost

[193] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIV, 2.
[194] Basil the Great, On the Holy Spirit, 40.
[195] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 3.
[196] Chrysostom stated that when Jesus said, "You shall see Me no more", He meant the time up to His crucifixion.

extremities; that their house should be left desolate; that they should undergo things more grievous than any, and such as never were undergone before. For all these things are enough to furnish even to the most senseless and contentious a clear proof of that which should come to pass at His coming".

Parable from the Old Testament: Ezekiel 1:21-2:1 "A Man on the Throne of God"

As we consider the Gospel for Tuesday of Holy Week, we listen to the religious leaders challenge Jesus in every way that they can imagine. Yet they have no clue Who it is that they're dealing with. Ezekiel's vision gives us a glimpse of this. Ezekiel saw not just the likeness of the Throne of God, but also the likeness of a man on the Throne. The text from Ezekiel reads:

> "When those went, *the wheels* went; and when those stood, *the wheels* stood; and when those lifted themselves off the earth, they were lifted off with them: for the spirit of life was in the wheels".
>
> "And the likeness over the heads of the living creatures was as a firmament, as the appearance of crystal, spread out over their wings above. And their wings were spread out under the firmament, reaching one to the other; two *wings* to each, covering their bodies. And I heard the sound of their wings when they went, as the sound of much water: and when they stood, their wings were let down. And lo! A voice from above the firmament that was over their head, *there was* as the appearance of a sapphire stone *and* the likeness of a throne upon it: and upon the likeness of the throne was the likeness as an appearance of a man above. And I saw as it were the resemblance of amber from the appearance of the loins and upwards, and from the appearance of the loins and under I saw an appearance of fire and the brightness thereof round about. As the appearance of the rainbow when it is in the cloud in days of rain so was the form of brightness round about".
>
> "This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of the Lord. And I saw and fell upon my face, and heard the voice of one speaking: and he said to me, Son of man, stand upon thy feet, and I will speak to thee" (Ezekiel 1:21-2:1).

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[197] that our human eyes and understanding could not see or comprehend God. Even the greatest of the prophets could only behold the likeness of God, not God Himself. The prophets could not even stand in the presence of the angels unless the angels transformed themselves into something more human. Because of this, God spread out the heavens to veil His Godhead, and it was necessary for Christ to come in the flesh, where His flesh veiled His Deity so that people could relate to Him. Cyril stated:

> "To look upon God with eyes of flesh is impossible; for the incorporeal cannot be subject to bodily sight; and the Only Begotten Son of God Himself has testified, saying, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18). For Ezekiel saw Him, yet what does the Scripture say? 'He saw the likeness of the glory of the Lord' (Ezekiel 1:28); not the Lord Himself; not the glory itself, as it really is. And when he saw merely the likeness of the glory, he fell to the earth from fear (Ezekiel 1:28). Now if the sight of the likeness of the glory brought fear and distress upon the prophets, anyone who should attempt to behold God Himself would to a certainty lose his life, according to the saying, 'No man shall see My face and live' (Exodus 33:20). For this cause God, of His great loving-kindness,

[197] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, IX, 1-4.

spread out the heaven as a veil of His Godhead that we should not perish. The word is not mine, but the Prophet's. 'If You would open the heaven, trembling will take hold upon the mountains from You, and they shall melt, as wax melts before the fire' (Isaiah 64:1-2 LXX). And why do you wonder that Ezekiel fell down on seeing the likeness of the glory? (Ezekiel 1:28) Daniel, at the sight of Gabriel, who was but a servant of God, immediately shuddered and fell on his face; and, prophet as he was, dared not answer him, until the Angel transformed himself into the likeness of a son of man (Daniel 10:9, 16, 18). Now if the appearing of Gabriel caused trembling in the Prophets, had God Himself been seen as He is, would not all have perished?"

"The Divine Nature then is impossible to see with eyes of flesh. But from the works, which are Divine, it is possible to attain to some conception of His power, according to Solomon, who says, 'By the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionately the Maker of them is seen' (Wisdom 13:5 LXX). He did not say that from the creatures the Maker is seen, but added proportionately. God appears the greater to every man in proportion as he has grasped a larger survey of the creatures. When his heart is uplifted by that larger survey, he gains thereby a greater conception of God".

"Do you want to learn that the nature of God is impossible to comprehend? The Three Children in the furnace of fire, as they hymn the praises of God, say 'Blessed are you that behold the depths, and sit upon the Cherubim' (Song of the Three Children 1:31 LXX). What is the nature of the Cherubim? Understand that and then look upon Him who sits on them. Ezekiel the Prophet even made a description of them, as far as was possible, saying that every one has four faces, one of a man, another of a lion, another of an eagle, and another of a calf. Each one had six wings[198], and they had eyes on all sides; and that under each one was a wheel of four[199] sides (Ezekiel 1:6-11, 10:21; Isaiah 6:2). Nevertheless though the Prophet makes the explanation, we cannot understand it even as we read. But if we cannot understand the throne, which he has described, how shall we be able to comprehend Him who sits on it, the Invisible and Ineffable God? To scrutinize the nature of God is impossible. But it is in our power to send up praises of His glory for His works that are seen".

Gregory Thaumaturgus took this one step further and likened[200] the womb of the Virgin Mary to the visions that Ezekiel saw, since she contained the same God that appeared to Ezekiel.

"The archangel addressed Mary in these terms: Through me all the heavenly powers hail you, the holy virgin. He Himself, who is Lord of all the heavenly powers and of all creation, has selected you as the holy one and the wholly fair. Through your holy, chaste, pure, and undefiled womb, the enlightening Pearl comes forth for the salvation of the entire world. Of all the race of man you are by birth the holy one, the more honorable, the purer, and the more pious than any other. You have a mind whiter than the snow, and a body made purer than any gold, however fine, and a womb such as the object which Ezekiel saw, and which he has described in these terms.

[198] Cyril has blended the account of Ezekiel and Isaiah.
[199] A wheel of four sides represents two wheels spinning at right angles to each other.
[200] Gregory Thaumaturgus, Four Homilies on the Annunciation, II, 2

> 'And the likeness of the living creatures upon the head was as the firmament, and as the appearance of the awesome crystal and the likeness of the throne above them was as the appearance of a sapphire. Above the throne it was as the likeness of a man, and as the appearance of amber; and within it there was, as it were, the likeness of fire all around' (Ezekiel 1:22, 26, 27). Clearly, then, the prophet beheld in type Him who was born of the holy virgin, whom you, O holy virgin, would have had no strength to bear, had you not beamed forth for that time with all that is glorious and virtuous. With what words of praise, then, shall we describe her virgin-dignity? With what indications and proclamations of praise shall we celebrate her stainless figure? With what spiritual song or word shall we honor her who is most glorious among the angels? She is planted in the house of God like a fruitful olive that the Holy Spirit overshadowed; and by her means are we called sons and heirs of the kingdom of Christ".

Jerome stated[201] that the vision that Ezekiel saw was an image of the Creation, where the crystal represents the compressed and denser waters above the earth[202]. The Creation itself speaks of the laver of Baptism; that is, as the infant world came out of the waters, so the new believer comes out of the laver.

> "The Spirit of God above moved, as a charioteer, over the face of the waters (Genesis 1:2), and produced from them the infant world, a type of the Christian child that is drawn from the laver of baptism. A firmament is constructed between heaven and earth, and to this is allotted the name heaven, — in the Hebrew Shamayim or 'what comes out of the waters,' — and the waters which are above the heavens are parted from the others to the praise of God (Genesis 1:7). Wherefore also in the vision of the prophet Ezekiel there is seen above the cherubim a crystal stretched forth (Ezekiel 1:22); that is, the compressed and denser waters. The first living beings come out of the waters; and believers soar out of the laver with wings to heaven. Man is formed out of clay (Genesis 2:7) and God holds the mystic waters in the hollow of his hand (Isaiah 40:12). In Eden a garden is planted, and a fountain in the midst of it parts into four heads (Genesis 2:8-10). This is the same fountain which Ezekiel later on describes as issuing out of the temple and flowing towards the rising of the sun, until it heals the bitter waters and quickens those that are dead" (Ezekiel 47:1, 8).

John Chrysostom stated[203] that the purpose of all these visions was to lead men to desire to become like the prophets who had the visions. The Scribes and Pharisees knew the Scriptures that stated these things quite well. But they didn't have the desire to be like the prophets.

> "Imagine only what sort of men it was intended for the hearers to become, when they considered that they were at once to be like the prophets, and like those great ones. It was on this account, you see, that he made mention of all the fire (Ezekiel 1:27); that he might lead them to reflect on the memory of those men. Of all the visions that appeared to them, the greater part appeared in fire; thus God

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[201] Jerome, Letters, LXIX, 6.

[202] This implies that Jerome understood that a water canopy existed prior to the Flood of Noah's day, which would create a "greenhouse effect" on the earth. During the Flood, the water canopy precipitated to cause the 40 days of heavy rain (Genesis 7:11-12).

[203] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XI, 6.

discoursed with Moses at the bush (Exodus 3:2-6), thus with all the people from Mount Sinai (Exodus 19:16-20:20), thus with Ezekiel regarding the cherubim" (Ezekiel 1:4-28).

Holy Tuesday Presanctified Liturgy
The Second Coming and the Last Judgment[204]

Revision B

Gospel: Matthew 24:36-26:2

> The Lord introduced His discussion about His Second Coming as follows,
>
> "Now concerning [peri de] that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels of heaven, nor the Son, but the Father only."
>
> "But as the days of Noah were, so also will the coming [Parousia] of the Son of Man be. As in the days before the flood, they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage, until the day that Noah entered the ark, and did not know until the flood came and took them all away, so also will the coming of the Son of Man be. Then two men will be in the field: one will be taken and the other left. Two women will be grinding at the mill: one will be taken and the other left. Watch therefore, for you do not know what day your Lord is coming. (Matthew 24:36-42).

Matthew 24:36 Introduces a Different Subject

The previous part of Matthew 24 relate mostly to the destruction of Jerusalem and the events preceding it. With verse 36, a new subject is introduced, namely, details regarding the Second Coming of Christ and the attendant Final Judgment. Details of the subject of the Second Coming continue to the end of Matthew 25.

The grammatical consideration here that is important to understand begins with the expression in Greek, *Peri de* (Matthew 24:36), and is used to change subject matter and introduce a new topic. The same expression is used by Paul where he takes up *seriatim* a list of items, about which the Corinthians had asked questions, with the introductory phrase, "Now concerning", which in Greek is *peri de*. Following are some examples[205]:

- "Now concerning [*peri de*] the things on which you wrote to me" (1 Corinthians 7:1).
- "Now concerning [peri de] virgins" (1 Corinthians 7:25).
- "Now concerning [*peri de*] things offered to idols" (1 Corinthians 8:1).
- "Now concerning [*peri de*] Spiritual gifts" (1 Corinthians 12:1).
- "Now concerning [*peri de*] love of the brethren" (1 Thessalonians 4:9).
- "Now concerning [*peri de*] the times and the season" (1 Thessalonians 5:1).

The practical impact of this grammatical change is that Jesus is returning to answer the original question His disciples had posed (Matthew 24:3), "Tell us, when will these things be"? His answer begins, "now concerning [*peri de*] that day and hour". He describes not just what it will be like when He comes, but also what He will be looking for and what the basis will be for His judgment.

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[204] This study adapted from a study prepared by Robert W. Newsom, *The King Judges His People: Jerusalem, Jesus and Judgment*, a series of studies on the Olivet Discourse and related texts in the Gospel of Matthew. Presented at Saint Athanasius Antiochan Orthodox Church, Isla Vista, California, 2002.

[205] For other examples, see Matthew 20:6; 22:31; 27:46; Mark 12:26; 13:32; John 11:8-11; Acts 21:25.

Description of the Last Days: Matthew 24:36-44

Jesus refers to *that* day and hour. The force of the *far demonstrative*, "that", being that other day; i.e., that other day the Lord mentioned by way of contrast in verse 22. This refers to the Second Advent.

The expression "that day and hour" also gives evidence of a change of subject matter by way of contrast. In the previous section (Matthew 24:4-35) the plural "days" is employed; in the present section (Matthew 24:36-46) the singular "day" is used. In verse 19, 22, 29 the plural "these days" describes the period under consideration; the singular "that day and hour" is not employed. But the second section, the period now under discussion, uses the singular (Matthew 24:36, 42, 44, 50 and 25:13). It is true that in Matthew 24:37 and 38 the plural "days" is found but that is in reference to the days of Noah previous to "the day" when Noah entered the ark. The distinctive use of the plural and singular in these sections points to different events; namely, the Destruction of Jerusalem in AD 70, and the Return of Christ at the Last Day.

John Chrysostom presented a contrast[206] between the righteous and the transgressors in the days before the Second Advent. There is also a contrast in their state of affairs: tribulation for some versus peace and safety for others. All the while, there will be a state of total unawareness on the part of the transgressors as to what is happening.

> "If there is luxury then, and peace and safety, as Paul said (1 Thessalonians 5:3), how does He say, 'after the tribulation of those days?' (Matthew 24:29) If there is luxury, how is there tribulation? It is luxury for those that are in a state of insensibility and peace. Therefore He did not say, 'when there is peace', but 'when they speak of peace and safety', indicating their insensibility. They are just like those in Noah's time, in that in the midst of such evils they lived in luxury".
>
> "But not so the righteous; they were passing their time in tribulation and dejection. He shows that when Antichrist has come, the pursuit of unlawful pleasures shall be more eager among the transgressors, and those that have learned to despair of their own salvation. There will then be gluttony, reveling, and drunkenness. Most of all He gives an example corresponding to the thing. Just like when the ark was in the making, they didn't believe. But while it was set in their midst, proclaiming beforehand the evils that are to come, when they saw it, they lived in pleasure, just as though nothing dreadful were about to take place. So also now, Antichrist indeed shall appear, after whom is the end, and the punishments at the end, and vengeance intolerable. But they that are held by the intoxication of wickedness shall not so much as perceive the dreadful nature of the things that are on the point of being done".

Defining "The Last Days"

"The day", "the great day", "that day and that hour" are expressions in the Scriptures for the final Day of Judgment. Christ has often spoken of the great judgment in connection with a

[206] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 2.

certain day. The disciples should not have had any difficulty understanding that Christ had changed the subject in verse 36 from the judgments upon Jerusalem to the judgment that was to occur at the End of the World. The use of the term "the day" by Matthew in his Gospel, indicates that it would be understood by the Apostles to refer to the final judgment, a concept basic to Old Testament Judaism. Jesus had said, speaking on the final judgment: "many will say to Me in that day" (Matthew 7:22). "But I say to you (Chorazin, Bethsaida), it shall be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon at the Day of Judgment, than for you". "But I say to you (Capernaum), that it shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom in the Day of Judgment, that for you" (Matthew 11:22, 24). "But I say unto you, that every idle word that men speak, they shall give account of it in the Day of Judgment" (Matthew 12:36). All these statements refer to the final, the Last Judgment.

Another observation is that nowhere in the New Testament is the *plural* – "the days", "days of vengeance", "those days" -- used in reference to the Second Coming. One exception[207] seems to be, "You have laid up treasure *for* the last days" (James 5:3*).*

There is a general impression among many Christians that the "last days" has reference to a short period just before the Second Coming of Christ, but the term is not so defined in the Scriptures nor understood by the Fathers. Concerning the "last days", the Fathers, following the Scriptures, hold that they began with the First Coming of Christ. This is found in a number of places in the Scriptures.

- "God, who at sundry times and in divers manners spoke in times past unto the fathers by the prophets, has in these last days spoken unto us by His Son, whom he has appointed heir of all things, by whom also he made the worlds" (Hebrews 1:1,2). "In these last days" obviously refers to the time in which the author of Hebrews was writing and is contrasted with the time past of the prophets.
- The Apostle Peter referred to the events of the Day of Pentecost as events of the last days. "But this is that which was spoken by the prophet Joel: 'And it shall come to pass in the last days, says God that I will pour out my Spirit on all flesh'" (Acts 2:16, 17).
- John said: "Little children, it is the last time: and as you heard that antichrist shall come, even now are there many antichrists; whereby we know that it is the last time" (1 John 2:18).
- Peter said, "He was destined before the foundation of the world but was made manifest at the end of the times for your sake" (1 Peter 1:20).
- Paul warns young Timothy about things are the perils that would come to pass in the last days (1 Timothy 4:1-3). The people in Timothy's Bishopric would be personally affected by those events. In particular, they needed the assurance that the coming apostasy was part of the overall pattern of events leading up to the end of the old order and the full establishing of Christ's Kingdom

[207] The Epistle of James, written early, 47-48 AD, provides on the historical side, one of the earliest insights into the nature of Jewish Christianity at its most promising period. It reveals the strong influence of the Old Testament and later Judaism, particularly the wisdom literature, and the degree to which the teaching of Christ had permeated and enriched this background. Another evidence for an early date is the striking absence of any Pauline influence. James is writing in the last days of the Old Covenant age; the Church is awaiting the arrival of the age to come (1 Corinthians 10:11; Hebrews 9:26). From the great respect and love that James had for Paul (Acts 15:25-26), one would expect that there would be some indication in James' Epistle of Paul's work if James had written after Paul began his missionary journeys.

There is no Scriptural ground for believing that "the last days" indicate a short period just before the Second Coming of the Lord. Rather, we should understand the last days as that period between Christ's birth and the destruction of Jerusalem.

Apostolic testimony is unmistakably clear: when Christ came, the 'last days' arrived with Him. He came to bring in the new age of the Kingdom of God. The old age was winding down, and would be thoroughly abolished when God destroyed the Temple.

The contrast between Matthew 24:4-35 and Matthew 24:36-25:46 is between known and unknown, between specific signs and general conditions, respectively. Table 1 shows a comparison between the two sections illustrating the contrast:

Table 1
Contrast Between Specific Signs and General Conditions

Local Judgment upon Jerusalem		**Universal Judgment in the Life to Come**	
Matthew 24:4-35		**Matthew 24:36-25:46**	
24:4, 14	Don't be led astray by specific sign-events and preconditions	24:36 24:39	no one knows did not know
24:15-16	When you see . . . then . . . flee!	24:42	do not know
24:25	I have told you beforehand	24:50	day when he is not looking
24:33	When you see all these things, you know that it is near	24:44	hour you do not expect
24:34	This generation will not pass away until all these things take place.	25:13	Keep awake therefore for you know neither the day nor the hour

The Comparison to the Days of Noah: Matthew 24:37-41

Our Lord, having taught that the time of His Second Coming is unknown because it is the Father's unrevealed counsel, now proceeds to teach His disciples that the time is unknowable because there shall be no signs. There are no means of foretelling the precise events, which will usher in the end of age. Those events will be as unforeseen as the coming of the flood in the days of Noah, or the breaking into a house by a burglar. Men and women will be engaged upon their usual occupations when it occurs.

John Chrysostom commented[208] on the Lord's statement that only the Father knows the day and hour. If the Son created everything that exists, and He knows everything the Father knows, how is it that He doesn't know the hour of His Second Advent? As God He knows; but since His disciples don't need to know, He refers them to His Father's judgment.

> "'But of that day and hour no man knows, no, not the angels of Heaven, neither the Son, but the Father' (Matthew 24:36). By saying, not the angels, He stopped their mouths, that they should not seek to learn what the angels don't know; and by saying, 'neither the Son', He forbids them not only to learn, but even to inquire. In proof that He said this, after His Resurrection, when He saw

[208] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 1.

they were becoming overly curious, He stopped their mouths more decidedly. For the present time (i.e. early 1st century) He has mentioned infallible signs; but then He said merely, 'It is not for you to know times or seasons'" (Acts 1:7).

"That they might not say, we are driven to perplexity, we are utterly scorned, we are not held worthy to know this, He says, 'which the Father has put in His own power' (Acts 1:7). He was exceedingly careful to honor them, and to conceal nothing from them. Therefore He refers it to His Father, both to make the thing awesome and to exclude that of which He had spoken from their inquiry".

There is a he counter argument: "If it is not this, and He is ignorant of it, when will He know it? Will it be together with us?" This implies that He is some kind of a lesser god! Who would say this? The Father He knows clearly; and of the day is He ignorant? Moreover, 'the Spirit indeed searches even the deep things of God' (1 Corinthians 2:10), and does He not know so much as the time of the judgment? How He ought to judge He knows, and of the secrets of each person He has a full perception; what is far more common than that, could He be ignorant of this? How, if 'all things were made by Him, and without Him was not even one thing made' (John 1:3, Colossians 1:16), was He ignorant of the day? He who made the worlds, it is quite plain that He made the times also; and if the times, even that day. How then is He ignorant of that which He made?"

The flood story is used to hammer home the point (Matthew 24:37-41). Whether the *good* are the ones left or taken may be stretching the illustration. Actually, a close reading of Noah and comparison with Matthew 13:41-42 would indicate that it is the wicked, who are gathered out and swept away!

How does our Lord describe these times? The people of Noah's day were living a very normal life. Christ does not stress wickedness, gluttony, drunkenness or sexual debauchery, even though those things were present. He uses the terms that express the normal, civilized and lawful affairs of eating, drinking, and marriage. The idea seems to be that all things went on as usual as if nothing were going to happen. That was -- in Noah's day -- and will be -- at Christ's Return -- the problem. Life as usual when something else was called for! (Matthew 24:38)

In Noah's day the end of that world came suddenly, in the absence of any special signs. All that the ancient world had was Noah's preaching of righteousness, which it chose to ignore.

"God did not spare the ancient world, but preserved Noah, a herald of righteousness when He brought a flood upon the world of the ungodly" (2 Peter 2:5). "The world that then existed was deluged with water and perished" (2 Peter 3:6).

The Return of Christ will be sudden and without any signs of warning regarding the exact day; but there will be the preaching of the Gospel which is the power of God unto salvation to everyone who believes (1 Corinthians 1:21; compare Matthew 24:39).

In the days of Noah, there was a sudden and determinative division among persons accomplished by God when "the Lord shut him in" (Gen. 7:16). There had been 100 years of warning while Noah was building the Ark. If people had eyes to see, they could ascertain that

something was coming. The Second Coming will do the same thing; and there is no hint of a "second chance" opportunity (Matthew 24:40-41).

The Lesson from a Thief: Matthew 24:43-44

Jesus says that if one knows when a thief is coming to break in, he can protect himself and his property. The expression the Lord uses [*ei eidei . . an*] supposes a condition contrary to fact, i.e. *he does not know when*. "Therefore you also must always be ready; for the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect". His disciples must be prepared for the unexpected; they must not be like a robbed homeowner who had allowed his house to be broken into because he failed to realize that burglars do not advertise beforehand the hours of their arrival. But there is something more of importance in the following parable.

The Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler: Matthew 24:45-51

Our Lord had rebuked the leaders of Israel for being unfaithful shepherds of the flock and lax in their stewardship over the Household of God. So he turns to the leaders of the New Israel in the following parable in much the same way He had dealt with the Apostle Peter (John 21):

> "Who then is a faithful and wise servant, whom his master made ruler over his household, to give them food in due season? Blessed *is* that servant whom his master, when he comes, will find so doing. Assuredly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all his goods. But if that evil servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat *his* fellow servants, and to eat and drink with the drunkards, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for *him* and at an hour that he is not aware of, and will cut him in two and appoint *him* his portion with the hypocrites. There shall be weeping and gnashing of teeth" (Matthew 24:45-51).

Above all, the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants shows that those who have been placed by their Lord in positions of special responsibility, the leaders and teachers of the Church, must be so continuously and faithfully occupied with their work. When He returns they will be found rendering service to their Lord by feeding the members of His household. On the other hand, should they 'trade upon' the apparent delay in their Lord's return, bully those committed to their charge, and make the satisfaction of their own appetites their primary concern, their ultimate fate will be no better than that of the hypocritical Pharisees.

The word translated "punish" (Matthew 24:51) is from *diksotomeo* which means *cut in two in reference to the dismemberment of a condemned person*. The next time one is tempted to be lax on the lesson or slip-shod with the homily, he might want to remember this parable and also to reflect upon the words of James. "Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness" (James 3:1). This is not an occasional consideration but is to be a constant concern; therefore, the basic warning about when is repeated: "The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know" (Matthew 24:50).

John Chrysostom stated[209] that the servant-made-ruler was one who was overcome by the love of carnal pleasure. The giving food in due season applies to every aspect of stewardship, including money, speech, power, etc. Everything was given to us by the Lord and was intended for the benefit of our fellow man. There is no difference between those possessions that we call "our own" and the alms given by the Church to the poor. All were given by the Lord to allow us to give in due season and all require our dutiful attention.

> "But these things are spoken not of money only, but also of speech, of power, of gifts, and of every duty, that we are entrusted with. If it is wisdom you have, or power, or wealth, or what it may, let it not be for the hurt of your fellow-servants, neither for your own ruin. For this cause, He requires both things of the servant, wisdom, and fidelity; for sin arises from folly also. He calls him faithful then, because he has pilfered nothing, neither misspent his Lord's goods without aim or fruit; and wise, because he knew how to dispense the things given him, according as was fit".
>
> "Let us also that have money listen to these things. Not to teachers only does He speak, but also to the rich. Both are entrusted with riches; those that teach with the more necessary wealth, the rich with what is inferior. Let us hear the honor of him that is approved. 'Truly I say to you, He will set him over all His goods' (Matthew 24:47). What can be equal to this honor? What manner of speech will be able to set forth the dignity, the blessedness, when the King of Heaven, He that possesses all things, is about to set a man over 'all His goods?'".
>
> "You are entrusted with your own possessions no less than he who dispenses the alms of the Church. As he has no right to squander at random the things given by you for the poor, since they were given for the maintenance of the poor; even so neither may you squander your own. Even though you have received an inheritance from your earthly father, and have in this way all you possess; even thus all are God's. You desire that what you have given to the Church should be thus carefully dispensed, and don't you think that God will require His own of us with greater strictness? For this end, He left these things in your hand, in order 'to give them their food in due season' (Psalm 104:27). But what does He mean, 'in due season?' To the needy, to the hungry! As you gave to your fellow servant to dispense, even so does the Lord want you too to spend these things on what is needful. Therefore though He was able to take them away from you, He left them that you might have opportunity to show forth virtue and to make our love for one another more fervent. But this He speaks, hinting at the insolent and the covetous, and indicating that the charge will be heavy, when they beat them whom they were commanded to feed".
>
> "He seems to be hinting here also at those that live in luxury, since for luxury too there is laid up a great punishment. 'He eats and drinks with the drunken, pointing at gluttony' (Matthew 24:49). It was not for this purpose that you received, that you should spend it on luxury, but that you should lay it out on alms. What! Are they not your own things, which you have? No! With the goods of the poor have you been entrusted, though you acquired them by honest labor or through an inheritance from your father! Could not God have taken away these things from you? He does not do this; He gives you power to be liberal to the poor".

[209] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 3-5, LXXVIII, 1..

> "Let us listen, as many as please the belly, as many as lay out on costly banquets the riches that pertain not at all to us, but belong to the needy. Do not therefore suppose these things to be your own. He lent them to you, that you might be able to approve thyself. Do not then suppose them to be yours, when giving Him His own. If you had lent to anyone that he might go and be able to find means of gain, would you say the money was his? To you then also has God given, that you might do business for Heaven. Make not then the exceeding greatness of His love to man a cause of ingratitude".

Basil the Great suggested[210] that the "cutting in half" of the ungodly on Judgment Day (Matthew 24:51, Luke 12:46) refers to the eternal alienation of the soul from the Spirit. "Thus in hell there is no one who confesses, no one in death who remembers God, because the help of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3, Matthew 16:17) is no longer available".

Parables on the Last Judgment

The three "parables" in chapter 25: the Ten Virgins (1-13), the Entrusted Wealth (14-30), and the Sheep and the Goats (31-46), are not precisely the same in their literary character. While the first two are certainly parables, the third is not a parable in the conventional sense. Rather, it might be called a poetic description of the way in which the prophecy of Jesus will be fulfilled. He had said, "The Son of man shall come in the glory of his Father with his angels; and then he shall reward every man according to his works" (Matthew 16:27). All three parables are related to the preceding two and reiterate and expand their theme. The parable of the Thief (Matthew 24:43-44) states that the Son of man will return at an unexpected time, so be prepared because you do not know when. The parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler (Matthew 24:45-51) states that the Son of man will come after an apparent delay, so do not give way to evil because you do not know when he will return.

The Parable of the Ten Virgins: Matthew 25:1-13

"Then the kingdom of heaven shall be compared to ten virgins who took their lamps and went to meet the bridegroom. Five of them were wise, and five were foolish. For when the foolish took their lamps, they took no oil with them; but the wise took flasks of oil with their lamps. As the bridegroom was delayed, they all slumbered and slept. But at midnight there was a cry, `Behold, the bridegroom! Come out to meet him.' Then all those virgins rose and trimmed their lamps. And the foolish said to the wise, `Give us some of your oil, for our lamps are going out.' But the wise replied, `Perhaps there will not be enough for us and for you; go rather to the dealers and buy for yourselves.' And while they went to buy, the bridegroom came, and those who were ready went in with him to the marriage feast; and the door was shut. Afterward the other virgins came also, saying, `Lord, lord, open to us.' But he replied, `Truly, I say to you, I do not know you.' Watch therefore, for you know neither the day nor the hour when the Son of Man will come" (Matthew 25:1-13).

The wise will be ready always because they do not know when; and when the Bridegroom comes it will be too late to prepare. Jesus emphatically stressed the certainty of the suddenness of the Parousia, and the paramount necessity for disciples to be ready for it. From

[210] Basil, On the Holy Spirit, XL.

the Lesson of the Fig Tree[211], the righteous may know the season, but they will not know the day and hour. The parable of the ten virgins is complementary to the Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler, which immediately precedes it. The Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler seems to focus on the leadership while the Parable of the Ten Virgins seems to have all disciples in view without any distinction in responsibilities. It gives a further picture of the predicament in which disciples will find themselves at the Parousia if they have failed to prepare themselves for it. The day of opportunity, they will then discover, will have passed forever. The time will have come for a speedy and permanent separation to be effected between those who are prepared to enter into the eternal life made possible for them by Him whom they have accepted as their King. Those others, who though nominally subjects of that King, have failed through thoughtlessness, lack of foresight, or irresponsibility to discharge their spiritual obligations. Against the latter the way to the marriage feast, a symbol of the joy of the kingdom of heaven, will be barred. There is a terrible finality about the words "and the door was shut" (Matthew 25:10).

In 1st Century Judea, there were normally three stages in the matrimonial procedures that were customary among the Jews. The engagement came first, when the respective fathers of the bride and groom made a formal settlement. This was followed by the betrothal, a ceremony held in the home of the bride's parents, when mutual promises were made by the contracting parities before witnesses and presents were given by the bridegroom to his betrothed.

"The man and the woman were bound[212] to one another by the betrothal ceremony, though they were not yet actually man and wife. In fact, so binding was the betrothal that if the man died during the period that it lasted, the woman was regarded as a widow. The canceling of a betrothal was not permitted; if, however, such a thing took place, it was parallel to divorce". Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) when Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they were married. When Joseph discovered this, he began private divorce proceedings (Matthew 1:18-19, Luke 1:27), until the Lord told him otherwise.

About a year after the betrothal, there was the marriage, when the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends went to get the bride from her father's house[213]. He brought her back in procession to his own home for a weeklong marriage feast, where singers and musicians often led this procession. The bride was wearing a veil at this time. At some point, the veil was taken off and laid on the bridegroom's shoulder, and the declaration was made, "The government shall be upon his shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6). At this occasion, the ten virgins in the story are pictured as going to meet them, though whether as official bridesmaids, servants of the bridegroom, or children of friends and neighbors we have no way of knowing. It was this weeklong marriage celebration that was the setting for Jesus' first miracle when the wine ran out (John 2:1-11).

To be included in the wedding feast, one had to be present in the right place at the right time. If the ceremony wasn't perfectly punctual, one may have had to wait a while. For a weeklong celebration, there wasn't the hurry we have today where the bride and groom are anxious to leave. As they waited, they kept an oil-burning lamp. It was customary to leave an oil-burning lamp lit all night long in one's bedchamber but with the wick turned down to generate a dim light. While the virgins waited, they turned the wicks down. When they heard

[211] See the Study for Monday Evening of Holy Week.
[212] W. O. E. Oesrterley, The Gospel Parables in the Light of their Jewish Background (S.P.C.K.), 1936, p.134.
[213] Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 66.

the procession coming, they all trimmed their lamps up bright. It was then that the five foolish virgins realized they didn't have enough oil to make it to the groom's house -- and had to go buy more. With no oil or coming late, either way they became indistinguishable from party crashers, and were left out.

Because the parable is concerned with the *Parousia* of the Son of man, the bridegroom is the central figure; there is no mention of the bride. Since the primary purpose of the parable was to stress the importance of being prepared for the final coming of Jesus, mention of the bride would have been misleading. Moreover, it is the ten virgins in the story who represent the Church waiting for the return of its Lord.

What differentiates the foolish from the wise is precisely the failure of the foolish to face the possibility that the bridegroom, their returning Lord and King, may come earlier or later than they expect. And that in any case the coming will be so sudden that there will be no opportunity for making good any deficiencies that are then discovered.

"Nor could those who had spare oil in their flasks necessary for this purpose render last minute assistance to those who has come without it. Saving grace, it is here taught, is a personal possession and is not transferable. When the final day of salvation comes, none can deliver his brother. Each man is in this respect the arbiter of his own destiny. This truth is underlined in the reply of the wise, when they are asked to share their spare supplies with the foolish. 'Never! There will certainly not be enough for you and us'. This uncompromising refusal is followed by the semi-ironical injunction go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves. As it is now after midnight it is not surprising that the purchase could not be made in time".

The parable ends with the command to be vigilant and ready, and with a reasoned statement for it which echoes, "But of that day and hour no one knows" (Matthew 24:36), and the day and the hour of the Lord's Personal Appearance remain unknown.

This parable with its exclamation, ***The Bridegroom comes!*** sets the beautiful theme for the first days of Holy Week with the Orthodox celebration of Bridegroom Matins. These services focus the attention of the Church on the *Parousia* of Christ at the End of the world to receive His Bride, the Church. This is the present anticipation of all the faithful.

John Chrysostom stated[214] that Jesus used the illustration of virgins in the Parable to direct His remarks to those people dedicated to a very noble and worthwhile cause -- celibacy. The Twelve, to whom He is speaking, had left everything to follow Him, including such things of the world as sexual intimacy (Matthew 19:29).

> "Great things Jesus had spoken of virginity, saying, 'There are eunuchs who have made themselves eunuchs for the Kingdom of Heaven's sake. He who is able to accept it, let him accept it' (Matthew 19:12). He knew also that most men would have a great opinion of it. For indeed the work is by nature great. Yet He did not command this, but left it to the choice of His hearers. Wherefore Paul also said, 'Now concerning virgins, I have no commandment of the Lord'" (1 Corinthians 7:25).

[214] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVIII, 1.

However, even if one[215] has dedicated his life to a good cause, such as celibacy, yet does not show the fruitfulness of good works such as almsgiving and showing mercy, everything is wasted and the Lord says, "I do not know you!" (Matthew 25:12).

> "Since the dedication to virginity is great and has great honor with the multitude, one might feel as though he had attained it all and be careless about other things. Therefore He put forth this Parable to persuade them that virginity, though it should have everything else, if destitute of the good things arising out of almsgiving, is cast out with the harlots. He called the five virgins foolish for undergoing the greater labor and yet betraying all for want of the lesser. By lamps, He means the gift of virginity, the purity of holiness; and by oil, He means humanity, almsgiving, and aid to them that are in need".

When the five wise virgins said to the five foolish virgins, 'Go to those that sell, and buy for yourselves' (Matthew 25:9), Chrysostom interpreted[216] the 'sellers' as the poor.

> "Do you see what great profit arises to us from the poor? Should you take them away, you would take away the great hope of our salvation. It is here that we must get together the oil, that it may be useful to us there, when the time calls us. Nothing is more defiled than celibacy that doesn't have mercy".

The Parable of Entrusted Wealth (The Talents): Matthew 24:14-30

There are similarities between this parable and the Parable of the Minas (Luke 19:11-27); both are a corrective to the disciples' erroneous supposition, "that the kingdom of God was to appear immediately" (Luke 19:11). However, the differences between the two are such that it is better to see them as two distinct parables though with the same basic theme of servants trading with their master's money. Gregory the Great said[217] that the man or nobleman traveling to a far country represents our Lord ascending into heaven in the flesh that He assumed at the incarnation. Table 1 gives the basic structure of both the Parable of the Talents and the Parable of the Minas.

TABLE I
Comparison of Parables of Talents and Minas

	PARABLE OF TALENTS	**PARABLE OF MINAS**
master called	"Lord"	nobleman
journey	to a far country	to a far country
purpose	- - - - - - - - - -	to receive a kingdom
distribution of silver	5, 2, 1 talents	1 mina each
earnings	5 yielded 5 more 2 yielded 2 more 1 yielded 0	1st yielded 10 more 2nd yielded 5 more another yielded 0
rewards	5: ruler over much 2: ruler over much 1: cast into outer darkness	1st: authority over 10 cities 2nd: authority over 5 cities another: mina taken away

[215] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVIII, 1.
[216] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVIII, 2.
[217] Gregory the Great of Rome, Parables of the Gospel, IX.

To call this "The Parable of the Talents" is misleading in English, since the English word "talent" refers to natural aptitude of inherent ability of certain people for certain functions. In 1st Century Israel, however, a "talent" was a measure of weight, in this case silver. The "talents" given to the slaves in the parable are assets that belonged to the Master, and were entrusted by him to others to be used not only in their interest, but also in his.

The story starts abruptly with "For it is like" without any explanation of what "it" signifies. But since it immediately follows a parable said to explicitly refer to "the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 25:1), this certainly carries forward that theme. The previous story sets forth the importance of being ready; this one carries on that theme by showing what readiness means. After a long time the Master will return, and all will give an accounting of their stewardship.

"It is not a matter[218] of passively 'waiting', but of responsible activity, producing results which the coming 'Master' can see and approve. The period of waiting was not intended to be an empty, meaningless 'delay', but a period of opportunity to put to good use the 'talents' entrusted to the 'slaves'".

An important aspect to understand is that this series of parables on the Second Advent describe what Jesus will do when He returns. He goes into details regarding what He will be looking for and what basis He will use for judgment. The lesson of the Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler and the Parable of the Ten Virgins is watchfulness. The lesson of the Parable of the Talents is judgment based on works.

The text of the Parable of the Talents reads:

"For it will be as when a man going on a journey called his servants and entrusted to them his property; to one he gave five talents, to another two, to another one, to each according to his ability. Then he went away. He who had received the five talents went at once and traded with them; and he made five talents more. So also, he who had the two talents made two talents more. But he who had received the one talent went and dug in the ground and hid his master's money. Now after a long time the master of those servants came and settled accounts with them. And he who had received the five talents came forward, bringing five talents more, saying, `Master, you delivered to me five talents; here I have made five talents more.' His master said to him, `Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' And he also who had the two talents came forward, saying, `Master, you delivered to me two talents; here I have made two talents more.' His master said to him, `Well done, good and faithful servant; you have been faithful over a little, I will set you over much; enter into the joy of your master.' He also who had received the one talent came forward, saying, `Master, I knew you to be a hard man, reaping where you did not sow, and gathering where you did not winnow; so I was afraid, and I went and hid your talent in the ground. Here you have what is yours.' But his master answered him, `You wicked and slothful servant! You knew that I reap where I have not sowed, and gather where I have not winnowed? Then you ought to have invested my money with the bankers, and at my coming I should have received what was my own with interest. So take the talent from him, and give it to him who has the ten talents. For to every one who has will more be given, and he will have

[218] R. T. France quoted in Morris, Leon, The Gospel According to Matthew (Eerdmans Publishing Co., Grand Rapids) 1992, p.627

abundance; but from him who has not, even what he has will be taken away. And cast the worthless servant into the outer darkness; there men will weep and gnash their teeth'" (Matthew 25:14-30)

It is not necessary for the understanding of the story to know the exact worth of the money[219]. The point is that different amounts of money were given to three servants in the Parable of the Talents. The two, who received the larger sums, used them in profitable transactions and doubled their value, while the man with the smallest sum buried it, where he knew that at least it would be out of the range of burglars and the hazards of a fluctuating market. Similarly in the Parable of the Minas; each of three servants were given equal amounts of their master's money. Two of the servants used them in profitable transactions and increased their value, while one servant hid it in a handkerchief.

The lord of those servants was gone for an unexpectedly long time; but when he returned he called them all to give an account, congratulating and rewarding the first two for the practical evidence of their trustworthiness. But the third man in each parable, who tries to excuse himself, finds that he stands accused. He is condemned as 'a lazy ne'er-do-well'. He tries to shift blame to his master's overbearing personality, but his own behavior contradicts his excuse. If he really had believed what he had alleged about his master, he could have gone and received safe interest from the bankers. His questionable caution is treated as a breach of trust, for he was not dealing with his own money but with someone else's; the sum committed to him is now transferred to the man who has proved to be the most enterprising and successful. The highlight of the parable is found in the sentence passed on the third servant for his faithless inactivity (Matthew 25:30, Luke 19:14, 27); and with that the story ends.

The talents or minas that the Lord gave to his servants represent "the Grace that was given to us according to the measure of Christ's gift" (Ephesians 4:7). Paul quoted Psalm 68:18 regarding this: "When He ascended on high, He led captivity captive and gave gifts to men" (Ephesians 4:8). In the Parable of the Minas, all were given the same gift; in the Parable of the Talents, some were given more than others. This denotes that "there are varieties of gifts, but the same spirit. There are differences of deaconates (Greek: *diakonia*), but the same Lord" (1 Corinthians 12:4-5). And yet also, "for everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more" (Luke 12:48). In the words of Gregory the Great[220], this should make a man more humble and inspire him to use his gift more diligently in God's service.

The conclusion to be drawn: in the interval between the two comings of Christ, which may be longer than expected, "after a long time", the disciples must make continuous, practical use by the effort of their wills of those gifts of the Spirit with which they are endowed. No one is

[219] The Hebrew word *kikkar* corresponds to the Greek word *talanton* and is transliterated into English from Greek. It was a measure of weight and in its original usage, denoted the maximum weight a man could carry. For example, the golden lamp stand in the tabernacle was made from a talent of gold. The Greek word *talanton* has its root meaning implying a balance (that is used to weigh precious metals) and may have been a more precise measurement. In the 1st Century, the talent represented a weight of about 75 pounds Troy. When the master gave his slaves 1, 2 or 5 talents, this refers to that weight in silver, the common currency. In terms of buying power, 84 denarii were minted from one pound of silver and one denarius was a day's wage for a laborer (Matthew 20:1-13). Thus, translating talents to denarii: one talent = 6,300 denarii.

[220] Gregory the Great of Rome, Parables of the Gospel, IX.

to grow tired, become "weary of well-doing" (Galatians 6:9), because it seems to take longer than expected.

Cyril of Alexandria applied[221] the Parable of the Minas to the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD. Yet he said that the scope of the Parable covers the whole purpose of the dispensation to man and of the mystery of Christ from the beginning to the end. To illustrate this, Cyril reviewed what the Scriptures had said regarding the beginning of the Parable: "A certain nobleman went into a far country to receive for Himself a Kingdom and to return" (Luke 19:12).

> "Christ ascended to the Father, and became a man journeying to a far country; for heaven is a different country from earth; and He ascended that He might receive for Himself a Kingdom. When He ascended into heaven, He sat down at the Right Hand of the Majesty on High until His enemies are made a footstool for His feet (Psalm 110:1)".
>
> "However, 'His citizens hated Him and sent a delegation after Him saying, 'We will not have this Man to reign over us'" (Luke 19:14). Cyril mentioned that Christ had reproached the Jewish leaders: "If I had not done among them the works which no one else ever did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and hated both Me and My Father'" (John 15:24).
>
> "The prophets had continually told the nation of Israel to expect the King. But the Jewish leaders rejected their King. Pontus Pilate asked them, 'Shall I crucify your King? They answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!' (John 19:15). Cyril concluded that they denied the Kingdom of Christ and fell under the domination of Satan, and brought upon themselves the yoke of sin, which cannot be thrown off. Israel in its madness was not open to instruction, and therefore it has continued in slavery".

Cyril pointed out[222] that the nobleman did not give the minas to those that hated Him (Luke 19:14), but only to His servants. "These have been entrusted with these gifts according to the measure of each one's readiness and disposition. The distribution was made suitably to the measure of each one's faculties. 'These are those who eat solid food (not babies who drink only milk) and are mature, those who by reason of practice have their senses exercised to discern good and evil' (Hebrews 5:13, 14). Examples of these are the wise disciples and those who succeeded them, including those who stand at the head of the holy Churches who 'shine as lights in the world holding fast the Word of Life' (Philippians 2:15). These do business with their minas (Luke 19:13) and trade with their talents (Matthew 25:16) and seek spiritual increase. 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward (literally household manager) whom his Master will make ruler over His household, to give them their portion of food in due seasons? Blessed is that slave whom his Master will find so doing when He comes; He will make him ruler over all that He has' (Luke 12:42-44). Giving one's fellow servants food is the distribution of the benefits of spiritual instruction and satisfying those who hunger after righteousness".

Gregory went on to suggest[223] that the gift of the five talents represents external (that is, physical or scientific) knowledge or the use of the five senses. These persons, he said, may not understand interior or mystical things, but yet, "by their desire for their heavenly home, teach

[221] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke, Homily 128.
[222] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke, Homily 129.
[223] Gregory the Great of Rome, Parables of the Gospel, IX.

sound doctrine to all whom they meet, doctrine concerning those exterior matters which they can understand".

The gift of the two talents as suggested by Gregory represents understanding and action. "They understand the subtleties of the interior life and when they teach by their learning and example, they derive as it were a double profit from their trading".

Of the one talent hidden in the ground, Gregory said, "To hide one's talent in the earth is to occupy the intelligence God gives us in purely earthly matters, not to seek spiritual profit, never to lift our heart above worldly considerations. There are some who received the gift of understanding, but who understand only the flesh. Of these, the Prophet says (Jeremiah 4:22) 'they are wise to do evil, but to do good they have no knowledge'".

As Gregory interpreted the Parable of the Talents, the one given five talents was not necessarily greater in the Kingdom of God than the one given just two. Each was given gifts according to his ability (Matthew 25:15), but Gregory interpreted them as being for different purposes. In the Parable of the Minas, on the other hand, each slave was given an equal amount. Some members of the Body of Christ may seem to us to be greater in the Kingdom of God than others, like an eye may seem more important than an ear (1 Corinthians 12:14-18); but that is not our call to judge. After all, the Lord has said that the first will be last and the last, first (Matthew 16:28-30). In both parables, the one rewarded the most was the one who earned the most return (Matthew 25:21, 28; Luke 19:16-17, 24). In some cases, it may be that the person who was forgiven much and therefore loved much (Luke 7:40-47) was the more motivated. This was likely the case of the Apostle Paul, who considered himself the least of the Apostles because of his former persecution of the Church (1 Corinthians 15:9-10).

A result common to both parables is that the one talent or mina that was taken away from the slave who didn't use it, was given to the one who had the most (Matthew 25:28, Luke 19:24). In both cases, the slave who didn't use his silver was called wicked and made excuses as to why he did nothing. His master said that at least he could have deposited his money with the bankers; they would have used it and would have given him interest for the use of the money (Matthew 25:27, Luke 19:23). Chrysostom referred[224] to the depositing money with the bankers to earn interest as speaking out, admonishing and advising within the Church. How many people who don't use their gifts could have their gifts be used in the Church if only they would come and participate? On the other hand, those who use their gifts have more gifts given to them (Matthew 25:29, Luke 19:26).

Chrysostom continued, "Let no man say, 'I have but one talent', and can do nothing; for you can even by one talent approve yourself. For you are not poorer than that widow (who gave two mites, or 1/64 of a denarius, which was all she had (Luke 21:1-4). You are not more uninstructed than Peter and John, who were both 'unlearned and ignorant men' (Acts 4:13). But nevertheless, since they showed zeal, and did all things for the common good, they attained to Heaven. For nothing is so pleasing to God as to live for the common advantage."

Chrysostom also pointed out that the penalty came with heavy accusation: "Cast the unprofitable slave into the outer darkness. There will be weeping and gnashing of teeth"

[224] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVIII, 3.

(Matthew 25:30). “Do you see how not only the spoiler and the covetous, not only the doer of evil things but also he that refuses to do good things is punished with extreme punishment”.

The 'Parable' of the Sheep and the Goats: Matthew 25:31-46

This is more a ‘poetic description’ than a parable. The Son of man is presented as enthroned in glory as King and executing His divine prerogative as Judge of all nations. He is not a harsh Judge devoid of sympathy, but one who “can have compassion on those who are ignorant and going astray, since he himself was also subject to weakness” (Hebrews 5:2). But “Son of man” is not simply a reference to our Lord's human nature, but to the figure in the prophetic vision (Daniel 7); His lordship, not His lowliness, is the focus here. The metaphor of the Judge as Shepherd comes from Ezekiel, “As for you, O my flock, thus says the Lord God; Behold I judge between the rams and the he-goats” (Ezekiel 34:17). And as usual in Hebrew poetry, there are no varying degrees of light and shade. The picture is painted in sharply defined contrasts of black and white.

In this account, the Lord does not mince words; He tells it like it will be without parables or hidden meanings. He will come with all the angels and sit on the Throne of His Glory. The hymns of the Church paint an awesome picture of this event, where thousands of angels attend Him while a river of fire flows by (Daniel 7:10). And from this vantage point all the nations will be gathered before Him and He will separate the nations as one separates sheep from goats.

The text from Matthew reads:

> The Lord said, "When the Son of man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, then he will sit on his glorious throne. Before him will be gathered all the nations, and he will separate them one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats, and he will place the sheep at his right hand, but the goats at the left. Then the King will say to those at his right hand, ‘Come, O blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world. For I was hungry and you gave me food; I was thirsty and you gave me drink; I was a stranger and you welcomed me; I was naked and you clothed me; I was sick and you visited me; I was in prison and you came to me’. Then the righteous will answer him, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry and feed thee, or thirsty and give thee drink? And when did we see thee a stranger and welcome thee, or naked and clothe thee? And when did we see thee sick or in prison and visit thee?’ And the King will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it to one of the least of these my brethren, you did it to me’. Then he will say to those at his left hand, ‘Depart from me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and his angels. For I was hungry and you gave me no food; I was thirsty and you gave me no drink; I was a stranger and you did not welcome me; naked and you did not clothe me; sick and in prison and you did not visit me’. Then they also will answer, ‘Lord, when did we see thee hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to thee?’ Then he will answer them, ‘Truly, I say to you, as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to me’. And they will go away into eternal punishment, but the righteous into eternal life." (Matthew 25:31-46).

While Jesus repeatedly, even constantly, refers to Himself as the Son of man, this is the only place in the Gospels where He speaks of the Son of man as **the King**. He did not disclaim the title when Pilate asked Him whether He was the King of the Jews. But during His incarnate life on earth there was the possibility that He would be accepted as a conventional, political, earthly king, for He had not yet fully entered into His true kingdom. We must remember the words of the penitent thief, "Lord, remember Me when you come into your kingdom" (Luke 23:42).

All men are pictured here, as falling into one or the other of two classes, which are as clearly distinguishable as are sheep and goats to a shepherd (Matthew 25:32). The sheep, identified with the righteous (Matthew 25:37), are placed in the favored position on the right hand of the Judge's throne; and the goats, who have no other identification, occupy the unfavored position on the left.

In ancient cultures[225], sheep and goats were raised together (and still are today in some parts of the world) since both need grazing and they eat more or less the same thing. Yet sheep and goats are quite different. Goats were generally dark in color and sheep generally white. Goats are able to cope with mountains and rocks, but sheep prefer the flatter valleys. Goats will eat the leaves off trees, whereas sheep prefer grass. Goats graze all day while sheep lie down in the shade during the heat of the day. Goats were less popular than sheep because goats are destructive, grazing closer to the ground and destroying pasture. Goats also have a more stubborn, less pleasant disposition. It was the "scapegoat" that took the sins of the people to the wilderness on the Day of Atonement (Leviticus 16:22). On the other hand, a sheep was preferred in many sacrificial offerings over a goat.

Both sheep and goats produced benefits for their owners. Sheep produced wool for clothing, milk for food and reproduced rapidly. Goats also produced milk (3 quarts per day) plus hair for a sackcloth tent covering and skin for leather. Goat meat was not as tasty as lamb, however. For a shepherd, who has raised both sheep and goats, separating them is easy.

The sheep are the elect, who have been gathered from the four corners of the earth (Matthew 24:31), for the gospel has been proclaimed to the entire world. They have "made their calling and election sure" (2 Peter 1:10), not by constantly saying, Lord, Lord, nor by repeated verbal expressions of their faith, but by numerous acts of self-sacrificing service, rendered unobtrusively to their fellow men. In virtue of the divine compassion and the infinite sympathy shown in His life on earth, the Son of man has come to feel the sorrows and afflictions of the children of man as though they were His own. He can therefore in a very real sense refer to the suffering men and women as His brethren (Matthew 25:40).

The righteous have all unwittingly been rendering service to their Lord by feeding the hungry, giving drink to the thirsty, welcoming strangers, clothing the naked, caring for the sick and visiting the outcasts in prison. By the very spontaneity and unselfconsciousness of their love, by their unaffected goodness, and their perseverance in well doing, they have proved themselves true sons of their heavenly Father. They are worthy, therefore, both to be addressed by the King as those who are "blessed by His Father", and also to receive from His lips the

[225] Ralph Gower, The New Manner and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 132-145.

gracious invitation to enter into their rightful inheritance, which has been prepared for them from the foundation of the world (Matthew 25:34).

John Chrysostom noted[226] that the Lord said to the righteous not "take", but "inherit". The righteous are referred to as "blessed of My Father" (Matthew 25:34) by the Lord. For what are they blessed? For very small deeds that are well within their power to do!

> "And in return for what do they receive such things? For the covering of a roof, for a garment, for bread, for cold water, for visiting, for going to prison! For indeed in every case it is what is needed, and sometimes not even that. For surely, the sick and one who is in bonds do not seek only for this, but the one to be delivered from his infirmity, the other to be freed. But He, being gracious, requires only what is within our power, leaving to us to exert our generosity in doing more. For even if they had done ten thousand things, the munificence would be of grace, since in return for services so small and cheap, such a heaven, and a kingdom and such great honor should be given them".

In stark contrast, those on the left, so far from being welcomed into the divine kingdom, are banished from the presence of its King. They are designated cursed rather than blessed, for they have no place in the family of God, having none of the characteristics of His children. They are assigned to the 'conflagration' prepared for the devil and his angels.

They have adopted Satan's position that self-interest should be the only motive in all their conduct. Consequently, they have shut their eyes to the spectacle of human misery, and turned a deaf ear to the cries of their suffering fellows. Without loving-kindness themselves, they cannot receive loving-kindness from their Lord. Yet they excuse themselves for having failed to render service to their Lord, saying that they had no opportunity to do so. The righteous had done so without even thinking about it, and thus were surprised to be rewarded for doing so. To those on the left, it had never occurred to them to consider their fellow man.

In comparing the actions of the righteous (Matthew 25:37-39) with the actions of the cursed (Matthew 25:44) one sees a clear parallel, but with a big difference. So also does the reply to the Judge to their respective questions. It is virtually the same except for the addition of the word *not.*

As in the previous parables of the ten virgins and the entrusted wealth, so in this picture of the Great Judgment, it is not so much positive wrongdoing that evokes the severest censure, as the utter failure to do good. The sins of omission are seen to be even more damning than the sins of commission. The door is shut against the foolish virgins for their negligence; the worthless servant is cast out as a good-for-nothing for doing nothing; and those on the left hand are severely punished for failing to notice the many opportunities for showing kindness which had been given to them. The significance of it all is eternal life or eternal punishment[227].

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[226] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIX, 2.

[227] This subject is covered in more detail in the Study for the 5th Sunday of Luke. See this Study especially for details on the various aspects of the mystery of hell.

Why did the unrighteous refuse to do such small things for members of the body of Christ? Chrysostom summed it up[228] by saying that "covetousness once for all blinded them that were seized by it; and this though so great a threat was set against it". They were caught up in the things of this world to the exclusion of the next world.

Our judges will be our contemporaries (in terms of pointing out that we had no excuse). "The men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here. The queen of the South will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and indeed a greater than Solomon is here" (Matthew 12:41-42).

Some have been troubled that this text is all about works; which in one sense is certainly true. But we must keep in mind that it is common to the whole scriptural picture that we are saved by grace and judged by works. One verse, one paragraph, one book does not cover everything. In the Parable of the laborers hired to work in the vineyard, the ones hired at the 11th hour received the same wage as those hired at the 1st hour and who bore the scorching heat of the day (Matthew 20:1-16).

As we are waiting for His glorious Return, we, as the Church -- the children of God -- need to be doing what He has commanded and being what He has created -- new creatures in Christ.

Jesus Warns His Disciples Again that He Will Be Crucified: Matthew 26:1-2

As Jesus approached the hour of His Crucifixion, He did so with calmness and resolution. After finishing His discussion with His disciples about the coming destruction of Jerusalem and His Second Advent, He said, "You know that after two days is the Passover, and the Son of Man will be delivered up to be crucified" (Matthew 26:2).

John Chrysostom spoke[229] of Jesus' state of mind at this point, taking into account the fragile weakness of His disciples. He kept bringing up things that were painful to them. He was in the process of fulfilling the mystery of the salvation of the world. Chrysostom said:

> "Note how He has in all His introductions started with what was most painful to them. For He did not say not, 'You know that after two days I am betrayed', but, 'You know that after two days is the Passover'. This showed that what was done was a mystery and that a feast and celebration was being kept for the salvation of the world, and that with foreknowledge He went to His suffering. So then, as though this were sufficient consolation for them, He did not even say anything to them now about a resurrection; for it was superfluous, after having discoursed so much about it, to speak of it again. Moreover, He shows that even His passion is a deliverance from countless evils, having by the Passover reminded them of the ancient benefits in Egypt".

[228] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIX, 1.
[229] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXX, 3.

First Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 2:5-10 "Moses Abandoned to the Nile"

In a parable from the Old Testament, Moses as an infant illustrates Christ as He approached His Cross. This is the first of two parables during Holy Week from the early life of Moses. As Christ approached His Cross, He took on Himself the sin of the world (John 1:29, 2 Corinthians 5:21), and was forsaken by the Father (Matthew 27:46); that is, in His humanity. Similarly Moses was abandoned to the Nile, which was infested with crocodiles. The text reads:

> "And the daughter of Pharaoh came down to the river to bathe; and her maids walked by the river's side, and having seen the ark among the reeds, she sent her maid, and took it up. And having opened it, she saw the baby weeping in the ark: and the daughter of Pharaoh had compassion on it, and said, 'This *is one* of the Hebrew's children'. And Moses' sister said to the daughter of Pharaoh, 'Do you want me to call you a nurse of the Hebrews, and shall she nurse the child for you?' And the daughter of Pharaoh said, 'Go!' And the young woman went, and called the mother of the child. And the daughter of Pharaoh said to her, 'Take care of this child, and nurse it for me, and I will give you the wages; and the woman took the child, and nursed it. And when the boy was grown, she brought him to the daughter of Pharaoh, and he became her son; and she called his name, Moses, saying, I took him out of the water" (Exodus 2:5-10 LXX).

Moses, the brother of Aaron, was also an ancestor of Christ, although that aspect is not included in either Matthew's or Luke's genealogy. According to tradition, the Virgin Mary's grandfather, Matthan, was a priest[230]. Luke records Matthan's grandson-in-law, Zachariah, as being a priest of the order of Abijah, the 8th Lot (1 Chronicles 24:10) and Elizabeth as being a daughter of Aaron (Luke 1:5). Since the Virgin Mary was Elizabeth's cousin, Mary was also among the daughters of Aaron as well as being descended from David and Judah. This means that Christ, in His earthly parentage, was descended from both a Priest and a King (See Hebrews 3:1-3, 4:14-15, 5:6-10, 7:1-3, 8:1-5, 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:16).

Moses' parents, Amram and his wife Jochebed (Exodus 6:20), had three children: Miriam, the oldest, Aaron and Moses. By faith, they disregarded Pharaoh's command to drown Hebrew male children (Exodus 1:22) and hid Moses for three months (Exodus 2:2, Hebrews 11:23).]

When Jochebed couldn't hide Moses any longer, she made a floating cradle and hid it among the reeds by the Nile. Miriam stood at a distance to find out what would happen. When Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the Nile and found Moses, she had pity on him since he was such a beautiful baby. In rushed Miriam and asked Pharaoh's daughter if she should go find a nurse. Of course, the nurse she found was Jochebed! Pharaoh's daughter then paid Jochebed to nurse her own son until he was weaned, at which point Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses (Exodus 2:3-10). Thus Moses' parents gave their son up to the Lord's discretion twice: once to the Nile, and once to the daughter of the evil tyrant.

Josephus, the First Century Jewish historian, adds some details[231] to the above account. One of the Egyptian magicians, perhaps Jannes or Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8) or their predecessors

[230] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, September 9.
[231] Josephus, Antiquities II, ix, 2-5

had foretold to Pharaoh that a Hebrew child to be born soon would bring down the Egyptian kingdom, would free the Hebrews, would excel all men in virtue and would be remembered through all ages. This was why Pharaoh ordered the drowning of all male Hebrews. To enforce the decree, Pharaoh ordered the execution of the entire family of anyone who disobeyed.

According to Josephus, Amram spent a lot of time in prayer over this and the Lord spoke to him in a dream. The Lord reminded Amram how He provided for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and told him the same prophesy that the Egyptian magicians had told Pharaoh. In addition, He also told Amram that his child will be concealed from the Egyptians and would be brought up in a surprising way.

Josephus also said that Jochebed sent the floating cradle down the Nile where Pharaoh's daughter, Thermuthis, saw it coming and saw it come to rest in some reeds. Miriam followed Moses from the riverbank and watched as Thermuthis found him. At first, Thermuthis tried to get some Egyptian women to nurse Moses, but baby Moses wouldn't accept them. It was then that Miriam offered her solution: a Hebrew nursemaid.

All of this required a great deal of faith on the part of Moses' parents. And God responded to their faith by providing for Moses in a remarkable way. Not only did he get the best education available (Acts 7:22), but he represented Pharaoh's only heir, since Thermuthis was barren. Pharaoh's magicians[232] warned him against Moses, but he disregarded their advice to kill Moses and instead protected him and raised him as the heir to the throne.

Second Parable from the Old Testament: Job 1:13-22 "Job Stripped of His Possessions"

In the Second Reading, Job portrayed Christ as He was struck down without a cause as He went voluntarily to the Cross. This is the second of five parables from the life of Job that are used during Holy Week. The text from Job reads:

> "And it came to pass on a certain day, that Job's sons and his daughters were drinking wine in the house of their elder brother. And, behold, there came a messenger to Job, and said to him: 'The yokes of oxen were plowing, and the she-asses were feeding near them. And the spoilers came and took them for a prey, and slew the servants with the sword; and I having escaped alone am come to tell thee'. While he was yet speaking, there came another messenger, and said to Job, 'Fire has fallen from heaven, and burnt up the sheep, and devoured the shepherds likewise; and I having escaped alone am come to tell thee'. While he was yet speaking, there came another messenger, and said to Job, 'The horsemen formed three companies against us, and surrounded the camels, and took them for a prey, and slew the servants with the sword; and I only escaped, and am come to tell thee'. While he was yet speaking, another messenger came, saying to Job, 'While thy sons and thy daughters were eating and drinking with their elder brother, suddenly a great wind came on from the desert, and caught the four corners of the house. And the house fell upon thy children, and they are dead. And I have escaped alone, and am come to tell thee'".
>
> "So Job arose, and rent his garments, and shaved the hair of his head, and fell on the earth, and worshipped, and said,

[232] Josephus, Antiquities, II, ix. 1, 7

'I myself came forth naked from my mother's womb,
And naked shall I return thither.
The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away;
As it seemed good to the Lord, so has it come to pass.
Blessed be the name of the Lord'".

"In all these events that befell him Job sinned not at all before the Lord, and did not impute folly to God" (Job 1:13-22 LXX).

Job was a descendant of Esau who lived during the years that Israel was in Egypt. His ordeals began with the Lord pointing out to Satan that Job was unique on the earth, "a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness. Job even offered prayers and offerings for his ten children, consecrating them just in case they had sinned in their heart (Job 1:6). Satan felt that if Job were poor and destitute, he would curse God to His face (Job 1:11).

Satan recognized Job's godliness, just as he recognized Christ (Matthew 4:1-10). Yet Satan felt that all Job's righteousness could be attributed to the Lord's physical blessings in Job's life. So the Lord allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions in sifting him.

The way this happened is first the Sabeans[233] attacked and took all Job's oxen and donkeys, killing Job's herdsmen in the process (Job 1:14-15). Second, fire fell from heaven and burned up all the sheep, killing the shepherds with the sheep (Job 1:16). Third, the Chaldean raiders came and took all Job's camels, killing the keepers who were defending. Lastly, while Job's children were having a feast at the house of the oldest son "on his day" (probably his birthday, Job 1:4) a great wind came from across the wilderness, collapsing the house on top of them and killing them all (Job 1:18-19). Today's insurance industry would refer to these last two as "acts of God" even though their source is an act of Satan.

Job's response to all this was to prepare himself to worship the Lord saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Meanwhile, the Lord pointed out to Satan that Job held fast to his integrity "even though you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause" (Job 2:3).

Speaking from the Lord's perspective, Paul said to give thanks for all things, not just those that we consider blessings. Sometimes, such as during the life of Job, there were things going on that Job had no knowledge of. The Lord had pointed out to Satan Job's righteousness but Satan had challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 1:8-11, 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable such that Job was destitute and in great pain (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

John Chrysostom stated[234], "If you give thanks when you are in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that. Compare this to a man giving thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragement". As an example, one

[233] This is the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory approximates what is Yemen today. The LXX translates "Sabeans" as spoilers.

[234] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX.

might recall Paul and Silas, broken and bleeding and sitting in a Philippian jail, but praying and singing hymns to God – at midnight (Acts 16:23-25).

Chrysostom encourages us to give thanks even for hell itself: "For surely it is a thing beneficial to those who attend to it, when the dread of hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings, which we see, but also for those, which we don't see and for those, which we receive against our will. For many are the blessings He bestows on us without our desire, without our knowledge". In this regard, we need to remember how the story of Job ended. Job benefited greatly from his affliction both in this world and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:10:11).

Whenever poverty, sickness or disasters affect us "then let us increase our thanksgiving; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words nor in tongue, but in deeds and in works, in mind and in heart". He reminds us of the words of our Lord and of the Prophet Isaiah, "What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father, who is in heaven, give good gifts to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:9, 11). "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget you but I will not forget you" (Isaiah 49:15).

Chrysostom also pointed out[235] that it is possible to give thanks only from fear, which is not a great thing; it is also possible to give thanks even when in sorrow, which is a great thing. In this regard, he quoted Job, 'The Lord gave; the Lord has taken away' (Job 1:21). Not only has the Lord given, but He has also made us strong enough to receive.

"Consider an example, 'If some low person were to become king, he has it in his power to give a governorship to whomever he will. This is the extent of his power, to give the dignity; he cannot make the person fit for the office, and oftentimes the honor makes one so preferred even ridiculous. If, however, he has both conferred on someone the dignity and also made him fit for the honor and equal to the administration, then indeed the thing is an honor. Christ has not only given us the honor, but has also made us strong enough to receive it'".

The Lord saw His Cross as His Glory (John 12:23). Job wasn't aware of what was going on in heaven between the Lord and Satan, but eventually He realized that his ordeal was for his glory also. And as a result, Job was rewarded both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:11).

Paul stated, "For the Word of the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing, but to us who are being saved, it is the Power of God" (1 Corinthians 1:18). The Cross is Wisdom, as Paul said: "We speak the Wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory." This wisdom "none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

As Jesus went to His Cross, His disciples tried to prevent Him. When Peter cut off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the high priest, Jesus rebuked him. "Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup which My Father has given Me?" (John 18:11) "Do you think

[235] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, II.

that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?" (Matthew 26:53) A year earlier as Jesus spoke of His Cross, Peter said, "Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to You!" But He turned and said to Peter, "Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men" (Matthew 16:22-23).

In the life of Job, there was a larger event that was taking place: the building of Job's faith, and the proving to Satan that he is impotent in overthrowing the things God has established. The same is true in our lives.

Holy Wednesday Bridegroom Matins
Jesus Glorified by the Cross

Revision B

Gospel: John 12:17-50

The Reaction of the Pharisees to Palm Sunday: John 12:17-19

In describing the events of Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday of Holy Week, the Apostle John gives less space to these events than the other Gospel writers, and he leaves out a lot of details that the other writers covered. Instead, he focuses on the spiritual climate that led up to the Last Supper and the Passover meal on Thursday evening.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus was proclaimed to be the Messiah by everyone in Jerusalem. A great multitude greeted Him as He rode into Jerusalem, saying, "Hosanna! Blessed is He, Who comes in the Name of the Lord! The King of Israel!" (John 12:13) Shortly before that, Jesus had raised Lazarus from the dead. Since Lazarus was a wealthy and prominent man, this created a spectacle, where people came to see Lazarus also. Lazarus was so prominent, in fact, that the chief priests plotted to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus (John 12:9-11).

The chief priests and Pharisees had no understanding of what Jesus was doing. They were aware of revolutionaries in the past, which staged a rebellion and were suppressed by the Romans. For example, Theudas and Judas of Galilee had done this in the days of the census by Caesar Augustus (Luke 2:1-3). But they were suppressed and their followers were scattered (Acts 5:36-37). The chief priests and Pharisees thought Jesus was just like the previous false messiahs (John 11:48-50, Acts 5:38-39), and they were worried about Roman intervention.

Following Palm Sunday, their concern became much more acute. Jesus' followers now were not just 400 or so as was the case with Theudas (Acts 5:36). There were hundreds of thousands involved now! The Pharisees remarked among themselves, "You see that you are accomplishing nothing. Look, the world has gone after Him!" (John 12:19)

John Chrysostom stated[236] that Joseph of Arimathaea and Nicodemus, who were secret followers of Jesus, made this remark to their fellow Pharisees (John 19:38-40).

> "Now this seems to me to be said by those who felt rightly, but had not courage to speak boldly, and who then would restrain the others by pointing to the result, as though they were attempting impossibilities. Here again they call the multitude 'the world'".

Another event occurred following Palm Sunday that exacerbated the situation. Following His triumphant entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, Jesus went straight to the Temple and drove out the moneychangers and those who sold doves saying, "My house shall be called a

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[236] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVI, 2.

house of prayer for all nations! But you have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:15-17). These people were there at the Temple because of the Lord's command for all Jewish men to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year at the Feasts of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Deuteronomy 16:16-17). The pilgrims were to bring their tithes with them and rejoice before the Lord with their household. If they came from a great distance and couldn't bring the tithe of their livestock, they were to convert it to money before they came and spend the money in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 14:22-27). The moneychangers served as the foreign currency exchange for all the people from distant countries. But it was more than just that. Foreign money could not be used to buy any animal sacrifices; one had to use the shekel of the sanctuary (Leviticus 5:15). In addition, there was the "temple tax" (Exodus 30:11-16) that Jesus paid even though He didn't have to (Matthew 17:24-27). This "temple tax" was required from foreigners -- payable in shekels of the sanctuary -- before they could bring any offering forward. And the moneychangers could charge anything they saw proper to perform this "service".

The Mosaic Law, however, strictly forbade making profits off people trying to be godly. For example, the Mosaic Law specified that if a citizen of Israel or a foreign visitor were to become poor, he was to be supported and no interest charged (Leviticus 25:35-37). This became a big issue during Nehemiah's time and Nehemiah extracted an oath from the priests that they would refrain from any interest or markup charged against their brothers during a famine (Nehemiah 5:1-13). Following the cleansing of the temple (where Jesus would not allow any vendors to hawk their wares in the temple, Mark 11:16), Jesus left the city for the night to frustrate nighttime assassination attempts by the scribes and chief priests (Mark 11:18-19).

Just as zeal for the Lord's house consumed David (Psalm 69:9), so it did Jesus (John 2:17) in throwing out the money-changers *twice*. The first time occurred around Passover, 27 AD (John 2:14-17), where Jesus made a whip out of leather cords and physically drove the money-changers out. The second time occurred around Passover, 30 AD, during Holy Week, just before the Crucifixion (Matthew 21:12-15, Mark 11:15-18, Luke 19:45-46), and this time, no whip is mentioned.

Theophylact stated that one aspect of the "den of thieves" was making a profit by selling off the animals that were offered for sacrifice. This was strictly forbidden by the Mosaic Law, which specified that the offering is holy and that the priests that offered the sacrifice must consume it in a holy place (Leviticus 6:25-26). Theophylact also applied this to the Church in his day.

> "It is possible that we ourselves may be cast out of the Temple. There are many of us who go into our own Temples and sell what is good and buy worse. There are others who have tables full of coins; that is, those who manage and administer the affairs of the Church, but who do everything for the sake of profit."

John Chrysostom noted[237] that Jesus was proclaimed as God, both by the multitudes, by the prophets and by the children. But the chief priests and the Scribes were indignant.

> "They were not persuaded, but 'were indignant' (Matthew 21:15), even while they heard the prophet crying aloud (Psalm 8:2, 118:26), and the children in a manner beyond their age proclaiming Him. He Himself sets up Isaiah against them as an accuser, saying, 'My house shall be called a house of prayer'" (Isaiah 56:7, Jeremiah 7:11).

[237] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 1.

> "Not in this way only does He show His authority, but also by His healing diverse infirmities. 'For the blind and the lame came unto Him, and He healed them' (Matthew 21:14), and His power and authority He indicates. But they would not even be persuaded, but together with the rest of the miracles, hearing even the children proclaiming, were ready to choke. They said, 'Do you hear what these are saying?' (Matthew 21:16); for the children were singing to Him as to God".

Gentiles Ask to See Jesus: John 12:20-22

"Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus'. Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus. Jesus was aware regarding whom the visitors were and where they were from, and that they wanted Jesus to come with them to heal their king. Jesus couldn't go; therefore He answered them, saying, 'The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified'" (John 12:20-23).

Moses of Chorene stated[238] that these Greeks were from Edessa in Mesopotamia. Abgar, king of Edessa, who requested that Jesus come to heal him of his leprosy, had sent them. Jesus' fame had gone throughout all Syria, and Gentiles had been coming to him from places distant from Judea (Matthew 4:24-25). Others, such as Clement of Alexandria, concurred and stated[239] that these "Greeks" were not Hellenic Jews, but were from somewhere quite a bit more remote. In a similar fashion, people had come from Mesopotamia and points even farther distant from Jerusalem to attend the Pentecost celebration where the Holy Spirit was given (Acts 2:9). Following the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, the Apostle Thomas sent Thaddaeus of the Seventy to heal Abgar and to evangelize the area around Edessa.

According to tradition[240], the courier, Ananias, that brought Abgar's request to Jesus, was a painter. Abgar had instructed him that if Jesus could not come to heal him, he was to paint an icon of Jesus. Abgar believed that the portrait would heal him. Aware of this, Jesus took a napkin and wiped His face with it, leaving a perfect impression of His face on the napkin. Jesus then gave this napkin to Ananias, with a message to say that he would be healed partially by it. Later He would send him an envoy, who would rid him of the remainder of the disease. Receiving the napkin, Abgar kissed it and most of the leprosy fell from his body, with a little remaining on his face. When Thaddaeus, of the Seventy, came, he completed the job.

In later centuries, this napkin was framed and placed above the city gate of Edessa. This napkin came to be referred to as 'The Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ Not-Made-With-Hands', and this icon has its own Feast Day in the Church on August 16th to commemorate the events associated with this miraculous icon. When Abgar's great grandsons restored idolatry, the Bishop of Edessa came by night and walled in the icon above the city gate to prevent its destruction. Succeeding generations forgot that the icon was there. During the reign of Emperor Justinian (527-565 AD), when the Persians attacked Edessa, the Bishop of Edessa, Eulabius, had

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[238] Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Moses of Chorene: The History of Armenia", 6, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

[239] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, II, Elucidations, i.

[240] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 16.

a vision from the Virgin Mary about the secret of the icon, and retrieved it. The icon was later destroyed during the Islamic Conquests.

The courier, Ananias, brought Abgar's request to Jesus in a letter, where Abgar requested[241] the following:

> "Abgar, son of Archam, prince of the land, to Jesus, Savior and Benefactor of men, who has appeared in the country of Jerusalem, greeting. I have heard of You, and of the cures done by Your hands, without remedies, without herbs. For, as it is said, You make the blind to see, the lame to walk, the lepers to be healed; You drive out unclean spirits, You cure unhappy beings afflicted with prolonged and inveterate diseases; You even raise the dead. As I have heard of all these wonders wrought by You, I have concluded from them either that You are God, come down from heaven to do such great things, or that You are the Son of God, working as You do these miracles. Therefore I have written to You, praying You to condescend to come to me and cure me of the ills with which I am afflicted. I have heard also that the Jews murmur against You and wish to deliver You up to torments. I have a city small but pleasant; it would be sufficient for us both."
>
> "The messengers, the bearers of this letter, met Jesus at Jerusalem, a fact confirmed by these words of the Gospel. 'Now there were certain Greeks among those who came up to worship at the feast. Then they came to Philip, who was from Bethsaida of Galilee, and asked him, saying, 'Sir, we wish to see Jesus'. Philip came and told Andrew, and in turn Andrew and Philip told Jesus' (John 12:20-22). Jesus did not then accept the invitation given to Him, but He thought fit to honor Abgar with an answer[242] in these words:
>
> "Blessed is he who believes in Me without having seen Me! For it is written[243] of Me, 'Those who see Me will not believe in Me, and those who do not see Me will believe and live'".
>
> "As to what you have written asking Me to come to you, I must accomplish here all that for which I have been sent; and when I shall have accomplished it all, I shall ascend to Him who sent Me. When I shall go away I will send one of my disciples, who will cure your diseases, and give life to you and to all those who are with you'. Ananias, Abgar's courier, brought him this word, as well as the portrait of the Savior[244], a picture which is still to be found at this day in the city of Edessa".

The Father Speaks From Heaven: John 12:23-29

In His answer to the Gentiles from Edessa, the emissaries who had been sent by King Abgar, Jesus said:

> "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it

[241] Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Moses of Chorene: The History of Armenia", 6, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

[242] Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "Moses of Chorene: The History of Armenia", 7, Ancient Syriac Documents, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

[243] Where this is written is not known.

[244] This portrait is called "The Icon of Christ Made Without Hands", which Jesus made by pressing his face against a cloth. This icon is so famous that it has its own Feast Day, August 16th, to commemorate its spectacular history.

> remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life. If anyone serves Me, let him follow Me; and where I am, there My servant will be also. If anyone serves Me, him My Father will honor. Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? 'Father, save Me from this hour'? But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father, glorify Your name" (John 12:23-28).

Then a voice came from heaven, saying, "I have both glorified it and will glorify it again". Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, "An angel has spoken to Him". Jesus answered and said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake" (John 12:28-30). This was a rather impressive display of Jesus' power and His connection with His Father that He gave for the visitors from Mesopotamia. When Ananias, the emissary, returned to King Abgar and healed him partly of his leprosy with "The Icon of our Lord Jesus Christ Not-Made-With-Hands", they were absolutely convinced that they had found the Truth.

John Chrysostom pointed out[245] that Jesus' humanity is evident when He said, "Now My soul is troubled"

> "Although My trouble urges Me to say this, yet I say the opposite, 'Glorify Your Name'; that is, lead Me now to the Cross. This greatly shows His humanity, and a nature unwilling to die, but clinging to the present life, proving that He was not exempt from human feelings. As it is no blame to be hungry, or to sleep, so neither is it to desire the present life; and Christ indeed had a body pure from sin, yet not free from natural wants, for then it would not have been a body. By these words He also taught something else; namely, if we are ever in agony and dread, and we don't shrink back from that which is set before us. By saying, 'Glorify Your Name', He shows that He dies for the truth calling the action, 'glory to God'. This fell out after the Crucifixion. The world was about to be converted, to acknowledge the Name of God, and to serve Him, not the Name of the Father only, but also that of the Son; yet still as to this He is silent. 'There came therefore a Voice from Heaven, I have both glorified it, and will glorify it again'. When had He 'glorified it?' By what had been done before; and 'I will glorify it again' after the Cross".

A Grain of Wheat in Mesopotamia

The visitors from Mesopotamia undoubtedly stayed in Jerusalem throughout the Days of Unleavened Bread, which ended five days after the Resurrection, but they probably returned prior to Pentecost. Thus they experienced the euphoria of the Resurrection, but they missed out on the Gift of the Holy Spirit, and had to wait until the Apostles came to visit them.

The message that they took back with them was very profound, and this would have a tremendous effect on all the countries surrounding Edessa[246]. The message was, "Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain". This is completely contrary to worldly logic; to the world it is utter foolishness (1 Corinthians 1:18-20). Crucifixion in the 1st Century Roman world meant utter humiliation; this is especially so in Jesus' case. Consider the crown of thorns, the robe, the reed, the punches, the slapping on

[245] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVII, 2.
[246] For details, see Mark Kern, The Apostle Jude, St. Athanasius Press, 2002, pp. 8-19.

the face, the spitting, the unjust "trial", the irony, the nails, the nakedness, the spear, etc. Yet the Scriptures speak of the crucifixion as being Jesus' glorification (John 12:23-24). This is 180 degrees different from most peoples' thinking, and even Satan in all his wisdom misunderstood this (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

The illustration here is the germination of a seed that is planted. Once in the ground, the seed itself contains enough to get the plant started. But once the roots of the plant get established, the seed dies and is dwarfed by the plant. And many kernels of wheat -- each of which is another seed -- are produced on the stalk of the plant, where each new seed contains the same life as the original seed. If the seed never dies, it never germinates and the plant doesn't grow. The seed just remains alone as a seed.

John Chrysostom compared[247] the Resurrection to the daily germination of seeds, plants and human reproduction:

> "What sort of excuse will they have who disbelieve the Resurrection, when the action is practiced each day, in seeds, in plants, and in the case of our own generation? First it is necessary that the seed die, and then the generation takes place. But when God does anything, reasoning is of no use; for how did He make us out of those things that were not? This I say to Christians, who assert that they believe the Scriptures; but I shall also say something else drawn from human reasoning. Of men some live in vice, others in virtue; and of those who live in vice, many have attained to extreme old age in prosperity, many of the virtuous after enduring the contrary. When then shall each receive his deserts? At what season? Hear Paul saying, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption' (1 Corinthians 15:53). He speaks not of the soul, for the soul is not corrupted; moreover, 'resurrection' is said of that which fell, and that which fell was the body. But why will some have it that there is no resurrection of the body? Is it not possible with God? Why is it unpopular to consider that the corruptible, which shared the toil and death, should share also the crowns? If it was inappropriate, it would not have been created at the beginning and Christ would not have taken flesh. But to show that He took it and raised it up, hear what He said, 'Reach here your fingers' (John 20:27); and, 'Behold, a spirit has not bones and flesh'" (Luke 24:39).

Rivers of Living Water

In connection with this, John recorded Jesus' announcement at the Feast of Tabernacles: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Then John remarks: "This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). It was for this purpose that Jesus came to the hour of His Crucifixion (John 12:27). He bought with a price those who had fallen, and made their body a Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). The new kernels of wheat now have the same life as the original seed, and this has been given as a down payment of the full reward (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14).

If we take up our cross and "lose our life", we save it; if we don't, we lose it. Avoiding the call to take up our cross, we make ourselves not worthy of Him (Matthew 10:38) and we

[247] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVI, 3.

forfeit being His disciple (Luke 14:27). This does not mean we have to go on some dramatic suicide mission to "lose our life" for the Lord. Rather we lose it by saying in the words of the Lord's Prayer, "Thy will be done on earth as it is in heaven."

John Chrysostom stated[248] that the Lord does not force us to take up our Cross, but He presents it as an attraction for our benefit

> "I do not force, I do not compel, but each one I make lord of his own choice. Wherefore I say, 'If any man *desires* to come after me'. For to good things do I call you, not to things evil or burdensome; not to punishment and vengeance that I should have to compel. No! The nature of the thing alone is sufficient to attract you. For you ought not, O Peter, because you have confessed Me Son of God, therefore only to expect crowns (Cf. Mark 8:29), and to suppose this enough for your salvation, and for the future to enjoy security, as having done all. For although it is in My power, as Son of God, to hinder you from having any trial at all of those hardships, yet such is not My will for your sake, that you may yourself contribute something, and be more approved".

The Lord had said, "Whoever desires to come after Me, let him deny himself and take up his cross and follow Me" (Mark 8:34). What does it means to deny oneself? John Chrysostom compared[249] that to denying someone else:

> "What then is it to deny another? He that is denying another, should he see him either beaten, or bound, or led to execution, or whatever he may suffer, does not stand by him, does not help him, is not moved, feels nothing for him, as being once for all alienated from him. Thus then, He will have us disregard our own body, so that whether men scourge or banish or burn or whatever they do, let him have nothing to do with himself, and let him so feel as though another were suffering it all".

The Cross is the ultimate act of the love of God for man (John 3:14-16). As we show love in humility to fellow members of the body of Christ, we take up our crosses also. Just as Jesus was highly exalted because He took up His Cross (Philippians 2:5-9), so we shall be also. Our crosses are not our enemies; they are for our benefit and our glory.

The Cross Will Be the Judgment of the World: John 12:30-31

After the Father spoke from heaven with a voice of thunder (John 12:29), Jesus said, "Now is the judgment of this world (Greek: *kosmos = world order)*; now the ruler of this world (*kosmos*) will be cast down" (John 12:30-31).

John Chrysostom commented[250] that Satan was judged worthy of hell using his own standards as the accuser of the brethren. This is what Jesus meant when He said, "Now the ruler of this world will be cast out".

> But what is 'the judgment of this world?' It is as though He said, 'there shall be a tribunal and retribution'. How, and in what way? 'Satan slew the first man, having found him guilty of sin, for 'by sin death entered' (Romans 5:12);

[248] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LV, 1.
[249] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LV, 2.
[250] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVII, 2-3.

but in Me, he found no sin. Why then did he spring upon Me and give Me over to death? Why did he put into the mind of Judas to destroy Me? Don't tell me that it was God's dispensation, for this belongs not to the devil, but His wisdom. For the present let us inquire into the disposition of that evil one. 'How then is the world judged in Me?' It shall be said to Satan, as if a court of justice were sitting, 'Well, you have slain all men, because you found them guilty of sin. But why did you slay Christ? Is it not clear that you did it wrongfully?' Therefore in Him the whole world shall be avenged. But, that this may be still clearer, I will make it plain by an example. Suppose there is some cruel tyrant, bringing ten thousand evils on all those who fall into his hands. If such a one were to engage with another king's son, and slay him unjustly, the death of the king's son will have power to get revenge for the others also. Suppose there is one who demands payment of his debtors, and he beats them and casts them into prison. Then from the same recklessness, he leads to the same dungeon one who owes him nothing. Such a reckless man shall suffer punishment for what he has done to the others. For that innocent one shall destroy him.

So also it is in the case of the Son. Those things, which the devil has done against us, of these shall the penalty be required by means of what he has dared against Christ. To show that He implies this, hear what He said, 'Now shall the prince of this world be cast down', 'by My Death'".

Augustine of Hippo commented[251] on this also, adding a logical sequence, and looking from the viewpoint of God's justice.

"The method by which man was surrendered to the devil's power ought not to be understood in the sense that it was the result of God's command; rather He permitted it, but He did so with justice. When God deserted the sinner (without withholding His mercies), the instigator of the sin rushed in. Therefore God decided that to rescue man from the devil's power, He should overcome the devil by justice, not by power. And what is the justice by which the devil has been conquered? Surely it is the justice of Christ. And how has he been conquered? He was conquered because the devil put Christ to death, although he found in Him nothing that deserved death. 'The prince of this world is coming, and he finds nothing (that is, no sin) in Me' (John 14:30). From there He went to His passion. What could be more just than to go as far as the death of the cross for the sake of justice? First justice conquered the devil, because Christ had no sin and was most unjustly put to death by the devil. Then power conquered death by rising from the dead and ascending to heaven with the very flesh in which He was slain".

"The devil was conquered by his own trophy of victory, that is, death. By seducing the first man (Adam), the devil slew him; by slaying the last man (Christ), he lost the first from his snare".

Jesus Must Be Lifted Up: John 12:32-33

It was not just the Gentiles from Edessa that heard the Father speak to Jesus. The disciples and some of the Scribes and Pharisees along with many other people were there also.

[251] Augustine of Hippo, On the Trinity, XIII, xiv, 18.

The text reads: "Therefore the people who stood by and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, 'An angel has spoken to Him'. Jesus answered and said, 'This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world; now the ruler of this world will be cast out. And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all peoples to Myself'" (John 12:29-32).

Jesus had a conversation with Nicodemus by night in late 27 AD, or about 2 1/2 years before the Crucifixion. Nicodemus was a Pharisee, and a member of the Sanhedrin (John 3:1, 10). Two years later in October, 29 AD, Nicodemus spoke in defense of Jesus, but was ridiculed and shouted down by the others (John 7:45-52). Finally, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, another member of the Sanhedrin, (Mark 15:43) performed the burial rite for Jesus (John 19:38-42) and were expelled from the council, imprisoned, and later exiled. Joseph ended up as Bishop of Britain and is the focal point of numerous Holy Grail legends. Nicodemus died while lamenting the death of the Deacon Stephen and was buried by Gamaliel[252] in Gamaliel's own tomb. Nicodemus recognized that he was witnessing something utterly phenomenal in his midst: "Rabbi, we know that You are a teacher come from God; for no one can do these signs that You do unless God is with him" (John 3:2; compare also John 12:42-43).

Jesus proceeded to tell Nicodemus of baptism and being born again (John 3:3-6), which Nicodemus couldn't understand (John 3:9). Jesus continued to tell Nicodemus of heavenly things (John 3:12). Specifically, Jesus told him that He had come down from heaven and that His purpose was to be lifted up as Moses lifted up the snake in the wilderness (John 3:13-14). This involved not just earthly things but heavenly things (John 3:12). Later (late 29 AD), Jesus spoke to the scribes and Pharisees again, "When you lift up the Son of Man, then you will know that I AM" (John 8:28). I AM is the Name God gave Moses for Himself at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Finally during Holy Week, Jesus again mentioned the lifting up. "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all *peoples* to Myself" (John 12:32).

Thus, when Joseph and Nicodemus saw Jesus lifted up (i.e. crucified), they realized what He had been saying and they knew what they had to do, no matter what the personal consequences.

This "lifting up" goes back to Israel in the wilderness. The people rebelled against God and Moses; so the Lord sent "fiery snakes" among the people (Numbers 21:4-6). The term "fiery" refers to the burning and swelling that resulted from the snakes' venom. In other places (Isaiah 30:6) the same snake is referred to as a "fiery hooded snake". This narrows down the species of the snake to either an asp or a cobra.

When the people repented, the Lord told Moses to make a bronze replica of the snake and set it on a flagstaff (Numbers 21:7-9). Anyone who looked to the bronze snake lived. This bronze snake was very highly revered in later years, even to the point of cultic worship until reform-minded Hezekiah destroyed it 700 years later (2 Kings 18:1-4).

Bronze has generally been regarded to speak of judgment, since the Altar of Burnt Offering was also made of bronze (overlaying wood). Paul spoke about how Christ, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6). This is why Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Thus Jesus became the

[252] Gamaliel was also a member of the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:34-40), and later became a Christian.

snake on the pole. And in doing so, the handwriting against us in ordinances, which was contrary to us, has been taken out of the way and nailed to the Cross (Colossians 2:13-14). The term "handwriting in ordinances" was a legal term referring to a debt that had to be paid because of money deposited with or lent to a person by another to be returned at an appointed time. Another example of this debt is found in the Parable of the Talents (Matthew 18:23-35) where a slave owed his king 10,000 talents of silver (or almost 400 tons of silver).

John Chrysostom commented[253] on the lifting up of the Son of Man thus: "But why did He not say plainly, I am about to be crucified, instead of referring His hearer to the ancient type?" Three reasons:

- "So that you may learn that the old things are akin to new, and that the one is not alien to the other."
- "So that you may know that He came willingly to His passion".
- "So you may learn that no harm arises to Him from the fact and that salvation springs from it for many".

As a result of His being lifted up, Jesus said that He "will draw all *peoples* to Himself" (John 12:32). Paul spoke of this a number of times. "For it pleased *the Father that* in Him all the fullness (that is, of God) should dwell, and through Him to reconcile all things to Himself, through Him whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

Speaking about Jews (who had received the oracles of God) versus the Gentiles, Paul also said: "He created in Himself into one new man from the two, thus making peace, that He might reconcile both in one body to God through the Cross. For through Him, we both have access by One Spirit to the Father" (Ephesians 2:15-18). John Chrysostom commented[254] that this does not mean that the Gentiles were raised to the high heritage that belonged to the commonwealth of the Jews, but that He has raised both to one yet higher.

Not only were Jews and Gentiles reconciled, but both were given the deaconate of reconciliation themselves, since both are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. "Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the deaconate of reconciliation. That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses to them and has committed to us the Word (Greek: *logos*) of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ as God (the Father) beseeching through us: we beg on behalf of Christ, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). John Chrysostom commented[255] on this: "We have succeeded to His functions. But if this appears to you a great thing, hear what follows also. He shows they do this not only on Christ's behalf but also on behalf of the Father.

Thus the reconciliation of the world to Christ as He draws all peoples to Himself encompasses not only everything in heaven and earth but also uses those who are the fruit of the One grain of wheat (that fell in the ground and died) as the chief reconcilers.

[253] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXVI,
[254] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V.
[255] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XI, 5.

The Pharisees Suppress the Faith: John 12:34-43

At this point, it is obvious that Jesus is no longer addressing the Gentile visitors from Mesopotamia. Now there are some of the religious leaders present, and they have been offended at hearing the Father speak to Jesus from heaven. They challenged Jesus' statement that He must be lifted up, saying:

> "We have heard from the law that the Christ remains forever; and how *can* You say, 'The Son of Man must be lifted up?' Who is this Son of Man?" (John 12:34)

John Chrysostom had scathing comments[256] regarding the boldface hypocrisy and deceit of the Jewish leaders. Jesus was trying to steer them away from hell, and they pretended they had never heard anything He ever said!

> "Deceit is a thing easily detected, even though it is covered outside with ten thousand colors. Just as those who whitewash decayed walls cannot, by the plastering, make them sound, so too those who lie are easily found out, as in fact was the case here with the Jews. For when Christ (which means Messiah) said to them, 'If I be lifted up I will draw all men to Me'; one of them said, 'We have heard from the Law, that Messiah remains forever; and how do you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?'"
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> "Even then they knew that Messiah was some Immortal One, and had life without end. And therefore they also knew what He meant; for often in Scripture the Passion and the Resurrection are mentioned in the same place. Thus Isaiah puts them together, saying, "He was led as a sheep to the slaughter" (Isaiah 53:7), and all that follows (cf. Isaiah 53:12). David also in the second Psalm[257], and in many other places, connects these two things. The Patriarch too after saying, 'He lay down, He couched as a lion', added, 'And as a lion's whelp, who shall raise Him up?' (Genesis 49:9) He showed at once the Passion and the Resurrection.
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> But these men when they thought to silence Him, and to show that He was not the Messiah, confessed by this very circumstance that the Messiah remains forever. And observe their evil dealing; they did not say, 'We have heard that Messiah neither suffers nor is crucified', but that 'He remains forever'. Yet even this would have been no real objection, for the Passion was no hindrance to His Immortality. Hence we may see that they understood many of the doubtful points, and deliberately went wrong. Since He had spoken before about death, when they now heard in this place the, 'be lifted up', they guessed that death was referred to. Then they said, 'Who is this Son of Man?' This too they did deceitfully, saying in effect: 'We are not saying this concerning you through enmity'. They knew who He was speaking of, but pretended that they didn't".

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[256] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVIII, 1.

[257] Wherefore did the heathen rage, and the nations imagine vain things? The kings of the earth stood up, and the rulers gathered themselves together, against the Lord, and against his Christ; *saying*, 'Let us break through their bonds, and cast away their yoke from us'. He that dwells in the heavens shall laugh them to scorn, and the Lord shall mock them. Then shall he speak to them in his anger, and trouble them in his fury. But I have been made king by him on Zion his holy mountain, declaring the ordinance of the Lord: the Lord said to me, You are my Son, to-day have I begotten you. Ask of me, and I will give you the heathen *for* your inheritance, and the ends of the earth *for* your possession. You shall rule them with a rod of iron; you shall dash them in pieces as a potter's vessel (Psalm 2:1-9 LXX)

What then does Jesus do? To silence them, and to show that the Passion is no impediment to His enduring forever, He said,

> "A little while longer the light is with you. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you; he who walks in darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light" (John 12:35-36).

In saying this, Jesus responded to their murderous intent with extreme gentleness and unspeakable loving-kindness.

After saying this, Jesus departed and "was hidden from them". It was His custom to leave Jerusalem for the night to frustrate nighttime assassination attempts by the scribes and chief priests (Mark 11:18-19). He often spent the night in Bethany at the home of Lazarus, Mary and Martha, who were quite wealthy and had a large house that could accommodate Jesus and His disciples (Luke 10:38-40). Other times He spent the night outdoors in the Garden of Gethsemane (a cemetery) with the Twelve, and Judas used this custom to arrange His arrest.

John Chrysostom stated[258] that there was a purpose for Jesus to hide Himself for a short time.

> "Why then did He hide Himself? Walking in men's hearts, He knew that their wrath was fierce, though they said nothing; He knew it boiling and murderous, and did not wait till it issued into action, but hid Himself, to avoid their hostility".

Jesus was giving them every chance to turn their lives around. He had done so many signs before them, but still they did not believe in Him. It got so bad that they could not believe (John 12:39). Isaiah prophesied of this:

> "You shall hear indeed, but you shall not understand; and you shall see indeed, but you shall not perceive. For the heart of this people has become glaringly bad, their ears are dull of hearing, and their eyes have they closed. Lest they should see with their eyes, hear with their ears, understand with their heart, and be converted, and I should heal them" (Isaiah 6:9-10, John 12:40).

Chrysostom addressed[259] the use of the term, "They could not believe", instead of the term, "They would not believe". These are related:

> "He said in another place, 'He that is able to receive it, let him receive it' (Matthew 19:12). So in many places He uses the term 'choice', instead of power for action. Again, 'The world cannot hate you, but Me it hates' (John 7:7). This one may see observed in common conversation; as when a man says, 'I cannot love this or that person', calling the force of his will, power for action. Again, 'this or that person cannot be a good man'. And what said the Prophet? 'If the Ethiopian (i.e. black men) shall change his skin, or the leopard his spots, this people also shall be able to do good, having learned evil' (Jeremiah 13:23 LXX). He said not that the doing of virtue is impossible to them, but that because they will not, therefore they cannot".

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[258] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVIII, 1.
[259] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVIII, 2.

All of the above refers to the general body of the Sanhedrin, including the Scribes, Pharisees and chief priests. There were exceptions, who kept their opinions quiet, "Lest they should be put out of the synagogue" (John 12:42). Earlier John mentioned, "No one spoke openly of Jesus for fear of the Jews" (John 7:13). When the man-born-blind was healed, he did openly confess Jesus, to the great chagrin of the Pharisees (John 9:24-34). His parents cowered before the Pharisees, not wanting to be put out of the synagogue, and let their son do the talking (John 9:22-23). Within the Sanhedrin, Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea were secret disciples of Jesus for fear of the Jews (John 19:38-39). Later Gamaliel joined them.

This created a division among the Pharisees. One group said, "This man (Jesus) is not from God because He does not keep the Sabbath". The other group, which included Nicodemus, Joseph of Arimathea, and Gamaliel, were more perceptive and said, "How can a man who is a sinner do such signs?" (John 9:16) They had witnessed the Creator create a blind man's eyes over again! Nicodemus had said the same thing during his secret meeting with Jesus two years earlier (John 3:2).

When the man-born-blind was "cast out of the synagogue" (John 9:34), he was "cut off from Israel." The word used here, *kareth* (Hebrew to cut off, cut down, destroy) was used in a wide variety of contexts. There are times when *kareth* is clearly synonymous to death by stoning (Exodus 31:14-15, Leviticus 20:2-3). But there are many other times where an offender was cut off from Israel, but not specifically stoned. For example:

Cut Off from Israel but Not Stoned	
Eating leavened bread during Passover	Exodus 12:15-20
Using Holy Oil improperly	Exodus 30:31-33
Eating offerings while unclean	Leviticus 7:15-21
Improper offerings	Leviticus 17:4-9
Drinking blood	Leviticus 17:10-14
Neglecting the Passover	Numbers 9:10-14
Neglecting purifications after defilement	Numbers 19:11-13

All of the above regulations have to do with maintaining the worship of God in an exact manner, which has its fulfillment in Christ. People who aren't interested in doing this are not part of Israel in spirit. The seeming vagueness of the term "cut off" may have been intentional to allow some discretion for judges to deal with individual cases where repentance may be forth coming.

In the case of the man born blind, he had offended the Jewish leaders. Being out of the synagogue meant he had no part in the worship of Israel. (Even Gentiles could take part at a distance!) This also meant he would have great difficulty finding employment and he may also be unable to inherit property.

Chrysostom pointed out[260] that the Lord did not instruct the formerly blind man to believe, but asked him, "Do you believe on the Son of God?" (John 9:35). The man had just been cut off from Israel for defending someone he didn't even know. "Who is He that I may

[260] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LIX, 1.

believe?" (John 9:36). "This expression is that of a longing and inquiring soul. He doesn't know Him in whose defense he had spoken so much, that you may learn his love of truth".

Chrysostom contrasted[261] this fear with the absence of fear in the Early Church, and he laid the cause of the problem on people who were overcome with the passions that corrupt the soul in slavery.

> "It is necessary for us to avoid all the passions, which corrupt the soul, but most especially those, which from themselves generate numerous sins. I mean such as the love of money and vainglory. See, for instance, how the Pharisees were broken off from the faith through their love of honor. 'Many', it said, 'of the chief rulers also believed on Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess Him, lest they should be put out of the synagogue' (John 12:42). As He said also to them before, 'How can you believe, who receive honor one of another, and seek not the honor that comes from God only?' (John 5:44) So then they were not rulers, but slaves in the utmost slavery. However, this fear was afterwards done away, for nowhere during the time of the Apostles do we find them possessed by this feeling, since in their time both rulers and priests believed" (Acts 6:7).

Jesus Speaks the Words of the Father: John 12:44-50

"Then Jesus cried out and said, 'He who believes in Me, believes not in Me but in Him who sent Me. And he who sees Me sees Him who sent Me. I have come as a light into the world, that whoever believes in Me should not abide in darkness. If anyone hears My words and does not believe, I do not judge him; for I did not come to judge the world but to save the world. He who rejects Me, and does not receive My words, has that which judges him -- the word that I have spoken will judge him in the last day. For I have not spoken on My own authority; but the Father who sent Me gave Me a command, what I should say and what I should speak. And I know that His command is everlasting life. Therefore, whatever I speak, just as the Father has told Me, so I speak'" (John 12:44-50).

After retiring for the night out of harm's way in Bethany, Jesus came back to Jerusalem for His last public appeal to the religious leaders before His Crucifixion. John Chrysostom stated[262] that this was a pattern that Jesus followed throughout His three years of public ministry.

> "When He had retired, and had come to them again, He spoke with them in a lowly manner, saying, 'He that believes on Me, believes not on Me, but on Him that sent Me' (John 12:44). Observe what He does! He begins with humble and modest expressions, and speaks of the Father; then again He raises His language, and when He sees that they are exasperated, He retires; then He comes to them again, and again begins with words of humility. And where has He not done this?
>
> See, for instance, what He said at the beginning, 'As I hear, I judge' (John 5:30). Then in a loftier tone, 'As the Father raises up the dead, and gives them life, so also the Son gives life to whom He will' (John 5:21). Again, 'I judge you not, there is another that judges' (John 8:15, 50). Then again He retires. Then coming to Galilee, 'Labor not for the meat that perishes' (John 6:27); and after

[261] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXIX, 1.
[262] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVIII, 2.

having said great things of Himself, that He came down from Heaven, that He gives eternal life, He again withdraws Himself. And He comes in the Feast of Tabernacles also (John 7:37-39), and does the same. One may see Him continually thus varying His teaching, by His presence, by His absence, by lowly, by high discourses. Yet, 'Though He had done so many miracles', it said, 'they didn't believe on Him."

As Jesus spoke, He spoke of His relationship with the Father. Chrysostom stated[263] that He was speaking of His Essence:

"He that believes the Apostles, believes not them, but God. But that you might learn that He speaks here of the belief on His Essence, He didn't say, 'He that believes My words', but, 'He that believes on Me'. He has nowhere said conversely, 'He that believes on the Father, believes not on the Father but on Me?' Because they would have replied, 'We believe on the Father, but we don't believe on You'".

"Because of their weakness, He led them in another way, showing that it is not possible to believe on the Father, without believing on Him. The words are not spoken as of man though, 'He that sees Me, sees Him that sent Me' (John 12:45). The 'seeing' of which He here speaks is that of the mind, thus showing the Consubstantiality. And the 'believing on Me' is as though one should say, 'He that takes water from the river, takes it not from the river but from the fountain'. Or rather this image is too weak, when compared with the matter before us".

"In saying, 'I have come as a light into the world' (John 12:46), Christ takes the Name that the Father is called by everywhere (i.e. Light) both in the Old Testament and in the New. Therefore Paul also calls Him, 'Brightness' (Hebrews 1:3), having learned to do so from this source. Jesus called Himself 'light', because He delivers from error, and dissolves mental darkness".

Chrysostom continued[264] to point out that Jesus did not come to judge the world at His First Advent (John 12:48), but He chose His words such that no one will have any excuse for not believing when He comes at His Second Advent.

"Lest they should think, that for lack of power He passed by the despisers, therefore He spoke, 'I came not to judge the world' (John 12:47). Then, in order that they might not be made more negligent, when they had learned that 'he that believes is saved, and he that disbelieves is punished', He has also set before them a fearful court of judgment. 'He that rejects Me, and receives not My words, has One to judge him'".

"One might ask, 'If the Father judges no man, and You have not come to judge the world, who judges him?' 'The word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him' (John 12:48). For since they said, 'He is not from God' (John 9:16), He said these things. Then 'they shall not be able to say these things, but the words which He spoke, shall be in place of an accuser, convicting them, and cutting off all excuse'. And 'the word which I have spoken' refers to the words that the Father gave Him to speak".

[263] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXIX, 1.
[264] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXIX, 2.

Some had argued that if Christ was sent by the Father, and then received commandment as to what He should say, then He didn't know what to say before He was sent, thus making Him at best, a lesser God. Chrysostom said[265],

> "If one takes the words of Christ in this sense, then one does not understand the cause of His lowliness? Yet Paul said, that both he and those who were made disciples knew 'what was that good and acceptable and perfect will of God' (Romans 12:2). Was it only the Son that did not know until He had received commandment? How can this be reasonable? Don't you see that He brings His expressions to an excess of humility that He may both draw those men over, and silence those who should come after. This is why He utters words befitting a mere man, so He may force us to pass over the lowliness of the sayings, as being conscious that the words belong not to His Nature, but are suited to the infirmity of the hearers".
>
> "Vainglory is a terrible thing, really terrible (Ephesians 4:17-19); this causes men to disbelieve, and others to believe wrongly, so that the things which were said for the sake of those men, through loving-kindness, they turned to sacrilege".

Parable from the Old Testament: Ezekiel 2:3-3:3 "Ezekiel Sent to Rebellious Israel"

The experience of Ezekiel in the 6th Century BC in dealing with the leaders of Israel closely parallels that of Christ in the 1st Century AD. John Chrysostom stated[266] that when Ezekiel was given the book to eat (Ezekiel 3:1-3), he ate what he was about to utter. The text of the Parable is:

> And he said to me, "Son of Man, I send you forth to the house of Israel, them that provoke me; who have provoked me, they and their fathers to this day. And you shall say to them, 'Thus says the Lord'. Whether then indeed they shall hear or fear (for it is a provoking house,) yet they shall know that you are a prophet in their midst. Don't fear them, son of man, or be dismayed at their face. They will madden and will rise up against you round about, and you will dwell in the midst of scorpions. Be not afraid of their words, or be dismayed at their countenance, for it is a provoking house. You shall speak my words to them, whether they will hear or fear; for it is a provoking house".
>
> "Son of man, hear him that speaks to you; do not be provoking, as the provoking house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you". I looked, and behold, a hand stretched out to me, and in it a volume of a book. He unrolled it before me; in it the front and the back were written on; and there was written in it lamentation, and mournful song, and woe.
>
> He said to me, "Son of Man, eat this volume, and go and speak to the children of Israel". So he opened my mouth, and caused me to eat the volume. And he said to me, "Son of man, your mouth shall eat, and your belly shall be filled with this volume that is given to you". So I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey" (Ezekiel 2:3-3:3).

[265] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXIX, 2.
[266] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Acts of the Apostles, IV.

Clement of Alexandria stated[267] that it is a sign of great love for the Lord to try to admonish His people.

> "Admonition, then, is the censure of loving care, and produces understanding. Such is the Instructor in His admonitions, as when He says in the Gospel, 'How often would I have gathered your children, as a bird gathers her young ones under her wings, and you would not!' (Matthew 23:37) And again, the Scripture admonishes, saying, 'And they committed adultery with stock and stone, and burnt incense to Baal' (Jeremiah 3:9, 7:9, 11:13, 32:29). For it is a very great proof of His love, that, though knowing well the shamelessness of the people that had kicked and bounded away, He notwithstanding exhorts them to repentance. He says by Ezekiel, 'Son of man, you dwell in the midst of scorpions; nevertheless, speak to them, if perhaps they will hear'" (Ezekiel 2:6-7).

Ambrose stated[268] that the people of God have always shed tears over the unrepentant in hope that they might come around.

> "The people of Nineveh mourned, and escaped the destruction of their city. Such is the remedial power of repentance, that God seems because of it to change His intention. To escape is, then, in your own power; the Lord wills to be entreated, He wills that men should hope in Him, He wills that supplication should be made to Him. You are a man, and want to be asked to forgive, and do you think that God will pardon you without asking Him?"
>
> "The Lord Himself wept over Jerusalem, that, inasmuch as it would not weep itself, it might obtain forgiveness through the tears of the Lord. He wills that we should weep in order that we may escape, as you find it in the Gospel, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, weep not for Me, but weep for yourselves'" (Luke 23:28).
>
> "David wept, and obtained of the divine mercy the removal of the death of the people who were perishing, when of the three things proposed for his choice he selected that in which he might have the most experience of the divine mercy (1 Chronicles 21:8-14). Why do you blush to weep for your sins, when God commanded even the prophets to weep for the people?"
>
> "And, lastly, Ezekiel was bidden to weep for Jerusalem, and he took the book, at the beginning of which was written, 'Lamentation, and melody, and woe' (Ezekiel 2:9 LXX)," two things sad and one pleasant, for he shall be saved in the future who has wept most in this age. 'For the heart of the wise is in the house of mourning and the heart of fools in the house of feasting' (Ecclesiastes 7:4). And the Lord Himself said, 'Blessed are you that weep now, for you shall laugh'" (Luke 6:21).

One might wonder why Jesus kept trying to soften and convert the Jewish leaders, when He knew they would not turn. Ezekiel faced the same problem. John Chrysostom stated[269] that we will receive a reward for our faithfulness, even if the people we are working with are ungrateful and unrepentant. After all, if we have done our part, the rest is up to the person of the Holy Spirit, Who will not violate the choice of the person involved.

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[267] Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, I, 9.
[268] Ambrose, Two Books Concerning Repentance, II, 48-51.
[269] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIII, 1.

"For even though the soil which we cultivate brings forth no fruit, if we have shown all industry, our Lord will not allow us to depart with disappointed hopes, but will give us a recompense. Paul says, 'Every man shall receive his own reward according to his own labor' (1 Corinthians 3:8), not according to the event of things. And that it is so, listen, 'Son of man, testify to this people, if they will hear, and if they will understand' (Ezekiel 2:5). Ezekiel says, 'If the watchman gives warning regarding what to flee from and what to choose, he has delivered his own soul, although there be none that will listen' (Ezekiel 3:18, 33:9). We have this strong consolation, and are confident of the recompense that shall be made to us."

"Still when we see that the work in you does not go forward, our state is not better than the state of those husbandmen who lament and mourn, who hide their faces and are ashamed. This is the sympathy of a teacher; this is the natural care of a father. It was in Moses' power to have been delivered from the ingratitude of the Jews, and to have laid the more glorious foundation of another and far greater people. 'Let Me alone', said God, 'that I may consume them, and make of you a nation mightier than this' (Exodus 32:10). Because he was a holy man, the servant of God, and a friend very true and generous, he did not heed this word. Rather he chose to perish with those who had been once allotted to him, than without them to be saved and be in greater honor. Such ought he to be who has the charge of souls".

Gregory the Great wrote[270] to Maximus, his fellow Bishop, to continue doing good and standing on behalf of the poor and oppressed, even though he dwells among scorpions. Consider the luminaries of the past and how they lived their lives among the enemies of God, as Jesus and Ezekiel also did.

"It is written, 'Rescue them that are drawn unto death, and don't forbid to deliver them that are ready to be slain' (Proverbs 24:11). But if you should say, 'My powers are insufficient, He who sees into the heart understands'. In all that you do, then, desire to have Him, Who sees into the heart well pleased with you. But whatever there is whereby He may be pleased don't omit doing. Human terrors and favors are like smoke, which is snatched by a light breeze and vanishes away. Know this most assuredly, that no one can please God and bad men at the same time. Esteem yourself to have pleased Almighty God in such degree, as you know yourself to have displeased disobedient men. But our defense of the poor must be found of such sort that both the humble may feel protection and oppressors may not easily find things that they may blame out of a malevolent disposition. Listen, then, to what is said to Ezekiel, 'Son of man, unbelievers and destroyers are with you, and you dwell among scorpions' (Ezekiel 2:6). The blessed Job says, 'I have been a brother of dragons, and a companion of owls' (Job 30:29). Paul says to his disciples, 'In the midst of a crooked and perverse nation, among whom you shine as lights in the world' (Philippians 2:15). We ought, then, to walk all the more cautiously as we know that we are living among the enemies of God".

[270] Gregory the Great, Epistle 36, Book 10.

Ambrose, in addressing Peter's words to Simon Magus[271] (Acts 8:9-24), spoke[272] in such a way as to leave the door open for repentance, even though such was highly unlikely. This may seem like ignorance or doubt about what will happen, but he compared this to the words of the prophets and the Lord Himself, who also addressed people who were very unlikely to repent. Similarly, when the Lord spoke to the Jewish leaders in His last public appeal, He knew that they would reject His words and crucify Him, but He gave them one last chance anyway.

> "Let this be my answer to them. I say that Peter did not doubt regarding Simon Magus. If they think that Peter doubted, did God doubt? He said to the prophet Jeremiah, 'Stand in the court of the Lord's house, and you shall give an answer to all Judah, to those who come to worship in the Lord's house, even all the words which I have appointed for you to answer them. Don't keep back a word! Perhaps they will listen and perhaps they will be converted' (Jeremiah 26:2-3). Let them say, then, that God also didn't know what would happen".
>
> "Ignorance is not implied in that word. The Lord also said to Ezekiel, 'Son of man, I will send you to the house of Israel, to those who have angered Me, both themselves and their fathers, up to this day, and you shall say unto them. Thus said the Lord, if perhaps they will hear and be afraid' (Ezekiel 2:5). Did He not know that they could or could not be converted? So, then, that expression is not always a proof of doubt".

Jerome, writing[273] to a deacon, calling him to repentance, mentioned the three things that were written in the book that Ezekiel was given to eat; that is, lamentation, and melody, and woe:

> "The first of these three belongs to you if you prove willing, as a sinner, to repent of your sins. The second belongs to those who are holy, who are called on to sing praises to God; for praise does not become a sinner's mouth. And the third belongs to persons like you, who in despair have given themselves over to uncleanness, to fornication, to the belly, and to the lowest lusts; men who suppose that death ends all and that there is nothing beyond it. Who say, 'When the overflowing scourge shall pass through it shall not come to us'" (Isaiah 28:15 LXX).
>
> "The book, which the prophet eats, is the whole series of the Scriptures, which in turn bewail the penitent, celebrate the righteous, and curse the desperate. Nothing is so displeasing to God as an impenitent heart. Impenitence is the one sin for which there is no forgiveness. If one who ceases to sin is pardoned even after he has sinned, and if prayer has power to bend the judge; it follows that every impenitent sinner must provoke his judge to wrath. Thus despair is the one sin for which there is no remedy. By obstinate rejection of God's grace men turn His mercy into sternness and severity".

Jerome, writing[274] again to a man, who broke a vow, stated that good men have always sorrowed for the sins of others, and the prophets and Apostles did this a lot.

> "Good men have always sorrowed for the sins of others. Samuel of old lamented for Saul because he neglected to treat the ulcers of pride with the balm

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[271] Simon Magus was referred to as the "Heresiarch", and the source of all 1st, 2nd and 3rd Century heresies. For details, see Mark Kern, "Simon Magus the Heresiarch", St.Athanasius Press, 2002.

[272] Ambrose, Two Books Concerning Repentance, II, v, 30-31.

[273] Jerome, Letters, CXLVII, 3.

[274] Jerome, Letters, CXXII, 1.

of penitence (1 Samuel 15:35). Paul wept for the Corinthians who refused to wash out with their tears the stains of fornication (2 Corinthians 2:4). For the same reason Ezekiel swallowed the book, which was written inside and out with song, lamentation and woe (Ezekiel 2:10 LXX). The song is the praise of the righteous, the lamentation is over the penitent, and the woe is for those of whom it is written, 'When the wicked man falls into the depths of evil, then is he filled with scorn' (Proverbs 18:3). It is to these that Isaiah refers when he says, 'In that day did the Lord God of hosts call to weeping and to mourning. And behold joy and gladness, slaying oxen; and killing sheep, eating meat and saying, 'let us eat and drink, for tomorrow we die' (Isaiah 22:13). Yet of such persons Ezekiel is bidden to speak thus, 'O you son of man, speak to the house of Israel; Thus you speak, saying, If our transgressions and our sins are on us, and we pine away in them, how should we then live? Say to them, As I live, says the Lord God, I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked; but that the wicked turn from his way and live'. Again, 'Turn from your evil ways; for why will you die, O house of Israel?' (Ezekiel 33:10-11) Nothing makes God so angry as when men from despair of better things cling to those which are worse; this despair in itself is a sign of unbelief. One who despairs of salvation can have no expectation of a judgment to come. If he dreaded such, he would, by doing good works, prepare to meet his Judge.

Holy Wednesday Anointing Unction Service
The Anointing and Betrayal of Jesus

Revision A

Gospel: Matthew 26:6-16

As shown in Table 1, there are three events describing a woman anointing Jesus, where two of them occurred immediately before His Crucifixion. John records one of the events just before the Crucifixion and Matthew and Mark record the other one. The first was at Mary and Martha's house, and the second was at the home of Simon the Leper. At the first, Judas was indignant; at the second, some of the others were indignant also.

The first of these two events occurred six days before Passover; the other occurred two days before Passover. Since the oil of spikenard was so expensive, it is extremely unlikely that two individuals were involved. Mary started with a pound[275] of oil of spikenard[276], which was imported from East India. She anointed Jesus' feet the evening prior to Palm Sabbath, which was a Saturday. Then on Wednesday evening she did it again, this time breaking the alabaster flask and pouring the rest of the oil of nard on Jesus' head such that it ran down his beard, shoulders, etc. Because of the first anointing, Jesus smelled like a King as He rode into Jerusalem on the colt. Because of the second, He smelled like a King at His burial.

The second anointing took place at the home of Simon the leper (Matthew 26:6, Mark 14:3), who is also called Simon the Pharisee (Luke 7:36-50) and who may have been the one who was healed of his leprosy by Jesus (Luke 5:12-16). Simon later was ordained as an apostle and evangelized the area around Gaul (modern France). There is strong tradition that Mary and Martha helping to evangelize Gaul also and they may have worked with Simon (who later took the name Julian) in this area. From the Gospel account and the parallel accounts, Simon, Mary and Martha all lived in Bethany and were probably close friends and may have been relatives.

To understand the last of the three anointings, which is the Gospel under consideration, it is instructive to examine the previous two first.

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[275] Greek: *litra* meaning the Roman pound consisting of 12 Troy ounces
[276] An unrelated plant with an aromatic root and the same name is grown in the US.

Table 1
The Anointing of Jesus

	LUKE	JOHN	MATTHEW	MARK
When?	Two years before Passover	Six days before Passover	Two days before Passover	Two days before Passover
Where?	At home of Simon the Pharisee	At house of Mary & Martha	At home of Simon the Leper	At home of Simon the Leper
Who?	A woman who was a "sinner"	Mary of Bethany	A woman	A woman
What material?	A fragrant oil	A litra of very costly oil of pure nard	Very costly fragrant oil	Very costly oil of pure nard
How applied?	Washed feet with tears, wiped with hair, kissed and anointed feet	Anointed Jesus feet, wiped with her hair	Poured on Jesus' head	Broke flask and poured on Jesus' head
What container?	An alabaster flask	- - - - - - - - - -	An alabaster flask	An alabaster flask
Reaction of 12	Simon the Pharisee wondered why Jesus let her touch Him	Judas Iscariot questioned why this was done	His disciples were angry	Some were angry with themselves

Jesus Anointed by a Former Harlot at Simon's House

In the year 28 AD, after the Twelve Apostles were selected (Luke 6:12-16), but before they were sent out two-by-two (Luke 9:1-6), Jesus was invited to the home of Simon the Pharisee. This event probably took place in or near Capernaum. Luke records this as follows:

> "Then one of the Pharisees asked Him to eat with him. And He went to the Pharisee's house, and sat down to eat. And behold, a woman in the city who was a sinner, when she knew that *Jesus* sat at the table in the Pharisee's house, brought an alabaster flask of fragrant oil, and stood at His feet behind *Him* weeping. And she began to wash His feet with her tears, and wiped *them* with the hair of her head; and she kissed His feet and anointed *them* with the fragrant oil. Now when the Pharisee who had invited Him saw *this,* he spoke to himself, saying, 'This man, if He were a prophet, would know who and what manner of woman *this is* who is touching Him, for she is a sinner'".
>
> "And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Simon, I have something to say to you'. So he said, 'Teacher, say it'. 'There was a certain creditor who had two debtors. One owed five hundred denarii, and the other fifty. And when they had nothing with which to repay, he freely forgave them both. Tell Me, therefore, which of them will love him more?' Simon answered and said, 'I suppose the *one* whom he forgave more'. And He said to him, 'You have rightly judged'. Then He turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'Do you see this woman? I entered your house; you gave Me no water for My feet, but she has washed My feet with her tears and wiped *them* with the hair of her head. You gave Me no kiss, but this woman has not ceased to kiss My feet since the time I came in. You did not anoint My head with oil, but this woman has anointed My feet with fragrant oil. Therefore I say to you, her sins, *which are* many, are forgiven, for she loved much. But to whom little is forgiven, *the same* loves little'. Then He said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven'. And those who sat at the table with Him began to say to

themselves, 'Who is this who even forgives sins?' Then He said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you. Go in peace'" (Luke 7:36-50).

Jerome[277] speculated that the prostitute was Mary Magdalene. This is not the case, since Mary Magdalene was not a former prostitute. Jesus had expelled seven demons from her (Luke 8:2), but she was a wealthy woman, and a virgin, and she spent her time visiting and ministering to the sick and the infirm[278]. The seven demons had been trying to torment her and distract her from what she was doing.

The Apostle John refers to Mary of Bethany, the sister of Lazarus, as the woman who had anointed the Lord with fragrant oil and wiped His feet with her hair (John 11:2). However John Chrysostom stated[279] that the Apostle John was looking forward to Mary's anointing just before Passover when she did that (John 12:1-8), and not back to what happened two years earlier.

> "John informs us who were Lazarus' sisters; and, moreover, what Mary had more than the others. Here some doubting say, 'How did the Lord endure that a woman should do this?' In the first place then it is necessary to understand, that this is not the harlot mentioned earlier (Luke 7:37), but a different person. She was a harlot full of many vices, but Mary was both serious and earnest; for she showed her earnestness about the entertainment of Christ" (Luke 10:38-39).

Simon the Pharisee, who invited Jesus to dinner, was probably the same person that Jesus had healed of leprosy about six months earlier in late 27 AD. Shortly after Jesus called four of His disciples, He met a man in a certain city who was full of leprosy, and He healed him (Luke 5:12-14). Since lepers were outcasts, finding a leper in a city is unusual, unless he were someone important. Later, just before Passover in 30 AD, Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus at the home of Simon the leper (Mark 14:3); this Simon was probably the same person Jesus healed almost three years earlier. Simon the Pharisee is probably the same person as Simon the leper, since his social position as a Pharisee would give him special privileges so as to avoid exclusion and isolation as a leper.

When Simon the Pharisee, the healed leper, saw the woman who was a known prostitute touching Jesus, he was aghast. From the Mosaic Law, anyone that the prostitute touched became unclean (Leviticus 15:1-12). Simon could not see how Jesus, if He were a prophet, would allow this. Prophets who became unclean ceased hearing from God as prophets. But Simon did not say this aloud, but only spoke to himself. Jesus answered his thoughts by posing the question regarding who loved more, one who was forgiven fifty denarii or one who was forgiven five hundred denarii. Simon, who was a scholar in the Mosaic Law, had been forgiven the fifty; the woman, who had come to a profoundly deep repentance in her weeping, had been forgiven the five hundred.

One can see a major difference in the tone of Jesus' conversation to Simon the Pharisee in 28 AD as compared to His conversation with another Pharisee who invited Him to dinner about a year later (Luke 14:1-7). Jesus was very gentle with Simon, and those present with him marveled at Jesus, "Who is this who even forgives sins?" (Luke 7:49) The Twelve Apostles had

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[277] Jerome, Letters, XII.

[278] Holy Apostles Convent, The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Buena Vista, CO, 2008, pp. 907-910.

[279] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXII, 1. See also John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXX, 2, where Chrysostom identifies Mary of Bethany as a former harlot.

similar reactions to Jesus' works at about this time, such as at the calming of a storm, "Who can this be? For He commands even the winds and the waters, and they obey Him!" (Luke 8:25) In contrast, at the dinner in 29 AD, "They watched Jesus closely" (Luke 14:1) because they were looking for some way to trap Him.

The difference in Jesus' tone is because Simon had become His follower, and after Pentecost, he was ordained Bishop of Gaul at Le Mans[280], taking the name, Julian. After a while, Mary and Martha of Bethany joined him there after their ordeal with the Jewish leaders. After Pentecost, the Jewish leaders followed through on their threat to kill Lazarus (John 12:10). Putting Mary, Martha and Lazarus in a leaking boat, they set them adrift at sea with no oars, rudder, food or water. Miraculously, they landed on Cyprus where Lazarus was later ordained bishop. Mary and Martha later went to Gaul[281] to join their friend, Simon. Together they founded a number of Churches[282] in what is now Southern France. Mary of Bethany spent the last 30 years of her life[283] in fasting and prayer in the cavern "Le Saints Baume" high in the Maritime Alps. A sometimes confusing aspect is that Western tradition links Mary of Bethany, Mary Magdalene and the prostitute who anointed Jesus (Luke 7:37) as the same person. Eastern tradition states that they were three different people.

The Baptism of Tears

Some of the Church Fathers also speak of something called a baptism of tears. This term is not found in the Scriptures but there are examples of people who experienced this in the Scriptures. Perhaps the best known example is the story at the dinner at Simon the Pharisee's house of the woman who washed Jesus' feet with her tears and with fragrant oil and who wiped His feet with her hair (Luke 7:36-40).

One striking characteristic about the events is that the woman loved much because she was forgiven much (Luke 7:41-47). Jesus made a big deal about this to the Pharisees who invited Him to dinner -- she loved more than they did because she was forgiven more than they were (Luke 7:41, 42, 47). The text is used as the Gospel lesson on days commemorating Holy Nuns from the idea that they, like the woman in Luke 7, loved much, but not because they were former prostitutes.

David wept over his condition a great deal. He described his bed as being drenched in his tears (Psalm 6:6) and how tears had been his food day and night (Psalm 42:3), while King Saul was hunting him down like an animal. King Hezekiah also shed tears of repentance and petition on his death bed -- which the Lord answered immediately (2 Kings 20:1-6). Paul (Acts 20:31) and Timothy (2 Timothy 1:4) are described as expending a lot of tears also.

Tears in our culture are considered unmanly in men and a weakness in women. In the ancient Near East, however, many people kept tear bottles[284] in which they stored all the tears they shed their whole lives (Psalm 56:8).

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[280] Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, January 27.
[281] Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, July 29.
[282] F. L. Cross, The Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 879.
[283] Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, July 22.
[284] G. Christian Weiss, Insight into Bible Times and Customs, Good News Broadcasting Association, Lincoln NE, 1972, p. 90.

Ambrose stated[285] that there is great depth in the counsel of the Lord's words, "Your faith has saved you. Go in peace" (Luke 7:50). Some of this he describes as follows:

> "Men are more readily led on to do the things that are right by kindness than by fear; love is more advantageous than dread for correction. By His grace, sin is forgiven in baptism in order to make us more grateful to Him. It is fitting for God that those whom He has invited by grace He should lead on by increase of that grace. And so He first bestows on us a gift by baptism, and afterwards gives more abundantly to those who serve Him faithfully. So, then, the benefits of Christ are both incentives and rewards of virtue".
>
> "We were before under a hard creditor, who was only satisfied and paid to the full by the death of the debtor".
>
> "But we have changed our creditor, or rather we have escaped, for the debt remains but the interest is canceled. All are forgiven; there is no one whom He has not loosed. Thus it is written, that He has forgiven 'all transgressions, doing away the handwriting of the ordinance that was against us'" (Colossians 2:14).
>
> "Take care that you do not begin to be in a worse case as creditor than as debtor, like the man in the Gospel, to whom his Lord forgave all his debt, and who afterwards began to exact from his fellow-servant that which he himself had not paid. For this reason his master exacted from him, with the bitterest reproaches, that which he had forgiven him. Let us, then, forgive few things to whom many have been forgiven, for we are the more well pleasing to God, the more we have been forgiven".
>
> "The Pharisee judges well concerning others, but does not believe that which he thinks well of in others. Christ said to him: 'You have rightly judged'. God had said to Cain, 'If you offer rightly, but do not divide rightly, you have sinned, be still' (Genesis 4:7 LXX). So, then, this man offered rightly, for he judges that Christ ought to be more loved by Christians, because He has forgiven us many sins; but he did not divide rightly, because he thought that He could be ignorant of Him Who forgave the sins of men".

Clement of Alexandria spoke[286] of a symbolic meaning of Luke's account of the woman anointing Jesus. His anointed feet are the Apostles traveling around the world with the Gospel.

> "The woman, before she received the Word, while she was still a sinner, honored the Lord with what she thought the most precious thing in her possession — the ointment. With the ornament of her person, with her hair, she wiped off the superfluous physical ointment, while she expended on the Lord tears of repentance; 'wherefore her sins are forgiven' (Luke 7:48). This may be a symbol of the Lord's teaching, and of His suffering. For the feet anointed with fragrant ointment means divine instruction traveling with renown to the ends of the earth. 'Their sound has gone forth to the ends of the earth' (Psalm 19:4, Romans 10:18). The feet of the Lord, which were anointed, are the Apostles, who according to prophecy received the fragrant unction of the Holy Spirit. Those who traveled over the world and preached the Gospel are figuratively called the feet of the Lord. Of whom also the Holy Spirit foretells in the Psalm, 'Let us adore at the place where His feet stood' (Psalm 122:2 LXX), that is, where the Apostles, His feet, arrived. Preached by them, He came to the ends of the earth. Tears are

[285] Ambrose, Letters, XLI, 6-10.
[286] Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 8.

repentance; and the loosened hair proclaimed deliverance from the love of finery and vainglory".

Jesus Anointed by Mary of Bethany Six Days before Passover

In 30 AD, Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with a very costly oil of spikenard just prior to His entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sabbath. The account reads as follows:

> Then, six days before the Passover, Jesus came to Bethany, where Lazarus was who had been dead, whom He had raised from the dead. There they made Him a supper; and Martha served, but Lazarus was one of those who sat at the table with Him. Then Mary took a pound of very costly oil of spikenard, anointed the feet of Jesus, and wiped His feet with her hair. And the house was filled with the fragrance of the oil. Then one of His disciples, Judas Iscariot, Simon's *son,* who would betray Him, said, 'Why was this fragrant oil not sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor?' This he said not that he cared for the poor, but because he was a thief, and had the money box; and he used to take what was put in it. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone; she has kept this for the day of My burial. For the poor you have with you always, but Me you do not have always'" (John 12:1-8)."

Mary had some spiritual insight in doing this that can easily go unnoticed. Jesus had been saying that He would be killed by the Scribes, Chief Priests and Pharisees, and that He would rise on the third day (Matthew 16:21, 17:23, 20:19, 27:64). The Twelve either did not understand what He said, or thought that He wouldn't allow this to happen to Him if He could prevent it. Jesus, however, recognized Mary's intent as a preparation for His burial.

Mary was one of the small group of women known as "The Myrrh-Bearing Women". Others among that group were Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, Martha, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Joanna, Suzanna, and Salome. These women traveled with Jesus and His disciples from Galilee (Luke 23:55), and they funded Jesus 3-year public ministry out of their possessions (Luke 8:3). Mary Magdalene was probably the wealthiest, but Mary and Martha were women of means also.

We can recognize Mary's wealth by noticing several things. First, they had a very large house. It was large enough to accommodate Jesus, the Twelve and a number of the Seventy when they came to Jerusalem and were reluctant to stay overnight too close to the plotting of the Jewish leaders (Matthew 21:17, Luke 10:38-42). The house was also large enough to hold a reception attended by many of the Jewish leaders at Lazarus' funeral (John 11:19, 31). Second, she could afford a pound of pure oil of spikenard worth over 300 denarii (John 12:3-5) to anoint Jesus with. Third, her brother Lazarus was given a rich man's funeral, with embalming and wrapping in strips of linen (John 11:44), as opposed to the poor man's funeral for the son of the widow of Nain (Luke 7:14-15), who was simply covered with a sheet in an open coffin. Jesus Himself was given a rich man's funeral by two rich men, and laid in the tomb of a rich man (John 19:38-42).

Judas Objects to Mary's "Waste" of the Costly Oil

There are several aspects to Judas' objection that John mentions. The obvious part is that he just wanted to line his own pockets with the money collected for the poor. The sale of this costly oil for 300 denarii[287] would have lined Judas' pocket quite well.

A disturbing question that we might have is why Jesus allowed Judas to have charge of the moneybox when He knew he was a thief. This is equivalent to the Pastor and the Finance Committee of a Church giving sole responsibility of the Church budget to a known thief. Most people just don't do that! Why would the Lord put the bag for the poor in the hands of a thief; why would he make him steward who was a lover of money? John Chrysostom suggested[288] that the Lord was very concerned for Judas' salvation.

> "This cut him off from all excuse. Judas could not say that he betrayed the Lord from love of money for he had in the bag sufficient to satisfy his desire; he betrayed the Lord from excessive wickedness which Christ wished to restrain. Therefore He did not even rebuke Judas as stealing, although aware of it. 'Let her alone', He said, 'for she has kept this for the day of My burial' (John 12:7). But the Lord's words did not reach or soften Judas at all. Even at the Lord's Supper in the upper room, when Satan entered Judas (John 13:27), the Lord told him 'what you do, do quickly'".

This presents quite a contrast between Mary and Judas. Both had followed Jesus for three years, and Judas had even been given the authority to heal the sick and raise the dead. Both had watched the Master do the same. But the realization of just Who Jesus was had penetrated Mary's heart, but had not affected Judas. Mary so appreciated the Master's forgiveness that she spent a great deal of money on ointment to prepare for His burial (John 12:7). Judas couldn't care less, and sold the Master for a few coins (Matthew 26:15).

One of the hymns for Holy Tuesday[289] states, "The adulterous woman[290], O Christ, approaching You and pouring on Your feet ointment with tears, was delivered by Your command from the rottenness of iniquity. But the ingrate Disciple, who was fully possessed of Your grace, and wallowed in the mire, selling You with the love of silver. Glory be to Your compassion, O Lover of mankind".

Commenting on Judas' love of money, Chrysostom pointed out[291] that Paul referred to covetousness as idolatry (Colossians 3:5) and a very intense slavery that is difficult to escape from. It can warp one's life and cause the forfeit of one's salvation.

> "A dreadful thing is the love of money; it disables both eyes and ears, and makes men worse to deal with than a wild beast. It allows a man to consider neither conscience, nor friendship, nor fellowship, nor the salvation of his own soul. But having withdrawn them at once from all these things, like some harsh mistress, it makes those captured by it its slaves. The dreadful part of so bitter a

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[287] One denarius was a day's wage for a laborer (Matthew 20:1-2).

[288] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXV, 2.

[289] Seraphim Nassar, Divine Prayers and Services, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, Englewood, NJ, 1993, p. 773-774.

[290] This is the adulterous woman from Luke 7:36-50. Church tradition holds that the woman who annointed Jesus just before Passover was a chaste, virtuous woman. See Seraphim Nassar, Divine Prayers and Services, Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese, Englewood, NJ, 1993, p. 778.

[291] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXV, 3.

slavery is that it persuades them even to be grateful for it. The more they become enslaved, the more does their pleasure increase; in this way especially the malady becomes incurable, in this way the monster becomes hard to conquer. This made Gehazi a leper instead of a disciple and a prophet (2 Kings 5:15-27); this destroyed Ananias and her with him (Acts 5:1-11); this made Judas a traitor (John 12:6); this corrupted the rulers of the Jews, who received gifts, and became the partners of thieves (Matthew 23:14-21). Paul called it 'idolatry' (Colossians 3:5), and not even so has he deterred men from it. Why did he call it 'idolatry?' Many possess wealth, and dare not use it, but consecrate it, handing it down untouched, not daring to touch it, as though it were some devoted thing[292]. If at any time they are forced to do so, they feel as though they had done something unlawful. As the Greek carefully tends his graven image, so you entrust your gold to doors and bars; you provide a chest instead of a shrine, and lay it up in silver vessels. You may not bow down to it as he does to the image; yet you show all kind of attention to it.

Again, the Greek would rather give up his eyes or his life than his graven image. So also would those who love gold. 'But', said one, 'I don't worship the gold'. Neither does he worship the image, but the devil that dwells in it (Deuteronomy 32:17); and in like manner you, though you don't worship the gold, yet you worship that devil who springs on your soul, from the sight of the gold and your lust for it. Far more grievous than an evil spirit is the lust of money-loving and many obey it more than others do idols. For these in many things disobey; but in this case they yield everything, and whatever it tells them to do, they obey. 'Be at war with all', it says, 'at enmity with all, know not nature, despise God, sacrifice to me yourself', and in all they obey. To the graven images they sacrifice oxen and sheep; but avarice says, 'sacrifice to me your own soul', and the man obeys".

While the covetous shall not inherit the Kingdom of God, not even so do they fear. (1 Corinthians 6:10). This covetousness is weaker than all the others; it is not inborn, nor natural. If it were, it would have been placed in us at the beginning; but there was no gold at the beginning, and no man desired gold. By each man's envying the one before him, men have increased the disease, and he who has gotten it in advance provokes him who had no desire. When men see splendid houses, extensive lands, troops of slaves, silver vessels, and great heaps of apparel, they use every means to outdo them; so that the first set of men are causes of the second, and these of those who come after.

Theophylact compared[293] the service offered by Mary with the criticism offered by Judas regarding serving the poor:

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[292] "The devoted thing" is a technical term that is rendered in the LXX as the "Anathema", and there are several aspects to this. The anathema was a kind of a vow, either initiated by an individual regarding some of his possessions or as a command by the Lord out of righteous judgment. For example, anything a man devotes to the Lord is holy, is not redeemable and is called anathema (Leviticus 27:28). On the other hand, the Canaanite king of Arad and his destroyed cities were named "Anathema" (Numbers 21:2-3). Because Achan took some of the anathema to his home he became anathema also (Joshua 7, 22:20). Chrysostom is saying that wealth can become very much like the things Achan took from the ruins of Jericho.

[293] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Ch. 14, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, pp. 118-119.

"'Why do you trouble her?', He asks. She has offered a gift; why do you turn her away with a rebuke? At the same time He chastises the betrayer, saying to him, 'She has done this for My burial', reproving him for his lack of conscience. It is as if the Lord were saying to him, 'You will hand Me over to death, and you do not reproach yourself. But she, inspired by God, has brought myrrh for My burial. Does she deserve your reproach?' Here the Lord makes two prophecies. First, the Gospel will be preached throughout the whole world. Second, the deed of this woman will be preached together with the Gospel. From this text, let those be confounded who put the poor above Christ. For I have heard goldsmiths say, 'If I make a living melting down a holy vessel in order to give to the poor, it is no crime'. Let them hear that Christ prefers service to Himself above service to the poor. The Body of Christ is, literally, that which is on the golden paten, and His Blood is that which is in the chalice. Therefore that man, who takes away the costly paten, and compels the Body of Christ to be placed upon a cheaper one, using the pretext of serving the poor; let it be known that he will share the fate of Judas".

Jesus Anointed by Mary of Bethany Again Two Days before Passover

On Wednesday of Holy Week, Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus again. The location is now the house of Simon the leper, not the house of Mary, Martha and Lazarus. Whereas six days before Passover (John 12:1) she anointed His feet and wiped them with her hair, now it is two days before Passover (Matthew 26:2, Mark 14:1) and she poured the oil on His head. According to Mark's account, she broke the alabaster flask as she did this (Mark 14:3). Matthew's account reads:

"And when Jesus was in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, a woman came to Him having an alabaster flask of very costly fragrant oil, and she poured it on His head as He sat at the table. But when His disciples saw it, they were indignant, saying, 'Why this waste? For this fragrant oil might have been sold for much and given to the poor'. But when Jesus was aware of it, He said to them, 'Why do you trouble the woman? For she has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, but Me you do not have always. For in pouring this fragrant oil on My body, she did it for My burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her'" (Matthew 26:6-13).

This time it is not Judas who criticizes Mary for "this waste", but the other disciples. Again, they valued it at 300 danarii, just as Judas had four days ago. Again Jesus commends Mary for doing this for His burial, and that she will be remembered for this everywhere that the Gospel is preached. Four days ago Mary had used part of the "Oil of Spikenard" on Jesus' feet; this time she emptied the flask and broke it open to get it all out for anointing His head. In doing so, the oil ran down His neck and beard and covered His body.

John Chrysostom noted[294] some things about Mary; especially that she recognized Him as God:

"After many other women, the Samaritan (John 4:7-39), the Canaanite (Matthew 15:22-28), her that had the issue[295] of blood (Mark 5:25-34), and other

[294] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXX, 1.

besides, that she came to Him, conscious to herself of much impurity; and then not publicly but in a house. Whereas all the others came to Him for the healing of the body alone, she came to Him by way of honor only, and for the amendment of the soul. She was not at all afflicted in body, so that for this most especially one might marvel at her. And not as to a mere man did she come to Him; for then she would not have wiped His feet with her hair, but as to one greater than man can be".

In contrast to Mary, the Twelve and the other disciples were not as aware of what was happening. Later they would understand; Chrysostom describes[296] their state-of-affairs:

"Why were the disciples indignant at this? They heard the Master saying, 'I will have mercy, and not sacrifice' (Matthew 9:13, 12:7). He blamed the Jews, because they omitted the weightier matters, justice, mercy, and faith (Matthew 23:23), and He spoke at length on the mount concerning almsgiving (Matthew 6:1-4). From these things they inferred and reasoned that if He does not accept whole burnt offerings, or the ancient worship, much more will He not accept the anointing of oil".

"Knowing her intention, however, He allows her. Great was her reverence, and unspeakable was her zeal; therefore He permitted the oil to be poured even on His head".

"If He didn't refuse to become man, to be born in the womb, and to be fed at the breast, why do you marvel if He accepts this? Like the Father allowed a sweet savor of meat and smoke (Exodus 29:18, Leviticus 1:9, Numbers 28:2), so did Jesus accept the harlot's intention (Luke 7:37-38). Jacob also anointed a pillar to God (Genesis 28:18, 31:13); oil was offered in the sacrifices (Leviticus 2:1); and the priests were anointed with ointment" (Exodus 30:22-33).

John Chrysostom celebrates[297] the eternal memory of the anointing by Mary, and notes that she is remembered above countless kings. In recognizing Mary's faith, the Lord allowed her to do things out of the zeal of her budding faith that He might not have permitted otherwise.

"While the noble exploits of countless kings and generals have sunk into silence; having overthrown cities, encompassed them with walls, set up trophies, and enslaved many nations, they are not known so much as by hearsay, though they have both set up statues, and established laws. Yet a woman who was a harlot[298] poured out oil in the house of some leper, in the presence of ten men; this all men celebrate throughout the world. So great a time has passed, and yet the memory of that which was done has not faded away. But Persians and Indians, Scythians and Thracians, Sarmatians, and the race of the Moors, and they that dwell in the British Islands, spread abroad that which was done secretly in a house by a woman that had been a harlot. Great is the loving-kindness of the Lord. He endures a harlot kissing his feet, and moistening them with oil, and wiping them with her hair, and He receives her, and reproves those that blame

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[295] We know the woman with the issue of blood today by the name of Veronica.

[296] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXX, 1.

[297] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXX, 2.

[298] Chrysostom identifies Mary of Bethany as a former harlot. This may mean that she had had more than one husband, such as the woman Jesus met at the well in Sychar (John 4:16-18).

her. It was not right that for so much zeal the woman should be driven to despair".

"But note this too, how far they were now raised up above the world, and excelled in almsgiving. Why was it He did not merely say, 'She has done a good work,' but before this, 'Why do you trouble the woman?' That they might learn not to require too much of the weaker sort at the beginning! Therefore neither does He examine the act merely itself by itself, but taking into account the person of the woman. If He had been making a law, He would not have brought in the woman. But that you might learn that for her sake these things were said, that they might not mar her budding faith, but rather cherish it. Therefore He said it, teaching us whatever good thing may be done by any man, though it is not quite perfect, to receive it, encourage it, advance it, and not to seek perfection at the beginning".

"All men, He said, shall celebrate her hereafter; now she has announced beforehand my passion, by bringing to me what was needed for a funeral; let no man reprove her. I am so far from condemning her as having done amiss, or from blaming her as having not acted rightly, that I will not allow what has been done to be hid, but the world shall know that which has been done in a house, and in secret. The deed came of a reverential mind, fervent faith, and a contrite soul".

Judas Bargains to Betray Jesus

Immediately after Mary anointed Jesus, Judas sought out the chief priests to betray Jesus. Matthew's and Luke's accounts read:

"Then one of the twelve, called Judas Iscariot, went to the chief priests and said, 'What are you willing to give me if I deliver Him to you?' And they counted out to him thirty pieces of silver. So from that time he sought opportunity to betray Him (Matthew 26:14-16).

"Then Satan entered Judas, surnamed Iscariot, who was numbered among the twelve. So he went his way and conferred with the chief priests and captains, how he might betray Him to them. And they were glad, and agreed to give him money. So he promised and sought opportunity to betray Him to them in the absence of the multitude" (Luke 22:3-6).

John Chrysostom spoke[299] at length about Judas, pondering how he could do such a thing! What was he thinking? From what he had seen and done and witnessed over the past three years, his deeds make no sense! The only explanation is that something else possessed him, and Chrysostom said that this was covetousness. Jesus was extremely patient with him, even up to the last hour, but to no avail. The least that we can do is to be similarly patient with those in our midst that have the same problem.

"And see how great is the wickedness of Judas, in that he comes to them of his own accord, in that he does this for money and for such a small sum of money".

"Luke said that he conferred with the chief captains. After that the Jews became seditious, the Romans set over them those that should provide for their good order. Their government had now undergone a change according to the prophecy. Judas was afraid of the multitude, and desired to seize him alone".

[299] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXX, 3.

"This is such madness! How did covetousness completely blind him! He that had often seen Him when He went through the midst, and was not seized, and when He gave many demonstrations of His Godhead and power; now he looked for an opportunity to lay hold on Him".

"Knowing this, then, let us also do all things for them that sin and are careless, warning, teaching, exhorting, admonishing, advising, though we profit nothing. Christ indeed foreknew that the traitor was incorrigible. Yet He did not cease to supply what He could do, as well admonishing as threatening and bewailing over him, and in a concealed way. At the time of the betrayal, He allowed him even to kiss Him (Luke 22:47-48), but this did not benefit Judas at all. So great an evil is covetousness; this made him both a traitor, and a sacrilegious robber".

"Every day Judas was with Him, who had nowhere to lay His head, and every day he was instructed by deeds and by words, not to have gold, silver, or two coats (Luke 12:33, Mark 10:21, Luke 3:11). Yet he was not taught self-restraint; how do you expect to escape the disease, if you don't have the benefit of earnest attention, and do not use much diligence? The monster is terrible, yet nevertheless, if you are willing, you will easily get the better of him. The desire is not natural; this is clear from those that are free from it. Natural things are common to everyone; but this desire has its origin from carelessness alone. From this it takes its birth; from this it derives its increase; when it has seized upon those who look greedily after it, it makes them live contrary to nature. When they don't care about their fellow countrymen, their friends, their brethren, etc., this is to live against nature. Thus it is evident that the vice and disease of covetousness, wherein Judas became a traitor, is contrary to nature. How did he become such a one, you may say, having been called by Christ?"

"Because God's call is not compulsory, neither does it force the will of them who are not minded to choose virtue, but admonishes and advises, and does all things, so as to persuade men to become good. But if some don't endure, it does not compel. If you want to learn what caused him to became such as he was, you will find that he was ruined by covetousness".

"How was he taken by this calamity? Such changes arise from carelessness, as on the other hand, those for the better from diligence. How many for instance that were violent, are now gentler than lambs? How many lascivious persons have become afterwards continent? How many former covetous have now cast away even their possessions? The contrary also has been the result of carelessness. Gehazi also lived with a holy man, and he too became depraved from the same disease (2 Kings 5:15-27). This calamity is the most grievous of all. From covetousness come robbers of tombs, manslayers, wars and fighting, and whatsoever evil you may mention. Someone said, 'there is nothing more wicked than a covetous man'".

First Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 2:11-22 "The Rejection of Moses"

In the First Reading, Moses, like Christ, came to his people as the only person qualified to be a prince and a judge, but he was rejected and driven away. The text from Exodus reads:

"And it came to pass in that length of time, that Moses having grown, went out to his brethren the sons of Israel: and having noticed their distress, he

saw an Egyptian smiting a certain Hebrew of his brethren the children of Israel. And having looked round this way and that way, he sees no one; and he smote the Egyptian, and hid him in the sand. And having gone out the second day he saw two Hebrew men fighting; and he said to the injurer, 'Why do you smite your neighbor?' And he said, 'Who made you a ruler and a judge over us? Will you slay me as you yesterday slew the Egyptian?' Then Moses was alarmed, and said, 'If *it be* thus, this matter has become known'. And Pharaoh heard this matter, and sought to slay Moses; and Moses departed from the presence of Pharaoh, and dwelt in the land of Midian; and having come into the land of Midian, he sat on the well."

"And the priest of Midian had seven daughters, feeding the flock of their father Jethro; and they came and drew water until they filled their pitchers, to water the flock of their father Jethro. And the shepherds came, and were driving them away; and Moses rose up and rescued them, and drew water for them, and watered their sheep. And they came to Reuel their father; and he said to them, 'Why have you come so quickly to-day?' And they said, 'An Egyptian delivered us from the shepherds, and drew water for us and watered our sheep'. And he said to his daughters, 'And where is he? And why have you left the man? Call him therefore, that he may eat bread'. And Moses was established with the man, and he gave Zipporah his daughter to Moses to wife. And the woman conceived and bore a son, and Moses called his name Gershom, saying, 'I am a sojourner in a strange land'" (Exodus 2:11-22 LXX).

Moses' parents exhibited a great deal of faith at the time that he was born. By faith, they abandoned their son to the Lord's discretion twice: once to the Nile in a floating basket and once to the daughter of the evil tyrant. And God responded to their faith by providing for Moses in a remarkable way. Not only did he get the best education available (Acts 7:22), but he represented Pharaoh's only heir, since Thermuthis, Pharaoh's daughter, was barren. Pharaoh's magicians[300] warned Pharaoh against Moses, but Pharaoh disregarded their advice to kill Moses and instead protected him and raised him as the heir to the throne.

As a young man[301], Moses was placed at the head of the Egyptian army and defeated the Ethiopians, who were advancing into Egypt from the South. This early activity of Moses may be what Stephen, the Protomartyr, referred to saying that Moses "was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22) before he left Egypt at age forty.

After Moses returned as a conquering hero[302], the magicians entertained a greater hatred of him than before, and were able to sway Pharaoh to beware of him as a military force to be reckoned with. At this same time, the incident occurred where Moses saw an Egyptian taskmaster unjustly beating a Hebrew. Moses struck down the Egyptian and killed him, and buried him in the sand. (From the above accounts, it is apparent that Moses was strong and skilled in military endeavors! The taskmaster had no business even questioning the Commander of the Egyptian army). The next day, Moses came upon two Hebrews fighting. Trying to act as a peacemaker, Moses spoke to them. But one of them replied, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" As heir to the throne, as a

[300] Josephus, Antiquities, II, ix. 1, 7
[301] Josephus, Antiquities, II, x, 1-2.
[302] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xi, 1

conquering hero, and with priestly qualifications, no one was more qualified to be a prince and a judge over them. But like Christ, his people rejected him.

When Moses realized that the event had become known, he left Egypt before Pharaoh could find him (Exodus 2:11-15). When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, knowing that his general had now identified with the Hebrews as his magicians said he would; but Pharaoh was too late.

John Chrysostom stated[303] that the "reproach of Christ" (Hebrews 11:26) that Moses received was spoken by his own people, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us?" (Exodus 2:14). By his rank (heir to the throne, general in the Egyptian army), they should have welcomed him with open arms as a prince and a judge. Chrysostom compared this to the reproach Christ received from His own, "He came to His own and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). After they crucified Him, "Those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads: 'if You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross'" (Matthew 27:39-40). Thus Moses and Christ suffered alike. Moses and Christ alike looked to the reward set for them (Hebrews 11:26, 12:2).

Second Parable from the Old Testament: Job 2:1-10 "The Smiting of Job by Satan"

In the Second Reading, Job portrayed Christ as He was struck down without a cause. The text from Job reads:

> "And it came to pass on a certain day that the angels of God came to stand before the Lord, and the devil came among them to stand before the Lord. And the Lord said to the devil, 'Where have you come from?' Then the devil said, 'I am come from going through the world, and walking about the whole earth'. And the Lord said to the devil, 'Have you then observed my servant Job, that there is none of *men* upon the earth like him, a harmless, true, blameless, godly man, abstaining from all evil? And he yet cleaves to innocence, whereas you have told *me* to destroy his substance without cause?' And the devil answered and said to the Lord, 'Skin for skin, all that a man has will he give as a ransom for his life. Put forth your hand, and touch his bones and his flesh: verily he will bless you to *your* face'. And the Lord said to the devil, 'Behold, I deliver him up to you; only save his life'.
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> So the devil went out from the Lord, and smote Job with sore boils from *his* feet to *his* head. And he took a potsherd to scrape away the discharge, and sat upon a dung-heap outside the city.
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> And when much time had passed, his wife said to him, 'How long will you hold out, saying, Behold, I wait yet a little while, expecting the hope of my deliverance? For, behold, your memorial is abolished from the earth, *even your* sons and daughters, the pangs and pains of my womb which I bore in vain with sorrows. And you yourself sit down to spend the nights in the open air among the corruption of worms. And I am a wanderer and a servant from place to place and house to house, waiting for the setting of the sun that I may rest from my labors and my pangs which now beset me. But say some word against the Lord, and die. But he looked on her, and said to her, You have spoken like one of the foolish women. If we have received good things of the hand of the Lord, shall we not

[303] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVI, 4.

endure evil things? In all these things that happened to him, Job sinned not at all with his lips before God" (Job 2:1-10 LXX)

Job was a descendant of Esau who lived during the years that Israel was in Egypt. During the Conquest of Canaan, Israel passed by Mt. Seir, Southeast of the Dead Sea (Deuteronomy 2:4-6), which was the home of the descendants of Esau.

This parable from the Old Testament illustrates the sacrifice of the Lamb of God, where Job is a picture of Christ as He was about to go to the Cross. Job's ordeals began with the Lord pointing out to Satan that Job was unique on the earth; "a blameless and godly man, abstaining from all evil" (Job 1:8 LXX). In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness. Job even offered prayers and offerings for his ten children, consecrating them just in case they had sinned in their heart (Job 1:6). Satan felt that if Job were poor and destitute, he would curse God to His face (Job 1:11).

Satan recognized Job's godliness, just as he recognized that of Christ (Matthew 4:1-10). Yet Satan felt that all Job's righteousness could be attributed to the Lord's physical blessings in Job's life. Satan didn't allow for the possibility that Job would actually want to love God. So the Lord allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions in sifting him.

Job's response to all this was to prepare himself to worship the Lord saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Meanwhile, the Lord pointed out to Satan that Job held fast to his integrity "even though you incited Me against him to ruin him without cause" (Job 2:3). When the Lord pointed out Job's righteousness, Satan challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

All these were "messengers from Satan" (compare 2 Corinthians 12:7) and the next was a severe physical one: skin boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (Job 2:7). Now destitute and unable to afford any medical attention, Job's only medical alternative was scrapping the pus off his skin with a piece of broken pottery. Completely disfigured by these diseases, Job's wife advised him: "Just say some word against the Lord, and die!" (Job 2:9 LXX). When three of his friends came to see him after hearing of his adversity, they didn't even recognize him at first because of his disfigurement. When they did, they openly wept (Job 2:11-12 LXX). Following this, they sat down with him for seven days without saying a word, for they saw that his affliction was dreadful and very great (Job 2:13 LXX). For Job, it was so bad he wished he had never been born (Job 3:1).

Following this week of silence the last messenger came: the inquisition. Job's three friends thought that Job had some secret sin that brought all this evil down on his own head. Eliphaz, king of the Temanites[304], suggested that those who plow iniquity and sow trouble harvest it. When can he remember the pure in heart ever being utterly destroyed? (Job 4:7-8 LXX). Bilhad, sovereign of the Shuhites[305], suggested that perhaps Job's sons had sinned and had gotten their just reward. If Job were pure and true, God would listen to his supplication, and

[304] Teman was the Southern portion of Idumaea.

[305] The Shuhites were descendants of Shuah, the son of Abraham by Keturah. His descendants were an Arab tribe west of the Euphrates.

would restore to him the habitation of righteousness. After all, God will not reject a man of integrity nor will he receive any gift of the ungodly (Job 8:4, 6, 20 LXX). Job claimed he was innocent. Zophar, king of the Mineans[306], suggested that the Lord knows false men without investigating their circumstances. "If you have made your heart pure and lifted up your hand to Him (that is, in prayer); if iniquity is in your hand, put it far away and do not let unrighteousness lodge in your tents (Job 11:4, 11-14 LXX). The effect of all this on Job was that "the tents of the destroyers prosper while the just and blameless man is a joke (Job 12:4, 6).

This last messenger from Satan was perhaps the cruelest and the most difficult to deal with. After all, there was ample evidence all around Job that it was true! Chrysostom commented[307] that "the reproaches of Job's friends appeared worse than the worms and the sores. There is nothing more intolerable to those in affliction than a word capable of stinging the soul". This is exactly what the "messengers of Satan" seek to convince us of also: that God is not faithful, that He doesn't care about us and that we should only trust in what we can see.

Paul reminds us that the usefulness of our "thorns in the flesh" or "messengers of Satan" are that we don't get exalted above measure (2 Corinthians 12:7). After all, we are to bear our crosses as our Lord bore His (Mark 8:34-37), and as He humbled Himself to death on the Cross, so should we. The Lord told Paul, and He tells us, "My grace is sufficient for you for My strength is made perfect in weakness" (2 Corinthians 12:9). Going through all he went through, it's hard to imagine the Lord's grace being sufficient for Job; but it was. Paul also said, "God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it" (1 Corinthians 10:13).

The Lord saw His Cross, which itself was a messenger of Satan, as His Glory (John 12:23). Job wasn't aware of what was going on in heaven between the Lord and Satan, but eventually He realized that his ordeal was for his glory also. As a result, Job was rewarded both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:11). Instigating and organizing Job's crosses and our crosses is Satan, just as he organized Jesus' Cross (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). Job grew spiritually because of all the evil that he had to bear. Obviously Jesus' and Job's Crosses did them no permanent harm.

[306] The Mineans were part of the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory is in Yemen today.

[307] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.

Holy Thursday Matins
The Hebrew Feast Days of Passover
The Arrest of Jesus and Preceding Events

Revision A

Introduction

There were seven "set feasts" prescribed by Moses, three of which are connected with "Passover" (Leviticus 23:2, 1 Chronicles 23:32 KJV). Each of the Feasts has a commemorating event in the life of the Hebrew nation, which Israel was instructed to remember during the given festival. Each of the Feasts also had a prophetic significance that foretold of some major event that God would accomplish among His people. In addition, there is a spiritual application using picture language that illustrates what the Lord has to say concerning the salvation and growth of His people.

Background

The Hebrew year is a lunar year and does not contain 365 ¼ days, as does the Roman year. Under a lunar year, each month contains either 29 or 30 days and is determined by the first appearance of the first crescent of the new moon. The determination of when a given month begins was a little more complicated 3500 years ago than it is today, since they were not able to cope with an overcast sky as easily as we are. The resulting length of the year was about 360 days. Since this lunar year system "loses" about five days every year, an additional month was added about every six years in order for the seasons to come in about the same months. The twelve (or thirteen) months of the Hebrew year are shown in Figure 1. The dates for these first three Feasts and Sabbaths are listed in Figure 2.

Figure 1
Months of the Hebrew Year

Month	Name		Month	Name
1	Nisan (Abib)		7	Tishri (Ethanim)
2	Lyyar (Ziv)		8	Chesvan (Bul)
3	Sivan		9	Chislev
4	Tammuz		10	Tebeth
5	Ab		11	Shebat
6	Elul		12	Adar
			13	Second Adar

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The Hebrew Agricultural Year in Relation to the Feasts

The Hebrew year involves an agriculture-based economy and is reflected in the "set feasts". Figure 3 shows the relative time distance between each of the first three of the "set feasts". Included in the last two columns of Figure 3 are events that occurred during the Hebrew agricultural year. Very simply, one cannot separate a people from their culture or a message from its cultural backdrop and expect to understand what the people experienced, or the full content of what is meant. For example, Paul, in obvious reference to the Day of First Fruits, says that Jesus Christ is the "First Fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20). Knowing nothing about the Day of First Fruits, this does not say much. In fact, there is a great deal of information contained in Paul's statement.

FIGURE 2
Dates of the First Three of the Seven Set Feasts

FEAST	DATE	SABBATH	OTHER NAMES
The Day of the Lord's Passover	14 Nisan	No	Preparation Day Mark 15:42
The Feast of Unleavened Bread	15 Nisan to 21 Nisan	15 Nisan and 21 Nisan	Called the Feast of the Passover in the New Testament; e.g. John 13:1, Luke 2:41
The Day of First fruits	16 Nisan	No	Called the "day after the Sabbath" (of 15 Nisan) Leviticus 23:10-14

Concerning the agricultural year of the Hebrew people, the Scripture doesn't spell out exactly what species of crop is sown and harvested on what specific day. To clarify this, the Gezer Calendar is included in Figure 3. This "Calendar" dates from about 925 BC and was discovered in the early 20th Century.

On the 16th of Nisan (i.e., the "day after the Sabbath" of the 15th of Nisan) a sheaf of the first fruits are brought in (Leviticus 23:9-14). What crop is not specified, but it is generally regarded as being barley for several reasons. First, barley is usually the first grain crop to ripen in the year, and has a fairly short growing season (60-70 days). Second, as a result of the plague of hail, the barley crop in Egypt was ruined because it was already "in the ear" (i.e. nearly ripe), whereas the flax had just come up and the wheat and spelt hadn't broken ground yet (Exodus 9:31-32). The barley grown in Israel (It's about 200 miles from Goshen to Jerusalem) is the same as grown in Egypt. Third, Hebrew tradition has always regarded the "first fruit sheaf" as being a barley sheaf. Fourth, from the Gezer Calendar, barley is the only grain crop that could be ripe at this time of year. One thing is certainly clear from the Leviticus 23 context. And that is that the first sheaf of the first crop belongs to the Lord. Since Jesus Christ is said to be "the first fruits of them that slept" (1 Corinthians 15:20) it wouldn't make sense if, for example, the "First fruit sheaf" were the second crop to be "in the ear." (This would imply that there is "another Jesus" who was raised from the dead by whom men may be saved.)

One might notice, too, that the "First fruit sheaf" is not the entire crop. The implication is that the barley is "in the ear" at about this time of year (Exodus 9:31-32). The entire crop is not necessarily ripe yet. After all, it is still just early spring. But the crop will be ripe very soon.

On the 6th of Sivan, 50 days after the 16th of Nisan, bread was baked from the wheat that had just been harvested and threshed. It was a "new grain offering," "baked with leaven as first fruits to the Lord" (Leviticus 23:16-17). This feast was called Weeks since it occurred seven weeks after the Day of First fruits. In the New Testament it is called Pentecost, meaning fiftieth. While it is not the same as the Day of First Fruits, it is certainly related to it in at least an agricultural sense. Since these loaves are regarded as "First fruits to the Lord" (Leviticus 23:17) it is obvious that the first loaf baked was to be the Lord's.

FIGURE 3
Hebrew Agricultural Year

Month	Corresponds To	Festival	Sabbaths	Agricultural Activity	Gezer Calander
Nisan (Abib)	Mar.-Apr.	Passover Unleavened Bread First fruits	None 15th , 21st None	Lamb Slain No Leaven 1st Sheaf Barley	Hoeing Up of Flax
Iyar	Apr.-May				Barley Harvest Completed
Sivan	May-June	Weeks or Pentecost	6th	2 Loaves from 1st of Wheat Harvest	Wheat Harvest Begins
Tammuz	June-July				Vine Tending
Ab	July-Aug.				
Elul	Aug.-Sept.				Summer Fruits
Tishri	Sept.-Oct.	Trumpets Atonement Tabernacles	1st 10th 15th, 22nd	None None Harvest Complete	Olive Harvest
Heshvan	Oct.-Nov.				
Chislev	Nov.-Dec.				Planting Grain
Tebeth	Dec.-Jan.				
Shebet	Jan.-Feb.				Late Planting of Grain
Adar	Feb.-Mar.				

The harvest preceding Weeks-Pentecost is not the end of the year's harvest. It is merely the harvest of one type of crop. The two wave loaves speak of Jew and Gentile in the church (as will be shown in more detail later.) The first fruit sheaf speaks of the resurrected Jesus Christ (as will also be shown in more detail later.) The crop of Christ and His Church begins at Weeks-Pentecost.

Following Weeks (or Pentecost) is about four months of growing, maturing and harvesting. By the time of the Feast of Trumpets, virtually all the harvesting has been completed. One might note that the long summer intervening between Weeks and Trumpets is

generally a hot one, especially toward the Negev (the southern part of Israel.) Galilee, in the north, and Jerusalem, on a mountain, are generally quite pleasant; but the area inland from Tel-Aviv - Jaffa and southward gets so hot that it is just unbearable to work in the heat of the day. This is probably what is referred to in one of Jesus' parables, where the laborers who "bore the burden and scorching heat of the day" were understandably upset at receiving the same wage as those who began work as the sun was setting (Matthew 20:12).

More will be said of this long, hot summer as this author feels that this is where Christianity is at the present time. The summer crop is grown and has almost reached maturity, and the harvest of the end of the age is imminent, at which point the Lord will come at the "last trumpet."

Traditionally, in agricultural cultures, there is a big celebration after the crop is completely harvested, stored, ground, etc. In Hebrew tradition, Booths has generally been regarded in such a manner.

THE LORD'S PASSOVER

This, the first festival of the Hebrew year, is not to be confused with the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which immediately follows it. To avoid confusion, each of the seven festivals will be referred to by the name designation as given in the Pentateuch. Fifteen hundred years later, the festivals are sometimes referred to by slightly different terms, where the events of "Passover Week" are often blurred together. "Passover" (Matthew 26:2) and the "Feast of the Passover" (Luke 2:41, John 13:1) in the gospels refers to the Feast days in general. Appendix F is a summary of the events surrounding the Crucifixion and Resurrection correlated with both Roman time, Hebrew time (where the day begins at sundown), and the Hebrew "set feasts." This tabulation will be referred to often in the following pages as the significance of the prophetic aspect of these festivals unfolds.

The Lord's Passover: Commemorating Event

Most people are aware of the "Passover" event in Egypt around 1400 BC, but it bears repeating. The story can be found in Exodus 12 and has two essential parts: What man did and what God did.

On the 14th day of Nisan, in the mid to late afternoon (about 3:00 p.m.), the Passover lamb (male, without blemish) was to be killed. Its blood was to be applied to the side and upper doorposts of the house where the given family lived, and where they would later eat the roasted meat of the lamb (Exodus 12:6, 7, 22). This is what man was supposed to do. In applying the blood as commanded, they couldn't help but trace out the outline of a cross.

What God did was in response to whether the given household obeyed His command and accepted the blood "as a token upon the houses" where they lived, or rejected the blood, disobeyed His command, and decided they could make it quite well apart from His way. The Lord said: "For I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments -- I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live;

and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12-13).

As is apparent from this quote, the "Lord's Passover" is so called because the Lord "passed over" the houses when He saw the blood, such that the house was delivered from death.

On this first Passover, one lamb per household was to be slain. Later on when Israel had entered the land and the Lord's house was established in the place He chose (Deuteronomy 16:2), this was no longer the case (Matthew 26:17).

The Lord's Passover: Prophetic Significance

Referring again to the chart of Appendix F, at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan (Thursday, about 1800 Roman time), Jesus and His disciples ate the Last Supper, after which Jesus went with His disciples to Gethsemane to pray. While there, He was betrayed and taken captive, and during the darkness, a pseudo-trial was given. The next morning, around sun-up (Friday, about 0600 Roman time), Jesus was delivered to Pilate immediately following Peter's denial (cf. cockcrow in Mark 14:72, 15:1). A few hours later at the "3rd hour" (Friday 0900 Roman time), Jesus was crucified (Mark 15:25). From the 6th hour until the 9th hour (Friday 1200 to 1500 Roman time), there was darkness over the whole land (Mark 15:33). At the 9th hour, Jesus cried out, gave up the spirit, and died (Mark 15:34-37).

Precisely at this time, there was something-significant happening at the Temple. According to the instruction in the books of Moses, the Passover Lamb was being slain in Jerusalem. As Jesus was dying, so was the Passover Lamb! This was what John the Baptist was talking about when he said, referring to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

John Chrysostom noted[308] that all the details of the Lord's Passover were in keeping with the Scriptures.

> "And His disciples said, 'Where do You want us to prepare for You to eat the Passover' (Matthew 26:17)? So even from this it is manifest, that He had no house, no place of sojourning; and I suppose neither had they. Surely they would have entreated him to come there. But neither had they any, having now parted with all things" (Matthew 19:27-30).
>
> "But why did He keep the Passover? To indicate by all things unto the last day, that He is not opposed to the Law".
>
> "And for what possible reason does He send them to an unknown person? To show by this also that He might have avoided suffering. For He who prevailed over this man's mind, so that he received them, and that by words; what would He not have done with them that crucified Him, if it had been His will not to suffer? And what He did about the donkey, this He did here also. For there too He said, 'If any man says anything to you, you shall say, that the Lord has need of them' (Matthew 21:2-3); and so likewise here, 'The Master says, I will keep the Passover at your house'" (Matthew 26:18).
>
> "After this, because they didn't know Him, He gave them a sign, like the prophet touching Saul (1 Samuel 10:3), saying, 'You shall find one going up and

[308] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

carrying a pitcher' (Mark 14:13-15). And see again the display of his power. For He did not only say, 'I will keep the Passover', but He adds another thing also, 'My time is at hand' (Matthew 26:18). And this He did, at once continually reminding His disciples of the passion, so that exercised by the frequency of the prediction, they should be prepared for what was to take place. At the same time He showed to themselves, and to him that was receiving Him, and to all the Jews, that He voluntarily came to His passion. And He adds, 'with my disciples', in order that both the preparation should be sufficient, and that the man should not suppose that He was concealing Himself".

Chrysostom continued to say[309] that Jesus ate the Passover meal exactly as prescribed by the Law of Moses

> "If they were eating the Passover, did they eat it contrary to the Law? They should not have eaten it sitting down to their meal (Matthew 26:20), but standing (Exodus 12:11). What then can be said? That after eating it, they <u>then</u> sat down to the banquet".
>
> "But another evangelist said that on that evening He not only ate the Passover, but also said, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you' (Luke 22:15), that is, on that year. For what reason? Because He was to bring about the salvation of the world, deliver the mysteries, and do away with the subjects of sorrow with His death; the cross was welcome to Him".

Thus, the prophetic significance of the celebration of the Lord's Passover was simply that for almost 1500 years, from the Exodus to 30 AD, the fact that Jesus would die as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world was celebrated in advance. This was so precise that Moses even predicted that Christ would be taken down from the Cross that same day. For the Lord told him to write, "None of the flesh which you sacrifice on the evening of the first day (i.e. the 14th of Nisan) shall remain overnight until morning" (Deuteronomy 16:4). The hymns of the Church address this also when they say that it was impossible that the author of life would be subject to corruption.

Justin Martyr explained[310] the prophetic significance of the Passover as portraying Christ. Roasting portrays crucifixion, and the Paschal Lamb was affixed to a spit that formed the shape of a cross.

> "The mystery, then, of the lamb which God enjoined to be sacrificed as the Passover, was a type of Christ; with whose blood, in proportion to their faith in Him, they anointed their houses, i.e., themselves, who believe on Him. The creation, which God created, Adam, was a house for the spirit, which proceeded from God. This injunction was temporary. God does not permit the lamb of the Passover to be sacrificed in any other place than where His Name was named. The days will come, after the suffering of Christ, when even the place in Jerusalem shall be given over to your enemies, and all the offerings shall cease. The lamb, which was commanded to be wholly roasted, was a symbol of the suffering of the cross which Christ would undergo. For the lamb, which is roasted, is roasted and dressed up in the form of the cross. For one spit is

[309] John Chrysostom, <u>Homilies on Matthew</u>, LXXXI, 3.
[310] Justin Martyr, <u>Dialog With Trypho,</u> 40.

transfixed right through from the lower parts up to the head, and one across the back, to which are attached the legs of the lamb".

Justin continued to say[311] that Christ was not cursed by the Law but that He delivered His people just like the blood of the lamb delivered Israel in Egypt.

> "The blood of the Passover, sprinkled on each man's doorposts and lintel, delivered those who were saved in Egypt, when the first-born of the Egyptians were destroyed. For the Passover was Christ, who was afterwards sacrificed, as also Isaiah said, 'He was led as a sheep to the slaughter' (Isaiah 53:7). And it is written that on the day of the Passover you seized Him, and that also during the Passover you crucified Him. And as the blood of the Passover saved those who were in Egypt, so also the blood of Christ will deliver from death those who have believed.

Athanasius identified[312] Pascha (Orthodox Easter) with Passover in a number of his Paschal letters, and applies all the imagery of Passover to modern Pascha.

> "Let us then, my beloved brethren, celebrate with thanksgiving the holy feast which now draws near to us, 'girding up the loins of our minds' (1 Peter 1:13), like our Savior Jesus Christ. Of Him it is written, 'Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His reins' (Isaiah 11:5). Each one of us having in his hand the staff which came out of the root of Jesse, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel (Isaiah 11:1, Ephesians 6:15), let us keep the feast. As Paul said, 'Not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8), reverently trusting that we are reconciled through Christ, and not departing from faith in Him. Nor do we defile ourselves together with heretics, and strangers to the truth, whose conversation and whose will degrade them. But rejoicing in afflictions, we break through the furnace of iron and darkness, and pass, unharmed, over that terrible Red Sea".

Irenaeus of Lyons stated[313] that the details of the Passion of Christ had been foretold by Moses. There were a great many details specified about what was going to happen and what it would all mean.

> "It would be endless to recount the occasions on which the Son of God was shown forth by Moses. Of the day of His passion, he was not ignorant; but foretold Him, after a figurative manner. By the name given to the Passover; and at that festival, which had been proclaimed such a long time previously by Moses, our Lord suffered, thus fulfilling the Passover. Moses did not describe the day only, but the place also, and the time of day at which the sufferings ceased, and the sign of the setting of the sun. 'You may not sacrifice the Passover within any other of your cities which the Lord God gives you; but in the place which the Lord your God shall choose that His name be called on there, you shall sacrifice the Passover at even, towards the setting of the sun'" (Deuteronomy 16:5-6).
>
> "Already he had declared His advent, 'There shall not fail a chief in Judah, nor a leader from his loins, until He comes for whom it is laid up, and He is the hope of the nations. Binding His foal to the vine, and His donkey's colt to the

[311] Justin Martyr, Dialog with Tyrpho, 111.
[312] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter III, 5.
[313] Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies IV, x, 1-2.

creeping ivy, He shall wash His stole in wine, and His upper garment in the blood of the grape. His eyes shall be more joyous than wine and His teeth whiter than milk' (Genesis 49:10-12 LXX). Let those who have the reputation of investigating everything, inquire at what time a prince and leader failed out of Judah, who is the hope of the nations, who is the vine, why was the donkey's colt referred to as His, what was the clothing, and what were the joyous eyes, what was the white teeth, and what the wine. Let them investigate every one of the points mentioned; and they shall find that there was none other announced than our Lord, Christ Jesus. Wherefore Moses, when chiding the ingratitude of the people, said, 'O foolish and unwise people, is this how you repay the Lord' (Deuteronomy 32:6). And again, he indicates that He who from the beginning founded and created them, the Word, who also redeems and enlivens us in the last times, is shown as hanging on the tree, and they will not believe on Him. For he says, 'Your life shall be hanging before your eyes, and you will not believe your life' (Deuteronomy 28:66). Again, 'Has not this same one your Father bought you, and made you, and created you?" (Deuteronomy 32:6)

Athanasius continued[314] to exhort his people that some keep the Feast by just going through the motions. The Apostle Paul as well as Moses reproves them such that, by doing this, the Feast becomes just "a feast of the Jews" (John 6:4) and not the real Pascha.

> "For that God who brought Israel out of Egypt, even He at this time calls us to the Feast, saying by Moses, 'Observe the month of new fruits, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 16:1). And by the prophet He said, 'Keep your Feasts, O Judah; pay to the Lord your vows' (Nahum 1:15). If then God Himself loves the Feast, and calls us to it, it is not right, my brethren, that it should be delayed, or observed carelessly. But with zeal we should come to it, so that having begun joyfully here, we may also receive an earnest of that heavenly Feast. For if we diligently celebrate the Feast here, we shall doubtless receive the perfect joy which is in heaven, as the Lord says, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, that I will not eat it until it is fulfilled with you in the kingdom of God' (Luke 22:15-16). Now we eat it if, understanding the reason of the Feast, and acknowledging the Deliverer, we conduct ourselves in accordance with His grace. As Paul said, 'So that we may keep the Feast, not with old leaven neither with the leaven of wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8). For the Lord died in those days, that we should no longer do the deeds of death. He gave His life, that we might preserve our own from the snares of the devil. And, what is most wonderful, the Word became flesh, that we should no longer live in the flesh, but in spirit should worship God, who is Spirit. He who is not so disposed, abuses the days, and does not keep the Feast, but like an unthankful person finds fault with the grace, and honors the days overmuch, while he does not supplicate the Lord, Who in those days redeemed him. Let him by all means hear, though fancying that he keeps the Feast, the Apostolic voice reproving him, 'You observe days, and months, and times, and years; I fear lest I have labored among you in vain' (Galatians 4:10-11). For the Feast is not on account of the days; but for the Lord's sake, who then suffered for us, we celebrate it, for 'our Passover Christ, is sacrificed' (1 Corinthians 5:7). Even as

[314] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 1-3.

> Moses, when teaching Israel not to consider the Feast as pertaining to the days, but to the Lord, said, 'It is the Lord's Passover' (Exodus 12:11). To the Jews when they thought they were keeping the Passover, because they persecuted the Lord, the Feast was useless. It no longer bore the name of the Lord, even according to their own testimony. It was not the Passover of the Lord, but that of the Jews (John 6:4). The Passover was named after the Jews, my brethren, because they denied the Lord of the Passover. On this account, the Lord, turning away His face from such a doctrine of theirs, said, 'Your new moons and your Sabbaths My soul hates' (Isaiah 1:14). So now, those who keep the Passover in like manner, the Lord again reproves, as He did those lepers that were cleansed (Luke 17:15ff). He loved the one as thankful, but was angry with the others as ungrateful, because they did not acknowledge their Deliverer, but thought more of the cure of the leprosy than of Him who healed them".

Again Athanasius spoke[315] of the Passover that we should not keep the Feast after an earthly manner, but with the angels in heaven. This includes the forty-day fast – akin to the forty years – to be purified and freed from defilement.

> "Wherefore let us not celebrate the Feast after an earthly manner, but as keeping festival in heaven with the angels. Let us glorify the Lord, by chastity, by righteousness, and other virtues. And let us rejoice, not in ourselves, but in the Lord, that we may be inheritors with the saints. Let us keep the Feast then, as Moses. Let us watch like David who rose seven times, and in the middle of the night gave thanks for the righteous judgments of God. Let us be early, as he said, 'In the morning I will stand before You, and You will look upon me; in the morning You will hear my voice' (Psalm 5:3). Let us fast like Daniel (Daniel 9:3); let us pray without ceasing, as Paul commanded (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Let all of us recognize the season of prayer, but especially those who are honorably married; so that having borne witness to these things, and thus having kept the Feast, we may be able to enter into the joy of Christ in the kingdom of heaven. But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement. So that when we depart hence, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber (Luke 14:15) with the Lord, to sup with Him; and may be partakers of the joy which is in heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days".

Also taking place on the Day of the Lord's Passover was the mystery of the Lord's Supper. This occurred just at the beginning of the 14th of Nisan, after sundown. See Appendix F for the time schedule. In the upper room where Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples, "as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My body'. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28). In doing this when the Church meets around the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 10:21), we celebrate the Lord's Passover, and we are delivered from the destroyer (Exodus 12:23, 1 Corinthians 10:10), just like what happened to Israel in Egypt.

[315] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 12.

Athanasius of Alexandria identified[316] Pascha[317] with Passover. We keep the Feast just like they were commanded to do: with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth.

> "Let us then, my beloved brethren, celebrate with thanksgiving the holy feast which now draws near to us, 'girding up the loins of our minds' (1 Peter 1:13), like our Savior Jesus Christ. Of Him it is written, 'Righteousness shall be the belt of His waist, and faithfulness the straps of His reins' (Isaiah 11:5). Each one of us having in his hand the staff which came out of the root of Jesse, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel (Isaiah 11:1, Ephesians 6:15), let us keep the feast. As Paul said, 'We keep the Feast not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8), reverently trusting that we are reconciled through Christ, and not departing from faith in Him. Nor do we defile ourselves together with heretics, and strangers to the truth, whose conversation and whose will degrade them. But rejoicing in afflictions, we break through the furnace of iron and darkness, and pass, unharmed, over that terrible Red Sea".

Athanasius continued[318] that Pascha (Passover) should not be observed carelessly but with the zeal and joy of a heavenly Feast that will be fulfilled at the Second Coming. The Lord died that we should no longer do the deeds of death; He became flesh that we should no longer live in the flesh, but worship in spirit God who is Spirit. He who does not abuses the days, does not keep the Feast, and like an unthankful person finds fault with Grace.

> "God, who brought Israel out of Egypt, at this time calls us to the feast, saying by Moses, 'Observe the month of new fruits, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 16:1). By Nahum He said, 'Keep your feasts, O Judah; pay to the Lord your vows' (Nahum 1:15). If then God Himself loves the feast, and calls us to it, it is not right, my brethren, that it should be delayed, or observed carelessly. But with alacrity and zeal we should come to it, so that having begun joyfully here, we may also receive a foretaste of that heavenly feast. For if we diligently celebrate the feast here, we shall doubtless receive the perfect joy which is in heaven, as the Lord says, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say to you, that I will not eat it until it is fulfilled with you in the kingdom of God' (Luke 22:15-16). Now we eat it if, understanding the reason for the feast, and acknowledging the Deliverer, we conduct ourselves in accordance with His grace. Paul said, 'So that we may keep the Feast, not with old leaven neither with the leaven of wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8). For the Lord died in those days, that we should no longer do the deeds of death. He gave His life, that we might preserve our own from the snares of the devil. And, what is most wonderful, the Word became flesh, that we should no longer live in the flesh, but in spirit should worship God, who is Spirit. He who is not so disposed, abuses the days, and does not keep the feast, but like an unthankful person finds fault with the grace, and honors the days overmuch, while he does not supplicate the Lord, Who in those days redeemed him. Let him by all means hear, though fancying that he keeps the feast, the Apostolic voice reproving him, 'Ye observe days, and months, and times, and years; I fear test I have labored among you in vain'

[316] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, III, 5.
[317] Pascha means "Passover" in Greek, and Pascha is the Feast Day that the Western world calls "Easter".
[318] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VI, 1-3.

(Galatians 4:10-11). For the feast is not on account of the days; but for the Lord's sake, who then suffered for us, we celebrate it, for 'our Passover Christ, is sacrificed' (1 Corinthians 5:7). Even as Moses, when teaching Israel not to consider the feast as pertaining to the days, but to the Lord, said, 'It is the Lord's Passover' (Exodus 12:11). To the Jews when they thought they were keeping the Passover, because they persecuted the Lord, the feast was useless. It no longer bore the name of the Lord, even according to their own testimony. It was not the Passover of the Lord, but that of the Jews (John 6:4). The Passover was named after the Jews, my brethren, because they denied the Lord of the Passover. On this account, the Lord, turning away His face from such a doctrine of theirs, said, 'Your new moons and your Sabbaths My soul hates' (Isaiah 1:14). Those who keep the Passover in like manner, the Lord again reproves, as He did those lepers who were cleansed (Luke 17:15ff), when He loved the one as thankful, but was angry with the others as ungrateful, because they did not acknowledge their Deliverer, but thought more of the cure of the leprosy than of Him who healed them".

Athanasius urged[319] us not to celebrate the Feast in an earthly manner, but as keeping festival in heaven with the angels. He urged watching like David, fasting like Daniel and praying like Paul. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem.

"Let us glorify the Lord, by chastity, by righteousness, and other virtues. And let us rejoice, not in ourselves, but in the Lord, that we may be inheritors with the saints. Let us keep the feast then, as Moses. Let us watch like David who rose seven times, and in the middle of the night gave thanks for the righteous judgments of God. Let us be early, as he said, 'In the morning I will stand before You, and You will look upon me; in the morning You will hear my voice' (Psalm 5:3). Let us fast like Daniel (Daniel 9:3); let us pray without ceasing, as Paul commanded (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Let all of us recognize the season of prayer, but especially those who are honorably married; so that having borne witness to these things, and thus having kept the Feast, we may be able to enter into the joy of Christ in the kingdom of heaven. But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement. So that when we depart this life, having been careful with fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber (Luke 14:15) with the Lord, to sup with Him; and may be partakers of the joy which is in heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days".

Athanasius continued to say[320] that the Feast of Passover is no longer of the Jews: it is ours. The shadows are abolished and the new things are here. The heathen and the Jews pretend to keep festival, but the Lord hates their festivities since they are hypocritical and impious. The Jews pretend to keep the Passover, but joy and gladness is taken from their mouth.

"This is the season of the Feast, my brethren. It is near; being not now proclaimed by trumpets, as the history records (Numbers 10:1-10, 29:1), but being brought near to us by Christ, Who suffered on our behalf and rose again, as Paul

[319] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VI, 12.
[320] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIX, 1-2.

preached, ‘Our Passover, Christ, is sacrificed’ (1 Corinthians 5:7). Now the feast of the Passover is ours, not that of a stranger, nor is it any longer of the Jews. The time of shadows is abolished, and those former things have ceased. Now the month of new things is at hand, in which every man should keep the Feast, in obedience to Him who said, ‘Observe the month of new things, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God’ (Deuteronomy 16:1). Even the heathen fancy they keep festival, and the Jews hypocritically pretend to do so. But the Feast of the heathen He reproves, as the bread of mourners, and He turns His face from that of the Jews, as being outcasts, saying, ‘Your new moons and your Sabbaths My soul hates’” (Isaiah 1:14).

“For actions not done lawfully and piously, are not of advantage, though they may be reputed to be so, but they rather argue hypocrisy in those who venture upon them. Therefore, although such persons pretend to offer sacrifices, yet they hear from the Father, ‘Your whole burnt offerings are not acceptable, and your sacrifices do not please Me; and although you bring fine flour, it is vanity, incense also is an abomination unto Me’ (Isaiah 1:13). For God does not need anything; and, since nothing is unclean to Him, He has had enough in regard to them, as He testifies, by Isaiah, saying, ‘I have had enough’ (Isaiah 1:11). Now there was a Law given about these things, for the instruction of the people, and to prefigure things to come, for Paul says to the Galatians; ‘Before faith came, we were kept guarded under the Law, being shut up in the faith which should afterwards be revealed unto us. The Law was our instructor in Christ, that we might be justified by faith’ (Galatians 3:23-24). But the Jews didn’t know or understand, therefore they walked in the daytime as in darkness, feeling for, but not touching, the truth we possess, which was contained in the Law; conforming to the letter, they did not submit to the spirit. When Moses was veiled, they looked on him, but turned away their faces from him when he was uncovered. They did not know what they read, but erroneously substituted one thing for another. Jeremiah cried against them, saying, ‘falsehood and not faithfulness has prevailed upon the earth’ (Jeremiah 9:3 LXX). The Lord therefore said concerning them, ‘The strange children have lied to Me; the strange children have grown old’ (Psalm 18:44-45 LXX). How gently He reproved them, saying, ‘Had you believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me’ (John 5:46). But being faithless, they went on to deal falsely with the Law, affirming things after their own pleasure, but not understanding the Scripture. As they had hypocritically made a pretense of the plain text of Scripture, and had confidence in this, He was angry with them, saying, ‘Who has required these of your hands?’ (Isaiah 1:12) Since they were very bold, he threatens, ‘Gather together your whole burnt offerings with your sacrifices, and eat flesh. For I spoke not to your fathers, nor commanded them in the day that I brought them out of the land of Egypt, concerning whole burnt offerings and sacrifices’ (Jeremiah 7:21-22). They did not act rightly, neither was their zeal according to Law, but they rather sought their own pleasure in such days, beating down their servants, and gathering themselves together for quarrels. They beat up the lowly, and did all things that tended to their own gratification. For this cause, they continue without a feast until the end, although they make a display now of eating flesh, out of place and out of season. Instead of the legally appointed lamb, they have learned to sacrifice to Baal. Instead of the true unleavened bread, ‘they collect the wood,

> and their fathers kindle the fire. And their wives prepare the dough, that they may make cakes to the host of heaven, and pour out libations to strange gods, that they may provoke Me to anger, says the Lord' (Jeremiah 7:18). They have the just reward of such devices; although they pretend to keep the Passover, joy and gladness is taken from their mouth. As Jeremiah says, 'There has been taken away from the cities of Judah, and the streets of Jerusalem, the voice of those who are glad, and the voice of those who rejoice; the voice of the bridegroom, and the voice of the bride' (Jeremiah 7:34). Therefore now, 'he, who among them sacrifices an ox, is as he who smites a man, and he who sacrifices a lamb is as he who kills a dog. He that offers fine flour is as if he offered swine's blood. He that gives frankincense for a memorial, is as a blasphemer' (Isaiah 66:3). Now these things will never please God, neither thus has the Word required of them. But He continues (Isaiah 66:3), 'These have chosen their own ways; and their abominations are what their soul delights in".

Also taking place on the Day of the Lord's Passover was the mystery of the Lord's Supper. In the upper room where Jesus ate the Last Supper with His disciples, "as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to His disciples and said, 'Take, eat, this is My body'. Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, 'Drink from it, all of you. For this is My blood of the New Covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:26-28). In doing this when the Church meets around the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 10:21), we celebrate the Lord's Passover, and we are delivered from the destroyer (Exodus 12:23, 1 Corinthians 10:10), just like it happened to Israel in Egypt.

Athanasius stated[321] that the Lord Himself had a great desire to keep the Passover; we should have this desire also. They ate it then ready to move out; so do we. Instead of a staff, we have Christ; instead of unleavened bread, we have the Eucharist; instead of sandals, we have the preparation of the Gospel. Christ is calling us to this!

> "I wish to remind you, and myself with you, that the command asks us to come to the Paschal Feast not profanely and without preparation, but with sacramental and doctrinal rites, and prescribed observances. We learn from the historical account, 'A man who is of another nation, or bought with money, or uncircumcised, shall not eat the Passover' (Exodus 12:43-48). Neither should it be eaten in 'any' house, but He commands it to be done in haste; inasmuch as before we groaned and were made sad by the bondage to Pharaoh, and the commands of the task-masters. When the people of Israel acted in this way, they were counted worthy to receive the type, which existed for the sake of this feast. The Word of God said to His disciples, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you' (Luke 22:15). That is a wonderful account, for a man might have seen them as ready for a procession or a dance, and going out with staves, sandals, and unleavened bread. These things, which took place before in shadows, were typical; but now the Truth is near us, 'the Image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15), our Lord Jesus Christ, the true Light. Instead of a staff, He is our scepter; instead of unleavened bread, is the bread, which came down from heaven. Instead of sandals, He has furnished us with the preparation of the Gospel (Ephesians 6:15), and has guided us to His Father. If enemies afflict us and persecute us, He again, instead of Moses, will encourage us with better

[321] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIV, 3-4.

words, saying, 'Be of good cheer; I have overcome the wicked one' (John 16:33, 1 John 2:13). If after we have passed over the Red Sea, heat should bother us or some bitterness of the waters occur, the Lord will appear to us, imparting to us of His sweetness, and His life-giving fountain, saying, 'If any man thirst, let him come to Me and drink' (John 7:37). Why do we wait, and why do we delay, and not come with all eagerness and diligence to the feast, trusting that it is Jesus who called us?"

The Lord's Passover: Spiritual Application

Looking at the Lord's Passover from a general viewpoint, there are two parts that form a spiritual application for those who have eyes to see it, ears to hear it, and a heart to understand it (Isaiah 6:8-10). The Passover is all about God's passing over Israel in Egypt, delivering (saving) them from death. The reason Israel was passed over was because of the shed blood of the Passover Lamb.

Taking this same information today, one can apply, by faith, the already-shed blood of the Lamb of God to the door of his dwelling (that is, his heart or his life.) Since the Lamb of God was slain once for all, this Passover does not need to be repeated yearly, but merely done once (Hebrews 9:26-28, 1 Peter 3:18). In the same manner it was done only once in Egypt for each household, but afterward was done only in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:1-2) as a reminder of their salvation from Pharaoh.

Practically speaking, this implies that one can see his need to be saved. It is not just a ritual that can be done for good luck. Further, it also implies that the person accepting Jesus' blood on the door of his dwelling acknowledges Jesus to be his Lord and Messiah. And consequently, one enters into a relationship with Him by accepting His blood in this manner as a free gift of salvation from sins.

Simultaneously, when this is done, something else happens. According to Paul, when someone turns to the Lord in this manner, a veil is taken away (2 Corinthians 3:16). At the precise moment that Jesus Christ died on the cross, the veil in the Temple was ripped from top to bottom (Mark 15:38). This veil in the Temple (or in the portable temple, the tabernacle) stood between the Holy of Holies, where God dwelt (Exodus 25:22) and the Holy Place, where man dwelt as represented by the Levitical priesthood (Numbers 18). The Levitical priests did not have access to the Holy of Holies; only the High Priest did, and then only once a year (Leviticus 16:1, 2, 34).

John Chrysostom reminded[322] us how the Passover applies to us all. We have the blood of Christ, the Lamb of God, sprinkled on our souls to protect us from the Destroyer, who fears that blood because he understands the Lord's death.

> "Paul establishes many things incidentally, and is very full of thoughts. Such is the grace of The Spirit. He does not comprehend a few ideas with many words, but includes great thought in brevity of expressions. When discoursing about faith, he reminds us about the reality. 'Through faith', he says, 'Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest He that destroyed the first-born should touch them' (Hebrews 11:28). What is 'the sprinkling of blood'? A lamb was slain in every household, and the blood was smeared on the doorposts, and

[322] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 1.

this was a means of warding off the Egyptian destruction. If then the blood of a lamb preserved the Jews unhurt in the midst of the Egyptians, and under so great a destruction, much more will the blood of Christ save us, who have had it sprinkled not on the doorposts, but in our souls. Even now the Destroyer is going about in this depth of night; but let us be armed with that Sacrifice, where he calls the 'sprinkling' anointing. God has brought us out from Egypt, from darkness, from idolatry. Although what was done was nothing, what was achieved was great. What was done was blood; but what was achieved was salvation, and the stopping and preventing of destruction. The angel feared the blood; for he knew of what it was a Type; he shuddered, thinking on the Lord's death; therefore he did not touch the door-posts".

This is all being done for a much greater purpose than is at first perceived. Chrysostom stated[323] that a mystery is being kept for the salvation of the world.

> "Christ did not say, 'You know that after two days I am betrayed', but, 'You know that after two days is the Passover' (Matthew 26:2). What was done is a mystery and that a feast and celebration is being kept for the salvation of the world. With foreknowledge He suffered everything! As though this was sufficient consolation for them, He did not even say anything to them then about a resurrection. It was superfluous, after having discoursed so much about it, to speak of it again. Moreover, He shows that even His very passion is a deliverance from countless evils, having by the Passover reminded them of the ancient benefits in Egypt".

Athanasius of Alexandria stated[324] that the Orthodox celebration at Pascha imitates the life of Israel at Passover: baptism, fasting, prayer, discipline and good works ending in Jerusalem.

> "When we look on the confusion of heretics, we shall, with Moses, sing that great song[325] of praise, 'Let us sing to the Lord, for he is very greatly glorified' (Exodus 15:1). Thus, singing praises, and seeing that the sin which is in us has been thrown into the Red Sea, we pass over to the wilderness. Being first purified by the fast of forty days, by prayers, fasting, discipline, and good works, we shall be able to eat the holy Passover in Jerusalem."

Chrysostom tied[326] the mystery of the Passover to the mystery of the Lord's Table. The rites of the Mosaic Law ceased when Jesus instituted the Eucharist because the next day, He became the Passover Lamb that had been foretold. The blood of the Eucharist is a New Testament, replacing the Old Testament offerings. In order that His disciples wouldn't be offended at eating His flesh and drinking His blood, Jesus first did just that Himself.

> "Why can it have been that He ordained this sacrament then, at the time of the Passover? That you might learn from everything, both that He is the lawgiver of the Old Testament, and that the things there are foreshadowed because of these things. Therefore, where the type is, there He puts the truth".

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[323] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIX, 3.
[324] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, III, 5.
[325] The Song of Moses is used in the Orthodox Church for Holy Saturday as part of Christ's victory over death.
[326] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 1.

"That evening was a sure sign of the fullness of times, and that the things were now come to the end. He gave thanks, to teach us how we ought to celebrate this sacrament, to show that He came willingly to the passion, and to teach us whatever we may suffer to bear it thankfully, also suggesting good hopes. If the type was a deliverance from such bondage, how much more the truth will set the world free, and He will be delivered up for the benefit of our race. I would add that He didn't appoint the sacrament before this, but waited until the rites of the Law were to cease. Thus the chief of the Feast Days He brings to an end, moving them to another most awesome table. He said, 'Take, eat, This is my body, Which is broken for many' (1 Corinthians 11:24). How were they not confounded at hearing this? He had told them before many and great things touching this. He didn't establish it any more, for they had heard it sufficiently, but he speaks of the cause of His passion, namely, the taking away of sins. He calls it blood of a New Testament, that of the undertaking, the promise, the new Law. For this He undertook of old, and this comprises the Testament that is in the new Law. Like the Old Testament had sheep and bullocks, so this has the Lord's blood. He shows that He was soon to die; therefore He made mention of a Testament, and He reminded them of the former Testament, for that also was dedicated with blood. Again He tells the cause of His death, 'which is shed for many for the remission of sins' (Matthew 26:28). And He said, 'Do this in remembrance of me'. Do you see how He removes and draws them away from Jewish customs? Just as you did that in remembrance of the miracles in Egypt, so do this likewise in remembrance of Me. That was shed for the preservation of the firstborn; this is for the remission of the sins of the whole world. For, 'This', He said, 'is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins'".

"He said this to indicate that His passion and His cross are a mystery, again comforting His disciples. Like Moses said, 'This shall be to you for an everlasting memorial' (Exodus 12:14), so He said, 'in remembrance of Me', until I come. Therefore He said, 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover' (Luke 22:15), that is, to deliver to you the new rites, and to give a Passover, by which I am to make you spiritual. And He Himself drank of it! On hearing this, they might have said, 'Do we drink blood, and eat flesh?', and then be perplexed. When He began to speak about these things, many were offended (John 6:60-66). Therefore lest they should be troubled likewise, He first did this Himself, leading them to the calm participation of the mysteries. Therefore He Himself drank His own blood. Do we need to observe that other ancient rite also? By no means! For on this account He said, 'Do this', that He might withdraw them from the other. If the Lord's Table now works remission of sins, as it surely does work it, the other is now superfluous".

Athanasius also linked[327] the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord's Table. The Passover, like the Lord's Table, is heavenly food if we partake worthily.

"There is no one free from defilement, though his course may have been but one hour on the earth; Job, that man of surpassing fortitude, testifies to this. 'Who shall be pure from uncleanness? Not even one!' (Job 14:4 LXX) Let us pray that we may not eat the Passover unworthily, lest we be exposed to dangers. To those who keep the feast in purity, the Passover is heavenly food; but to those

[327] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, V, 5.

who observe it profanely and contemptuously, it is a danger and reproach. 'Whosoever shall eat and drink unworthily, is guilty of the death of our Lord' (1 Corinthians 11:27). Let us not merely proceed to perform the festal rites, but let us be prepared to draw near to the divine Lamb, and to touch heavenly food. Let us cleanse our hands; let us purify the body. Let us keep our whole mind from guile; not giving up ourselves to excess and to lusts, but occupying ourselves entirely with our Lord, and with divine doctrines. Being altogether pure (2 Peter 1:4), we may be able to partake of the Word".

THE FEAST OF UNLEAVENED BREAD

Most people know far more about the Lord's Passover than about the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Also there has been considerable lumping together in Hebrew tradition, mixing the Lord's Passover with the Feast of Unleavened Bread. They are not the same things.

The Scriptures spell them out as two distinct celebrations (Leviticus 23:4-8). They are, however, very definitely related.

As an introduction to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it is important to bear in mind that a Sabbath (i.e. a day that is declared a Sabbath) is very significant. The Lord took Sabbaths seriously and considered them very important. The Sabbaths were to be "a sign between Me and them that they might know that I the Lord sanctify them" (Exodus 31:16-17). The penalty for not keeping the Sabbath was death by stoning (Exodus 31:14-15). During the 40 years wandering in the wilderness, a man was stoned to death for so much as gathering sticks on the Sabbath (Numbers 15:32-36).

Therefore, one can be quite certain that if the Lord declares a Sabbath as part of one of the "set feasts", it is a significant and noteworthy event. And there is a reason for it.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread: Commemorating Event

In the year of the Exodus, the Feast of Unleavened Bread in its seven-day-long celebration spanned the Exodus of Israel from Egypt (Exodus 12:15ff). It began with the eating of the Passover lamb on the night of the 14th Nisan (i.e., the beginning of the 15th Nisan), and ended on the 21st of Nisan with the crossing of the Red Sea. There are six significant things concerning this Feast as mentioned in the Scripture.

Sabbath of the 15th Nisan**.**

On this day, beginning in the evening and going on all night, the nation of Israel was to eat the roasted Passover lamb "with your loins girded, your sandals on your feet, and your staff in your hand; you shall eat it in haste" (Exodus 12:11). This they did as they left Egypt (Exodus 12:51). So then, the first Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread commemorates (a) eating, and (b) leaving.

The Events Between the Two Sabbaths**.**

The Second significant thing about the Feast of Unleavened Bread is what happened between the two Sabbaths. According to the record (Exodus 13:17-22), God, Himself, was going before the Nation of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night. This is the first

time in the history of the people of God that God, Himself, physically led His people where He wanted them to go. Paul makes some very interesting statements concerning this week of Unleavened Bread and following: He said that all the people were baptized into Moses in both the cloud and in the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). More will be said about this under "Spiritual Application."

Eating the Unleavened Bread.

The third significant thing about the Feast of Unleavened Bread is naturally the eating of unleavened bread. Unleavened bread was eaten because the nation of Israel left Egypt in haste, on short notice, and didn't have time to leaven it (Exodus 12:39). Unleavened bread is later called "the bread of affliction" (Deuteronomy 16:3) because it was supposed to remind them of their affliction in Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:7). We might note that the texture of unleavened bread, being tougher than and not as tasty as leavened bread, might imply some kind of "hardship."

The Reminder.

The fourth significant thing about the Feast of Unleavened Bread is what the Scripture says the Feast was supposed to be to the people by way of reminder, and by way of instruction for one's children. The Lord said that the Feast should serve as "a sign to you on your hand and as a reminder on your forehead" of two things. (a) Recollection of their deliverance (or salvation); that is, how the Lord with a strong hand brought them out of Egypt, (b) Walking accordingly; that is, that "the Law of the Lord may be in your mouth" (Exodus 13:8-9; Deuteronomy 16:3).

Prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, there was a concerted effort to rid every trace of leaven from their houses in obedience to the Scriptures. "For seven days no leaven shall be seen with you in all your territory" (Deuteronomy 16:3-4). This resulted in a thorough cleaning and inspection of each household in order that some leaven might not be overlooked.

Redemption and Sanctification.

The fifth significant thing is the redemption and sanctification of the first-born for the Lord. From the time of Abraham, Abraham and his descendants enjoyed a special relationship with the Lord (Genesis 15:1-7, 13-14, 17:1-14). When Israel was enslaved in Egypt, the Lord made it clear to Moses that the relationship between Himself and Israel was that of a father and a firstborn son (Exodus 4:22). Pharaoh's firstborn came into the picture when, through the hardness of his heart, he wouldn't let God's firstborn go. Therefore, the Lord said He would kill Pharaoh's firstborn (Exodus 4:23). From this, Israel was to learn "how the Lord makes a distinction between Egypt and Israel" (Exodus 11:7).

The Sabbath of the 21st Nisan.

Although the Scripture doesn't explicitly say that this is the day of the crossing of the Red Sea, Hebrew tradition has always held such to be the case. Moreover, this would make good sense logically. The feast generally speaks of separation and purification. This will be shown in more detail later. Therefore, a complete and final separation of Israel from Egypt and the ways of Egypt fitly conclude the Feast of Unleavened Bread. On the other hand, if one maintains that the 21st of Nisan is not the day of the crossing of the Red Sea, then one is struck with an inconsistent (and thus logically untenable) position of the Lord declaring a Sabbath for absolutely no reason at all.

The crossing of the Red Sea was an extremely dramatic event. After Israel left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan, Pharaoh changed his mind again and went after them (Exodus 14:5-9). Led by 600 select chariots (plus 50,000 cavalry and 200,000 foot soldiers according to Josephus[328]), the Egyptians overtook the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Most maps of the Exodus place the Red Sea

[328] Joseph, Antiquities of the Jews, II, xv, 3.

crossing at the Northwest tip of the Red Sea where the Southern end of the Suez Canal now exists. At that time, the Red Sea narrowed down to about a 5-8 mile wide body of water. According to Josephus, Israel was trapped between the Red Sea, the mountains and the Egyptian army.

By faith, Israel passed through the Red Sea as on dry land (Hebrews 11:29). Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong East wind all night so that the waters were a wall[329] on their right and left (Exodus 14:21-22). Earlier that day, the pillar of cloud moved through their midst from in front of them to behind them to block the path of the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:19-20). Paul stated that because the Hebrews passed through the cloud and the sea that "all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2).

In looking at the geography of this region, the Red Sea runs almost North-South at every potential crossing site. Therefore, a wind blowing from the East (compare Exodus 10:19) could not, by itself, push the waters back. However, it would have helped considerably in drying out the ocean bottom to allow people to cross on "dry land". This dividing of the waters had to have had some additional supernatural help.

After the Hebrews crossed, the entire Egyptian army, led by Pharaoh, went in after them. However, "the Lord looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. That is, the Egyptians attempted to be baptized in the cloud and in the sea. He caused their chariot wheels to swerve and He made them drive with difficulty so the Egyptians said "let us flee from Israel, for the Lord is fighting for them against us" (Exodus 14:24-25). Too late! Just then Moses stretched his hand over the sea again and the waters returned to their normal state.

The waters returning to normal had the effect of a major tsanumi (or tidal wave). Josephus adds[330] that there was a tremendous electrical storm that occurred as the Egyptian army was on the dry sea bed. "As soon as the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind. Showers of rain also came down from the sky and dreadful thunder and lightning with flashes of fire. Thunder bolts also darted on them; nor was there anything which used to be sent by God upon men as indications of His wrath which did not happen at this time". Thus the Egyptian army was electrocuted as well as drowned. As John Chrysostom wrote[331], the faith of Moses went beyond human reasoning, weakness and lowliness.

As a result of the Exodus, Egypt was ruined. Her crops were non-existent because of the plagues and her livestock were decimated. Her army was totally eliminated and all the surrounding nations knew it (Joshua 2:9-10). This left Egypt open to be conquered and to be made slaves themselves by some conquering nation as they had enslaved the Hebrews.

Sometimes we also find ourselves in predicaments from which there appears to be no escape: such as Moses was trapped between the sea, the mountains and a powerful army.

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[329] See`also Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, II, ii, 21; Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4:20.

[330] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xvi, 3.

[331] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 2.

Sometimes the only solution may be the resolve of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego as they were about to be thrown into the furnace: the Lord can save us if He wills; but even if He does not, we will not bow to idolatry (Daniel 3:13-27).

These two Sabbaths in the Feast of Unleavened Bread can be seen as going together. On the first Sabbath, they were declared free, and left Egypt; but they weren't really free from the power of Egypt. On the second Sabbath, they were set free from the power of Egypt once and for all in a very dramatic manner.

The Feast of Unleavened Bread – In the Lives of the Disciples

Instead of titling this section "Prophetic Significance", it appears that it may have more meaning to follow each of the six significant points of the preceding section in relation to what was going through the minds of Jesus' disciples (that is, all the disciples and not just the Twelve.)

Sabbath of the 15th Nisan**.**

The beginning of the Sabbath of the 15th Nisan (refer to Appendix F throughout this section) was probably the most awesomely, soul-searching time that any of the young men and women had faced in their lives as yet. Their leader, whom they recognized as the Christ, Son of the Living God, and Savior of Israel (Matthew 16:16), had just been given a grossly unfair trial and was put to death. None other than the religious leaders of the country that they and their fathers had been taught to respect and trust did this. As the Sabbath began, their Lord and Christ had just been buried (Mark 15:42-46, Luke 23:54). At this point, "they did not understand the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:9). Just as if to add insult to injury, the religious leaders had gotten the Romans to post a guard at the tomb so that they couldn't even pay their last respects if they wanted to (Matthew 27:62-28:4).

It might be added at this point that when the disciples were huddled together in the upper room, in a way, they did so "with their loins belted, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in their hand" (Exodus 12:11). They were enough in fear of the religious leaders to be ready to run at a moment's notice. In a similar manner, Paul encouraged the Ephesians to "belt your waist with truth" (Ephesians 6:14).

Also, while huddled in the upper room, the "lamb" they were chewing over was the events of the last day or two (cf. Luke 24:15-21). They weren't eating their own Passover meal, because they'd already eaten it the night before, at their Lord's direction (Matthew 26:17-35, see Appendix F). The meal, or lack of it, that they had that evening, probably consisted solely of awesome, soul-searching discussions or foreboding centered around sincerity, truth, and "what-is-life-all-about" topics. This is the fulfillment of the "eating" and "leaving" mentioned in the preceding section.

Gregory the Theologian added[332] that we must do as Israel did of old regarding purification. We will not be able to leave Egypt or escape the destroyer unless we partake of the Passover with a desire for God.

> "What of the loins, or reins, for we must not pass these over? Let the purification take hold of these also. Let our waist be belted and kept in check by

[332] Gregory of Nazianzen, Oration on Holy Baptism, XL, 40.

continence, as the Law commanded Israel of old when partaking of the Passover. For no one comes out of Egypt purely, or escapes the Destroyer, except he who has disciplined these. Let the reins be changed by that good conversion by which they transfer all the affections to God. So that they can say, Lord, all my desire is before You, and the day of man I have not desired; for you must be a man of desires, but the desires must be those of the spirit".

The Events Between the Two Sabbaths.

So as they're huddled together in the upper room, where the Scripture records them as being for the 1st and 2nd appearance of post-resurrection Jesus to the eleven (John 21:19-24), outside, all around them, was a celebration going on. Jerusalem was crowded with people who had come from all over the earth to be here for this event (Deuteronomy 16:16). Outside, everyone was celebrating and recalling their deliverance (or salvation) by the Lord with a strong hand out of Egypt and at least going through rituals that were intended to keep "the Law of the Lord in their mouth" (Exodus 13:9). Most people were undoubtedly quite sincere in their celebrating, and probably thankful that the Lord had provided them the means to make the trip to Jerusalem this year. Ironically, virtually no one realized that they had just crucified the same Lord that led them out of Egypt (1 Corinthians 10:4) or that the real Passover Lamb had just been buried. We can see this from these same people's reaction when informed of such by Peter (Acts 2:14-42). And by therefore crucifying their deliverer (Messiah), they were breaking the Law of the Lord (in a most heinous way) that was supposed to be in their mouth especially at this time of year.

The disciples, huddled in the upper room, did not have a great deal of hope at this point. This changed when Jesus appeared to them in the evening after the 16th of Nisan (the beginning of the 17th of Nisan (See Appendix F). But if there is one thing they were aware of at this point, it's a cleavage between themselves and the rest of Israel. They were afraid that their religious leaders would do the same to them (under cover of darkness, of course!) as they did to their Lord (John 20:9). Although the disciples' eyes were somewhat blind and their hearts were somewhat hard with unbelief at what their Lord said He would do, (Luke 24:25; Mark 16:14) still, like it or not, they had just left their own little Egypt. Later on the disciples would realize that the Lord had made a distinction between "Israel" and "Egypt" (Galatians 6:16; Romans 9:6-8; comp. Exodus 11:7). "Egypt" here is used as an image of bondage to sin and is what Peter said when he spoke at Pentecost and exhorted the crowd to "be saved from this crooked generation" (Acts 2:40). The disciples, for sure, had seen the religious leaders for what they were (cf. Matthew 23) and they wanted no part of it. But they didn't as yet realize just what was in store for them as an alternative. Or rather they just didn't believe what their Lord had said just yet.

Eating the Unleavened Bread.

It might be added at this point that when the disciples were huddled together in the upper room, in a way, they did so "with their loins girded, their sandals on their feet, and their staff in their hand" (Exodus 12:11). They were enough in fear of the religious leaders to be ready to run at a moment's notice. In a similar manner, Paul encouraged the Ephesians to "belt your waist with truth" (Ephesians 6:14).

Eating unleavened bread during the Feast generally speaks of separation and purification. It speaks separation in that this was the time of leaving behind bondage and slavery in Egypt. It speaks purification in that unleavened bread (pure, without germ or leaven) is eaten throughout

the Feast. Paul speaks of this Feast as being a time of putting away an old leaven of malice and wickedness, and keeping the feast with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth (1 Corinthians 5:7-8). It has been mentioned how the disciples' separation had been affected. At this point, their purification is in process by virtue of their having to face their dilemma sincerely and realistically. Peter tried some of the old leaven on the Day of the Lord's Passover (i.e. His denial, Matthew 26:69-75), before the Lord was crucified. He didn't like it.

Additionally, this "unleavened bread" of sincerity and truth that the disciples were "chewing over" was easily a "bread of affliction." They had had their differences and confrontations with the religious leaders simply by being associated with Jesus, but they never had to be afraid to walk the streets at night for fear of crucifixion like they did that week of Unleavened Bread.

John Chrysostom commented[333] on this to say that a belt around the waist is a foundation for the body when working, running and fighting. Spiritually this refers to someone who has tightened up his life, is not given over to lust, and has control of his thoughts.

> "'Stand therefore,' says he, 'having belted your hips with truth'. He is not speaking of a literal, physical belt; all the language in this passage he employs in a spiritual sense. And observe how methodically he proceeds. First he tightens his soldier's belt? What then is the meaning of this? The man that is loose in his life, and is dissolved in his lusts, and that has his thoughts trailing on the ground, him he braces up by means of this belt. He does not allow him to be impeded by the garments entangling his legs, but leaves him to run with his feet free. 'Stand therefore, having belted your loins', says he. By the "loins" here he means this: just what the keel is in ships, the same are the loins with us the basis or groundwork of the whole body. They are, as it were, a foundation, and upon them as the schools of the physicians tell you, the whole frame is built. In 'belting the loins' he compacts the foundation of our soul. He is not speaking of these loins of our body, but is discoursing spiritually; as the loins are the foundation alike of the parts both above and below, so is it also in the case of these spiritual loins. We know, when persons are fatigued, they put their hands on their loins as if upon a sort of foundation, and in that manner support themselves. It is for this reason that the belt is used in war that it may bind and hold together this foundation in our frame. For this reason also when we run we have our belt tightened. This guards our strength. Let this then be done also with respect to the soul; then in doing anything we shall be strong; and it is a thing most especially becoming to soldiers.

Israel was commanded to eat the Passover lamb with their loins girded, with their sandals on their feet, and with their staff in their hand (Exodus 12:11). John Chrysostom stated[334] that we need to be ready for our Exodus at any moment as we prepare for our death. Leaving our Egypt, we live as travelers on a journey, where our citizenship is in heaven. We face a desert without virtue in our life on earth, filled with snakes and scorpions in the form of demons. Yet our leader is not just Moses, but Christ.

> "Why did Israel eat the Passover with their loins girded? They had their belt on their waist, their staff in their hands, and their shoes on their feet; thus they

[333] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII.
[334] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, Moral.

ate the Passover. These are awesome mysteries, and of vast depth. They came out of Egypt; they ate the Passover. 'Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us' (1 Corinthians 5:7). Why did they have their belt on their waist? Their appearance is that of travelers; having shoes and staves in their hands and eating standing declares this. The Jews were continually forgetting God's benefits to them. Accordingly then, God tied the sense of His benefits, not only to the time, but also to the habit of those that were to eat. This is why they were to eat with belt and sandals on, that when they were asked the reason, they might say, 'we were ready for our journey, we were just about to leave Egypt to the land of promise and we were ready for our Exodus'. This then is the historical type. But the reality is this; we too eat a Passover, even Christ; for 'our Passover has been sacrificed, even Christ' (1 Corinthians 5:7). We too ought to eat it, that we too may be ready for our Exodus".

"Let no one that eats this Passover look towards Egypt, but towards Heaven, towards 'the Jerusalem that is above' (Galatians 4:26). On this account you eat with your belt tightened and your shoes on your feet, that you may know, that from the moment you first begin to eat the Passover, you ought to set out, and to be on your journey. This implies two things: that we must depart from Egypt, and that, while we stay, we must stay as in a strange country. 'For our citizenship is in Heaven' (Philippians 3:20); and that our whole life long we should be prepared. So that when we are called we may not put it off, but say, 'My heart is fixed'. (Psalm 108:1). Some might feel that Paul, who knew nothing against himself, could say this; but those like me, who require a long time for repentance, cannot say it. Yet being belted is the part of a waking soul; listen to what God says to righteous Job, 'Belt up your waist like a man, for I will ask of you, and you speak to Me' (Job 38:3). The Lord said this to all the prophets and again to Moses. He Himself appeared to Ezekiel belted (Ezekiel 9:11 LXX). The angels also appear to us belted (Revelation 15:6), as being soldiers. From our being belted, it comes that we also stand bravely. We are going to depart, and many are the difficulties that intervene. When we have crossed this plain, immediately the devil is on us, doing everything, contriving every trick. Those who have been saved out of Egypt, those who have passed the Red Sea, those who are delivered from the evil demons, and from unnumbered plagues, may be taken and destroyed by him. But, if we are vigilant, we too have a pillar of fire, the grace of the Spirit. The same both enlightens and overshadows us. We have manna; actually far more than manna. We have spiritual drink, not water that springs from the Rock. We also have our encampment (Revelation 20:9), and we dwell in a desert; for a desert without virtue is the earth, even more desolate than that wilderness. Why was that desert so terrible? Because it had scorpions and adders (Deuteronomy 8:15)! 'A land which no one passed through' (Jeremiah 2:6). Yet that wilderness is not so barren of fruit, as is this human nature. How many scorpions, how many asps are in this wilderness; how many snakes, how many 'offspring of vipers' (Matthew 3:7) are these through whom we pass! Yet let us not be afraid; for the leader of this our Exodus is not Moses, but Jesus".

The Reminder.

The Feast was supposed to be a reminder, and instruction for one's children of two things. (a) Recollection of their deliverance (or salvation); that is, how the Lord with a strong

hand brought them out of Egypt, (b) Walking accordingly; that is, that "the Law of the Lord may be in your mouth" (Exodus 13:8-9; Deuteronomy 16:3). Prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, there was a concerted effort to rid every trace of leaven from their houses in obedience to the Scriptures.

Between the two Sabbaths of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the disciples experienced being led by God in a new way. At the Exodus, Israel was led by God personally (according to I Corinthians 10:4 they were led by Christ). The disciples had been led by Christ before, but the Jesus they knew had humbled and emptied Himself (Philippians 2:6-8; John 6:62) to the point that they barely recognized Him in His now glorified form (John 20:14-16, 21:1-7; Luke 24:15 ff.). When He first appeared to the eleven huddled in the upper room, they were startled and terrified (Luke 24:36-43). Now, for the first time, they were face to face with the Christ of the cloud and the pillar — the Christ before He humbled Himself. Three of the twelve had seen this Jesus in a radiant state earlier at the transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-8, Mark 9:2-8, Luke 9:28-36), but it was not quite like this. There Jesus' face and clothing became radiant white much as Moses' face had been when he was on the mountain (Exodus 34:29-35). The difference between then and now is that then they were all overshadowed by the cloud, terrifying Peter, James and John. Here Christ *is* the cloud who teleports Himself at will and passes through solid walls (John 20:19). Physically He does not appear shaped like a cloud as He did then; but He is the same God (1 Corinthians 10:1-4).

Redemption and Sanctification.

A major issue was the redemption and sanctification of the first-born for the Lord. From the time of Abraham, Abraham and his descendants enjoyed a special relationship with the Lord (Genesis 15:1-7, 13-14, 17:1-14). When Israel was enslaved in Egypt, the Lord made it clear to Moses that the relationship between Himself and Israel was that of a father and son, even a firstborn (Exodus 4:22).

Within Israel, the firstborn of each family was to be sanctified or set aside for a special purpose. This was first instituted shortly after the death of Pharaoh's firstborn (Exodus 13:2, Numbers 3:13, 8:17). With regard to this "special purpose", the firstborn was to be the Lord's; later one discovers that what God had in mind was for the firstborn of every family to minister to Him as a priest (Numbers 3:12, 8:15-16, Exodus 19:5-6). However, because of the unfaithfulness of the firstborn (along with everyone else), and due to the faithful response of the tribe of Levi at the time of the incident involving the golden calf, God chose the Levites to be priests instead of the firstborn (Exodus 32:26-29, Numbers 3:12-13, 40-48, 8:14-19).

Among the firstborn, each was to be redeemed whether man or beast. The firstborn of clean animals instead of being redeemed were offered as a sacrifice (Numbers 18:15-17). All this speaks of some aspect of the work of Christ, Who is the firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29).

The Sabbath of the 21st Nisan.

Nothing at all is mentioned in the New Testament as having occurred on the 21st of Nisan, the second Sabbath of this Feast. Almost exclusively, what is mentioned in the New Testament concerning the period from the Resurrection to the Ascension is the appearances of Jesus to various people and events leading up to such. In Figure 3, all these appearances are listed, excluding Ascension Day. What we know is that (1) the Twelve were baptized into a

baptism of repentance by John the Baptist 3 1/2 years ago; (2) on the beginning of the 17th of Nisan at evening, this year, Jesus Christ breathed on the ten (excluding Thomas) in the upper room. There they "received the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22). (3) On Pentecost, 43 days after the second Sabbath they were all "filled with the Holy Spirit" and began speaking in other tongues such that all the foreigners in town heard the disciples speak in their own native language (Acts 2:4 ff.). (4) Following Peter's sermon on Pentecost, the 3,000 converts were admonished to "repent and be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of sins" (Acts 2:38).

Although nothing happened on the 21st of Nisan in the lives of the Disciples, the events of the original 21st of Nisan has come to speak of Baptism as a necessity for the Church to free us from the power of sin. This will be addressed more in the next section.

If one looks ahead to the Feast of Tabernacles, one will note that the second Sabbath of the Feast of Tabernacles occurs almost 6 months to the day after the second Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Since there is no obvious fulfillment of the second Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, its fulfillment evidently will occur at the end times. Since the Feast of Tabernacles refers to the time of the Second Coming of Christ, the second Sabbath of Unleavened Bread could refer to something that precedes the Second Coming. John referred to "two witnesses" who were described as doing very spectacular things that led up to the purification and separation of the people of God from those allied with the devil. These witnesses began to act in this way 3 years and 6 months prior to the Second Coming (Revelation 11:1-12). Thus one possible meaning for the second Sabbath, the 21st of Nisan, is the beginning of the times of great affliction, where the people of God begin to eat "the bread of affliction" in a new way. These times lead up to the day when the people of God will be freed from the power of the devil forever.

FIGURE 3
APPEARANCES OF JESUS AFTER THE RESURRECTION

Appearance	To Whom	Day	Reference
1	Mary Magdalene	16 Nisan Early Morning	Mark 16:9, John 20:11-17
2	The Myrrh-Bearing Women: Virgin Mary, Mary Magdalene, Salome, Joanna, etc.	16 Nisan Early Morning	Matthew 28:8-10, Mark 16:8, Luke 24:9-10
3	Peter[335]	16 Nisan	Luke 24:34, 1 Corinthians 15:5
4	Cleopas and Luke on Road to Emmaeus	16 Nisan Afternoon	Mark 16:12-13, Luke 24:13-35
5	The Eleven Minus Thomas	17 Nisan Evening	Mark 16:14, Luke 24:36-49, John 20:19-24

[335] It is not known whether the appearance to Peter came before that to Cleopas and Luke, or if it occurred as Cleopas was walking (running?) back from Emmaeus. See Luke 24:33, 34.

6	The Eleven Including Thomas	24 Nisan Evening	John 20:24-29
7	Peter, Thomas, Nathanael, James, John, and Two Others While Fishing on Sea of Galilee	After 26 Nisan	John 21:1-24, esp. 21:14
8	The Eleven on a Mountain in Galilee	After 26 Nisan	Matthew 28:16-20
9	500 Brethren at Once	Before Pentecost	1 Corinthians 15:6
10	James	Before Pentecost	1 Corinthians 15:7

The Feast of Unleavened Bread – Spiritual Application

To see the Feast of Unleavened Bread in its spiritual application, it is important to remember what has just happened on the day of the Lord's Passover. The Passover Lamb (the Lamb of God, Jesus Christ) has just been slain; in the spiritual application, this fact has just been accepted or believed. The blood of this lamb has been applied to the door of one's dwelling; in the spiritual application, one's dwelling is his body; and is sometimes referred to as a tent (2 Corinthians 5:1-5). Therefore, believers are "passed over" and are not subject to the wrath of God (Romans 5:9). Moreover, since the veil in the Temple was ripped apart, the believers have access to the presence of God in the Holy of Holies, having been "presented before Him holy and blameless and beyond reproach" (Colossians 1:22).

But the life of the believer, or his walk with God does not end here. Egypt is often used metaphorically throughout the Scriptures as a picture of the bondage and slavery of sin (Deuteronomy 5:6, 7:8; Exodus 20:2). And just as the nation of Israel had to leave the land of Egypt (their place of bondage), so the new believer has to leave his place of bondage, whatever it may be. Different people have different kinds of bondage; some have it with fornication, others with debauchery, others with lying or various forms of deceit, etc. The point is to leave it.

There are times when the power behind the bondage tries to come after the new believer to bring him back to the bondage he's just left, very much as the armies of Pharaoh went after the Israelis. At this point, one should walk by faith and not by sight. Instead of crying out and desiring to go back to the bondage of Egypt as the Israelis did (Exodus 14:10-12), the thing to do is what Moses said: "Do not fear! Take your stand and **see the salvation of the Lord** which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever" (Exodus 14:13). What followed was the baptism of Israel in the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

In the spiritual application of the second Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, just as Moses called the baptism of Israel in the Red Sea: "The salvation of the Lord", so Peter says that "baptism now saves you -- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). Note that by baptism he does not mean merely removing dirt from the flesh (washing or dunking in water), but "an appeal to God for a good conscience." And should the power behind one's former bondage try to swallow up a believer after he has left his former bondage, appealing to the believer's new Lord and Master will get answered (1 Corinthians 10:11-13). For more

details on how the resurrection of Jesus Christ is involved, refer to the next chapter on the Day of First fruits (also refer to Romans 6:1-23).

The principle that is involved here is the destruction of the power of sin. If Egypt can be seen as representing the bondage and slavery of sin, then the armies of Pharaoh certainly represent the power of sin. At the baptism of the Israelis in the Red Sea, as at the baptism of a new believer, the power of sin is buried (cf. also 1 Corinthians 15:56; Romans 6:3-7, 14).

In short, what is happening here is that the baptism in the cloud is the "appeal to God for a good conscience," and the baptism in the Red Sea is the demonstration or burial that is customarily referred to as "baptism." Both are necessary!

John Chrysostom carried[336] this spiritual application one step further with regard to a desire to return to the Egypt of sin.

> "Not only does he remind them of the 'unleavened bread' (1 Corinthians 5:7-8), but also to point out the affinity of the Old Testament with the New; and to point out also that it was impossible, after the 'unleavened bread', again to enter into Egypt. But if any one chose to return, he would suffer the same things as did they. For those things were a shadow of these".

Regarding the removal of all traces of leaven from their houses, Chrysostom continued[337] to say that this represents instruction for us to clean up our lives.

> "Let us explain why the leaven is cast out of all their borders. What then is the hidden meaning? The believer must be freed from all iniquity. For as among them he perishes if he is found with old leaven, so also with us, whoever is found with iniquity. Since of course the punishment being so great in that case (Exodus 12:12-14), which is a shadow, in our case it cannot choose but be much greater. For if they so carefully clear their houses of leaven, and pry into mouse-holes; much more ought we to search through the soul so as to cast out every unclean thought".

Eating the Passover Lamb:

Eating the Passover lamb was the first thing the Israelis did once the Passover Lamb's blood had been shed, and it is the first thing the new believer does once he accepts God's pardon. God's pardon is the blood on the doorpost. It is given by God and is a free gift (Ephesians 2:8, Romans 5:15-19), and it is both a necessary and sufficient condition for God to pass over the new believer, delivering him from death (Romans 5:9). But, one might ask, what does the "eating" refer to?

Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29). Jesus stated that a person needs to eat His flesh in order to avoid death (John 6:49-51). It is important that the new believer do this right away. Because just as the Israelis needed some substantial nourishment to carry them in their journey out of Egypt, so the new believer needs some real "meat" for strength to get him "on his feet" and out of his bondage. Applying what Jesus said about this, He also said, "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). In other words, the "eating" is with one's heart, and the "digesting" is with one's mind.

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[336] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XV, 7.
[337] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XV, 8.

As the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is "eaten" (accepted, received) and "digested" (understood, sorted out), something different becomes apparent. If the new believer has the eyes to see, he can see his new Lord and Master begin to lead him, authoritatively, decisively away from his bondage toward the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, the Kingdom of God. Usually, there is a real excitement, rejoicing, and anticipation in a new believer's life around this time as he first sees "the movement of the pillar and the cloud," (i.e., the presence of God directing his life.)

Note that Paul mentions that, "Our fathers were under the cloud, and were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1). The cloud was out in front leading the way, yet they were "under" the authority of the cloud just as the new believer is now "under" the authority of his Lord. And as they were baptized into Moses, (Moses being the head of the Israeli nation is often representative of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church), the new believer is baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (along with the Father and the Spirit).

Eating the Unleavened Bread:

According to the Law, unleavened bread was to be eaten throughout each of the seven days of the feast. Anyone eating something leavened was to be cut off from the nation of Israel! From the seriousness of the penalty of eating leavened foodstuffs, one can see that eating unleavened bread is the *central issue* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Anyone who does not wish to comply is, in effect, saying that they do not want to partake of the things of the Kingdom of God. Paul writes to the Corinthians and mentions both the Lord's Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The "old leaven" which was to be cleaned out of one's dwelling (Exodus 12:19), which is spiritually, one's life or one's heart, is "malice and wickedness", whereas the unleavened bread of the feast is "sincerity and truth".

Israel was commanded to eat the Passover lamb with their loins belted, with their sandals on their feet, with their staff in their hand (Exodus 12:11). John Chrysostom stated[338] that we also look for our Exodus, and we need to be ready. Assisting us are the same forces that assisted Israel in her Exodus, and opposing us are the same forces that opposed them.

> "For why did they eat the Passover with their loins belted? They had, we read, their loins belted, and their staff in their hands, and their shoes on their feet, and thus they ate the Passover. Awful and terrible mysteries, and of vast depth; and if so terrible in the type, how much more in the reality? They came forth out of Egypt; they ate the Passover. Attend. 'Our Passover has been sacrificed, even Christ' (1 Corinthians 5:7). Why did they have their loins belted? Their guise is that of wayfarers; for their having shoes and staves in their hands and their eating standing, declares nothing else than this. The Jews were continually forgetting God's benefits to them. Accordingly then, God tied the sense of these, His benefits, not only to the time, but also to the very habit of them that were to eat. For this is why they were to eat belted and sandalled, that when they were asked the reason, they might say, 'we were ready for our journey, we were just about to go forth out of Egypt to the land of promise and we were ready for our exodus'. This then is the historical type. But the reality is this; we too eat a Passover, even Christ; 'for', says he, 'our Passover has been sacrificed, even Christ' (1

[338] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, Moral.

Corinthians 5:7). We too ought to eat it, both sandalled and belted. Why? That we too may be ready for our Exodus, for our departure hence".

"Let not any one of them that eat this Passover look towards Egypt, but towards Heaven, towards 'Jerusalem that is above' (Galatians 4:26). On this account you eat with your loins belted, on this account you eat with shoes on your feet, that you may know, that from the moment you first begin to eat the Passover, you ought to set out, and to be upon your journey. And this implies two things, both that we must depart out of Egypt, and that, while we stay, we must stay as in a strange country. 'For our citizenship is in Heaven' (Philippians 3:20); and that all our life long we should ever be prepared. So that when we are called we may not put it off, but say, 'My heart is fixed'. (Psalm 108:1). To be belted is the part of a waking soul, hearken to what God says to that righteous man, 'Gird up now your loins like a man, for I will ask you, and you answer Me' (Job 38:3). This He says also to all the prophets and this He says again to Moses, to be belted. And He Himself also appears to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:11 LXX) belted. And the Angels, too, appear to us belted (Revelation 15:6), as being soldiers. For we also are going to depart, and many are the difficulties that intervene. When we have crossed this plain, straightway the devil is upon us, doing everything, contriving every artifice. To the end that those who have been saved out of Egypt, those who have passed the Red Sea, those who are delivered at once from the evil demons, and from unnumbered plagues, may be taken and destroyed by him. But, if we are vigilant, we too have a pillar of fire, the grace of the Spirit. The same both enlightens and overshadows us. We have manna, yea rather not manna, but far more than manna. For spiritual drink we have not water that springs forth from the Rock. So have we too our encampment (Revelation 20:9), and we dwell in the desert even now; for a desert indeed without virtue, is the earth even now, even more desolate than that wilderness. Why was that desert so terrible? Was it not because it had scorpions in it, and adders (Deuteronomy 8:15)? 'A land', it is said, 'which none passed through' (Jeremiah 2:6). Yet that wilderness is not so barren of fruits as is this human nature. At this instant, how many scorpions, how many asps are in this wilderness, how many serpents, how many 'offspring of vipers' (Matthew 3:7) are these through whom we at this instant pass! Yet let us not be afraid; for the leader of this our Exodus is not Moses, but Jesus".

Gregory of Nazianzen added[339] to this aspect of eating the Passover with one's loins belted, saying that the purification must take hold of the reins of our life.

"And what of the loins, or reins, for we must not pass these over? Let the purification take hold of these also. Let our loins be belted and kept in check by continence, as the Law bade Israel of old, when partaking of the Passover! For no one comes out of Egypt purely, or escapes the Destroyer, except he who has disciplined these. And let the reins be changed by that good conversion by which they transfer all the affections to God. So that they can say, Lord, all my desire is before You, and the day of man have I not desired; for you must be a man of desires, but they must be those of the spirit".

Athanasius added[340] to this, saying that the Feast is an eternal and a heavenly Feast, not in shadows, but in truth. And we should treat it and prepare for it accordingly.

[339] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 40 on Holy Baptism, XL

"Therefore blessed Moses of old time ordained the great feast of the Passover, and our celebration of it, because Pharaoh was killed, and the people were delivered from bondage. For in those times, when those who tyrannized over the people had been slain, temporal feasts and holidays were observed in Judea (Esther 9:20-28, Judith 9:15). Now, however, that the devil, that tyrant against the whole world, is slain, we do not approach a temporal feast, my beloved, but an eternal and heavenly. Not in shadows do we show it forth, but we come to it in truth. For they being filled with the flesh of a dumb lamb, accomplished the feast, and having anointed their doorposts with the blood, implored aid against the destroyer. But now we, eating of the Word of the Father, and having the lintels of our hearts sealed with the blood of the New Testament (Matthew 26:28), acknowledge the grace given us from the Savior. He said, 'Behold, I have given unto you to tread upon serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy' (Luke 10:19). For no more does death reign; but instead of death henceforth is life, since our Lord said, 'I am the life' (John 14:6); so that everything is filled with joy and gladness; as it is written, 'The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice' (Psalm 97:1). For when death reigned, 'sitting down by the rivers of Babylon, we wept' (Psalm 137:1) and mourned, because we felt the bitterness of captivity; but now that death and the kingdom of the devil is abolished, everything is entirely filled with joy and gladness. And God is no longer known only in Judea, but in all the earth. 'Their voice has gone forth, and the knowledge of Him has filled all the earth' (Psalm 76:1, 19:4). What follows, my beloved, is obvious; that we should approach such a feast, not with filthy raiment, but having clothed our minds with pure garments. For we need in this to put on our Lord Jesus, that we may be able to celebrate the feast with Him. Now we are clothed with Him when we love virtue and are enemies to wickedness; when we exercise ourselves in temperance and mortify lasciviousness. Also when we love righteousness before iniquity; when we honor sufficiency and have strength of mind; when we do not forget the poor but open our doors to all men; when we assist humble-mindedness but hate pride".

Athanasius continued[341] to link the ancient Passover to the Church.

"For the Passover is indeed abstinence from evil for exercise of virtue, and a departure from death unto life. This may be learned even from the type of old time. For then they toiled earnestly to pass from Egypt to Jerusalem, but now we depart from death to life; they then passed from Pharaoh to Moses, but now we rise from the devil to the Savior. And as, at that time, the type of deliverance bore witness every year, so now we commemorate our salvation. We fast meditating on death, that we may be able to live. We watch, not as mourners, but as they that wait for the Lord, when He shall have returned from the wedding, so that we may vie with each other in the triumph, hastening to announce the sign of victory over death".

Athanasius also linked[342] the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord's Table, and for those who approach unworthily, it is a danger and a reproach. However, those who draw near to the divine Lamb, touch heavenly food.

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[340] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter IV, 2-3.
[341] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter V, 4.

> "For there is no one free from defilement, though his course may have been but one hour on the earth (Job 14:4 LXX), as Job, that man of surpassing fortitude, testifies. But, 'stretching forth to those things that are to come' (Philippians 3:13), let us pray that we may not eat the Passover unworthily, lest we be exposed to dangers. For to those who keep the feast in purity, the Passover is heavenly food; but to those who observe it profanely and contemptuously, it is a danger and reproach. For it is written, 'Whosoever shall eat and drink unworthily, is guilty of the death of our Lord' (1 Corinthians 11:27). Wherefore, let us not merely proceed to perform the festal rites, but let us be prepared to draw near to the divine Lamb, and to touch heavenly food. Let us cleanse our hands; let us purify the body. Let us keep our whole mind from guile; not giving up ourselves to excess, and to lusts, but occupying ourselves entirely with our Lord, and with divine doctrines; so that, being altogether pure (2 Peter 1:4), we may be able to partake of the Word".

In one word, then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures separation: separation from an old life of a bondage to sin and various wickedness, and the beginning of a life of real righteousness, having been purified from former sins (2 Peter 1:9).

The number seven is generally recognized as representing perfection or completion. Eating unleavened bread for seven days would then represent a complete separation from the old life of bondage and its power. This separation is illustrated very dramatically in the inundation of the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Baptism in water makes a fitting conclusion to this "feast of separation" in that it adds an harmonic note of completion to the seven days of sincerity and truth (Compare 1 Peter 3:21).

The new believer who has come through this "Feast of Separation" has a unique standing among mankind. Jesus Christ, Himself the firstborn of creation (Colossians 1:15) makes a distinction between "Israel and Egypt" (Exodus 11:7); that is between His own and those of the world (John 10:1-16). Those who are His own are said to have their names written in the Lamb's book of life (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12-15, 21:27), and are referred to collectively as "the general assembly and church of firstborn ones who have been enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). As such, they represent the firstborn of mankind and are designated to be a kingdom of priests to God the Father (Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6, 1 Peter 2:5, 9). All this was made possible by Christ's death and resurrection, and is the fulfillment and spiritual application of the sanctification of the firstborn that was mentioned earlier in the section The Feast of Unleavened Bread - Commemorating Event. It began in its present form in the lives of the disciples during the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, although it wasn't very apparent then due to the external turmoil of that time. Such things are easier seen in retrospect.

Yet there is a mystery here that not all are granted the ability to see. Ambrose of Milan stated[343] that the depth of the mystery was veiled by Moses, so that only those to whom it has been given might know the mystery of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:11-12).

> "All do not see the depths of the mysteries, for they were hid from the Levites, lest they should see who ought not to see, and they who cannot serve should take it up. Moses, indeed, saw the circumcision of the Spirit, but veiled it,

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[342] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter V, 5

[343] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 260.

so as to give circumcision only in an outward sign. He saw the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth; he saw the sufferings of the Lord, but he veiled the unleavened bread of truth in the material unleavened bread. He veiled the sufferings of the Lord in the sacrifice of a lamb or a calf".

Referring to the man in Corinth who had his father's wife, Paul felt it necessary to "deliver the man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh, that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus". Paul explained this by saying, "Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:5-7). Later the man repented and Paul urged the Corinthians to forgive him (2 Corinthians 2:5-8). There are two uses of the term "leaven" in this context. (1) Leaven is sin, and this needs to be purged out of our lives just as was done in every household prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. (2) Leaven in a lump of dough compares to the Kingdom of God in terms of the effect the Kingdom of God has on the world (Luke 13:20-21). In John Chrysostom's words[344], "As this converts the large quantity of meal into its own quality, even so shall you convert the whole world".

Ambrose of Milan commented[345] on the first use of the term "leaven" in the Scriptures as follows:

"The Apostle then judged that the sinner should at once be restored to the heavenly sacraments if he himself wished to be cleansed (2 Corinthians 2:5-8). And well is it said 'Purge', for he is purged as by certain things done by the whole people, and is washed in the tears of the multitude, and redeemed from sin by the weeping of the multitude, and is purged in the inner man. For Christ granted to His Church that one should be redeemed by means of all, as she herself was found worthy of the coming of the Lord Jesus, in order that through One all might be redeemed".

Ambrose continued[346] to say that Paul's meaning is slightly obscured by the two uses of the word 'leaven'. Paul's action in Corinth in delivering the man over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:4-8) was an illustration of the first use of the term "leaven". But Paul's forgiveness of the man after his repentance was an illustration of the second meaning of 'leaven' (i.e. leaven in a lump of dough). Ambrose stated,

"This leaven (of the Kingdom) the Church hides in her meal, when she softened the hard letter of the Law by a spiritual interpretation. She has ground it as it were in the mill of her explanations, bringing out as it were from the husks of the letter the inner secrets of the mysteries. From this, she sets forth the belief in the Resurrection, wherein the mercy of God is proclaimed, and wherein it is believed that the life of those, who are dead, are restored. Now this comparison seems to be fitly brought forward in this place, since the kingdom of heaven is redemption from sin, and therefore we all, both bad and good, are mingled with the meal of the Church that we all may be a new lump. But that no one may be afraid that an admixture of evil leaven might injure the lump, the Apostle said, 'That you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened' (1 Corinthians 5:7).

[344] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLVI,
[345] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 80.
[346] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 81-83

> That is to say, this mixture will render you again such, as in the pure integrity of your innocence. If we thus have compassion, we are not stained with the sins of others, but we gain the restoration of another to the increase of our own grace, so that our integrity remains as it was. And therefore he adds, 'For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us'. That is, the Passion of the Lord profited all, and gave redemption to sinners who repented of the sins they had committed".

One can sense in the words of Exodus 11 and 12 an atmosphere of things happening quickly, on very short notice, with little time to prepare (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3). So it is when one comes to know the Lord. A life with God is not something that one plans; it is a moment by moment walk with the Lord. Knowing the Lord as a name in a book is useless; one needs to listen to His direction as a voice in one's heart. And just as the whole nation of Israel just couldn't help but break out in song after its baptism in the Red Sea (Exodus 15), so the new believer often just can't help but want to sing about his recent salvation and his newly-discovered Lord.

In the Orthodox calendar, the forty days of Lent are spent in fasting and in mourning our expulsion from Paradise. At Pascha, we celebrate our return to Paradise and we should be zealous for this. Athanasius stated[347] it in these words:

> "Ours also is the Passover, the calling is from above, and 'our conversation is in heaven'. As Paul says, 'For we have here no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come' (Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 13:14) whereto, also, looking forward, we properly keep the feast. Heaven truly is high, and its distance from us infinite; for 'the heaven of heavens', says he, 'is the Lord's' (Psalm 115:16). But not, on that account, are we to be negligent or fearful, as though the way there were impossible. But rather should we be zealous. Yet not, as in the case of those who journeyed East and, finding a plain in Shinar, began to build a tower. There is no need for us to bake bricks with fire, and to seek slime for mortar (Genesis 11:3); for their tongues were confounded, and their work was destroyed.
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> But for us the Lord has consecrated a way through His blood, and has made it easy. For not only has He afforded us consolation respecting the distance, but also He has come and opened the door for us which was once shut. For, indeed, it was shut from the time He cast out Adam from the delight of Paradise, and set the Cherubim and the flaming sword, that turned every way, to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). This is now, however, opened wide. And He that sits upon the Cherubim, having appeared with greater grace and loving-kindness, led into Paradise with himself the thief who confessed (Luke 23:40-43); and having entered heaven as our forerunner, opened the gates to all. Paul also, 'pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling' (Philippians 3:14) by it was taken up to the third heaven, and having seen those things which are above, and then descended, he teaches us, announcing what is written to the Hebrews. 'For you are not come unto the mount that might be touched, and that burned with fire, and clouds, and darkness, and a tempest, and to the voice of words. But you are come unto Mount Zion, and unto the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven' (Hebrews 12:18-23).

[347] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter XLIII.

> Who would not wish to enjoy the high companionship with these! Who would not desire to be enrolled with these, that he may hear with them (Matthew 25:34), 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

Summary of the Feast of Unleavened Bread

In one word, then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures separation: separation from an old life of a bondage to sin and various wickedness, and the beginning of a life of real righteousness, having been purified from former sins (see 2 Peter 1:9).

Numbers mean something, too. The number seven is generally recognized as representing perfection or completion. Eating unleavened bread for seven days would then represent a *complete* separation from the old life of bondage and its power. This separation is illustrated very dramatically in the inundation of the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. As mentioned earlier, baptism in water makes a fitting conclusion to this "feast of separation" in that it adds a harmonic note of completion to the seven days of sincerity and truth (Compare 1 Peter 3:21).

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Yet there is a mystery here that not all are granted the ability to see. Ambrose of Milan stated[348] that Moses veiled the mysteries that he saw partly to avoid conflict over them.

> "All do not see the depths of the mysteries. They are hid from the Levites, lest they should see who ought not to see, and lest they who cannot serve should take it up. Moses saw the circumcision of the Spirit, but veiled it, so as to give circumcision only in an outward sign. He saw the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth; he saw the sufferings of the Lord, but he veiled the unleavened bread of truth in the material unleavened bread. He veiled the sufferings of the Lord in the sacrifice of a lamb or a calf".

Referring to the man in Corinth who had his father's wife, Paul felt it necessary to "deliver the man over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh that his spirit may be saved in the Day of the Lord Jesus" (1 Corinthians 5:5). Paul explained this by saying, "Do you not know

[348] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 260.

that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven that you may be a new lump, since you are truly unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us" (1 Corinthians 5:6-7). Later the man repented and Paul urged the Corinthians to forgive him (2 Corinthians 2:5-8). There are two uses of the term "leaven" in this context. One refers to the leaven as sin, and this needs to be purged out of our lives just as was done in every household prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The other use compares leaven in a lump of dough to the Kingdom of God in terms of the effect the Kingdom of God has on the world (Luke 13:20-21). In John Chrysostom's words[349], "Since this converts the large quantity of meal into its own quality, even so shall you convert the whole world".

Ambrose of Milan stated[350] that the judging and purging are done by the whole Church, just as the whole Church was found worthy.

> "Paul judged that the sinner should at once be restored to the heavenly sacraments if he himself wished to be cleansed. He is purged as by certain things done by the whole people, washed in the tears of the multitude, redeemed from sin by the weeping of the multitude, and is purged in the inner man. Christ granted to His Church that one should be redeemed by means of all, as she herself was found worthy of the coming of the Lord Jesus, in order that through One all might be redeemed".

Ambrose continued to say[351] that Paul's meaning is slightly obscured by the two uses of the word 'leaven'. Paul's action in Corinth in delivering the man over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:4-8) was an illustration of the first use of the term "leaven". But Paul's forgiveness of the man after his repentance was an illustration of the second meaning of 'leaven' (i.e. leaven in a lump of dough). Regarding the second meaning of 'leaven' associated with Paul's action in Corinth, Ambrose stated,

> "This leaven of the Kingdom the Church hides in her meal, when she softened the hard letter of the Law by a spiritual interpretation. She has ground it in the mill of her explanations, bringing out from the husks of the letter the inner secrets of the mysteries. From this, she sets forth the belief in the Resurrection, wherein the mercy of God is proclaimed, and wherein it is believed that the life of those who are dead is restored. This comparison seems to be fitly brought forward in this place, since the kingdom of heaven is redemption from sin, and therefore we all, both bad and good, are mingled with the meal of the Church that we all may be a new lump. But that no one may be afraid that a mixture of evil leaven might injure the lump, Paul said, 'That you may be a new lump, even as you are unleavened' (1 Corinthians 5:7). That is to say, this mixture will change you in the pure integrity of your innocence. If we thus have compassion, we are not stained with the sins of others, but we gain the restoration of another to the increase of our own grace, so that our integrity remains as it was. Therefore he adds, 'For Christ our Passover is sacrificed for us'. That is, the Passion of the Lord profited all, and gave redemption to sinners who repented of the sins they had committed".

[349] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLVI, 2.
[350] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 80.
[351] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 81-83

As a final word of spiritual application, one can sense in the words of Exodus 11 and 12 an atmosphere of things happening quickly, on very short notice, with little time to prepare (see Exodus 12:39; compare Deuteronomy 16:3). So it is when one comes to know the Lord. A life with God is not something that one plans; it is a moment by moment walk with the Lord. We do not just know the Lord as a name in a book; we listen to His direction as a voice in our heart. And just as the whole nation of Israel just couldn't help but break out in song after its baptism in the Red Sea (Exodus 15), so the new believer often just can't help but want to sing about his recent salvation and his newly-discovered Lord.

In the Orthodox calendar, the forty days of Lent are spent in fasting and in mourning our expulsion from Paradise. Athanasius stated[352] that Paradise was shut when Adam was expelled; but now Paradise has been opened to everyone by Christ, and we celebrate our return to Paradise at Pascha.

> "Ours is the Passover; the calling is from above; and 'our citizenship is in heaven' (Philippians 3:20). As Paul says; 'we have no continuing city, but we seek the one to come' (Hebrews 13:14); looking forward to this, we properly keep the feast. Heaven truly is high, and its distance from us is infinite; for 'the heaven of heavens is the Lord's' (Psalm 115:16). But we are not, on that account, negligent or fearful, as though the way there were impossible. But rather we should be zealous. We do not move from the East, like those of old, find a plain in Shinar, and begin to build a tower; there is no need for us to bake bricks with fire, and to seek tar for mortar (Genesis 11:3). Their tongues were confused, and their work was destroyed. But for us the Lord has consecrated a way through His blood, and has made it easy. He has not only consoled us respecting the distance, but He has also come and opened the door for us which was once shut. It was shut from the time He cast Adam out from the delight of Paradise, and set the Cherubim and the flaming sword, that turned every direction, to guard the way back to the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). This is now wide open. He that sits on the Cherubim, having appeared with greater grace and loving-kindness, led into Paradise with Himself the thief who confessed. Having entered heaven as our forerunner, He opened the gates to all. Paul also, 'pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling' (Philippians 3:14) by it was taken up to the third heaven, and having seen those things which are above, and then descended, he teaches us, announcing what is written to the Hebrews. 'You have not come to the mountain that may be touched and that burned with fire, and to blackness and darkness and tempest, and the sound of a trumpet and the voice of words. But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn who are registered in heaven' (Hebrews 12:18-23). Who would not wish to enjoy the high companionship with these! Who would not desire to be enrolled with these, that he may hear with them (Matthew 25:34), 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom, prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

THE DAY OF FIRSTFRUITS

[352] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XLIII.

The Day of First Fruits represents the Day of Christ's Resurrection and the Orthodox Church celebrates this day today as Pascha; in the West it is celebrated as Easter. In the minds of the Patriarchs of the Old Testament, there was an expectation of a bodily resurrection, but it remained a mystery regarding just how it would happen. For example, during the years that Israel was in Egypt, the Patriarch Job said, "For I know *that* my Redeemer lives, and He shall stand at last on the earth. After my skin is destroyed, this I know, that in my flesh I shall see God, Whom I shall see for myself, and my eyes shall behold, and not another. *How* my heart yearns within me!" (Job 19:25-27)

Although the Day of First-Fruits is mentioned after the Feast of Unleavened Bread, it actually falls during the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, on the 16th of Nisan (Leviticus 23:11). Refer back to the diagrams in Figure 1 and Figure 2.

The Day of First-Fruits is the first of the harvest-related festivals, and as such, would have no place being celebrated until Israel entered the land and had a crop to celebrate with (see Leviticus 23:10, Deuteronomy 26:1-11). It is related to the Feast of Weeks in that the Feast of Weeks is specified as occurring exactly seven weeks after the Day of First-Fruits (Leviticus 23:15, 16).

A word on how people counted in Moses' day is necessary, where the same is true in Jesus' day. By our way of reckoning, the Feast of Weeks occurred 49 days after the Feast of First-Fruits. By their way of reckoning, it occurred 50 days after because they reckoned the Day of First-Fruits as being "the first day after" the Day of First-Fruits.

The same is true concerning the Lord's Passover (14 Nisan) and the Day of First-Fruits (16 Nisan). We would reckon First-Fruits as being the 2nd day after Passover; they would reckon it as being *the third day*. This will be shown to be very important later on.

The Day of First Fruits – Commemorating Event

There are two significant events that the Lord commanded to take place on the Day of First fruits: waving the barley sheaf and recounting the history of Israel. With regard to the barley sheaf, much has already been said in the chapter on "The Hebrew Agricultural Year." The barley crop is the first crop to come up from (burial in) the ground, and is the first crop to ripen (see Exodus 9:31, 32). One sheaf only was cut and this one sheaf, the first grain of the imminent harvest, was then waved by the priest before the Lord (Leviticus 23:10-12). The wave sheaf was generally regarded (in symbolic terms to an agricultural people), as an embodiment of a declaration or promise that a harvest is imminent.

On the same day, after the First fruit sheaf was brought to the priest at the Temple in a basket, the bearer of the basket of barley was to declare to the Lord, "I have entered the land which the Lord swore to our fathers to give us" (Deuteronomy 26:1-11). The priest would then take the basket and set it down beside the altar. Then the bearer of the basket would proceed to recount the history of the nation of Israel:

A. Jacob, an Aramean, was ready to perish from famine.
B. He went down to Egypt and sojourned there, being few in number.
C. While there he became a great, mighty, and populous nation.

D. But the Egyptians treated them harshly and put them in hard bondage.
E. They cried out to the Lord and the Lord heard their voice and saw their affliction, toil and oppression.
F. And the Lord brought them out of Egypt with
    1. A mighty hand
    2. An outstretched arm
    3. Awe-inspiring terror
    4. Signs
    5. Wonders or miracles
G. And He has brought them to this place, and given them this land, a land flowing with milk and honey.

Then the bearer of the basket would say "and now, behold, I have brought the first of the produce of the ground which You, O Lord, have given me."

It's would be very easy for someone living under the Old Covenant to just go through the motions of all this and have no understanding of all that it means. It's easy to think of this as just an agricultural festival similar to what happened in the neighboring pagan countries.

The Day of First Fruits – Situation in Perspective in Israel

It is important to understand the perspective of the Israeli nation when the Day of First-Fruits was first celebrated, just after the Conquest of Canaan, 42 years after the Exodus. It was not celebrated the year Israel entered Canaan; it is here assumed it was celebrated the next year, even though nothing is mentioned in the Scripture (See Joshua 5:11, 12).

When the Day of First-Fruits was first celebrated, the events that happened in the year they entered the land were fresh in the minds of most of the people. The manna, the food the Israelis ate during their 40 year stay in the Sinai wilderness, ceased on the Day of First-Fruits. On the 14th of Nisan, they observed the Passover. On the next day, the 15th of Nisan, a Sabbath, they ate some of the produce of the land. The next day, the manna stopped (Joshua 5:11-12).

Both the first year, and virtually every year since, the central theme preceding and following the day of the Feast of First-Fruits was the celebration of the fact that they had been delivered from Egypt. Also, being in the middle of the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they were in the midst of eating unleavened bread for seven days. Further, the barley crop was ripe, but as yet not reaped.

The Day of First Fruits – Prophetic Significance

Refer once again to the chart in Appendix F. On this day, shortly before dawn, Jesus Christ was resurrected from His burial in Joseph of Arimathea's tomb (Matthew 27:57-66, 28:1-10). According to Paul, Jesus was "the First-Fruits of those that are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). As such, He is the barley sheaf that was waved before the Lord in celebration that the harvest is at hand. Later Paul makes it clear that the harvest of which Jesus Christ is the First-Fruits is all "those who are His at His coming" at the end of the age (1 Corinthians 15:23, 24). Since the Day of First-Fruits was not a Sabbath day, the actual harvesting of the barley could begin on this same day. And so the Lord's harvest began this day, also.

Consider some Old Testament passages relating to the death of Old Testament believers (e.g. Genesis 37:35, 42:38, Job 14:13, 19:25, Psalms 16:10, 49:15, 88:3, 89:48). Old Testament believers did not expect, as Paul did later (Philippians 1:23), to be with the Lord immediately upon death. They simply expected to be in the grave, or Sheol, to await the coming of their Redeemer. They realized, however, that (1) their Redeemer lived (Job 19:25) and (2) He would not abandon their soul to Sheol (Psalms 16:10). Jesus refers to Lazarus as being in "Abraham's bosom" (not heaven, or with the Lord), while the rich man, who had no compassion on Lazarus, was in "Hades" and in torment (Luke 16:22-26). From these and other passages, it seems likely that there were two parts to "the grave" (or Sheol): one for the righteous (i.e. Abraham's bosom), and one for the unrighteous, containing flames (Luke 16:24). Between the two was a great chasm so that no one can cross between the two (Luke 16:26).

A transition of believers from Sheol (Abraham's bosom) to heaven occurred at the Resurrection. This is what Paul referred to as the Lord leading captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8, Psalm 68:18). This transfer was the beginning of the harvest of which the First-Fruit sheaf was a promise or declaration. At the end of the age comes the grand finale of the harvest (Revelation 14:14-20) where first all the "tares" are gathered (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) and bundled and prepared to be burned.

Jesus said that it was written in the Scriptures that the Christ was to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day (Luke 24:44-46, 1 Corinthians 15:4 see also Luke 24:26, 27; John 20:9). There are numerous references to Christ's suffering (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, etc.), but no references at all, apart from First-Fruits, to Christ rising precisely on the third day. Jesus used Jonah's three days in the belly of the sea monster as an illustration of His three-day burial. But to make this connection before Christ was incarnate took some keen insight. That the Day of First-Fruits was to be taken unmistakably as a resurrection prophecy can be seen by connecting the "history lesson" of Deuteronomy 26:1-11 to the First-Fruit sheaf offering. In the "history lesson", the predominant theme is the resurrection of the Israeli nation from the point of certain death by (1) a mighty hand, (2) an outstretched arm, (3) awe-inspiring terror, (4) signs, and (5) wonders or miracles. And in the First-Fruit sheaf one is celebrating the resurrection of the seed that was buried in the ground.

The Day of First Fruits – Spiritual Application

The spiritual application of the Day of First-Fruits has two aspects: one has to do with the harvest (of which Jesus Christ was the first) which concludes at the end of the age. The other has to do with our walk in this present age.

Referring to the harvest aspect, Paul states that if Jesus Christ is not raised, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and those who have fallen asleep (Old Testament believers included) have perished. They are still in Sheol (1 Corinthians 15:16-18). However, since Jesus Christ was in fact raised from the dead, and as a First-Fruit of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20); therefore, we also shall be raised up (2 Corinthians 4:14, Ephesians 2:7, Romans 6:8, 9). We shall also be present together with all believers when Jesus Christ returns to set up the throne of His father David and rule the earth with justice (Isaiah 9:6, 7), and with the strength of an iron rod (Revelation 12:5).

Referring to our walk in this present age, the Day of First-Fruits is related to baptism. Consider the words of Paul, "Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

This is the spiritual application of the "history lesson" (Deuteronomy 26:1-11). Just as Israel was raised from certain death to become a great, mighty nation and to live in a land flowing with milk and honey by means of (1) a mighty hand, (2) an outstretched arm, (3) awe-inspiring terror, (4) signs, and (5) wonders; so, too, the Kingdom of God today. That the Kingdom of God today consists of an uncountable multitude is well attested to (Revelation 7:9, Hebrews 12:1). That these believers belong to a Kingdom flowing with milk and honey (i.e., uncountable riches) is witnessed by Paul (Ephesians 1:18-23, Colossians 1:27, 2:2-3). And that our Lord works by means of (1) a mighty hand, (2) an outstretched arm, (3) awe-inspiring terrors, (4) signs, and (5) wonders is found by merely reading through the book of Acts.

What then is the connection to baptism? Baptism implies burial. Since the charges against us (our sins, guilt, etc.) have been nailed to the cross; and since by faith we have accepted this, God's provision, we have identified ourselves into Christ's death. Baptism proclaims this by burying the new believer in water. But baptism does not end in the water. The new believer emerges from the water just as Christ emerged from the grave and just as the Israeli nation emerged from certain death.

But just a "resurrection experience" is not the point of baptism either; it is a means to an end. At the time of the Day of First fruits, Israel was in the midst of eating unleavened bread for seven days, and eating unleavened bread implies a new and different life-style[353] (1 Corinthians 5:8). Thus, Paul says, "so we too might walk in newness of life." It is this "walking in newness of life" that baptism is all about.

This "walking in newness of life" is not just following a bunch of rules and gutting it out. At the time that the Israeli army entered Canaan, the manna ceased on the Day of First-Fruits (Joshua 5:11-12). And the reason it ceased was because God had made provision for them to walk in a newness of life. They were now at a point where they could begin to draw from the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, the Kingdom of God. And so today with the new believer, once he has "appealed to God for a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:21) in baptism; the resources of the Kingdom of God are available to enable him, in fact, to walk in newness of life.

The Lord had said of the Levites, "Behold, I have taken the Levites from the midst of the children of Israel, instead of every male that opens the womb from among the children of Israel: they shall be their ransom, and the Levites shall be mine. For every first-born *is* mine; in the day in which I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to myself every first-born in Israel: both of man and beast, they shall be mine" (Numbers 3:12-13 LXX).

Ambrose of Milan stated[354] that the Levites were sanctified as First-Fruits of the nation of Israel instead of the firstborn.

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[353] Refer also to the Spiritual Application of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.
[354] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 259.

> "The duty of the Levites is no light one, for the Lord says of them: 'Behold I have taken the Levites from among the children of Israel, instead of every first-born that opens the womb among the children of Israel. These shall be their ransom, and the Levites shall be Mine. For I sanctified to Myself all the first-born in the land of Egypt' (Numbers 3:12-13). We know that the Levites are not reckoned among the rest, but are preferred before all, for they are chosen out of all. They are sanctified like the First-Fruits and the firstlings which belong to the Lord, since the payment of vows and redemption for sin are offered by them".

Similar to the Levites, we have been made a kingdom of priests to God the Father and to Christ (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6, 20:6), as a result of Christ's Resurrection. This was the intent at the time of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6) and it has been realized by the fulfilling of the Law by Christ regarding the Day of First-Fruits.

Comments from the Church Fathers on First-Fruits

Christ is the First-Fruits as our Great High Priest (Hebrews 8). As His fellow priests, we are part of the crop that followed. Ambrose stated[355] that the First-Fruits are of the same nature as the remaining fruit.

> "Now the First-Fruits are undoubtedly of the same nature and kind as the remaining fruits, the first of which are offered to God as a petition for a richer increase. They are a holy thank-offering for all gifts, and as a kind of libation of that nature which has been restored".

John Chrysostom noted[356] that the First-Fruits refer to both Christ and to the giving of the Holy Spirit, and more is yet to come.

> "For the First-Fruits are so great that we are thereby freed from our sins, and attain righteousness and sanctification. And if those of that time both drove out devils, and raised the dead by their shadow (Acts 5:15), or garments (Acts 19:12), consider how great the whole must be. If the creation, devoid as it is of mind and reason, and though in ignorance of these things, yet groans, much more should we".

Referring to the manner of the Resurrection, Paul wrote, "That which you sow, you do not sow the body which is to be, but a bare grain, perhaps of wheat or of something else. But God gives it a body just as He wished, and to each of the seeds a body of its own" (1 Corinthians 15:37-38). Referring to this, Chrysostom wrote[357] that if a different body rises than that which had fallen asleep, then the same words apply to Christ's Resurrection, and the devil has not given back that which he took captive.

> "Paul's discourse no longer regards the resurrection, but the manner of the resurrection, what is the kind of body which shall rise again; whether it will be of the same kind, or better and more glorious. He takes both from the same analogy, intimating that it will be much better. But the heretics, considering none of these things, dart in and say, 'One body falls and another body rises again. How then is there a resurrection? The resurrection is of that which was fallen. But where is that wonderful and surprising trophy over death, if one body falls and another rise

[355] Ambrose of Milan, Decease of His Brother Saytrus II, 91.
[356] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XIV, v. 23.
[357] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLI, 3.

again? He will no longer appear to have given back that which he took captive. How can this analogy apply? It is not one substance that is sown, and another that is raised, but the same substance improved. If this is not the case, then neither will Christ have resumed the same body when He became the First-Fruits of them that rise again. According to the heretics He threw aside the former body, although it had not sinned, and took another".

Chrysostom continued to say[358] that we live for Christ not just because God raised up our First-Fruits (i.e. Christ), but also because we are not our own.

> "Paul exhorted the Corinthians to virtue from Christ's love; he then led them on to this from what has been actually done for them; he added, 'If any man is in Christ,' he is 'a new creature' (2 Corinthians 5:17). 'If any has believed in Him, he has come to another creation'; for he has been born again by the Spirit. For this cause, we ought to live for Him, not only because we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19), not only because He died for us (1 Corinthians 5:15), not only because He raised up our First-Fruits (1 Corinthians 15:20-23), but because we have also come to another life. See how many just grounds he urges for a life of virtue".

With this a background, Chrysostom addressed[359] the attitude we should have. We should long for the redemption of our body and the things to come such that all our conversations revolve around the age to come.

> "This is the language of a right-minded child: not to be riveted to things that are seen, neither to account things present some great matter; but to hasten to our Father and to long for the things to come. This springs out of a good conscience, and a soul set free from things that are on earth. Paul himself was longing after this every day; he said, that 'even we ourselves, who have the First-Fruits of the Spirit, groan, waiting for an adoption, the redemption of our body' (Romans 8:23). He who has this fondness can neither be puffed up by the good things of this life, nor embarrassed by its sorrows; but as though dwelling in the heavens, is freed from each sort of irregularity.
>
> 'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven' (Luke 11:2). Behold a most excellent train of thought! He asks us to long for the things to come, and hurry towards that destination; till that may be, even while we live here, to be diligent in showing the same conversation as those above. You must long, says He, for heaven, and the things in heaven. Even before heaven, He asked us make the earth a heaven and do and say all things, even while we are continuing in it, as having our conversation there; these too should be objects of our prayer to the Lord. There is nothing to hinder our reaching the perfection of the powers above, just because we inhabit the earth; it is possible even while living here, to do all, as though already placed on high".

John of Damascus spoke[360] of Christ as the First-Fruits of man's compound nature (i.e. the flesh animated with the intelligent and rational soul). Taking His flesh from the holy Virgin,

[358] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XI, 4.
[359] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XIX, 7.
[360] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith III, 2.

He was animated with human reason and thought; but He did not change His divinity into human flesh or make one compound nature out of His humanity and Divinity.

> "After the assent of the holy Virgin, the Holy Spirit descended on her, according to the word of the Lord which the angel spoke, purifying her, and granting her power to receive the divinity of the Word, and likewise power to bring forth. She overshadowed by the hypostatic Wisdom and Power of the Most High God, the Son of God, Who is of like essence with the Father as of Divine seed. From her holy and most pure blood He formed flesh animated with the spirit of reason and thought, the First-Fruits of our compound nature; not by procreation but by creation through the Holy Spirit. He did not develop His body by gradual additions but perfect it at once. The Divine Word was not made one with flesh that had an independent pre-existence. Taking up His abode in the womb of the holy Virgin, He unreservedly in His own subsistence took upon Himself through the pure blood of the eternal Virgin a body of flesh animated with the spirit of reason and thought. Thus He assumed to Himself the First-Fruits of man's compound nature, Himself the Word, having become subsistence in the flesh. He is at once human flesh, and at the same time flesh of God the Word, and likewise flesh animated, possessing both reason and thought. We speak not of man as having become God, but of God as having become Man. For being by nature perfect God, He naturally became likewise perfect Man. He did not change His nature or make the dispensation an empty show, but became, without confusion, change or division, one in subsistence with the flesh, which was conceived of the holy Virgin, and animated with reason and thought. He did not change the nature of His divinity into the essence of flesh, nor the essence of flesh into the nature of His divinity. He did not make one compound nature out of His divine nature and the human nature He had assumed".

Gregory of Nyssa stated[361] that Christ led the way for us, as the firstborn of all creation, such that as He did, so shall we do. As the First-Fruits of those that slept, He implanted in our nature the power of rising from the dead. By sharing in Baptism, He became the firstborn of many brethren. By assuming human nature as First-Fruits, He presented all humanity to God its Father.

> "Not only was all creation made by Him. But when the original creation of man had decayed and vanished away (Gregory's paraphrase of 2 Corinthians 5:17), and another new creation was wrought in Christ, in this too, He took the lead. He is Himself the first-born of all that new creation of men which is effected by the Gospel. In order that this may be made clearer let us thus divide our argument. Paul on four occasions employs this term, calling Him, 'first-born of all creation' (Colossians 1:15), 'the first-born among many brethren' (Romans 8:29), and 'first-born from the dead' (Colossians 1:18). On another occasion he employs the term absolutely, without combining it with other words, 'But when again He brings the first-born into the world', He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him' (Hebrews 1:6). Whatever view we entertain concerning this title in the other combinations, the same we shall in consistency apply to the phrase 'first-born of all creation'. For since the title is one and the same it must be that the meaning conveyed is also one. In what sense then does Christ become 'the first-born among many brethren'? In what sense does He become 'the first-born

[361] Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius II, 8.

from the dead'? This is plain! We are by birth flesh and blood, as the Scripture says, 'He Who for our sakes was born among us and was partaker of flesh and blood' (Gregory's paraphrase of Hebrews 2:14). In order to change us from corruption to incorruption by the birth from above, the birth by water and the Spirit, He led the way in this birth, drawing down the Holy Spirit on the water, by His own baptism. In all things He became the first-born of those who are spiritually born again, and gave the name of brethren to those who partook in a birth like His own by water and the Spirit."

"Since it was also fit that He should implant in our nature the power of rising again from the dead, He became the 'First-Fruits of them that slept' (1 Corinthians 15:20) and the 'first-born from the dead'. By His own act He loosed the pains of death, so that His new birth from the dead was made a way for us also, since the pains of death, wherein we were held, were loosed by the resurrection of the Lord. By having shared in the washing of regeneration, He became 'the first-born among many brethren'. By having made Himself the First-Fruits of the resurrection, He obtained the name of the 'first-born from the dead'. Having in all things the pre-eminence, after 'all old things have passed away' (2 Corinthians 5:17), He became the first-born of the new creation of men in Christ by the two-fold regeneration (i.e. water and the Spirit). By both Holy Baptism and that which is the consequence of the resurrection from the dead, He became for us in both alike the Prince of Life, the first-born and the First-Fruits."

"This first-born, then, has also brethren, concerning whom He speaks to Mary, saying, 'Go and tell My brethren, I go to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God' (John 20:17). In these words He sums up the whole aim of His dispensation as Man. 'Men revolted from God, and 'served those which by nature were not gods' (Galatians 4:8), and though being the children of God became attached to an evil father falsely so called. For this cause, the mediator between God and man, having assumed the First-Fruits of all human nature, sent to His brethren the announcement of Himself, not in His divine character, but in that which He shares with us. He said, 'I am departing in order to make by My own self that true Father, from whom you were separated, to be your Father, and by My own self to make that true God from whom you had revolted to be your God. For by that First-Fruits which I have assumed, I am in Myself presenting all humanity to its God and Father' (Gregory's paraphrase of John 14). Since, then, the First-Fruits made the true God to be its God, and the good Father to be its Father; the blessing is secured for human nature as a whole, and by means of the First-Fruits the true God and Father becomes Father and God of all men. Now 'if the First-Fruits is holy, the lump also is holy' (Romans 11:19). But where the First-Fruits is, and the First-Fruits is none other than Christ, there also are they that are Christ's".

Gregory was clear[362] that Christ as the First fruits applies to His humanity, not to His Deity. For He is the First born of many brethren (Romans 8:29) in His humanity, but the Only begotten of the Father (John 1:14) in His Deity. In His Deity, He has no brethren; only in His humanity did He have brethren.

"Of this new creation therefore in Christ, which He Himself began, He was called the first-born, being the First fruits of all, both of those begotten into

[362] Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius IV, 3.

life, and of those quickened by resurrection of the dead. 'That He might be Lord both of the dead and of the living' (Romans 14:9), and might sanctify the whole lump by means of its First fruits in Himself. Now that the character of 'first-born' does not apply to the Son in respect of His pre temporal existence; the appellation of "Only-begotten" testifies of this. For he who is truly only-begotten has no brethren, for how could any one be only-begotten if numbered among brethren?

The Lord's Table

John of Damascus continued[363] to say that the First-Fruits of our nature allowed a second birth to take place in us to deliver our nature from the sin of our first parent. We become by adoption what He is Himself by nature.

> "It was fitting that not only the First-Fruits of our nature should partake in the higher good but every man who wished it. To do this, a second birth should take place and that the nourishment should be new and suitable to the birth and thus the measure of perfection be attained. Through His birth, that is, His incarnation, baptism, passion and resurrection, He delivered our nature from the sin of our first parent, death and corruption. He became the First-Fruits of the resurrection, and made Himself the way, image and pattern, in order that we, too, following in His footsteps, may become by adoption what He is Himself by nature, sons and heirs of God and joint heirs with Him. He gave us therefore a second birth in order that, just as we who are born of Adam are in his image and are the heirs of the curse and corruption, so also being born of Him we may be in His likeness and heirs of His incorruption, blessing and glory".

That the First-Fruits are related to the Lord's Table is stated by Irenaeus[364]. The bread and the cup are the First-Fruits of His own gifts.

> "Giving directions to His disciples to offer to God the First-Fruits of His own created things, He took that created thing, bread, and gave thanks, and said, 'This is My body'. not as if He did not stand in need of them; He desired that they might be themselves neither unfruitful nor ungrateful. The cup likewise, which is part of that creation to which we belong, He confessed to be His blood. He taught that the new oblation of the New Covenant, which the Church received from the Apostles, offers to God throughout all the world, to Him who gives us as the means of subsistence, the First-Fruits of His own gifts in the New Testament".

Irenaeus also stated[365] that both oblations and sacrifices are still offered by Christians as they were among the Hebrews; only the kind has changed, since it is now done by free men.

> "We are bound to offer to God the First-Fruits of His creation, as Moses says, 'You shall not appear in the presence of the Lord your God empty' (Exodus 23:15, 34:20). So that man, being accounted as grateful, by those things in which he has shown his gratitude, may receive that honor which flows from Him. We have not abandoned the offering of oblations in general; for there were both oblations there among the Jews, and there are oblations here among the Christians. Sacrifices were among the people of Israel; sacrifices are present,

[363] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith IV, 13
[364] Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies IV, 17, 4.
[365] Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies IV, 18, 1.

also, in the Church. But the species alone has been changed, inasmuch as the offering is now made, not by slaves, but by freemen

John of Damascus referred[366] to the bread of the Lord's Table as a First-Fruit of that future bread that is necessary for existence. It purifies us from diseases and calamities just like gold is purified by fire.

> "The body and blood of Christ make a protection against all kinds of injury, a purging from all uncleanness, for the support of our soul and body. Should one receive gold, it gets purified by critical burning; we do this also lest in the future we be condemned with this world (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). The bread of the Lord's Table purifies us from diseases and all kinds of calamities, according to Paul (1 Corinthians 11:30); for if we would judge ourselves, we should not be judged. But when we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we should not be condemned with the world. This too is what he says, so that he who partakes of the body and blood of Christ unworthily, eats and drinks damnation to himself (1 Corinthians 11:27-32). Being purified by this, we are united to the body of Christ and to His Spirit and become the body of Christ. This bread is the First-Fruits of the future bread which is necessary for existence. It is fitting to speak so of the Lord's body, for the Lord's flesh is life-giving spirit because it was conceived of the life-giving Spirit. For what is born of the Spirit is spirit. I do not say this to take away the nature of the body, but I wish to make clear its life-giving and divine power".

[366] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith IV, 13.

Events Leading to the Arrest of Jesus

First Gospel: Matthew 26:2-20 "The Preparation for the Passover"

The first part of this Reading (Matthew 26:2-16) is common to the Reading for Holy Wednesday evening. For a discussion of the Anointing of Jesus and Judas' plans for the Betrayal, see the Study for Holy Wednesday evening.

On Thursday of Holy Week; that is, on the 13th of Nisan[367], Jesus' disciples came to Him to ask Him where He would like to eat the Passover. See Appendix F for a Table of when these events were taking place. Jesus sent Peter and John to prepare the Passover, saying,

> "'Go and prepare the Passover for us, that we may eat'. So they said to Him, 'Where do You want us to prepare?' And He said to them, 'Behold, when you have entered the city, a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him into the house which he enters. Then you shall say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says to you, "Where is the guest room where I may eat the Passover with My disciples?" Then he will show you a large, furnished upper room; there make ready'. So they went and found it just as He had said to them, and they prepared the Passover" (Luke 22:8-13).

This upper room was a large room on the roof of a very large house. It was the same room in which the Eleven were huddled together when Jesus walked through the walls (John 20:19-29) on the evening of the 17th of Nisan. See Appendix F. This is also the same place that the 120 were gathered at Pentecost (Acts 1:13). It was necessary for the Lord to find a place to eat the Passover because He had no house of His own at which to eat the Passover (Luke 9:58). The Passover lamb could only be slain in Jerusalem, not in any other town, and had to be eaten in Jerusalem also (Deuteronomy 16:5-8).

The Lord's instructions about the preparation of the Passover meal were strikingly similar to what He had told His disciples a few days earlier on Palm Sunday (9th of Nisan). Then He had also sent two of His disciples[368] and said,

> "'Go into the village opposite *you*, where as you enter you will find a colt tied, on which no one has ever sat. Loose it and bring *it here.* And if anyone asks you, 'Why are you loosing *it?'* thus you shall say to him, 'Because the Lord has need of it''. So those who were sent went their way and found *it* just as He had said to them. But as they were loosing the colt, the owners of it said to them, 'Why are you loosing the colt?' And they said, 'The Lord has need of him'" (Luke 19:30-34).

Each of these signs were similar to what the prophet Samuel had done at the time that Saul was chosen as the first king of Israel (1 Samuel 10:1-12). For Saul, these events changed his heart and he began to prophesy with the prophets.

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[367] See for example:
John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.
Clement of Alexandria, Fragments Found in Greek Only in the Oxford Edition, 11.

[368] Which two disciples these were are not mentioned by any of the Gospel writers.

John Chrysostom asked[369] why Jesus would send Peter and John to some unknown persons. He concluded that this was just one more example of His willingness to go to the Cross, and that He could have avoided the Cross if He had wanted.

> "And for what possible reason does He send them to an unknown person? To show by this also that He might have avoided suffering. He who prevailed over this man's mind, so that he received them, and that by words; what would He not have done with them that crucified Him, if it had been His will not to suffer? What He did about the donkey (Luke 19:30-34), this He did here also. There too He said, 'If anyone says anything to you, you shall say, 'The Lord has need of them,' and immediately he will send them' (Matthew 21:3) and so likewise here. 'The Master says, 'I will keep the Passover at your house'. But I marvel not at this only, that the man received Him, but that expecting to bring upon himself such hostility, he despised the enmity of the multitude".

Chrysostom continued[370] that all this was necessary because His disciples really didn't yet know Who Jesus was:

> Because they didn't know him, He gave them a sign, like as the prophet touching Saul (1 Samuel 10:1-12). Notice the display of his power. He did not only say, 'I will keep the Passover', but He adds another thing also, 'My time is at hand' (Matthew 26:18). This He did, continually reminding His disciples of the passion, so that exercised by the frequency of the prediction, they should be prepared for what was to take place. At the same time He showed to them, to the man that was receiving Him, and to all the Jews, that He comes voluntarily to His passion. He adds, 'Eat with my disciples', in order that both the preparation should be sufficient, and that the man should not suppose that He was concealing Himself".

Second Gospel: John 13:3-17 "The Foot Washing"

People in the 1st Century who could afford footwear wore sandals. Walking mostly on unpaved streets and pathways, one's feet were usually dirty on coming home. The first element of hospitality for a guest was washing his feet, which was done by one of the lowest of the servants. Jesus made use of this custom to teach His disciples about the Kingdom of God.

After eating the Passover meal with His disciples, Jesus laid aside His garments, took a towel and a basin of water, and washed His disciples' feet. Peter protested, but Jesus replied, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (John 13:7). Peter refused to allow Jesus to wash His feet, feeling that the Master should be served, not serve Himself. Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8). To that Peter replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also *my* hands and *my* head!" (John 13:9) Jesus replied,

> "He who is bathed needs only to wash *his* feet, but is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you". For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean'. So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you?" (John 13:10-12).

[369] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.
[370] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

The Mystery of the Foot Washing

In speaking of His humbling of Himself to wash His disciples' feet, Cyril of Jerusalem said[371] that Jesus took on Himself the "linen of humanity", where this was analogous to Jesus taking on human flesh.

Ambrose of Milan commented[372] on the mystery involved in the Lord washing His disciples' feet. Just as the Lord emptied Himself to become man, so He puts off His clothes to do the work of a slave that He may clothe us with His mercy. The water that Christ uses to wash His disciples' feet is the water of the message of the dew from heaven. By imitating Him, we wash away our own pollution.

> "Come, then, Lord Jesus, put off Your garments, which You put on for my sake; be stripped that You may clothe us with Your mercy. Wrap Yourself for our sakes with a towel, that You may wrap us with Your gift of immortality. Pour water into the basin; wash not only our feet but also the head, and not only of the body, but also the footsteps of the soul. I wish to put off all the filth of our frailty".
>
> "How great is that excellence! As a servant, You washed the feet of Your disciples; as God, You send dew from heaven. Nor do You wash the feet only, but also invite us to sit down with You, and by the example of Your dignity exhort us, saying, 'You call Me Master and Lord, and you do well, for so I am. If I, the Lord and Master, have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet'".
>
> "I wish also myself to wash the feet of my brethren; I wish to fulfill the commandment of my Lord; I will not be ashamed in myself, nor disdain what He Himself did first. Good is the mystery of humility, because while washing the pollution of others I wash away my own. But all were not able to exhaust this mystery. Abraham was willing to wash feet out of a feeling of hospitality. Gideon was willing to wash the feet of the Angel of the Lord who appeared to him, but his willingness was confined to one; he was willing as one who would do a service, not as one who would confer fellowship with himself. This is a great mystery, which no one knew. Lastly, the Lord said to Peter, 'What I do you don't know now, but shall know hereafter'. This is a divine mystery, which even they who wash will inquire into. It is not, then, the simple water of the heavenly mystery (i.e. Baptism) whereby we attain to be found worthy of having part with Christ".
>
> "There is also certain water, which we put into the basin of our soul, water from the fleece and from the Book of Judges (Judges 6:36-40); water, too, from the Book of Psalms (Psalm 1:3, 65:9-10, 72:6). It is the water of the message from heaven. Let this water, O Lord Jesus, come into my soul, into my flesh, that through the moisture of this rain the valleys of our minds and the fields of our hearts may grow green. May the drops from You come upon me, shedding forth grace and immortality. Wash the steps of my mind that I may not sin again. Wash the heel of my soul that I may be able to erase the curse that I won't feel the serpent's bite on the foot of my soul. As You have asked those who follow You, I may tread on serpents and scorpions with uninjured foot. You have redeemed the world; redeem the soul of a single sinner".

[371] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XII, 1.
[372] Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, I, Introduction, 13-16.

Irenaeus linked[373] the washing of the disciples' feet and the creation of the New Man as the body of Christ.

> "Now in the last days, when the fullness of the time of liberty had arrived, the Word Himself 'washed away the filth of the daughters of Zion' (Isaiah 4:4), when He washed the disciples' feet with His own hands. This is the end result of the human race inheriting God; this reverses what happened in the beginning, by means of our first parents, when we were all brought into bondage by being made subject to death. By means of the New Man (Ephesians 2:15, 4:24), all who from the beginning were His disciples, having been cleansed and washed from things pertaining to death, should come to the life of God. He who washed the feet of the disciples sanctified the entire body, and rendered it clean".

Clement of Alexandria stated[374] that the washing of the disciples' feet was for the benefit of the Gentiles.

> "The Savior Himself washing the feet of the disciples, and dispatching them to do good deeds, pointed out their pilgrimage for the benefit of the nations, making them beforehand fair and pure by His power".

Being Completely Clean

Peter at first refused to allow Jesus to wash His feet, feeling that the Master should be served; He should not be the servant Himself. Jesus said, "If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me" (John 13:8). To that Peter replied, "Lord, not my feet only, but also my hands and my head!" (John 13:9) Jesus replied, "He who is bathed needs only to wash his feet, and is completely clean; and you are clean, but not all of you". For He knew who would betray Him; therefore He said, 'You are not all clean'.

Love for one another was to become the distinguishing characteristic for the Church, and the love was to be modeled on the love of Christ for us, and not just as we love ourselves. Love for ourselves varies from individual to individual; Christ's love for us sets a new standard. Jesus quantified love for neighbors as a sacrificial love just like His love for man. "A new commandment I give you that you love one another: as I have love you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). By loving one another like this, true righteousness is generated, and we become completely clean.

Chrysostom linked[375] knowledge of God with beholding the Glory of God with good works. In willingly going to His Cross, not by constraint and necessity, Christ taught, by His actions, a sacrificial love for all men. By learning Who He is, a true Son and greatly beloved by the Father, we also learn about the Father. To the contrary, there are those who profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him (Titus 1:16). Someone who helps his domestics, kinsmen and strangers, while not helping those who are related to him by family, blasphemes and insults God. As Paul said, "he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

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[373] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxii, 1.
[374] Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 8.
[375] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 3-4, LXXXIII, 1.

Commenting on Jesus' statement that the disciples were completely clean, Gregory the Great used[376] the illustration of baptism in the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-4) to state that all our previous sins are forgiven. But as we cross the wilderness of this life, we encounter other enemies that we must deal with.

> "The passage of the Red Sea was a figure of holy baptism, in which the enemies behind died, but others were found in front in the wilderness. To all who are bathed in holy baptism, all their past sins are remitted, since their sins die behind them even as did the Egyptian enemies. But in the wilderness we find other enemies; while we live in this life, before reaching the country of promise, many temptations harass us, and hasten to bar our way as we head to the land of the living. Whoever says, then, that sins are not entirely put away in baptism, let him say that the Egyptians did not really die in the Red Sea. But, if he acknowledges that the Egyptians really died, he needs to acknowledge that sins die entirely in baptism, since surely the truth is more advantageous in our absolution than the shadow of the truth. In the Gospel the Lord says, He that is washed needs not to wash, but is completely clean (John 13:10). If, therefore, sins are not entirely put away in baptism, how is he that is washed completely clean? He cannot be said to be completely clean, if he has any sin remaining. But no one can resist the voice of the Truth; He that is washed is completely clean. Nothing, then, of the contagion of sin remains to him whom He Himself, who redeemed him, declares to be completely clean".

Tertullian, speaking of the same things, noted[377] that baptism is a sealing of a faith that has already begun. Otherwise, baptism is of necessity, not free will; we cease sinning because we want to, not because we are forced to.

> "That baptismal washing is a sealing of faith, which faith is begun and is commended by the faith of repentance. We are not washed in order that we may cease sinning, but because we have ceased, since in heart we have been bathed already. For the first baptism of a learner is this, a perfect fear; thenceforward, in so far as you have understanding of the Lord, faith is sound, the conscience having once for all embraced repentance. Otherwise, if it is only after the baptismal waters that we cease sinning, it is of necessity, not of free-will, that we put on innocence. Who, then, is preeminent in goodness? He who is not allowed to be evil, or he whom it displeases to be evil? He who is asked or he whose pleasure it is to be free from crime?"

Tertullian also stated[378] that Jesus' statement to the Twelve about their not needing to wash a second time implies that they all had been baptized by John the Baptist.

> As far as I shall be able, I will reply to them who affirm 'that the Apostles were not baptized'. They had undergone the human baptism of John, and were longing for that of the Lord, and the Lord Himself had defined baptism to be one. Jesus said to Peter, who was desirous of being thoroughly bathed, 'He who has once bathed has no necessity to wash a second time' (John 13:10); which, of course, He would not have said at all to one not baptized. Even here we have a conspicuous proof against those who, in order to destroy the sacrament of water,

[376] Gregory the Great, Epistles, XI, 45.
[377] Tertullian, On Repentance, III, I, 6.
[378] Tertullian, On Baptism, III, ii, 12.

deprive the Apostles even of John's baptism. Can it seem credible that 'the way of the Lord' (John 1:23, Isaiah 40:3), that is, the baptism of John, had not then been 'prepared' in those persons who were being destined to open the way of the Lord throughout the whole world?

On the other hand, Tertullian continued[379], those that reject Christ need to bathe daily.

> But the Jewish Israel bathes daily, because he is daily being defiled: and, for fear that defilement should be practiced among us also, therefore was the definition touching the one bathing made (John 13:10). Happy the water, which once washes away; which does not mock sinners with vain hopes; which does not, by being infected with the repetition of impurities, again defile them whom it has washed!

Understanding What Christ Had Done

Jesus had said to the Twelve, "What I am doing you do not understand now, but you will know after this" (John 13:7). The text states:

> "So when He had washed their feet, taken His garments, and sat down again, He said to them, "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for *so* I am. If I then, *your* Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you. Most assuredly, I say to you, a servant is not greater than his master; nor is he who is sent greater than he who sent him. If you know these things, blessed are you if you do them" (John 13:12-17).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated[380] that understanding what the Lord had done involves learning from Him and patterning our behavior after His. We bear His Image, and with His example, we have a pattern of heavenly conversation. Those who are thus disposed, and fashion themselves according to the Gospel, will be partakers of Christ.

> As he who receives an Apostle receives Him who sent him, so he who is a follower of the saints, makes the Lord in every respect his end and aim, even as Paul, being a follower of Him, goes on to say, 'Imitate me, just as I also imitate Christ (1 Corinthians 11:1). There were first Christ's own words, who from the height of His divinity, when conversing with His disciples, said, 'Learn of Me, for I am meek and lowly in heart, and you shall find rest to your souls' (Matthew 11:29). Then too when He poured water into a basin, and belted Himself with a towel, and washed His disciples' feet, He said to them, 'Know what I have done' (John 13:12).
>
> Brethren, how shall we admire the loving-kindness of Christ? With what power, and with what a trumpet should a man cry out, exalting these His benefits! That not only should we bear His image, but should receive from Him an example and pattern of heavenly conversation. As He began, we should go on; when suffering, we should not threaten; when reviled, we should not revile again, but should bless them that curse, and in everything commit ourselves to God, who judges righteously. Those who are thus disposed, and fashion themselves according to the Gospel, will be partakers of Christ. They will be imitators of

[379] Tertullian, On Baptism, III, ii, 15.
[380] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, II, 4-5.

apostolic conversation, on account of which they shall be deemed worthy of that praise from him, with which he praised the Corinthians, when he said, 'I praise you that in everything you are mindful of me' (1 Corinthians 11:2). Afterwards, there were men who used his words, but chose to hear them as suited their lusts, and dared to pervert them, like the followers of Simon Magus[381], like Hymenaeus and Alexander (1 Timothy 1:20), and before them the Sadducees (Matthew 22:23-34, Acts 4:1-3). They had 'made shipwreck of faith' (1 Timothy 1:19), scoffed at the mystery of the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:18, 1 Corinthians 15:12). Paul immediately proceeded to say, 'As I have delivered to you traditions, hold them fast' (1 Corinthians 11:2). That means, indeed, that we should think not otherwise than as the teacher has delivered.

In speaking of Paul's instructions for widows, who served a ministry within the Church, John Chrysostom gives[382] some illumination regarding what Christ had done by washing His disciples' feet. The widows that Paul referred to were not just husband-less women, but dedicated servants in the Church. Paul required strictness for these widows almost as much as for the Bishop himself, similar to the Prophetess Anna (Luke 2:36-38). Characteristics of these widows are that they should be:

"Well reported for good works: if she has brought up children, if she has lodged strangers, if she has washed the saints' feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work" (1 Timothy 5:10).

Chrysostom spoke[383] at length in very practical terms about what is really happening when we wash each other's feet. As we give of ourselves to the poor, we give to Christ Himself (Matthew 25:34-40); therefore we should do it ourselves, like Abraham, and not delegate it to our servants. Conversely, as the poor receive us, they receive Christ. In this way, we are indebted to the people we serve as if they were our physicians.

"Observe, the hospitality here spoken of is not merely a friendly reception, but one given with zeal, cheerfulness and readiness, going about it as if one were receiving Christ Himself. The widows should perform these services themselves, not commit them to their handmaids. For Christ said, 'If I your Master and Lord have washed your feet, you ought also to wash one another's feet' (John 13:14). Though a woman may be very rich, of the highest rank and from a noble family, there is not the same distance between her and others, as between God and the disciples. If you receive the stranger as Christ, don't be ashamed, but rather glory. 'He that receives you', He said, 'receives Me' (Matthew 10:40). If you do not so receive him, you have no reward".

"Abraham received men that passed as travelers, as he thought, and he did not leave to his servants to make the preparations for their entertainment, but took the greater part of the service upon himself. He commanded his wife to mix the flour, though he had three hundred and eighteen servants born in his house (Genesis 14:14, 18:1-8), of whom there must have been many maidservants; but he wished that himself and his wife should have the reward, not of the cost only, but of the service. Thus we ought to exercise hospitality by our own personal

[381] For details on the influence of Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002.
[382] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIV, Vv. 9-10.
[383] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIV, Vv. 9-10.

exertions, that we may be sanctified, and our hands be blessed. If you give to the poor, don't refuse to give it yourself, for it is not to the poor that it is given, but to Christ; who is so wretched, as to refuse to stretch out his own hand to Christ?"

"This is hospitality; this is truly to do it for God's sake. But if you give orders with pride, though you ask the stranger to take the first place, it is not hospitality; it is not done for God's sake. The stranger requires much attendance, much encouragement, and with all this it is difficult for him not to feel ashamed; so delicate is his position, that while he receives the favor, he is ashamed. That shame we ought to remove by the most attentive service, and to show by words and actions, that we do not think we are conferring a favor, but receiving one. So much does good will multiply the kindness! He who considers himself losing something, and thinks that he is doing a favor, destroys all the merit of it; so he who looks upon himself as receiving a kindness, increases the reward. 'For God loves a cheerful giver'" (2 Corinthians 9:7).

"You are rather indebted to the poor man for receiving your kindness. If there were no poor, the greater part of your sins would not be removed. The poor are the healers of your wounds; their hands are medicinal to you. You give your money, and with it your sins pass away. Thus you receive more than you give, you benefit more than you grant. You lend to God, not to men. You increase your wealth, rather than diminish it".

Affirmation of Christ's Deity

During the course of the foot-washing, Jesus clearly proclaimed His Deity. After He had washed His disciples' feet, He said,

"You call me Teacher and Lord, and you say well, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet. For I have given you an example, that you should do as I have done to you" (John 13:12-15).

Athanasius of Alexandria, addressing the Arian controversy, used[384] Jesus statement as part of a proof that He is God.

"If they are in doubt whether Christ is God at all, let them reverence Thomas, who handled the Crucified and pronounced Him Lord and God (John 20:28). Or let them fear the Lord Himself, who said, after washing the feet of the disciples, 'You call Me Lord and Master, and you say well, for so I am' (John 13:13). But in the same body in which He was when he washed their feet, He also carried up our sins to the Tree. He was witnessed to as Master of Creation, in that the Sun withdrew his beams, the earth trembled, the rocks were broken and the executioners recognized that the Crucified was truly Son of God (Matthew 27:45, 51, 54). The Body they saw was not that of some man, but of God, Who even when He was crucified, He raised the dead (Matthew 27:52-53). But once for all 'at the consummation of the ages, to put away sin' (Hebrews 9:26), 'the Word was made flesh (John 1:14) and proceeded forth from Mary the Virgin, Man after our likeness. We are deified not by partaking of the body of some man, but by receiving the Body of the Word Himself".

[384] Athanasius of Alexandria, Personal Letters, LXI, 2.

Ambrose of Milan also used[385] the Lord's statement as an expression of His Deity. Yet the Lord's words must be examined to note whether He is speaking as a man or as God. In His Deity, He is equal to the Father; in His manhood, He is one of us.

> "It is after Christ's Manhood that He entreats, and in virtue of His Godhead that He commands, as it is written where He said to Peter, 'I have prayed for you, that your faith fail not' (Luke 22:32). When Peter said, 'You are the Christ, the Son of the living God', He answered, 'You are Peter, and upon this Rock will I build My Church, and I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 16:18-19). Could He not, then, strengthen the faith of the man to whom He gave the kingdom, whom He called the Rock, thereby declaring him to be the foundation of the Church? Consider, then, the manner of His entreaty, the occasions of His commanding. He entreats, when He is shown to us as on the eve of suffering; He commands, when He is believed to be the Son of God."
>
> "Will you then offer, as an account of the matter, that Christ can do nothing, just as an unskilled apprentice can do nothing without his master's instructions, or a slave can do nothing without his Lord. Then He spoke falsely in calling Himself Master and Lord, and He deceived His disciples, 'You call Me Master and Lord, and you say well, for so I am'".
>
> "How, then, does the Son see the Father? A horse sees a painting, which naturally it is unable to imitate. Not thus does the Son behold the Father. A child sees the work of a grown man, but he cannot reproduce it; certainly not thus, again, does the Son see the Father."

[385] Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, IV, I, 57-58, 62.

The Last Supper

Third Gospel: Matthew 26:21-39 "The Last Supper"
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 11:23-32 "The Lord's Table"

The Lord's Supper is sometimes referred to as the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 10:21), and as the Bread of Heaven (John 6:32-33). The manna that fed Israel for 40 years in the wilderness was also a foreshadowing of the Lord's Supper. Manna was a mystery food, just like the bread and wine of the Lord's Supper. Moses said of the manna,

> "And he afflicted you and restricted you with hunger, and fed you with manna, which your fathers knew not; that he might teach you that man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God shall man live" (Deuteronomy 8:3 LXX).

In fact, the name "manna" means "What is it?" (Exodus 16:15)

The Priesthood of Melchizedek

An early hint of the Lord's Supper came from Melchizedek at the time of Abraham. There has been much discussion about the identity of Melchizedek. Paul pointed out (Hebrews 7:7) that the lesser (Abraham) is always blessed by the greater (Melchizedek). Was Melchizedek an angel? The giving of a tithe by Abraham to Melchizedek (Genesis 14:20) was an acknowledgment by Abraham that Melchizedek's priesthood was of God, and Abraham seemed to recognize Melchizedek as someone greater than himself, since the tithe was customarily presented to Deity (Leviticus 27:30-32, Deuteronomy 26:12-15). While angels' appearance often resembles that of the Son of God, angels are not spoken of as priests but as messengers ("Angel" means messenger) and as deacons (Hebrews 1:14, Greek).

Ambrose stated[386] that Melchizedek was not an angel but was a holy man and a priest of God who prefigured Christ as a "type" or a shadow of the Truth. Cyprian stated[387], "Melchizedek bore a type of Christ; He offered bread and wine and blessed Abraham. Who is more of a priest of the Most High God than our Lord Jesus Christ is, Who offered Himself as a sacrifice to God the Father. He offered the very same thing that Melchizedek offered; that is, bread and wine, namely, His body and blood".

The person Melchizedek was tied intimately with the person of the Messiah in Old Testament prophecy and in First Century expectation. Referring to the messianic expectation, Jesus asked the Pharisees a question, "What do you think about the Messiah? Whose Son is He?" They answered, "The Son of David." Jesus replied, "How then does David in the Spirit call Him Lord, saying 'The Lord said to My Lord, sit at My Right Hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool' (Psalms 110:1)? If David then calls Him 'Lord', how is He his Son?" This was very embarrassing for them and no one dared question Jesus any more (Matthew 22:41-46). The answer, of course, is that Christ is the Son of God in His Person and the Son of David in His humanity.

Thus everyone agreed that Psalm 110 was addressing the Messiah. In this light, Psalm 110 also states, "The Lord has sworn and will not change His mind. You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek" (Psalm 110:4). Paul quoted this in saying that Jesus

[386] Ambrose of Milan, Of the Christian Faith, III, xi, 87-89.
[387] Cyprian, Epistles, Lxii, 4.

fulfilled the prophecy of David in becoming High Priest according to the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 5:6, 10; 6:20; 7:21). The prophet Zachariah also foretold that Messiah would be both a ruler (i.e. King) and a priest (Zachariah 6:12-13).

Paul gives us some more illumination on who Melchizedek was (Hebrews 7:1-7). First, he is described as having no genealogy (Hebrews 7:3). In the First Century, this was indisputable since one could go look it up in the Temple. One possibility is for Melchizedek to have been the pre-incarnate Son of God, similar to some of the Theophanies. Summarizing some characteristics of Melchizedek:

CHARACTERISTIC	**REFERENCE**
No genealogy	Hebrews 7:3, 6
Neither beginning of days or end of life	Hebrews 7:3, 8, 16
Made like the Son of God	Hebrews 7:3
Blessed the Patriarch Abraham	Hebrews 7:1, 6-7
Blessed Priest of the Most High God	Hebrews 7:1
Blessed God who saved Abraham	Genesis 14:19
Received a tithe from Abraham	Hebrews 7:2, 4-5, Genesis 14:19

Paul was using the figure of Melchizedek to compare the Levitical priesthood to that of Christ. In doing so, he described Melchizedek as having no father and mother, no genealogy and neither beginning of days nor end of life (Hebrews 7:3,6,16). John Chrysostom stated[388] that when Paul described Melchizedek in these terms, he was speaking in comparison to the Levitical priesthood, and he meant that information about Melchizedek's parents, his birth and his death wasn't available. Records that were kept in the Temple in Jerusalem for determining the Levitical priests would not include Melchizedek if he were not a descendant of Shem. Similarly, genealogical records for Job, a descendant of Esau, were not kept in the Temple either. The point was that if Melchizedek was greater than Abraham and was a type of Christ, then Christ is far greater than Abraham, the priesthood of Christ is far greater than the Levitical priesthood, and genealogies are irrelevant.

No matter how one interprets the identity of Melchizedek, one can conclude that, as a minimum, the "Order of Melchizedek" takes on the meaning of a priestly function as it was originally intended at the Creation. Later the priestly function was restricted and limited to the Levites at the time of Moses (Numbers 3:12-13). Melchizedek first brought out bread and wine when Abraham returned from battle; then He blessed and received tithes from Abraham (Genesis 14:18-20). Bread and wine would be food that had already been prepared, and which could be distributed on short notice to the exhausted warriors. It is conspicuous, however, that there was no victory parade; no feast; no raucous celebration. There was just bread and wine!

Melchizedek gave everyone a glimpse of things to come with the bread and wine. When the Son of God came in the Incarnation, as our High Priest after the Order of Melchizedek (Hebrews 7:11-22, Psalm 110:4), He also brought bread and wine, blessed it, and said, "Take, eat, this is My Body" and "This is My Blood" (Matthew 26:26-29). Ignatius of Antioch referred[389] to the Lord's Supper as "the medicine of immortality". Yet it is a mystery as to how

[388] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XII, 3.
[389] Ignatius of Antioch, Ephesians 19.

the bread and the wine is the Lord's body and blood. He didn't explain it to Abraham and He doesn't explain it to us.

The Bread of Heaven

Around Passover of 29 AD, a year before the Crucifixion, many people were seeking Jesus. Jesus confronted them! They were seeking Him because they ate of the loaves and were filled at the feeding of the 5000. So He cautioned them to seek the food that endures to everlasting life (John 6:22-27). Using the leaven[390] of the Pharisees (Matthew 16:6-12, Luke 12:1), the crowds quoted Exodus 16:4-5, "Behold, I will rain bread (i.e. manna) from heaven for you" and asked Jesus what sign He will perform (John 6:30-31).

The manna in the wilderness was a foreshadowing of the Bread of Heaven. In his review of the 40 years in the wilderness, Moses spoke of the Bread of Heaven.

> "And He humbled you and let you be hungry, and fed you with manna which you did not know, nor did your fathers know, that He might make you understand that man does not live by bread alone, but man lives by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3).

There is a play on words in this statement. "Manna" in Hebrew means "What is it?" Therefore neither the people nor their fathers knew what it was. As soon as the people began to eat of the fruit of the Promised Land, the manna stopped as suddenly as it came (Joshua 5:12). The manna was a special mystery food, just like the Eucharist.

Jesus replied that it was not Moses who gave the people bread from heaven but His Father. "The Bread of Heaven is He Who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:33). He continued that He is the Bread of Life (John 6:35).

> "I am the Living Bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:51).

The Lord's Table is not magical, but needs to be mixed with faith. In this regard, Jesus spoke of the Lord's Supper as follows,

> "Truly I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in yourselves. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up on the last day. My Flesh is true food, and My Blood is true drink. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me and I in him. As the living Father sent Me and I live because of the Father, so he who eats Me, he also shall live because of Me. This is the Bread which came down out of heaven; not as the fathers ate, and died. He who eats this Bread shall live forever" (John 6:53-58).

These words caused quite a stir, even among Jesus' disciples. Some of them said, "This is a difficult statement; who can listen to it?" (John 6:60). In other words, they didn't agree, but didn't understand either. As a result, many of His disciples withdrew and did not walk with Him

[390] There is a dual use of the term "leaven" in the Scriptures. Christ in the Church will leaven the whole lump, and all who respond to Him will become holy (Galatians 5:9). On the other hand, sin among the brethren needs to be purged out so that it doesn't produce a leavening that goes in the other direction (1 Corinthians 5:6).

anymore (John 6:66). According to tradition[391], two of these disciples that left were the Evangelists Mark and Luke, but they later returned and wrote their Gospels. The Twelve stayed with Him (John 6:67-69) even though they didn't understand either what He said about the Bread of Heaven (Luke 24:30-35).

As Jesus did at the feeding of the 5,000 and the 4,000, so He did at the Last Supper. After blessing it, He broke it and gave it to them. At the Last Supper, He added, "Take, eat, this is My body" (Matthew 26:26, Mark 14:22, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:23-24). Similarly with the cup, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25-27).

Just as no one knew where Manna came from, so no one knows how the bread and the cup is the body and blood of the Lord. Manna was the Lord's miraculous provision just as it was His miraculous provision that their clothes and their sandals never wore out nor did their feet swell from walking during the 40 years in the wilderness (Deuteronomy 8:4, 29:5). The church has always referred to the Lord's Supper as "O Great Mystery!" and has recognized that it is not explainable. The bishops in the Church are referred to as "stewards of God" (Titus 1:7) and "Stewards of the Mysteries of God" (1 Corinthians 4:1-2), where the word *steward* (Greek *oikonomos*) refers to a household manager. In the Orthodox Church the Lord's Supper is reserved for those who confess the Orthodox Faith. This is not to be elitist but to elevate the Lord's Supper as the highest form of the unity of the Faith and to look forward to a time when the Church will no longer be divided. Just as the bread and the cup **IS** the body and blood of the Lord (it doesn't just represent the body and blood), so the bread and the cup **IS** the New Covenant. The Church has always considered the Lord's Supper to be the central part of worship as we "eat bread in the Kingdom of God" (Luke 14:15) around the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 10:21).

Just as manna was God's special provision to get His people through the wilderness (Exodus 16:35, Numbers 11:7), the Lord's Supper is God's special provision for the wilderness of this life. Once we have arrived in the Promised Land at the Second Coming, the manna will not be necessary and we will drink of the fruit of the vine new with our Lord (Matthew 26:29). At that time, everyone will know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34), and everywhere will be holy ground (Joshua 5:15). And we will all join the saints and angels in worshipping the captain of the host of the Lord.

We Are Seated in the Heavenly Places

In His Ascension, Jesus took His human body (of flesh and bones: Luke 24:39) to heaven. Enoch (Genesis 5:24, Hebrews 11:5) and Elijah (2 Kings 2:10-14) had already been taken to heaven with a human body; and Moses was there also, as evidenced by his transfiguration along with Jesus (Mark 9:4). But neither of these three saints had the resurrected, incorruptible body that Jesus had. Christ entered heaven with a resurrected and glorified humanity.

In this glorified body after the Resurrection, some people who knew Him well didn't recognize Him at first. Some examples of this are Mary Magdalene at the tomb (John 20:11-17), Luke and Cleopas on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-33) and the Apostles fishing on the Sea of Galilee (John 21:1-7). There was something different about His resurrected body, yet it was still recognizable on closer inspection. The nail holes were still there and were recognizable as

[391] Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles.

nail holes (John 20:25, 27); the spear puncture wound was still there (John 19:34). But yet the mortal (i.e. His human nature) had put on immortality and thus was changed.

In this transcendent, immortal body, He ascended to His Father. And "with His Own blood, He entered the Most Holy Place once for all, having obtained eternal redemption" (Hebrews 9:12). This has significant implications for us in the Body of Christ, the Church. Paul wrote how Christ "raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Ephesians 2:6). This takes place around the Lord's Table at the Lord's Supper, where He said, "This cup is the New Covenant in My blood" (Luke 22:20, 1 Corinthians 11:25). How the bread and wine becomes His resurrected body and blood is a mystery, just as how His glorified body passed through solid walls (John 20:19) is a mystery; and those who serve at the Altar are called stewards of the mysteries of God (1 Corinthians 4:1). If we refuse to eat the Lord's body and blood, we have no life in us; doing so, we have eternal life (John 6:53-58), for we partake of the New Covenant.

Thus by the man Christ entering heaven, He has opened the door to all humanity. His disciples understood this at the Ascension and returned to Jerusalem with great joy and were continually in the Temple praising and blessing God (Luke 24:52, 53). At Pentecost, the Twelve even extended the invitation to the very people who had crucified their Lord saying, "For the promise is to you and to your children, and to all who are afar off, as many as the Lord our God will call" (Acts 2:39).

Giving Thanks for All Things

One aspect of being filled with the Spirit is thankfulness. Paul said to give thanks for all things, not just those that we consider blessings. Remembering the story of Job, there were things going on that Job had no knowledge of. The Lord had spoken to Satan about Job's righteousness but Satan had challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 1:8-11, 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable such that Job was destitute and in great pain (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

John Chrysostom stated[392], "If you give thanks when you are in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that. Compare this to a man giving thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragement". As an example, one might recall Paul and Silas, broken and bleeding and sitting in a Philippian jail, but praying and singing hymns to God – at midnight (Acts 16:23-25).

Chrysostom encourages[393] us to give thanks even for hell itself: "For surely it is a thing beneficial to those who pay attention to it, when the dread of hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings which we see, but also for those which we don't see and for those which we receive against our will. For many are the blessings He bestows upon us without our desire, without our knowledge". In this regard, we need to remember how the story of Job ended. Job benefited greatly from his affliction both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:10:11).

[392] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, Vv. 18-21.
[393] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, Vv. 18-21.

Chrysostom encourages[394] us that whenever poverty, sickness or disasters affect us "then let us increase our thanksgiving; thanksgiving, I mean, not in words nor in tongue, but in deeds and in works, in mind and in heart". Further, he reminds us of the words of our Lord and of the Prophet Isaiah: "What man is there among you who, if his son asks for bread, will give him a stone? If you then, being evil, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will your Father who is in heaven give good gifts to those who ask Him" (Matthew 7:9, 11). "Can a woman forget her nursing child and have no compassion on the son of her womb? Even these may forget you, but I will not forget you (Isaiah 49:15).

The Eucharist:

The central part of the early Church worship was the giving of thanks (Greek: *eucharisteo* = to give thanks). The Greek word meaning to give thanks (*eucharisteo*) has been transliterated into English as the word Eucharist referring to the Lord's Supper. The "*eucharisteo*" was present when Jesus first instituted the Lord's Supper (Matthew 26:27, Mark 14:23, Luke 22:19, 1 Corinthians 11:24), and the name became associated with it.

The giving of thanks involves not just bread and wine, but also our calling in one Body (Colossians 3:15). We are called to one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one Baptism as well as one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). Therefore, the giving of thanks or Eucharist involves the unity of the Faith to a special degree. The result is that everything we do in word or in deed results in our giving thanks (Colossians 3:17). And thus we walk as children of light (Ephesians 5:8-21). Chrysostom stated[395], "For if we thus do, there will be nothing polluted, nothing unclean, wherever Christ is called on".

But it is more than just words, for Paul said, "In word and in deed" (Colossians 3:17). Chrysostom stated[396], "Let us give thanks then in all things, whatever may have happened; for this is true thankfulness. For to do so in prosperity alone is no great thing; but when in extremities we give thanks, then it is admirable. For when in circumstances under which others blaspheme and exclaim discontentedly, we give thanks, we do three things. First, we cause God to rejoice; next, we have shamed the devil; and third, we have made even that which has happened to be nothing. For if we exclaim discontentedly, the devil, standing close by, succeeded to his wish, and God, as being blasphemed, leaves us and the calamity is heightened. But if we give thanks, the devil, as gaining nothing, departs; and God, as being honored, rewards us with greater honor." Chrysostom likened those who give thanks in adversity to the experience of martyrs.

The Singing of Psalms:

Another aspect of the thanksgiving and worship of the Church – as it was with the synagogue – was the singing of psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. For example, after the Last Supper, Jesus and the Twelve sang a hymn before leaving for prayer in the Garden of Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26). That hymn was probably part of the Passover Liturgy that was sung after the Passover meal.

[394] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, Vv. 18-21.
[395] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 17.
[396] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, VIII, v. 15.

Chrysostom stated[397] that the origin of "hymns" is not human but the hymns are what is chanted by the Powers above. For example, when the angels and the cherubim chant "Glory to God in the highest" (Psalm 112:5) or "Holy, holy, holy, Lord God Almighty, who was and is and is to come" (Revelation 4:8); these are "hymns." On the other hand, Chrysostom continues, the heavenly Powers do not chant psalms; psalms come out of our human weakness in response to God.

Music as a means of teaching and admonishing (Colossians 3:16), is sometimes more effective than preaching. Antiphonal singing, which was started by Ignatius, Bishop of Antioch from 68-107 AD, accomplishes this quite well. As one listens to preaching, one can build up logical barriers to acceptance of what is being preached. In listening to music, the same tenets are often carried into one's heart with the melody before one can erect any barriers. Thus Paul encouraged the Colossians to sing "with Grace in your hearts to the Lord" (Colossians 3:16). As we sing to the Lord in worship, we also teach and admonish one another.

Chrysostom pointed out[398] a result or benefit of this on one's children: "But now your children will utter songs and dances of Satan where none of them knows any Psalm but it seems a thing to be ashamed of even, and a mockery and a joke. For whatever soil the plant grows in, such is the fruit it bears; if in a sandy and salty soil, of like nature is its fruit; if in a good and rich one, it is again similar. So the matter of instruction is a sort of fountain. Teach your child to sing those Psalms, which are so full of the love of wisdom, chastity and of not keeping company with the wicked. If one teaches a child to know Psalms, he will know hymns also."

"An additional benefit is ours by singing in our hearts to the Lord. This can be done in the marketplace as well as at home, with no one but God hearing us." Chrysostom compared[399] this very favorably with the way Moses prayed and that even when walking or working at our job, we can pray in our hearts and dwell above.

He Prepares a Table before Me

One of the most familiar of the Psalms is the 23rd Psalm, where David uses imagery that he drew from his youth when he cared for his family's sheep. During his shepherding, David killed both a lion and a bear in hand to hand fighting to protect the sheep (1 Samuel 17:32-36).

Christ also said that He is the Good Shepherd (John 10:11) and He is also the door to the sheepfold (John 10:7). Anyone who tries to enter the sheepfold without coming in by the door is a thief and a robber (John 10:1). As the Good Shepherd, He laid His life down for the sheep (John 10:15), just as David put his life on the line protecting his family's sheep.

The 23rd Psalm goes beyond just caring for the sheep with green pastures, still water (Psalm 23:2) and freedom from fear in the valley of the shadow of death (Psalm 23:4). The Good Shepherd also sets a table before us in the presence of our enemies. This table has generally been interpreted as the Lord's Table (1 Corinthians 10:21) which is the Lord's Supper. To be welcome at the Lord's Table, He needs to lead us in the paths of righteousness (Psalm 23:3). For we need to examine ourselves before partaking of the Lord's body and blood in order to avoid eating and drinking judgment on ourselves by not discerning the Lord's body. The

[397] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.
[398] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.
[399] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.

judgment incurred by the Corinthians for not discerning the Lord's body was that some were weak, some were sick and others had died (1 Corinthians 11:28-30).

The result is that around the Lord's Table, He anoints our head with oil (Psalm 23:5) and makes us kings and priests to God the Father (Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 1 Peter 2:5, 9). Around the Lord's Table, our cup runs over (Psalm 23:5) as the Lord does "exceedingly abundantly above all that we ask or think, according to the power that works in us (Ephesians 3:20). And we will dwell in the house of the Lord forever (Psalm 23:6), in the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21, 22).

First Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 19:10-19 "Preparation at Mt. Sinai"

The Reading from Exodus reminds us that the same Person, Who instituted the Lord's Supper, also gave the Law from the midst of the fire on Mt. Sinai. In both cases, the intent was to lead the Lord's people to Christ (Romans 10:4), but each case had a different perspective.

The Law was our pedagogue until Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). The Law also predated Moses, and Adam knew the major aspects of the Law. Tertullian expressed[400] this as follows, "For in this law given to Adam, we recognize in embryo all the precepts which afterward sprouted up when given through Moses. That is, you shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and out of your whole soul; you shall love your neighbor as yourself, etc". John Cassian added[401] that how else could Abel have known to offer to God a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock using the fat portions (Genesis 4:4), unless he had been taught by the Law (Exodus 13:12, Leviticus 3:3-10)? How could Noah have distinguished what animals were clean and what were unclean (Genesis 7:2), when the commandment of the Law (Deuteronomy 14) had not yet been given by Moses?

Knowledge of the Law by faith brought Abraham to Christ. Jesus said of Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). As a result, Abraham is referred to as "The father of all those who believe" (Romans 4:11). Those who obey the Law as Abraham did are now sons of Abraham and heirs according to the promise and are blessed with the believing Abraham (Galatians 3:7, 9, 29).

One might say, "The law is not made for a righteous person" (1 Timothy 1:9). The Law was very versatile and was designed both for those who had a heart of faith and for those who were stiff-necked. Abraham did not need the details of the Law because his heart was right. The Early Church taught[402] that God bound Israel for the hardness of their hearts, that by sacrificing, and resting, and purifying themselves, etc., they might come to the knowledge of God, who ordained these things for them. The Mosaic Law bridged a gap until the coming of Christ when the Law would be written on men's hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and the Holy Spirit would take up residence in men's bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

The giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai was a very dramatic event, where God spoke directly to all His people for the first time, and this made a lasting impression on the people of God. The appearance of the mountaintop looked like it "burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens" (Deuteronomy 4:11). This was an awesome spectacle, accompanied by the thunder, the

[400] Tertullian, Answer to Jews, I, iii, 2.
[401] John Cassian, Conferences I, viii, 23.
[402] Apostolic Constitutions VI, iv, 20.

lightning, the smoke and the very loud trumpet sound (Exodus 19:16), in addition to the earthquake (Psalm 114:4), all of which Basil the Great attributed[403] to the angels around the Throne of God. Moses reminded Israel not to forget these spectacular events (Deuteronomy 4:10), and so did the Psalmist (Psalm 104:32). Not only did God speak to His people personally from the midst of the fire (Deuteronomy 4:36), but Moses walked up the mountain right into this fire (Exodus 24:16-18). Moses' account of this is as follows:

> "Ask of the former days which were before you, from the day when God created man upon the earth, and beginning at the one end of heaven to the other end of heaven, if there has happened anything like to this great event, if such a thing has been heard. Has a nation have heard the voice of the living God speaking out of the midst of the fire, as you have heard, and lived to tell about it?" (Deuteronomy 4:32 LXX).

These events became known to the world (Deuteronomy 4:33). Clement of Alexandria referred[404] to this as, "The Lord's Voice, the Word, without shape, the Power of the Word, the luminous Word of the Lord, and the Truth from heaven, coming to the assembly of the Church". All the neighboring nations knew how the plagues and the Red Sea decimated Egypt (Joshua 2:9-11). They knew how the Lord had fought for Israel against Amalek in the wilderness (Exodus 17:8-16). They knew how Israel had overrun Og and Sihon, the kings of the Amorites who were both stronger than Israel (Deuteronomy 4:38), and how the hornets had helped (Joshua 2:10, 24:12). This had never been done before: taking out a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and by wonders (Deuteronomy 4:34-37). How could any nation contend with Israel when the supernatural was normal procedure?

There is a connection between the Law and Grace. The giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai and the giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost occurred on the same day. These two events are related because the Law is spiritual (Romans 7:14) and needs to be understood spiritually. When Christ came, He stated, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one piece of a Hebrew letter (about the size of the dot of an i) will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18). As John Chrysostom stated, "The Law is not the adversary but the fellow worker of Grace."

The Law is very useful today, especially for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16), and early Apostolic teaching[405] warned people about speaking evil of the Law. In many of the Orthodox Church services, we ask that God (1) may teach us His commandments; (2) that He might make us understand His commandments and (3) that He might enlighten us with His commandments. The Law teaches us that man "does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). As the Holy Spirit burns within us, we can also hear God speaking to us from the fire within us if we have a heart to listen.

Another similarity between the Giving of the Law and the Lord's Table is that both require preparation. To prepare the people to hear the holy Word of God speaking with a voice of thunder from the midst of the fire on Mt. Sinai, Moses had the people prepare to become a kingdom of priests by:

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[403] Basil the Great, On the Spirit, Ch. 14.
[404] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata VI, iv.
[405] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, iv, 19.

- Washing their clothes
- Fasting from sex
- Consecration by Moses

Anyone, man or beast that touched the holy mountain that the Lord God came down on was to be put to death (Exodus 19:10-15). Under Old Testament Law, if the people didn't purify themselves, they couldn't bring an animal sacrifice because they would be unclean! Although Old Testament purification rites required those who offered sacrifices to wash in clean water beforehand; the water just cleaned up the offerer to qualify him to offer the sacrifice (Exodus 29:4, Leviticus 8:6, Exodus 19:10-15, Exodus 30:18-21).

In a similar situation, Great Vespers on Saturday evening prepares us to receive the Lord's Table. We also purify ourselves to meet a Holy God; and failure to do so makes us guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. Regarding this, Paul stated,

> "Therefore whoever eats this bread or drinks *this* cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning the Lord's body. For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep. If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1 Corinthians 11:27-31).

In most Orthodox Churches, provision is made for confession of sins at Vespers or Matins prior to participation at the Lord's Table.

Some people refrain from partaking of the Eucharist out of fear. Fear is OK, but partaking of the Eucharist is not about how holy one is, and is not a reward for righteousness. The decision to partake should not be made on the basis of "Am I good enough?" The answer will always be "No!" It's like people refraining from going to a hospital until they get well. The point is to prepare oneself with the proper robe of humility, and confession of sins is part of that.

The Farewell Discourse

April 8, 2004

1st Gospel Reading for Holy Thursday Evening: John 13:31-18:1

This Reading is the first of twelve Gospel Readings prescribed for Holy Thursday Evening. It is presented here in the interest of continuity of time, since this Farewell Discourse was given after the Institution of the Lord's Supper (preceding discussion) but before arriving at the Garden of Gethsemane (which follows). In the middle of the Farewell Discourse, Jesus said, "Arise, let us go from here" (John 14:31). As He finished the Farewell Discourse, He and His disciples crossed the Brook Kidron into the Garden of Gethsemane (John 18:1). Thus the second half of the Farewell Discourse may have been given as they were in transit.

A New Commandment: John 13:31-35

At the beginning of the Farewell Discourse, Jesus stated, "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another; as I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35).

This was not supposed to be new, because it was well-established as part of the Mosaic Law. The Greatest Commandment, which was part of a Creed, that was recited every Sabbath[406], contained as its most basic elements, love for God with our whole heart and love for neighbor as ourselves. But the religious leaders did not honor this, and they practiced the opposite. Thus it was new in that love for one another was to become the distinguishing characteristic for the Church, and the love was to be modeled on the love of Christ for us, and not just as we love ourselves. Love for ourselves varies from individual to individual; Christ's love for us sets a new standard as a selfless, sacrificial love.

Love for one's brother in keeping with the Greatest Commandment meant a lot in the 1st century. "By this we know love, because He laid down His life for us. And we also ought to lay down our lives for the brethren" (1 John 3:16). After all, Christ instructed us to love others as He had loved us. "A new commandment I give to you, that you love one another. As I have loved you, that you also love one another. By this all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another" (John 13:34-35). This "new commandment" is "new" in the sense that the quality of our love is measured against that of Christ Himself, and is to be a sacrificial love as His was. "Let nothing be done through selfish ambition or conceit, but in lowliness of mind let each esteem others better than himself" (Philippians 2:3). The way this works out was described by the Lord as feeding, welcoming, visiting, and clothing the least of these My brethren. Refusing to do this to the least of the members of the Body of Christ is the same as refusing to do so to the Lord Himself (Matthew 25:37-40). "But whoever has this world's goods, and sees his brother in need, and shuts up his heart from him, how does the love of God abide in him?" (1 John 3:17).

John Chrysostom commented[407] on this to say that the love we should have extends especially toward those that hate us. When we show love to someone, and they show love in

[406] Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 245, 101-104.

[407] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XXVII, v. 15:7.

return, they "pay us back". But when we show love and the person returns hate instead, it is God that "pays us back". The more perverse the person we show love toward, the greater the Lord recompenses us.

> "But you are called to a greater citizenship, and are enrolled in the books of Heaven, and are liable to greater laws. For the reward is greater then, when one draws to himself a person not minded to love. If Christ bids us invite to supper those that cannot make us any recompense, that what goes for recompense may be the greater. Much more ought we to do this in regard to friendship. Now he that is loved and loves in return, pays you a recompense. But he that is loved and does not love in return, has made God a debtor to you in another sense. And besides, when he loves you, it is easy for him to do so. When he doesn't love you, then he stands in need of your assistance. Don't make this difficulty a cause for listlessness. Do not say, because he is sick, that is the reason I take no care of him (for the dulling of love is indeed a sickness), but be sure to warm again that which has become chilled.
>
> But suppose he will not be warmed, what then? Continue to do your own part. What if he grows more perverse? He is but procuring to you so much greater returns, and shows you to be so much the greater imitator of Christ. For if the loving one another was to be the characteristic of disciples (John 13:35), consider how great the loving of one that hates us must be. For your Master loved those that hated Him, and called them to Him; and the weaker they were, the greater the care He showed them. For He said, (Matthew 9:12), "Those that are whole need not a physician, but those that are sick".

When Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, He revealed this aspect of love. When we consider Who Jesus is, we might ask, 'Why did Jesus need to be baptized at all by John?' John actually tried to prevent Jesus from baptism saying that he needed to be baptized by Jesus, not vice versa (Matthew 3:14). Jesus stated, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness" (Matthew 3:15). So John allowed Him to be baptized and the Uncreated accepted the laying on of hands by His own creation.

But what did this manifestation of God mean in terms of "fulfilling all righteousness"? Jesus said later that "He came not to destroy the Law or the Prophets but to fulfill" (Matthew 5:17). Also, "till heaven and earth pass away nothing will pass from the Law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). Jesus also defined the gist of the Law as being summarized in the Greatest Commandment: "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and mind; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-40, Mark 12:29-34). Jesus quantified this love for neighbors as a sacrificial love just like His love for man: "A new commandment I give you, that you love one another: as I have love you, that you also love one another" (John 13:34). By humbling ourselves like Christ and loving one another like this, true righteousness is generated.

John Chrysostom commented[408] on this kind of love to say that love for one another is greater than any kind of miraculous signs:

> "If love were truly observed, there would be neither slave nor free, neither ruler nor ruled, neither rich nor poor, neither small nor great. Nor would any devil then ever have been known. For sooner would grass endure the application

[408] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXII, 11.

of fire than the devil the flame of love. Love is stronger than any wall, is firmer than any adamant; or if you can name any material stronger than this, the firmness of love transcends them all."

"Therefore Paul says that the love of which we are speaking is the mother of all good things, and prefers it to miracles and all other gifts. Where there are vests and sandals of gold, we require some other garments by which to distinguish the king. But if we see the purple and the crown, we don't require any other sign of his royalty. Similarly, when the crown of love is upon our head, it is enough to point out the genuine disciple of Christ; not to us only, but to the unbelievers. For, 'by this', says He, 'all will know that you are My disciples, if you have love for one another' (John 13:35). This sign is greater than all signs, in that the disciple is recognized by it. Though anyone should work 10,000 signs, but be at strife one with another, they will be a scorn to the unbelievers. Just as if they do no signs, but love one another exactly, they will continue to be reverenced by all men".

Peter's Denials Foretold: John 13:36-38

Jesus had just said to His disciples, "Where I am going, you cannot come" (John 13:33). Simon Peter said to Him, "Lord, where are You going?" Jesus answered him, "Where I am going you cannot follow Me now, but you shall follow Me afterward". Peter said to Him, "Lord, why can I not follow You now? I will lay down my life for Your sake". Jesus answered him, "Will you lay down your life for My sake? Most assuredly, I say to you, the rooster shall not crow till you have denied Me three times" (John 13:36-38).

Peter's life was characterized by a fervent love for Christ, and he desired to go everywhere with Him. Along with others of the Twelve, Peter had left behind a profitable fishing business that he and his brother Andrew had built up, and had no material gain or benefit to show for it. Peter was hurt that he couldn't follow His Lord where He was going. Of course, Christ was going to the Cross and to Hades to lead captivity captive; Peter couldn't follow Him there. But He said that Peter will follow afterward; this refers to Peter's crucifixion upside down by Emperor Nero in c. 67 AD.

John Chrysostom commented[409] on Peter's remarks to say that this was a learning process for Peter that would teach him to trust in the Master to a fuller extent, and also to have mercy on his fellow Christians who are experiencing the same things.

"You shall know from this temptation that your love is nothing without the presence of the impulse from above. In Christ's care for Peter, He allowed even that fall. He desired to teach him even by the first words; when he continued in his vehemence, He did not force him into the denial, but left him alone, that he might learn his own weakness".

"Christ taught him humility, and proved that human nature by itself is nothing. But, since great love made him open for contradiction, He now sobers him that he might not later be subject to this, when he should have received the stewardship of the world; remembering what he had suffered, he might know himself. Look at the violence of his fall; it did not happen to him once or twice, but he was so beside himself, that in a short time, three times did he utter the words of denial, that he might learn that he did not so love as he was loved. Yet,

[409] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIII, 1.

to one who had so fallen, Christ said afterward, 'Do you love Me more than these?' (John 21:15) The denial was caused not by the cooling of his love, but from his having been stripped of aid from above. He accepts Peter's love, but cuts off the spirit of contradiction engendered by it. If you love, you ought to obey Him whom you love. Do you know you what a thing it is to contradict God? Peter did not learn that it was impossible that what Christ says should not come to pass, Peter had to learn it by the denial".

Thomas and Philip Want to Understand Where Christ Was Going: John 14:1-14

As Jesus was explaining to His disciples that He was going to prepare a place for them, Thomas was confused.

> "Jesus said, 'Where I go you know, and the way you know'. Thomas said to Him, 'Lord, we do not know where You are going, and how can we know the way?' Jesus said to him, 'I am the way, the truth, and the life. No one comes to the Father except through Me. If you had known Me, you would have known My Father also; and from now on you know Him and have seen Him'. Philip said to Him, 'Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us'. Jesus said to him, 'Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father[410]; so how can you say, 'Show us the Father'?'" (John 14:4-9)

The Twelve had heard from the Father on three separate occasions: First, at Jesus' baptism (Matthew 3:17), second, at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:5), and third, four days earlier on Palm Sunday (John 12:28).

John Chrysostom stated[411] that when Peter asked, "Lord, where are You going?", he did so out of loving affection. But when Thomas asked about not knowing the way, he did so out of uncertainty and cowardice. Thomas did not say "Tell us the place", but, "We do not know where you are going". The Twelve had long desired to hear about the place He was going to, and when they got the courage to ask, they did so from both great love and from anxiety. Their problem was looking past the veil of Christ's flesh that concealed His Deity. Chrysostom continued[412]:

> "But Christ set him straight, persuading him to gain the knowledge of the Father through Himself, while Philip desired to see Him with these bodily eyes. They had perhaps heard concerning the Prophets, that they 'saw God' (Exodus 33:20-23). Christ said, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18); and again, 'Every man that has heard and has learned from God comes to Me' (John 6:45). 'You have not heard His voice at any time and you have not seen His shape' (John 5:37). And in the Old Testament, 'No man shall see My face, and live' (Exodus 33:20).
>
> But Christ did not say, 'Have you not seen Me', but, 'Have you not known Me'. If Christ is truly of the same substance as the Father, yet still the Son, He shows in Himself Him who begot Him. If the Twelve had truly known Jesus as the Son of God, they would have known the Father also. Jesus stated that he that

[410] For more discussion on Philip's question and its significance on clarifying the persons of the Godhead, see Mark Kern, The Apostle Philip, Unpublished Work, 2002, pp 7-15.
[411] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIII, 2.
[412] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIV, 1.

knows My Essence, knows that of the Father also. But to make use of a grosser argument, no man can discern what gold is by examining silver. For one nature is not shown by another. Wherefore He rightly rebuked him, saying, 'Am I so long with you?' Because He was clothed with flesh, therefore He said, 'Have you not known Me?'"

The Coming of the Holy Spirit: John 14:15-17

The Lord said to His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever— the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:15-17).

The Holy Spirit is called "The Helper" meaning one called alongside to help (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), and Jesus described the role of the Holy Spirit again later in this conversation[413] after the Last Supper (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit in us is a key element in the coming together of "the city with solid foundations whose craftsman and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). With the Holy Spirit at work in us, we are described as containing treasure in earthenware vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). The exterior of our human frailties may be rough, but God has chosen to dwell there.

From this point of view, the question of Jesus' disciples just before He ascended is very timely, "Lord will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The answer was no; the city's not ready yet! The earthenware vessels, containing the treasure, still need some work.

Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the Holy Spirit, saying, "Thus says the Lord, 'In a favorable time I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you'" (Isaiah 49:8). The help referred to is the Lord's guidance to springs or fountains of water (Isaiah 49:10, John 7:37-39) which represents the Holy Spirit. Gentiles will be part of this, "Behold, they shall come from afar; and lo, these will come from the North and the West, and these from the land of Persia (Isaiah 49:12 LXX). The Church Fathers have interpreted the reference to Persia as referring to the Magi coming to visit the infant Jesus. In this day of salvation, the Lord will comfort His people (Isaiah 49:13) and have compassion on them (Isaiah 49:10, 13) as a nursing mother does her child (Isaiah 49:14-15). Thus we receive the Comforter (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, Acts 9:31, Romans 8:15) with baptism and the newly baptized receive the pure milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2).

The Place of the Law with Regard to the Holy Spirit

Immediately prior to mentioning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15), and "He who has My Commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" (John 14:21), and "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14:24). We sometimes dissociate "The Commandments" from the Grace of the Holy Spirit as if we're beyond the elementary principles of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-8). Sometimes overlooked in Paul's famous argument of Law vs. Grace are Paul's statements: "Therefore the Law is holy, and the

[413] **See the Section describing this later conversation for more details.**

Commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12). "For we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14). "I agree with the Law that it is good" (Romans 7:16).

Paul continued, "Therefore the Law was our tutor until Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). For the Law, by itself, cannot dictate conditions of the heart. "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

John Chrysostom pointed[414] out that the when the Lord said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15), "His commandments and the sum of them are, 'You shall love the Lord your God, and your neighbor as yourself'. Therefore to love God is to love one's neighbor, 'For if you love Me', He said, 'O Peter, feed My sheep' (John 21:16, 17). But to love one's neighbor works a keeping of the commandments; with reason does He then say, "'On these hang all the Law and the Prophets'".

John Chrysostom went on to say[415] that the problem the disciples had was actually a lack of love for God. True love for God would not have displayed sorrow and cowardice. Their despondency at His words about going to the Cross displayed a lack of faith and a lack of love for God. The hearing of His Commandments is a proof of love for God.

> "It is not enough merely to have them, we need also an exact keeping of them. But why does He frequently repeat the same thing to them? (John 14:15, 21, 24) I think that He alluded to their despondency; for since He had uttered many wise sayings to them concerning death, saying, 'He that hates his life in this world shall save it for life eternal' (John 12:25); and, 'Unless a man take his cross and follow Me, he is not worthy of Me' (Matthew 10:38). He is about to say other things besides, rebuking them, 'Do you think that you suffer sorrow from love? Not sorrowing would be a sign of love'. And because He wished all along to establish this, as He went on He summed up His discourse in this same point; 'If you loved Me you would have rejoiced, because I go to My Father' (John 14:28), but now you are in this state through cowardice. To be thus disposed towards death is not for those who remember My commandments; for you ought to be crucified, if you truly loved Me, for My word exhorts you not to be afraid of those that kill the body. Those that are such both the Father and I love."
>
> "So that he that hears not these sayings not only does not love Me, but neither does he love the Father. If this is the sure proof of love, the hearing the commandments, and these are of the Father, he that hears them loves not the Son only, but the Father also. 'I speak not without the Father, nor say anything of Myself contrary to what seems good to Him'".

The Mosaic Law as Being Spiritual

The Greatest Commandment of the Law as stated is the Gospel is:

- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37), and
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39).

Jesus called these two parts "the first" and "the second", where the second is like the first (Matthew 22:39). These words did not just fall out of the sky; they had been an integral part of

[414] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXI.
[415] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

the Mosaic Law from the beginning (Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 30:6, Leviticus 19:18). Israel was instructed to teach this to their children diligently (Deuteronomy 6:7). They were instructed to bind them into phylacteries on their foreheads (Deuteronomy 6:8) and write them on the door posts of their houses (Deuteronomy 6:9).

The Mosaic Law defined keeping the Greatest Commandment as being "circumcised in heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6, 10:16). If they obeyed the Lord and kept this commandment (and its corollaries), the Lord promised to bless them above all the nations of the earth. He would open for them His good storehouse to bless them so that they could lend to and evangelize the nations (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 12). The Greatest Commandment was even used as a Creed[416] in the Synagogue worship, and it was one of the first things children learned in school. Thus, in questions with the Jewish leaders, there was no argument about what is the Greatest Commandment. This was so fundamental to the Mosaic Law that it was obvious.

In Mark's account, Jesus prefaced His response with the introduction to the Creed used in the Synagogue worship, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). After reciting the Greatest Commandment, Jesus concluded, "There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31). In Matthew's account, Jesus summarized the Greatest Commandment by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

Some people today feel that the Ten Commandments aren't applicable anymore: they say we're under Grace not Law because of the New Covenant (Romans 6:14). Yet does this mean that we don't need to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength and our neighbor as our self?

The Lord Himself stated that, "Do not think I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one point (small part of a Hebrew letter) will by no means pass from the Law until all is fulfilled. Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). The Lord went on to describe how we need to take the precepts of the Law to heart and apply them to our thoughts and intentions as well as to our deeds (Matthew 5:21-48).

Early Christian teaching[417] included a greater emphasis on the Law than is present today. "He nowhere has dissolved the law, but fulfilled it. For Moses himself, who was at once the lawgiver, the high priest, the prophet, and the king, and Elijah, the zealous follower of the prophets, were present at our Lord's transfiguration on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-8). They were witnesses of His incarnation and of His sufferings, as the intimate friends of Christ, but not as enemies and strangers. Thus it is demonstrated that the law is good and holy, as also the prophets."

The usefulness of the Law is as a tutor to get us started in the right direction (Galatians 3:24, 25). As we grow in the Faith and can distinguish the Holy Spirit speaking to us, we don't

[416] Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 245, 101-104.
[417] Apostolic Constitutions VI, iv, 19-20.

need the Law anymore, because it is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 10:16-17). John Chrysostom stated[418],

> "The Law is not the adversary but the fellow worker of Grace. But if when Grace is come, the Law continues to hold us down, it becomes an adversary. If it confines those who ought to go forward to Grace, then it is the destruction of our salvation. If a candle which gave light by night kept us, when it became day, from the sun, it would not only cease to benefit us, but would injure us. So does the Law if it stands between the greater benefits of Grace and us. Just so a tutor or pedagogue makes a youth ridiculous, by retaining him with himself, when time calls for his departure".

Christ's Presence with His People: John 14:18-26

As Jesus spoke to His disciples, they still understood in the terms that they were familiar with. They had seen Him raise Lazarus, Jairus' daughter and the son of the widow of Nain from the dead (John 11:38-46, Mark 5:35-43, Luke 7:11-16). But regarding His own Resurrection, He was speaking differently; He referred to not just the Resurrection, but also to the Ascension and Pentecost. He said, "I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you. A little while longer and the world will see Me no more, but you will see Me. Because I live, you will live also" (John 14:18-19). These were mystical statements to them, and they didn't understand.

John Chrysostom commented[419] on Jesus' statement, "At that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you" (John 14:20). The same words, such as son of God, mean different things when applied to Christ and to us.

> "With regard to the Father, these words, "I am in My Father", refer to Essence; with regard to the disciples, "I in you" refer to agreement of mind and help from God. Great and altogether boundless is the interval between Christ and the disciples. If the same words are employed, do not marvel; for the Scripture tends to use in different senses the same words, when applied to God and to men. Thus we are called 'gods' (Psalm 82:6, John 10:34-36) and 'sons of God' (Luke 20:36, Romans 8:14, Galatians 3:26); yet the word has not the same force when applied to us and to God. The Son is called 'Image' (Colossians 1:15), and 'Glory' (John 12:23, 13:31-32); so are we (1 Corinthians 11:7), but great is the interval between us. Again, 'You are Christ's, and Christ is God's' (1 Corinthians 3:23); but not in like manner as Christ is God's are we Christ's. But what is it that He said? 'When I am arisen', He said, 'you shall know that I am not separated from the Father, but have the same power with Him, and that I am with you continually. When facts proclaim the aid which comes to you from Me, you will see this when your enemies are kept down and you speak boldly, when dangers are removed from your path, when the preaching of the Gospel flourishes day by day, when all yield and give ground to the word of the true Faith".

The Apostle Jude had asked, "How will You show Yourself to us and not to the world?" (John 14:22) Chrysostom commented[420] that Jesus planned to reveal Himself in a new way to His disciples. His reason for doing this is 'Because you keep My commandments'. It will not be

[418] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap 3.
[419] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 2.
[420] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

as a phantom dead-man-walking, or as in a dream of a dead man, but in His resurrected and transformed human flesh.

> "'As the Father reveals Himself, so also do I', Jesus said. And not in this way only He removed the suspicion, but also by saying, 'We will make Our abode with him', a thing which does not belong to dreams. But observe the disciple (Jude) confounded, and not daring to say plainly what he desired to say. He did not say, 'Woe to us, that You die, and will come to us as the dead come'. Jesus then said, that 'I accept you, because you keep My commandments'. In order that they might not, when they should see Him afterwards, regard Him to be an apparition, which was their first impression (John 20:19-20), therefore He said these things beforehand. He tells them also the reason, 'Because you keep My commandments'; He said that the Spirit also will appear in like manner. Now if after having accompanied Him so long time, they cannot yet endure that Essence, or rather cannot even imagine It, what would have been their case had He appeared this way to them at the first? On this account also He ate with them after the Resurrection that the action might not seem to be an illusion. If they thought this when they saw Him walking on the waters, although His form was seen by them, and He was not far distant, what would they have imagined had they suddenly seen Him arisen whom they had seen embalmed? (John 19:39-42) Therefore He continually tells them that He will appear, why He will appear, and how He will appear, that they may not suppose Him to be an apparition".

It was necessary that Christ depart so that the Holy Spirit might come (John 7:39). It was the role of the Holy Spirit to bring all the things that Jesus had said to their remembrance (John 14:26). John Chrysostom said[421] of this:

> "'If these things are not clear to you now, 'He', the Holy Spirit, is a clear teacher of them'. And the, 'He dwells with you' (John 14:17), is the expression of One implying that Christ Himself will depart. That they may not be grieved, He said, that as long as He should remain with them and the Spirit should not come, they would be unable to comprehend anything great or sublime. This He said to prepare them to bear nobly His departure, as that which was to be the cause of great blessings to them. He continually calls Him 'Comforter', because of the afflictions which then possessed them (i.e. from the Jewish leaders). Even after hearing these things they were troubled: when they thought of the sorrows, the wars, His departure; see how He calms them again by saying, 'Peace[422] I leave to you'".

Christ's Departure: John 14:27-31

Christ Goes to His Father

In speaking of His departure, Jesus said,

> "Peace I leave with you, My peace I give to you; not as the world gives do I give to you. Let not your heart be troubled, neither let it be afraid. You have heard Me say to you, 'I am going away and coming *back* to you.' If you loved Me, you would rejoice because I said, 'I am going to the Father', for My Father is

[421] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

[422] That is, "Shalom", the universal greeting in Hebrew from one person to another. This expression is also part of the Orthodox Liturgy, "Peace be to all!"

> greater than I. And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe (John 14:27-29).

The disciples did not understand Who Jesus was, much less the Resurrection. Yet they did understand that the Father was Almighty, and they could have rejoiced that Jesus was going to the Father, if fear and confusion hadn't clouded their thinking. John Chrysostom said[423] of this:

> "They did not yet know concerning the Resurrection, nor had they right opinion concerning Him. For how could they, who did not even know that He would rise again? But they thought that the Father was mighty. He said then, that 'If you are fearful for Me, as not able to defend Myself, and if you are not confident that I shall see you again after the Crucifixion, yet when you heard that I go to the Father, you ought to have rejoiced because I go away to One that is greater, and able to undo all dangers'. 'You have heard Me say to you'. Why has He emphasized this? Because, He said, 'I am so firmly confident about the things which come to pass, that I even foretell them. So far am I from fearing!'"

The Father is Greater

In taking on human flesh, Jesus emptied Himself[424] and took on the form of a slave (Philippians 2:7). Prior to that, He was in the form of God and equal to God the Father (Philippians 2:6, John 5:18, 10:33, Colossians 2:9). In becoming a man, born of the Virgin Mary, He took on poverty and laid aside His eternal wealth (2 Corinthians 8:9). He came to serve, not to be served (Matthew 20:28).

In ascending back to the Father, Jesus sat down at the Right Hand of God[425]. From there, He will return again at the Right Hand of Power (Mark 14:62, Psalm 110:1, Revelation 19:11-16). From this point of view, we can rejoice that Jesus ascended back to the Father (John 14:28).

Prior to the Crucifixion, the disciples were struggling to understand Who Jesus was. The events of the Crucifixion itself were going to be instrumental in helping the disciples come to grips with Who He is as they see Him as Master over death itself. And therefore He said, "And now I have told you before it comes, that when it does come to pass, you may believe[426] that I AM" (John 13:19). By saying it this way, He was identifying Himself with the same person Who spoke to Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:13-14).

But yet many have struggled with Jesus' statement, "My Father is greater than I". To some, this implies that Jesus is not God, or at best He is some kind of lesser God, but not equal to the Father. The Father can be thought of as "The Fountainhead", and therefore can be said to be "greater", but Christ is of the same Essence in His Divinity, being "God of God". John Chrysostom addressed[427] this by saying:

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[423] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 4.

[424] This statement is often used by heretics to "prove" that Jesus is not equal to the Father.

[425] See for example Mark 16:19, Luke 22:69, Acts 7:55-56, Romans 8:34, Ephesians 1:20, Colossians 3:1, Hebrews 1:3, 8:1, 10:12, 12:2, 1 Peter 3:22.

[426] Some English translations, not understanding the implications of the Hebrew "I AM" leave out the words "that I AM" in order to present a better English sentence. "I AM" is the Name God used for Himself when He spoke to Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:14). See also John 8:28, 58; 13:19; 18:5, 6. The words "that I AM" are omitted in the Greek text in John 14:29, but are present in the Greek text in John 13:19.

[427] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 4.

"As though He had said, 'You would not have known, had I not told you. I should not have told you, had I not been confident'. Do you see that the speech is one of condescension? When He said, 'Do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels?' (Matthew 26:53), He spoke to the secret thoughts of the hearers. No one, even in the height of madness, would say that He was not able to help Himself, but needed Angels. But because they thought of Him as a man, therefore He spoke of 'twelve legions of Angels'. Yet He asked a question of those who came to take Him, and they all fell backwards (John 18:6). If any one says that the Father is greater, inasmuch as He is the cause of the Son, we will not contradict this[428]. But this does not by any means make the Son to be of a different Essence. But what He said, is of this kind, 'As long as I am here, it is natural that you should deem that I am a in danger; but when I am gone there, be confident that I am in safety; for Him none will be able to overcome'. All these words were addressed to the weakness of the disciples, for, 'I Myself am confident, and care not for death'. On this account, He said, 'I have told you these things before they come to pass, but since you are not yet able to receive the saying concerning them, I bring you comfort even from the Father, whom you entitle great."

The Ruler of This World Has Nothing In Me

Jesus stated, "I will no longer talk much with you, for the ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me. But that the world may know that I love the Father, and as the Father gave Me commandment, so I do. Arise, let us go from here" (John 14:27-31). By saying that the ruler of this world (Satan) has nothing in Me, Jesus was saying that Satan could find no sin in Him with which to accuse Him. Christ allowed Satan to put Him to death, even though he found in Him nothing that deserved death. Thus Satan will be judged for the unjust murder of the Son of God. As the accuser of all men (Revelation 12:10), Satan has grounds for putting them to death, since all have sinned and fall short of the glory of God (Romans 3:23). But not so Christ! It is clear that he did this wrongfully! Therefore in Him the whole world shall be avenged, and Satan will have been judged by his own standards.

For more discussion on this topic, see the Study for Holy Wednesday Bridegroom Matins in the Section titled, "The Cross Will Be the Judgment of the World".

John Chrysostom pointed out[429] how Christ's love for His Father affected Him during all He went through. The disciples could see that Christ's action could not be destructive nor hurtful, since the Father greatly loved Him and the Father willed that this should happen.

"'Not being subject to death, I endure it through My love to the Father'. This He said that He may again rouse their souls, that they may learn that willingly He goes to this thing, and that He does it despising the devil. It was not enough for Him to have said, 'Yet a little while I am with you' (John 7:33), but He continually handles this painful subject, with good reason, until He should make it acceptable to them, by weaving along with it pleasant things. Wherefore at one time He said, 'I go, and I come again that where I am, there you may be

[428] From John 1:18, the Son is referred to as "The Only Begotten", Who was begotten of the Father before all ages, and Who is God of God, of the same Essence as the Father. Similarly, the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father (John 15:26).

[429] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 4.

also' (John 14:3); and, 'You cannot follow Me now, but afterwards you shall follow Me' (John 13:36); and, 'I go to the Father' (John 14:12); and, 'The Father is greater than I' (John 14:28); and, 'Before it comes to pass, I have told you' (John 14:29); and, 'I do not suffer these things from constraint, but from love for the Father' (John 14:31). He wanted them to consider that the action could not be destructive nor hurtful, if at least the Father who greatly loved Him, and was greatly loved by Him, so willed".

The True Vine and the Branches: John 15:1-17

Beginning at this point, the rest of the Farewell Discourse was given on the way to Gethsemane.

Jesus made an analogy between Himself and His Church to a grape vine and its branches. In this analogy, both vine and branches are an integral part of the plant and a grapevine would not function without both. The branches carry all the fruit, but the vine and root provide nourishment. Both are essential for they are all part of one plant. Thus we are united with Jesus in the body of Christ.

Those who have grown grapes for many years, usually do a lot of pruning. And most of the fruit of the grapevine is carried by the new growth. So every year in the fall, growers prune their vines back to the main stalk leaving just buds in strategic places for new growth. This way, the maximum new growth appears every year – and the maximum fruit. So long as the root system is healthy, the vine will replace everything that has been pruned away early in the new season. It's common in the spring for branches to grow a foot every week.

Similarly with us! Jesus is the true vine and God the Father is the vine dresser (John 15:1). Every branch that bears fruit, the Father prunes that it may bear more fruit (John 15:2). This is the action of the Cross in our lives. On the other hand, branches that don't bear fruit, He takes them away (John 15:2). Branches that don't bear fruit (John 15:4) are like faith without works. A third category of branches are those that don't abide in the vine (John 15:6); these are cast out, wither and are thrown into the fire. This may be a reference to heretics throughout the ages[430] whose teachings do not last and whose end is Perdition.

Christian Marriage

Paul concluded a section in Ephesians that sounds like advice for married couples with the words: "This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church" (Ephesians 5:32). Thus, Paul's main point is Christ and the Church; husbands and wives serve to illustrate his points. Wives are instructed to submit to their husbands as the Church submits to Christ (Ephesians 5:22-24). Husbands are instructed to love their wives as Christ loved the Church; that is, giving Himself up for her (Ephesians 5:25), sanctifying and cleansing her (Ephesians 5:26) and presenting her holy and without blemish (Ephesians 5:27). Thus both husband and wife have roles to play that are analogous to the relationship of Christ with the church. These roles are confined to this present age, however.

To see this, consider the question posed to Jesus by the Sadducees and Jesus' answer: they posed a situation where one woman was widowed six times and remarried six times.

[430] For details of a Study of heretics in the 1st Century, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002.

Therefore, they asked, whose wife would she be in the Resurrection (Luke 20:28-33)? Jesus replied that in the Resurrection, people do not marry but "are equal to the angels and are sons of God, being sons of the Resurrection" (Luke 20:35-36). In the Body of Christ, Paul wrote that, "There is neither Jew nor Greek; there is neither slave nor free; there is neither male or female; for you are all one in Christ" (Galatians 3:28).

Part of the mystery of the roles we play as husband and wife can be thought of as a teaching device for the benefit of our children, our neighbors and the world: Husbands demonstrate how Christ treats the Church by how they treat their wives; and, by doing so, husbands also teach their wives how to love the Lord – thus sanctifying, cleansing and presenting her holy. Wives demonstrate how the Church responds to Christ by how they respond to their husbands; and, by doing so, wives also teach their husbands how to be obedient to the Will of God in everything. Even atheists who are faithful to their spouses demonstrate this to themselves in some way!!. Many people lose sight of this today and see only that their spouse isn't perfect; therefore they feel a need to assume their spouse's role, women becoming manlier and men becoming more effeminate. In contrast to this, the Orthodox wedding includes a crowning, where the crowns the bride and groom receive represent martyrs' crowns to signify their life toward each other. This will not be necessary in the Resurrection; one will not need to teach anyone about knowing the Lord, "For they shall all know Me from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:34). Another illustration of Union with Christ is demonstrated in the Lord's relationship with His people Israel in the Old Testament.

Union with Christ

In terms of Union with Christ, just as husband and wife become one flesh (Ephesians 5:28-31), so those in the Church are members of Christ's body (Ephesians 5:30), where Christ is the head (Ephesians 5:23). The different members of this body have different roles, but all the roles serve a purpose as directed by the Head (1 Corinthians 12:12-31). And like the grapevine, the body of Christ is all one plant.

Walking Worthy of our Calling

Paul had just finished saying in the previous chapter that he prays (Ephesians 3:14) to God the Father that He would grant:

- That they be strengthened with might through His Spirit in the inner man (Ephesians 3:16)
- That Christ may dwell in their hearts through faith (Ephesians 3:17)
- That they be rooted and grounded in love (Ephesians 3:17)
- That they be able to comprehend (by revelation) the width, length, depth and height (Ephesians 3:18)
- That they might know the love of Christ which far surpasses knowledge (Ephesians 3:19)
- That they might be filled with all the fullness of God (Ephesians 3:19)

This is a lot! Having said this, Paul then said that He (God) is able to do abundantly above all that we even ask or think (Ephesians 3:20). The only way all the above can be contained is in the Body of Christ.

The way we walk worthy of our calling (Ephesians 3:1) is stated as: "with all lowliness, gentleness, long-suffering, bearing with one another". John Chrysostom states[431],

[431] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX.

"This is the basis of all virtue. If you are lowly, and realize what you are and how you were saved, and will take this recollection as a motive to all virtue, the lowly-minded man is able to be at once generous and a grateful servant. 'For what do you have that you did not receive' (1 Corinthians 4:7) says Paul. Chrysostom continues to state that those who have difficulty with this due to a demeanor that is very critical of others: remember "if you are not forbearing with your neighbor, how shall God be forbearing with you? If you don't bear with your fellow-servant, how shall the Master bear with you? Wherever there is love, all things are to be borne".

Some people have become lowly-minded by taking on an attitude of what might be called "worm theology." This often expresses a great deal of piety, but also often represents merely an excuse for doing nothing. Walking worthy of our calling represents a depth of understanding accompanied by a gratitude for all the Grace given to us. If this gratitude is genuine, it will be translated into deeds.

In another place, Chrysostom said[432], "If anyone were to place a diadem about our head, a crown of gold, would we not do everything so we might seem worthy of the lifeless jewels? But now it is not a diadem that is placed about our head, but – what is far greater – Christ is made our very head. If you are the Body of Christ, bear the Cross, for He bore it; bear spitting, bear beatings, bear nails".

Unity of Spirit

Paul writes that we are co-crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20). If the vine has died, so have the branches, for the life of the vine flows through the branches also. If the Head has died, so has the body for they share a common life. The death Paul speaks of here is a death to sin and the life is an eternal life. Just as Christ took on the sin of the world when He died (John 1:29, 1 Peter 2:24), so we die to our sin in baptism.

Paul also writes that "if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we shall also be in the likeness of His resurrection' (Romans 6:5). The vine and the branches, the Head and the body are united in death and resurrection; all this is accomplished in a mystery through baptism (Romans 6:4). The ancient Church Fathers used the illustration of a sword in a fire to describe Christ's two natures (God and man): the sword (humanity) doesn't become fire (divinity). But after a while, the heat of the fire makes the sword glow like fire. The same is true about the branches being connected to the vine, and the body connected to the Head. We begin to take on the characteristics of the Master. Similarly in ancient cultures, the queen (the wife) was empowered with the authority of the king (the husband) in his absence.

John Chrysostom wrote[433] that the union of members of the body of Christ is more entire and more perfect than with human bodies.

> "In the human body there is a spirit which holds all together, though in different members. So it is here also; for to this end was the Spirit given, that He might unite those who are separated by race and by different manners. For old and young, rich and poor, child and youth, woman and man, and every soul become in a manner one and more entirely so than if there were one body. For this spiritual relation is far higher than the other natural one, and the perfectness

[432] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, III, Moral.
[433] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX.

> of the union more entire; because the conjunction of the soul is more perfect, inasmuch as it is both simple and uniform".

How does this work in real life? Paul writes, "The Spirit Himself bears witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and joint heirs with Christ, if indeed we suffer with Him, that we may also be glorified with Him" (Romans 8:16-17). The Spirit in the vine bears witness with the spirit in the branches; the Spirit of the Head bears witness with the spirit of the body. This is how the organism functions as the Body of Christ. Vine and branches, Head and body suffer and are glorified together.

Chrysostom continued[434] to say that this is a bond that doesn't cramp, and which distance and death doesn't interrupt.

> "This is a bond that doesn't bruise, nor does it cramp the hands it binds, but it leaves them free, and gives them ample play, and greater courage than those which are at liberty. The strong, if he is bound to the weak, will support him and not allow him to perish. And if he were tied to the lazy, him he will rouse and animate. 'Brother helped by brother is as a strong city' (Proverbs 18:19 LXX). This chain no distance of place can interrupt, neither heaven, nor earth, nor death, nor anything else, but it is more powerful and strong than all things".

The result is that we are more than conquerors through Him who loved us (Romans 8:37). For anything to prevail against the branches it has to take on the Vine; for anything to prevail against the body, it has to take on the Head.

One Body and One Spirit

Paul spoke of the Trinity as One Spirit, One Lord and One God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). Interspersed between these references to the Trinity are the references to one body, one faith and one baptism; the result is that God the Father is above all, through all and in all. The glue that holds all this together is love (Ephesians 4:2). Chrysostom comments[435], "The love which Paul requires of us is no common love, but that which cements us together and makes us cleave inseparably to one another; it accomplishes as great and as perfect a union as though it were between limb and limb". One of the most intimate moments of this union occurs as the body of Christ (the Church) meets to worship her Lord and Head and partakes of the body and blood of Christ in the Lord's Supper. This is a great mystery: how the body of Christ partakes of the Body of Christ?

Chrysostom refers[436] to the Body of Christ as: "The faithful throughout the whole world, both which are, and which have been, and which shall be. And again, they that before the coming of Christ who pleased God are 'one body' also, because they knew Christ. 'Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad' (John 8:56). And again, 'If you had believed Moses, you would have believed Me, for he wrote of Me' (John 5:46). And the prophets, too, would not have written of One of whom they knew not what they said. They both knew Him and worshipped Him. Thus they were also 'one body'".

[434] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX.
[435] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX.
[436] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, X.

In order to establish and promote this union, each one of us was given Grace according to the measure of Christ's gift to us (Ephesians 4:7). These gifts, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc., are for the equipping of the saints for the work of (literally) deaconing and for the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12, 16). These gifts have their purposes listed in the following verses:

- That we all come to the unity of the Faith and knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13)
- That we all come to a Perfect Man (Ephesians 4:13). This is the New Man referred to elsewhere (Ephesians 2:15, 4:24)
- That we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13)
- That the truth of this might be preserved in spite of deceitful attempts to undo it (Ephesians 4:14)
- That the whole body might grow up in love with every part of the body doing its share, being joined and knit together with every joint supplying (Ephesians 4:15-16).

Many times we see today discussions and "manifestations" of spiritual gifts resulting in divisions rather than leading to the unity of the faith, the perfect man and the stature of the fullness of Christ. Perhaps this is caused by a lack of emphasis on love (1 Corinthians 13). But another cause may be lack of humility. Not all are given the same gifts (1 Corinthians 12:28-30); and some are given more or greater gifts than others, just as in the Parable of the Talents where some were given one, two and five talents (Matthew 25:15). Paul also wrote of a ranking (i.e. in honor) of the gifts with Apostles first (1 Corinthians 12:28). We need to accept our gift, whatever it is, with humility and strive to use our gift to the best of our ability. Those using their gifts are often given more (Matthew 25:28-29). For more details, see the Gospel lesson for the 16th Sunday after Pentecost.

Thus, the aim of the illustrations of the vine and the branches and the husband and wife is to give us a glimpse into some of the mysteries of God being worked out in our midst (Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:1-10). The focus is always on Union with Christ and unity within the Body of Christ. While this much has been revealed to us, there are depths to it that we will not know until the Lord returns.

The Hatred of the World: John 15:18-27, 16:1-4

This part of the Holy Week Readings (John 15:18-16:2) are also used for the Feast Day commemorating both the warrior-martyrs Demetrios of Salonica (October 26th) and George of Cappadocia (April 23rd).

In the above readings, we wrestle with the question of why seemingly good people hate and persecute the righteous. This is not something that was done back then and doesn't occur today; there are countless similar examples today and most Christians have encountered it to one degree or another. In George's and Demetrios' case, they were persecuted by the Emperor. In the case of the Lord and the Twelve, it was either the Jewish leaders, King Herod or the Emperor Nero. Their enemies were not the underbelly of society but the leaders who were respected and who upheld the law — seemingly good people. The Lord pointed out that there was considerable hypocrisy involved regarding the Jewish leaders (Matthew 23). And the Jewish historian, Josephus, chronicles chapter after chapter of the sordid, scheming, homicidal family life of the Herod family. But most people didn't know all this. It seemed like good people were persecuting the righteous.

The World Loves Its Own

Earlier in the Farewell Address, the Lord gave His disciples final instructions before His Crucifixion. He said that:

- He would be returning to the Father (John 13:33)
- They would follow Him later (John 13:36)
- He was going to prepare a place for them (John 14:3)
- His relationship with the Father is God of God: He is in the Father and the Father in Him (John 14:10)
- If they had trouble accepting that, believe because of the works that He has done (John 14:11)
- He would not leave them as orphans, but would send the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who would teach them all things (John 14:16, 17, 26)
- No longer will He call them slaves, but friends, for all things He heard from the Father He made known (John 14:15)
- The characteristic of His followers is to be love: as He loved them and laid down His life, so should they do for one another (John 14:10-17)

In contrast to this Jesus said, "If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18). By "the world" here, the Lord means those over whom "the ruler of this world" (John 14:30) reigns. It is he who was responsible for the Lord's Crucifixion (1 Corinthians 2:8), and he was called the father of those who opposed Jesus and plotted His death (John 8:44).

Why should the world hate Jesus? Jesus stated, "They hated Me without a cause" (John 15:25). This is a quote from Psalm 35:19, Psalm 69:4 and Psalm 109:3 and reflects David's struggle against the godless (Psalm 35:16), the wicked and the deceitful (Psalm 109:2). "Zeal for the Lord's house had consumed David and the reproaches of those who reproach God had fallen on David" (Psalm 69:9).

The Lord made the same connection here. "They hated both Me and My Father" (John 15:24). One purpose of the Lord's coming was to expose this and to give them an opportunity to change. "If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin, but now they have no excuse for their sin. If I had not done among them the works which no one else did, they would have no sin; but now they have seen and also hated both Me and My Father" (John 15:22, 24). The works that Jesus showed were from His Father (John 10:32).

These "works which no one else did" are mentioned throughout the four Gospels. For example, a mute, demon-possessed man was healed and then spoke; the crowd said, "It was never seen like this in Israel" (Matthew 9:33). The paralytic who was lowered through the roof was forgiven his sins and then healed. The crowd responded, "We never saw anything like this!" (Mark 2:12). After being healed, the man born blind remarked, "Since the world began, it has been unheard of that anyone opened the eyes of one who was born blind" (John 9:32). And even the Twelve were stunned at Jesus' works. After calming a raging storm, they said, "Who can this be? He commands even the winds and the water, and they obey Him!" (Luke 8:25).

The Jewish leaders claimed to oppose Jesus because He was opposed to the Father. For example, Moses wrote that anyone who performs signs and wonders AND leads the people to serve other gods shall be executed for instigating a rebellion against the Lord (Deuteronomy 13).

The works Jesus did testified as to Who He was: the crowds' reaction was, "When the Christ comes, how could He do more[437] signs than these which this Man had done?" (John 7:31). Jesus was not leading a rebellion against God but a return to God. Yet when Jesus confronted the Jewish leaders with this, they refused to see it. They also didn't notice that Moses prophesied of Jesus' arrival saying, "The Lord God will raise up for you a Prophet like me from among you, from your countrymen; you shall listen to Him" (Deuteronomy 18:15).

In response to this, Jesus said, "Many good works I have shown you from My Father. For which of those works do you (try to) stone Me?" They answered, "For a good work we do not stone You, but for blasphemy, and because You, being a Man, make Yourself God." Jesus answered, "If I do not do the works of My Father, do not believe Me. But if I do, though you do not believe Me, believe the works, that you may know and believe that the Father is in Me and I in Him" (John 10:32-38). Thus, one can say that, on their part, it was a refusal to accept the obvious. Their allegiance was to their father, the devil (John 8:44), and not to God or even to upholding the Mosaic Law.

Because Christ and the Twelve were not of the world, they were hated by the world (John 15:19). Because they were of the Father (John 17:11, 12) and the ruler of this world hated the Father, they were hated by the world. This then led to persecution by the world.

The Matins Gospel for Demetrius and George (Luke 21:12-19) prophesied concerning this: Jesus said that their persecution would involve:

- Being delivered up to the synagogues and prisons (Luke 21:12)
- Being brought before kings and rulers (Luke 21:12)
- Being betrayed by parents, brothers, relatives and friends (Luke 21:16)
- Some being put to death (Luke 21:16)
- Being hated by all for Christ's Name's sake (Luke 21:17).

Yet all this would turn out for them as an occasion for their testimony, where the Lord will give them a mouth and wisdom which all their adversaries will not be able to contradict or resist (Luke 21:13,15). Not a hair of their head would be lost. But by their patience, they will possess their souls (Luke 21:18, 19).

The word translated "testimony" (Luke 21:13) is the Greek word *marturion*, from which we get the English word martyr. Over the centuries, their "testimony" came to be regarded as their martyrdom.

The term "possessing their souls" can be thought of in terms of finishing the race: "Therefore we also, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us lay aside every weight, and the sin which so easily ensnares us, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us" (Hebrews 12:1). "For whoever desires to save his life will lose it; but whoever loses his life for My sake and the Gospel's will save it. For what will it profit a man if he gains the whole world and loses his own soul? Or what will a man give in exchange for his soul?" (Mark 8:35-37).

[437] See Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XV, 17 for a contrasting situation. Cyril states that prior to the Second Advent, the Antichrist or "man of sin" (2 Thessalonians 2:3-4) will attempt to reverse this impression on the crowds with his illusions and lying wonders (2 Thessalonians 2:9), and attempt to perform more "miracles" than Christ did. See the Study for Holy Monday Evening, p. 32.

The Gospel lesson concludes the discussion of the hatred by the world with, "They will put you out of the synagogues; yes, the time is coming that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service (John 16:2). Being "put out of the synagogue" refers to the Mosaic Law injunction of being "cut off from Israel", leaving one with no part in the religious life of Israel, and thus no forgiveness of sins. For more discussion of this, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Pascha.

The Apostle Paul, in the years prior to his conversion was involved in the killing of Christians as a "service to God." This involved not just the Deacon Stephen (Acts 7:57-60), but also causing others to blaspheme under torture and persecution (Acts 26:9-11). Later, Paul referred to himself as the chief of sinners because of his role in this persecution (1 Timothy 1:12-15).

The Example of the Apostle Peter: Acts 12:1-11

This Reading is also used for the Feast Day of George of Cappadocia and adds another aspect to the suffering and persecution of the martyrs: deliverance. This Reading is used because of the miraculous events that occurred just prior to George's martyrdom, where he was delivered from the wounds he suffered during his torture. This Reading is the account of Peter's release from prison by an angel following the death of James, the son of Zebedee, and thus has similarities to George's deliverance.

The setting is about the time of the famine during the days of Claudius (Acts 11:28), which began in 44 AD. Herod the king[438] began to harass some of the Church and killed James, the brother of John with the sword (Acts 12:1-2). John Chrysostom said[439] that Herod picked James out "at random and without selection". James had just returned to Judea from evangelism in Spain and was very outspoken and prominent. According to tradition[440], James' body was returned to Spain and buried there with great honor.

Having killed James, Herod saw that it pleased the Jewish leaders, so he imprisoned Peter also, intending to do the same after the Days of Unleavened Bread[441]. Herod had wanted to make sure Peter did not leave the area because of the death of James. Chrysostom remarked[442] that Herod pleased the Jewish leaders by doing murders without plan or reason, and that this was a very sad commentary on their blood-lust.

As was the case with Jesus, one notices here the unjustifiable hatred of Peter by both Herod and the Jewish leaders. Why did they hate him? For healing the sick (Acts 3:1-6)? For performing miracles (Acts 5:15)? For speaking the truth (Acts 4:19-20)?

At this point, it had been about 13 years since Pentecost and they had had ample opportunity to see Peter's good deeds. The Lord, Himself, had put this question to them 13 years ago: "For which of those (good) works do you try to stone me?" (John 10:32) They answered that they were trying to stone Him for blasphemy "making Himself God" (John 10:33). James

[438] I.e. Herod Agrippa who reigned from 41-44 AD.
[439] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.
[440] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.
[441] The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a seven day festival that includes Passover. See the earlier Section titled "The Feast of Unleavened Bread".
[442] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

and Peter did not make themselves to be God, ever; why did it please the Jewish leaders so much to see James and Peter dead? (Acts 12:3, 4). Their lust for blood seems to be out of control, and they seem to hate him without a cause just like they did the Lord.

In the account, Peter was bound with two chains, placed between two soldiers (Acts 12:6), and guarded by four tetrads (a squad of four soldiers) until after Passover (Acts 12:4). At the same time, prayer was offered to God constantly for him by the Church. The night before Herod intended to bring Peter out, an angel stood by him in prison, and lit up the prison (Acts 12:7). Only Peter saw this light; we know this because of the controversy that developed the next morning (Acts 12:18). When the angel told Peter to get up and get dressed, his chains fell off. Peter followed the angel past the first and second tetrad, not sure if this was real or a vision. As they got to the Iron Gate leading to the city, the door opened by itself. After going down one street a little ways, the angel disappeared (Acts 12:9-10). Then Peter realized this was real and not a vision (Acts 12:11). The next morning, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. When Herod came looking for Peter, and didn't find him, he examined the guards and then executed them. Peter, meanwhile, left for Caesarea (Acts 12:19), and eventually settled in Antioch.

Chrysostom noted[443] that this was no ordinary holding cell, having to go past the first and second watch (or tetrad), besides being chained between two soldiers of a third tetrad. "By this the Lord honored him, that by the ministry of His angel he rescued him".

Chrysostom also noted[444] that when Peter arrived at the house of Mary, he told them what happened, then left, making sure they made these things known to James[445] and the brethren. When he withdrew to another place, he did not tempt God, nor fling himself into temptation. When they were commanded to do this, then they did it; such as when an angel opened the prison doors, letting them out and telling them to stand in the Temple and speak to the people (Acts 5:20). Here the angel gave him free permission to withdraw that he should not fall into danger again.

George's deliverance was just temporary, but its purpose was the same: to give his tormentors no excuse. After the crushing and the nails and the burying alive and the poison, Diocletian should have gotten the message. After all, his wife, the Empress Alexandra, along with the chief pagan priest, Athanasius, the governor Clycerius and others got the message and became Christians. But Diocletian was so insanely blinded by his hatred for God that he had his own wife executed instead of recognizing what God was trying to tell him. Fortunately, others were not as blind and were led to believe by George's "testimony."

The same is true for us. Our testimony may not be as dramatic as that of Demetrius or George, but there are always people looking on. And there are others that will hear about it later. When we can overcome the hatred of the world with love and obedience to Christ, we offer a testimony that is difficult to refute.

[443] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI, Recapitulation.
[444] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI, Recapitulation.
[445] This is James, the Lord's brother, the Bishop of Jerusalem.

The Procession and Work of the Holy Spirit: John 15:26-27, 16:5-15

The text states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father; but yet it also states that Christ will send the Holy Spirit from the Father (John 15:26-27). In the West today, the "Filioque" clause of the Nicene Creed states that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father *and the Son*, where the term "*and the Son*" in Latin is "Filioque". This Filioque clause was not present in the original Nicene Creed, but was added hundreds of years later. In the East, the Nicene Creed remains as written in the 4th Century.

John Chrysostom commented[446] on this by saying that the gist is that the Son and Holy Spirit are God as well as the Father.

> "When He said that the Holy Spirit 'proceeds from the Father', this shows that He (the Holy Spirit) knows all things exactly, as Christ also said of Himself, that 'I know where I came from and where I am going' (John 8:14). Behold, it is no longer the Father alone, but the Son also who sends".

Just as we call the Son of God "Lord", so we call the Holy Spirit "Lord" (2 Corinthians 3:17-18). Christ is God of God and we rightly say in the Nicene Creed that He is Light of Light, Very God of Very God. The same applies to the Holy Spirit. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father whereas the Holy Spirit eternally proceeds from the Father (John 15:26).

Jesus, the Son of God, is referred to as "the Only Begotten of the Father" (John 1:14; see also John 3:16, 1 John 4:9, Isaiah 9:6). He is referred to as "Only Begotten" because He is the only One who was eternally born of the Father, making Him God of God. During Creation Week, all things were made through Him and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3, Hebrews 1:8-12). The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, proceeds from the Father (John 15:26). Both the Son's begetting and the Holy Spirit's procession are mysteries that are unknowable by human wisdom. However, both the Son and the Holy Spirit are described in the Scriptures as God[447].

John recorded Jesus' words about the Holy Spirit: "He will not speak on His own authority, but whatever He hears He will speak" (John 16:13), and He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you" (John 16:14). This does not mean that the Holy Spirit is a lesser God than the Son, or that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father through the Son. This simply means[448] that the Holy Spirit speaks nothing contrary, nothing of His own opposed to Christ's words. After all, Christ Himself spoke nothing beside what the Father said, nothing of His own against Him, or differing from Him (John 14:10); so also with respect to the Spirit. The knowledge of the Son and the Spirit is one.

The Spirit of Truth

As Paul wrote to Timothy, he said Timothy's focus was to be in the House of God, which is the Church, the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Church has the Holy Spirit, called the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13), and by Him, we know that we are of the Truth (1 John 3:19, 4:6). The Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). Therefore the Truth supports the Church and the Church supports the Truth.

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[446] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVII, 3.
[447] See 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18, John 15:26, 1 John 5:6, Ephesians 4:3-6, John 1:32-34, Matthew 1:18.
[448] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 2.

One might contrast this with the world's view of truth as expressed by Pontius Pilate "What is truth?" (John 18:38). Having no spirit of truth for an absolute reference, any "truth" is relative.

Jesus said of the Holy Spirit, "And when He has come, He will convict the world of sin, of righteousness, and of judgment: of sin, because they do not believe in Me; of righteousness, because I go to My Father and you see Me no more; of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged".

John Chrysostom stated[449] that the Jewish leaders will not go unpunished when the Spirit of Truth is present. The things that Jesus had already done were sufficient to stop their mouths; but now they will see the same things done by His disciples, which will make the proof of the Resurrection more certain. Prior to the Crucifixion they could say, 'This is the carpenter's son, whose father and mother we know' (Matthew 13:54-58). But when they see the bands of death loosed, wickedness cast out, natural lameness straightened, devils expelled, an abundant supply of the Spirit, and all this effected by Christ being called on, what will they say? The natural conclusion is that the Father has born witness of Christ (Matthew 3:17, John 12:28), and the Spirit will bear witness also (John 15:26-27).

The Holy Spirit will convict the world of sin, meaning that He will cut off all their excuses, and show that they have transgressed unpardonably (Matthew 23:31-33). He will convict the world of righteousness, meaning that Christ's going to the Father is proof that He lived a blameless life. They had said, 'This man is a sinner' (John 9:24), and 'This man is not from God' (John 9:16). Yet the Spirit will show that Christ is seated at the Right Hand of the Father, which does not happen to sinners. And the Holy Spirit will convict the world of judgment, because the ruler of this world is judged. They had said that Christ had a demon (Matthew 12:24-27) and that He was a deceiver (Matthew 27:63). But when His followers trample on the ruler of this world through the power of the Holy Spirit, these accusations shall also be shown to be false.

The Holy Spirit is Our Strength

The Lord told His disciples when He met them in Galilee, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations" (Matthew 28:18-19). At the Ascension, He said, "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8). Thus, just as "His Glorious Arm went at the right hand of Moses" (Isaiah 63:12), so it did with the Apostles after Pentecost. This is the work of the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called "The Helper" (i.e., one called alongside to help, John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), and this help is substantial. The Holy Spirit in us is a key element in the coming together of "the city with solid foundations whose craftsman and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). With the Holy Spirit at work in us, we are described as containing treasure in earthenware vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). The exterior of our human frailties may be rough, but God has chosen to dwell there.

To illustrate the strength that the Holy Spirit gives us, we might consider one of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit: prophecy. This Gift is used for the edification, exhortation and comfort to those in the Church (1 Corinthians 14:3-4). But most prophecy is limited; one prophesies only in

[449] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 1.

part (1 Corinthians 13:8-9) since God does not usually reveal too much all at once (John 16:12, Mark 4:33). We can only prophesy according to the faith that we have (Romans 12:6). In using this Gift, we are limited by our human condition.

John Chrysostom compared life before Pentecost among the Twelve, when they did not have the benefit and strength of the Holy Spirit.

> "If the Apostles who had enjoyed[450] the benefit of many miracles, and had had part in so many unutterable mysteries were offended by the mere hearing of the Cross (Matthew 16:21-23); consider what the common sort should feel, being first told that He is the Son of God, then seeing Him crucified and spit on. If to His disciples He said: 'I have many things to say to you, but you cannot hear them now' (John 16:12); much more would the rest of the people have utterly failed, had the greatest of these mysteries been revealed to them before the proper time. Accordingly, He forbids the Twelve to tell Who He is" (Matthew 17:9).
>
> "It was no slight comfort[451] to the Twelve to learn that Jesus knew the excess of their despondency. They were beside themselves from the anguish caused by Him leaving, and from their awaiting the terrible things which were to come, since they didn't know whether they should be able to bear them manfully".
>
> "Why did He not tell them that they had been granted the Spirit? That you might learn that they were exceedingly virtuous! If, when they had not yet been granted the Spirit, they did not abandon Him, though overwhelmed with sorrow, consider what sort of men they were likely to be after having enjoyed the grace. If they had heard this at that time, and so had endured, we should have attributed the whole to the Spirit. But now it is entirely the fruit of their own state of mind, and it is a clear manifestation of their love for Christ, who applied a touchstone to their mind, which is as yet defenseless".

Why the Holy Spirit Had to Wait for Christ to Leave

John Chrysostom gave[452] several reasons:

1. **The curse had not yet been taken away**, sin was not yet loosed, but all were yet subject to vengeance; therefore He could not come. The enmity needed to be put away, and we needed to be reconciled to God; then we could receive that Gift.
2. **The disciples had to be prepared** beforehand to receive the dignity of the Holy Spirit. How can that which is everywhere be "sent"? Since the disciples were not to be drawn away from Christ, He needed to exhort them to hold on to the Spirit, in order that they might cherish Him. Christ Himself was able to do these things, but He conceded to the Spirit the working of miracles, that they might understand His dignity. The Father could have brought into being things which are, yet the Son did so, that we might understand His power; this also is the case regarding the Holy Spirit.
3. **The disciples had to learn** the relationship of the Father, Son and Spirit. Jesus had said several times, "For One is your Teacher, the Christ" (Matthew 23:8-10). Obeying the Holy Spirit is not disobeying Christ, since their teaching is one. There is one Will of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. If Christ were still on earth in the flesh, He would be the center of attention worldwide.

[450] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 4.
[451] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 1.
[452] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 3.

Christ Foretells His Death, Resurrection and Ascension: John 16:16-33

Jesus said to His disciples, "A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me, because I go to the Father". Then *some* of His disciples said among themselves, "What is this that He says to us, 'A little while, and you will not see Me; and again a little while, and you will see Me'; and, 'because I go to the Father'? They said therefore, "What is this that He says, 'A little while'? We do not know what He is saying" (John 16:16-18).

John Chrysostom commented[453] on this by saying that either grief at Jesus' departure clouded their understanding or His words seemed obscure to them. He was going, yet they will still see Him. This seemed to them like two contrary statements!

> "One may with reason wonder how, after having heard these things often, they doubt, as though they had heard nothing. How is it they did not understand? It was either grief that drove what was said from their understanding; or it was the obscurity of the words. Jesus seemed to set before them two contraries, which were not contrary. 'If we shall see You, where are You going? And if You go, how shall we see You?' Therefore they say, 'We cannot tell what He says'. That He was about to depart, they knew; but they didn't know that He would shortly come to them. On which account He rebuked them, because they did not understand what He said".

The Analogy to Childbirth

Isaiah prophesied against Babylon, but his prophecy looked beyond Babylon to the Second Coming of Christ. He compared the Second Coming to a woman in labor (Isaiah 13:8), and he gave many of the same signs in the heavens (Isaiah 13:10, 13) that will precede the Second Coming that Christ mentioned (Matthew 24:29-30) when He spoke prior to the Crucifixion. Isaiah linked the woman in labor to the earth who gives birth to the saints at the Resurrection (Isaiah 26:17-21). As the Lord returns in glory at the Second Coming, Isaiah likens His groans as He lays waste the mountains and hills to a woman in labor (Isaiah 42:14-15).

Jesus used the same analogy of a woman in labor (John 16:21-22) in speaking of His Crucifixion and Resurrection. In this case, the woman is the nation of Israel, and she will give birth to the Church, which is a new creation (Matthew 24:8, 2 Corinthians 5:17, Galatians 6:15). The disciples were sorrowful as the time came to give birth (John 16:20), but they were filled with joy at the birth of the Church at Pentecost (Acts 2).

John Chrysostom stated[454] that Jesus introduced this example to show that sorrow is for a season, but joy is lasting; death is a translation to life. There will be a great profit of their birth-pangs.

> "He did not say, 'a child has been born', but, 'A man'. For to my mind He here alludes to His own Resurrection".
>
> "He also implies something mystical, that He has loosened the birth pangs of death, and caused a new man to be born of them. He did not say that the pain shall pass away only, but, 'she does not even remember it', so great is the joy

[453] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIX, 1.
[454] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIX, 1.

which follows; so also shall it be with the Saints, where the departing is like passing from the womb into the light of day".

The Disciples Think They Understand

Jesus had just finished explaining to His disciples that they have not asked for anything in His Name yet (John 16:23-24), but that will come. For the present, He has come from the Father and He will be leaving the world and returning to the Father (John 16:28).

Jesus' disciples said to Him, "See, now You are speaking plainly, and not using parables! Now we are sure that You know all things, and have no need that anyone should question You. By this we believe that You came forth from God" (John 16:29-30).

Not to burst their bubble, Jesus replied that the hour had come where they would be scattered each to his own home. Yet He encouraged them to endure and be cheerful, for He had overcome the world.

John Chrysostom stated[455] that He gave a pledge, in the first place, that they were right in believing on Him; a second reason for His pledge was to assure them that they would be safe. Chrysostom went on to say[456] that we can comfort ourselves with two things. First, if someone insults us for being Christians, we can laugh at it, for they don't know who we are. On Judgment Day, when we are revealed as sons of God, then they will know and be embarrassed. Second, if they persist in what they do, their end will be a most bitter one. Chrysostom made[457] some analogies:

> "If a man should insult the governor, knowing that he is governor, then the insult is bitter. But if he insults, supposing him to be a private man, the insult cannot touch him. So let us think this way also. Our revilers do not know what we are, that we are citizens of heaven, registered for the country which is above, fellow-choristers with the Cherubim".
>
> "If a governor who was traveling, and had gotten ahead of his servants, were sitting a while in the inn waiting for them, and then the innkeeper, or some other travelers, should behave rudely to him, and revile him, would he not laugh at the other's ignorance? Would not their mistake rather give him pleasure? Would he not feel a satisfaction as though not he but someone else was insulted? Let us too behave thus. We too sit in an inn, waiting for our friends who travel the same road. When we are all together, then they shall know who it is that they insult. These men then shall hang their heads; then they shall say, 'This is he whom we fools had in derision' (Wisdom 5:3-4).

Christ Prays to the Father: John 17:1-5

Jesus spoke these words, lifted up His eyes to heaven, and said: "Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You" (John 17:1). In speaking to His Father, John Chrysostom stated[458] that it was not so much a prayer but a discourse for the benefit of those people present. They needed to know that He went willingly to the Cross, that this was His mission, and that this was His glory and that of the Father.

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[455] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIX, 2.
[456] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIX, 4.
[457] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIX, 3.
[458] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXX, 1.

"As yet the disciples still thought of Him as a mere man; and for their sake He acted thus, just as He did in the case of Lazarus, and John tells the reason; 'Because of the people who are standing by I said *this*, that they may believe that You sent Me' (John 11:42). One might say that this took place with good cause in the case of the Jews; but why in the case of the disciples? They who, after all that had been said and done, said, 'Now we are sure that You know all things' (John 16:30), most of all needed to be established. The Evangelist does not even call the action prayer; but 'He lifted up His eyes to heaven', and said rather that it was a discoursing with the Father. Christ came not merely to reveal Himself, but also to teach virtue. It behooved the teacher to teach, not by words only, but also by actions. So He said, 'Father, the hour has come. Glorify Your Son, that Your Son also may glorify You'" (John 17:1).

"Again He shows us, that willingly He comes to the Cross. How could He be unwilling, who prayed that this might come to pass, and called the action 'glory', not only for Himself the Crucified, but also for the Father? This was the case, for not the Son only, but the Father also was glorified. Before the Crucifixion, not even the Jews knew Him. 'Israel', it said, 'has not known Me' (Isaiah 1:3); but after the Crucifixion, all the world ran to Him".

There is some depth of meaning to Jesus' words about His glorification and that of the Father. This does not have to do with His Essence, in which He has always been glorified, but as a result of the service of men. This glorification took place when He ascended to the Right Hand of the Father in His human flesh. John Chrysostom stated[459] it this way:

"Well did Christ say of the Father, 'I have glorified You on the earth' (John 17:4); for in heaven He had been already glorified, having His own natural glory, and being worshipped by the Angels. Christ then speaks not of that glory which is bound up with His Essence[460], but of that which comes from the service of men. The, 'Glorify Me' (John 17:5), is of this kind; and that you may understand that He speaks of this manner of glory, listen to what follows. 'I have finished the work which You have given Me to do' (John 17:4). And yet the action was still but beginning, or rather was not yet beginning. How can He say, 'I have finished?' He means, first, 'I have done all My part'. Second, He speaks of the future, as having already come to pass. And third, which one may say most of all, that all was already effected, because the root of blessings had been laid, which fruits would certainly and necessarily follow, from His being present at and assisting in those things which should take place after these".

"Allowing that He was with reason not honored among men, because His flesh concealed His Deity; how did He seek to be glorified with the Father? What He said refers to the Dispensation; since His fleshly nature had not yet been glorified, not having as yet enjoyed incorruption, nor shared the kingly throne. Therefore He said not 'Glorify Me on earth', but 'Glorify Me with You' (John 17:5). This glory we also shall enjoy according to our measure. Therefore Paul said, 'If we suffer with *Him,* we may also be glorified together'" (Romans 8:17).

[459] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXX, 2-3.

[460] In His Essence as God, Christ has always possessed the Glory of God in its fullness, even though none should glorify Him on earth.

Christ Prays for the Apostles: John 17:6-19

A brief outline of Christ's prayer to the Father is:

- Glorify the Son (i.e. by crucifixion) that the Son may glorify the Father (John 17:1)
- The Father gave the Son authority over all flesh (John 17:2)
- The Son glorified the Father on earth and finished the work He was given to do; i.e. Incarnation, Cross, etc. (John 17:4)
- The Son will return to the glory He had with the Father before the world was (John 17:5, 13)
- The Father gave the Son the Twelve (John 17:6)
- The Twelve know that:
  - All the Son was given came from the Father (John 17:7)
  - The Son's Words came from the Father (John 17:8, 14)
  - The Father sent the Son (John 17:8)
  - The Twelve are the Father's (John 17:9)
  - The Son is glorified in them (John 17:10)
- The Son asked the Father to keep the Twelve as one as the Father and the Son are one (John 17:11). The oneness in the Church parallels the oneness in the Trinity.
- The Son kept the Twelve in the Father's Name (John 17:12)
- None of the Twelve were lost except Judas (John 17:12)
- The World hated the Twelve because they, like the Son, were not of the world (John 17:14). This aspect of the Christian life was repeated many times by those saints who became known as the Unmercenary Healers.
- As the Father sent (Greek: *apostello*) the Son, so the Son sent (Greek: *apostolos*) the Twelve Apostles (John 17:18)
- The Father sanctified the Twelve. The Son sanctified Himself that the Twelve might thus be sanctified by the Truth (John 17:17, 19).

John Chrysostom noted[461] the relationship of the Father and the Son with the Twelve. There is equality of honor between the Father and the Son. The Twelve were not alienated at any time from the Father or the Son. The words, "Those whom You have given Me" (John 17:9), are said only for condescension; for what the Father has is the Son's, and what the Son has is the Father's (John 17:10).

When Christ said that He kept the Twelve in the Father's Name, Chrysostom said that He spoke as a man and as a Prophet, since nowhere does He appear to have done anything by the Name of God. (He didn't need to since He is God!)

Regarding the loss of Judas, as predicted by the Scripture, David spoke of this as follows: "Even the man of My peace, in whom I trusted, who ate my bread, lifted up his heel against me" (Psalm 41:9 LXX, John 13:18). Peter also referred to David's words of judgment against Judas when the Apostles agreed to replace Judas with Matthias (Psalm 69:25, 109:8, Acts 1:20). Christ had said, "All that the Father has given Me I should lose nothing" (John 6:39). Chrysostom commented[462] on Jesus' words as follows:

> "Not only was Judas lost, but also many afterwards; how then could He say, 'I should lose nothing?' 'For My part, I will not lose'. In another place, declaring the matter more clearly, He said, 'I will by no means cast out' (John 6:37). That is, it was not through any fault of Mine; it was not because I either

[461] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXI, 2.
[462] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXI, 2.

instigate or abandon them; but if they start away of themselves, I will not draw them by necessity".

As covered in an earlier chapter, the relationship of the Twelve with the Father and the Son caused them to be hated by the world. John Chrysostom said[463] of this:

> "Everywhere virtue tends to engender hatred from wicked men. Men envy those who desire to live properly, and prepare an excuse for themselves if they can overthrow the credit of others; they hate them as having pursuits opposite to their own, and use every means to shame their way of life. But let us not grieve, for this is a mark of virtue. Therefore Christ also said, 'If you were of the world, the world would love its own' (John 15:19). In another place, He said, 'Woe to you when all men shall speak well of you' (Luke 6:26). Therefore He said here, 'I have given them Your word, and the world has hated them' (John 17:14). Again He tells the reason for which they were worthy to obtain so much care from the Father; 'For Your sake, they have been hated, and for Your Word's sake' (John 17:6-8); so that they would be entitled to considerable providential care from the Father".

When Christ said that they were not of the world just as He is not of the world (John 17:16), this does not mean that they are without sin as He is without sin. They simply look to another world and have nothing common with earth, but have become citizens of heaven. Just as the Twelve were sanctified by the Truth (John 17:17), so Paul wrote that the Church is sanctified by the washing of water by the Word (Ephesians 5:26). Correct teaching as opposed to heresy is a key aspect of this sanctification. This is why the Church has fought so many battles against heresy, rather than let it slide! In Christianity today, many Churches are not continuing this battle, and they are losing sanctification as a result.

Christ said that He sanctified Himself in order that they might be sanctified (John 17:19). This refers to the sacrificial system of the Old Testament, where everything offered to the Lord was holy, and Christ's sacrifice on the Cross was the fulfillment of all the Old Testament sacrifices.

The Scriptures refer to things, animals, and people as being holy, but always by association with a Holy God. Made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, Ephesians 4:24), His people were to be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 19:2), and they are to be partakers of His Holiness (Hebrews 12:10). Consequently, the Tabernacle and all its furnishings and utensils were anointed with holy oil (Exodus 40:9) in preparation for the Presence of God dwelling there (Exodus 29:43-46, Numbers 7:89). Holy clothing was worn by the priests (Exodus 28:2) in serving God, and holy water was used by the priests in performing the judgments of God both for discernment in concealed sin (Numbers 5:17ff) and for removing uncleanness (Numbers 19:9). The offerings to the Lord were also holy, whether animal or vegetable (Exodus 29:33, Leviticus 2:3, 6:25). Even the ground was holy if the Lord's Presence was there (Exodus 3:4, Joshua 5:15), and the camp of Israel was not allowed to become defiled (Deuteronomy 23:14, Numbers 5:2-3) because of the Tabernacle and the Presence of God in its midst. The Commandments, Statutes and Judgments of the Lord were similarly holy (Romans 7:12, Psalm 19:7-10) because they represented the Word of God for His people (Deuteronomy 4:8, Leviticus 18:26-28, Psalm 105:42). All this carries over into the New Testament, where the people of God "are not called

[463] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 1.

to uncleanness but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Ambrose stated[464] that the Church is the holy ground, fruitful with sanctity and fertile with virtues. Christ in us is like the burning bush, consuming our thorns, showing us Grace.

From this point of view, all sacrifice is an expression of love. Christ's sacrifice of Himself on the Cross was the ultimate expression of the love of God for man (1 John 4:10, John 15:13). On the other hand, the offering of animal sacrifices under the Mosaic Law was one way that men could express love for and devotion to God (Psalm 50:23). The animal sacrifices, which were required to be offered in Jerusalem, pointed to Christ offering Himself in Jerusalem (Matthew 23:37-38), where the Lord's Name was established (Deuteronomy 12:5).

Christ Prays for the Church: John 17:20-18:1

Jesus prayed that the Church "may be one as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me. And the glory which You gave Me I have given them, that they may be one just as We are one" (John 17:21-22).

John Chrysostom noted[465] that in comparing the oneness of the Church to that of the Father and the Son, this does not denote exact similarity in their case, but only as far as was possible for men. Similarly He said 'Be merciful, just as your Father also is merciful' (Luke 6:36). We can't be as merciful as the Father, but we can try! Chrysostom continued:

> "Nothing so offends all men as divisions, so He provides that they should be one. All who believe through the Apostles are one, though some from among them were torn away[466]. This did not escape His knowledge; He even foretold it (Matthew 24:24), and showed that it proceeded from men's slack-mindedness. 'That the world may believe that You have sent Me'" (John 17:21).
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> "As He said in the beginning, 'By this shall all men know that you are My disciples, if you love one another' (John 13:35). How should they believe after this? 'Because You are a God of peace'. If therefore they observe the same as those of whom they have learned, their hearers shall know the teacher by the disciples. But if they quarrel, men shall deny that they are the disciples of a God of peace, and will not believe that Christ has been sent from the Father. Do you see how He proves His unanimity with the Father?"

Chrysostom also noted[467] that Christ said, 'That they may behold My glory' (John 17:24) and not 'That they may share My glory'.

> "Here He implies what that eternal rest is, the looking on the Son of God. This certainly it is which causes them (the disciples) to be glorified; as Paul said, 'With unveiled face[468] mirroring the glory of the Lord' (2 Corinthians 3:18). For

[464] Ambrose of Milan, Epistles, LXIII, 41-42.
[465] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 2.
[466] For example, four of the original Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-20) were torn away to follow the teachings of the Arch Heretic Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24). These four were Nicholas of Antioch (Acts 6:5, Revelation 2:14-15), Demas (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 1:24, 2 Timothy 4:10), Phygellus and Hermogenes (2 Timothy 1:15). For more information on this, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St.Athanasius Press, 2002.
[467] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 3.
[468] The term "unveiled face" refers to the glowing face of Moses as He descended from Mt. Sinai with the Tablets of the Law (Exodus 34:29-35). Because the people of Israel were afraid of Moses due to his glowing face, Moses put a veil over his face.

> as they who look on the sunbeams, and enjoy a very clear atmosphere, draw their enjoyment from their sight, so then also, and in much greater degree, this will cause us pleasure. At the same time also He shows, that what they should behold was not the body then seen, but some awesome Substance".

Chrysostom linked[469] knowledge of God and beholding the Glory of God to good works. In willingly going to His Cross, not by constraint and necessity, Christ taught, by His actions, a sacrificial love for all men. By learning Who He is, a true Son and greatly beloved by the Father, we also learn about the Father. To the contrary, there are those who profess that they know God, but in their works they deny Him (Titus 1:16). Someone who helps his domestics, kinsmen and strangers, while not helping those who are related to him by family, blasphemes and insults God. As Paul said, "he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever" (1 Timothy 5:8).

[469] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 3-4, LXXXIII, 1.

The Arrest of Jesus

Fourth Gospel: Luke 22:43-44 "Christ's Agony in the Garden"

As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke records an event that is omitted by the other Gospel writers. This event reads:

> "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'. Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground". (Luke 22:41-44)

Jesus, as the Son of God, has a special relationship to God the Father. The Father is the Fountainhead, but the Son is equal to the Father in His Deity, as is the Holy Spirit. In becoming incarnate (taking on human flesh), Jesus became a man and He had a mission to accomplish. Man had been expelled from Paradise because of rebellion against God, and Jesus' mission was to restore that connection.

At Jesus' baptism and at the Transfiguration the Father spoke from heaven saying, "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased" (Matthew 3:17, 17:5). From eternity past, this has always been the relationship of the Father and the Son. But when He came to the Cross, the Father laid on His Son the sins of all mankind (2 Corinthians 5:21). Approaching the Cross in His humanity, Jesus was in agony and His sweat became as great drops of blood because of this; and that was even after being strengthened by an angel (Luke 22:43-44). Yet Jesus also approached the Cross as His glorification, knowing that His submitting to the Cross would accomplish a great deal (John 12:23-27).

Theophylact noted[470] that the Lord did not take all of His disciples with Him as He went to pray in the Garden (Matthew 26:36-37, Mark 14:32-33), but only those three who had seen Him in glory at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-7).

> "Because He was agonizing as He prayed, He did not want these things to appear as cowardice. He took with Him those who were eyewitnesses of His divine glory and hearers of the Voice from above, which bore witness to Him, so that when they saw Him struggling and agonizing, they would understand this to be His human nature. To confirm that He was truly man, He permitted His human nature to do what is natural to it. Christ, as man, desires life and prays for the cup to pass, for man has a keen desire for life. By doing these things, the Lord confutes those heretics who say that He became man in appearance[471] only.

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[470] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, p. 293.

[471] This note from the editors of Theophylact's Commentary: "The Docetists, 'Appear-ists', were a heretical sect dating back to apostolic times. [This stems from the heresies of Simon Magus. For details on Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2002.] They held that God the Word did not become flesh in any literal manner, but only appeared to do so. Thus they denied that Christ's body, Passion, or His human nature was real. This false and blasphemous heresy is contrary to the very doctrine of the Incarnation and the salvation of man. It has been condemned by the Church whenever it has arisen: in the Gnostics of the apostolic era, in the Manicheans a few centuries later, in the Bogomils of the later Byzantine era, and in the Theosophists and spiritualists of the nineteenth century.

Since Christ was truly both God and man, He had two wills. The struggle in the Garden was Christ's human will submitting itself to His Divine will, where both His human and His Divine will agreed that He would pursue His mission for the salvation of man. Theophylact stated[472] it this way:

> "The praying in Gethsemane was from His human nature, which was permitted to suffer the human passion of love of life. It was not from His divine nature, as the accursed Arians say, and this is made clear by His sweat and by His agony, which was so great that, as the saying goes, drops of blood fell from Him. It is a saying that those who labor extremely hard 'sweat blood', and that those in bitter sorrow 'weep blood'. This is why the Evangelist uses the image of sweating drops of blood, to show that the Lord was not merely damp with perspiration as a token of His humanity, but was completely drenched with sweat. This makes it clear that the nature, which sweated and agonized, was the Lord's human nature, not His divine. His human nature was permitted to suffer these things, and consequently did suffer them, to prove that the Lord was truly human, and not a man in appearance only".

According to tradition, the angel that appeared to strengthen Jesus was the Archangel Gabriel. Gabriel was the angel who announced the birth of John to Zechariah (Luke 1:19), the birth of Christ to the Virgin Mary (Luke 1:26), and who gave Daniel understanding of some of his visions (Daniel 8:16, 9:21). Gabriel is also associated with the angel in Joseph's dreams (Matthew 1:20, 2:13), the announcement to the shepherds (Luke 2:9), and one of the angels at the tomb (Matthew 28:2, Mark 16:5). Thus the role of Gabriel has been to announce salvation to mankind.

Theophylact stated that appearance of the angel to strengthen Jesus fulfilled the prophecy of Moses:

> "There appeared an angel to Him, strengthening Him, and this too was for our encouragement, that we might learn the power of prayer to strengthen us, and having learned this, use it as our defense in dangers and sufferings. Thus is fulfilled the prophecy of Moses, 'And let all the sons of God be strengthened in Him' (Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX), as it is written[473] in the Great Ode".

Cyril of Alexandria pointed out[474] the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. Noting that Jesus was grieved in the Garden, Cyril asked why He seemed to be afraid of death. Cyril concluded that it was not death that Christ feared; it was the consequences of Israel's rebellion against God that He was grieved at, because He foresaw the utter destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. Through pity for Israel He would have put off the necessity to suffer; but as it was not possible for Him to avoid the passion, He submitted to it also, because God the Father so willed it with Him. Cyril's words are:

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[472] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, pp. 293-295.

[473] This note from the editors of Theophylact's Commentary: "This is part of the Second Ode of the Nine Prophetic Odes. These nine Odes, Or Canticles, taken from the Old and New Testaments, are printed together with the Psalms in the Psalter Book. They provide the underlying Scriptural structure for one of the most important parts of the Matins service, the Matins Canon".

[474] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 146, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp. 581-582.

"For what reason, O Lord, were You also terrified at death? Did You draw back from suffering after being seized with fear? Didn't You teach the holy Apostles to make no account of the terrors of death, saying, 'Fear not them who kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul' (Matthew 10:28)? The grace of spiritual fortitude is Your gift to the elect. You are by nature Life, and the cause of life. You we look for as a Savior and Deliverer, and the Destroyer of corruption. From You all receive their life and being. You have made every thing that breathes. The angels are for You, from You and by You, and so is the whole rational creation. To You David spoke concerning us, 'You send Your Spirit, and they are created; and You renew the face of the ground' (Psalm 104:30). How, therefore, are You grieved, and sorrowful, even to death? Plainly You knew, that You are God by nature, and know whatever is about to happen. By enduring death in the flesh, You knew that You would free from death the inhabitants of all the earth, and bring Satan to shame; that You would set up a trophy of victory over every evil and opposing power. That You would be known by everyone, and worshipped as the God and Creator of all. You knew that you would spoil hell; that You would deliver those that are in there from bonds that had endured for many ages; that You would turn to Yourself all that is under heaven. These things You announced to us of old by the holy prophets. We have heard You clearly saying, 'Now is the judgment of this world: now will the prince of this world be cast out. And I, if I be lifted up from the earth, shall draw all men unto Me' (John 12:31-32). You had said, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain'" (John 12:24).

"For what reason, therefore, are You grieved? Yes, He says, rightly am I found thus in anguish. I know that by consenting to suffer the passion on the cross, I shall deliver all beneath the heaven from every evil, and be the cause of unending blessings to the inhabitants of the whole earth. I am aware of the unloosing of death, and the abolition of corporeal corruption, and the overthrow of the tyranny of the devil, and the remission of sin. But yet it grieves Me for Israel, the firstborn, that from now on, he is not only deleted from the ranks of the first born, but he is also not even among the servants. The portion of the Lord, His inheritance, will be the portion of jackals (Psalm 63:10 LXX). He who was the beloved one is greatly hated; he who had the promises is utterly stripped of My gifts; the pleasant vineyard with its rich grapes will be a desert land, a place dried up, and without water. I will command the clouds that they rain no rain on it. I will break through its hedge, and it shall be a spoil; and I will beat down its wall, and it shall be trampled under foot (Isaiah 5:5-6). Tell me then, what vine dresser, when his vineyard is desert and waste, will feel no anguish for it? What shepherd would be so harsh and stern, that when his flock was perishing, to suffer nothing on its account? These are the causes of My grief; for these things I am sorrowful. I have no pleasure in the death of a sinner, but rather that he should turn from his evil way and live (Ezekiel 18:23). Right is it, that as being good and merciful, I should not only be glad at what is joyful, but also should feel sorrow at what is grievous".

"But that He pitied Jerusalem, as being well aware of what was about to happen, and that it would have to endure all misery because of its crimes against Him, you may learn even from this. He went up from Judea to Jerusalem, and,

when He beheld the city, He wept over it, and said, 'Would that you had known the things of your peace; but now they are hid from your eyes' (Luke 19:41-42). As He wept over Lazarus (John 11:35), in pity for the whole race of mankind, so we say that He was grieved[475] at seeing Jerusalem involved in extreme miseries for which there was no cure".

"You have heard[476] Christ say, 'Father, if You will, remove this cup from Me' (Luke 22:42). Was then His passion an involuntary act? Was it necessary for Him to suffer; or rather was the violence of those who plotted against Him, stronger than His own will? Not so, we say! His passion was a voluntary act, but it was difficult for Him in that it implied the rejection and destruction of the synagogue of the Jews. It was not His will that Israel should be the murderer of its Lord. By so doing it would be exposed to utter condemnation and become reprobate, be rejected from having part in His gifts and in the hope prepared for the saints. Once it had been His people, His only one, His elect and adopted heir. Moses said to them, 'Behold, the heavens and the earth are the Lord's your God: and you the Lord has chosen out of all nations to be His people' (Deuteronomy 10:14-15). Through pity for Israel He would have put off the necessity to suffer; but as it was not possible for Him to avoid the passion, He submitted to it also, because God the Father so willed it with Him".

When we see it this way from His viewpoint, knowing what happened in c. 70 AD as a consequence, we can weep with Him as He approached the Crucifixion.

John Chrysostom on Christ's Apparent Desire to Avoid Crucifixion

John Chrysostom noted[477] differences in Christ's statements concerning the Cross. On the one hand, He seems to be asking the Father in the Garden of Gethsemane for permission to avoid the Cross. But on the other hand, He seems to be rebuking Peter for suggesting the same thing. Christ's entire mission in becoming Incarnate focused on the Cross, and Chrysostom reviews a number of Christ's statements to this effect. His agony in the Garden, as He faced crucifixion, is merely proof of the human feelings of His humanity. In addition, by His ordeal in the Garden, He taught His followers how they should face death; not boldly flinging themselves onto the executioner, but patiently waiting on the Will of God as death approaches. By doing this, He also taught them to avoid the temptation for the vainglory of a heroic martyr's death.

"Approaching the Cross, He said, 'Father if it be possible let this cup pass from me' (Matthew 26:39). That is, He is asking, 'If it be permissible let me not be subjected to crucifixion and death'. But yet, when Peter suggested avoiding the Cross, Jesus rebuked Peter severely saying, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men' (Matthew 16:23). A few moments earlier, Jesus had pronounced Peter blessed for his understanding of the Incarnation. Why did Jesus pour such an invective on Peter after he had received the revelation from the Father, and had received the keys of heaven? (Matthew 16:17-19) This seems contradictory when Jesus seems to be saying the same thing that Peter was rebuked for".

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[475] Moses and the Apostle Paul felt this same grief and both offered to be accursed from Christ themselves in order that their countrymen might be saved (Exodus 32:32, Romans 9:3).

[476] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 147, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp 585-586.

[477] John Chrysostom, Homily on the Passage Matthew 26:29, and Against Marcionites and Manichaeans, 2-4.

"Jesus had also said that 'The good shepherd lays down his life for the sheep', and that 'A hireling, *he who is* not the shepherd, one who does not own the sheep, sees the wolf coming and leaves the sheep and flees' (John 10:11-12). If it is the sign of the good shepherd to sacrifice himself and of the hireling to be unwilling to undergo this, how can He who calls Himself the good shepherd ask that he may not be sacrificed? How could He say "I lay down my life of myself?" (John 10:17-18) If you lay down Your life of Yourself, how can You ask another that You may not lay it down?"

"He Himself again speaks, 'Therefore My Father loves Me, because I lay down My life that I may take it again' (John 10:17). If He does not desire to lay it down, and so asks the Father, how is it that He is loved on this account?"

"Yet the cross is glory according to the evangelist, 'The Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified' (John 7:39). In other words, 'Grace was not yet given because the enmity towards men was not yet destroyed by reason that the cross had not yet done its work'. The cross destroyed the enmity of God towards man, brought about the reconciliation, made the earth Heaven, associated men with angels, pulled down the citadel of death, unstrung the force of the devil, extinguished the power of sin, delivered the world from error, brought back the truth, expelled the Demons, destroyed temples, overturned altars, suppressed the sacrificial offering, implanted virtue, and rounded the Churches. The cross is the will of the Father, the glory of the Son, the rejoicing of the Spirit. The cross is that which is brighter than the sun; for when the sun is darkened then the cross shines brightly. The sun is darkened not because it is extinguished, but because it is overpowered by the brilliancy of the cross".

"The cross opened Paradise, it brought in the robber, it conducted into the kingdom of Heaven the race of man, which was about to perish, and was not worthy even of earth. So great are the benefits which have sprung from the cross, and yet does He not desire to be crucified, I ask? If He did not desire it, did someone force Him? Why did He send prophets beforehand announcing that He would be crucified, if He did not wish to undergo it? For what reason does He call the cross a cup, if He did not desire to be crucified? Just as the cup is sweet to those who are thirsty so also was crucifixion to Him. Therefore He also said 'With desire have I desired to eat this Passover with you' (Luke 22:15), because after that evening the cross was awaiting Him".

"But in fact you behold Him hastening towards the deed. At least when they came upon Him, He said 'Whom do you seek?', and they replied 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Then He said to them 'I AM!' and they went backward and fell to the ground (John 18:4-6). Thus having first crippled them and proved that He was able to escape their hands, He then surrendered Himself that you might learn that not by compulsion or force, or the tyrannical power of those who attacked Him, did He unwillingly submit to this, but willingly with purpose and desire; He prepared for it a long time before".

"Having said 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me', He added 'nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done' (Luke 22:42). Here we find two wills that oppose one another. It seems as if the Father desires Him to be crucified, but He Himself does not desire it. Yet everywhere, we behold Him desiring and purposing the same things as the Father. When He says 'Grant to them, as I and You are one that they also may be one in us' (John 17:11, 21); this

is equivalent to saying that the purpose of the Father and of the Son is one. Similarly He says 'The words, which I speak, I speak not Myself, but the Father which dwells in Me, He does these works' (John 14:10). When He says, 'I have not come of Myself' and 'I can of My own self do nothing' (John 8:27-30), He does not say this as signifying that He has been deprived of authority, either to speak or to act. But He desires to prove the concord of His purpose, both in words and deeds, and in every kind of transaction, to be one and the same with the Father. The expression 'I speak not of Myself' is not denying His authority but a demonstration of agreement".

"How then does He say here, 'Nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'? Listen carefully! The doctrine of the Incarnation was very hard to receive. The exceeding measure of His loving kindness and the magnitude of His condescension were full of awe, and needed much preparation to be accepted. Consider what a great thing it was to listen to and to learn from God the ineffable, the incorruptible, the unintelligible, the invisible, the incomprehensible, where the ends of the earth are in His hands (Psalm 95:4 LXX), who looks on the earth, and causes it to tremble, who touches the mountains, and makes them smoke (Psalm 104:32). The weight of whose condescension not even the Cherubim were able to bear but veiled their faces by the shelter of their wings (Isaiah 6:2). This God, who surpasses all understanding, and baffles all calculation, having passed by angels, archangels, and all the spiritual powers above, condescended to become man. He was willing to take flesh formed of earth and clay, and enter the womb of a virgin, and be born in the space of nine months, and be nourished with milk, and suffer all things to which man is liable. Inasmuch then as that which was to happen was so strange as to be disbelieved by many even when it had taken place, He first of all sent prophets beforehand, announcing this very fact".

"He passed through all the phases incident to man. He did not enter once for all into a man matured and completely developed, but into a virgin's womb, so as to undergo the process of gestation and birth and suckling and growth. He suffered the infirmities of human nature to be hungry, thirsty, to sleep and feel fatigue; finally also when He came to the cross, He was allowed to undergo the pains of the flesh. For this reason also streams of sweat flowed down from it, an angel was discovered strengthening it (Luke 22:43-44), and He was sad and downcast. Before He uttered these words He said, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death?'" (Matthew 26:38)

"Just as He hungered, as He slept, as He felt fatigue, as He ate and drank, so also did He approach death, thereby showing his humanity, and that aspect of human nature which does not submit without pain to be torn from this present life. Had He not uttered any of these things, it might have been said that, if He were a man, He ought to have experienced human feelings. What are these? In the case of one about to be crucified, fear and agony, and pain in being torn from present life. A sense of the charm which surrounds present things is implanted in human nature. On this account wishing to prove the reality of the fleshly clothing, and to give assurance of the incarnation, He shows the actual feelings of man with full demonstration".

"This is one consideration, but there is another no less important. Christ, having come to earth, wished to instruct men in all virtue. Now the instructor teaches not only by word, but also by deed; for this is the teacher's best method of

teaching. A pilot for instance when he makes the apprentice sit by his side shows him how he handles the rudder, but he also joins speech to action, and does not depend on words alone or example alone. In like manner also an architect, a weaver, an embroiderer, a gold refiner, and a coppersmith; every kind has teachers who instruct both orally and practically. Inasmuch as Christ Himself came to instruct us in all virtue, He both tells us what ought to be done, and does it Himself. 'He who does and teaches the same shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven' (Matthew 5:19). Now observe; He commanded men to be lowly-minded and meek, 'Blessed are the poor in spirit, blessed are the meek' (Matthew 5:3-5). Again He teaches meekness and forbearance by His acts when He was struck on the face by the servant of the high priest. He said, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well why do you strike Me?' (John 18:23) He teaches men to pray for their enemies by means of His acts. For when He had ascended the cross He said, 'Father forgive them for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). Again He commanded us to do good to those who hate us, and to deal fairly with those who treat us spitefully (Matthew 5:44). This He did by his own acts; for he cast devils out of the Jews, who said that He Himself was possessed by a devil. He bestowed benefits on His persecutors, He fed those who were forming designs against Him, He conducted into His kingdom those who desired to crucify Him".

"He taught them also to pray when they asked Him (Luke 11:1). But it was necessary for them not merely to learn to pray but also how they ought to pray; for this reason He delivered to them the "Lord's Prayer". Since He commanded them to pray 'lead us not into temptation' (Luke 11:2-4), He instructed them in this very precept by putting it in practice Himself, saying, 'Father if it be possible, let this cup pass away from me' (Matthew 26:39). Thus He taught all the saints not to plunge into dangers, not to fling themselves into them but to wait for their approach, and to exhibit all possible courage, only not to rush forwards themselves, or to be the first to advance against terrors. Why did He pray like this? He did this both to teach us lowliness of mind, and also to deliver us from the charge of vainglory. On this account, when He had spoken these words 'He went away and prayed' (Matthew 26:39). After He had prayed He spoke to His disciples, 'Could you not watch with me one hour? Watch and pray that you don't enter into temptation' (Matthew 26:39-41). He not only prays but also admonishes, 'For the Spirit indeed is willing but the flesh is weak' (Matthew 26:41). Now this He said by way of emptying their soul of vanity, and delivering them from pride, teaching them self-restraint. Therefore the prayer which He wished to teach them, He Himself also offered, speaking from His manhood, not according to His Godhead, for the divine nature is impassable. He prayed as instructing us to pray, and even to seek deliverance from distress; but, if this is not permitted, then to acquiesce in what seems good to God. Therefore He said, 'Nevertheless not as I will but as You will' (Matthew 26:39), not because He had one will and the Father another. But in order that He might instruct men, even if they were in distress and trembling, even if danger came upon them, and they were unwilling to be torn from present life, nevertheless to postpone their own will to the will of God".

"Paul incurred many dangers and prayed that he might not be exposed to them. Then he heard Christ saying, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for my

strength is made perfect in weakness' (2 Corinthians 12:9). As soon as he saw what the will of God was, he in the future submitted his will to God's will. By means of this prayer then Christ taught both these truths that we should not plunge into dangers, but rather pray that we may not fall into them; but if they come upon us we should bear them bravely, and postpone our own will to the will of God. Knowing these things, let us pray that we may never enter into temptation; but if we do enter it, let us ask God to give us patience and courage, and let us honor His will in preference to every will of our own. For then we shall pass through this present life with safety, and shall obtain the blessings to come".

Fifth Gospel: Matthew 26:40-27:2 "The Arrest of Jesus"

Parts of this Reading are read twice during Holy Week. To avoid duplication, that part of the Reading dealing with Jesus' "trial" will be covered where they are read again on Holy Thursday evening.

When Jesus and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane, it was already late. We can see this from Appendix F, which shows a time line of the events of the Crucifixion. The Law stated that the Passover had to be eaten on the 14th of Nisan, which means that they had to begin eating the Passover after 6 PM, which is the beginning of the 14th of Nisan. Following the Passover meal came all the teaching of John 14:1 to John 17:26. Then Jesus took His disciples to the Garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus went off a short distance to pray three times for an hour each. Each time, Jesus said the same words in His prayer, and each time He returned to find His disciples sleeping (Mark 14:33-41). After the third time, Judas arrived with a detachment of troops, knowing that Jesus would be there (John 18:2-3). By the time Judas arrived, it was most likely after midnight.

The Disciples Can't Stay Awake: Matthew 26:40-46

John Chrysostom noted[478] that Jesus took His disciples with Him, since they clung to Him inseparably, but yet He went off a little bit (Luke 22:41) to pray by Himself. "For it was usual with Him to pray apart from them. This He did teaching us in our prayers, to prepare silence for ourselves and great retirement".

All of the Eleven went to the Garden with Him, but only Peter, James and John went farther (Matthew 26:35-37). Chrysostom stated[479] that He did not take all of them farther with Him, but only those three that had seen His glory on the mount of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-7). This was so that they would know that He went to the Cross of His own free will.

After praying for an hour, He returned to find Peter, James and John sleeping. They were used to staying out all night fishing (John 21:3-4), but they hadn't been doing that recently, since they had left their business to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11). Jesus, on the other hand, was accustomed to praying all night (Luke 6:12). After praying the first time, Jesus "came to the disciples and found them asleep, and said to Peter, 'What? Could you not watch with Me one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed *is* willing, but the flesh *is* weak'" (Matthew 26:40-41). Even though all the disciples were sleeping, Jesus said this to

[478] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.
[479] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

Peter because he had earlier that he would never stumble and would never deny Him (Matthew 26:33-35).

Chrysostom stated[480] that everything in Christ's Passion belongs to Divine dispensation. The disciples were weak and Jesus only woke them up once.

> "And why did He come the second time? In order to reprove them, for they were so drowned in despondency, that they had no sense even of His presence. He did not however reprove them severely, but stood apart from them a little, showing their unspeakable weakness, that not even when they had been rebuked, were they able to endure. But He doesn't awake and rebuke them again, lest He should smite them that were already smitten, but He went away and prayed. And when He came back again, He said, 'Sleep on now, and take your rest' (Matthew 26:45). Yet there was need to be wakeful then. He shows that they will not bear so much as the sight of the dangers, but will be put to flight and desert Him from their terror. He had no need of their help and He shows that He must by all means be delivered up. He shows again that what is done belongs to a divine dispensation".

Judas Comes with the Soldiers: Matthew 26:47-56
2nd Gospel Reading for Holy Thursday Evening: John 18:1-11

After Jesus had finished praying the third time, "He came to His disciples and said to them, 'Are *you* still sleeping and resting? Behold, the hour is at hand, and the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand'. And while He was still speaking, behold, Judas, one of the Twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and elders of the people. Now His betrayer had given them a sign, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him'. Immediately he went up to Jesus and said, 'Greetings, Rabbi!' and kissed Him" (Matthew 26:45-49).

The Apostle John adds some details to this encounter in the 2nd Gospel Reading for Holy Thursday Evening.

> "Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops[481], and officers from the chief priests and Pharisees, came there with lanterns, torches, and weapons. Jesus therefore, knowing all things that would come upon Him, went forward and said to them, 'Whom are you seeking?' They answered Him, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus said[482] to them, 'I AM'. Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, 'I AM', they drew back and fell to the ground. Then He asked them again, 'Whom are you seeking?' And they said, 'Jesus of Nazareth'. Jesus answered, 'I have told you that I AM. Therefore, if you seek Me, let these go their way', that the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, 'Of those whom You gave Me I have lost[483] none' (John 18:3-9).

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[480] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

[481] That is, Roman troops. The chief priests and Pharisees have portrayed Jesus as an insurrectionist to the Roman authorities, and therefore the Roman authorities assisted in arresting Jesus.

[482] This expression is usually translated, "I am *He*", but the word "*He*" is not present in the Greek, but was inserted by the translators in order to make better sense of the English. By saying "I AM", Jesus was calling Himself by the same Name that He gave to Moses at the Burning Bush when Moses asked the then Pre-Incarnate Christ what to call Him. He said then, "I AM has sent me to you" (Exodus 3:14).

[483] See also John 17:12, 1 John 2:19.

John Chrysostom stated[484] that this occurred about midnight, and that Jesus generally spent the night out of doors. If He had been in the habit of lodging at someone's house, Judas and the soldiers would have seized Him there. Since Judas "knew the place" (John 18:2), the implication is that Judas had often spent the night with Jesus and the rest of the Twelve (and others) at this location. Chrysostom continued,

> "Do you see His invincible power, how being in the midst of them He disabled their eyes? The darkness was not the cause of their not knowing Him, the Evangelist has shown, by saying, that they had torches also. And even had there been no torches, they ought at least to have known Him by His voice; or if they did not know it, how could Judas be ignorant, who had been so continually with Him? He too stood with them, and he knew Him no more than they did, but he fell backward with them. Jesus did this to show, that not only could they not seize Him, but they could not even see Him when He was in their midst, unless He gave permission".
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> "What madness! His word threw them backward, yet not even so did they turn, when they had learned that His power was so great, but again set themselves to the same attempt. When therefore He had fulfilled all that was His, then He gave Himself up".

Cyril of Alexandria stated[485] that it was not the Lord's will that He should be taken while He was teaching daily in the Temple (Matthew 26:55), but rather He was waiting for a fitting season for His Passion.

> "This season has now arrived; don't be ignorant that this is your hour and the power of darkness. That is, a short time is granted you during which you have power over Me, by the Will of the Father consenting with My Will. I willed that for the salvation and life of the world, I should submit Myself to My Passion. You have therefore one hour against Me, that being between the Cross and the Resurrection".

Peter Tries to Defend Jesus

Then Simon Peter, having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear. The servant's name was Malchus. So Jesus said to Peter, 'Put your sword into the sheath. Shall I not drink the cup, which My Father has given Me?'" John 18:10-11). Luke adds, "But Jesus answered and said, 'Permit even this'. He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51). Matthew finishes up by saying, "But Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?' In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me'. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Matthew 26:52-56). Luke adds, "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

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[484] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.
[485] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983, p. 589.

Mark adds[486] to this account, "Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked" (Mark 14:51-52).

During the Farewell Discourse, Jesus had said, "'When I sent you without money bag, knapsack, and sandals (Luke 9:3), did you lack anything?' So they said, 'Nothing'. Then He said to them, 'But now, he who has a money bag, let him take it, and likewise a knapsack; and he who has no sword, let him sell his garment and buy one. For I say to you that this which is written must still be accomplished in Me, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12). For the things concerning Me have an end'. So they said, 'Lord, look, here are two swords'. And He said to them, 'It is enough'" (Luke 22:35-38).

John Chrysostom commented[487] on Peter's attempt to defend Jesus as follows: In his zeal, Peter had forgotten many things that the Lord had said over the previous three years, and which the Holy Spirit would remind him of later. For example, he had forgotten about turning the other cheek and returning good for evil, and now possessed a sword. But Christ, by His actions, continues to declare what He had said for the last three years.

> "Peter, therefore, taking courage from Christ's voice (when everyone fell backwards), armed himself against the assailants. 'And how', one might ask, 'does he who was asked not to have a wallet, not to have two coats (Luke 9:3), now possess a sword?' I think he had prepared it long before, as fearing this very thing which came to pass. But if you say, 'How does he, who was forbidden even to strike a blow with the hand (Matthew 5:44-47), attempt to become a manslayer?' He certainly had been commanded not to defend himself (Matthew 5:39), but here he did not defend himself, but his Master. Besides, the Twelve were not as yet perfect or complete. But if you desire to see Peter endowed with heavenly wisdom, you shall after this behold him wounded (Acts 5:40), and bearing it meekly, suffering ten thousand dreadful things, and not moved to anger. But Jesus here also works a miracle, both showing that we ought to do good to those who do evil to us (Matthew 5:44-45), and revealing His own power. He therefore restored the servant's ear, and said to Peter, 'All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword' (Matthew 26:52). The Evangelist John adds the name of the servant (Malchus), because the thing done was very great, not only because He healed him, but because He healed one who had come against Him, and who shortly after would strike Him with the fist (John 19:3). He also halted the war which was likely to have been kindled from this circumstance against the disciples. For this cause the Evangelist John included the name, Malchus, so that the men of that time might search and inquire diligently whether these things had really come to pass. Not without a cause does he mention the 'right ear'. He desired to show the impetuosity of the Apostle, that he almost aimed at the head itself".

Cyril of Alexandria stated[488] that Peter had misunderstood what the Lord had said about swords. The Lord was speaking about the impending destruction of Jerusalem, which would

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[486] According to tradition, the young man was the Evangelist Mark himself, who lived nearby, and who was roused out of bed by the commotion. See April 25th for the Lives of the Saints at the web site www.oca.org.

[487] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

[488] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983, pp. 578-580.

come as a result of the shameful treatment of her Lord. But Peter interpreted His words personally, and began carrying a weapon. Cyril said,

> "On this account He says, 'When I sent you without purse and without wallet and shoes, did you lack anything?' And they said, 'No'. For the Savior sent the holy Apostles, with the command to preach to the inhabitants of every village and city the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, and to heal every grief and every sickness among the people. On their journey He directed them not to occupy themselves with things that concern the body. But rather without baggage, unencumbered, and resting all their hope of sustenance on Him, they were to traverse the land. This they did, making themselves an example of praiseworthy and apostolic conduct. But now, He said, he that has a purse, let him take it, and a wallet in like manner. Was this because, on second thoughts, a more serviceable plan was devised? Would it have been better on the former occasion also to have had wallet and purse? What was the cause of so sudden a change? What need had the holy Apostles of purse and wallet?"
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> "The Lord's words in appearance had reference to them, but in reality applied to the person of every Jew; for they it rather was whom Christ addressed. He did not say that the holy Apostles must get purse and wallet, but that whosoever has a purse, let him take it, meaning thereby, that whoever had property in the Jewish territories, should collect all that he had together, and flee, so that if he could any how save himself, he might do so. But anyone who had not the means of equipping himself for travel, and who from extreme poverty must continue in the land, let even such one, He says, sell his cloak, and buy a sword. From now on the question with all those who continue in the land will not be whether they possess anything or not, but whether they can exist and preserve their lives. War shall befall them with such unendurable impetuosity, that nothing shall be able to stand against it".
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> "In foretelling these things, the Lord was speaking of what was about to happen to the country of the Jews. But the divine disciples did not understand the deep meaning of what was said, but supposed rather that He meant that swords were necessary, because of the attack about to be made upon Him by the disciple who betrayed Him, and by those who were assembled to seize Him. For this reason they say, 'Lord, behold, here are two swords'. Fixing His look, the Savior ridicules their speech, and says, 'It is enough'. Really! Two swords are enough to bear the brunt of the war about to come on them, where it turned out that many thousands of sword would be to no avail".

Theophylact stated[489] that when Jesus saw that His disciples didn't understand, He let it pass such that they would understand later from the outcome of the events. He explained the misunderstanding about the swords this way:

> "Indeed, at the time these words were spoken, the Apostles were so lacking in understanding that they replied, 'Lord, behold, here are two swords'. Because the Lord knew they had not understood, He said, 'It is enough', although in fact it was not enough. If He had needed human assistance against those swooping down on Him like bandits, a hundred swords would not have been enough; but if He had needed divine aid, two swords were excessive. Because

[489] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, pp. 290-292.

> they did not understand, the Lord did not want to rebuke them, and so by saying, 'It is enough', He passes over the matter without comment. We do the same ourselves when we see that someone with whom we are talking does not understand what we are saying, and we say, 'Fine, let it be', although it is not fine. We let it go so as not to cause a disturbance. This is what the Lord is doing here when He sees that the disciples have not understood what was said. He lets it pass by, permitting the understanding of his words to emerge later from the outcome of the events".

Chrysostom added[490] a note, "And one might wonder why they did not seize the Twelve with Him, and cut them to pieces, especially when Peter had exasperated them by what he did to the servant, Malchus. Who then restrained them? It was that Power which cast them backward. To show that this did not come to pass through their intention, but by the power and decree of Him whom they had seized, John has added, 'That the saying might be fulfilled which He spoke, not one of them is lost except the son of perdition'" (John 17:12)

John concludes the arrest of Jesus by saying, "Then the detachment of troops and the captain and the officers of the Jews arrested Jesus and bound Him. And they led Him away to Annas first, for he was the father-in-law of Caiaphas who was high priest that year. Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people" (John 18:12-14).

The Depravity of Judas

We might ask ourselves how Judas could have stooped so low to betray Christ with an embrace! On three recorded occasions[491], Jesus had passed through the midst of those who wanted to arrest and kill Him, without their knowing it. If it had been His will that He should not be taken, He might have done this again. Judas, who had witnessed the Master do this on several occasions, therefore had told the troops, "Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely" (Mark 14:44). This was why Jesus had asked the troops, "Whom are you seeking?" (John 18:4) He had blinded their eyes to recognizing Him, in order to expose Judas' malice.

Cyril of Alexandria stated that Jesus had earlier stated that one of the Twelve would betray Him (Matthew 26:21), and therefore Judas' purposes were known. Judas exhibited an extraordinary display of falsehood throughout his betrayal.

> "There was the serpent within him struggling against God; he was the dwelling place of the devil. As he was reclining at table with the rest of the disciples, the Savior gave him a piece of bread, having dipped it in the dish; and after the bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:26-27). He approached Christ in the Garden as one beside himself with wine; and through the instrument of fraud and treachery, he makes a show of extraordinary affection. Christ very justly condemned him with the greater severity saying, 'Judas, do you betray the Son of Man with a kiss?' (Luke 22:48) Judas even said, 'Hail Master!' (Matthew 26:49) Does he say 'Hail!' to Him who by his instrumentality is made the prey of death?

[490] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

[491] That is, when the Jewish leaders tried to stone Him twice (John 8:59, 10:39); and when the synagogue of Nazareth tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:30).

Inasmuch as that false one, Satan, was within him, he used falsehood even in saying, 'Hail'".

John Chrysostom stated[492] that Judas' depravity had gotten so bad that he had become like a wild beast that had lost touch with the rest of mankind. Yet Jesus tried to reprove and correct him right up to the end:

"Oh! What depravity had the traitor's soul received! With what kind of eyes did he then look at his Master? With what mouth did he kiss Him? Oh! Accursed purpose; what did he devise? What did he dare? What sort of sign of betrayal did he give? 'Whomever I shall kiss' (Matthew 26:48), he said. He was emboldened by his Master's gentleness, which more than all was sufficient to shame him, and to deprive him of all excuse for that he was betraying one so meek".

But even to the very moment Jesus continued to reprove him, saying, 'Judas, are you betraying the Son of Man with a kiss?' (Luke 22:48) 'Are you not ashamed even of the form of the betrayal?' Since even this did not check him, He submitted to be kissed, and gave Himself up willingly. And they laid their hands on Him, and seized Him that night on which they ate the Passover; to such a degree did they boil with rage. Yet this does not deliver Judas from intolerable punishment, but even more exceedingly condemns him. Though he had received such proof of His power, lenience, meekness, and gentleness, he became fiercer than any wild beast. Knowing then these things, let us flee from covetousness. It was this that then drove him to madness (John 12:6); the same exercises them who are taken by it in the most extreme cruelty and inhumanity. When it makes them to despair of their own salvation, much more does it cause them to overlook that of the rest of mankind".

Judas Illustrates the Mind of the Covetous

Using Judas as an illustration of the covetous, Chrysostom continued to say[493] that our perspective of things is sometimes twisted to favor covetousness.

"How shall we instruct him that is in darkness? The love of money is darkness, permitting nothing that exists to appear as it is. Very much as one in darkness, though he should see a golden vessel, though a precious stone, though purple garments, supposes them to be nothing, for he doesn't see their beauty. So also he that is in covetousness, knows not as he ought the beauty of those things that are worthy of our care. Disperse then the mist that arises from this passion, and then will you see the nature of things".

"Some even curse the poor, and say that houses and living are disgraced by poverty. What is a disgrace to a house? To be indifferent about worldly things, often occasions all a man's leisure to be spent in the care of his soul. When you see great care about outward things and then be ashamed at the great unsuitability. The houses of those that are rich most of all are unsuitable. When you see tables covered with hangings, and couches inlaid with silver, just as in the theater and the stage, what can be equal to this unsuitability? What kind of house is most like the stage and the things on the stage: the rich man's or the poor man's? Is it not quite plain that it is the rich man's? This therefore is very

[492] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 2.
[493] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 3-4.

unsuitable. What kind of house is most like Paul's, or Abraham's? It is quite evident that it is the poor man's. This therefore is most adorned, and to be approved. That you may learn that this is a house's adorning, enter into the house of Zacchaeus, and learn how Zacchaeus adorned it, when Christ was on the point of entering. He did not run to his neighbors begging curtains, and seats, and chairs made of ivory, neither did he bring forth from his closets Laconian hangings; but he adorned it with an adorning suitable to Christ. "The half of my goods I will give to the poor; and whomsoever I have robbed, I will restore fourfold" (Luke 19:8). In this way let us adorn our houses that Christ may enter in to us also. These are the fair curtains; these are wrought in Heaven; they are woven there. Where these are, there is also the King of Heaven. But if you adorn it in another way, you are inviting the devil and his company.

He came also into the house of the publican Matthew. What then did this man also do? He first adorned himself by his readiness and by his leaving all, and following Christ.

So also Cornelius adorned his house with prayers and alms; wherefore even unto this day it shines above the palace. The vile state of a house is not in vessels lying in disorder, nor in an untidy bed, nor in walls covered with smoke, but in the wickedness of those that dwell there. Christ shows it, for into such a house, if the inhabitant is virtuous, He is not ashamed to enter; but into that other, though it has a golden roof, He will never enter. So that while this one is more gorgeous than the palace, with its golden roof and columns, is like filthy drains and sewers, for it contains the vessels of the devil.

In another place, Chrysostom probes[494] deeper into the mind of Judas, regarding what he had and what he was given. Covetousness, Chrysostom concluded, is a cruel tyrant that tries to snare our soul.

"A grievous tyrant indeed is the love of gold, and terrible in putting the soul beside itself. A man is not so beside himself through drunkenness as through love of money, not so much from madness and insanity as from love of money".

"Why did Judas betray Him? He called Judas when he was unmarked and unknown. He made him one of the Twelve; He gave him a share in His teaching. He promised him ten thousand good things, He caused him to work wonders, he was sharer of the same table, the same journeys, the same company, the same conversation, as the rest. Were not these things sufficient to restrain him? What had he to charge Him with? Rather, what good did he not receive at His hands? Christ knew Judas' mind, and didn't cease to do His part. He often said, 'One of you shall betray Me' (Matthew 26:21). He often identified him, and yet spared him, and though He knew him to be such a one, yet did not cast him out of the band of the Twelve. He still bore with him; He still honored him, and loved him, as a true disciple, and as one of the Twelve. Last of all (oh, for your vileness!), He took a towel, and with His own unsullied hands He washed your polluted feet, and even this did not keep him back. Judas stole the things of the poor, and, that he might not go on to greater sin, Christ bore this too. Nothing persuaded Judas. Had he been a beast, or a stone, would he not have been changed by this kindness towards him, by these wonders, by these teachings? He was more senseless than a stone".

[494] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, VI.

"While we wonder at such folly of the traitor; we should dread what wounded him. He became such from avarice, from the love of money. We should cut out this passion, for to these diseases does it give birth; it makes us impious, and causes us to be ignorant of God, though we have received ten thousand benefits at His hands. Cut it out, I entreat you; it is no common disease; it knows how to give birth to a thousand destructive deaths. We have seen Judas' tragedy. Let us fear lest we too fall into the same snares. This was written that we should not suffer the same things. This is why all the Evangelists related it, that they might restrain us. Flee then far from it. Covetousness consists not in the love of much money alone, but in loving money at all. It is grievous avarice to desire more than we need. Was it talents[495] of gold that persuaded the traitor? For thirty pieces of silver he betrayed his Lord. Covetousness is not shown in receiving much, but rather in receiving little things? See how great a crime he committed for a little silver!"

"It cannot be that an avaricious man should ever see the face of Christ! This is one of the things, which are impossible. It is a root of evils, and if he that possesses one evil thing falls from that glory, where shall he stand who bears within him the root? He who is the servant of money cannot be a true servant of Christ. Christ Himself has declared that the thing is impossible. "You cannot," He says, "serve God and Mammon," and, "No man can serve two masters" (Matthew 6:24), for they lay upon us contrary orders. Christ says, 'Spare the poor'; Mammon says, 'Even from the naked strip off the things they have'. Christ says, 'Empty yourself of what you have'; Mammon says, 'Take also what you have not'. Do you see the opposition, do you see the conflict?"

"How is it that a man cannot easily obey both, but must despise one? Does it need proof? Do we not see in very deed, that Christ is despised, and Mammon honored? Christ says, 'So likewise, whoever of you does not forsake all that he has cannot be My disciple' (Luke 14:33); Mammon, on the other hand, says, 'Take the bread from the hungry'. Christ says, 'Cover the naked' (Isaiah 58:7); the other says, 'Strip the naked'. Christ says, 'You shall not hide yourself from your own flesh', (Isaiah 58:7) and those of your own house; Mammon says, 'You shall not pity those of your own seed; though you see your mother or your father in want, despise them'. 'Even your own soul', he says, 'destroy it also'. And he is obeyed! He who commands us to do cruel, mad, brutal things, is listened to rather than He who bids us gentle and healthful things! Hell is appointed for this; for this, a river of fire (Daniel 7:10); for this, a worm that doesn't die" (Mark 9:42-48).

To further define the problem of riches, Jesus gave an illustration of camels and needles (Matthew 19:24-26) that has been little understood in our generation. The main gates of most cities in ancient times were huge wooden structures set in an archway and often overlaid with brass for strength and flame proofing. At night, the gates were closed and locked with a bar on the inside and not opened until morning. Travelers that arrived late in the day after the gates were closed were forced to spend the night outside the city unless there was some provision for them to get into the city. Outside the city, law and order did not exist at night and travelers were at the mercy of outlaws. This is still the case today in some third world countries.

[495] A talent was a measure of the weight a man could carry, and consisted of about 75 pounds.

To deal with this situation, many ancient cities had a "needle's eye gate" which was a small, low door beside the main gate. Such a feature existed[496] on at least one of the gates of Jerusalem and Damascus. A man could fit easily through the "needle's eye gate", but a camel, being a large animal, could not fit easily. If the camel's pack (which could weight up to 1,000 pounds) were removed and the camel were made to kneel, the camel could just barely crawl through the "needle's eye gate."

The statement Jesus made, that it is easier for a camel to go through the needle's eye gate than for a rich man to enter the Kingdom of God, made use of the above imagery. Like the camel, the rich man first needs to unload his pack or burden. The parable of the sower refers to this pack as "the cares of this world, the deceit of riches, the desire for other things" (Mark 4:19) and the pleasures of life (Luke 8:14). These are things that appeal to our flesh and which can lead us away from God. Some of the early disciples, like Barnabas (one of the Seventy) sold a large amount of property and brought the entire proceeds to the Twelve (Acts 4:34-37). Ananias and Sapphria on the other hand, were caught in the deceit of riches and held back part of the proceeds – and paid dearly (Acts 5:1-10).

This does not mean that no Christian can be rich. The Patriarch Job was very wealthy (Job 1:1-3, 42:12-17), yet the Lord referred to him as a blameless and upright man who had no peers in his righteousness (Job 1:8, 2:3). In Jesus' illustration, nothing is said about the camel's pack being loaded back up once the camel is inside. The key here is discerning the deceitfulness of wealth and the strength of its pull on one's heart. Job was able to let his pack be taken off without remorse. "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21; also Job 2:9-10). Many Christians throughout the ages have been unable or unwilling to continue fighting this pull and have taken oaths of poverty to thrust a sword (so to speak) into the heart of the demon of wealth.

Second Old Testament Reading: Job 38:1-23, 42:1-5 "The Lord Speaks to Job"

The text of the Reading from Job, from the Septuagint[497] is presented below, since it differs from the Hebrew in places. In this Reading, it is Christ speaking to Job after Job has gone through an ordeal that models the future suffering of Christ Himself in the flesh. In this account, the Lord never questions Job's righteousness, only his understanding of God.

> "And after Elihu had ceased from speaking, the Lord spoke to Job through the whirlwind and clouds, saying, 'Who is this that hides counsel from me, and confines words in his heart, and thinks to conceal them from me? Put your belt on like a man; and I will ask you, and you answer me. Where were you when I founded the earth? Tell me now, if you have knowledge, who set the measures of it, if you know? Or who stretched a line upon it? On what are its rings fastened? And who is he that laid the corner-stone upon it? When the stars were made, all my angels praised me with a loud voice".
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> "And I shut up the sea with gates, when it rushed out, coming forth as out of its mother's womb. And I made a cloud its clothing, and shrouded it in mist.

[496] Weiss, Insight into Bible Times and Customs, pp. 24-25

[497] The Septuagint, or LXX from the seventy translators, was a translation of the Hebrew Scriptures that was done between c. 300 BC and 200 BC. The LXX was used exclusively by the Early Church, and the vast majority of Old Testament quotes in the New Testament are from the LXX and not from the Hebrew.

> And I set bounds to it, surrounding it with bars and gates. And I said to it, this far shall you come, but you shall not go beyond, but your waves shall be confined within you".
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> "Did I order the morning light in your time; and did the morning star then first see his appointed place; to lay hold of the extremities of the earth, to cast the ungodly out of it? Or did you take clay of the ground, and form a living creature, and set it with the power of speech upon the earth? And have you removed light from the ungodly, and crushed the arm of the proud?"
>
> "Or have you gone to the source of the sea, and walked in the tracks of the deep? And do the gates of death open to you for fear; and did the porters of hell quake when they saw you? And have you been instructed in the breadth of the whole earth under heaven? Tell me now, what is the extent of it?"
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> "And in what kind of a land does the light dwell? And of what kind is the place of darkness? If you could bring me to their utmost boundaries, and if also you know their paths, I know then that you were born at that time, and the number of your years is great. But have you gone to the treasures of snow? And have you seen the treasures of hail? And is there a store of them for you against the time of your enemies, for the day of wars and battle?'" (Job 38:1-23)
>
> "Then Job answered and said to the Lord, 'I know that you can do all things, and nothing is impossible with you. For who is he that hides counsel from you? Or who keeps back his words, and thinks to hide them from you? And who will tell me what I knew not, great and wonderful things, which I understood not? But hear me, O Lord that I also may speak; and I will ask you, and do you teach me. I have heard the report of you by the ear before; but now mine eye has seen you'" (Job 42:1-5).

In this Reading, Job has just finished defending himself against the inquisition brought by his friends, and by Elihu the son of Barachel the Buzite (Job 32:1-2) who felt that there must have been some sin in Job's life for such a dramatic catastrophe to have inundated him. For example, Eliphaz, king of the Temanites[498], suggested that those who plow iniquity and sow trouble harvest it. When can he remember the pure in heart ever being utterly destroyed? (Job 4:7-8 LXX). Bilhad, sovereign of the Shuhites[499], suggested that perhaps Job's sons had sinned and had gotten their just reward. If Job were pure and true, God would listen to his supplication, and would restore to him the habitation of righteousness. After all, God will not reject a man of integrity nor will he receive any gift of the ungodly (Job 8:4, 6, 20 LXX). Job claimed he was innocent. Zophar, king of the Mineans[500], suggested that the Lord knows false men without investigating their circumstances. "If you have made your heart pure and lifted up your hand to Him (that is, in prayer); if iniquity is in your hand, put it far away and do not let unrighteousness lodge in your tents (Job 11:4, 11-14 LXX). The effect of all this on Job was that "the tents of the destroyers prosper while the just and blameless man is a joke (Job 12:4, 6). Job had been a prophet to his countrymen[501], and this would explain why he was sought out by the kings of neighboring countries.

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[498] Teman was the Southern portion of Idumaea. See Job 42:17 LXX.

[499] The Shuhites were descendants of Shuah, the son of Abraham by Keturah. His descendants were an Arab tribe West of the Euphrates. See Job 42:17 LXX.

[500] The Mineans, or Naamathites, were part of the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory is in Yemen today. See Job 42:17 LXX.

[501] Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1996, p. 708.

The result of this inquisition was perhaps the cruelest and the most difficult aspect of Job's misery to deal with. After all, there was ample evidence all around Job that what they were saying was true! Chrysostom commented[502] that "the reproaches of Job's friends appeared more grievous than the worms and the sores. There is nothing more intolerable to those in affliction than a word capable of stinging the soul". The message of the inquisition is exactly what Satan seeks to convince us of: that God is not faithful; that He doesn't care about us and that we should only trust in what we can see.

Chrysostom encourages[503] us to give thanks even for hell itself, which can be seen as a bridle on our heart.

> "Surely it is a thing beneficial to those who listen to it, when the dread of hell is laid like a bridle on our hearts. Let us therefore give thanks not only for blessings which we see, but also for those which we don't see and for those which we receive against our will. For many are the blessings He bestows upon us without our desire, without our knowledge".

Job was a forerunner for Christ regarding suffering and patience (James 5:10:11). He grew spiritually because of all the evil (the Cross) that he had to bear, and he was rewarded for his suffering both in this life and in the age[504] to come (Job 42:1-17).

Gregory Nazianzen stated[505] that Job's entire ordeal was for the revealing of his righteousness. This was also true of Christ's ordeal at the Cross.

> "What then of Him who answered Job out of the whirlwind and cloud, Who is slow to chastise and swift to help, Who does not allow the rod of the wicked to come into the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous should learn iniquity? At the end of the contests He declares the victory of the athlete in a splendid proclamation and lays bare the secret of his calamities. 'Do you think that I have dealt with you for any other purpose than the revealing of your righteousness?' This is the balm for his wounds, this is the crown of the contest, this is the reward for his patience. Perhaps his subsequent prosperity was small, great as it may seem to some, and ordained for the sake of small minds, even though he received twice again as much as he had lost".

Ezekiel referred to Job as a model of intercession for his people, along with Noah and Daniel. This is a result of Job's righteousness, where the Lord directed Job to intercede in prayer for his accusers and offer up sacrifices for them (Job 42:7-8). Similarly, Christ does the same for us (Hebrews 7:24-28). Ezekiel stated that things were so bad in his day that not even Noah, Daniel or Job could deliver the people by their prayers.

> "And the word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, if a land shall sin against me by committing a trespass, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break its staff of bread, and will send famine upon it, and cut off from it man and beast. Though these three men should be in the midst of it, Noah,

[502] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.
[503] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, v. 18.
[504] See Good Friday Vespers for the Study on Job 42:10-1
[505] Gregory Nazienzen, Oration On the Great Athanasius, XXI, 18.

> Daniel, and Job, they alone should be delivered by their righteousness" (Ezekiel 14:13-14 LXX).

The reproaches that Job received from the Lord (Job 38:1-23) had to do with his limited understanding of the Godhead that had existed prior to Creation and that had created the world. The Lord never questioned Job's righteousness; He said that what Job had spoken was right, and that his friends had not spoken right (Job 42:7-8). But Job still had to learn more about the majesty of God, as we all do. When Christ came as the ultimate intercessor, His Divinity was veiled by His flesh, and He didn't have the weakness in understanding God that Job had.

Clement of Alexandria stated[506] that Job attained a state of true spirituality and knowledge as a result of his ordeal:

> "The soul, which has chosen the best life, exchanges earth for heaven. He attains the life that is from God and righteousness. With reason therefore, Job, who had attained to knowledge, said, 'Now I know that You can do all things; and nothing is impossible to You. Who tells me of what I know not, great and wonderful things with which I was unacquainted? I felt myself vile, considering myself to be earth and ashes' (Job 30:19). He who, being in a state of ignorance, is sinful, 'is earth and ashes'; while he who is in a state of knowledge, being assimilated as far as possible to God, is already spiritual, and so elect".

John Chrysostom stated[507] that the ability to perceive ourselves through God's eyes is no small part of true wisdom, and truly knows ourselves:

> "This is no small part of true wisdom, to be able to perceive what we really deserve. He best knows himself, who accounts himself to be nothing. Thus we see that both David and Abraham, when they were come up to the highest pitch of virtue, then best fulfilled this; and would call themselves, the one, 'earth and ashes' (Genesis 18:27), the other, 'a worm' (Psalm 2:7); all the saints too, like these, acknowledge their own wretchedness. So that he surely who is lifted up in boasting, is the very person to be most ignorant of himself. Therefore in our common practice we tend to say of the proud, 'he doesn't know himself', 'he is ignorant of himself'".

In contrast to the humility and righteousness of Job, Chrysostom stated[508] that arrogance truly abases us. Similarly the Lord said, "For whoever exalts himself will be humbled, and he who humbles himself will be exalted" (Luke 14:11, 18:14, Job 22:29):

> "Most utterly does arrogance abase! This abased Pharaoh. He said, 'I don't know the Lord' (Exodus 5:2), and he became inferior to flies, frogs and locusts; and after that with his arms and horses he was drowned in the sea. In direct opposition to him, Abraham said, 'I am dust and ashes' (Genesis 18:27), and prevailed over countless barbarians. Having fallen into the midst of the Egyptians, he returned, bearing a trophy more glorious than Pharaoh (Genesis 12:16-20), and, clinging to this virtue, grew from there to be a 'friend of God' (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:23). Therefore he is celebrated everywhere, therefore

[506] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, IV, 26.
[507] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXV, 5.
[508] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 6.

he is crowned and proclaimed; but Pharaoh is both earth and ashes, and if there is anything else more vile than these. For nothing does God so abhor as arrogance".

First Hour Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-23; 12:1-5, 9-11, 14-15 "Israel Will Be Ruined"

In the mid 2nd Century, Justin Martyr noted[509] that parts of this Reading from Jeremiah, in the Hebrew original, had been changed or deleted by the Jewish Scribes from most copies in his day in order to remove obvious references to Christ. In order to get back to the original Reading, the Septuagint text will be used throughout. In italics is the portion that Justin said had been deleted. These parts are now included in modern Hebrew texts, but the wording may be slightly altered.

Put Wood Onto His Bread: Jeremiah 11:18-23

The Septuagint text reads as follows:

> "O Lord, teach me, and I shall know: then I saw their practices. *But I as an innocent lamb led to the slaughter, knew not. Against me they devised an evil device, saying, 'Come and let us put wood onto his bread, and let us utterly destroy him from off the land of the living, and let his name not be remembered any more'.* O Lord, that judge righteously, trying the reins and hearts, let me see your vengeance *taken* upon them, for to you I have declared my cause. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth[510] that seek my life, that say, 'You shall not prophesy at all in the name of the Lord, but if you do, you shall die by our hands'. Behold, I will visit them: their young men shall die by the sword; and their sons and their daughters shall die of famine: and there shall be no remnant *left* of them; for I will bring evil upon the dwellers in Anathoth, in the year of their visitation" (Jeremiah 11:18-23 LXX).

Jeremiah prophesied here about the Crucifixion and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem. But there is more to it than just that. To begin, Ambrose of Milan stated[511] that the Son here speaks of the mystery of His coming Incarnation. The "Bread" is the Lord's body which came down from heaven as the Life of the world (John 6:51), and this is why we call Him the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35, 48). Putting "wood onto His bread" refers to attaching His body to the Cross. The "men of Anathoth that seek my life" are the residents of Jerusalem and vicinity that crucified Christ, and the sword and famine that will visit them is the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD and in c. 135 AD.

Tertullian, in his writings against the 2nd century heretic, Marcion, stated[512] that Jeremiah's prophecy was a very ancient figure of the body of Christ. Marcion taught that Christ was not really a man, and therefore this part of Jeremiah's prophecy was difficult for Marcion to interpret.

> When Jesus so earnestly expressed His desire to eat the Passover (Luke 22:15), He considered it His own feast; for it would have been unworthy of God to desire to partake of what was not His own. Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, 'This is my body'

[509] Justin Martyr, Dialog with Tyrpho, a Jew, LXXII.
[510] Anathoth was the birthplace of the Prophet Jeremiah, and was located about 3 miles NE of Jerusalem.
[511] Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, IV, xii, 165-167.
[512] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 40.

(Luke 22:19), that is, the figure of my body. There could not have been a figure, however, unless there was first a real body. An empty thing, or phantom, is incapable of a figure. If, however, as Marcion might say, He pretended the bread was His body, because He lacked the truth of bodily substance, it follows that He must have given bread for us. It would contribute very well to the support of Marcion's theory of a phantom body, that bread should have been crucified! But why call His body bread, and not rather some other edible thing, say a melon, which Marcion must have had in place of a heart! Marcion did not understand how ancient this figure of the body of Christ was. He said Himself by Jeremiah, 'I was like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they devised a device against me, saying, Let us cast the tree on His bread' (Jeremiah 11:19), which means, of course, the cross on His body. Thus enlightening the ancient prophecies, He declared plainly enough what He meant by the bread, when He called the bread His own body.

Tertullian continued to say[513] that the reference to bread linked Jesus' body on the Cross to the mystery of the Bread of Life.

"Come, now, if you have read in the utterance of the prophet in the Psalms, 'God has reigned from[514] the tree' (Psalm 96:10), I wait to hear what you understand thereby. I fear you may perhaps think some carpenter-king is signified, and not Christ, who has reigned from that time onward when he overcame death, which ensued from His passion of 'the tree'".

"Similarly, again, Isaiah says: 'For a child is born to us, and to us is given a Son' (Isaiah 9:6). What novelty is that, unless he is speaking of the 'Son' of God? And one is born to us, where the beginning of His government has been made 'on His shoulder'. What king in the world wears the ensign of his power on his shoulder, and does not bear either diadem on his head, or else scepter in his hand? But the novel 'King of the ages', Christ Jesus, alone reared 'on His shoulder' His own novel glory, and power, and sublimity, — the cross, that the Lord 'might reign from the tree'. Of this tree likewise it is that God hints, through Jeremiah, that you would say, 'Come and let us put wood onto his bread, and let us utterly destroy him from off the land of the living, and let his name not be remembered any more' (Jeremiah 11:19 LXX). Of course on His body that 'wood' was put[515]; for so Christ has revealed, calling His body "bread' (John 6:32-59), whose body the prophet in bygone days announced under the term 'bread'. If you shall still seek for predictions of the Lord's cross, the 22nd Psalm will at length be able to satisfy you, containing as it does the whole passion of Christ; singing, as He does, even at so early a date, His own glory. 'They pierced', He says, 'my hands and feet' (Psalm 22:16) — which is the peculiar atrocity of the cross. Again when He implores the aid of the Father, 'Save me', He says, 'out of the mouth of the lion' — of course, of death — 'and from the horns of the unicorn[516] my humility' (Psalm 22:21 LXX) — that is, from the ends

[513] Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, I, vii, 10. For a similar discussion, see also: Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 19.

[514] Some ancient manuscripts had the words "from the tree" in the text. The texts used by Justin Martyr and Leo the Great had "from the tree" added, but the texts we have today do not have that addition.

[515] That is, when they laid the Cross on Him to carry it to Golgatha.

[516] The horn of the unicorn, in appearance like a pole, illustrates a Cross. In both Hebrew and Greek, the word translated "cross" did not have to have a "crossbeam".

of the cross. Which cross neither David himself suffered, nor any of the kings of the Jews, that you may not think the passion was of some other particular man than His, who alone was so signally crucified by the people.

Those That Deal Treacherously: Jeremiah 12:1-5

The Septuagint text reads as follows:

> "Righteous are you, O Lord, that I may make my defense to you; I will speak to you of judgments. Why is it that the way of ungodly men prospers? That all that deal very treacherously are flourishing? You have planted them, and they have taken root; they have begotten children, and become fruitful; you are near to their mouth, and far from their reins. But you, Lord, know me; you have proved my heart before you; purify them for the day of their slaughter. How long shall the grass of the field wither and the Land mourn for the wickedness of those that dwell in it? The beasts and birds are utterly destroyed; because the people said, 'God shall not see our ways'. Your feet run, and they cause you to faint; how will you prepare to ride on horses? You have been confident in the Land of your peace; how will you do in the roaring of Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:1-5 LXX)

Jeremiah addressed a hardness of heart among the people of Israel in his day that required the Babylonian Captivity to cure. He warned the people that the Captivity was coming (Jeremiah 21), and when it came, He told them why it had come (Jeremiah 44:24-30). There had been total apostasy in Judah; but when the captives returned after the 70 years in captivity, they wept for the sins of Israel prior to the Captivity! (Nehemiah 8:9-10, 9:1-3) Thus the Captivity had served a useful purpose.

John Cassian addressed[517] the people of Jerusalem who crucified Christ as having a similar hardness of heart, but which was too much to be cured by punishment in this life. Some people can be admonished and corrected by adversities in this life, such as Judah was corrected by the Babylonian Captivity. Those that cannot be corrected, he says, are doomed to be punished with the demons. Cassian compared this situation to Babylon the Great, as described by John in Revelation.

> "We ought to consider those men truly wretched and miserable who defile themselves with all kinds of sins and wickedness. Yet not only is there no visible sign of the devil's possession shown in them, but no temptation proportionate to their actions, or any scourge of punishment is brought to bear upon them. They are given no swift and immediate remedy in this world, whose 'hardness and impenitent heart', is too much for punishment in this life. They 'heap up for themselves wrath and indignation in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God' (Romans 2:5), 'where their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:44, 46, 48; Isaiah 66:24). Against them, the prophet is perplexed at the affliction of the saints, when he sees them subject to various losses and temptations. On the other hand, he sees sinners not only passing through the course of this world without any scourge of humiliation, but even rejoicing in great riches, and the utmost prosperity in everything, inflamed with uncontrollable indignation and fervor of spirit. He exclaims, 'But as for me, my feet had almost gone, my footing had almost slipped. I was grieved at the wicked, when I saw the peace of sinners. There is no regard to their death, nor is

[517] John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, vii, 31.

there strength in their stripes. They do not struggle in the labor of men, neither shall they be scourged like other men' (Psalm 73:2-5), since hereafter they shall be punished with the demons, to whom in this world it was not granted to be scourged in the lot and discipline of sons, together with men. Jeremiah also, when conversing with God on this prosperity of sinners, never professes to doubt about the justice of God, as he says, 'You are just, O Lord, if I speak to You of judgments' (Jeremiah 12:1). Yet in his inquiry as to the reasons of this inequality, he proceeds to say, 'But yet I will speak what is just to You. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly? You have planted them and they have taken root; they prosper and bring forth fruit. You are near in their mouth and far from their reins'" (Jeremiah 12:1-2).

"When the Lord mourns for their destruction by the prophet, and anxiously directs doctors and physicians to heal them, and in a manner urges them on to a similar lamentation, He says, 'Babylon the Great is suddenly fallen; she is destroyed. Wail for her! Take balm for her pain; Perhaps she may be healed' (Jeremiah 51:8; Revelation 18:2, Isaiah 13:19, 21:9). Then the prophet in the person of the Apostles, spiritual men and doctors who see the hardness of their soul and their impenitent heart say, 'We have healed Babylon; but she is not cured. Let us abandon her and let us go every man to his own land because her judgment has reached even to the heavens, and is lifted up to the clouds'" (Jeremiah 51:9).

The Shepherds Destroyed the Vineyard: Jeremiah 12:9-11, 14-15

The Septuagint text reads as follows:

"Is not my inheritance to me a cave of robbers, or a cave round about her? Go gather together all the wild beasts of the field, and let them come to devour her. Many shepherds have destroyed my vineyard, they have defiled my portion, they have made my desirable portion a trackless wilderness; it is made a complete ruin. For My sake the whole land has been utterly ruined, because there is none that lays the matter to heart".

"Thus says the Lord, concerning all the evil neighbors that touch my inheritance, which I have divided to my people Israel. Behold, I will draw them away from their land, and I will cast out Judah from the midst of them. It shall come to pass, after I have cast them out, that I will return, and have mercy on them, and will cause them to dwell everyone in his inheritance, and everyone is his land" (Jeremiah 12: 9-11, 14-15 LXX).

Gregory Nazianzen described[518] the situation of Jeremiah's day in very dire terms, and likened it to the situation in Christ's day:

1. The princes in her midst are like roaring lions, devouring souls in their might (Ezekiel 22:25 LXX).
2. Her priests have violated My laws and profaned My holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, but all things were alike to them (Ezekiel 22:26).
3. The priests said not, 'Where is the Lord?', and they that handled the Law knew Me not (Jeremiah 2:8).

[518] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration in Defense of His Flight to Pontus, II, 67-68.

4. My flock became a prey, behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hands, and will gather them and make them My own; but the shepherds shall suffer such and such things, as bad shepherds ought (Ezekiel 34:8-10).
5. Many pastors have destroyed My vineyard, and have polluted My pleasant portion, till it was reduced to a trackless wilderness (Jeremiah 12:10).
6. God will consume both the wall and them that daubed it, that is, those who sin and those who throw a cloak over them (Ezekiel 13:14 LXX).

Jeremiah addressed a situation in Israel that repeats itself from time to time when the shepherds that God has established for His people fight against Him. The Early Church had similar difficulties with the leaders of the Jewish synagogue in the centuries that followed the Crucifixion. Early Christian tradition states[519]:

> "Those are most certainly to be avoided who blaspheme God. The greatest part of the ungodly is ignorant of God; but these men, as fighters against God, are possessed with a willful evil disposition, as with a disease. From the wickedness of these heretics 'pollution is gone out on all the earth' (Jeremiah 23:15). The wicked synagogue is now cast off by the Lord God, and His house is rejected by Him, as He says, 'I have forsaken My house, I have left My inheritance' (Jeremiah 12:7). Again, says Isaiah, 'I will neglect my vineyard, and it shall not be pruned or spaded, and thorns shall spring up on it, as on a desert; and I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it'" (Isaiah 5:6).

Jesus' "Trial" Before the Sanhedrin: Matthew 26:57-68
Peter's Denials: Matthew 26:69-75

Third Old Testament Reading: Isaiah 50:4-11 "Prophecy of Jesus' Trial"

While these Readings are part of Holy Thursday Matins, the study of their content will be covered during the Study of Holy Thursday Burial Vespers. This is being done in order to keep together for study those events that happened consecutively. The Study of Holy Thursday (here) ends with Judas' betrayal and the arrest of Jesus. The Study of Holy Thursday Burial Vespers will begin with the event immediately following: Jesus' trial by night before the Sanhedrin.

[519] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, ii, 5.

APPENDIX F: Time Line of the Events of Passover

Roman		Hebrew	Name	Jewish Customs	Events Taking Place for Jesus and the Twelve
Day	**Time**	**Day**	**of Feast**		
		112 Nisan			
Wednesday	0000				
	0600				
	1200				
	1800	13 Nisan	"First Day of Unleavened Bread"	Houses were searched for the presence of leaven (Exodus 12:15).	
Thursday	0000				
	0600				
	1200				The Twelve Prepare the Passover (Last Supper)
	1800	14 Nisan	"Day of Preparation"	Preparations were made for the Feast Day following, including the slaying of the Passover Lamb at 1500.	The Last Supper 1800-2100; Gethsemane 2100-2400
FFriday	0000				Jesus' "Trial" Before the Sanhedrin
	0600				Peter's Denial; Jesus Delivered to Pilate, Crucified 0900
	1200				Jesus Died 1500
	1800	15 Nisan	"Feast of Passover" or "Passover"	The big celebration	Jesus Buried 1800
Saturday	0000	**Sabbath**			Jesus in Hades, Having Descended into Hell
	0600				
	1200				
	1800	116 Nisan	"The First Day of the Week"		
Sunday	0000				
	0600				Jesus Rose from the Dead
	1200				
	1800	117 Nisan			Jesus Appears to the Ten Apostles in the Upper Room
MMonday	0000				
	0600				
	1200				

Holy Thursday Evening
Jesus' Trial Before the Sanhedrin and Peter's Denials
The Twelve Passion Gospels

Revision B

Jesus' "Trial" Before the Sanhedrin

2nd Gospel: John 18:12-28 Jesus' "Trial" Before the Sanhedrin
3rd Gospel: Matthew 26:57-68 Jesus' "Trial" Before the Sanhedrin

The first part of this Second Reading, John 18:1-11, was covered in the Study for Holy Thursday Morning in conjunction with the other Readings for Holy Thursday Morning that dealt with Jesus' arrest by Judas, the officers of the High Priest and their contingent of soldiers.

The Levitical Judges: Predecessor of the Sanhedrin

Prior to Moses, the oldest male in a family (the patriarch of the family) exercised a leadership role in family matters, even with regard to capital punishment (Genesis 38:24). When Israel came out of Egypt, Moses himself "judged" all the people and heard every case. It was only after his father-in-law suggested that he get some help, that Moses appointed the Seventy Elders to assist him (Exodus 18:13-27). Moses' probably picked one elder from each tribe[520] and one from each clan to make up the Seventy (Deuteronomy 1:9-18). These Seventy then went part way up Mt. Sinai with him when he received the Law (Exodus 24: 1-15). In the same way, the Apostles chose "wise, understanding and knowledgeable men", in appointing the first seven "deacons" (Acts 6:3). These seven "deacons" had all been numbered among the Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-20) and exercised a leadership role in the Early Church. The "Patriarchs" of the Church have performed a similar role in the Church as the Seventy did for Israel in the days of Moses. The Old Testament Readings for the Feast Days[521] of some of the "Patriarchs of the Church" is Deuteronomy 1:8-15 as a reminder of this. Below is an excerpt of this:

> "I charged your judges at that time, saying, 'Hear causes between your brethren, and judge rightly between a man and his brother, and the stranger that is with him'. 'You shall not have respect to persons in judgment, you shall judge small and great equally. You shall not shrink from before the person of a man, for the judgment is God's; and whatever matter shall be too hard for you, you shall bring it to me, and I will hear it'" (Deuteronomy 1:16-17).

The Law required the Levitical judges who later took Moses' place to institute righteous judgment. Just as Moses stood as an intercessor between Christ and men (Deuteronomy 5:27, Exodus 20:19), so the judges who came later did. To reject them was to reject Christ, as was the case with Samuel when Israel demanded a king (1 Samuel 8:7). The early Church applied this to its bishops and priests. Cyprian stated[522] in this regard, "Nor let them think that the way of life or of salvation is still open to them, if they have refused to obey the bishops and priests".

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An important aspect of their duty was rightly dividing the Word of God in the exposition of the Law and the Prophets, such that it corresponded[523] to the teachings of Christ in the

[520] The leaders of thousands were the Patriarchs of the Tribes, and the leaders of hundreds were the Heads of Clans.
[521] For example, Ss. Athanasius & Cyril on January 18 and Ss. John Chrysostom, Basil and Gregory on January 30.
[522] Cyprian, Epistles 61:4, 39:7.
[523] Apostolic Constitutions, II, iv, 36; II, v, 41; II, iii, 13.

Gospels. Judgments in the Church were held on Mondays[524] to allow for peaceful settlements prior to the Lord's Supper the next Sunday. Chrysostom spoke[525] of the advantage of judgment in this life by the priests: helping us to avoid problems at the Last Judgment. To those who were not priests in the Church, the words of Christ applied, "Judge not that you be not judged" (Matthew 7:1). Cyprian pointed out[526] that Christ and the Apostles showed considerable respect for the Levitical judges of their day, even if these judges were false or had crucified Christ (John 18:20-23, Acts 23:2-5).

There were four major responsibilities that the Levitical Judges were required to adhere to in all their judgments. These four responsibilities have formed the basis for law and justice for all of civilization today that has a Christian influence. Where Christian influence is lacking, e.g. in Islamic countries, these responsibilities are also compromised.

If the Levitical Judges encountered a matter that was too difficult for them (Exodus 18:26), they were to bring it to the Holy of Holies before the Lord and He would decide it for them. This was done by the High Priest who came into the Holy of Holies to inquire of the Lord with the Urim and Thummim (*Hebrew: lights and truth*) over his heart (Exodus 28:30, Numbers 27:21, 1 Samuel 28:6). Anyone who wouldn't accept the Lord's decision was to be executed as a traitor (Deuteronomy 17: 8-12). In the Early Church, these responsibilities of righteous judgment were passed on to the Bishops, who took the place of the Levitical Judges. The four responsibilities were:

a) **Diligent Inquiry**. In hearing the cases between their brethren, the Law required diligent inquiry to determine whether a man has testified falsely against his brother (Deuteronomy 19:18). This was what initiated the Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD. A major dispute had arisen between Paul and certain men from Judea over the issue of circumcision (Acts 15:2), so they took the matter to Bishop James, who gave his judgment as the decision of the Council (Acts 15:19). On the other hand, the Pharisees were unwilling to do this regarding Jesus (John 7:50-52). Basil wrote[527] that the bishops of the early Church were encouraged to keep one ear open for the accused or for the absent. They were not to believe the slander uttered against the absent.
b) **Two or Three Witnesses** represented confirmation of a matter as being true, even if the matter involved capital punishment (Deuteronomy 19:15, Hebrews 10:28), and the witnesses were to cast the first stone in executing the criminal (Deuteronomy 13:9). Paul quoted this passage (Deuteronomy 17:7) with regard to an errant brother in the Church of Corinth (1 Corinthians 5:13). Christ stated that since God the Father bore witness to Him, therefore His testimony was true (John 8:17). He also instructed the Church to confirm everything with two or three witnesses, whether the matter involved an errant brother (Matthew 18:16) or a presbyter (1 Tim. 5:19). At Christ's trial before the Sanhedrin, the witnesses did not agree (Mark 14:59), but He was crucified anyway. On the other hand, Christ brought three witnesses to His Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1), and many were witnesses to His Resurrection (1 Corinthians 15:4-7). There were even two angels as witnesses of His Resurrection at the tomb (Luke 24:4).
c) **Evenhanded Judgment**. They were not to be respecters of persons, but were to judge the rich and the poor evenhandedly, neither showing partiality to the poor nor deferring to the

[524] Apostolic Constitutions, II, vi, 47.
[525] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XVI,
[526] Cyprian, Epistles 68:3; 64:1; 54:4.
[527] Basil, Letters, 244, 2.

great (Leviticus 19:15). They were forbidden from taking a bribe, since "a bribe blinds the eyes of the wise and twists the words of the righteous" (Deuteronomy 16:19). Christ was well known for His impartiality (Matthew 22:16), and James called partiality "sin" and a transgression of the Law (James 2:9). Early Christian tradition[528] applied this to the bishops. "For the bishop must not only himself give no offense, but must be no respecter of persons; in meekness instructing those that offend. But if he himself has not a good conscience, and is a respecter of persons for the sake of filthy lucre, he disregards the voice of God".

d) **Fear of No One**. Israel was not to be afraid of anyone, because the judgment was God's. In Jesus' day, justice was distorted. Many of the leaders believed in Him, but they were not confessing Him out of fear of the Pharisees (John 12:42). In the early Church, it was common for the Christian martyrs to welcome death, having no fear of evil civil authorities.

The Sanhedrin in the 1st Century

The Sanhedrin was the descendant of Moses' Seventy Elders, and Jesus referred to the fact that the Scribes and Pharisees "sit in Moses' seat" (Matthew 23:2). The High Priest was in charge of the Levitical Judges, and it was he who would go into the Holy of Holies to discern difficult matters before the Lord. The High Priest's term of office was supposed to be for life, but the Romans had a tradition[529] of selling the office of High Priest each year to the highest bidder. So there were always a group of former High Priests that were called "chief priests". The Nelson Bible Dictionary gives a description[530] of the Sanhedrin as follows:

> "The Sanhedrin was the highest ruling body and court of justice among the Jewish people in the time of Jesus. Headed by the high priest of Israel, the Sanhedrin was granted limited authority over certain religious, civil, and criminal matters by the foreign nations that dominated the land of Israel at various times in its history. The Sanhedrin was exercising this limited power when it charged Jesus with the crime of blasphemy but then sent him to Pilate, the Roman official, for a formal trial and sentencing".
>
> "The word "Sanhedrin" is often translated "council". Usually the assembly itself is meant, although the word may also refer to the assembly meeting (John 11:47) or to the place where the assembly met (Luke 22:66; Acts 4:15). The same word is also used for smaller, local courts of justice (Matt. 10:17; Mark 13:9). The Sanhedrin is also implied in Bible passages that mention a meeting of the various groups that made up the council: the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes (Mark 14:53–55). Sometimes some of the members of the Sanhedrin are simply called rulers" (Luke 24:20; Acts 4:5).
>
> "The Sanhedrin had 71 members. The New Testament mentions some of them by name: Joseph of Arimathea (Mark 15:43), Gamaliel (Acts 5:34), Nicodemus (John 3:1; 7:50), the high priests Annas and Caiaphas (Luke 3:2) and Ananias (Acts 23:2). The high priest was always president of the Sanhedrin. Some scholars suggest that the apostle Paul was a member of the Sanhedrin before his conversion to Christianity, but this is not known for sure".

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528 Apostolic Constitutions II, iii, 9; II, ii, 5; II, vi, 45

529 Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chap. 14, p. 127.

530 Ronald F. Youngblood, general editor; F.F. Bruce and R.K. Harrison, consulting editors, *Nelson's new illustrated Bible dictionary, electronic edition of the revised edition of Nelson's illustrated Bible dictionary, Logos Library System*, (Nashville: Thomas Nelson) 1997, c1995.

"The Sanhedrin grew out of the council of advisors for the high priest when the Jewish people lived under the domination of the Persian and Greek empires. In the beginning, the council was made up of the leading priests and the most distinguished aristocrats among the lay people. Later, however, as the influence of the scribes grew, they were also given some positions on the Sanhedrin. In this way, the Sanhedrin came to include both Sadducees -- or "chief priests" and "elders" -- and Pharisees or scribes. These were the two main groups within Judaism, and the Sanhedrin usually tried to maintain a balance of power between them. But the Sanhedrin would sometimes divide along party lines. As he stood before the Sanhedrin, the apostle Paul was shrewd enough to pit the Pharisees against the Sadducees to his own advantage" (Acts 23:1–10).

"After 6 AD, the official authority of the Sanhedrin extended only to the province of Judea in southern Palestine. Still, Jews living elsewhere respected the Sanhedrin highly and would often be guided by its decisions. Within the province of Judea, which included the city of Jerusalem, the Romans left most of the business of governing the Jews to the Sanhedrin. The Sanhedrin even had its own police force, or Temple police, so it could make arrests on its own. This is the force that arrested Jesus in the Garden of Gethsemane (Mark 14:43; Acts 4:1–3) and that performed the "guard duty" at the tomb" (Matthew 27:64-66).

"The Sanhedrin also served as the Supreme Court of the Jews. This does not mean that people who were dissatisfied with the verdict of the lower court could appeal to the Sanhedrin for a different decision. But matters of special importance and other matters that lower courts were unable to resolve were brought to the Sanhedrin. The Roman rulers did, however, reserve the right to interfere with what the Sanhedrin was doing, as happened in the case of Paul (Acts 23:10; 24:7), but this probably happened very seldom. The Romans denied the power of capital punishment to the Sanhedrin. This is why the Jews said to Pilate after they had tried Jesus, 'It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death'" (John 18:31).

"In the New Testament the Sanhedrin was involved in hearings against Jesus (Matt. 26:59; Mark 14:55), Peter and John and the other apostles (Acts 4:1–23; 5:17–41), Stephen (Acts 6–7), and Paul (Acts 22–24). The Sanhedrin probably did not "officially" try Jesus, since it was done in the middle of the night. It is more likely that He was given a preliminary hearing to establish the charges against Him and then taken to Pilate. It is also not clear whether Stephen was officially condemned and executed by the Sanhedrin or simply was stoned by an angry mob without due process of law" (Acts 7:54–60).

The Sham of a "Trial"

The sham of a "trial" that Jesus received at the hand of the Sanhedrin was symptomatic of a greater problem. Rulers and government was established in Israel to establish justice and order, as opposed to every man doing what is right in his own eyes (Deuteronomy 12:8). Righteousness and justice were lacking in Israel, and it would not be forthcoming; because of this Jesus said that "the Kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it" (Matthew 21:43). The impact of this is that the Church was given the government of the Kingdom of God on earth, and the Church will be expected to keep the Law that was given to Moses and to establish righteousness and justice. To understand this, we need

to consider the various aspects of Jesus' trial from the viewpoint of what the Mosaic Law required.

John Chrysostom noted[531] that the entire Sanhedrin spent the whole night at the house of Annas, the father-in-law of the High Priest Caiaphas (John 18:13), waiting for Judas to bring Jesus in after midnight. They gave up their sleep to arrange the murder of the Son of God! They didn't eat the Passover while they were waiting[532], but they watched for this other purpose. Having then taken Him unexpectedly, they chose even to pass by the Passover, for the sake of satiating their murderous lust.

The one thing that stands out most emphatically in all the Gospel accounts is the absence of justice on the part of the religious authorities. If anyone was ever innocent, it was Christ; He had not only committed no crime (John 19:4, Luke 23:14-15), but also had committed no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22). To understand the details of this, we need to consider what the Mosaic Law said concerning the proceedings of a trial. Referring to the four responsibilities of the Levitical Judges:

Instead of Diligent Inquiry: False Witnesses Are Sought

"Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. Many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree" (Mark 14:55-56). This was most decidedly NOT what the Levitical Judges were supposed to be doing. A diligent inquiry was not even under consideration among the Sanhedrin. John Chrysostom referred[533] to this assembly by night as 'a council of pestilent men'. When they asked questions, it was only to invest this plot with the appearance of a court of justice, for the testimonies of the false witnesses did not agree (Mark 14:56). In Matthew's account, he said that "many false witnesses came forward, but they found none" (Matthew 26:60), meaning none agreed with each other.

John Chrysostom noted[534] that the high priest then asked Jesus about His disciples and His doctrine (John 18:19). Though he had continually heard Him speaking in the temple and teaching openly, he now desires to be informed. When Jesus answered truthfully, one of the officers who stood by slapped Jesus with the palm of his hand, saying, "Do You answer the high priest like that?" (John 18:22)

> "O the wickedness! For since they had no charge to bring, they inquired concerning His disciples, perhaps where they were, and why He had collected them, and with what intention, and on what terms. This he said, as desiring to prove Him to be a seditious person and an innovator, thinking that no one paid attention to Him, except His disciples, as though His disciples were some factory of wickedness. What then did Christ say? To overthrow this, He said, 'I spoke openly to the world. I always taught in synagogues and in the temple, where the Jews always meet, and in secret I have said nothing. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard what I said to them. Indeed they know what I said'" (John 18:20-21)

[531] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.
[532] Presumably they ate the Passover lamb while Jesus was hanging on the Cross, or just after He died (John 18:28).
[533] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.
[534] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

> "These are not the words of one speaking arrogantly, but of one confiding in the truth of what He had said. What He said at the beginning, 'If I bear witness of Myself, My witness is not true' (John 5:31), this He now implies, desiring to render His testimony abundantly credible. When Annas mentioned the disciples, Christ said, in effect, 'Ask My enemies, ask those who have plotted against Me, who have bound Me; let them speak'. This is an unquestionable proof of truth, when one calls his enemies to be witnesses to what he said. What then does the high priest do? When it would have been right to have made the inquiry that he did not do".

But Chrysostom inquired[535] a little further regarding just how it was that they charged Him with blasphemy. A few days aerlier (i.e. Tuesday of Holy Week), He had said, when they were gathered together, "The Lord said to My Lord, 'Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool" (Matthew 22:44, Psalm 110:1). He interpreted the saying as referring to Himself, and they dared say nothing, but held their peace, and from that day on did no one dared question Him anymore. Why then did they now call the saying a blasphemy? If the thing came to be inquired into, and carefully decided, it would free Christ from all blame. Therefore they condemned Him among themselves by rule of the mob, saying, 'You have heard His blasphemy'; all but forcing everyone to deliver the sentence. What then do the others say? 'He is guilty of death'; that having taken Him as condemned, they should thus work on Pilate to pass sentence. The members of the Sanhedrin, in saying, 'He is guilty of death', set themselves up as witnesses, accusers, judges, and passed sentence. Christ, on His part, answered truthfully. To the last day He taught that He was Christ, that He sits at the Right Hand of the Father, and that He will come again to judge the world, which was the language of one revealing His full accordance with the Father.

Two or Three Witnesses Agree Only on a Misunderstanding

"But at last two false witnesses came forward and said, 'This fellow said, I am able to destroy the temple of God and to build it in three days'" (Matthew 26:61). These witnesses had remembered an event that occurred three years earlier at the Passover (John 2:13). Jesus had just started His public ministry with the miracle of changing water into wine, and He went from the wedding feast at Cana to the Temple in Jerusalem and drove out the money changers (John 2:13-17). The Jewish leaders asked Him, "What sign do You show to us, since You do these things?" Jesus answered and said to them, "Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up." Then the Jews said, "It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?" But He was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:18-21). Chrysostom noted[536] that Jesus prophesied at that time of His Crucifixion and Resurrection, but the witnesses hadn't understood what He had said.

However, this one thing was not an offense, even if true, that would invoke the death penalty. Therefore the High Priest tried to press Jesus into making a defense for Himself.

"Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You? But Jesus kept silent" (Matthew 26:62). Chrysostom stated[537] that any attempt at defense was unprofitable,

[535] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 3.
[536] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.
[537] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.

because no man was listening. This was a showcase trial only pretending to be a court of justice; but in truth it was an onset of robbers, assailing Him without cause, as in a cave, or on a road.

Evenhanded Judgment Is Completely Lacking

Finally the high priest answered and said to Him, "I put You under oath by the living God: Tell us if You are the Christ, the Son of God!" (Matthew 26:63) This was a good strategy on his part, because he knew that Jesus was honest and that he would not be deceitful like everyone else. Jesus said to him, "It is as you said. Nevertheless, I say to you, hereafter you will see the Son of Man sitting at the Right Hand of the Power, and coming on the clouds of heaven". Then the high priest tore his clothes, saying, "He has spoken blasphemy! What further need do we have of witnesses? Look, now you have heard His blasphemy!" (Matthew 26:63-65) This was rather hypocritical, however, since Jesus had said the same thing publicly two days earlier (Matthew 22:44).

From Luke's account, Jesus prefaced His answer with references to these previous conversations. He said,

> "If I tell you, you will by no means believe. And if I also ask you, you will by no means answer Me or let Me go. Hereafter the Son of Man will sit on the right hand of the power of God" (Luke 22:67-69).

Another occasion, where Christ "told them" this, was three years earlier, when He drove the money changers out of the Temple. He said, "Take these things away! Do not make My Father's house a house of merchandise!" (John 2:16) Calling God His Father obviously makes Him the Son of God, and He did this on a number of occasions (John 5:18-47, 8:17-30, 10:29-33, etc.).

Two days earlier, Jesus had spoken to them when they asked by what authority He taught in the Temple. As if they didn't know! He had told them often enough! His return question had to do with the baptism of John the Baptist: was it from heaven or from men? (Matthew 21:23-27) They refused to answer, because either answer would cause them to lose face. Later the same day, Jesus asked them how David's son could be David's Lord, and again they refused to answer (Matthew 22:41-46).

The term "Right Hand of Power" comes primarily from the Psalms. By saying this, the Lord underscored that He was being convicted solely and ultimately because He was the Son of God.

The imagery in the Scriptures regarding the Lord's Right Hand states that He:

- Is exalted and victorious (Psalm 89:13, 98:1, 118:15)
- Saved David, the anointed king (Psalm 20:6, 60:5, 108:6, 138:7)
- Possessed the Promised Land (Psalm 44:3, 78:54)
- Is majestic in power (Exodus 15:6)
- Seeks out and swallows enemies (Psalm 21:8, Exodus 15:12)
- Went at the right hand of Moses (Isaiah 63:12).

Yet there are other things associated with the Lord's Right Hand:

- It spread out the heavens (Isaiah 48:13)
- It plants vines; i.e. Churches (Psalm 80:15-17)

- It is full of righteousness (Psalm 48:10)
- It teaches us awesome things (Psalm 45:4)
- It provides support (Psalm 18:35, 63:8, 139:10; Isaiah 41:10)
- It is a place of refuge (Psalm 17:7)
- The Queen Mother sits there (Psalm 45:9, 1 Kings 2:19)

Chrysostom added that the actions of the High Priest in tearing his clothes added force to the accusation. Since Jesus had moved His hearers to fear by what He said, the words of the High Priest had the same effect as what they did about Stephen, stopping their ears, and refusing to consider the matter further (Acts 7:54-58).

We note that the High Priest does not give the sentence himself, but invites it from the rest. Chrysostom stated[538]

> "Before Pilate, they said nothing about Christ's claim that He sat at the Right Hand of the Father, but instead said, "If this Man were not a malefactor, we would not have delivered Him up unto you" (John 18:30); attempting to put Him to death by political accusations. Why did they not slay Him secretly? They wanted also to bring an evil report against His fame. Since many had now heard Him, even in remote parts of the Empire, were admiring Him, and were amazed at Him, therefore they endeavored that He should be put to death publicly, and in the presence of all. They wished to make a show of it, as in this way disgracing Him, but even by these very things He shone forth the more".
>
> "In proof that indeed they had power to have put Him to death, even among themselves, hear what Pilate said. "Take Him, and judge Him according to your Law" (John 18:31). But they would not, that He might seem to have been put to death as a transgressor, as a usurper, as a mover of sedition. Therefore they crucified thieves with Him; therefore they said, 'Write not that this man is King of the Jews; but that He said it'" (John 19:21).
>
> "But all these things are done for the truth, so that they might not have so much as any shadow of a defense. At the sepulcher too, in the like manner, the seals and the watches made the truth to be more conspicuous; and the mocking, the jeering, and the reviling, created this same effect".
>
> "For such is the nature of error: those things, whereby it plots, destroy it. This is what happened here, for they that seemed to have conquered, these most of all were put to shame, defeated, and ruined. But He that seemed to be defeated, this man above all has both shone forth, and conquered mightily".

When Jesus answered the High Priest, 'I spoke openly to the world. Why do you ask Me? Ask those who have heard what I said to them', He was slapped by one of the officers who stood by (John 18:22). If Jesus were a very wealthy man, they would not have treated Him like that. But because He was poor, with just a few followers, He was treated very insolently. Chrysostom said[539] of this:

> "What could be more audacious than this? Shudder, O heaven; be astounded, O earth, at the long-suffering of the Lord, and the senselessness of the servants! Yet what was it that He said? He did not say, 'Why are you asking

[538] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 3.
[539] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

Me', as if refusing to speak, but wishing to remove every pretext for senseless behavior. After being struck, though He was able to annihilate everyone, He does not do this, but speaks words able to relax any brutality. 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?'" (John 18:23)

"That is, 'If you can lay hold on My words, declare it; but if you cannot, why do you strike Me?' Do you see that the judgment-hall is full of tumult, trouble, passion, and confusion? The high priest asked deceitfully and treacherously; Christ answered in a straight forward manner. What then was next to be done? Either to refute, or to accept what He said! This however is not done, but a servant strikes Him. So far was this from being a court of justice, that the proceedings were those of a conspiracy, and a deed of tyranny. Then having not made any further discovery, they sent Him bound to Caiaphas".

John Chrysostom stated[540] that there was a purpose in Annas sending Jesus to Caiaphas (John 18:24).

"This was done, in order that the number of His judges might show, even against their will, how fully tested was His truth. 'And it was early morning' (John 18:28). Before cock crow He was brought to Caiaphas, early in the morning to Pilate; whence the Evangelist shows, that being questioned by Caiaphas during an entire half of the night, He was in no way proved guilty; and Caiaphas sent Him on to Pilate".

"Observe the ridiculous conduct of the Jews. They who had seized the innocent, and taken up arms, do not enter into the hall of judgment, "lest they should be polluted" (John 18:28). What kind of pollution was it to set foot in a judgment-hall, where wrong-doers see justice? Those who paid tithes of mint and anise (Matthew 23:23), did not think they were polluted when bent on killing unjustly, but thought that they polluted themselves by even stepping into a court of justice. Why did they not kill Him, instead of bringing Him to Pilate? In the first place, the greater part of their rule and authority had been cut away, when their affairs were placed under the power of the Romans; besides, they feared lest they should afterwards be accused and punished by Him".

Now it was Caiaphas who advised the Jews that it was expedient that one man should die for the people (John 18:14). Chrysostom stated[541] of this:

"Why does the Evangelist again remind us of his prophecy? To show that these things were done for our salvation! Such is the exceeding force of truth, that even enemies proclaimed these things beforehand. Lest the listener, hearing of bonds, should be confounded, he reminds him of that prophecy, that the death of Jesus was the salvation of the world".

Fear of the Multitudes, But No Fear of God

Jesus' "trial" before the Sanhedrin was truly an ironic occasion. First, the Levitical Judges (i.e. the Sanhedrin) could have done as Moses did and brought the matter into the Holy of Holies to have the Lord discern what is right and just. But if they did so, Who would they be speaking to? None other than Christ, Whom they have on "trial"! They certainly did not want to do this because their whole conspiracy was organized by their father the devil. They did all this

[540] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.
[541] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

by night because they feared the multitudes, who would have stoned them for assaulting someone they believed to be a prophet (Matthew 21:46, Luke 20:6). Their fear of man was very pronounced, and their fear of God was completely lacking, when the opposite should have been the case.

Second, they went out of their way to mock Jesus and treat Him shamefully. In their murderous frenzy, they seemed to take great delight in assaulting Him. All this indicates just what is the power and motivation behind their actions – namely Satan (1 Corinthians 2:7-8) – as they try to take control of the Kingdom of God on earth. John Chrysostom said[542] of this:

> "Why did they do these things, when they put Him to death? What need of this mockery? That you might learn their intemperate spirit by all things, and that having taken Him like a prey, they thus showed their intoxication, and gave full swing to their madness; making this a festival, and assaulting Him with pleasure, and showing forth their murderous disposition".
>
> "This shows both His unutterable tenderness, and the inexcusable wickedness of those men, who had the heart to do such things to Him that was so mild and meek, and was charming them with such words, as were enough to change a lion into a lamb. He didn't fail in any things of gentleness; they didn't fail in any things of insolence and cruelty in what they did and in what they said. All these things the prophet Isaiah foretold, proclaiming beforehand by one word intimating all this insolence. "As many shall be amazed at you, so shall your face be without glory from men, and your glory shall not be honored by the sons of men" (Isaiah 52:14 LXX).
>
> "For what could be equal to this insolence? They spit on and struck His face with the palms of their hands, and some on the head, giving full swing in every way to their own madness. They inflicted the blows that are most insulting of all, punching, slapping with the palms of their hands, and to these blows adding the insult of spitting at Him. With much derision did they speak, saying, 'Prophesy to us, Christ, who is he that struck you?' (Matthew 26:67-68), since the multitude called Him a prophet" (John 6:14, 7:40).
>
> "But another said, that they covered His face with His own garment, and did these things (Luke 22:64), as though they had got in the midst of them some vile and worthless fellow. Not only freemen, but slaves[543] also were intemperate towards Him at that time" (Mark 14:65).

Cyril of Alexandria compared[544] this shameful treatment of the Lord to the words of Jeremiah to Jerusalem just before the Babylonian Captivity: "The heaven is amazed at this, and is very exceedingly horror-struck, says the Lord" (Jeremiah 2:12 LXX).

> "He is the Lord of earth and heaven, the Creator and Maker of all, the King of kings and Lord of lords. He is of such surpassing greatness in glory and majesty, the foundation of everything, and in Him all things exist and abide. He Who is the breath of all the holy spirits in heaven, is scorned like one of us, and patiently endures punching, and submits to the ridicule of the wicked, offering

[542] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 1.

[543] These "officers" are servants of the High Priest, not commanders of the Roman army. They are not necessarily Hebrews.

[544] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 150, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 594.

Himself to us as a perfect pattern of longsuffering, or rather revealing the incomparability of His Godlike gentleness".

Chrysostom also applied[545] the things that Christ suffered to the martyrdom of the saints that came later. Our victory in this life is attained when we suffer wrongfully, for the same instigator is at work with us.

> "He also that is dragged to martyrdom thus conquers by being bound, beaten, maimed, and slain. What is in war defeat, that is, for the combatant to fall; this with us is victory. Nowhere do we overcome by doing wrongfully, but everywhere by suffering wrongfully. Thus also the victory becomes more glorious, when we sufferers get the better of the doers. Hereby it is shown that the victory is of God. It has an opposite nature to outward conquest, which fact is an infallible sign of strength. Thus also the rocks in the sea, by being struck, break the waves; this is how all the saints were proclaimed, crowned, and set up with their glorious trophies, winning this tranquil victory".

James the Just, the Lord's Brother, Establishes Justice in the Church

When the Church was established at Pentecost (Acts 2), James the Lord's brother began his role of establishing justice in Jerusalem to counteract the influence of the Sanhedrin. In doing so, he also encountered the wrath of the Sanhedrin, and he was martyred like his brother. At the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD, James was clearly the authority figure in Jerusalem. After everyone had spoken, James answered, as the presiding Levitical Judge at the Council, and said, "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God" (Acts 15:13, 19). Then it pleased the Apostles and elders with the whole church to send chosen men: Joseph (Barsabas), i.e. James' brother and Silas with a letter to the Gentile Churches documenting this.

We can see James in this position much earlier also. Paul's conversion[546] was about 34 AD. Three years after this (or 37 AD) Paul went to Jerusalem, but had to leave after 15 days due to an assassination plot (Galatians 1:18, Acts 9:26-30). During those 15 days, Paul only saw Peter and James, the Lord's brother; he saw none of the rest of the Twelve (Galatians 1:19). Later on, he saw the Apostle John and remarked that James, the Lord's brother, Peter and John were the pillars of the Jerusalem Church (Galatians 2:9). That this is James, the Lord's brother, and not James, the brother of John, is clear from Acts 12:2. James, the brother of John, was martyred by Herod in 44 AD (Acts 12:2), right after returning from Spain[547], or four years before the Council of Jerusalem. James, the son of Alpheus, was away evangelizing Egypt according to tradition[548].

Eusebius, the 4th Century church historian, wrote[549] a brief history about the life of James. In this history, he quoted from documents that are now either lost or which exist only in fragments.

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[545] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 4.
[546] For the reasoning behind this, see the discussion for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost
[547] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.
[548] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 9.
[549] Eusebius, Church History, II, i. 2-4.

"Then James, whom the ancients surnamed 'The Just' on account of the excellence of his virtue, is recorded to have been the first to be made Bishop of the Church of Jerusalem. This James was called the brother of the Lord because he was known as a son of Joseph. But Clement in the sixth book of his Hypotyposes[550] writes thus: 'For they say that Peter, James and John after the Ascension of our Savior, as if also preferred by our Lord, did not strive after honor, but chose James the Just Bishop of Jerusalem'. But the same writer, in the seventh book of the same work, relates also the following things concerning him. 'The Lord, after his resurrection, imparted knowledge to James the Just and to John and Peter, and they imparted it to the rest of the Apostles, and the rest of the Apostles to the Seventy, of whom Barnabas was one.' Paul also makes mention of the same James the Just, where he writes, 'Other of the apostles saw I none, except James the Lord's brother'" (Galatians 1:19).

Eusebius also went into great detail about the martyrdom of James. Particularly impressive about James' conduct was his unbending adherence to the truth, even under strong public pressure to do otherwise.

"After Paul had been sent to Rome by Festus, the Jews, being frustrated in their hope of entrapping him by the snares which they had laid for him, turned against James, the brother of the Lord, to whom the Episcopal seat at Jerusalem had been entrusted by the Apostles. Leading him into their midst they demanded of him that he should renounce faith in Christ in the presence of all the people. But, contrary to the opinion of all, with a clear voice, and with greater boldness than they had anticipated, he spoke out before the whole multitude and confessed that our Savior and Lord Jesus is the Son of God. They were unable to bear any longer the testimony of the man who, on account of the excellence of ascetic virtue, and of piety which he exhibited in his life, was esteemed by all as the most just of men, and consequently they slew him. Opportunity for this deed of violence was furnished by the prevailing anarchy, which was caused by the fact that Festus had died just at this time in Judea, and that the province was thus without a governor. The manner of James' death has been already indicated by the above-quoted words of Clement, who records that he was thrown from the pinnacle of the temple, and was beaten to death with a club.

Eusebius quoted Hegesippus in a more detailed account of the martyrdom of James, where he said that Hegesippus is in agreement with Clement. Hegesippus, who lived immediately after the apostles, "gives[551] the most accurate account in the fifth book of his Memoirs". He writes as follows:

"James, the brother of the Lord, succeeded to the government of the Church in conjunction with the Apostles. He has been called the Just by all from the time of our Savior to the present day; for there were many that bore the name of James. He was holy from his mother's womb; he drank neither wine nor strong drink; and he did not eat meat. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the bath. He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments. He was in the habit of

[550] Clement was a late 1st Century Bishop of Rome. His Hypotyposes (or Outlines) exists today only in scattered fragments.

[551] These works of Hegesippus are lost; most of what we know about them comes from Eusebius' quotes.

entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found on his knees begging forgiveness for the people. His knees became hard like those of a camel, in consequence of his constantly bending them in his worship of God, and asking forgiveness for the people. Because of his exceeding great justice he was called the Just, and Oblias, which signifies in Greek, J*ustice*, in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him."

Hegesippus was quoting from Isaiah, and applied to James the Lord's brother the following: "Wherefore now their glory has been brought low, and the shame of their countenance has withstood them, and they have proclaimed their sin as Sodom, and made it clear. Woes to their soul, for they have devised an evil counsel against themselves, saying against themselves, 'Let us bind the just, for he is burdensome to us'. Therefore shall they eat the fruits of their works. Woe to the transgressor! Evils shall happen to him according to the works of his hands" (Isaiah 3:9-11).

Eusebius continued to say that as many as believed (among the Jews) did so on account of James. Therefore when many of the rulers (i.e. the Sanhedrin) believed (Acts 15:5), there was a commotion among the Jews, Scribes and Pharisees, who said that there was danger that the whole people would be looking for Jesus as the Christ.

"Coming therefore in a body to James they said, 'We entreat you, restrain the people; for they are gone astray in regard to Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat you to persuade all that have come to the feast of the Passover concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in you. We bear you witness, as do all the people, that you are just, and do not respect persons (Matthew 22:16). Do therefore persuade the multitude not to be led astray concerning Jesus. The whole people and all of us also, have confidence in you. Stand therefore on the pinnacle of the temple (Matthew 4:5), that from that high position you may be clearly seen, and that your words may be readily heard by all the people. All the tribes, with the Gentiles also, are come together on account of the Passover'".

"These Scribes and Pharisees therefore placed James on the pinnacle of the temple, cried out to him and said. 'O just one, in whom we ought all to have confidence, forasmuch as the people are led astray after Jesus, the Crucified One, declare to us, what is the gate of Jesus' (John 10:1-9). He answered with a loud voice, 'Why do you ask me concerning Jesus, the Son of Man? He Himself sits in heaven at the Right Hand of the great Power, and is about to come on the clouds of heaven' (Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62). When many were fully convinced and gloried in the testimony of James, and said, 'Hosanna to the Son of David,' these same Scribes and Pharisees said again to one another, 'We have done badly in supplying such testimony to Jesus. Let us go up and throw him down, in order that they may be afraid to believe him'".

"They cried out, saying, 'Oh! The just man is also in error'. And they fulfilled the Scripture written in Isaiah, let us take away the just man, because he is troublesome to us; therefore they shall eat the fruit of their doings' (Isaiah 3:10 LXX). So they went up and threw down the just man, and said to each other, 'Let us stone James the Just'. And they began to stone him, for he was not killed by the fall; but he turned, knelt down and said, 'I entreat you, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do' (Luke 23:34). And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, who are

mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, (Jeremiah 35) cried out, saying, 'Stop; what are you doing? The just one prays for you'. One of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the just man on the head. Thus he suffered martyrdom. They buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the temple. He became a true witness; both to Jews and Greeks that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately[552] Vespasian besieged them."

[552] James was martyred in c. 62 AD, and Vespasian began the siege of Jerusalem in c. 66 AD.

Peter's Denials

3rd Gospel: Matthew 26:69-75 "Peter's Denials"

Following Peter's attempt to defend Jesus by cutting off the ear of Malchus, the servant of the High Priest (John 18:10), the disciples scattered (Mark 14:27). Peter and John regrouped enough to follow the group of soldiers sent by the High Priest, but at a distance.

The Scene of Peter's Denials

When Jesus was arrested by the soldiers that Judas brought (John 18:3, 12), Peter and John followed the soldiers to the house of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. John was known to the High Priest, and went into the courtyard with the soldiers, officers and Pharisees. Then John spoke to the doorkeeper, a servant girl, to let Peter in also.

To understand the scene of Peter's denials, one must understand the construction of houses in 1st Century Judea. Houses were constructed out of sun-dried brick and were one-story dwellings. The walls were whitewashed inside and outside with lime or gypsum. Windows were small and few, had no glass, and were covered with a latticework that could be opened – probably like simple venetian blinds. Most houses had at least one courtyard on the interior, where windows usually opened to the courtyard. Well-to-do houses, such as that of the High Priest, may have had several courtyards.

Roofs of houses were generally flat. The houses of the wealthy had roofs of clay tile and stone. Roofs were not delicate areas like today; they were a part of the living quarters where people lived and moved about. There was generally a stairway to the roof from the courtyard and also a stairway to the roof from outside the house. When Jesus warns him who is on the housetop not to go down to take anything out of the house, but to flee quickly, the implication is to use the outside stairway, not the inside stairway (Matthew 24:17).

Some uses of the roof area mentioned in the Scriptures are:

• Private discussions	1 Samuel 9:25
• Sleeping, especially in hot summers	1 Samuel 9:26
• Construction of Booths during the Feast of Tabernacles	Nehemiah 8:16
• Waiting for good tidings	2 Samuel 18:24, 33
• Making announcements	Matthew 10:27; Luke 12:3
• Home altars for family idols	2 Kings 23:12; Jeremiah 19:13; Zephaniah 1:5

The "trial" of Jesus before the Sanhedrin was held in the roof area of Annas' house. When Peter entered the courtyard, Mark noted that he "was below in the courtyard" (Mark 14:66). The events of the "trial" were visible to everyone in the courtyard.

Peter Denies Jesus Three Times

By this time, it was well after midnight, and it was cold out. "Now the servants and officers who had made a fire of coals stood there, for it was cold, and they warmed themselves. Peter stood with them and warmed himself". As Peter tried to remain incognito, the High Priest began asking Jesus about His disciples, where there were two of them standing or sitting down below (John 18:18-19).

The doorkeeper, who let Peter in said to him, "Aren't you also one of this Man's disciples?" Peter said, "I am not" (John 18:13-17). According to the other Gospel accounts, the doorkeeper, who was a servant girl, spoke to Peter as he sat by a fire (Matthew 26:69, Mark 14:66, Luke 22:56-57). This was Peter's first denial, and he simply denied the charge out-of-hand without making a big deal of it.

John Chrysostom commented[553] on Peter's first denial as follows. John was already inside, and at least some of the people present knew that he was a follower of Jesus.

> "What are you saying, Peter? Did you not declare just now, 'If need be that I lay down my life for You, I will lay it down?' What has happened then, that you cannot even endure the questioning of a doorkeeper? Is it a soldier who questions you? Is it one of those who seized Him? No, it is a lowly doorkeeper; nor is the questioning of a rough kind. She didn't say, 'Are you a disciple of that cheat and corrupter', but, 'of that man', which was the expression rather of one pitying and relenting. But Peter could not bear any of these words. The, 'Aren't you also', is said on this account, that John was inside, so mildly did the woman speak. But he perceived none of this, nor took it into his mind, neither the first time, nor the second, nor the third, but only when the cock crowed. Nor did this even bring him to his senses, till Jesus gave him the bitter look".

As they continued to warm themselves from the fire, Peter went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed the first time (Mark 14:68), indicating that it was just before daybreak. Someone said, "This *fellow* also was with Jesus of Nazareth" (Matthew 26:71). According to Mark, it was the same servant girl as before (Mark 14:69), but the other Gospel writers do not identify the one who spoke. This time Peter denied with an oath saying, "I do not know the Man!" (Matthew 26:72)

About an hour later (Luke 22:59), "one of the servants of the high priest, a relative of Malchus (John 18:10), whose ear Peter cut off (Luke 22:49-51), said, "Did I not see you in the Garden with Him?" (John 18:26) This was an eyewitness of the events in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was arrested. He also said to Peter, "Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it." (Mark 14:70).

One aspect of being a Nazarene was a distinctive accent. Galileans spoke the same Aramaic dialect (of Hebrew) as Judeans, but they were easily identified by a different pronunciation of the Hebrew gutturals. This would be equivalent to the differences in pronunciation one might find between people who live in Boston, Atlanta and Los Angeles. All of the Twelve, except Judas, were also from Galilee, and therefore their Galilean accent gave them away.

[553] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

After being challenged for the third time, Peter then "began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times'. When he thought about it, he wept" (Mark 14:71-72). According to Luke, the rooster crowed while Peter was still speaking. "And the Lord turned and looked at Peter. And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how He had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows, you will deny Me three times'. So Peter went out and wept bitterly" (Luke 22:61-62). Since the "trial" was held in the roof area, Jesus could see those people in the courtyard, and they could see Him.

John Chrysostom noted[554] how concerned Jesus was for Peter at this point in his sifting, and how all four of the Gospel writers mention this:

> "Why have the Evangelists with one accord written concerning him? Not as accusing the disciple, but as desiring to teach us, how great an evil it is not to commit all to God, but to trust to one's self. But do you admire the tender care of his Master, who, though a prisoner and bound, took great forethought for His disciple, raising Peter up, when he was down, by His look, and launching him into a sea of tears".

Chrysostom also pointed out[555] that the Evangelist Mark, a disciple of Peter and one of the Seventy, declares his master's weakness in more detail than the rest, since he learned this from Peter himself.

> "Mark said, that when he had once denied, then first the cock crowed, but when he denied Him for the third time, then the cock crowed for the second time. He declares more particularly the weakness of the disciple, and that he was utterly dead with fear; having learned these things of his masters himself, for he was a follower of Peter. In which respect one would most marvel at him, that so far from hiding his teacher's faults, he declared it more distinctly than the rest on this very account, that he was his disciple".

Theophylact stated[556] that Peter was gripped by cowardice to such a degree that God abandoned him for a short time.

> "This happened so that when he had been corrected, he might be more forgiving toward others. He was so impetuous that if he had not been chastened here, he would have become self-willed, arrogant and unforgiving toward others. Peter was in the grip of such fear that he would not have been aware of his fall if the Lord had not turned and looked at him".

Peter the Rock

When Jesus first met Peter, He said that Peter shall be called Cephas, meaning a stone or rock (John 1:42). Two years later, after the Twelve had been sent out two-by-two to heal the sick and raise the dead, Jesus repeated this statement following Peter's confession that "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God". He also added the following. "And I also say to you that you are Peter, and on this rock I will build My church, and the gates of Hades shall not prevail

[554] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.
[555] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 1.
[556] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, p. 298.

against it. I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven" (Matthew 16:18-19).

This was not the first time the Twelve had acknowledged Jesus as the Son of God. Nathanael had said so first (Spring 27 AD) at his calling when Jesus told him He saw him in secret (John 1:48-50). The Twelve had admitted this also (Spring 29 AD) after Jesus calmed the storm on the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 14:33). Jesus had taught that He was the Son of God (John 3:16-18; 5:25; Matthew 11:27) prior to Peter's confession and even the Gergesene demoniacs admitted it (Matthew 8:29). But yet Peter was called blessed for his confession whereas Nathanael and the Twelve weren't.

John Chrysostom saw[557] in Peter's confession a cornerstone of divine doctrine. In Greek and Roman mythology, being a son of the gods was rather commonplace. There were many sons of the gods, some legitimate and some illegitimate. Yet Peter's confession was set apart as a revelation from the Father (Matthew 16:17).

To show this, Chrysostom pointed out that as Peter had referred to His Lord: "Christ, the Son of the Living God", so His Lord referred to him "Simon Bar-Jonah" or Simon son of Jonah (Matthew 16:16-17). Like Father, like Son.

> "Unless Peter had rightly confessed Him as begotten of the very Father Himself, this was no work of revelation; had he accounted our Lord to be one of the many, his saying was not worthy of a blessing. The Twelve earlier confessed not such a son-ship as Peter, but accounted Him to be truly Son as one of the many, and though peculiarly so beyond the many, yet not of the same substance. Peter's statement was then no longer a human opinion but a divine doctrine".

This is a cornerstone of the Faith in that we need to recognize Jesus as God Incarnate. We need to grasp what Jesus told Nicodemus: he who believes this "will not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).

Much disagreement has developed in later centuries over whether "the rock" referred to Simon's person or Simon's confession. The Orthodox Church has always maintained that "the rock" is Peter's confession and that this confession is a cornerstone to the faith. The Gates of Hades has not prevailed against Simon's confession; but it has prevailed against his person when he denied the Lord three times.

The Sifting of Peter

Prior to predicting that Peter would deny Him three times, Jesus stated, "Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift you as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren" (Luke 22:31-32).

What does Jesus mean by "sifting"? This is a reference to the harvesting of wheat, and Jesus also spoke of this in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. In this parable, the tares have been interpreted as representing the heretics that rise up within the Church, and the parable was given as instruction as to how to deal with them.

[557] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

To understand the parable of the wheat and the tares, one has to understand the methods used to harvest wheat in the 1st Century. Gower gives a good description[558] of these methods. After the grain was cut off near the top of the stalk with a sickle, it was bundled together and carried to the place of threshing. The remainder of the stalks was left in the ground for the grazing of sheep.

At the threshing floor, the grain was first separated from the stalks by driving oxen over a pile of wheat that was about 18 inches high. On the more efficient threshing floors, the oxen pulled a heavy sledge made of wood, and having pieces of flint protruding beneath. The heavy sledge pressed on the kernels of wheat and separated the wheat from the stalk. The heavier grain fell through the straw to the hard ground below, and the flints chopped up the straw into animal fodder.

After threshing came the winnowing to separate the grain from the straw. As the evening breezes picked up, the straw was lifted into the air with a pitchfork and carried off the threshing floor by the wind. When the remainder was too small to be picked up by the pitchfork (called a winnowing fork), the remainder was picked up with a shovel.

To separate the grain from loose fragments on the threshing floor, the grain had to be purified by sifting. Everything left on the threshing floor went through large sieves for sifting that allowed the grain to pass through, but left most of the rubbish behind. At this time, tares were also separated from the wheat. The tares were a species of darnel that looks identical to the wheat until the grain ripens, when it becomes black instead of yellow. If eaten, the tare grains are bitter and cause dizziness and sickness. After separation, the good grain was stored in large earthenware receptacles or in brick silos.

John Chrysostom referred[559] to Peter as "the leader of the apostolic choir". On Pentecost, it was Peter who spoke out boldly with the Eleven (Acts 2:14), preaching to the crowds. It was Peter also who spoke to the crowds on Solomon's Porch (Acts 3:11-12), who spoke to the Sanhedrin (Acts 4:8), who spoke to Ananias and Sapphria (Acts 5:1-9), and whose shadow healed sick people (Acts 5:15).

Satan realized the role that Peter was being prepared for in the Early Church, and therefore demanded permission to sift him much as he had demanded permission to sift Job (Job 1:8-12, 2:3-6). Part of Peter's sifting was the placing him in the courtyard of the High Priest, where he would be tempted to deny his Lord. Peter experienced another sifting when he was in Antioch and was tempted to socialize only with the Jews, following the Jewish dietary laws. There he had to be corrected by Paul (Galatians 2:11-14).

1st Gospel: John 13:31-38, 14:1-31, 15:1-27, 16:1-33, 17:1-26, 18:1 "Discussions Following the Last Supper"

Since these discussions occurred prior to Jesus' trial, they were covered in the Study for Holy Thursday Morning.

[558] Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 95-101.
[559] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

2nd Gospel: John 18:1-11 "The Arrest of Jesus"

The first part of this Second Reading, John 18:1-11, was covered in the Study for Holy Thursday Morning in conjunction with the other Readings for Holy Thursday Morning that dealt with Jesus' arrest by Judas, the officers of the High Priest and their contingent of soldiers.

4th Gospel: John 18:28-40, 19:1-16 "Jesus Before Pilate"
5th Gospel: Matthew 27:3-32 "Judas' Remorse, Jesus Before Pilate"

These Readings from Thursday Evening of Holy Week will be covered during Good Friday at First Hour Prayers in conjunction with the Readings that are read at that time.

6th Gospel: Mark 15:16-32 "The Crucifixion"
7th Gospel: Matthew 27:33-54 "Extraordinary Events During the Crucifixion"

These Readings from Thursday Evening of Holy Week will be covered during Good Friday at Third Hour Prayers in conjunction with the Readings that are read at that time.

8th Gospel: Luke 23:32-49 "The Repentant Robber, the Death of Christ"

This Reading from Thursday Evening of Holy Week will be covered during Good Friday at Sixth Hour Prayers in conjunction with the Readings that are read at that time.

9th Gospel: John 19:25-37 "The Taking Down of Christ from the Cross"

This Reading from Thursday Evening of Holy Week will be covered during Good Friday at Ninth Hour Prayers in conjunction with the Readings that are read at that time.

10th Gospel: Mark 15:43-47 "The Burial of Jesus"
11th Gospel: John 19:38-42 "The Burial of Jesus"

These Readings from Thursday Evening of Holy Week will be covered during Good Friday at Vespers in conjunction with the Readings that are read at that time.

12th Gospel: Matthew 27:62-66 "The Sealing of the Tomb"

This Reading from Thursday Evening of Holy Week will be covered during Good Friday at the Evening Lamentation in conjunction with the Readings that are read at that time.

Good Friday First Hour Prayers
Judas' Remorse
The Trial Before Pontius Pilate

Revision B

5th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:3-10 "Judas' Remorse"

"When Judas, his betrayer, saw that Jesus was condemned, he felt regret and brought back the thirty pieces of silver to the chief priests and the elders, saying, 'I have sinned in betraying innocent blood'. They said, 'What is that to us? See to it yourself'. And throwing down the pieces of silver in the temple, he departed; and he went and hanged himself. But the chief priests, taking the pieces of silver, said, 'It is not lawful to put them into the treasury, since they are blood money'. So they took counsel, and bought with them the potter's field, to bury strangers in. Therefore that field has been called the Field of Blood to this day. Then was fulfilled what had been spoken by the prophet Jeremiah, saying, 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of him who was valued by the sons of Israel, and they gave them for the potter's field, as the Lord directed me'" (Matthew 27:3-10).

We might note the contrast here between Mary of Bethany and Judas. Both had followed Jesus for three years, and Judas had even been given the authority to heal the sick and raise the dead (Matthew 10:1-8). Both had watched the Master do the same. But the realization of just Who Jesus was had penetrated Mary's heart, but had not affected Judas. Mary so appreciated the Master's forgiveness that she spent a great deal of money on ointment to prepare for His burial (John 12:7). Judas couldn't care less, and sold the Master for a few coins (Matthew 26:15). One of the hymns[1] for Holy Wednesday states,

> "While Mary brought expensive oil, the disciple came to an agreement with the transgressors. She rejoiced to pour out what was very precious; he made haste to sell the One Who is above all price. She acknowledged Christ as Lord; he severed himself from the Master. She was set free, but Judas became the slave of the enemy. Grievous was his lack of love! Great was her repentance!"

John Chrysostom noted[2] the sequence and timing of Judas' remorse. Judas was in the grip of an evil spirit (John 13:27) because he had allowed this due to his covetousness. In spite of this, the truth and the shamelessness of Judas and the Jewish leaders were exposed for everyone to see.

> "Note when it is that he feels remorse: when his sin was completed, and had received an accomplishment. The devil is like this; he keeps the unwatchful from seeing the evil before this time, lest he, whom he has taken, should repent. When Jesus was saying so many things, Judas was not influenced; but when his offense was completed, then repentance came upon him; but not then profitably. To condemn it, to throw down the pieces of silver, and to disregard the Jewish leaders were all acceptable things; but to hang himself, this was unpardonable,

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[1] Mother Mary and Kallistos Ware, The Lenten Triodion, St. Tikhon's Seminary Press, South Canaan, PA, 1994, P. 538.

[2] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 2.

Good Friday First Hour Prayers 1310
5th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:3-10 "Judas' Remorse" 1310
Good Friday First Hour Reading: Zechariah 11:10-13 "The Thirty Pieces of Silver" 1316
Good Friday First Hour Epistle: Galatians 6:14-18 "Glory in the Cross" 1318
Background for Galatians 1318
The Cross Can Be Offensive 1320
Boasting in the Cross 1321
The Trial Before Pontius Pilate 1322
Good Friday First Hour Gospel: Matthew 27:1-56 "The Crucifixion" 1322
4th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: John 18:28-40, 19:1-16 "Jesus Before Pilate" 1322
5th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:11-32 "Jesus Before Pilate" 1322
The First Appearance Before Pilate: The Accusations: Matthew 27:11-14, John 18:28-32 1322
Pilate and Herod Agree Over Jesus: Luke 23:6-12 1326
The Second Appearance Before Pilate: John 18:33-39, 19:6-12, 14-16 1328
The Barter Over Barabbas: Matthew 27:15-21, 26, John 18:40-19:1 1330
Pilate Washes His Hands of the Matter: Matthew 27:22-25, John 19:8-14 1333
Mary Magdalene's Reaction to Lack of Justice 1340
Good Friday Third Hour Prayers 1347
The Soldiers Mock Jesus: Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, John 19:2-5 1347
6th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Mark 15:16-32 "The Crucifixion" 1347
Good Friday Third Hour Gospel: Mark 15:16-41 "The Crucifixion" 1347
The 1st Mocking by Herod 1347
The 2nd Mocking After Pilate Scourged Him 1347
The 3rd Mocking After He Was Condemned 1347
Good Friday Third Hour Reading: Isaiah 50:4-11 "The Scourging and the Spitting" 1350
A Time to Speak: Isaiah 50:4-5 1350
He Gave His Back to the Scourges: Isaiah 50:6-7 1351
Walk in the Light of Your Fire: Isaiah 50:8-11 1352
The History of Crucifixion as a Means of Punishment 1354
Shapes of Crosses 1356
Simon of Cyrene Carries Jesus' Cross: Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26 1357
The Women Lament: Luke 23:27-31 1358
Golgotha, Burial Place of Adam: Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, John 19:17-18 1359
Gall to Drink: Mark 15:23, Matthew 27:34, Luke 23:36 1361
Dividing His Garments: Mark 15:24-25, Matthew 27:35-36, Luke 23:34, John 19:23-24 1362
Pilate's Inscription: Mark 15:26, Matthew 27:37, Luke 23:38, John 19:19-22 1363
The Jeering of Christ on the Cross: Mark 15:29-32, Matthew 27:39-43, Luke 23:34-37 1365
The Effects of the Crucifixion 1367
Good Friday Third Hour Epistle: Romans 5:6-10 "Justification and Faith" 1371
Background: Defining Faith, Belief, Trust 1372
A Covenant of Trust 1373
How We are "Justified" 1373
We Are Crucified With Christ 1374
Taking Up Our Cross 1376
Good Friday Sixth Hour Prayers 1380
Good Friday Sixth Hour Gospel: Luke 23:32-49 "The Two Thieves" 1380
8th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Luke 23:32-49 "The Two Thieves" 1380
7th Gospel Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:45-54 "Extraordinary Events During the Crucifixion" 1385
The Darkness 1386
The Earthquake and the Raising of the Dead 1389
The Tearing of the Veil in the Temple 1390
The Recognition by the Centurion and the Crowd 1392
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and a work of an evil spirit. The devil led him out of his repentance too soon[3], so that he should reap no fruit from it; and he carries him off by a most disgraceful death, having persuaded him to destroy himself".

"Note also the truth shining forth on every side, even by what the adversaries do. Even the death of the traitor stops the mouths of those that had condemned Christ, and does not allow them to have so much as a shadow of an excuse for theirs shamelessness. What could they have to say, when the traitor is shown to pass such a sentence on himself?".

"Listen, you covetous, consider what befell Judas; at the same time he lost the money, committed the sin, and destroyed his own soul. Such is the tyranny of

[3] We might apply Chrysostom's words to all who contemplate suicide. To sorrow for one's sins is a good thing. Sometimes we need to consider the impact and ramifications of our deeds. We needn't rush away from this. The Lord knows what we are doing. In taking time to consider what we have done, our repentance may become deeper and more sincere.

covetousness. He did not enjoy the money, the present life, or that to come, but lost all at once; having gotten a bad character with those men, so hanged himself".

"After the act, then, some see clearly. These men for a time were unwilling to have a clear perception of the fact, but said, 'What is that to us? You see to it' (Matthew 27:4). This thing of itself is a most heavy charge against them. This is the language of men bearing witness to their daring and their transgression, but intoxicated by their passion, and unwilling to rein in their satanic attempts, senselessly wrapping themselves up in a veil of feigned ignorance".

Commenting on Judas' love of money, Chrysostom pointed out[4] that Paul referred to covetousness as idolatry (Colossians 3:5).

"Far more grievous than an evil spirit is the lust of money-loving and many obey it more than others do idols. The evil spirits in many things disobey; but in this case the covetous yield everything, and whatever it tells them to do, they obey. 'Be at war with all', it says, 'at enmity with all, disregard nature, despise God, sacrifice to me yourself', and in all they obey. To the graven images they sacrifice oxen and sheep; but avarice says, 'sacrifice to me your own soul', and the man obeys".

Speaking of the Sanhedrin, Jesus spoke of their treason in the same terms as Judas. Chrysostom noted[5] that they pronounced and displayed their own condemnation by buying the Potter's Field.

"Do you see them again self-condemned by their conscience? Because they knew that they had purchased the murder of Christ, they did not put the money into the treasury, but bought a field to bury strangers in. This also became a witness against them, and a proof of their treason. The name of the place proclaimed their blood-guiltiness more clearly than a trumpet. They didn't do it at random, but having taking counsel, so that no one should be clear of the deed, but all guilty. These things prophecy foretold from of old".

"Today there are also those that take by violence countless things belonging to others, and excuse themselves if they put some ten or a hundred gold pieces into the alms box. Touching whom also the prophet said, 'You covered my altar with tears' (Malachi 2:13). Christ is not willing to be fed by covetousness, He doesn't accept this food. Why do you insult your Lord, offering Him unclean things? It is better to leave men to pine with hunger, than to feed them from these sources. It is better to give nothing, than to give the things of one set of persons to others. Tell me, if you saw any two persons, one naked, one having a garment, and then having stripped the one that had the garment, you were to clothe the naked, would you not have committed an injustice? It is surely plain to every one! If giving all that you have taken to another, you have committed an injustice, and not shown mercy; when you give only a small portion of what you rob, and call the deed alms, what manner of punishment will you not undergo?"

[4] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXV, 3.
[5] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 3.

During this whole time, the future Apostle Paul was a Pharisee (Acts 23:6); Paul knew all about this firsthand, and may have been involved in the decision to use Judas' 30 pieces of silver to buy the Potter's Field (Matthew 27:3-10).

Good Friday First Hour Reading: Zechariah 11:10-13 "The Thirty Pieces of Silver"

The Hebrew Masoretic text and the Greek Septuagint text differ a little for this Reading. Therefore the English translation from both is presented below:

> "I will take my beautiful staff, and cast it away, that I may break my covenant, which I made with all the people. It shall be broken in that day; and the Canaanites, the sheep that are kept for me, shall know that it is the word of the Lord. I will say to them, 'If it be good in your eyes, give me my price, or refuse it'. They weighed for my price thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, 'Drop them into the furnace, and I will see if it is good metal, as I was proved for their sakes'. And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them into the furnace in the house of the Lord" (Zechariah 11:10-13 LXX).
>
> "And I took my staff, Beauty, and cut it in two, that I might break the covenant which I had made with all the people. So it was broken on that day. Thus the poor of the flock, who were watching me, knew that it was the word of the Lord. Then I said to them, 'If it is agreeable to you, give me my wages; and if not, refrain'. So they weighed out for my wages thirty pieces of silver. And the Lord said to me, 'Throw it to the potter'—that princely price they set on me. So I took the thirty pieces of silver and threw them into the house of the Lord for the potter" (Zechariah 11:10-13 NKJ).

Tertullian spoke[6] of the difference in the Scriptures between figures and prophecies that were fulfilled in a literal fashion. The price Judas received was one of the prophecies that were fulfilled in a literal fashion.

> "In the Scriptures, there are figures, but there are also literal statements; are all not shadows, but there are bodies too. We have prophecies about the Lord Himself, which are clearer than the day. It was not figuratively that the Virgin conceived in her womb, when she bore Emmanuel, that is, Jesus, God with us (Isaiah 7:14, Matthew 1:23). Even granting that He was figuratively to take the power of Damascus and the spoils of Samaria (Isaiah 8:4), still it was literally that He was to 'enter into judgment with the elders and princes of the people' (Isaiah 3:13). In the person of Pilate 'the heathen raged', and in the person of Israel 'the people imagined vain things'. 'The kings of the earth' in Herod, and 'the rulers' in Annas and Caiaphas, 'were gathered together against the Lord, and against His Anointed' (Psalm 2:1-2). Again He was 'led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a sheep before the shearer', that is, Herod, 'is dumb, so He opened not His mouth' (Isaiah 53:7). 'He gave His back to scourges, and His cheeks to blows, not turning His face even from the shame of spitting' (Isaiah 50:6 LXX). 'He was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12); 'He was pierced in His hands and His feet' (Psalm 22:16). 'They cast lots for his clothing' (Psalm 22:18); 'they gave Him gall, and made Him drink vinegar' (Psalm 69:21); 'they shook their heads, and mocked Him' (Psalm 22:7); 'He was appraised by the traitor in thirty

[6] Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, II, vi, 20.

pieces of silver' (Zechariah 11:12). What figures of speech do Isaiah and David give us here? These are all prophesies that were fulfilled literally".

Tertullian noted[7] that Jesus could have been betrayed by a stranger, and not by a friend and Apostle. He also could have been taken without a price for His betrayal. Yet the Passover was His own Feast, and all this was done intentionally.

> "In like manner the law prefigures His passion. Of all the festal days of the Jews He chose the Passover (Luke 22:1). Moses had declared that there was a sacred mystery: 'It is the Lord's Passover' (Leviticus 23:5). How earnestly, therefore, does He reveal the bent of His soul: 'With desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer' (Luke 22:15). It was because He had to be 'led like a lamb to the slaughter; and because, as a sheep before her shearers is dumb, so was He not to open His mouth' (Isaiah 53:7), that He so profoundly wished to accomplish the symbol of His own redeeming blood. He might also have been betrayed by any stranger, but instead He fulfilled a Psalm: 'He who ate bread with me has lifted up his heel against me' (Psalm 41:9). Without a price He might have been betrayed. What need of a traitor was there in the case of One, Who offered Himself to the people openly, and might as easily have been captured by force or taken by treachery? This might have been well enough for another Christ, but would not have been suitable for One, Who was accomplishing prophecies. It was written, 'The Righteous One did they sell for silver' (Amos 2:6). The exact amount and the destination of the money were clearly foretold by Jeremiah[8]: 'And they took the thirty pieces of silver, the price of Him who was valued, and gave them for the potter's field' (Matthew 27:10). When He so earnestly expressed His desire to eat the Passover, He considered it His own feast; for it would have been unworthy of God to desire to partake of what was not His own".

Jerome noted[9] that the wording is different between the Hebrew text, which Matthew quotes (Matthew 27:9-10) and the Greek Septuagint text for Zechariah 11:12-13. Cyril of Jerusalem also noted[10] this difference in the text between the Hebrew text and the Greek Septuagint, where the Hebrew said that the 30 pieces of silver were used for the potter's field and the Septuagint said that it was used in the foundry. Cyril said that the two texts are saying the same thing, since potters used a foundry for sifting off the good clay from the bad. Cyril stated,

> "Regarding the thirty pieces of silver, I will say to them, 'If it is good in your sight, give me my price, or refuse, etc.' (Zechariah 11:12 LXX). One price is owed to Me for My healing the blind and lame, and I receive another; for thanksgiving, I receive dishonor, and for worship, I receive insult. Do you see how the Scripture foresaw these things? 'And they weighed for My price thirty pieces of silver' (Zechariah 11:12 LXX). How exact the prophecy! How great and unerring the wisdom of the Holy Spirit! He said, not ten, or twenty, but thirty, exactly as many as there were. Does he who received it keep it? Or does

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[7] Tertullian, The Five Books Against Marcion, II, iv, 40.

[8] Tertullian quotes Matthew's Gospel text, but the quote in Matthew resembles Zechariah 11:12 more than it resembles Jeremiah 32:7-15. Both Jeremiah and Zechariah foretold this event. Zechariah mentioned 30 pieces of silver, and Jeremiah mentioned 17 *shekels* of silver without mentioning the number of coins.

[9] Jerome, Letters, LVII, 7.

[10] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 10-11.

he give it back? After he has given it back, what becomes of it? The Prophet says then, 'And I took the thirty pieces of silver, and cast them into the house of the Lord, into the foundry' (Zechariah 11:13 LXX). Compare the Gospel with the Prophecy: Judas, it says, was remorseful, and cast down the pieces of silver in the temple, and departed" (Matthew 27:5).

"But now I have to seek the exact solution of this seeming discrepancy. Those who make light of the prophets, allege that the Prophet says on the one hand, 'And I cast them into the house of the Lord, into the foundry'; but the Gospel on the other hand, 'And they gave them for the potter's field' (Matthew 27:10). Hear then how they are both true. For those conscientious Jews, when they saw that Judas was remorseful and said, 'I have sinned, in that I have betrayed innocent blood', reply, 'What is that to us; you see to that' (Matthew 27:4). Is it then nothing to you, the crucifiers? Shall he who received and restored the price of murder see to it, and shall you the murderers not see to it? Then they say among themselves, 'It is not lawful to cast them into the treasury, because it is the price of blood' (Matthew 27:6). Out of your own mouth is your condemnation; if the price is polluted, the deed is polluted also".

"How is there no disagreement, if the Gospel says, 'the potter's field', and the Prophet, 'the foundry?' Not only goldsmiths, or brass-founders, have a foundry, but potters also have foundries for their clay. They sift off the fine and rich and useful earth from the gravel, and separate from it the mass of the refuse matter, and temper the clay first with water, that they may work it with ease into the forms intended. Why then do you wonder that the Gospel says plainly 'the potter's field', whereas the Prophet spoke his prophecy like an enigma, since prophecy is in many places enigmatical?"

Good Friday First Hour Epistle: Galatians 6:14-18 "Glory in the Cross"

The subject "Glory in the Cross" appears time and time again in the Orthodox Lectionary. This Epistle lesson for First Hour Prayers is also used in the Orthodox Church for the Sunday before the Exaltation of the Cross in September, and for the 22nd Sunday After Pentecost (usually in November). In the West, this Epistle lesson is commonly used in July. For another viewpoint on the subject "Glory in the Cross", see the Study of the Old Testament Reading from Exodus 33 that is used for Good Friday Burial Vespers.

Background for Galatians

Paul and Barnabas visited Southern Galatia on their First Missionary Journey around 47-48 AD (Acts 14:1-23). In Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas ran into violent disagreements with the Jews living there. In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19); in Iconium, they escaped just before they were stoned (Acts 14:5-6). After appointing elders for these Galatian churches, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria (Acts 14:23).

After their return and report to the brethren in Antioch, "Certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved.' Therefore when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the Apostles and elders, about this question" (Acts 15:1-2). Paul referred to this in

his Epistle to the Galatians, "I went up to Jerusalem by revelation and communicated to them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation. Lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2:2).

The decision of the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD was a ratification of Paul's Gospel. The Apostles, elders and brethren in Jerusalem drafted a letter to be read to the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to this effect. In addition, the Jerusalem brethren counseled the Gentiles to abstain (1) from things offered to idols, (2) from blood and things strangled and (3) from sexual immorality (Acts 15:28-29). Silas and Joseph (Barsabas) the Lord's step-brother, both leading men in the Jerusalem Church, (Acts 15:22), accompanied Paul and Barnabas back to Antioch, Syria for the reading of this letter to the Church there. Joseph then returned to Jerusalem (Acts 15:33) while Silas accompanied Paul on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 15:34, 40). Going back to Iconium, Lystra and Derbe (via Cilicia), "they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem" (Acts 16:4). This visit was about 49 AD.

Paul's next visit to the Galatian Churches was at the beginning of his Third Missionary Journey in about 53 AD (Acts 18:23). Between these two visits, the churches were beset by a number of men who had persuaded the Gentiles to go back to keeping the Mosaic Law. That this occurred soon after 49 AD, Paul alludes to in his Epistle, "I marvel that you are turning away so soon from Him who called you in the Grace of Christ, to a different Gospel" (Galatians 1:6). Much of this controversy can be traced to a heretical group called the Ebionites[11] who were loosely allies with Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-25).

John Chrysostom commented[12] on this at length, saying that it was true, but the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem were directed toward, "the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia" (Acts 15:23), not to the Jews in Jerusalem. He stated also that this was "in condescension to the Jewish believers", which condescension Paul had no need of when preaching to the Gentiles. In fact, Paul kept the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem.

> "That this Epistle breathes an indignant spirit is obvious to everyone, even on the first perusal. 'O foolish Galatians' (Galatians 3:1). 'Let no man bother me' (Galatians 6:17). 'Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing' (Galatians 5:2). 'You have become estranged from Christ you who are justified by Law; you have fallen from Grace'" (Galatians 5:4).
>
> "Some of the Jews (i.e. Ebionites) who believed, being held down by the pre-occupation of Judaism, and at the same time intoxicated by vain-glory and desirous of obtaining for themselves the dignity of teachers, came to the Galatians. They taught them that the observance of circumcision, Sabbaths and new moons was necessary, and that Paul, in abolishing these things was not to be tolerated. For, they said, Peter and James and John, the chiefs of the Apostles and the companions of Christ, did not forbid them (i.e. in Jerusalem)."

[11] The Ebionites were a Jewish-Christian heretical group that rejected the writings of Paul and accepted only the Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew. They were strict followers of the Mosaic Law, and advocated a return to Judaism. Some practiced a strict form of asceticism, and abhorred certain foods. For more details, including their connection to Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2002, pp. 37-55, 58-60.

[12] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap. 1, vv. 1-3.

> "But these deceivers, by withholding the causes both of Paul's condescension and that of his brethren misled the simpler (Galatians), saying that Paul was not to be tolerated; he appeared but yesterday while Peter and his colleagues were from the first. Paul was single, but they were many, and pillars of the church. They accused him too of hypocrisy, saying that the very man who forbids circumcision observes the rite elsewhere; and he preaches one way to you and another way to others".

In addressing this situation, Paul first defended his apostleship, "I neither received it from men, nor was I taught it, but it came through the revelation of Jesus Christ" (Galatians 1:12). Then he went on to address some of the problems in the churches of Galatia.

The Cross Can Be Offensive

In the Epistle from Galatians, Paul addressed the reason why the Ebionites insisted that the Gentiles be circumcised (Galatians 6:12), even though James and the Apostles in Jerusalem had already written to all the Gentile churches that this wasn't necessary (Acts 15:13-29). Why would they want to do this? There was still a strong influence worldwide of the Pharisees in Jerusalem who insisted on it (Acts 21:20-25). Paul said that they (the Jewish Christians in Galatia) do this "only that they may not suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ" (Galatians 6:12). Much of the persecution Paul experienced came at the hands of the Jewish leaders[13] or was instigated by them; and the Ebionites joined them. Thus the Jewish Christians Paul wrote about chose to offend God rather than men, and just to avoid taking up their cross.

Peter wrote to beware of "your adversary the devil who walks about like a roaring lion, seeking whom he may devour" (1 Peter 5:8). Do we ever wonder why? He's been judged and outsmarted by the Cross and he knows his time is limited (Revelation 12:12). Is it any wonder, then, that Paul spoke of people whose allegiance was to Satan (like the Ebionites) and who were "enemies of the Cross of Christ?" (Philippians 3:18). As a result, Paul's preaching of the Cross offended some people, and Paul was persecuted (Galatians 5:11).

We can be well-meaning Christians and still be enemies of the Cross of Christ. When Jesus began to show His disciples that He must go to Jerusalem, suffer and be killed, Peter rebuked Him, "'Far be it from You, Lord; this shall not happen to you!' Jesus turned to Peter and said, 'Get behind Me, Satan! You are an offense to Me, for you are not mindful of the things of God, but the things of men'" (Matthew 16:21-23). The key is in knowing the Lord's Will.

John Chrysostom commented[14] that the way this happened is that the Jewish Christians abroad "were reviled by the Jews in Jerusalem for deserting the customs of their fathers" (i.e. the Mosaic Law). "They desire, says Paul, to injure you that they may not have this charged against them, but vindicate themselves by means of your flesh". Chrysostom added that there was an element of vain-glory involved also, for Paul stated that they did this in order "that they may boast in your flesh" (Galatians 6:13).

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[13] It is noteworthy that until Emperor Nero, Simon Magus' patron, began persecuting Christians, the Jews organized all persecution of the Early Church.

[14] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap. 6, vv. 12-13.

Boasting in the Cross

Paul also spoke of boasting in the Cross (Galatians 6:14). This can be done simply by displaying the Cross in our homes and altars, by venerating the Cross in Church and by making the sign of the Cross. John Chrysostom expressed[15] another aspect:

> "What is the boast of the Cross? That Christ for my sake took on Him the form of a slave, and bore His sufferings for me, the slave, the enemy, the ungrateful one; He even so loved me as to give Himself up to a curse for me. What can be comparable to this! Let us then not be ashamed of His unspeakable tenderness; He was not ashamed of being crucified for our sake, and will we be ashamed to confess His infinite solicitude?"

Chrysostom spoke[16] of the world as the affairs of life, the praise of men, glory, wealth and all such things as have a show of splendor. There is a double putting to death, as Paul said, "Through the Cross, the world has been crucified to me and I to the world" (Galatians 6:14).

> "They are dead to me and I to them; neither can they captivate and overcome me, for they are dead once for all; nor can I desire[17] them, for I too am dead to them. Nothing can be more blessed than this putting to death, for it is the foundation of the blessed life".

While some members of Israel after the flesh were causing these problems in the Churches of Galatia, Paul contrasted them with the Israel of God (Galatians 6:16). In the following, the Lord Himself had used similar terms referring to sons of Abraham. Speaking to the Pharisees, who prided themselves as being descendants of Abraham, Jesus said they really weren't because they didn't do the works of Abraham. Instead they sought to kill Him (John 8:13, 37, 39-40). In Paul's case, those who do the works of Israel (i.e. Jacob) are the Israel of God. (Compare Romans 2:28; 4:2, 3, 16; Matthew 3:9).

Paul wrote about a rule of faith (Galatians 6:16) as being related to the Cross (Galatians 6:14). Paul referred to this as the "Word of the Cross" (1 Corinthians 1:18). This subject has so much depth that it is covered three times in the Orthodox Lectionary: the Third Sunday in Lent (or the Adoration of the Cross), the First Sunday after Pentecost (or All Saints Sunday) and the Exaltation of the Cross in September plus the Sunday Before and the Sunday After.

[15] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap. 6, v. 14.
[16] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap. 6, v. 14.
[17] That is, I just don't want them!

The Trial Before Pontius Pilate

Good Friday First Hour Gospel: Matthew 27:1-56 "The Crucifixion"
4th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: John 18:28-40, 19:1-16 "Jesus Before Pilate"
5th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:11-32 "Jesus Before Pilate"

The First Appearance Before Pilate: The Accusations: Matthew 27:11-14, John 18:28-32

After a "trial" that lasted half the night, early in the morning, the whole multitude of the Sanhedrin (Luke 23:1) led Jesus from the house of Caiaphas to the Praetorium where Pontius Pilate held judgment. In utter hypocrisy, they did not go into the Praetorium, lest they should be defiled, but that they might eat the Passover (John 18:28). Anyone who was unclean was not allowed to partake of the Passover meal, and they assumed that any building occupied by Gentiles was unclean. However, anyone plotting murder against his brother was also unclean. The Law required that the unjust punishment that they sought against their brother was to be applied to them (Deuteronomy 19:15-21).

According to tradition[18], twelve flagstaffs that were held by Greek servants bent down as if bowing to Jesus as He was being led into the Praetorium. In addition, the runner (a Greek slave) who led Jesus into the Praetorium took off his garment and spread it on the ground just like the Hebrews did on Palm Sunday. The Jewish leaders protested to Pilate regarding both these events, but there was nothing they could do about bent flagstaffs, and the runner was just imitating the actions of the Hebrew people earlier in the week. As a result of these things, Pilate was afraid, and wanted to leave the tribunal.

"Pilate then went out to them and said, 'What accusation do you bring against this Man?' They answered and said to him, 'If He were not an evildoer, we would not have delivered Him up to you'. Then Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and judge Him according to your law'. Therefore the Jews said to him, 'It is not lawful for us to put anyone to death', that the saying of Jesus might be fulfilled which He spoke, signifying by what death He would die" (John 18:29-32).

We might note that the Jewish leaders claimed that "It is not lawful for them to put anyone to death", but that did not prevent them from executing the Archdeacon Stephen when he said things that they didn't like (Acts 7:54-60). Their motivation here seems to be one of identifying Jesus with malefactors, and not just in murdering Him.

According to tradition[19], in one exchange between Pilate and the Jewish leaders, they had accused Jesus of blasphemy. "Pilate replied, 'If these words are blasphemous, take him for the blasphemy, and lead him away to your synagogue, and judge him according to your law'. The Jews said to Pilate, 'Our law bears that a man who wrongs his fellow-men is worthy to receive forty save one lashes; but he that blasphemes God is to be stoned with stones'. Pilate said to

[18] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 1, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.
[19] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 4, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

them, 'Take him, and punish him in whatever way you please'. The Jews said to Pilate, 'We wish that he be crucified'. Pilate said, 'He is not deserving of crucifixion'.

Luke gives a little more details of the accusations against Jesus. "And they began to accuse Him, saying, 'We found this fellow perverting the nation, and forbidding to pay taxes to Caesar, saying that He Himself is Christ, a King'" (Luke 23:2). We note that the charges against Him have changed from the "trial" before the Sanhedrin to the "trial" before Pilate. Previously He was accused of blasphemy, but that is not a crime in the eyes of the Romans. So now He is being painted as a rebel and an insurrectionist.

Yet while He was being accused, He said nothing. This was very unusual! Attorneys to represent an accused prisoner were not the custom, and each person represented himself. If it came to a shouting match between Jesus and the Scribes, Jesus had a voice that could be heard by 5000 men outdoors (Luke 9:11-14) above the squirming of children (Matthew 14:21). Jesus could have put up a vigorous defense. Jesus did answer one question that Pilate asked of Him. "Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'You said so'.

The chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing (Mark 15:2). In all this, Jesus' demeanor was very regal, and Pilate began to understand that He really was a king.

By saying nothing, Jesus set Himself above the continuous stream of lies coming from the religious leaders, and Pilate was able to perceive this. Pilate knew that the Sanhedrin had handed Him over to him because of envy (Matthew 27:18). In addition, during Jesus' "trial" before Pilate, Pilate's wife, Claudia Procula[20], sent word to him, saying, "Have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him" (Matthew 27:19).

According to tradition[21], when word was brought to Pilate regarding his wife's dreams, he said to the Jewish leaders, "You know that my wife is a worshipper of God, and prefers to adhere to the Jewish religion along with you". They said to him, "Yes; we know". Pilate then mentioned what his wife said. The Jews answered Pilate, "Did we not tell you that He was a sorcerer? Behold, he has sent a dream to your wife".

According to tradition[22], Claudia Procula was a granddaughter of Augustus Caesar, and she was also a good friend of Fulvia, the wife of Jairus, the Synagogue Ruler. Pontius Pilate used to love to engage in intellectual and philosophical arguments with Jairus. Claudia Procula was present at Jairus' house when Jesus raised Jairus' 12-year old daughter from the dead (Mark

[20] After Pentecost, Pilate was recalled to Rome to face charges regarding his unjust trial of Jesus, plus a massacre of some Samaritans. Pilate was unable to refute the charges. See note 1, p. 110, Eusebius, Church History, II, vii, in Philip Schaff, Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 1. His wife, St. Claudia Procula, joined the Myrrh-Bearing women, after Pilate's death, in their service to the Early Church, and she is commemorated on October 27. See Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 27.

[21] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 2, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

[22] Catherine van Dyke, tr., "The Letters of Pontius Pilate and Claudia Procula", Relics of Repentance, 1st Edition, Issana Press, Lincoln, NE 68503, 1990.

5:41-43), and her own 12-year old son was healed of lameness at the same time. She had tried to influence her husband in favor of Christ, but to no avail. Pilate had been concentrating on his political career, desiring a higher position in Egypt. Hindering Pilate was none other than Herod, where the two supposedly became friends over Jesus' trial (Luke 23:6-13). Herod wanted to install a cousin in place of Pontius Pilate, and this had created a rivalry between them.

After Herod saw Jesus and became friendly with Pilate, Herod pressed Pilate to get Jesus' trial over with quickly so that the two of them could embark on a fishing trip. Herod later double-crossed Pilate and spoke secretly against him to Caesar. Pilate's young son, on hearing that his father had allowed the execution of Jesus, the One who had healed him, could not bear it and suddenly dropped dead.

The Psalms describe Jesus' response to the lies swirling around Him at His trial. The Psalmist says, 'And I was as a man that hears not, and who has no rebuttals in his mouth' (Ps 38:14 LXX); and again, 'But I, as a deaf man, heard not; and was as a dumb man not opening his mouth' (Ps 38:13 LXX).

According to tradition[23], there were twelve men who stood up to try to defend Jesus, where Lazarus and Nicodemus were among them.

> "Speaking to them separate from the Jewish leaders, Pilate said to them, 'For what reason do they wish to put Him to death?' They said to him, 'They are angry because he cures on the Sabbath'. Pilate said, 'For a good work do they wish to put him to death?' They said to him, 'Yes'".
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> "And Pilate, filled with rage, went outside of the Praetorium, and said to them, 'I take the sun to witness that I find no fault in this man' (Luke 23:4). The Jews answered and said to the procurator, 'Unless this man was an evil doer, we would not have delivered him to you'. And Pilate said, 'You take him, and judge him according to your law'. The Jews said to Pilate, 'It is not lawful for us to put any one to death'. Pilate said, 'Has God said that you are not to put to death, but that I am?'"

Yet Pilate was still astounded that Jesus made no reply. "Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled" (Mark 15:4-5). "So Pilate said to the chief priests and the crowd, 'I find no fault in this Man'. This was Pilate's first attempt to release Jesus. But they became fiercer, saying, 'He stirs up the people, teaching throughout all Judea, beginning from Galilee to this place'" (Luke 23:1-5).

Three days earlier Jesus had put the people under strict obligation to pay the tribute to Caesar when He said, "Render therefore to Caesar the things that are Caesar's, and to God the things that are God's" (Matthew 22:21). A year earlier, after the feeding of the 5000, when "Jesus perceived that they were about to come and take Him by force to make Him king, He departed again to the mountain by Himself alone" (John 6:15). Thus the accusations are totally erroneous, and Jesus' accusers knew it.

[23] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 2-3, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

John Chrysostom stated[24] that the tribunal was so corrupt that there was no point answering most of the charges. When He did answer, it was only briefly so as not to get the reputation of arrogance.

> "For these reasons then He replies to nothing, but holds His peace, yet answering briefly so as not to get the reputation of arrogance from continual silence. When the high priest adjured Him, when the governor asked, He replied. But in reply to their accusations He no longer said anything; for He was not then likely to persuade them. Isaiah declares this same thing from of old, 'In His humiliation His judgment was taken away'" (Isaiah 53:8 LXX). At these things the governor marveled, and indeed it was worthy of admiration to see Christ showing such great forbearance, and holding His peace, Him that had countless things to say.

Theophylact stated[25] that when Pilate said to Jesus, "Are You the King of the Jews?", that Pilate was mocking and ridiculing the Jewish leaders in their accusations. It is as if he were saying, "You -- penniless, low-born, poorly-clothed, all-alone -- are accused of making an attempt against the throne?" He was ridiculing this charge against Jesus because the commission of such an act required considerable money and assistance. These accusers had no support for their slander except their own shrill voices.

Cyril of Alexandria noted[26] that the whole multitude of them began to accuse Him, saying, "We found this *fellow* perverting the nation" (Luke 23:2). What He taught was repentance, and to them, this was perverting the nation!

> "Their sole purpose was to bring down to death Him, Who was raising them up to life. This was the object of their stratagems. Yet the Law loudly proclaims, 'You shall not bear false witness against your neighbor' (Exodus 20:16). And again, 'Keep yourself far from a false matter; do not kill the innocent and righteous'" (Exodus 23:7)
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> "They prided themselves in the knowledge of the Divine Laws, but they did not pay attention to the respect due to the Law. Led on by an unrestrained impetuosity into whatever pleased them alone, without examination of its nature, they invented numerous charges, heaping up against Christ accusations which were neither true nor capable of being proved. Pilate recognized this and openly acquitted Jesus not just once[27], but three times".
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> "When he whose duty it was to judge Him acquitted Him, to make their doom more severe, they earnestly beg that He, Who was guilty of no sin, might suffer as from them the penalty of death. They denied the Holy and Just and asked for a murderer to be granted to them, that they might be partners in his guilt[28]. For this, they were given up to destruction and slaughter, and perished

[24] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVI, 1.

[25] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 301.

[26] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 151, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 602-603.

[27] By shouting down Pilate's acquittal three times, Theophylact notes that they give triple confirmation of their own bloodthirstiness. See Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 305.

[28] Ironically, the Jewish leaders joined Barabbas' political faction (the Zealot Party) during the revolt against Rome that ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. This caused the murders of tens of thousands of

together with their whole race (i.e. c. 70 AD). For this their unholy cry, 'Crucify Him!', the Lord said, 'I have forsaken My house, I have left My heritage; I have given the dearly beloved of My soul into the hand of her enemies. My heritage is to Me like a lion in the forest; it cries out against Me; therefore I have hated it'" Jeremiah 12:7-8).

Pilate and Herod Agree Over Jesus: Luke 23:6-12

When Pilate heard that Jesus was from Galilee, he asked if He was a Galilean. Since Herod[29] was tetrarch of Galilee (Luke 3:1), Pilate saw a way out of his dilemma of convicting an innocent man to please the Jewish mob: shift the responsibility to Herod[30]. "And as soon as he knew that He belonged to Herod's jurisdiction, he sent Him to Herod, who was also in Jerusalem at that time. Now when Herod saw Jesus, he was exceedingly glad; for he had desired for a long time to see Him, because he had heard many things about Him, and he hoped to see some miracle done by Him. Then he questioned Him with many words, but Jesus answered him nothing. The chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked Him, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That very day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other" (Luke 23:7-12).

Herod had wanted to see Jesus for over a year, ever since he ordered the beheading of John the Baptist (Mark 6:14-29). "At that time Herod the tetrarch heard the report about Jesus and said to his servants[31], 'This is John the Baptist; he is risen from the dead, and therefore these powers are at work in him'" (Matthew 14:1-2). Luke reports more of Herod's perplexity over who Jesus was. "Now Herod the tetrarch heard of all that was done by Him; and he was perplexed, because it was said by some that John had risen from the dead, and by some that Elijah had appeared, and by others that one of the old prophets had risen again. Herod said, 'John I have beheaded, but who is this of whom I hear such things?' So he sought to see Him" (Luke 9:7-9).

About six months later, Luke reports that some Pharisees had warned Jesus that Herod wanted to kill Him. This may have been sincere, or it may have been a cunning way to get Jesus to go to Jerusalem so that they could arrest Him. "On that very day some Pharisees came, saying to Him, 'Get out and depart from here, for Herod wants to kill You'. Jesus said to them, 'Go, tell that fox, 'Behold, I cast out demons and perform cures today and tomorrow, and the third day I shall be perfected'. Nevertheless I must journey today, tomorrow, and the day following; for it cannot be that a prophet should perish outside of Jerusalem'" (Luke 13:31-33).

Thus when Pilate sent Jesus bound to Herod, Pilate satisfied a long-held desire of Herod. By this gesture, Pilate and Herod became friends (Luke 23:12). This was foretold by the Prophet

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innocent people, and led to their own destruction. See Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 305.

[29] This is Herod Antipas, whose nephew, Herod Agrippa, later executed James the son of Zebedee and imprisoned Peter to please the same Jews (Acts 12:1-3) that organized the Crucifixion of Christ

[30] Roman law required that every man be judged by the ruler of the province in which he lived. See Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 303.

[31] One of the servants of Herod was Chuza, whose wife, Joanna, was one of the eight Myrrh-Bearing women at the Cross and at the Tomb (Matthew 27:55, Luke 24:10).

Hosea, "And having bound Him, they led Him away as a present to the king of Jarim" (Hosea 10:6 LXX). Cyril of Jerusalem stated[32],

> "It became Him who was on the eve of making peace between earth and heaven, to make the very men who condemned Him the first to be at peace; for the Lord Himself was there present, who reconciles the hearts of the princes of the earth. Notek the exactness of the Prophets, and their true testimony".

Rufinus of Aquileia adds that there was a reason that the Prophet Hosea referred to Herod as the King of "Jarim", or "wild vine", since Herod was not a Hebrew.

> "Listen to what the Gospel relates, 'Pilate hearing that He was from Galilee, sent Him to Herod, who was king in Israel at that time'. Rightly does the Prophet add the name 'Jarim', which means 'a wild-vine'. Herod was not of the house of Israel, nor of that vine of Israel which the Lord had brought out of Egypt, and 'planted in a very fruitful hill', but was a wild vine, i.e. of an alien stock. Rightly, therefore, was he called 'a wild-vine', because he in nowise sprung from the shoots of the vine of Israel".

Theophylact stated[33] that Herod Antipas suffered from a passion for novelty. He had heard much about Jesus and supposed that He was just a clever conjuror. While Herod "questioned Him with many words, Jesus answered him nothing" (Luke 23:9), thus frustrating Herod. Herod's questioning was insincere, had no serious intent, and mocked Jesus all the while. Jesus did not cast pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6), and His silence was an act of compassion. The word which is spoken and brings no benefit becomes the cause of greater condemnation for those who do not listen. To Pilate, whose disposition was better than Herod's, Jesus did give an answer, but not a clear one. When Pilate asked, "Are You the King of the Jews?", Jesus replied, "You say so" (Luke 23:3). This has a double meaning; it can mean "Indeed I am!", or it can mean, "I do not say so; you do!" By ridiculing Jesus, Pilate and Herod give irrefutable testimony that Jesus was not a leader of rebellion and sedition. Had He been so, they would not have toyed with Him, while a great danger hung over them. Theophylact continued:

> "According to the Mosaic Law, the testimony of two men is true (Deuteronomy 17:6). In this case, one is the Governor (Pilate) and the other is the King (Herod), where both say that Jesus was innocent of the charges brought against Him (Luke 23:14-15). Jesus is silent, and His enemies bear witness on His behalf. The Jews shout and make a lot of noise, but there is no one to prove their accusations. Yet Pilate was soft and unable to stand fast for the truth. He was afraid of slander that the Jews would falsely accuse him of setting free a man[34] who had risen up against the king".
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> "The custom of releasing one man at the time of Passover comes from the release of Jonathan by Saul (1 Samuel 14:36-46). When the Jewish nation had made their treaty of submission to Rome, they had been given permission to live according to their own practices and laws. Just as the people had demanded the release of Jonathan, this became the custom at the time of the Passover".

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[32] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 14.

[33] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 304.

[34] Yet it is truly ironic that the man that Pilate did release for the Jewish leaders was a notorious murderer and insurrectionist.

Tertullian linked[35] Jesus' appearance before Herod as the raging of the heathen and the setting of the kings of the earth against Christ.

> "At that time 'the heathen raged, and the people imagined vain things; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers gathered themselves together against the Lord and against His Christ' (Psalm 2:1-3). The heathen were Pilate and the Romans; the people were the tribes of Israel; the kings were represented in Herod, and the rulers in the chief priests, Annas and Caiaphas. When, indeed, He was sent to Herod gratuitously by Pilate, the words of Hosea were accomplished, for he had prophesied of Christ. 'And they shall carry Him bound as a present to the king' (Hosea 10:6 LXX). Herod was 'exceeding glad' when he saw Jesus, but he heard not a word from Him. For, 'as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so He opened not His mouth', because 'the Lord had given to Him a disciplined tongue, that he might know how and when it behooved Him to speak' (Isaiah 50:4). Even that 'tongue which stuck to His jaws' (Psalm 22:15), as the Psalm said it should, through His not speaking".

The Second Appearance Before Pilate: John 18:33-39, 19:6-12, 14-16

After Jesus' return from Herod, "Pilate entered the Praetorium again, called Jesus, and said to Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' [Jesus had already told Pilate that He was; but Pilate could only understand politics and earthly matters.] Jesus answered him, 'Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?' Pilate answered[36], 'Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have delivered You to me. What have You done?' Jesus answered, 'My kingdom is not of this world. If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here'. Pilate therefore said to Him, 'Are You a king then?' Jesus answered, 'You say rightly that I am a king. For this cause I was born, and for this cause I have come into the world, that I should bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears My voice'. Pilate said to Him, 'What is truth?'

According to tradition[37], "Jesus said to Pilate, 'Truth is from heaven'. Pilate replied, 'Is truth not upon earth?' Jesus said to Pilate, 'You see how those who speak the truth are judged by those that have the power on earth'". When He had said this, Pilate went out again to the Jews, and said to them, 'I find no fault in Him at all'" (John 18:33-38). This was Pilate's second attempt to release Jesus.

By contrast to Pilate, Paul wrote to Timothy that Timothy's focus was to be in the House of God, which is the Church, the pillar and support of the truth (1 Timothy 3:15). The Church has the Holy Spirit, called the Spirit of Truth (John 16:13), and by Him, we know that we are of the Truth (1 John 3:19, 4:6). The Head of the Church is the Lord Jesus, who is the Way, the Truth and the Life (John 14:6). Therefore the Truth supports the Church and the Church

[35] Tertullian, Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 42.

[36] We might remember Pilate's background at this point. His wife was a Christian and Jesus had healed his son of lameness. The lights seem to be turning on very slowly with Pilate.

[37] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 3-4, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

supports the Truth. Having no spirit of truth for an absolute reference, like Pontius Pilate, any "truth" is relative and serves only to achieve one's personal desires.

John Chrysostom stated[38] that when Jesus asked Pilate, 'Are you speaking for yourself about this, or did others tell you this concerning Me?' (John 18:34), Jesus said this to expose the evil intention of the Jewish leaders. Jesus did not say this out of ignorance, but from a desire that even Pilate should accuse the Jews in their plotting. Pilate first tried to clear himself of wrongdoing, saying, 'Am I a Jew?' Jesus' reply was a mild reproof. He said to the effect, 'You have heard from the Jewish leaders; why don't you make accurate inquiry? They have said that I am a malefactor; ask them what evil I have done! You are not making inquiry, but are simply framing charges against Me!'

Jesus reassured Pilate that He had no intentions of revolt against Rome, 'My kingdom is not of this world'. Pilate, who was not a very wicked man, nor after their fashion, was being led upward by Jesus. Jesus desired to show that He is not a mere man, but God and the Son of God. 'If My kingdom were of this world, My servants would fight, so that I should not be delivered to the Jews; but now My kingdom is not from here' (John 18:36).

Chrysostom continued to say[39] that Jesus kept working on Pilate in order that he might come to the knowledge of the truth.

> "Why was it that Pilate did not make inquiry in their presence, but apart, having gone into the judgment hall? He suspected something great respecting Him, and wished, without being troubled by the Jews, to learn everything accurately. Then when he said, "What have you done?" on this point Jesus made no answer; but concerning that of which Pilate most desired to hear, namely, His Kingdom, He answered, saying, "My Kingdom is not of this world." That is, "I am indeed a King, yet not such as you suspect, but far more glorious," declaring by these words and those which follow, that no evil had been done by Him. For one who says, "To this end was I born, and for this cause I came into the world, that I should bear witness unto the truth," shows that no evil has been done by Him. Then when He said, "Every one that is of the truth hears My voice," He draws him on by these means, and persuades him to become a listener to the words. "If anyone is true, and desires these things, he will certainly hear Me." And, in fact, Jesus so grabbed Pilate by these short words, that Pilate said, 'What is truth?'"
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> "But for the present Pilate applied himself to what was pressing, for he knew that this question needed time, and desired to rescue Him from the violence of the Jews. Therefore Pilate went out, and said, 'I find no fault in him' (John 18:38). Consider how prudently Pilate acted. He did not say, 'Since he has sinned, and is deserving of death, forgive him on account of the Feast'. But having first acquitted Him of all guilt, he asked them over and above, if they were not minded to dismiss Him as innocent, could they forgive Him on account of the time of the Passover?"

In this second attempt to release Jesus, and Pilate proposed releasing Jesus according to the custom that they had at the time of the Passover. "But you have a custom that I should

[38] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 4.
[39] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 1.

release someone to you at the Passover. Do you therefore want me to release to you the King of the Jews?" (John 18:39) But the Jewish leaders outsmarted him and demanded the release of a notorious murderer, insurrectionist and robber (Luke 23:19). "Then they all cried again, saying, 'Not this Man, but Barabbas!' Now Barabbas[40] was a robber" (John 18:40). Thus the chief priests implied that Jesus was worse than the notorious Barabbas.

The Barter Over Barabbas: Matthew 27:15-21, 26, John 18:40-19:1

"Then Pilate, when he had called together the chief priests, the rulers, and the people, said to them, 'You have brought this Man to me, as one who misleads the people. Having examined Him in your presence, I have found no fault in this Man concerning those things of which you accuse Him; and neither did Herod; for I sent you back to him; and indeed nothing deserving of death has been done by Him. I will therefore chastise Him and release Him' (for it was necessary for him to release one to them at the feast). And they all cried out at once, saying, 'Away with this Man, and release to us Barabbas' — who had been thrown into prison for a certain rebellion made in the city, and for murder" (Luke 23:13-19). Mark's account adds that Barabbas[41] was chained up nearby with his fellow rebels for having committed murder[42] in the rebellion (Mark 15:7)

According to tradition[43], Nicodemus, who was a member of the Sanhedrin (John 3:1), stood up at about this time before Pilate and spoke on Jesus' behalf, defending Him.

> "Nicodemus, a Jew, said, 'I beseech your honor, let me say a few words'. Pilate said, 'Say on'. Nicodemus said, 'I said to the elders and the priests and Levites, and to all the multitude of the Jews in the synagogue, 'What do you seek to do with this man? This man has done many miracles and strange things, which no one has done or will do. Let him go, and do not wish any evil against him. If the miracles, which he does, are of God, they will stand; but if of man, they will come to nothing. For assuredly Moses, being sent by God into Egypt, did many miracles, which the Lord commanded him to do before Pharaoh. There were there Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8), servants of Pharaoh, and they also did not a few of the miracles which Moses did; and the Egyptians took them to be gods, this Jannes and this Jambres. But, since the miracles which they did were not of God, both they and those who believed in them were destroyed. Now release this man, for he is not deserving of death'. The Jews said to Nicodemus, 'You have become his disciple, and therefore you defend him'. Nicodemus said to them, 'Perhaps, too, the procurator has become his disciple, because he defends him also. Has the emperor not appointed him to this place of dignity?' The Jews

[40] Barabbas means "Son of Abbas", and his name is very ironic. In Aramaic, this sounds very much like Barabba, or "Son of Father", which Jesus spoke about throughout His three-year public ministry.

[41] According to tradition, Barabbas was the only other person in prison at that time. See Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 9, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

[42] According to Josephus' account of the Jewish rebellion that resulted in the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD, the Zealots (a political party) used murder as a technique for accomplishing their goals. Political opponents were quietly and systematically assassinated when they least expected it. This created a reign of terror, since no one knew who the Zealots were or who they would strike next. See Josephus, Wars of the Jews, IV, vi, 1.

[43] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapter 5, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

> were vehemently enraged at this, and gnashed their teeth against Nicodemus. Pilate said to I them, 'Why do you gnash your teeth against him when you hear the truth?' The Jews said to Nicodemus, 'May you receive his truth and his portion'. Nicodemus said, 'Amen, amen; may I receive it, as you have said'".

Also, according to tradition[44], other devout Jews also stood up and testified on Jesus' behalf, including the former paralytic who was lowered through the roof (Luke 5:18-26), the man who was born blind (John 9:1-37), and the woman who was healed of a flow of blood (Mark 5:25-34). They testified of all that Jesus had done, including the recent raising of Lazarus from the dead after he had been in the tomb for four days. At this, "Pilate trembled, and said to all the multitude of the Jews, 'Why do you wish to pour out innocent blood?'"

Pilate then sought to release Jesus after he scourged[45] Him as a malefactor, intending to release Him after the whipping. In this way, the Jewish leaders would see Jesus get punished, but yet He would still be released. "So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged Him. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they slapped Him with their hands. Pilate then went out again, and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him'". Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. Pilate said to them, 'Behold the Man!'" (John 19:1-5). That is to say, why would you want to crucify someone so pitiful? From Pilate's point of view, the chief priests viewed Jesus as a common malefactor. Therefore he had scourged Him as such, and, in his mind, there was no further need of any more punishment. In doing so, however, Pilate had taken the first step toward abandoning justice and giving way to mob rule.

John Chrysostom stated[46] that Pilate had many opportunities to release Jesus, and many reasons to do so. In addition to the absence of evidence of Jesus ever having mustered forces or collected armaments, there was the obvious plotting of the Jewish leaders. But there was also the testimony of Pilate's wife. For Pilate to miss all this suggests that he was rather spineless.

> "The dream of Pilate's wife was no small thing (Matthew 27:19). Why did Pilate not see it himself? He did not see it either because she was more worthy, or because he, if he had seen it, would not have believed it. Therefore it was ordered that the wife should see it, so that it might be clear to all. She does not merely see it, but also suffers many things, that from his feeling towards his wife, the man may be made more reluctant to commit the murder. The time too contributed not a little, for on the very night of the trial she saw it".

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[44] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapters 6-8, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

[45] "Scourging" was done with a whip made of sharp pieces of metal or bone at the end short leather cords. According to Hebrew custom, it was illegal to give more than 39 lashes, since forty lashes was considered fatal. The Apostle Paul received 39 lashes five times from the Jewish leaders (2 Corinthians 11:24). Each "lash" created a number of "stripes" as the sharp pieces of metal dug into the prisoner's back, resulting in profuse pain and bleeding. This scourging left Jesus very weak, such that He could not carry His Cross to Golgotha. When Claudia Procula, Pilate's wife came to see him to warn him to have nothing to do with Jesus' condemnation, she saw Jesus being scourged. Fastened to a post, Jesus was standing in a pool of his own blood, where the scourger was a man that Jesus had healed. See Catherine van Dyke, tr., "The Letters of Pontius Pilate and Claudia Procula", Relics of Repentance, 1st Edition, Issana Press, Lincoln, NE 68503, 1990.

[46] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVI, 1.

> "But it was not safe, it may be said, for Pilate to let Him go, because they said He made Himself a king. He ought then to have sought for proofs, and a conviction, and for all the things that are infallible signs of usurpation, as, for instance, whether He levied forces, whether He collected money, whether he forged arms, whether He attempted any other such thing. But He was led away at random; therefore neither does Christ acquit him of the blame, in saying, 'Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin' (John 19:11). So that it was from weakness that Pilate yielded and scourged Him, and delivered Him up".
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> "Pilate then was unmanly and weak; but the chief priests were wicked and criminal. Since Pilate had found out a device with which to release Him, namely, the law of the feast requiring him to release a condemned person, what do they contrive in opposition to that? 'But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus'" (Matthew 27:20).

Chrysostom also stated[47] that Pilate wanted Jesus to defend Himself and be acquitted, but since He didn't answer the charges, he devised another thing. Since it was a custom for them to release one of the condemned, Pilate tried by this means to deliver Him. If the Jewish leaders were unwilling to release Him as innocent, yet as guilty they might pardon Him for the Feast's sake.

> "Do you see how the order is reversed? The petition on behalf of the condemned was customarily with the people, and the granting it with the rulers. Now the contrary has come to pass, and the ruler petitions the people; and not even so do they become gentle, but grow more savage and bloodthirsty, driven to frenzy by the passion of envy. They had nothing with which to accuse Him, and this though He was silent, but they were refuted even then by reason of the abundance of His righteous deeds. Being silent He overcame them that said ten thousand things out of madness".

"Therefore, when the chief priests and officers saw Him, they cried out, saying, 'Crucify Him, crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'You take Him and crucify Him[48], for I find no fault in Him'. The Jews answered him, 'We have a law, and according to our law He ought to die, because He made Himself the Son of God'. Therefore, when Pilate heard that saying, he was the more afraid, and went again into the Praetorium, and said to Jesus, 'Where are You from?' But Jesus gave him no answer. Then Pilate said to Him, 'Are You not speaking to me? Do You not know that I have power to crucify You, and power to release You?' Jesus answered, 'You could have no power at all against Me unless it had been given you from above. Therefore the one who delivered Me to you has the greater sin'. From then on Pilate sought to release Him" (John 19:6-12). This was Pilate's third attempt to release Jesus.

But Pilate had now gotten himself into a serious dilemma. By having Jesus scourged as a malefactor, Pilate had already violated his own judgment, and that of Herod, that Jesus was

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[47] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVI, 1.

[48] This implies that the Jewish leaders could have had Jesus crucified themselves even without Pilate's judgment. But they wanted Him to be executed as a common malefactor to stop the spread of His teaching. Later when Stephen, one of the first Deacons, said some things they didn't like, they stoned him (Acts 7:54-60) without asking Pilate's permission.

innocent of all charges. He couldn't back down now without losing face. Finally he began to understand the real problem here: Jesus is the Son of God! No wonder the chief priests and elders were envious! (Matthew 27:18) In the Roman pantheon of gods, there were many sons of gods, some legitimate and some illegitimate. But they were all extraordinary characters and objects of worship by Roman citizens! Now Pilate was being asked to crucify one of the gods! No wonder Pilate was "the more afraid"! Pilate probably had no clue how much greater his dilemma really was in that he was about to crucify the God of gods.

John Chrysostom noted[49] that in asking for Barabbas, the chief priests were demanding someone who was like mannered to themselves. Pilate tried to counteract the fury of the Jewish leaders; he had Jesus scourged and mocked, but to no avail.

> "Pilate scourged Him, perhaps desiring to exhaust and to soothe the fury of the Jews. When he had not been able to deliver Him by his former measures, being anxious to stay the evil at this point, he scourged Him, and permitted to be done what was done, the robe and crown to be put on Him, so as to relax their anger. Therefore he led Him forth to them crowned with thorns, that, seeing the insult which had been done to Him, they might recover a little from their passion, and vomit their venom. The soldiers would not have done this, had it not been the command of their ruler".

Yet in all of this, Jesus took care to give the chief priests every chance to avoid murdering Him. John Chrysostom said[50] of this

> "See how much care Jesus took to relieve them from blame, and how much diligence they employed, so as not to leave to themselves so much as a shadow of an excuse. For which was right? To let go the acknowledged criminal or Him about whose guilt there was a question? If in the case of acknowledged offenders it was fit there should be liberation, much more in those of whom there was a doubt. Surely Jesus did not seem to them worse than acknowledged murderers. On this account, it is not merely said they had a robber; but one who was infamous in wickedness, who had perpetrated countless murders. But nevertheless even him did they prefer to the Savior of the world, and neither did they reverence the season because it was holy, nor the laws of humanity, nor any other thing of the kind, but envy had once for all blinded them. Besides their own wickedness, they corrupted the people also, that for deceiving them too they might suffer the most extreme punishment".

Pilate Washes His Hands of the Matter: Matthew 27:22-25, John 19:8-14

"Pilate said to them, 'What then shall I do with Jesus who is called Christ?' *They* all said to him, 'Let Him be crucified!' Then the governor said, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, saying, 'Let Him be crucified!' When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*'" (Matthew 27:22-24). We might wonder that should go to the trouble of washing his hands in public. He obviously had some serious guilt pangs!

[49] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIV, 1.
[50] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVI, 2.

In addition, Pilate realized that he had been outsmarted by the Jewish leaders and was forced into a choice of either condemning an innocent man, or losing face with the people and other government officials like Herod. He and Herod had already agreed that Jesus was innocent of all charges brought against Him (Luke 23:14-15). Now he had scourged Jesus as a malefactor, and the crowd was clamoring for blood, such that a riot was developing. When he offered to free Jesus as a gesture of goodwill in keeping with the Feast, they asked for Barabbas, a terrorist assassin, instead. By washing his hands of the matter, Pilate abdicated responsibility to the mob.

In addition, the Jewish leaders twisted Jesus' words again to make it appear that Jesus was just another insurrectionist like Barabbas. Jesus had already told Pilate that His Kingdom was not of this world, and that, if it were, His servants would fight (John 18:36). The Jewish leaders said, "'If you let this Man go, you are not Caesar's friend. Whoever makes himself a king speaks against Caesar'. This made Pilate afraid about his career advancement, because the Jewish leaders were sure to report this to Caesar.

When Pilate therefore heard that saying, he brought Jesus out and sat down in the judgment seat[51] in a place that is called *The* Pavement, but in Hebrew, Gabbatha. Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover. And he said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' But they cried out, 'Away with *Him,* away with *Him*! Crucify Him!' Pilate said to them, 'Shall I crucify your King?' The chief priests answered, 'We have no king but Caesar!' Then he delivered Him to them to be crucified. So they took Jesus and led *Him* away" (John 19:8-16).

John Chrysostom noted[52] that Israel, at the time of Samuel, asked for a king to rule them, just like the Gentile nations. Similarly, the Jewish leaders at Jesus' trial asked for a Gentile king to rule over them. The Lord granted them their wish!

> "Thus the Jews, who at first enjoyed the influence of God under Moses and Joshua, sought to have a king over them just like the Gentiles (1 Samuel 8:1-7), and in the wilderness after the manna, remembered the onions (Numbers 11:5). In the same way, refusing the Kingdom of Christ, they invited to themselves that of Caesar (John 19:15). Therefore God set a king over them, according to their own decision. When then Pilate heard these things, he delivered Christ to be crucified. This was utterly without reason! When he ought to have inquired whether Christ had aimed at sovereign power, he pronounced the sentence through fear alone. That this might not befall him, Christ said beforehand, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36-37). But Pilate having given himself wholly up to present things, didn't display any great amount of wisdom. His wife's dream should have been sufficient to terrify him; but by none of these things was he made better, nor did he look to heaven, but delivered Him up. So they laid the cross upon Him as a malefactor."

While sitting in the official position of the Judgment Seat, Pilate washed his hands before the crowd to demonstrate that he felt that he was innocent in condemning a just man. In doing this, Pilate demonstrated that he not only had no understanding of any truth (John 18:38), but also no understanding of right vs. wrong. After all, he and Herod had already agreed that Jesus

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[51] According to Unger, Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, the name "The Pavement" in Greek referred to the type of stone used in its construction, and the Hebrew word "Gabbatha" referred to its shape.

[52] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 1.

was innocent (Luke 23:14-15). If he really wanted to stand up for justice, he had at his command adequate soldiers to disperse the mob. And he realized that the Jewish leaders were only doing this out of envy (Matthew 27:18). He could have done what Lysias, the Roman commander, did in rescuing Paul from a riot caused by these same Jewish leaders (Acts 21:26-24:9).

From the other Gospel accounts:

"*They* all said to him, 'Let Him be crucified!' Then the governor said, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, saying, 'Let Him be crucified!' When Pilate saw that he could not prevail at all, but rather *that* a tumult was rising, he took water and washed *his* hands before the multitude, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just Person. You see *to it*'. And all the people answered and said, 'His blood[53] *be* on us and on our children'. Then he released Barabbas to them; and he delivered *Him* to be crucified" (Matthew 27:22-26).

"So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus to be crucified" (Mark 15:15).

"So Pilate gave sentence that it should be as they requested. And he released to them the one they requested, who for rebellion and murder had been thrown into prison; but he delivered Jesus to their will" (Luke 23:24-25).

According to tradition[54], "some of the Jewish leaders had said, 'You are no friend of Caesar's if you release this man, because he called himself Son of God and king. You wish, then, this man to be king, and not Caesar?'" They reminded Pilate that Jesus was the one that Herod the Great was looking for when he destroyed all the children in Bethlehem 32 years earlier. Pilate was surprised to hear this; it was then that he washed his hands of the matter.

> "And Pilate, in a rage, said to the Jews, 'Always has your nation been rebellious, and you always speak against your benefactors'. The Jews said, 'What benefactors?' He said to them, 'Your God led you out of the land of Egypt from bitter slavery, and brought you safe through the sea as through dry land, and in the desert fed you with manna. He gave you quails, and quenched your thirst with water from a rock, and gave you a law; and in all these things you provoked your God to anger, and sought a molten calf. And you exasperated your God, and He sought to slay you. And Moses prayed for you, and you were not put to death. And now you charge me with hating the emperor'".
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> "And rising up from the tribunal, he sought to go out. And the Jews cried out, and said, 'We know that Caesar is king, and not Jesus. For assuredly the magi brought gifts to him as to a king. And when Herod heard from the magi that a king had been born, he sought to slay him; and his father Joseph, knowing this, took him and his mother, and they fled into Egypt. And Herod hearing of it, destroyed the children of the Hebrews that had been born in Bethlehem'".
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> "And when Pilate heard these words, he was afraid; and ordering the crowd to keep silence, because they were crying out, he said to them, 'So this is He whom Herod sought?' The Jews said, 'Yes, it is He'. And, taking water, Pilate washed his hands in the face of the sun, saying, 'I am innocent of the blood of this just man; you see to it. Again the Jews cried out, 'His blood be upon us, and upon our children'".

[53] In saying this, they were prophesying the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD.

[54] Roberts and Donaldson, "Part I, The Acts of Pilate", Chapters 9, First Greek Form, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

"Then Pilate ordered the curtain of the tribunal where he was sitting to be drawn, and said to Jesus, 'Your nation has charged you with being a king. On this account I sentence you, first to be scourged, according to the enactment of venerable kings, and then to be fastened on the cross in the garden where you were seized. And let Dysmas and Gestas, the two malefactors, be crucified with you'".

John Chrysostom noted[55] that the Jewish leaders didn't just want Jesus dead; they also wanted Him humiliated. Therefore they needed Pilate to crucify Him. If they had just stoned Him, as they did Stephen a year later (Acts 7:54-60), He would not have been humiliated like He was on the Cross. Pilate, on the other hand, was given ample opportunity to render a correct and just judgment. Because he refused to do so, he shared in the guilt of crucifying Christ. Chrysostom said:

"They had brought Him in order that the thing might be done by the decision of the governor; but the contrary fell out. He was acquitted, rather than condemned, by the decision of the Governor. Then, because they were ashamed, they said, 'We have a law, and by our law he ought to die, because he made himself the Son of God'" (John 19:7).

"How then when the judge said, 'Take him, and judge him according to your law,' did they reply, 'It is not lawful for us to put any man to death' (John 18:31), while here they go back to the law? And consider the charge, 'He made himself the Son of God' (John 19:7). Tell me, is this a ground of accusation, that He who performed the deeds of the Son of God should call Himself the Son of God? What then does Christ do? While they held this dialogue one with the other, He held His peace, fulfilling that saying of the Prophet, that 'He opens not his mouth; in His humiliation His judgment was taken away'" (Isaiah 53:7, 8 LXX).

"Then Pilate was alarmed when he heard from them, that He made Himself the Son of God, and dreads lest the assertion may possibly be true, and he should seem to transgress. But these men who had learned this, both by His deeds and words, did not shudder, but are putting Him to death for the very reasons for which they ought to have worshipped Him. On this account Pilate no more asks Him, 'What have you done?' (John 18:35) but, shaken by fear, he begins the inquiry again, saying, 'Are you the Christ?' But Jesus didn't answer. For Pilate had heard, 'To this end was I born, and for this I came', and, 'My Kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36-37). When Pilate ought to have opposed His enemies and delivered Him, he did not do so, but seconded the fury of the Jews. Then they being in every way silenced, made their cry in a political charge, saying, 'He that makes himself a king, speaks against Caesar' (John 19:12). Pilate ought therefore to have accurately inquired, whether He had aimed at sovereignty, and set His hand to expel Caesar from the kingdom. But he did not make an exact inquiry, and therefore Christ did not answer him, because He knew that he asked all the questions idly. Besides, since His works bore witness to Him, He would not prevail by word, nor compose any defense, showing that He came voluntarily to this condition".

[55] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIV, 2.

"When He was silent, Pilate said, 'Do you not know that I have power to crucify you?' (John 19:10) Do you see how Pilate condemned himself beforehand; for, 'if the whole rests with you, why do you not let Him go, when you have found no fault in Him?' When then Pilate had uttered the sentence against himself, then Jesus said, 'He that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin'. Jesus showed that Pilate also was guilty of sin. Then, to pull down his pride and arrogance, He said, 'You would have no power except it were given you'" (John 19:11).

"Jesus showed that this did not come to pass at random, but that it was accomplished mystically. Then lest, when we hear, 'Except it were given you', we should deem that Pilate was exempt from all blame, on this account therefore He said, 'Therefore he that delivered Me unto you has the greater sin'. The 'given' in this place means what is 'allowed'; as though He had said, 'He has permitted these things to be, yet that does not make you clear of the wickedness'. He awed Pilate by the words, and offered a clear defense. On which account Pilate sought to release Him; but they again cried out, saying, 'If you let this man go, you are not Caesar's friend".

"For when they profited nothing by bringing charges drawn from their own law, they wickedly betook themselves to external laws, saying, 'Every one that makes himself a king speaks against Caesar'. And where has this Man appeared as a tyrant? Did He ever walk unattended, save by His twelve disciples, following in every point a humble mode of living, both as to food, and clothing, and habitation? But O what shamelessness and ill-timed cowardice! For Pilate, deeming that he should now incur some danger were he to overlook these words, comes forth as though to inquire into the matter[56]; but without making any inquiry, he gave Him up to them, thinking to shame them. For to prove that he did it for this purpose, hear what he said".

"'Behold your king!' But when they said, 'Crucify him!', he added again, 'Shall I crucify your king?' But they cried out, 'We have no king but Caesar' (John 19:15). Of their own will they subjected themselves to punishment; therefore also God gave them up, because they were the first to cast themselves out from His providence and superintendence. And since with one voice they rejected His sovereignty, He allowed them to fall by their own political plotting. Still what had been said should have been sufficient to calm their passion, but they feared, lest, being let go, He should again draw the multitudes; and they did all they could to prevent this. For a dreadful thing is love of rule, dreadful and able to destroy the soul; it was on account of this that they had never heard Him. And yet Pilate, in consequence of a few words, desired to let Him go, but they pressed on, saying, 'Crucify him'. And why did they strive to kill Him in this manner? Because it was a shameful death! Fearing therefore lest there should afterwards be any remembrance of Him, they desired to bring Him to the accursed punishment, not knowing that truth is exalted by hindrances. To prove that they had this suspicion, listen to what they said. 'We have heard that that deceiver said, After three days I will rise again' (Matthew 27:63); on this account they made all this stir".

[56] The "sitting down" on the Judgment Seat showed that Pilate was going to make an inquiry and a judgment.

Theophylact stated[57] the situation this way. By denying Christ and asking for a murderer instead, they loved what was similar to themselves and joined themselves to Barabbas' revolt against Rome.

> "Three times Pilate released the Lord, and three times they shouted against Christ, giving triple confirmation to their own bloodthirstiness. As Peter said, they denied the Holy One and the Just, and asked that a murderer be granted to them (Acts 3:14). They loved that which was similar to themselves. Therefore they joined Barabbas' faction, and themselves became rebels against Rome, and they became the cause of tens of thousands of murders and of their own destruction".

John Chrysostom also marveled[58] at the madness of the Jewish leaders in calling Christ's blood down on them and their children. Yet Christ was still willing to receive any of them that later repented. We can also marvel at the greatness of Christ during this whole proceeding.

> When they saw the judge washing his hands, and saying, 'I am innocent', why did they cry out, 'His blood be on us, and on our children'? After giving sentence against themselves, then Pilate yielded that all should be done. This was due to their great madness. For passion and wicked desire are like this. They do not allow men to see anything of what is right. But why do they draw down the curse upon their children also? This doesn't make sense!
>
> Nevertheless, though they acted with so much madness, both against themselves, and against their children, the Lover of Man did not confirm their sentence upon their children. But from the one and from the other received those that repented (Acts 2:36-39), and counted them worthy of good things beyond number. For indeed even Paul was of them, and the thousands that believed in Jerusalem (Acts 21:20). And if some continued in their sin, to themselves let them impute their punishment.
>
> And why did Pilate scourge Him? Either as one condemned, or willing to invest the judgment with due form, or to please them. And yet he ought to have resisted them. For indeed even before this he had said, 'Take Him, and judge Him according to your law'. And there were many things that might have held back him and those men, the signs and the miracles, and the great patience of Him, who was suffering these things, and above all His untold silence. For since both by His defense of Himself, and by His prayers, He had shown His humanity. He showed His exaltation and the greatness of His nature, both by His silence, and by His contempt of what is said; leading them to marvel at Himself. But to none of these things did they give way.

Cyril of Jerusalem commented[59] on the awesome spectacle that took place. We stand in amazement at what the Lord our God submitted Himself to.

> "Look with awe then at the Lord who was judged. He suffered Himself to be led and carried by soldiers. Pilate sat in judgment, and He who sits on the right hand of the Father, stood and was judged. The people whom He had redeemed from the land of Egypt, and often from other places, shouted against Him, 'Away

[57] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 304.
[58] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVI, 2.
[59] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 15.

with Him, away with Him, crucify Him' (John 19:15). Why, O Jews? Because He healed your blind? Or because He made your lame to walk, and bestowed His other benefits? So that the Prophet in amazement speaks of this too, 'Against whom have you opened your mouth, and against whom have you let loose your tongue?' (Isaiah 57:4) And the Lord Himself says in the Prophets, 'My heritage became unto Me as a lion in the forest; it gave its voice against Me; therefore have I hated it' (Jeremiah 12:8). I have not refused them, but they have refused Me; in consequence thereof I say, 'I have forsaken My house'" (Jeremiah 12:7).

"Pilate then was unmanly and weak; but the chief priests wicked and criminal. For since he had found out a device with which to release Him, namely, the law of the feast requiring him to release a condemned person, what do they contrive in opposition to that? 'But the chief priests and elders persuaded the multitudes that they should ask for Barabbas and destroy Jesus'" (Matthew 27:20).

John Chrysostom observed[60] that Pilate retaliated against the Jewish leaders in a way that they couldn't complain to Caesar about. With the title on the Cross, Pilate proclaimed the envy and malice of the Jewish leaders, and also formed a basis for the recognition of the Cross when it was excavated by Helena in the 4th Century.

"At the same time repaying the Jews, and making a defense for Christ, Pilate wrote a title for the Cross. The Jewish leaders had given Him up as worthless, and attempted to confirm this sentence by making Him share the punishment of the robbers; Pilate retaliated in order that no one in the future might bring evil charges against Him, or accuse Him as a worthless and wicked person. To close their mouths and the mouths of all who might desire to accuse Him, and to show that they had risen up against their own King, Pilate thus placed, as on a trophy, those letters, which utter a clear voice, and show His Victory, and proclaim His Kingdom, though not in its completeness. Pilate made this clear not in a single language, but in three languages. Since it was likely that there would be a mixed multitude among the Jews on account of the Feast, in order that none might be ignorant, he publicly recorded the madness of the Jews, in all three languages. For they showed malice against Him even when crucified. If He was a mortal and weak, and was about to die, why did they fear the letters asserting that He is the King of the Jews? They asked, 'Say that "he said"' (John 19:19-21). As Pilate wrote it, it is an assertion, and a general sentence, but if 'he said' is added, the charge is shown to be one arising from his own rashness and arrogance. Still Pilate was not turned aside, but stood with his first decision. And it is no little thing that it happened this way. The wood of the cross was buried, because no one was careful to take it up, inasmuch as fear was pressing, and the believers were hurrying to other urgent matters. When the Cross was sought for in later times[61], it was presumed likely that the three crosses would lie together; in order that the Lord's Cross might be recognizable, it was obvious to everyone, first by its lying in the middle, and then by the title. For those of the thieves had no titles."

[60] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 1.

[61] It was during Chrysostom's lifetime that Helena, the mother of Emperor Constantine, searched for the Cross and found it.

Mary Magdalene's Reaction to Lack of Justice

Mary Magdalene was a wealthy woman who traveled around with Jesus, the Twelve and the Seventy throughout their three-year public ministry. Jesus had freed her from seven demons that were bothering her at the beginning of the three years. Some people infer that these demons had led her into sexual immorality, but this is not the case. If Mary's wealth that she used to support Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:3) had been obtained from prostitution, Jesus would not have accepted her help (Deuteronomy 23:18). In fact, Mary had been living an ascetic life, devoted to the care of the elderly, the sick and the disabled. The demons, seeing her virtuous life, thought that she might be the virgin that Isaiah spoke of (Isaiah 7:14), and tried to cause her to fall into sin and disrupt her in her efforts[62]. After Jesus freed her from these demons, she devoted herself, along with seven other women, to the service and financial support of Jesus' ministry (Luke 8:3).

These eight women are generally identified as the "Myrrh-Bearing Women" because they were prominent both at the Cross and at the tomb on Sunday morning. The eight are:

- Mary Magdalene
- Mary Theotokos (The Virgin Mary)
- Joanna
- Salome
- Mary the wife of Cleopas (or Alphaeus)
- Susanna
- Mary of Bethany
- Martha of Bethany

Of the eight, the first five are the more prominent and outspoken. The last three, according to tradition, were also included. Five of these women were also very wealthy: Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and Mary and Martha of Bethany. Salome and Mary the wife of Cleopas had husbands, who were fishermen, and who earned a good living. They were not as wealthy as the other five, but they were undoubtedly able to contribute to Jesus' support.

A confusing aspect in Gospel references to these women is that two women named Mary had a son named James. Mary, the wife of Alphaeus, was the mother of James, one of the Twelve Apostles; the Virgin Mary was the stepmother of James, the Lord's brother (Matthew 13:55, Galatians 1:19).

In Western church tradition, James, the son of Alphaeus, and James, the Lord's brother, have sometimes been identified as the same person. From Eastern tradition, James, the Lord's brother was Bishop of Jerusalem from 30-62 AD and never left the vicinity of Jerusalem. He is the James who rendered the decision of the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD (Acts 15:13-19). Eastern Tradition links James the son of Alphaeus with evangelism abroad, especially in Egypt where he was martyred.

One helpful tip that can clear up the confusion between these two women named Mary is the passage that refers to the Virgin Mary as the mother of James and Joseph (Matthew 13:55). This Joseph is also called Barsabas, Justus and Judas (Acts 1:23, Acts 15:22). Therefore, in Matthew 27:56, the women looking on from afar at the cross were Mary Magdalene, the Virgin

[62] For more details, see The Life of the Virgin Mary, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 1989, p. 402.

Mary (that is, Mary the mother of James and Joseph) and Salome (the wife of Zebedee and the Virgin Mary's step daughter).

These eight women had been together a lot during Jesus' three-year public ministry. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and others (Luke 8:3) are described as providing for Jesus out of their possessions (that is, acting as deaconesses). These same women had faithfully followed Him from Galilee and had come up with Him to Jerusalem (Matthew 27:55, Mark 15:40-41 and Luke 23:55).

After the Ascension, Mary Magdalene lived in the same house as the Virgin Mary; that is, the Apostle John's house. At this time, the Virgin Mary was about 48 years old, Mary Magdalene about 41 and John about 25. If Mary Magdalene had been a woman of means and able to help support Jesus' three year ministry (Luke 8:3), this may mean that she, too, sold everything and laid it at the Apostles' feet.

Shortly after Pentecost, Mary Magdalene was led with a strong desire to expose those who unjustly condemned Christ. Traveling to Rome, she asked to present her case before Tiberius Caesar[63]. That Tiberius Caesar would actually listen to her suggests that she was a Roman citizen and had the right to appeal to Caesar (Acts 22:25-29, 25:7-12), and that she was a woman of means. Appearing before Tiberius Caesar, she presented him with a red egg and announced "Christ is risen!" Other accounts state[64] that Annas and Caiaphas were also ordered to appear before Tiberius; however Caiaphas died on the ship en route to Rome. She told Tiberius the whole story of Pilate's unjust trial, the release of a murderer and insurrectionist in His place and of the cowering of Pilate to the plotting of the Jewish leaders (Acts 3:13-15, Matthew 27:15-24). Tiberius also heard that Pilate had massacred some Samaritans unjustly[65] and summoned him to Rome to answer for his actions. Pilate was unable to defend himself; in testimony before Tiberius, everything Pilate said was vigorously refuted by Mary Magdalene, where everything Pilate said appeared to be senseless, deceitful or self-serving. Pilate was imprisoned until Tiberius could decide his punishment[66]. In one account, Pilate was banished to Gaul by Caius Caligula, Tiberius' successor, where he committed suicide[67]. In another account[68], Pilate died in Rome, but his body was sent to Gaul for burial. Eusebius described[69] these times as follows:

> "After the death of Tiberius (c. 37 AD), Caius Caligula received the empire. Besides innumerable other acts of tyranny against many people, he greatly afflicted the whole nation of the Jews. These things we may learn briefly from

[63] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 22.

[64] The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2008, July, p. 953-957.

[65] A leader of the Samaritans had promised to disclose the sacred treasures, which Moses had concealed on Mt. Gerizim, and the Samaritans came together in great numbers from all quarters. There is no mention of any treasure that Moses placed on Mt. Gerizim, but there was mention of large stones on the neighboring Mt. Ebal, on which were written the Law (Deuteronomy 27:1-14). Pilate, supposing the gathering to be with rebellious purpose, sent troops against them and defeated them with great slaughter. The Samaritans complained to Vitellius, Governor of Syria, who sent Pilate to Rome in 36 AD to answer the charges brought against him. See note 1, p. 110, Eusebius, Church History, II, vii, in Philip Schaff, Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 1.

[66] The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2008, p. 963.

[67] Eusebius, Church History, II, vii.

[68] The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2008, p. 965-969.

[69] Eusebius, Church History, II, 6-7.

the words of Philo[70], who writes as follows, 'Great was the caprice of Caius in his conduct toward all, and especially toward the nation of the Jews. The latter he so bitterly hated that he appropriated to himself their places of worship in the other cities, and beginning with Alexandria he filled them with images and statues of himself (for in permitting others to erect them he really erected them himself). The Temple in the holy city, which had hitherto been left untouched, and had been regarded as an inviolable asylum, he tried to alter and transform[71] into a temple of his own, that it might be called the temple of the visible Jupiter, the younger[72] Caius'. Innumerable other terrible and almost indescribable calamities which came upon the Jews in Alexandria during the reign of the same emperor, are recorded by the same author in a second work[73], to which he gave the title, On the Virtues. With him agrees also Josephus, who likewise indicates that the misfortunes of the whole nation began with the time of Pilate, and with their daring crimes against the Savior. Hear what he says[74] in the second book of his Jewish War, where he writes as follows, 'Pilate being sent to Judea as procurator by Tiberius[75], secretly carried veiled images of the emperor, called ensigns, to Jerusalem by night. The following day this caused the greatest disturbance among the Jews. For those who were near were confounded at the sight, beholding their laws, as it were, trampled under foot. For they allow no image to be set up in their city'. Thus, it was not long after the Crucifixion that there came upon them the penalty for the exclamation, which they had uttered under the same Pilate, when they cried out that they had no other king than Caesar (John 19:15). The same writer further records[76] that after this another calamity overtook them. He writes as follows, 'After this he stirred up another tumult by making use of the holy treasure, which is called Corban (Mark 7:9-13), in the construction of an aqueduct three hundred stadia[77] in length. The multitude was greatly displeased at it, and when Pilate was in Jerusalem they surrounded his tribunal and gave utterance to loud complaints. But he, anticipating the tumult, had distributed through the crowd armed soldiers disguised in citizen's clothing, forbidding them to use the sword, but commanding them to strike with clubs those who should make an outcry[78]. To them he now gave the prearranged signal from the tribunal.

[70] Philo, Legatio Ad Caium, 43. This is Book IV of the works of Philo, and is still extant. It describes the sufferings, which came upon the Jews as a result of Caius' command that divine honors should be paid to him.

[71] See Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, XVIII, viii, 2-8. Herod Agrippa subsequently persuaded Caius not to erect his statue in the Temple in Jerusalem.

[72] "Caius the Younger" to distinguish him from Julius Caesar, who also bore the name Caius, and who was also deified in the Roman pantheon of gods.

[73] Philo, On the Virtues. This is Book II of the works of Philo, and is no longer extant. It contains an account of the oppression of the Jews during the time of Tiberius, Sejanus, and by Pontius Pilate in Judea.

[74] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, ix, 2-3. To request that the images be removed, tens of thousands of Jews fell down before Pilate saying that they would rather be slain than have the images stay in Jerusalem. Pilate relented and removed the images from Jerusalem.

[75] Pontius Pilate was procurator from 27-37 AD. He carried these images to Jerusalem in c. 27 AD, shortly after he moved his quarters from Caesarea to Jerusalem.

[76] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, ix, 4.

[77] That is, 34 miles long. This may be the ancient aqueduct that was found to the South of Jerusalem. Pilate may have simply restored an aqueduct that was built at the time of Solomon. This work was done in the years 30-37 AD

[78] That is, make outcry like they did when they demanded that Pilate crucify Christ (Matthew 27:21-24).

Many Jews were beaten and many of them perished in consequence of the blows; while many others were trampled under foot by their own countrymen in their flight, and thus lost their lives. But the multitude, overawed by the fate of those who were slain, held their peace'. In addition to these the same author records many other tumults which were stirred up in Jerusalem itself. Josephus shows[79] that from that time sedition, wars and mischievous plots followed each other in quick succession, and never ceased in the city and in all Judea until finally the siege of Vespasian overwhelmed them. Thus the divine vengeance overtook the Jews for the crimes which they dared to commit against Christ".

"It is worthy of note that Pilate himself, who was governor in the time of our Savior, is reported to have fallen into such misfortunes under Caius, whose times we are recording, that he was forced to become his own murderer and executioner[80]. And thus divine vengeance, as it seems, was not long in overtaking him. This is stated by those Greek historians who have recorded the Olympiads, together with the respective events, which have taken place in each period".

A brief description of Pilate's appearance before Caesar is recorded[81] in the history archives of Edessa, the Persian city, where extensive Christian activity occurred in the 1st Century. In this account, Peter was speaking to the people of Rome about 54 AD. Pilate was quite knowledgeable about everything that had happened at the Crucifixion.

"You see the wonderful works, which accompany and follow these words. It has not been long since He ascended to His Father, and see how His Gospel has winged its flight through the whole creation. You saw the sun become darkened at His death; you yourselves are witnesses[82]. The earth, moreover, quaked when He was slain, and the veil was torn at His death. Concerning these things the governor Pilate also was witness. He himself sent and made them known to Caesar, and these things, plus other things, were read before him, and before the princes of your city. On this account Caesar was angry against Pilate because he had unjustly listened to the persuasion of the Jews; and for this reason he took away from him the authority, which he had given to him. This same thing was published and known in all the dominion of the Romans. What Pilate saw and made known to Caesar and to your honorable senate, the same do I preach and declare, as do my fellow-apostles. You know that Pilate could not have written to the imperial government of that which did not take place and which he had not seen with his own eyes; but that which did take place and was actually done — this it was that he wrote and made known. Moreover, the guards of the sepulcher also were witnesses of those things, which took place there; they became as dead men. When those guards were questioned before Pilate, they confessed before him how large a bribe the chief-priests of the Jews had given them, so that they might say that we His disciples had stolen the corpse of Christ. You have heard

[79] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, ix-xiv.

[80] Pilate was banished to Vienne in Gaul, where a monument is still shown as Pilate's tomb. According to local tradition, he committed suicide upon the mountain near Lake Lucerne, which bears his name. See footnote 1, page 110, "Eusebius, Church History, II, vii.", II, 28-29, in Philip Schaff, Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series, Volume I, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994.

[81] "The Teaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome", Ancient Syriac Documents, in Memoirs of Edessa, The Ante Nicene Fathers, Volume 8.

[82] That is, when the sun was darkened at the Crucifixion (Luke 23:44-45), it was darkened all over the world, including at Rome.

> many things; if you are not willing to be persuaded by those things, which you have heard, at least be persuaded by the mighty-works, which you see, which are done by His Name".

Pilate's wife, Claudia Procula, on the other hand, came to believe in Christ and lived an ascetic life along with others of the Holy Women[83]. She had sent word to her husband during Jesus' trial to "have nothing to do with that just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him" (Matthew 27:19).

Mary Magdalene was renowned in the Early Church for her evangelistic efforts, both in Rome and later in Ephesus working with the Apostle John, and was referred to as "Equal to the Apostles"[84].

[83] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 27.
[84] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 22.

Good Friday Third Hour Prayers
The Crucifixion

This Study of the Crucifixion begins with the events following the death sentence given to Jesus by Pontius Pilate, and ends at about the Sixth Hour just before the darkness covers the earth. Thus this Study covers the Good Friday events from about the Third Hour to about the Sixth Hour. Some of the Readings for Holy Thursday Evening are included as they fall within this time frame.

The Soldiers Mock Jesus: Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-20, John 19:2-5
6th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Mark 15:16-32 "The Crucifixion"
Good Friday Third Hour Gospel: Mark 15:16-41 "The Crucifixion"

Jesus was mocked by the Roman soldiers three times: once during His appearance before Herod (Luke 23:11), again after Pilate scourged and ridiculed Him (John 19:1-5) and again after Pilate sentenced Him just before He was about to be led away for crucifixion (Matthew 27:27-31, Mark 15:16-21)

The 1st Mocking by Herod

"Then Herod questioned Him with many words, but He answered him nothing. The chief priests and scribes stood and vehemently accused Him. Then Herod, with his men of war, treated Him with contempt and mocked *Him*, arrayed Him in a gorgeous robe, and sent Him back to Pilate. That same day Pilate and Herod became friends with each other, for previously they had been at enmity with each other" (Luke 23:9-12).

The 2nd Mocking After Pilate Scourged Him

"So then Pilate took Jesus and scourged *Him*. And the soldiers twisted a crown of thorns and put *it* on His head, and they put on Him a purple robe. Then they said, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' And they struck[85] Him with their hands. Pilate then went out again, and said to them, 'Behold, I am bringing Him out to you, that you may know that I find no fault in Him'. Then Jesus came out, wearing the crown of thorns and the purple robe. And *Pilate* said to them, 'Behold the Man!'" (John 19:1-5)

The 3rd Mocking After He Was Condemned

"Then the soldiers of the governor took Jesus into the Praetorium and gathered the whole garrison around Him. They stripped Him and put a scarlet robe on Him. When they had twisted a crown of thorns, they put *it* on His head, and a reed in His right hand. And they bowed the knee before Him and mocked Him, saying, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they spit on Him, and took the reed and struck Him on the head. When they had mocked Him, they took the robe off Him, put His *own* clothes on Him, and led Him away to be crucified" (Matthew 27:27-31).

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Cyril of Jerusalem noted[86] the significance of the crown of thorns placed on Jesus' head by the soldiers. The crown was a mystery concerning the remission of sins and a release from the curse.

[85] That is, they slapped Him with the palm of their hands.
[86] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 17.

"But the soldiers who crowd around mock Him, and their Lord becomes a sport to them, and upon their Master they make jests. 'When they looked on Me, they shook their heads' (Psalm 109:25). Yet the figure of kingly state appears; for though in mockery, yet they bend the knee. Before they crucify Him, the soldiers put on Him a purple robe, and set a crown on His head, though it is of thorns. Soldiers proclaim every king; and soldiers also must in a figure crown Jesus. For this cause the Scripture says in the Canticles, 'Go forth, daughters of Jerusalem, and look upon King Solomon in the crown wherewith His mother crowned Him' (Canticles 3:11). And the crown itself was a mystery; for it was a remission of sins, a release from the curse".

Cyril of Jerusalem continued to say[87] that the events of the Cross were part of the imagery of the wine-press mentioned in the Scriptures, as was the crown of thorns.

"When He was judged before Pilate, He was clothed in red; for there they put on Him a purple robe. Isaiah wrote, 'Who is this that comes from Edom; the redness of His garments from Bozrah, who is this who in dishonor wears purple? Why are Your garments red, and Your raiment as from a trodden wine-press?' (Isaiah 63:1-2). But He answers and says, 'All day long have I stretched forth My hands to a disobedient and contradicting people'" (Isaiah 65:2 LXX).

"Rightly did the Prophet Isaiah bewail you, saying, 'My well-beloved had a vineyard in a hill in a fruitful place. And I waited, he says, that it should bring forth grapes; I thirsted that it should give wine. But it brought forth thorns' (Isaiah 5:1-2). For you see the crown, wherewith I am adorned".

John Chrysostom stated[88] that one can see the work of the devil in these proceedings and that it was he who was the power that crucified Christ (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

"The devil entered in triumph into everyone as though on some signal. The Jews were pining with envy and jealousy and were mad against Him; as to the soldiers, what caused their behavior? Is it not clear that it was the devil that was then entering in fury into the hearts of everyone? They made a pleasure of their insults against Him, being a savage and ruthless sort. When they ought to have been awestruck, when they ought to have wept, they did not; but on the contrary, they were despiteful, and insolent. Perhaps they were also seeking to please the Jews, or they may have done all in conformity to their own evil nature".

Cyril of Jerusalem also stated[89] that while the things that Christ endured were incredible, all these things were an example for us as we take up our cross.

"The High-priest having questioned Him, and heard the truth, is angry; and the wicked officer of wicked men strikes Him; and the countenance, which had shone as the sun at the Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9), endured to be struck by lawless hands. Others also come and spit on the face of Him, Who by spit had healed the man who was blind from his birth (John 9:6-7). Do you thus repay the Lord? This people is foolish and unwise (Deuteronomy 32:6). The Prophet, greatly wondering, says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' (Isaiah 53:1) for the thing is incredible, that God, the Son of God, and the Arm of the Lord, should

[87] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 27, 29.
[88] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVII, 1
[89] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 13.

suffer such things. In order that they who are being saved may believe, the Holy Spirit writes before, in the person of Christ[90], who says, 'I gave My back to the scourges and My cheeks to smiting'. And My face I turned not away from the shame of spitting (Isaiah 50:6). He was saying, as it were, 'Though knowing beforehand that they will strike Me, I did not even turn My cheek aside. For how should I have nerved My disciples against death for truth's sake, had I Myself dreaded this?' I said, 'He that loves his life shall lose it' (John 12:25): if I had loved My life, how was I to teach without practicing what I taught? First then, being Himself God, He endured to suffer these things at the hands of men; that after this, we men, when we suffer such things at the hands of men for His sake, might not be ashamed. You see that of these things also the prophets have clearly written beforehand".

John Chrysostom commented[91] on the injustice at Christ's "trial" to show how we might act if we encounter the same kind of situation:

"Let us not merely read of these things, but bear them in mind: the crown of thorns, the robe, the reed, the blows, the smiting on the cheek, the spitting. These things, if continually meditated on, are sufficient to take down all anger. If we are mocked, if we suffer injustice, let us still say, 'the servant is not greater than his Lord' (John 13:16). On this account He bore all these things in order that we might walk in His footsteps, and endure this mocking which disturbs more than does any other kind of reproach. He not only bore these things, but also used every means to save and deliver from the appointed punishment those who did them. He sent the Apostles for their salvation, and you hear them saying that, 'we know that you did it in ignorance' (Acts 3:17, see also 3:25-26); and by these means they drew them to repentance. This let us also imitate."

"All these things, therefore, let us practice in our actions; for if we do not act rightly in these, we have come to no purpose and we have come in vain into the world. Or rather we have come to our harm, for faith is not sufficient to bring men into the Kingdom; it even has power in this way most to condemn those who exhibit a sick life. For 'that servant who knew His Master's Will and did not prepare himself or do according to His Will, shall be beaten with many stripes' (Luke 12:47). And again, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin' (John 15:22). What excuse then shall we have, who have been set within the palace and deemed worthy to peek and enter into the sanctuary, and have been made partakers of the releasing mysteries?"

[90] Cyril: "For He who then spoke these things, was afterward Himself an actor in them".
[91] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIV, 3.

Good Friday Third Hour Reading: Isaiah 50:4-11 "The Scourging and the Spitting"

The Church Fathers have used these words from Isaiah regarding Christ's trial to teach us how Satan attempts to torment us like he did Christ. First he gets us attached to the things of this life; then he takes those things away to try to lead us away from God as we struggle to recover the things of this life. The things of this life are called "the passions", and involve everything associated with love of life and pleasure. The Jewish leaders, the soldiers and the mob were all under the sway of their passions as they orchestrated the Crucifixion at the urging of their master (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

A Time to Speak: Isaiah 50:4-5

The text from Isaiah reads:

"The Lord *even* God gives Me the tongue of instruction, to know when it is fit to speak a word. He has appointed for Me early, and He has given Me an ear to hear. And the instruction of the Lord, even the Lord, opens My ears, and I do not disobey, nor dispute" (Isaiah 50:4-7 LXX).

Isaiah wrote concerning Christ's trial before Pilate and Herod: "And He, because of His affliction, opens not His mouth: He was led as a sheep to the slaughter, and as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so He opens not his mouth" (Isaiah 53:7 LXX). But why, we might ask, did He keep silent?

Ambrose of Milan wrote[92] about the wisdom of being silent. From his observations, he saw many people fall into sin by speaking, but rarely by being silent. People don't know how to be silent, even when speaking won't do any good. Knowing when to speak is wisdom from God, and Jesus used this wisdom well during His trial. Saints through the ages have loved to keep silence, knowing that it was Divine protection to be hidden from the scourge of one's own tongue.

> "What we ought to learn before everything else is to be silent, that we may be able to speak. My voice may condemn me, before that of another acquits me; for it is written: 'By your words you shall be condemned' (Matthew 12:37). What need is there that you should hasten to undergo the danger of condemnation by speaking, when you can be safer by keeping silent? How many have I seen to fall into sin by speaking, but scarcely one by keeping silent; and so it is more difficult to know how to keep silent than how to speak. I know that most persons speak because they do not know how to keep silent. It is seldom that anyone is silent even when speaking profits him nothing. He is wise, then, who knows how to keep silent. Lastly, the Wisdom of God said: 'The Lord has given to me the tongue of learning that I should know when it is good to speak' (Isaiah 50:4). Justly, then, is he wise who has received of the Lord to know when he ought to speak. Wherefore the Scripture says well, 'A wise man will keep silence until there is opportunity'" (Ecclesiasticus 20:7 LXX).
>
> "Therefore the saints of the Lord loved to keep silence, because they knew that a man's voice is often the utterance of sin, and a man's speech is the beginning of human error. Lastly, the Saint of the Lord said: 'I said, I will take

[92] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy, I, ii, 5-6.

heed to my ways that I offend not in my tongue' (Psalm 39:1). He knew that it was a mark of the divine protection for a man to be hid from the scourge of his own tongue. We are chastised by the silent reproaches of our thoughts, and by the judgment of conscience. We are chastised also by the lash of our own voice, when we say things whereby our soul is mortally injured, and our mind is sorely wounded. But who is there that has his heart clean from the impurities of sin, and does not offend in his tongue? So as he saw there was no one who could keep his mouth free from evil speaking, he laid upon himself the law of innocence by a rule of silence, with a view to avoiding by silence that fault which he could with difficulty escape in speaking".

John Chrysostom wrote[93] how there is a spiritual dimension to hearing and speaking. This Christ had at His trial, and the prophets had this also. As we are able to obtain access to this, we also have "the mind of Christ"

> What eye has not seen what God prepared?' For who among men saw the things which were about to be dispensed? Neither then has 'the ear heard, nor has it entered into the heart of man' (Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 2:9). For if the Prophets spoke of it, how said he, 'Ear has not heard, neither has it entered into the heart of man?' It did not enter; for not of himself alone is he speaking, but of the whole human race. The Prophets heard; but the prophetic ear was not the ear 'of man', for not as men did they hear, but as Prophets. The same was true with Christ during His trial. Isaiah said, 'He has added unto me an ear to hear' (Isaiah 50:4 LXX), meaning by 'addition' that which was from the Spirit. From this, it was plain that before hearing it had not entered into the heart of man. For using the gift of the Spirit, the heart of the Prophets was not the heart of man, but a spiritual heart. Also Paul said, 'We have the mind of Christ' (1 Corinthians 2:16), as if he would say, 'When we had the blessing of the Spirit and learned the things which no man can speak, no one of us conceived them in his mind. How should we, since not even angels know them".
>
> "What kind of things then are these? That by the foolishness of preaching He shall overcome the world, and the nations shall be brought in, and there shall be reconciliation of God with men, and so great blessings shall come upon us!"

He Gave His Back to the Scourges: Isaiah 50:6-7

The text from Isaiah reads:

"I gave My back to scourges, and My cheeks to blows; and I turned not away My face from the shame of spitting. But the Lord God became My helper; therefore I was not ashamed, but I set My face as a solid rock; and I know that I shall never be ashamed, for He that has justified Me draws near" (Isaiah 50:6-8 LXX).

Our Lord gave us an example of how suffering unjustly, but patiently, can lead to our glory. The Lord had said, "Do not resist an evil person. But whoever slaps you on your right cheek, turn the other to him also. If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also. And whoever compels you to go one mile, go with him two" (Matthew 5:39-41). Paul added to this, "Live peaceably with all men. Beloved, do not avenge yourselves,

[93] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, VII, 7.

but *rather* give place to wrath; for it is written, 'Vengeance *is* Mine, I will repay', says the Lord. Therefore, 'If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap coals of fire on his head' (Proverbs 25:21-22). 'Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good'" (Romans 12:19-21).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated that when we do this, as Jesus did, then it is that we tread on serpents and scorpions. As Jesus said to the Seventy as they returned from healing the sick and casting out demons, "Behold, I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you. Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven" (Luke 10:19-20). As we take up our Cross, then we trample, because it is then that we defy the things of this world. Athanasius said[94],

> "Thus our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ comes before us, when He would show men how to suffer. When He was smitten, He bore it patiently; being reviled, He reviled not again; when He suffered, He threatened not, but He gave His back to the whips, and His cheeks to punching, and turned not His face from spitting. At last, He was willingly led to death, that we might behold in Him the image of all that is virtuous and immortal, and that we, conducting ourselves after these examples, might truly tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the power of the enemy".

Jerome gave[95] some examples of the contrary:

> "One hour's debauch made Noah uncover his nakedness, which through sixty years of sobriety he had kept covered. Lot in a fit of intoxication unwittingly adds incest to incontinence, and wine overcomes the man whom Sodom failed to conquer. He, Who gave His back to the whips, condemns a bishop, that is a striker. And when He was reviled, He reviled not again".

Walk in the Light of Your Fire: Isaiah 50:8-11

The "fire" referred to here is the passions. Those who are controlled by their passions have a "light" by which they order their life. It may seem as if this "order" is wildly out of control at times, but unseen masters are pulling the strings. These same masters are the same ones who orchestrated the Crucifixion of Christ.

The text from Isaiah reads:

"Who is he that pleads with me? Let him stand up against me at the same time: yea, who is he that pleads with me? Let him draw near to me. Behold, the Lord, the Lord, will help me; who will hurt me? Behold, all you shall grow old as a garment, and a moth shall devour you. Who is among you that fears the Lord? Let him listen to the voice of His Servant: you that walk in darkness, and have no light, trust in the Name of the Lord, and stay upon God. Behold, you all kindle a fire, and feed a flame: walk in the light of your fire, and in the flame, which you have kindled. This has happened to you for my sake; you shall lie down in sorrow" (Isaiah 50:8-11 LXX).

[94] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, X, 7.
[95] Jerome, Letters, LXIX, 9.

Irenaeus wrote[96] that Isaiah's prophecy predicted that there would be a reaction by the whole earth against the Church, just as there would be a reaction by the whole earth at the Second Coming. The words "stand opposite", "draw near", and "lie down in sorrow" are very similar to the words that the Lord used in His illustration of separating sheep from goats on Judgment Day (Matthew 25:32-46).

> The prophets said, 'The Lord has reigned; let the people be enraged: [even] He who sits upon the cherubim; let the earth be moved' (Psalm 99:1). These prophets were thus predicting (1) that wrath from all nations, which after His ascension came upon those who believed in Him, with the movement of the whole earth against the Church. And (2) the fact that, when He comes from heaven with His mighty angels, the whole earth shall be shaken, as He Himself declares, 'There shall be a great earthquake, such as has not been from the beginning' (Revelation 16:18, Luke 21:25-28). And again, when one says, 'Whoever is judged, let him stand opposite; and whoever is justified, let him draw near to the servant of God' (Isaiah 50:8 loosely). Again, 'Woe unto you, for you shall wax old as does a garment, and the moth shall eat you up' (Isaiah 50:9); and, 'All flesh shall be humbled, and the Lord alone shall be exalted in the highest' (Isaiah 2:11). It is thus indicated that, after His passion and ascension, God shall cast down under His feet all who were opposed to Him, and He shall be exalted above all, and there shall be no one who can be justified or compared to Him.

When Isaiah referred to "the Lord's Servant", referring to Christ, he is speaking of the Lord's humanity. Against Him, the passions of the Jewish leaders were kindled and fed as a fire, and those caught up by this fire had the light of their passions, instead of the Light of God, to walk by. This led to their demise, as was evident in c. 70 AD.

Gregory the Theologian spoke[97] of two kinds of light. One is the Light of God that illumines us, and which is mentioned many times in the Scriptures. Then there is the "light" from the flame of our passions, which was "illuminating" those who crucified Christ. To counteract this flame, there is both a cleansing fire and an avenging fire.

> "A light for the righteous springs up, and its partner is joyful gladness (Psalm 97:11). 'The light of the righteous is everlasting' (Proverbs 13:9); and 'You are shining wondrously from the everlasting mountains' (Psalm 76:4 LXX) is said to God by the Angelic powers which aid our efforts after good".
>
> "And you have heard David's words; 'The Lord is my Light and my Salvation, whom then shall I fear?' (Psalm 27:1) And now he asks that the Light and the Truth may be sent forth for him (Psalm 43:3), now giving thanks that he has a share in it, in that the Light of God is marked upon him (Psalm 4:6-7). That is, that the signs of the illumination given are impressed upon him and recognized".
>
> "One light alone let us shun — that which is the offspring of the baleful fire; let us not walk in the light of our fire, and in the flame which we have kindled (Isaiah 50:11). I know a cleansing fire which Christ came to send upon the earth (Luke 12:49), and He Himself is mystically called a Fire. This Fire takes away whatever is material and of evil habit; and this He desires to kindle with all speed, for He longs for speed in doing us good, since He gives us even

[96] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxiii, 13.
[97] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration on Holy Baptism, XL, 36.

coals of fire (Isaiah 47:14 LXX) to help us. I know also a fire, which is not cleansing, but avenging. This is either that fire of Sodom (Genesis 19:24), which He pours down on all sinners (Psalm 11:6), mingled with brimstone and storms, or that which is prepared for the Devil and his Angels (Matthew 25:41). Or it is that which proceeds from the face of the Lord, and shall burn up his enemies round about (Psalm 97:3). There is one even more fearful still than these, the unquenchable fire (Mark 9:43-48), which is ranged with the worm that doesn't die, but is eternal for the wicked. For all these belong to the destroying power".

John Cassian stated[98] that the devil uses worldly cares as a scourge to torment us and sever us from spiritual delights. In this way, we become bound by the cords of our own sins and walk in the flame of our own fire.

> "As the devil holds our soul fast in the labors for these worldly goods, when he wants to sever us from spiritual delights, he vexes us by diminishing these and depriving us of them. When the lightness of His burden has become loathsome to us through the evil of a corrupt desire, and when we are caught in the chains of that property and substance, which we kept for our comfort and solace, he torments us with the scourges of worldly cares. For 'each one is bound by the cords of his own sins' (Proverbs 5:22), and hears from the prophet, 'Behold all you that kindle a fire, encompassed with flames, walk in the light of your fire, and in the flames which you have kindled' (Isaiah 50:11). Solomon is witness to this, 'Each man shall thereby be punished, whereby he has sinned' (Wisdom 11:16 LXX). The pleasures, which we enjoy, becomes a torment to us, and the delights and enjoyments of this flesh, turn like executioners upon their originator. One who is supported by his former wealth and property is sure not to admit perfect humility of heart".

Ambrose of Milan spoke[99] of the flame of our fire as a youthful lust that we kindle. He encouraged us to cast it out of our mind and not to feed it with the fuel of luxury.

> "Let us pass over this fire of youthful lust as though it were following us, though indeed it follows not behind us, but within our selves. We wish for the most part to flee, but if we do not wholly cast it out of our mind, we rather take it up than forsake it. Let us then spring over it, lest it be said to us, 'Walk in the flame of your fire, which you have kindled for yourselves' (Isaiah 50:11). For as he who "takes fire into his bosom burns his clothes," so he who walks upon fiery coals must of necessity burn his feet, as it is written, 'Can one walk upon coals of fire and not burn his feet?' (Proverbs 6:28) This fire is dangerous; let us then not feed it with the fuel of luxury".

The History of Crucifixion as a Means of Punishment

Crucifixion was in use[100] at least as early as 1500 BC, and was in use in Egypt prior to the Exodus. The Patriarch Joseph prophesied that Pharaoh's chief baker would be crucified. "Within three days Pharaoh will lift off your head from you and hang you on a tree; and the birds will eat your flesh from you" (Genesis 40:19). Crucifixion at that time was not done to cause

[98] John Cassian, Conferences, III, xxiv, 24.
[99] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance, I, xiv, 75-76.
[100] Merrill Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, pp 229.

pain, but to generate ridicule. Normal procedure was first to kill the victim, then to tie the hands of the victim's body to an upright pole to let the body rot in the sun. Sometimes crucifixion also implied the placing of the victim's head on top of a separate pole as was the case with the chief baker in Joseph's day. The word usually translated "hang" means crucifixion and not hanging by the neck as in the Western United States tradition. Similarly, the 75-foot high "gallows" that Haman built for Mordecai during the Captivity (Esther 7:9-10) was intended for crucifixion, not hanging by the neck.

During the Exodus, when Balaam taught Balak, the king of Moab, to put a stumbling block before the people of Israel (Revelation 2:14), the Lord's punishment for those who were joined to the Moabite prostitutes was crucifixion. The offenders were first killed, then crucified.

> "Now Israel remained in Acacia Grove, and the people began to commit harlotry with the women of Moab. They invited the people to the sacrifices of their gods, and the people ate and bowed down to their gods. So Israel was joined to Baal of Peor, and the anger of the Lord was aroused against Israel. Then the Lord said to Moses, 'Take all the leaders of the people and hang the offenders before the Lord, out in the sun, that the fierce anger of the Lord may turn away from Israel'. So Moses said to the judges of Israel, 'Every one of you kill his men who were joined to Baal of Peor'" (Numbers 25:1-5).

The Lord's instructions regarding crucifixion, in anticipation of the crucifixion of His Son, was not to leave the victim hang on the tree overnight.

> "If a man has committed a sin deserving of death, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain overnight on the tree, but you shall surely bury him that day. So that you do not defile the land which the Lord your God is giving you *as* an inheritance; for he who is hanged *is* accursed of God" (Deuteronomy 21:22-23).

In Roman times, crucifixion was done either by nails driven through the wrists, or by tying the victim to the cross with cords. When nails were used, the victim died quicker, and the initial pain was more pronounced. When cords were used, it took days for the victim to die of sheer exhaustion, and the eventual pain was greater.

There was usually a strong peg that projected out of the central stem of the cross, on which the feet of the victim could rest. This had the effect of prolonging death. If the legs of the victim were broken, as was done to the two thieves (John 19:31), death came quickly as the victim was strangled by his own collarbone. In Jesus' case, His legs weren't broken, but He was weakened considerably by the scourging[101]. This may have been why Jesus died before the two thieves. Since victims were compelled to carry their own cross, and since Jesus was unable to do so (Mark 15:21), the scourging had evidently left Him very weak, and He had probably lost several units of blood.

[101] "Scourging" was done with a whip made of sharp pieces of metal or bone at the end short leather cords. According to Hebrew custom, it was illegal to give more than 39 lashes, since forty lashes was considered fatal. The Apostle Paul received 39 lashes five times from the Jewish leaders (2 Corinthians 11:24). Each "lash" created a number of "stripes" as the sharp pieces of metal dug into the prisoner's back, resulting in profuse pain and bleeding. Following the scourging, Jesus was left standing in a pool of His own blood. This scourging left Jesus very weak, such that He could not carry His Cross to Golgotha.

Before the nailing or binding with cords took place, the victim was often given a medicated cup to confuse the senses and deaden the pain. Jesus refused to drink this (Matthew 27:34) in order that His senses might be clear.

The Romans used crucifixion as a tool in terrorizing the city during the siege of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. Some of the Jews in the city sought to escape to the Romans, hoping to find some safety from the horrors of the city by way of their surrender; but they experienced something quite different[102] when they were crucified in jest.

> "They were first whipped and then tortured with all sorts of tortures before they died, and were then crucified outside the walls of the city. So the soldiers, out of wrath and hatred they bore the Jews, nailed those they caught, one after one way, and another after another, to the crosses, by way of jest, when their multitude was so great, that room was wanting for crosses, and crosses wanting for bodies. Roman soldiers captured people attempting to escape and then crucified them at the rate of 500 per day".

In the 4th Century AD, the Emperor Constantine outlawed crucifixion as a means of punishment, due to his increasing reverence for the Cross.

Shapes of Crosses

The use of the Cross, as a symbol or sign, did not first appear in New Testament times. Other pagan cultures had used it before[103]. For example, a cross-shaped emblem was used in Egypt, Nineveh and Phoenicia, among other countries. These crosses were shaped like the Modern Greek Cross with equal length arms.

Other crosses used are the X-shaped "St. Andrew Cross", so called because the Apostle Andrew was crucified on one of that shape. The St. Andrew Cross is very prominently displayed on the British flag today. Also used has been the Tee-shaped "St. Anthony Cross", supposedly derived from the crutch or walking stick of Anthony the Great[104]. During the middle Ages in Europe the Celtic Cross, having a circle behind the crossbeam, was used a lot, and carved in stone in many places. Most commonly used in the West is the Latin Cross, which is the style displayed on most Western Churches.

For executions in Roman times, a "Simple Cross" was sometimes used. This was a plain vertical stake where the victim's hands were tied or nailed above his head. The Greek word for cross, *stauros*, means "an upright stake" and does not imply a crossbeam. Thus a "cross" did not have to have a crossbeam, and referring to the Cross that Jesus died on as "a tree" (1 Peter 2:24, Galatians 3:13) is perfectly consistent with the meaning of *stauros.*

Many comments have been made by the Church Fathers in comparing the "tree" that Christ died on with the "tree" that caused mankind to fall in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-16). By the "tree" in the Garden, Satan set a trap for Adam and caused him to fall. By the "tree" of the Cross, God also set a trap for Satan. If Satan had known what would result from this trap, he "would not have crucified the Lord of Glory" (1 Corinthians 2:8).

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[102] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, xi, 1.
[103] Merrill Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, pp 227.
[104] Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, January 17.

Simon of Cyrene Carries Jesus' Cross: Matthew 27:32, Mark 15:21, Luke 23:26

"Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross" (Mark 15:21).

We might ask, "Who is Simon of Cyrene?" and "Why do three of the four Gospel writers mention Simon of Cyrene (in North Africa) as being present at the Crucifixion, and as being pressed into service to carry Jesus' cross?" Evidently many people that they were addressing, including Theophilus (Luke 1:1-3, Acts 1:1-3), the governor of Antioch, knew who Simon was.

As part of the spread of the Early Church, Luke mentions men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who were among those scattered at the death of Stephen in 31 AD, and who began preaching to the Greek speaking Gentiles in Antioch also. Over the span of a few years, a great number had believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21). From the Scriptures, the men we know who were from Cyrene (in Northern Africa) and from the island of Cyprus were:

NAME	FROM	Later Bishop of	Notes, N. T. References
Simon	Cyrene	?	Mark 15:21, Acts 13:1?
Rufus	Cyrene	Thebes	Mark 15:21, Romans 16:13
Alexander	Cyrene	heretic	Mark 15:21, 1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Timothy 4:14
Lucius	Cyrene	Laodicea	Acts 13:1, Romans 16:21
Aristobulus	Cyprus	Britain	Barnabas' brother; Peter's father-in-law; Romans 16:10
Barnabas	Cyprus	Cyprus	Acts 4:36-37, 9:26-28, 12-15

All of the above, except Simon and Alexander, were members of the original Seventy (Luke 10:1-20) and were referred to, in the early Church, as the "lesser apostles" as opposed to the Twelve who were called the "great apostles." In addition, the name Simon of Cyrene is a Greek name that is equivalent to the Hebrew name "Simeon." Simeon, called Niger, or black (Acts 13:1), may be the same person as Simon of Cyrene, being a black man coming from North Africa.

Of the six people listed above, all of the first five may have been involved in starting the church in Antioch. John Chrysostom noted[105] that when the text states, "the hand of the Lord was with them" (Acts 11:21), this means that the men from Cyprus and Cyrene performed miracles, further suggesting that the Seventy were involved. Barnabas was not involved initially, but when the news of the great number of people (including Gentiles) turning to the Lord reached the church in Jerusalem, James and the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate. This was similar to the sending of Peter and John to chrismate the converts of Deacon Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:14) and the Lord sending Peter to chrismate and baptize Cornelius and those with him (Acts 10:19-21, 44-48). Barnabas may have been chosen to go because his brother Aristobulus was involved.

[105] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

Thus it is understandable that the Gospel writers mentioned Simon of Cyrene as carrying Jesus' Cross. He was a prominent person, and he was widely known throughout the Early Church.

The Women Lament: Luke 23:27-31

"And a great multitude of the people followed Him, and women who also mourned and lamented Him. But Jesus, turning to them, said, 'Daughters of Jerusalem, do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children. For indeed the days are coming in which they will say, 'Blessed *are* the barren, wombs that never bore, and breasts which never nursed!' Then they will begin to say to the mountains, 'Fall on us!' and to the hills, 'Cover us!' For if they do these things in the green wood, what will be done in the dry?'" (Luke 23:27-31)

The above is a proverb that compares Jesus' suffering to that of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. If the innocent Jesus (the green wood) suffered so much, the sufferings of guilty Jerusalem (the dry wood) will be that much greater. For details of the sufferings of Jerusalem, see the Study for Holy Monday Evening.

Theophylact stated[106] that Christ did not need lamentation for what He was doing, but praise. The women of Jerusalem, who were caught up in the sins of the Jewish leaders, were the ones to be lamented for what they would suffer later.

> "The women wept for the Lord as if something terrible had befallen Him, showing their own compassion. But He did not accept their lament, and instead He seemed to rebuke them. For He suffered willingly! Lamentation is not appropriate for Him, Who suffered willingly for the salvation of all human nature; instead, praise and acclamation are His due".
>
> "But was He really rebuking them? No! He was exhorting them to consider the catastrophes that were coming and to mourn for the people who will then suffer. Then, women will cook their own children for food without a tear of remorse[107], and the belly that had carried the child will wretchedly welcome back the thing which it had borne".
>
> "If the Romans have done these things to Me, the Green Tree, ever-flourishing on account of My Divinity, laden with the fruits of My teachings, which nourish all men, what will the Romans not do to you, the Jewish people, the dry tree, barren of all righteousness and bearing no fruit? Had there been any amount of living sap of goodness within you, you might have been found deserving of a little bit of mercy. But now you will be like dry wood that is cast into the furnace and destroyed".

Cyril of Alexandria stated[108] that the cruelty of the Roman officers is but a prelude to their cruelty to Israel in the war that destroyed Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. That is, Israel would reap the same cruelty plus some in the destruction of Jerusalem.

> "He raised the dead to life, He cleansed the lepers, He healed the blind. But though these were His works, yet the Roman officers, or rather Pilate who

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[106] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 307-8.

[107] See Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, iii, 4.

[108] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 151, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 606-607.

> condemned Him, inflicted upon Him these cruel mockeries. Therefore when He says, the Roman commanders have inflicted upon Me such things, though they see Me adorned with such great glory, what will they do to Israel, perceiving him to be a dry and fruitless stock? In Israel, they will see nothing admirable. Plainly they will burn him with fire, without showing him mercy; he will suffer the cruelties prompted by savage rage. Such were the miseries into which Israel fell when God, Who judges righteously, exacted of them the punishment for their wickedness against Christ".

Josephus describes the fury of the Roman soldiers against the Jews; and their greedy neighbors also showed them no mercy. Not even the Temple was spared but was used as a battleground by these warring parties. Worshippers were killed in front of the altar and hundreds of dead were strewn within the Temple. Josephus laments the horrible situation:

> "O most wretched city[109], what misery so great as this from the Romans did you ever suffer, when they came to purify you from your intestine hatred! For you could be no longer a place fit for God, nor could you long continue in being, after you had been a sepulcher for the bodies of your own people, and had made the holy house a burying-place in this civil war of yours".
>
> "It is therefore impossible[110] to go distinctly over every instance of these men's iniquity. I shall therefore speak my mind at once here briefly - that neither did any other city ever suffer such miseries, nor did an age ever breed a generation more fruitful in wickedness than this was, from the beginning of the world" (cf. Acts 2:40).

This fury against the Jews was so intense, that even though the Roman General Titus had wanted to spare the Temple from destruction[111], there was nothing he could do to prevent it. The animosity of the soldiers toward the Jews was just too intense.

Golgotha, Burial Place of Adam: Matthew 27:33, Mark 15:22, Luke 23:33, John 19:17-18

"And when they had come to the place called Calvary[112], there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do'. And they divided His garments and cast lots" (Luke 23:33-34).

The other Gospel writers stated: "And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull" (Mark 15:22). "And He, bearing His cross, went out to a place called *the Place* of a Skull, which is called in Hebrew, Golgotha" (John 19:17). Golgotha was known as the Place of a Skull both because the hill resembled a skull, and because human remains were often seen there, leftovers from bodies that were left to rot in the sun.

Cyril of Alexandria stated[113] that when Abraham led his son, Isaac, up to one of the mountains of Moriah (Genesis 22:2), he had Isaac carry the wood for the sacrifice, which

[109] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, i, 3.
[110] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, V, x, 5.
[111] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, iv, 6-7.
[112] The English word "Calvary" comes from the Latin word for skull, *calvaria*.
[113] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 151, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 606.

foreshadowed Christ carrying His Cross. Just as Christ was doing the Will of His Father (Matthew 26:42), so also were Abraham and Isaac. The "mountains of Moriah" were the same location where Christ was later crucified. Thus the sacrifice of Isaac foreshadows that of Christ.

The Lord had told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on a mountaintop, but this command was contrary to the Lord's Law (which forbade human sacrifice) and was seemingly contrary to the Lord's promise that his posterity would be numbered through Isaac. In obeying, Abraham told his two servants that he and Isaac were going to worship the Lord on the mountaintop and then return (Genesis 22:5). Abraham concluded that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead (Hebrews 11:17-19). Josephus stated[114] that Isaac shared Abraham's faith and willingly climbed up on the altar to be sacrificed.

Theophylact stated[115] that there is a tradition that has come down to us from the holy fathers that Adam had been buried in this place near Golgotha. John Chrysostom also acknowledged[116] that this tradition had come down to his generation. By being crucified there, the Lord healed both the sin and the death of Adam. At the place where death began, there death was destroyed.

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[117] that Golgotha was the center of the earth because here our sins were nailed to the Cross.

> "He stretched out His hands on the Cross, that He might embrace the ends of the world. For this Golgotha is the very center of the earth, as the Prophet Asaph said, 'You have wrought salvation in the midst of the earth' (Psalm 74:12 LXX). He stretched forth human hands, who by His spiritual hands had established the heaven. They were fastened with nails, that His manhood, which bore the sins of men, having been nailed to the tree, and having died, sin might die with it, and we might rise again in righteousness. Since by one man came death, by One Man came also life (Romans 5:12, 17); by One Man, the Savior, dying of His own accord. Remember what He said, 'I have power to lay down My life, and I have power to take it again'" (John 10:18).

Cyril of Jerusalem also noted[118] how a cross and wood had been used in prophetic imagery for over 1500 years.

> "This was the figure, which Moses completed by fixing the serpent to a cross that whoever had been bitten by the living serpent, and looked to the brazen serpent, might be saved by believing (Numbers 21:9, John 3:14). Does then the brazen serpent save when crucified, and shall not the Son of God incarnate save when crucified also? On each occasion life comes by means of wood. In the time of Noah, the preservation of life was by an ark of wood (Genesis 6:13-17). In the time of Moses the sea, on beholding the emblematic rod, withdrew from him who

[114] Josephus, Antiquities, I, xiii, 4.
[115] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 134.
Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 308.
[116] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 1.
[117] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 27-29.
[118] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 20.

struck it (Exodus 14:15-27). Is then Moses' rod mighty, and is the Cross of the Savior powerless?"

Cyril of Alexandria stated[119] that the Jewish leaders claimed to be Moses' disciples, but yet they had no understanding of what Moses said.

> "You heard your great chieftain Moses foretelling the savageness of your attacks. He said, 'Your life shall hang in doubt before you; you shall fear day and night, and have no assurance of life' (Deuteronomy 28:66 LXX). You shall see, that is, Him, Who is the cause of life, or rather Life itself, hung on a tree. And how then did you entirely disregard the prophecy of Moses, of whom you made so great boast? For we have heard you expressly declare, 'We are Moses' disciples'".

Cyril of Jerusalem addressed[120] the problem of people denying the Faith during persecution, which was a big issue in his day. He encouraged people not to fear crucifixion, since they would be simply returning the favor to their King. He noted that the Head of the Church was crucified at the "Place of the Skull", or Golgotha. The Prophets foretold this.

> "Do not recant the Faith in time of persecution. Rejoice not in the Cross in time of peace only, but hold fast the same Faith in time of persecution also. Don't be a friend of Jesus in time of peace, and His enemy in time of wars. You received remission of your sins, and the gifts of the King's spiritual bounty; when war shall come, strive nobly for your King. Jesus, the Sinless, was crucified for you; and will you not be crucified for Him who was crucified for you? You are not bestowing a favor, for you have first received. But you are returning a favor, repaying your debt to Him who was crucified for you on Golgotha. Now Golgotha is interpreted, 'the place of a skull' (Matthew 27:33). Who were they then, who prophetically named this spot Golgotha, in which Christ the true Head endured the Cross? As the Apostle says, 'Who is the Image of the Invisible God' (Colossians 1:15); and a little after, 'He is the Head of the body, the Church' (Colossians 1:18). And again, 'The Head of every man is Christ' (1 Corinthians 11:3); and again, 'Who is the Head all principality and power' (Colossians 2:10). The Head suffered in 'the place of the skull'. O wondrous prophetic appellation! The very name also reminds you, saying, 'Think not of the Crucified as of a mere man; He is the Head of all principality and power. That Head which was crucified is the Head of all power, and has for His Head the Father; for the Head of the man is Christ, and the Head of Christ is God'" (1 Corinthians 11:3).

Gall to Drink: Mark 15:23, Matthew 27:34, Luke 23:36

"Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take *it*" (Mark 15:23). "They gave Him sour wine mingled with gall[121] to drink. But when He had tasted *it,* He would not drink" (Matthew 27:34).

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[119] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 151, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 609.
[120] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 23.
[121] Before the fastening to the cross took place, the victim was often given a medicated cup to confuse the senses and deaden the pain. Jesus refused to drink this (Matthew 27:34) in order that His senses might be clear. There may have been a number of ingredients in this medicated cup, including myrrh, gall, etc.

Severe loss of blood, such as from a violent scourging, can result in shock, and the victim begins to sweat, while his blood pressure falls and his pulse becomes slow and feeble. A secondary shock from tissue damage, such as the nail wounds as well as the bleeding from the scourging, often follows an hour or more later. A person in secondary shock is pale, weak, exhausted and may complain of thirst, which Jesus did. First aid for people in shock includes lowering the head, to help circulation to the brain, and administering water with a little salt to replace lost fluids. Instead, Jesus had His head erect and was offered vinegar. Theophylact stated[122] that by offering Him a wine that had turned vinegary, they were mocking Him.

Justin Martyr pointed[123] to the prophecies of Christ's extreme thirst while on the Cross. The result was that the Jewish people, who continued to reject Christ, became extremely thirsty themselves.

> "The statement, 'My strength has become dry like a potsherd, and my tongue has clinged to my throat,' (Psalm 22:15) was also a prophecy of what would be done by Him according to the Father's will. For the power of His strong word, by which He always confuted the Pharisees and Scribes, and your entire nation's teachers that questioned Him, had a cessation like a plentiful and strong spring. The waters of this spring have been turned off, when He kept silence, and chose to return no answer to anyone in the presence of Pilate".

As Jesus was weakened severely by the wounds from the scourging, the nail wounds and the shock, He was unable to support Himself with His legs, and death came quickly. For the two thieves, who had not been scourged, death did not come quickly until after their legs were broken, and they were unable to support their weight any longer.

Dividing His Garments: Mark 15:24-25, Matthew 27:35-36, Luke 23:34, John 19:23-24

"Then the soldiers, when they had crucified Jesus, took His garments and made four parts, to each soldier a part, and also the tunic. Now the tunic was without seam, woven from the top in one piece. They said therefore among themselves, 'Let us not tear it, but cast lots for it, whose it shall be', that the Scripture might be fulfilled which says, 'They divided My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots' (Psalm 22:18). Therefore the soldiers did these things" (John 19:23-24). Matthew adds, "Sitting down, they kept watch over Him there" (Matthew 27:35-36).

Mark states, "And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him" (Mark 15:24-25). John's Gospel states, however, that it was about the sixth hour when Jesus was crucified. "Now it was the Preparation Day of the Passover, and about the sixth hour. And Pilate said to the Jews, 'Behold your King!' But they cried out, 'Away with *Him*, away with *Him*! Crucify Him!'" (John 19:14)

Matthew Henry cleared up[124] this apparent contradiction in John 19:14 by saying, "Some ancient Greek and Latin manuscripts read 'about the third hour', which agrees with Mark 15:25".

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[122] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 134.

[123] Justin Martyr, Dialog with Trypho, 102.

And it appears that he was already upon the cross before the darkness that began at the sixth hour (Matthew 27:45).

Theophylact stated[125] that by dividing up His garments as if they were dividing up, not His poor garments, but the garments of a king, they were mocking Him.

John Chrysostom noted[126] that the soldiers divided up the garments that had performed miracles. They didn't do this to the two thieves; only to Christ.

> They parted the garments, by which such great miracles were done (Matthew 9:20, 14:36). But they wrought none now, Christ restraining His unspeakable power. This was no small addition to insult. They dared to do all this as if they were doing it to someone base, abject and the vilest of all men. To the thieves they did nothing of the kind, but to Christ they dared it all. They crucified Him in the midst of the thieves that He might share in their reputation.

"And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left. Then Jesus said, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do'. And they divided His garments and cast lots" (Luke 23:33-34).

The statement Jesus made, 'Father, forgive them, for they do not know what they do', is not included in all New Testament manuscripts, and may be left out of some English translations. However, this statement is very similar to that made by Deacon Stephen just before He was stoned to death by the same Jewish leaders (Acts 7:60).

The Lord's words go right to the heart of what He had been saying for three years all over Israel: "love your enemies and forgive them". Early in His public ministry, Jesus had said at the Sermon on the Mount,

> "But I say to you, love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you, that you may be sons of your Father in heaven. For He makes His sun rise on the evil and on the good, and sends rain on the just and on the unjust. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same? If you greet your brethren only, what do you do more *than others?* Do not even the tax collectors do so?" (Matthew 5:44-47).

Pilate's Inscription: Mark 15:26, Matthew 27:37, Luke 23:38, John 19:19-22

Now Pilate wrote a title and put *it* on the cross. And the writing was JESUS OF NAZARETH, THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then many of the Jews read this title, for the place where Jesus was crucified was near the city; and it was written in Hebrew, Greek, *and* Latin. Therefore the chief priests of the Jews said to Pilate, 'Do not write,' The King of the Jews', but

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[124] Henry, Matthew, Matthew Henry's Commentary on the Bible, Peabody, MA, Hendrickson Publishers, 1997, Matthew 19, V, 3, (2), [2].

[125] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 134.

[126] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVII, 1.

'He said, 'I am the King of the Jews'. Pilate answered, 'What I have written, I have written'" (John 19:19-22).

Theophylact stated[127] that the title that Pilate put on the Cross, which was the accusation against Him (Matthew 27:37), was done to try to dishonor His fame and reputation. It made it appear that He was a fomenter of insurrection and had called Himself "king", so that those who passed by would not pity Him, but would instead revile Him as a failed usurper.

Theophylact also stated[128] that this inscription would turn out to be truly ironic and would contain the truth in an uncanny way.

> "The devil had caused the inscription detailing Jesus' "crime" of insurrection in three languages, so that every passerby would know that He had been hung on the Cross because He had made Himself a king. Yet what was intended by the devil as an accusation became instead a triumphant symbol. The Romans, the most powerful nation, the Greeks, the wisest nation, and the Hebrews, the most God-fearing nation would all be placed under the kingship of Jesus and would acclaim Him. The devil, although wise in evil doing, did not understand that this would be the result".

John Chrysostom stated[129] that the title that Pilate put on Jesus' Cross was his way of retaliating against the Jews. Pilate was angry with the Jewish leaders for the way they shouted him down as he tried to release Jesus three times. Therefore he did not back down when they protested the wording of the title. The title itself was helpful 300 years later when Helena, the mother of Constantine went to Jerusalem to search for the Cross.

> "In putting a title on Jesus' Cross, Pilate was at the same time retaliating against the Jews, and making a defense for Christ. Since, they had given Him up as worthless, and attempted to confirm this sentence by making Him share the punishment of the robbers, Pilate thus placed those letters, which utter a clear voice, and show forth His Victory, and proclaim His Kingdom, though not in its completeness. This he made clear not in a single tongue, but in three languages. Since it was likely that there would be a mixed multitude among the Jews on account of the Feast, in order that none might be ignorant of the defense, he publicly recorded the madness of the Jews, in all the (major) languages. They bore malice against Him even when crucified. If He was a mortal and weak, and was about to become extinct, why did they fear the letters asserting that He is the King of the Jews? And what do they ask? 'Say that 'he said'. For now it is an assertion, and a general sentence; but if 'he said' ise added, the charge is shown to be one arising from his own rashness and arrogance. Still Pilate was not turned aside, but stood by his first decision."
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> "The wood of the cross was buried after the Crucifixion, because no one was careful to take it up, inasmuch as fear was pressing, and the believers were

[127] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 134.

[128] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 309.

[129] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 1.

hurrying to other urgent matters. Since it was later sought for[130], and it was likely that the three crosses would lie together, in order that the Lord's Cross might not be unknown, it was made clear to all, first by its lying in the middle, and then by the title. For those of the thieves had no titles."

Pilate was also determined that the Jewish leaders would not shout him down again. Josephus records[131] how Pilate got even with them a few years later. Anticipating another riot, He placed soldiers in disguise among the crowd armed with clubs as a riot control measure. When the people began to shout him down, the soldiers, on a signal from Pilate began beating them on the head. Many people died during the resulting melee.

> "Pilate stirred up another tumult by making use of the holy treasure, which is called Corban (Mark 7:9-13), in the construction of an aqueduct three hundred stadia[132] in length. The multitude was greatly displeased at it, and when Pilate was in Jerusalem they surrounded his tribunal and gave utterance to loud complaints. But he, anticipating the tumult, had distributed through the crowd armed soldiers disguised in citizen's clothing, forbidding them to use the sword, but commanding them to strike with clubs those who should make an outcry[133]. To them he now gave the prearranged signal from the tribunal. Many Jews were beaten and many of them perished in consequence of the blows; while many others were trampled under foot by their own countrymen in their flight, and thus lost their lives. But the multitude, overawed by the fate of those who were slain, held their peace".

The Jeering of Christ on the Cross: Mark 15:29-32, Matthew 27:39-43, Luke 23:34-37

"And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'You Who destroy the temple and build *it* in three days, save Yourself! If You are the Son of God, come down from the cross'. Likewise the chief priests also, mocking with the scribes and elders, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the cross, and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let God deliver Him now if He will have Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:39-43)

Theophylact stated[134] that the mocking was the devils' way of making all Christ's miracles look as if they were mere fantasy. The tempting to come down from the Cross was

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[130] Helena, the mother of Constantine, made a pilgrimage to Jerusalem to search for the Cross in 326 AD, or about 20 years before Chrysostom was born. An old Jew named Judah told her that the Cross was buried under the Temple of Venus that Hadrian (76-138 AD) had built on Golgotha. Helena ordered that the Temple of Venus be torn down and the ground under it excavated. Having done that, they found three crosses. They suspected which cross was the real one: first from its lying in the middle (John 19:18), and second from the title written by Pilate (John 19:19). To dispel all uncertainty as to which, if any, was the real one, they used the Cross to raise a dead man. The Temple of Venus on Golgotha had the effect of preserving the wood of the Cross for 300 years.

[131] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, II, ix, 4.

[132] That is, 34 miles long. This may be the ancient aqueduct that was found to the South of Jerusalem. Pilate may have simply restored an aqueduct that was built at the time of Solomon. This work was done in the years 30-37 AD

[133] That is, make outcry like they did when they demanded that Pilate crucify Christ (Matthew 27:21-24).

[134] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 135.

similar to the tempting after the forty-day fast at the beginning of Jesus' public ministry (Matthew 4:1-11).

> "Even 'they that passed by' on the road blasphemed the Lord, mocking Him as a deceiver. Likewise the chief priests said, 'Cannot He, Who saved others, save Himself?' Thus they scoffed at His miracles as if they had all been mere fantasy. For the Lord did save many by working miracles. It is the devil who incited them to say, 'Come down from the Cross'. The prince of evil knew that salvation would come through the Cross; he was again tempting and testing the Lord. If He did come down from the Cross, the devil could be assured that Jesus was not the Son of God; and for this very reason He did not come down. Christ would not have ascended the Cross in the first place, if He intended to descend from it. But knowing that it was in this manner that salvation would come to mankind, He endured to be crucified and to suffer all the other things".
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> Theophylact continued[135]: "The devil said the same thing to Jesus that he said to Him when he tempted Him on the pinnacle[136] of the Temple (Matthew 4:5-6). Reluctantly conceding any good that he now feared might come through the Cross, the devil wanted to prevent it by any possible means. But all his devices turned back on himself".

John Chrysostom addressed[137] the mocking of Christ on the Cross, as part of Satan's agenda for several reasons. First, Pilate's "Accusation" called Jesus a king; they had to disprove that. Second, they feared His Resurrection and wanted to dishonor Him so that people would not follow Him after He rose. Third, their logic was faulty! If the proof that He was the Son of God is His coming down from the Cross, then the proof that the prophets were prophets is their being rescued from their dangers.

> "And yet who would not have been moved by the multitude that was following Him, and lamenting Him? Not these wild beasts! Wherefore He gave to the multitude an answer, but not to these men. After having done what they would, they endeavored also to injure His honor, fearing His resurrection. Therefore they said these things publicly, and crucified thieves with Him. Wishing to prove Him a deceiver, they said, 'You that would destroy the temple, and build it in three days, come down from the cross' (Matthew 27:40). Since Pilate would not remove the accusation (this was the writing, 'The king of the Jews'), but he persevered in saying, 'What I have written, I have written' (John 19:22), they then endeavored by their derision of Him to show that He is not a king. Wherefore they said 'If He is the king of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross. He saved others, Himself He cannot save' (Matthew 27:42), aiming hereby to bring discredit even on His former miracles. And again, 'If He is the Son of God, and God will have Him, let Him save Him'" (Matthew 27:43).
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> "O most execrable! Were the prophets not prophets, nor the righteous men righteous, because God did not rescue them out of their dangers. Surely they were, even though they suffered these things. What then could be equal to this stupidity? If the coming of the dangers did not injure the honor of the prophets in

[135] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 309.

[136] The pinnacle of the Temple was the flat roof of the Temple structure, about six stories high, and included a railing to guard against accidental falls.

[137] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVII, 2.

> Israel, how much more in the case of this man! The thief, who was depraved in such great wickedness, and who had spent his whole life in murders and house-breaking, when these things were being said, he then confessed Him, and made mention of a kingdom. Yet the things that were done seemed to testify the contrary in the eyes of those who did not know the mysterious dispensation, that He was weak and of no power. Nevertheless truth prevailed even by the contrary things".

Leo the Great stated[138] that the Chief Priests showed utter ignorance of the Scriptures as they taunted Jesus on the Cross. The prophets predicted everything that would happen, but they never said that Christ would come down from the Cross. Instead, they said the He reigned on the Tree.

> "The mysteries of the Law, the sacred observances of the Passover, the mouths of the Prophets never told you that Christ should either not allow Himself to be crucified, or should shake Himself free from the binding nails. What you did find truly and oft-times written is that which applies to your abominable wicked doing and to the Lord's voluntary suffering. He Himself says by Isaiah, 'I gave My back to the scourges, My cheeks to the palms of the hand; I turned not My face from the shame of spitting' (Isaiah 50:6). He Himself says by David, 'They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst they supplied Me with vinegar' (Psalm 69:21); and again, 'Many dogs came about Me; the council of evil-doers beset Me. They pierced My hands and My feet, they counted all My bones. But they themselves watched and gazed on Me; they parted My garments among them, and for My robe they cast lots' (Psalm 22:16-18). Lest the course of your own evil doings should seem to have been foretold, and no power in the Crucified predicted, you read not that the Lord descended from the cross, but you did read, 'The Lord reigned [139]on the tree' (Psalm 96:10).

The Effects of the Crucifixion

Paul described the effect of the Crucifixion in his letter to the Colossians:

"And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross. Having disarmed principalities and powers, He made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it" (Colossians 2:13-15).

The effect of the Crucifixion was also illustrated after the Exodus when the Lord told Moses to make a bronze replica of the snake that killed many Israelis and set it on a flagstaff (Numbers 21:7-9) or cross. When the people repented, anyone who looked to the bronze snake[140] lived.

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[138] Leo the Great, Sermons, LV, 2.

[139] Some ancient manuscripts had the words "from the tree" in the text. The texts used by Justin Martyr and Leo the Great had "from the tree" added, but the texts we have today do not have that addition.

[140] This bronze snake was very highly revered in later years, even to the point of cultic worship until reform-minded Hezekiah destroyed it 700 years later (2 Kings 18:1-4).

Since the Altar of Burnt Offering was also made of bronze (overlaying wood), bronze has generally been regarded to speak of judgment. Paul spoke about how Christ, who knew no sin, was made to be sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21; Isaiah 53:6). This is why Jesus cried out, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46). Thus Jesus became the snake on the pole. And in doing so, the handwriting against us in ordinances, which was contrary to us, has been taken out of the way and nailed to the Cross (Colossians 2:13-14). The term "handwriting in ordinances" was a legal term referring to a debt that had to be paid because of money deposited with, or lent to, a person by another, to be returned at an appointed time. An example of this type of debt is the slave who owed his master 10,000 talents of silver[141] (Matthew 18:23-35).

John Chrysostom spoke[142] at length of the effects of the Crucifixion and compared it to man's relationship to God under the Mosaic Law and in the Garden of Eden. Our relationship is not that of slave and Master, but friend with Friend. We are not just made in His Image, but we become sons of God. This begins as we are "baptized into His death" (Romans 6:3). He then outlines what our baptism accomplishes. Chrysostom noted that there was a purpose for Christ's death in a very public manner, with His enemies as witnesses, so that no one could dispute that He died. Conversely, His Resurrection was not public, since future events would bear witness to the truth. In accomplishing this, Christ "trampled down death by death". When the dead arose, death met his death-stroke from a dead body.

> "Christ has forgiven us all our trespasses, those which produced that deadness. He did not allow them to remain merely scratched out, but wiped them out. What does it mean when He said handwriting in ordinances? This is the Faith. It is enough to believe. He has not set works against works, but works against faith. Blotting out is an advance upon remission, where He did not preserve it, but tore it up, 'by nailing it to His Cross'. Then to add to this, He 'disarmed the principalities and powers, and made a public spectacle of them, triumphing over them in it' (Colossians 2:13-15). Nowhere has he spoken in so lofty a strain.
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> Do you see how great His earnestness that the bond should be done away was? We all were under sin and punishment. He Himself, through suffering punishment, did away with both the sin and the punishment, and He was punished on the Cross. To the Cross, then, He affixed it. As having power, He tore it up. By the 'handwriting' He could mean three things:
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> 1. That which they said to Moses, namely, 'Everything that God has said will we do, and be obedient' (Exodus 24:3).
> 2. That we owe to God obedience
> 3. That the devil held possession of it, the handwriting which God made for Adam, saying, 'In the day you eat of the tree, you shall die'".
>
> "This handwriting then the devil held in his possession. And Christ did not give it to us, but Himself tore it in two, the action of one who remits joyfully. When He said He 'disarmed the principalities and powers', He means the diabolical powers; because they had, as it were, a hold on man. When He became Man broke[143] that hold".

[141] 10,000 talents of silver represents almost 400 Tons of silver.
[142] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, VI, vv. 13-15.
[143] That is, the devil now didn't have a hold on all men.

"What is the meaning of 'He made a public spectacle of them' (Colossians 2:15)? Never was the devil in so shameful a plight and well Paul said so. While expecting to have Christ's humanity in his grasp in Hades, he lost even those he had. When that Body was nailed to the Cross, the dead arose. There, death received his wound, having met his death-stroke from a dead body. As an athlete, when he thinks he has hit his adversary, himself is caught in a fatal grasp; so truly does Christ also show, that to die with confidence is the devil's shame".

"The devil would have done everything to persuade men that Christ did not die[144], had he had the power. For His Resurrection was proof demonstrative for all succeeding time. Proof of His death could be obtained at no other time except when it happened. Therefore He died publicly in the sight of all men, but He did not rise publicly, knowing that the future would bear witness to the truth. While the world was looking on, Christ intended that the serpent should be slain high up on the Cross; but here is the marvel. What did the devil do that Christ might die in secret? Listen to Pilate say, 'Take Him away, and crucify Him, for I find no fault in Him' (John 19:6), and withstanding them in a thousand ways. Again the Jews said to Him, 'If You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross' (Matthew 27:40). Then further, when He had received a mortal wound[145], and He did not come down, for this reason He was also committed to burial. It was in His power to have risen immediately, but He did not, that the fact that He died might be believed. In cases of private death, it is possible to impute death to a swoon; but here, it is not possible to do this. Even the soldiers did not break His legs, like those of the others, that it might be made clear that He was dead. Those who buried the Body are known; and therefore the Jews themselves sealed the stone along with the soldiers. What was most of all attended to, was this very thing that it should not be obscure. The witnesses to it are from enemies, from the Jews. Listen to them saying to Pilate, 'That deceiver said, while he was yet alive, 'After three days I rise again'. Command therefore that the sepulcher' (Matthew 26:63, 64) be guarded by the soldiers. This was accordingly done; they also sealed it. They even said afterwards to the Apostles, 'You intend to bring this Man's blood upon us' (Acts 5:28)! He did not allow the fashion of His Cross to be put to shame. Since the Angels have suffered nothing like it, He therefore does everything for this, showing that His death achieved a mighty work. There was, as it were, a single combat. Death wounded Christ; but Christ, being wounded afterwards killed death. A mortal body destroyed him that seemed to be immortal; and the whole world looked on. What is truly wonderful is that He didn't commit this thing to another. But there was made a second handwriting of another kind than the former".

"That is, beware then lest this condemn us; after saying, 'I renounce Satan[146], and array myself with You, O Christ'. This is not the same as the 'handwriting', but is rather a covenant. With the 'handwriting', one is held accountable for debts. But this covenant has no penalty, 'If this be done or if this be not done'. What Moses said when he sprinkled the blood of the covenant, by

[144] This is what Simon Magus the heretic taught: that Christ did not die on the Cross. Simon said that it was he, Simon, who only appeared to die on the Cross. For more details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

[145] That is, from the spear, John 19:34

[146] That is, as part of the Baptismal Services.

this God also promised everlasting life. There, it was slave with master, here it is friend with friend: there, it is said, 'In the day that you eat thereof you shall die' (Genesis 2:17); an immediate threatening. But here is nothing of the kind! God arrives, i.e. for baptism, and here is nakedness, and there was nakedness in the Garden. There, however, one that had sinned was made naked, because he sinned, but here, one is made naked[147], that he may be set free. Then, man put off the glory which he had; now, he puts off the old man; and before going up (to the contest), puts him off as easily, as it were his garments. He is anointed, as wrestlers about to enter the lists. He is born at once; and as that first man was, not little by little, but immediately. He is anointed (i.e. Chrismation), not as the priests of old time, on the head alone, but rather in more abundant measure. The priests were anointed on the head, the right ear, the hand (Leviticus 8:23, 24), to excite him to obedience, and to good works; but the newly baptized are anointed all over. We notice the similarity to Old Testament priests! He comes not to be instructed merely; but to wrestle, and to be exercised; he is advanced to another creation. When one confesses his belief in the life everlasting, he has confessed a second creation. He took dust from the earth, and formed man (Genesis 2:7); but now, dust no longer, but the Holy Spirit; with This he is formed, with this harmonized, even as Himself was in the womb of the Virgin. He said not in Paradise, but 'in Heaven'. Do not understand that, because the subject is earth, it is done on earth. He is removed to Heaven, there these things are transacted, in the midst of Angels. God takes up your soul above, above He harmonizes it anew, He places you near to the Kingly Throne. He is formed in the water; he receives spirit instead of a soul. After he is formed, i.e. in baptism, He brings to him, not beasts, but demons, and their prince, and says, 'Tread on serpents and scorpions' (Luke 10:19). He said not, 'Let Us make man in our image, and after our likeness' (Genesis 1:26), but 'He gives them to become the sons of God. But of God, he said, 'they were born' (John 1:12, 13). That you give no ear to the serpent, immediately he teaches you to say, 'I renounce you', that is, 'whatsoever you say, I will not listen to you'. In order that the serpent not destroy you by means of others, it is said, 'and your pomp, and your service, and your angels'. He has set him no more to keep Paradise, but to have his citizenship in heaven".

Tertullian stated[148] that (at least some of) the imagery of the winepress in the Scriptures refers to Christ's Passion, where He came with His clothes stained red[149]. His "clothes" refers to His human nature, which veils the Godhead. The imagery continues at the Lord's Table, where wine is consecrated as His blood.

"In order that you may discover how anciently wine is used as a figure for blood, turn to Isaiah, who asks, 'Who is this that comes from Edom, from Bozrah with garments dyed in red, so glorious in His apparel, in the greatness of his might? Why are your garments red, and your raiment as His, Who comes from the treading of the full winepress?' (Isaiah 63:1-3 LXX) The prophetic Spirit contemplates the Lord as if He were already on His way to His passion, clad in His fleshly nature. As He was to suffer in His human nature, He represents the bleeding condition of His flesh under the metaphor of garments dyed in red, as if

[147] A reference to a person's baptism.
[148] Tertullian, The Five Books Against Marcion, II, iv, 40.
[149] Because of the violent scourging, Christ also came to the Cross, with His clothes stained red.

reddened in the treading and crushing process of the winepress, from which the laborers descend reddened with the wine juice, like men stained in blood. Much more clearly still does the book of Genesis foretell this, when (in the blessing of Judah, out of whose tribe Christ was to come according to the flesh) it even then delineated Christ in the person of that patriarch. 'He washed His garments in wine, and His clothes in the blood of grapes' (Genesis 49:11); in His garments and clothes the prophecy pointed out his flesh, and His blood in the wine. Thus did He now consecrate His blood in wine, who then (by the patriarch) used the figure of wine to describe His blood". This figure of wine as His blood continues into the Eucharist.

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[150] that though Christ came to save everyone, the vine (Israel) that He had planted brought forth thorns and gall, like Sodom, instead of grapes and wine. The prophets had described how this would happen in amazing detail. As a result, the prophetic office was withdrawn from Israel and established in the Church. From the time of the Crucifixion on, there were no more prophets in Israel outside the Church.

"But He endured these things, having come for the salvation of all, yet the people returned Him an evil recompense. Jesus said on the Cross, 'I thirst' (John 19:28). He had brought forth the waters for them out of the rock (Exodus 17:1-7); and He asked fruit of the Vine which He had planted. But what does the Vine do? This Vine was by nature of the holy fathers (i.e. the patriarchs), but of Sodom by purpose of heart. 'For their Vine is of Sodom and their tendrils of Gomorrah' (Deuteronomy 32:32). This Vine, when the Lord was thirsty, having filled a sponge and put it on a reed, offers vinegar to Christ in shock on the Cross. 'They gave Me gall for My food, and in My thirst, they gave Me vinegar to drink' (Psalm 69:21). Do you see the clearness of the Prophets' description? But what sort of gall did they put in My mouth? They gave Him, it says, wine mingled with myrrh (Mark 15:23). Now myrrh is in taste like gall, and very bitter. Are these the things that you recompense to the Lord? Are these your offerings, O Vine, to your Master? Rightly did the Prophet Isaiah bewail you, saying, 'My well beloved had a vineyard on a hill in a fruitful place. And I waited, he says, that it should bring forth grapes; I thirsted that it should give wine. But it brought forth thorns (Isaiah 5:1-2 LXX); for you see the crown, wherewith I am adorned. What then shall I now decree? I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it (Isaiah 5:6). The clouds which are the Prophets were removed from them, and are for the future in the Church. As Paul says, 'Let the Prophets speak two or three, and let the others judge' (1 Corinthians 14:29); and again, 'God gave in the Church, some Apostles and some Prophets'" (Ephesians 4:11). Some examples of prophets in the Church are Agabus, who bound his own feet and hands (Acts 21:10-11), Silas and Judas Barsabas (Acts 15:32, 22), who was Christ's stepbrother.

Good Friday Third Hour Epistle: Romans 5:6-10 "Justification and Faith"

In Romans, we encounter the rallying cry of the Protestant Reformation: *Justification by Faith*. The word "justified" is a translation of both the Hebrew "*tsadaq*" and the Greek

[150] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 29.

"*dikaioo*" and means to render just, innocent or right. This Old Testament concept of being "justified" is used in various Orthodox services. For example: **(Psalm 51:4)** "Against Thee, Thee only, I have sinned and done what is evil in Thy sight; so that Thou art justified (*tsadaq*) when Thou dost speak and blameless (i.e. clean) when Thou dost judge". **(Psalm 143:2)** "And do not enter into judgment with Thy servant, for in Thy sight no man living is justified" (*tsadaq*). Yet a time will come when **(Isaiah 45:25)** "In the Lord all the offspring of Israel will be justified (*tsadaq*).

Background: Defining Faith, Belief, Trust

The term "faith" has come to mean something a little different than it did in the Old Testament and in the First Century. This is reflected in the English translations of the Bible today. Listed below are some of the Greek words translated "faith" and their related words:

GREEK WORD	DEFINITION	STRONG'S REF.#
Peitho	To convince, to rely upon	3982
Pistis	from peitho: persuasion, credence	4102
Pistos	from peitho: trustworthy	4103
Pisteuo	from pistis: to have faith	4100
Pistikos	from pistis: genuine, trustworthy	4101
Pistoo	from pistos: to assure	4104

These words are translated into English at various places, *to have faith, to believe, to trust*. But the root word of them all is "*peitho*" which implies faith, belief and trust based upon being convinced. For example, even the demons have faith – and tremble (James 2:19). They have been thoroughly convinced long ago.

If one were to flip through English language Bibles, one would find that the English word faith is used much more often in the New Testament than trust. In the Old Testament, however, the opposite is true. Listed below are some of the Hebrew words that are commonly translated faith, belief, trust:

HEBREW WORD	DEFINITION	STRONG'S REF.#
Aman	to build up, support, trust	539
Emuwn	from aman: established, trusty	529
Emunah	from emuwn: firmness, security	530
Chacah	to flee suddenly for protection	2620
Machaceh	from chacah: a shelter	4268
Batach	to hurry for refuge	982
Mibtach	from batach: a refuge, security, assurance	4009

The first three of the above Hebrew words are commonly translated "to believe" and "to have faith;" the last four are translated "to trust."

Thus, going back to the original meanings of the words in both New and Old Testaments, the concepts of "faith," "belief" and "trust" are interwoven and have their root meaning in trust and security based upon something convincing or established. In the Old Testament, the concept of trust goes further and includes words related to shelter, protection and refuge.

A Covenant of Trust

In both Old and New Testament times, the people of God have had a covenant relationship with their Lord. For example, the Lord said, "If you will indeed obey My voice and keep My covenant, then you shall be My own special treasure among all the peoples, for all the earth is Mine" (Exodus 19:5). Following this, the Lord went on to detail the Ten Commandments which can be summarized as "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength, and your neighbor as yourself" (Deuteronomy 6:5; Leviticus 19:18).

A similar covenant exists in the New Testament (Hebrews 8:8-13) and the same basic commandments apply: "Love the Lord your God with all your heart, soul and strength and your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:36-39; Mark 12:30-31; Luke 10:27). The difference now is that the Mediator of the covenant has come and died (Hebrews 9:15), meaning we are justified by His blood (Romans 5:9), and He has sent us the Holy Spirit (John 7:39; Romans 5:5). The cup of the Lord's Supper is called "The New Covenant in My Blood" (1 Corinthians 11:25, Luke 22:20). He has also put His Laws into our minds and He has written them on our hearts (Hebrews 8:10). Because of this covenant relationship, trust, shelter, protection and refuge exists – and the Lord illustrated this with His analogy to the birds and the flowers (Matthew 6:25-34).

This covenant relationship is so strong that tribulation just generates additional strength. "Tribulation (in the sense of pressure) works cheerful endurance; cheerful endurance works proof and proof works a confident expectation or hope" (Romans 5:3 literal). Faith has its root in being convinced and implies trust. It is tribulation (i.e. the pressure of daily life) that generates the proof and the convincing that the Lord is good and that He can be trusted. This is why we glory in our tribulations (Romans 5:3), because it deepens our trust and increases our faith.

Therefore, faith, belief, trust becomes a real world, tangible experience. And justification by faith becomes a covenant relationship and not just a theological abstraction. The faith of the Centurion (Matthew 8:5-13) serves as a good example of this faith, belief, trust.

How We are "Justified"

To put the faith, belief, trust that Paul is speaking of in context; the phrase "justified by faith" (Romans 5:1) comes as a summary of what Paul has just said in the previous chapter. He described "faith" as follows:

- Belief (or faith) is accounted for righteousness. "Abraham believed God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness" (Romans 5:3, 5).
- Works (or earning one's way) generates further debt, not grace (Romans 5:4).
- Paul quotes David as describing "the blessedness of the man to whom God imputes righteousness without works" (Romans 5:6-8, Psalm 32:1-2).
- This blessedness came to Abraham before his circumcision: therefore it applies to both Jews and Gentiles (Romans 5:9-12).
- The promises made to Abraham also apply to those who are of the faith of Abraham (Romans 5:13-16).

How this fits together, John Chrysostom described[151] as having two parts: His part and our part. His part is quite extensive; for our part, however, we bring only faith. Chrysostom illustrated this with an example.

> "Consider how Paul everywhere sets down these two points: His part and our part. On His part, however, there are things varied, numerous and diverse. He died for us, further reconciled us, brought us to Himself, and gave us grace unspeakable. But we brought faith only as our contribution. So he says 'through Whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand' (Romans 5:2). This grace is the being counted worthy of the knowledge of God, the being forced from error, the coming to a knowledge of the Truth, the obtaining of all the blessings that come through Baptism. The goal of His bringing us near was that we might receive these gifts. It was not only that we might have simple remission of sins, that we were reconciled; but that we might receive also countless benefits".
>
> "Consider an example: A person has acquired rule, glory and authority, yet he does not hold it continuously, but is quickly cast out. Or if a man does not take it from him, death comes and is sure to take it from him. But God's gifts are not of this kind; for neither man, nor occasion, nor crisis of affairs, nor even the devil, not even death can come and cast us out. But when we are dead, we then have possession of them, and keep going on enjoying more and more. If you feel doubt about those things to come, considering those now present and what you have already received, believe in the other also. This is why Paul says 'And we rejoice in hope of the glory of God' (Romans 5:2) that you may learn what kind of soul the faithful ought to have".

In many places affected by the Protestant Reformation, "faith" and "works" were often viewed as separate and exclusive. In Orthodox tradition "faith" and "works" are seen as two sides of the same coin.

We Are Crucified With Christ

Peter's conduct in Antioch is an illustration of Justification by Faith. When Peter was in Antioch during the years following his escape from Herod (Acts 12:1-17), he usually ate with the Antioch Gentiles. But when Jews came down from Jerusalem, Peter withdrew and ate separately with them (Galatians 2:11-13). Paul, in his letter to the Galatians, referred to Peter, Barnabas and others of the Jews as hypocrites and as not being straightforward about the truth of the Gospel regarding Jewish dietary laws (Leviticus 11).

Paul's argument was that Peter, himself, had a vision (Acts 10:10-16) which Peter rested heavily upon in his argument with the Jews at the Council of Jerusalem that the Gentiles are equal partakers of the Kingdom of God (Acts 11:15-18). Peter testified of this, "So God, who knows the heart, acknowledged them (the Gentiles) by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as He did to us, and made no distinctions between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith. Now, therefore, why do you test God by putting a yoke (i.e. the Mosaic Law) on the neck of the disciples which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear? But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus Christ we shall be saved in the same manner as they" (Acts 15:8-11).

[151] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, IX, Verse 2.

The decree of the Council of Jerusalem was that the Gentile believers did not need to keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:19-29).

There was a strong heretic group within the Early Church, sometimes referred to as the Ebionites[152] that advocated a strict keeping of all aspects of the Mosaic Law. Paul wrote to the Galatians about this, and referred to Peter's conduct in Antioch as an example of the truth of the Gospel, that a man is justified by the faith of Jesus Christ and not by the works of the Law (Galatians 2:16). Paul spoke of us as being co-crucified with Christ (Galatians 2:20), alluding to Baptism.

John Chrysostom pointed out[153] that the Law itself teaches us to follow Christ, not the written letter. The entire history of the Faith is wrapped around this in addressing justification. If we hold to the latter rather than the Master's voice, we testify that Christ died in vain.

> "The Law itself has taught me no longer to obey itself; and therefore if I do so, I shall be transgressing even its teaching. Moses says, speaking of Christ, 'The Lord God will raise up to you a Prophet from the midst of you of your brethren, like me; to Him shall you listen' (Deuteronomy 18:15). Therefore those who do not obey Him transgress the Law".
>
> Referring to Paul's argument regarding Peter in Antioch, Chrysostom continued, "Christ's death is a plain proof of the inability of the Law to justify us; and if the Law does justify, then His death is superfluous. Yet how could it be reasonable to say (Christ's death) has been done heedlessly and in vain when it is so awesome, so surpassing human reason, a mystery so ineffable. Patriarchs travailed with this, Prophets foretold it, and angels gazed on with consternation and all men confess this as the summit of Divine tenderness. How utterly out of place it would be if they should say that so great and high a deed had been done superfluously, for this is what their conduct (i.e. the conduct of Peter and the Jews in Antioch) came to".

Paul stated that "those who are Christ's have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. If we live in the Spirit, let us also walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:24-25). Since the passions and desires of the flesh are the things that hinder us from a close walk with God, denying these is an integral part of our crosses. And our crosses will generally lead us to a point where we are better able to do this.

But we need to actually do something about it. "If we live in the Spirit, let us walk in the Spirit" (Galatians 5:25). This is a faith-works issue. In James 2:17-20, the English words to believe and to have faith are translations of the same Greek word (meaning to believe, to have faith, to trust). Similarly "works" means labor or deeds. Demons believe and have faith (James 2:19), but they tremble at the One they "believe in" and they have no deeds to show for their belief or faith. Similarly for us; if we live in the spirit, but don't walk in the Spirit, our belief or faith is barren or dead, just like that of the demons.

As an example, consider the Crosses of the Apostle Paul. "From the Jews five times I received forty stripes minus one. Three times I was beaten with rods; once I was shipwrecked; a

[152] For more details of the Ebionites and other 1st Century heretics, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

[153] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2.

night and a day I have been in the deep (i.e. after shipwreck). I have been in journeys often, in perils of waters, of robbers, in the wilderness, in the sea, among false brethren, in weariness and toil, in sleeplessness often, in hunger and thirst, in fasting often, in cold and nakedness. Besides the other things, what comes upon me daily: my deep concern for all the churches" (2 Corinthians 11:24-27). Yet all this did not cause Paul any permanent harm. All this caused Paul to be one of the most admired of all the Apostles.

Similarly with the Patriarch Job's Crosses. In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness (Job 1:8). Yet the Lord allowed Satan to take away all his wealth, his ten children, plus his health, leaving him sitting among the ashes scraping the pus off his skin boils with a piece of broken pottery (Job 1:13-22, 2:7-8). To add insult to injury, Job's friends then began to inquire of him which of his secret sins had brought this calamity on him (Job 4:7-21, 8:1-6, 11:1-20). Job grew spiritually because of all the evil that he had to bear and he was rewarded both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:11). Obviously Job's Crosses did him no permanent harm either.

Taking Up Our Cross

If we are truly justified, we will see the Cross in our lives. The Lord said, "Whoever does not bear his cross and come after Me cannot be My disciple" (Luke 14:27).

The Cross is the ultimate act of the love of God for man. "Greater love has no one than this, than to lay down one's life for his friends" (John 15:13). The Lord applies these same principles that He used for Himself to us: "This is My commandment, that you love one another as I have loved you" (John 15:12).

From the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus spoke to the multitudes: "Love your enemies, bless those who curse you, do good to those who hate you, and pray for those who spitefully use you and persecute you. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? Do not even the tax collectors do the same?" (Matthew 5:44-48). This is how the Lord treated His enemies; He took even their sins with Him to the Cross.

Contrasting life in the world around them, Jesus had said, "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your deacon and the slave of all" (Mark 10:42-44). The Apostle Peter elaborated on this and compared the humility of Christ with how husbands and wives should treat one another with love, humility and obedience (1 Peter 2:21-3:9). Diadochos of Photiki, in commenting on this, said[154],

> "Obedience is the chief among the initiatory virtues; for first it displaces presumption and then in engenders humility within us. Thus it becomes, for those who are willing to embrace it, a door leading to the love of God".

The Lord's brother, James, wrote, "Humble yourselves in the sight of the Lord and He will lift you up" (James 4:10). Diadochos also commented[155] on this as follows,

> "When the intellect fully and consciously senses the illumination of God's Grace, the soul possesses a humility which is, as it were, natural. Wholly filled with divine blessedness, it can no longer be puffed up with its own glory; for even

[154] Diadochos of Photiki, 5th Century, On Spiritual Knowledge, Text 41.
[155] Diadochos of Photiki, On Spiritual Knowledge, Text 95.

if it carries out God's commandments ceaselessly, it still considers itself more humble than all other souls because it shares His forbearance". John of Karpathos added[156], "If you always behave with humility before the Lord, you will never show arrogance toward anyone".

Gregory of Nyssa stated[157] that humility cannot be achieved easily. We must imitate the Master Who put His divinity aside to take on the filth of humanity.

> "But let no one imagine that humility can be achieved easily and without labor. The Lord removes pride, the root of evil, from our character by counseling us to imitate Him who became poor of His own will, Who is the truly Blessed One. For as it is said, 'Let this mind be in you which was also in Christ Jesus: who being in the form of God, thought it not robbery to be equal with God, but emptied Himself, taking the form of a servant' (Philippians 2:5-7). The perfectly Pure accepts the filth of human nature".

Just as our Lord was exalted and glorified because He humbled Himself to the point of death on His Cross (Philippians 2:5-10), so also we will be exalted if we humble ourselves in taking up our crosses. Our crosses are not our enemies; our crosses are for our benefit. Referring to the reply of the Twelve to Jesus, "Behold we have left all we had and followed You; what therefore shall we have?" (Matthew 19:27, Mark 10:28, Luke 18:28). Gregory of Nyssa said[158],

> "Would you like to know who it is that is poor in spirit? He is poor in spirit who is given the riches of the soul in exchange for material wealth; he who is poor for the sake of the spirit. He has shaken off earthly riches like a burden so that he might be lightly lifted into the air and be borne upwards".

Paul spoke of Jesus enduring His Cross and despising the shame because of the joy that was set before Him (Hebrews 12:2). That joy for Him was us and our faithfully enduring our crosses. And like Him, any humiliation we suffer in the eyes of the world causes us no permanent harm and does not even compare to the rewards the Lord brings at His Second Coming.

[156] John of Karpathos, 7th Century, Texts for the Monks of India, Text 12.
[157] Gregory of Nyssa, 4th Century, The Beatitudes, Sermon 1.
[158] Gregory of Nyssa, The Beatitudes, Sermon 1.

Good Friday Sixth Hour Prayers
The Two Thieves
The Darkness

Good Friday Sixth Hour Gospel: Luke 23:32-49 "The Two Thieves"
8th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Luke 23:32-49 "The Two Thieves"

In examining the two thieves on the Cross, we discover some true insights into the Grace of God. We also see the Church Fathers' concept of Paradise as the abode of the Just pending the Second Coming, where they distinguish between Paradise and the Kingdom of Heaven, which is the full inheritance of the saints. It was to this Paradise that Paul was caught up (2 Corinthians 12:1-4).

From Luke's account of the two thieves, "There were also two others, criminals, led with Him to be put to death. And when they had come to the place called Calvary, there they crucified Him, and the criminals, one on the right hand and the other on the left".

"And the people stood looking on. But even the rulers with them sneered, saying, 'He saved others; let Him save Himself if He is the Christ, the chosen of God'. The soldiers also mocked Him, coming and offering Him sour wine, and saying, 'If You are the King of the Jews, save Yourself'. And an inscription also was written over Him in letters of Greek, Latin, and Hebrew: THIS IS THE KING OF THE JEWS. Then one of the criminals, who were hanged, blasphemed Him, saying, 'If You are the Christ, save Yourself and us'. But the other, answering, rebuked him, saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are under the same condemnation? And we indeed justly, for we receive the due reward of our deeds; but this Man has done nothing wrong'. Then he said to Jesus, 'Lord, remember me when You come into Your kingdom'. And Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise'" (Luke 23:32-43).

Matthew and Mark state that the robbers both reviled Jesus at first (Matthew 27:44, Mark 15:32). However the one had more insight than the other did into the things that were happening, and subsequently repented of his words.

Jesus was the first of the three to die, about the ninth hour, or 3 PM. This means that the repentant thief, before he died, was able to see all the miraculous things[159] that happened following the death of Christ. He saw the darkness that began at the sixth hour and which lasted until the ninth hour, and this may have tipped him off that this was Someone Special hanging next to him. He saw the earthquake and the splitting of the rocks after Christ's death, and he heard the centurion saying, "Truly this was the Son of God!" (Matthew 27:51-54)

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[159] For details of this, see the Study for Good Friday Ninth Hour Prayers.

Following the ninth hour, "Because it was the Preparation *Day*, that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs" (John 19:31-33).

According to Church tradition[160], the name of the repentant thief was Dismas or Dysmas and the other was named Gestas[161]. In some accounts, there had been some contact between Jesus and the two thieves during the Flight into Egypt c. 32 years earlier. In this account[162], Joseph and Mary endeavored to cross a desert region by night after hearing that it was infested with robbers. As they went along, the two thieves were standing guard for their comrades, and stopped Joseph, Mary and Jesus. Dismas (called Titus in this account), bribed his fellow thief with 40 drachmas and a belt to let the Holy Family proceed without waking the rest of the thieves. Mary, seeing that the robber had done them a kindness, said to him, "The Lord God will sustain you by His Right Hand, and will grant you remission of your sins".

Cyril of Jerusalem commented[163] on the unique situation that the repentant thief found himself in. The lights went on as he was hanging on the cross, after over 32 years of crime, and he recognized Him who would come in His Kingdom. At the place where Adam fell by the tree, the Tree of the Cross brought the thief back to Paradise. The thief had a will for righteousness, but death prevented him, and the Lord accepted faith instead.

> "To him it was the end of life and the beginning of restoration; the surrender of his soul and a first share in salvation. After rebuking the other, he said, 'Lord, remember me; for with You is my account. Do not listen to this other man, for the eyes of his understanding are blinded; but remember me. I say not, remember my works, for of these I am afraid. Every man has a feeling for his fellow traveler; I am traveling with You towards death. Remember me, Your fellow traveler. I do not say, 'Remember me now, but, when You come in Your Kingdom'".
>
> "What power, O robber, led you to the light? Who taught you to worship that despised Man, your companion on the Cross? O Light Eternal, which gives light to them that are in darkness! Therefore also he justly heard the words[164], 'Be of good cheer'; not that your deeds are worthy of good cheer; but that the King is here, dispensing favors. The request reached to a distant time; but the grace was very speedy. 'Truly I say unto you, this day shall you be with Me in Paradise (Luke 23:43); because today you have heard My voice, and have not hardened your heart (Psalm 95:7-8). Very speedily I passed sentence on Adam, very speedily I pardon you'. To him it was said, 'In the day wherein you eat, you shall surely die' (Genesis 2:17); but you today have obeyed the Faith, today is your salvation. Adam by the Tree fell away; you by the Tree were brought into Paradise. Do not fear the serpent; he shall not cast you out; for he is fallen from

[160] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 134.

[161] Roberts and Donaldson, "The Gospel of Nicodemus", Part I, The Acts of Pilate, First Greek Form, Chapter 9, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8.

[162] Roberts and Donaldson, "The Arabic Gospel of the Infancy of the Savior", Apocrypha of the New Testament, Chapter 23, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8.

[163] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 30-31.

[164] Cyril has added these words to the text of Luke 23:43 as being implied therein.

heaven (Luke 10:18). I say not to you, 'This day shall you depart', but, 'This day shall you be with Me'. Be of good courage; you shall not be cast out. Fear not the flaming sword (Genesis 3:24); it shrinks from its Lord. O mighty and ineffable grace! The faithful Abraham had not yet entered, but the robber enters! Moses and the Prophets had not yet entered, and the robber enters, though a breaker of the law. Paul also wondered at this before you, saying, 'Where sin abounded, there grace did much more abound' (Romans 5:20). They who had borne the heat of the day had not yet entered; and he of the eleventh hour entered. Let none murmur against the good man of the house, for he says, 'Friend, I do you no wrong; is it not lawful for Me to do what I will with My own?' (Matthew 20:12-16) The robber has a will to work righteousness, but death prevents him; I do not wait exclusively for the work, but faith also I accept. I have come who feed My sheep among the lilies (Song of Solomon 6:2-3), I have come to feed them in the gardens. I have found a sheep that was lost, but I lay it on My shoulders (Luke 15:4-5); for he believes, since he himself has said, 'I have gone astray like a lost sheep (Psalm 119:176); Lord, remember me when You come in Your kingdom'" (Luke 23:42).

Irenaeus wrote[165] that Paradise is the abode of the just until the consummation of all things, and includes those that were translated such as Enoch and Elijah. Adam dwelt in Paradise before the Fall, and Paul was caught up there in a vision. For most people, the Resurrection of the body has not yet occurred, and they live in Paradise with their soul only. For a few, like Elijah, they live there bodily also.

> "Our predecessors advanced beyond seven hundred, eight hundred, and nine hundred years of age; and their bodies kept pace with the protracted length of their days, and participated in life as long as God willed that they should live. Enoch, when he pleased God, was translated in the same body in which he pleased Him, thus pointing out by anticipation the translation of the just. Elijah, too, was caught up, when he was yet in the substance of the natural form; thus exhibiting in prophecy the assumption of those who are spiritual, and that nothing stood in the way of their body being translated and caught up. By means of the very same hands through which they were molded at the beginning, did they receive this translation and assumption. The first man was placed in Paradise, as the Scripture declares 'And God planted a garden [Greek LXX: Paradeisos] eastward in Eden, and there He placed the man whom He had formed' (Genesis 2:8). Afterwards when man proved disobedient, he was cast out from there into this world (Genesis 3:22-24). The elders, who were disciples of the apostles, tell us that those who were translated were transferred to that place. Paradise has been prepared for righteous men, such as have the Spirit; in which place Paul the apostle, when he was caught up, heard words which are unspeakable as regards us in our present condition (2 Corinthians 12:4). There shall they who have been translated remain until the consummation of all things, as a prelude to immortality".

Athanasius stated[166] that Adam, who was cast out of Paradise, reentered Paradise by means of the thief.

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[165] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, v, 1.
[166] Athanasius of Alexandria, "Statement of Faith", 1, in Epistula Eusebii.

"All things which the Father rules and sways, the Son rules and sways likewise: wholly from the Whole, being like the Father as the Lord says, 'He that has seen Me has seen the Father' (John 14:9). But he was begotten ineffably and incomprehensibly, for 'Who shall declare his generation?' (Isaiah 53:8); in other words, no one can. At the consummation of the ages (Hebrews 9:26), He descended from the bosom of the Father, and took from the undefiled Virgin Mary our humanity, Christ Jesus, whom He delivered of His own will to suffer for us, as the Lord said, 'No man takes My life from Me. I have power to lay it down, and have power to take it again' (John 10:18). In which humanity He was crucified and died for us, rose from the dead, and was taken up into the heavens, having been created as the beginning of ways for us (Proverbs 8:22). When on earth, He showed us light from out of darkness, salvation from error, life from the dead, an entrance to Paradise, from which Adam was cast out, and into which he again entered by means of the thief. As the Lord said, 'This day shall you be with me in Paradise' (Luke 23:43), into which Paul also once entered. He showed us also a way up to the heavens, where the humanity of the Lord, in which He will judge the quick and the dead, entered as precursor for us".

Leo the Great stated[167] that the triumph of the Cross was immediate and effective. This is a mystery as to how so great a benefit could be conferred upon the thief.

The Cross of Christ, therefore, symbolizes the true altar of prophecy, on which the oblation of man's nature should be celebrated by means of a salvation-bringing Victim. There the blood of the spotless Lamb blotted out the consequences of the ancient trespass. There the whole tyranny of the devil's hatred was crushed, and humiliation triumphed gloriously over the lifting up of pride. So swift was the effect of faith, that the one robber, who believed in Christ as the Son of God, entered Paradise justified. Who can unfold the mystery of so great a boon? Who can state the power of so wondrous a change? In a moment, the guilt of long evil-doing is done away; clinging to the cross, amid the cruel tortures of his struggling soul, he passes over to Christ. To him, on whom his own wickedness had brought punishment, Christ's grace now gives a crown.

Ambrose, writing[168] a treatise for the Emperor Gratian against the Arians, pointed out some of the things the Arians omitted, which included the inviting the robber into Paradise.

"Even in the very hour of mockery and insult, acknowledge His Godhead. He hung on the Cross, and all the elements did Him homage. The sun withdrew his rays, the daylight vanished, darkness came down and covered the land, the earth trembled; yet He Who hung there trembled not. What was it that these signs signified, but reverence for the Creator? That He hangs on the Cross, this you regard; that He gives the kingdom of God, this you regard not. That He tasted of death, you read, but that He also invited the robber into Paradise, to this you disregard. You gaze at the women weeping by the tomb, but not upon the angels keeping watch by it. What He said, you read; what He did, you do not read. You say that the Lord said to the Canaanite woman, 'I am not sent, but to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matthew 15:24). You do not say that He did what she asked Him to do".

[167] Leo the Great, Sermons, LV, iii.
[168] Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, II, xi, 96.

John Chrysostom stated[169] that until the thief repented, Jesus had been hearing the mockery from everyone around Him except the Holy Women.

> "Those, who before paid Him attention, had deserted Him. But His enemies and foes, having got Him in the midst of themselves on the cross, insulted, reviled, mocked, derided, scoffed at Him; Jews and soldiers from below, from above thieves on either side. Both thieves insulted and upbraided Him. How then did Luke say that one 'rebuked' the other (Luke 23:40)? Both things were done, for at first both upbraided Him, but afterwards one did so no more. That you might not think the thing had been done by any agreement, or that the thief was not a thief, by his insolence he showed you, that up on the cross he was a thief and an enemy, and at once was changed".

John Chrysostom also stated[170] that while the devil tried to cast a veil over what was done, everything contributed to the glory of Christ on the Cross.

> "The devil therefore wished to cast a veil over what was done, but was unable; for the three were crucified, but Jesus alone was glorious, that you may learn that His power affected all. Yet the miracles took place when the three had been nailed to the cross; but no one attributed anything of what was done to either of those others, but to Jesus only. So entirely was the plot of the devil rendered vain, and all returned upon his head. For even of these two, one was saved. He therefore did not insult the glory of the Cross, but contributed to it not a little. For it was a greater matter than shaking the rocks, to change a thief upon the cross, and to bring him to Paradise".

Theophylact stated[171] that the repentant thief, Dismas, recognized in Jesus' voice His goodness and His Divinity, when He said on behalf of His crucifiers, 'Father forgive them' (Luke 23:34). The thief asked for entry into the Kingdom, and Christ promised him Paradise until the Kingdom was available for all.

> "The voice of Jesus was not only full of compassion, but it also revealed great power. He did not say, 'Lord, I beseech You, forgive them', but instead spoke the simple and authoritative words, 'Father, forgive them'. Therefore when the former blasphemer recognized by this voice that Jesus was indeed a king, he rebuked the other thief, and said to Jesus, 'Remember me when you come in Your Kingdom'. The Lord replied, 'Today you shall be with Me in Paradise' (Luke 23:42-43). As a man, He was on the Cross, but as God, He is everywhere, both on the Cross and in Paradise, filling all things (Ephesians 4:10), and nowhere absent".
>
> "But how can the Lord say this to the thief, when Paul said that none of the saints had received the promise (Hebrews 11:39)? Some say that Paul was referring just to those saints that he had just enumerated. Others say that the thief is not yet in Paradise, but will be there eventually".
>
> "In understanding this, we must distinguish between the Kingdom of Heaven and Paradise. We pray, 'Your Kingdom come' and not 'May we live in

[169] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVII, 2.
[170] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 1.
[171] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 310-312.

Paradise'. The thief asked the Lord to remember him when He came in His Kingdom; Jesus promised him Paradise. Quoting Isaiah, Paul said of the Kingdom of Heaven, 'Eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him' (1 Corinthians 2:9). Therefore the Lord does not contradict what Paul said about receiving the promises. The repentant thief did obtain Paradise, but he has not yet obtained the Kingdom. But he will obtain the Kingdom, along with all those whom Paul enumerated. In the meantime, he has Paradise, which is a place of spiritual rest".

"Even if the Kingdom of Heaven and Paradise were the same thing, this does not prevent the Lord's words and those of Paul from being in agreement. The repentant thief is in Paradise along with those mentioned by Paul, but they do not yet enjoy the full inheritance of good things. Although they do not yet enjoy their reward in full, nevertheless in the meanwhile they pass their time in places of light, of fragrance, of royalty in the tabernacles of the righteous, although they are not yet entitled to the full measure of the gifts of the Kingdom".

"Just as a victorious king returns in triumph from his conquest, bringing with him the best of the spoils, so too the Lord, having despoiled the devil of the best of the devil's own plunder, brought it with Him as He returned into man's ancient homeland, or Paradise. After His death as a man, Christ was present in Paradise as God, but also by reason of His human soul endowed with logos and mind. He was in Paradise with His mind, and simultaneously, He descended into Hades with His soul. By saving the thief, He also bound the devil, the vessel of evil, as the Lord foretold when He said that one must first bind the strong man and only then can he plunder the strong man's goods" (Matthew 12:29).

Cyril of Alexandria referred[172] to the confession of faith by the repentant thief as beautiful. He was able to see through the façade of contrasts.

"He saw Him crucified, and called Him a King. He Who was bearing scorn and suffering, he expected to come in Godlike glory. He saw Him surrounded by a multitude of the Jews, and the wicked gang of the Pharisees, and Pilate's band of soldiers. All these were mocking Him, and no single one of them confessed".

7th Gospel Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:45-54 "Extraordinary Events During the Crucifixion"

"Now from the sixth hour until the ninth hour there was darkness over all the land[173]. And Jesus cried out again with a loud voice, and yielded up His spirit. Then, behold, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom; and the earth quaked, and the rocks were split, and the graves were opened. And many bodies of the saints who had fallen asleep were raised; and coming out of the graves after His resurrection, they went into the holy city and appeared to many. So when the centurion and those with him, who were guarding Jesus, saw the earthquake

[172] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 153, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 610.

[173] The Greek word, *Ge*, translated "land", is a general word that is also translated "earth", referring to the entire globe. For examples where the context implies "earth" as in the entire globe, see Matthew 24:30, 35; 28:18; Luke 21:25, 35. For examples where the context implies just the nation of Israel, see Matthew 2:21; Luke 21:23.

and the things that had happened, they feared greatly, saying, 'Truly this was the Son of God!'" (Matthew 27:45, 50-54)

"So when the centurion saw what had happened, he glorified God, saying, 'Certainly this was a righteous Man!' And the whole crowd, who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:47-49).

The Darkness

Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two (Luke 23:44-49).

The darkness was not just a local event, but covered the whole earth as well as Palestine. According to tradition[174], Dionysius the Aeropagite, whom Paul converted in Athens on his second missionary journey in c. 50 AD (Acts 17:34), was in Egypt when the sun was darkened. As an unbeliever, he cried out, "Either God, the Creator of the world is suffering, or the world is ending!" Dionysius had been a member of the Greek Supreme Court (the Aeropagus) in Athens before the Apostle Paul converted him. Dionysius later wrote a document called "The Celestial Hierarchy", which endeavors to define the various angelic or demonic beings of various ranks. The document was likely edited or revised by others later on, and therefore today the author is called "Pseudo-Dionysius".

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[175] that from the Sixth Hour to the Ninth Hour, it was neither day nor night. The prophets had foretold this; but until it happened, one would have difficulty piecing the prophetic accounts together.

> "Christ then was crucified for us, who was judged in the night, when it was cold, and therefore a 'fire of coals' (John 18:18) was laid. He was crucified at the third hour; 'and from the sixth hour there was darkness until the ninth hour' (Matthew 27:45); but from the ninth hour there was light again. Are these things also written? Let us inquire. Now the Prophet Zechariah says, 'And it shall come to pass in that day, that there shall not be light, and there shall be cold and frost[176] one day. And that day shall be known to the Lord, and *it shall* not *be* day or night; but towards evening it shall be light' (Zechariah 14:6-7 LXX). What, didn't He know any other days? Days are many, but this is the day of the Lord's patience, which the Lord made (Psalm 118:24). What is this dark saying which the Prophet speaks? That day is neither day nor night? What then shall we name it? The Gospel interprets it, by relating the event. It was not day; for the sun shone not uniformly from his rising to his setting, but from the sixth hour till the ninth hour, there was darkness at mid-day. The darkness therefore was interposed; but 'God called the darkness night' (Genesis 1:5). It was neither day nor night: for neither was it all light, that it should be called day; nor was it all darkness, that it should be called night; but after the ninth hour the sun shone forth. This also the Prophet foretells; for after saying, 'Not day, nor night', he added, 'And toward evening, it shall be light'. (Zechariah 14:7 LXX). Do you see

[174] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 3.
[175] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 24.
[176] That is, the cold on account of which Peter warmed himself (Mark 14:54).

the exactness of the prophets? Do you see the truth of the things, which were written many years earlier?"

Cyril continued[177] to elaborate on this unusual darkness, and mentioned how the prophets had foretold it.

> "You might ask at exactly what hour the sun failed? Was it the fifth hour, or the eighth, or the tenth? Tell, O Prophet, the exact time to the Jews, who are unwilling to hear; when shall the sun go down? The Prophet Amos answers, 'And it shall come to pass in that day, says the Lord God, that the sun shall go down at noon (for there was darkness from the sixth hour); and the light shall grow dark over the earth in the day' (Amos 8:9). What sort of season is this, O Prophet, and what sort of day? 'And I will turn your feasts into mourning' (Amos 8:10); for this was done in the days of unleavened bread, and at the feast of the Passover. Then afterwards he says, 'And I will make Him as the mourning of an Only Son, and those with Him as a day of anguish' (Amos 8:10). For in the day of unleavened bread, and at the feast, their women were wailing and weeping, and the Apostles had hidden themselves and were in anguish. Wonderful then is this prophecy".
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> "But, some one will say, 'Give me yet another sign; what other exact sign is there of that which has come to pass?' Jesus was crucified; and He wore but one coat, and one cloak. His cloak the soldiers shared among themselves, having torn it into four; but His coat was not torn, for when torn it would have been no longer of any use. So about this, the soldiers cast lots; the one they divide, but for the other they cast lots. Is then this also written? The diligent chanters of the Church, who imitate the Angel hosts, know this and continually sing praises to God. They are thought worthy to chant Psalms in this Golgotha, and to say, 'They parted My garments among them, and on My vesture they did cast lots' (Psalm 22:18; John 19:24)".
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> "The Sun was darkened, because of 'the Sun of Righteousness' (Malachi 4:2). Rocks were broken, because of the spiritual Rock (Matthew 27:51, 1 Corinthians 10:4). Tombs were opened, and the dead arose, because of Him who was 'free among the dead' (Psalm 88:4-5 LXX); He sent forth His prisoners[178] out of the pit wherein is no water' (Zechariah 9:11 LXX). Be not then ashamed of the Crucified, but be also bold to say, 'He bears our sins, and endures grief for us, and with His stripes we are healed' (Isaiah 53:4-5). Let us be thankful to our Benefactor. Again; 'for the transgression of my people was He led to death; and I will give the wicked for His burial, and the rich for His death' (Isaiah 53:8-9). Therefore Paul says plainly, 'that Christ died for our sins according to the Scriptures, and that He was buried, and that He has risen again the third day according to the Scriptures'" (1 Corinthians 15:3-4).

John Chrysostom stated[179] that the darkness covered the entire earth, and was not just an eclipse. This darkness had occurred only once before in Egypt, when the prototype of the Passover occurred (Exodus 10:21-29). In the Passover in Egypt, the thick darkness lasted for

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[177] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 25-26, 34.

[178] This refers to the ransacking of Hades when the Lord descended into Hell (Ephesians 4:8-10). For more details, see the Study for Holy Saturday.

[179] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.

three days; at the Crucifixion, it lasted for three hours. This miracle, which Christ performed while He was fastened to the Cross, was greater than what they asked for when they taunted Him about coming down from the Cross.

> "It was much more marvelous that these things should be done when He was nailed to the cross, than when He was walking on earth. Not in this respect only was the wonder, but because that which they had sought[180] was done from heaven, and it was over the entire world. This had never happened before, but in Egypt only, when the Passover was first instituted. Those events were prototypes of these".
>
> "And observe when it took place. At midday, that all that dwell on the earth may know it, when it was day all over the world; which was enough to convert them, not by the greatness of the miracle only, but also by its taking place in due season. For after all their insulting, and their lawless derision, this is done, when they had let go their anger, when they had ceased mocking, when they were satiated with their jeering, and had spoken all that they were minded. Then He shows the darkness, in order that at least having vented their anger, they may profit by the miracle. This was more marvelous than to come down from the cross, that being on the cross He should work these things. Whether they thought He Himself had done it, they ought to have believed and to have feared. Even if they thought that the Father had done this, they ought to have been moved to compunction, for that darkness was a token of His anger at their crime. That it was not an eclipse, but both wrath and indignation, is clear by the time, for it continued three hours, but an eclipse takes place in one moment of time, and they know it, who have seen this. Eclipses have taken place even in our generation. How, you may say, did not all marvel, and account Him to be God? No one was concerned to inquire into the cause of it, and great was the habit of ungodliness. And they did not know the cause of what took place, and they thought perhaps that this happened due to an eclipse or some natural effect. They knew nothing, neither did they inquire, because of great indifference".

Theophylact stated[181] that the strange darkness and the accompanying events were an answer to the request by the Jewish leaders for a sign.

> "The Jews once had asked to see a sign from heaven (Matthew 12:38-40). Behold, now, a sign -- this strange darkness. The Lord showed that He was not crucified because He was too weak to resist; He Who did such things as these had the power to shatter and destroy His crucifiers".

Cyril of Alexandria linked[182] the darkness to the spiritual blindness of the Jewish leaders, where inanimate creation could see what they could not. Even the Temple mourned for its Master.

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[180] That is, the Scribes and Pharisees had asked for a sign. Jesus told them that the only sign they would get would be that of the Prophet Jonah. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the sea monster for three days, so He would be in the heart of the earth for three days (Matthew 12:38-40). These events are now part of that sign that they sought for.

[181] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 313.

[182] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 153, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 610-611.

"He who excels all created things, and shares the Father's throne, humbled Himself to emptying, and took the form of a slave, and endured the limits of human nature, that He might fulfill the promise made of God to the forefathers of the Jews. But they were so obstinate and disobedient as even to rise up against their Master. They made it their business to deliver the Prince of life to death, and crucified the Lord of glory. When they had affixed to the cross the Lord of all, the sun over their heads withdrew, and the light at midday was wrapped in darkness, as the divine Amos had foretold (Amos 5:18-20). For there was darkness from the sixth hour until the ninth hour; and this was a plain sign to the Jews, that the minds of those who crucified Him were wrapped in spiritual darkness, a blindness in part had happened to Israel (Romans 11:25). And David in his love of God even curses them, saying, 'Let their eyes be darkened, that they may not see' (Psalm 69:23). Creation itself bewailed its Lord; for the sun was darkened, and the rocks were broken, and the very temple assumed the garb of mourning[183] for its veil was torn from the top to the bottom. This is what God signified to us by the voice of Isaiah, saying, 'And I will clothe the heavens with darkness, and wrap it around with sackcloth'" (Isaiah 50:3).

The Earthquake and the Raising of the Dead

The text states that "the earth quaked and the rocks were split" (Matthew 27:51). "The rocks", in this case, refers to the tombs in that area. It was customary to bury the dead in tombs that were carved out of a hillside, often into solid rock. After a year or so, when the flesh had rotted away from the bodies, the bones of the dead were put into small boxes, called ossuaries, for permanent storage.

When the rocks split, the ancient graves were opened. But the people who had been buried there did not come out of the tombs until after Christ's Resurrection (Matthew 27:52-53). According to tradition[184], some of those who were raised were the Prophet Daniel and his three co-workers Hananiah, Mishael and Azariah, known more commonly to us (Daniel 1:7) by their Babylonian names: Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego. All these appeared to many in Jerusalem before dying again (Matthew 27:53). According to other tradition[185], some of those who were raised even testified before the Sanhedrin. For these people to be raised is incredible! All that was left of them was a small pile of bones in a bone box! See Appendix G for the Study for Holy Saturday for more details of this resurrection and the testimony before the Sanhedrin.

Nickolai Velimirovic commented[186] on the physical results of the Lord being lifted up as follows:

"Oh what a terrible rebuke to man! Lifeless nature recognized Him whom we were not able to recognize. The whole of mute creation trembled and stood up in protest in its own way and with its own language. The mute earth quaked -- that is its language. The rocks are broken -- that is their language. The sun withholds its light -- that is its language. The whole of creation protests in its own

[183] Tearing one's clothing was an outward sign of mourning. See for example Genesis 37:34, Job 1:20, Joshua 7:6, 1 Kings 21:27.

[184] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 17.

[185] Roberts and Donaldson, "The Gospel of Nicodemus", Part II, Christ's Descent into Hell, First Latin Version, The Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8.

[186] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, March 28.

way, for the whole creation is obedient, as Adam was once in Paradise. The whole creation knows Him, as Adam did in Paradise. How it is that irrational creation knew Him and was obedient to Him, we do not know. It is some sort of inner instinct of creation, which came to it by the Word of God, Who made it. This instinct of creation is of greater worth than human understanding that is darkened by sin. Of all that exists, nothing is blinder than the human understanding when darkened by sin. It not only does not see that which it was created to see, but sees that which is contrary to being, contrary to God, contrary to truth".

John Chrysostom stated[187] that in answer to the blasphemy of the crowd, Jesus performed greater miracles than they had asked for.

> They had said, 'He saved others, Himself He cannot save' (Matthew 27:42). But He, while hanging on the cross, proved this statement was wrong most abundantly on the bodies of His servants. If for Lazarus to rise on the fourth day was a great thing, how much more for all those who had long ago fallen asleep, at once to appear alive, which was a sign of the future resurrection. For, 'many bodies of the saints which slept, arose and went into the holy city, and appeared to many' (Matthew 27:52). In order that what was done might not be accounted to be an imagination, they appear to many in the city[188]. The Centurion too glorified God, saying, 'Truly this was a righteous man. The multitudes that came together to that sight, returned beating their breasts' (Luke 23:48). So great was the power of the crucified, that after so much mocking, scoffs, and jeers, both the centurion was moved to compunction, and the people. Some say that there is also a martyrdom of this centurion[189], who after these things grew to manhood in the faith.
>
> Chrysostom continued[190], "And together with these things He showed Himself also by what followed after these things, by the raising of the dead. For in the instance of Elisha, one on touching a dead body rose again (2 Kings 13:20-21); but now by a voice He raised them, His body continuing up there, on the cross. All is done that this might be believed. They are not merely raised, but also rocks are broken, and the earth shaken, that they might learn, that He was able to strike them blind, and to rend them in pieces. He that cleft rocks asunder, and darkened the world, much more could have done these things to them, had it been His will. But He did not want to; but having discharged His wrath upon the elements, it was His will to save them by His clemency. But they continued their madness. Such is envy; such is jealousy; it is not easily stayed".

The Tearing of the Veil in the Temple

In addition to the darkness, the veil of the Temple separating the Holy of Holies from the Holy Place was torn from top to bottom (Matthew 27:51). This thick veil had been embroidered for the newly renovated Temple around 5 BC and the Virgin Mary as a skilled weaver had helped with its construction[191] along with four other young virgins at the Temple. The High

[187] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.
[188] For details of this, see the Study for Holy Saturday.
[189] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 16.
[190] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.
[191] Holy Apostles Convent, The Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, Buena Vista, Colo. 81211, p. 71.

Priest under Mosaic Law was allowed to enter the Holy of Holies (beyond the veil) only once per year on the Day of Atonement (Hebrews 9:1-7, Leviticus 16:29-34).

The tearing of the veil signified three things:

1. For those who worship God in spirit and truth (John 4:21-24), with the veil torn, they now have a boldness to enter the Holy of Holies at any time (Hebrews 10:19-22). We do this every time we enter during the Divine Liturgy.
2. For those who serve the physical Temple only, the Temple was going to be opened and trampled by the Romans.
3. The Temple itself mourned for the One that it had been created to worship.

John Chrysostom stated[192] that the tearing of the veil showed that heaven was to be opened, and that the true work was being transferred to the Holy of Holies in heaven.

> "Do not marvel if at this time they were perverse, being altogether prepared to set themselves impudently against all things. But observe this other point, how great signs He had wrought, some from Heaven, some on earth, some in the Temple, at once marking His indignation, and at the same time showing that what were unapproachable are now to be entered, and that Heaven shall be opened. The work was transferred to the true Holy of Holies. They said, 'If He is the King of Israel, let Him come down now from the cross' (Matthew 27:42), but He shows that He is King of the whole world. Whereas those men said, 'You that destroy this temple, and build it in three days' (Matthew 27:40), He shows that the earthly Temple shall be made forever desolate".

Theophylact stated[193] that the tearing of the veil in the Temple signified two things: the coming destruction by the Romans to desecrate the Temple on earth and the breakdown of the barrier that separates man from the Temple in heaven.

> "The veil of the temple is torn, the Lord showing through this that the Holy of Holies will now be accessible, and will be given over to the Romans for desecration. The Lord also shows that the veil, which had once separated us from the holy things in heaven, the veil of enmity and sin, is now torn apart. This is the great barrier which separates us from that place".

Theophylact continued[194] to say that the Temple itself was mourning the death of Christ. Just as man's flesh is the veil covering the temple of his mind, so the power of the flesh over the spirit was also torn away for all men by the sufferings of Christ

> "The veil was also torn as a sign that even the Temple mourned the crucifixion of the Lord. Just as the Jews have the custom of tearing their garments during such calamities, so too the Temple itself, as if it were a living being, showed its grief for the Creator Who suffered, and tore its own garment. The torn veil shows something else as well. Man's flesh is the veil, or covering, of the Temple, which is his mind. So the power, which the flesh had over the spirit, was torn by the sufferings of Christ, from the top to the bottom, that is,

[192] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.

[193] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 313.

[194] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 137.

from Adam until the last man. Even Adam was sanctified by the sufferings of Christ, and his flesh will no longer be cursed, or subject to corruption, and likewise incorruption has been bestowed upon us all".

The Recognition by the Centurion and the Crowd

In addition to Longinus, the Centurion, the whole crowd that had come together to see the Crucifixion was stunned. Luke states, "And the whole crowd who came together to that sight, seeing what had been done, beat their breasts and returned home. But all His acquaintances, and the women who followed Him from Galilee, stood at a distance, watching these things" (Luke 23:48-49).

The beating of one's breast was a sign of great sorrow and repentance. We can see this in the Parable of the Pharisee and the Publican, where the "tax collector, standing afar off, would not so much as raise *his* eyes to heaven, but beat his breast, saying, 'God, be merciful to me a sinner!'" (Luke 18:13) After seeing the miraculous events associated with the Crucifixion, all the witnesses knew that they had participated in a horrendous mistake. They had been party to the Crucifixion of the Son of God and they knew it. This came back to them with a thud seven weeks later when the Apostle Peter spoke at Pentecost, "'Therefore let all the house of Israel know assuredly that God has made this Jesus, *whom you crucified*, both Lord and Christ'. Now when they heard *this*, they were cut to the heart, and said to Peter and the rest of the apostles, 'Men *and* brethren, what shall we do?'" (Acts 2:36-37).

Theophylact stated[195] that Jesus voluntarily gave up His breath because He had the power to lay down His life and to take it up again. He did not die as an ordinary man but as the Master. The centurion and the crowd recognized this, and, at this point, Jesus began to draw them to Himself.

> "When He had cried out with a loud voice, He gave up His breath. He had the power to lay down His life, and to take it back again. It was the Lord's voice itself, together with the other miracles, which caused the centurion to believe. The Lord did not die as an ordinary man, but as the Master. He named death a committal; that is, a deposit for safekeeping, because He intended to receive back His life. His last words, the first such ever spoken by a man completely free of any claim by the devil, made our souls worthy of freedom; for in Christ our souls have likewise been committed to the Father and are no longer held by the devil. Before the death of Christ, the devil had a clear right to our souls. But from the moment that the Son committed His spirit, not to Hades, but into the hands of the Father, our souls were freed from Hades. The very thing which the Lord had said, 'If I am lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Me' (John 12:32), is now seen to have been accomplished. When the Lord was lifted up on the Cross, He drew both the thief and the centurion to Himself (Luke 23:43, Matthew 27:54). Certain of the Jews who smote their breasts thereby faulted the crucifiers, and clearly justified Jesus. His disciples fled, but the women, that portion of mankind, who first received the condemnation and the curse for sin, remained and beheld all these things. They were the first to enjoy the justification and the blessing of the Cross, just as they were the first to enjoy the Resurrection".

[195] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 313.

Theophylact continued[196] to say that the centurion noted the contrasts present during the Crucifixion, and that this was Someone special on the Cross.

> "When the centurion, that is, the captain of a hundred[197], saw how Jesus as Master of life gave up His life, he marveled and confessed Him. See how the order of things are reversed: the Jews put Him to death, but the Gentiles confess Him, and the disciples flee, while the women remain by His side".

Cyril of Alexandria stated[198] that the people who smote their breast were crying out against those who crucified Christ, but didn't dare to do it openly.

> "Again observe that no sooner had He endured the passion on the Cross for our sakes, than He began to win many to a knowledge the truth; for the centurion, it says, when he saw what had happened glorified God, saying, that truly This Man was righteous. Certain Jews also smote their breasts, being pricked doubtless by their consciences. They looked up with the eyes of their mind to the Lord, and perhaps cleared themselves of their impious conduct against Christ by crying out against those who crucified Him. They dared not do so openly, because of the impiety of the rulers. With truth therefore, did our Lord say, 'When I have been lifted up from the earth, I shall draw all men to Me'" (John 12:32).

Good Friday Third Hour Reading: Isaiah 52:13-54:1 "The Suffering Servant"

There is a great deal of content in this Reading and the early Church Fathers quoted it extensively. We will break the Reading up into sections to cover it adequately.

The Lord's Servant Brings in the Gentiles: Isaiah 52:13-15

Behold, My Servant shall understand, and be exalted, and glorified exceedingly. As many shall be amazed at You, so shall Your face be without glory from men, and Your glory *shall not be honored* by the sons of men. Thus shall many nations wonder at Him; and kings shall keep their mouths shut: for they to whom no report was brought concerning Him, shall see; and they who have not heard, shall consider" (Isaiah 52:13-15 LXX).

Christ, in His humanity, is referred to as "My Servant", as He put aside the glory of the fullness of His Deity in becoming man (Philippians 2:5-8, Colossians 1:19, John 17:5). He didn't relinquish His Deity, but His humanity was a veil or cloak over His Deity. Gregory the Theologian stated[199] that it is a significant thing for Christ to be called Servant. By His doing so, we are intermingled with God and become deified.

> "Next is the fact of His being called Servant and serving many well, and that it is a great thing for Him to be called the Child of God. In truth He was in servitude to flesh, to birth and to the conditions of our life with a view to our liberation, and to that of all those whom He has saved, who were in bondage under sin. What greater destiny can befall man's humility than that he should be

[196] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 137.
[197] "Centum" in Latin means "hundred".
[198] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 153, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 611.
[199] Gregory Nazianzen, 4th Theological Oration, III.

intermingled with God, and by this intermingling should be deified. We were so visited by the Dayspring from on high (Luke 1:78), that even that Holy Thing that should be born should be called the Son of the Highest (Luke 1:35), and that there should be bestowed on Him a Name which is above every name (Philippians 2:9). What else can this be than God? Every knee will bow to Him That was made of no reputation for us, and That mingled the Form of God with the form of a servant. All the House of Israel will know that God has made Him both Lord and Christ (Acts 2:36). For all this was done by the action of the Begotten, and by the good pleasure of Him That begot Him".

Those who knew what was happening (such as the angels) when Christ became incarnate were amazed at Christ's humility and lack of glory. Yet some mistook His humility for weakness. John Chrysostom stated[200] that there was no equal to the insolence showed to Him during the Crucifixion, and to His unutterable tenderness.

> "When the sea saw His face, it had reverence and calmed (Matthew 8:26); when the sun beheld it on the cross, it turned away his rays (Luke 23:44-45). When they saw His face, they spit, and struck it with the palms of their hands, and some upon the head (Mark 14:65), giving full swing in every way to their own madness. For indeed they inflicted the blows that are most insulting of all, punching, slapping with the palms of their hands, and to these blows adding the insult of spitting at Him. With much derision they said, 'prophesy to us, Christ, who is he that hit you?'" (Matthew 26:67-68)

The result is the entry of the Gentiles as the people of God. John Chrysostom stated[201] that the people who shall see and consider what they had not been told are the same as what Paul referred to:

> Eye has not seen, nor ear heard[202],
> Nor have entered into the heart of man
> The things which God has prepared for those who love Him (1 Corinthians 2:9).

The prophet spoke here of the whole human race. The prophets heard, but the prophetic ear was not the ear 'of man'. Before hearing, it had not entered into the heart of man. After the gift of the Spirit, the heart of the Prophets was not the heart of man, but a spiritual heart. Chrysostom continues:

> "Before we had the blessing of the Spirit and learned the things which no man can speak, no one of us or even of the Prophets conceived them in his mind. How should we? Since not even angels know them. But now, 'We have the mind of Christ'" (1 Corinthians 2:16).
>
> "What kind of things then are these? Namely that by the foolishness of preaching He shall overcome the world, and the nations shall be brought in, and there shall be reconciliation of God with men, and so great blessings shall come upon us!"

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[200] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 1.
[201] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, VII, 6-7.
[202] This is a paraphrase of Isaiah 64:4. Chrysostom stated that the exact Old Testament wording had been lost. See 2 Kings 22:8, 2 Chronicles 34:14. During times of apostasy, copies of the Scriptures were thrown out, often intentionally, and those who were bent on restoration had difficulty finding copies.

"How then have we 'known'? God has revealed them by His Spirit; not by external wisdom. This is not like some dishonored handmaid that has been permitted to enter in, and stoop down and look into the mysteries pertaining to the Lord. The difference between this wisdom and that is great. The things which angels did not know, these are what Wisdom has taught us. But external wisdom (i.e. of the world) has done the contrary. Not only has she failed to instruct, but she hindered and obstructed, and after the event sought to obscure His doings, trying to make the Cross of no effect. Not simply by our receiving the knowledge, does he describe the honor given to us, nor by our receiving it with angels, but, what is more, by His Spirit conveying it to us".

Chrysostom added[203] that the entry of the Gentiles as the people of God was amazing, considering where they came from. Just as amazing was the blindness of His own people to the barrage of information that could have led them to the Faith.

"It is a thing indeed worthy of our amazement, how they who were nurtured in knowledge of the prophetic books, how they heard Moses every day telling them ten thousand things concerning the coming of the Christ, and the other prophets afterwards. They beheld Christ Himself daily working miracles among them, giving up His time to them alone. He had not as yet allowed His disciples to depart into the way of the Gentiles, or to enter into a city of Samaritans, nor did so Himself; but everywhere declared that He was sent to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5). While they saw the signs, heard the Prophets, and had Christ Himself continually reminding them, they yet made themselves once for all so blind and dull, as by none of these things to be brought to faith in Christ (Matthew 15:24). On the other hand those of the Gentiles, who had enjoyed none of these things, never heard the oracles of God, but were ever ranging among the fables of madmen, for heathen philosophy is this. Their way of life was more impure and more accursed than their doctrine. Still, fallen as they were as low as the very depth of wickedness, all of a sudden, they have appeared to us shining from on high, and from the summit of heaven".

Apostolic Preaching: Christ's Humility at the Cross: Isaiah 53:1-3

"Who has believed our report? And to whom has the Arm of the Lord been revealed? For He grew up before Him as a tender plant, and as a root out of dry ground. He had no form and He had no majesty that we should look at Him; and He had no attractiveness that we should desire Him. He was despised and rejected by men, a Man of sorrows and familiar with suffering, and like one from whom men hide their faces, and we despised Him, and we did not value Him" (Isaiah 53:1-3 Dead Sea Scrolls).

The Apostolic Preaching

The Apostle Paul quoted this part of Isaiah (Romans 10:16) and stated that it applied to the preaching of the Apostles. Paul said,

"For 'whoever calls on the name of the Lord shall be saved' (Joel 2:32). How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear

[203] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, IX, 1.

> without a preacher? And how shall they preach unless they are sent? As it is written: 'How beautiful are the feet of those who preach the gospel of peace, Who bring glad tidings of good things!' But they have not all obeyed the gospel. For Isaiah says, 'Lord, who has believed our report?' (Isaiah 53:1) So then faith *comes* by hearing, and hearing by the word of God. But I say, have they not heard? Yes indeed: 'Their sound has gone out to all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world' (Psalm 19:4). But I say, did Israel not know? First Moses says: 'I will provoke you to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation, I will move you to anger by a foolish nation' (Deuteronomy 32:21). But Isaiah is very bold and says: 'I was found by those who did not seek Me; I was made manifest to those who did not ask for Me'. But to Israel he says: 'All day long I have stretched out My hands to a disobedient and contrary people' (Isaiah 65:1-2).

There are two meanings to Isaiah's words "We brought a report as *of* a child" (Isaiah 53:2 LXX). One refers to the child-like faith in the body of Christ (Matthew 10:14-15) in response to the Apostolic preaching, and the other to the Incarnation of Christ in the womb of the Virgin Mary.

Justin Martyr applied[204] the "dry ground" (Isaiah 53:2) to the Gentiles as they soaked up the preaching of the Apostles. As Christ sent them out, they did not believe their own report[205], but in the power of Him who sent them.

> "Moreover, the prescription that twelve bells be attached to the robe of the high priest (Exodus 28:33-34), which hung down to the feet, was a symbol of the twelve apostles, who depend on the power of Christ, the eternal Priest (Hebrews 4:14-15, 8:1). Through their voice, all the earth has been filled with the glory and grace of God and of His Christ. David also says, 'Their sound has gone forth into all the earth, and their words to the ends of the world' (Psalm 19:4). Isaiah speaks as if he were impersonating the Apostles, when they say to Christ that they didn't believe in their own report, but in the power of Him who sent them. So he says: 'Lord, who has believed our report? And to whom is the Arm of the Lord revealed? We have preached before Him as if He were a root in a dry ground' (Isaiah 53:1-2)".

John Chrysostom interpreted[206] the reference to "dry ground" as referring to the Incarnation and the virginity of Mary.

> "Since that which was to happen was so strange as to be disbelieved by many even when it had taken place, He first of all sent prophets beforehand, announcing this very fact. For instance the patriarch predicted it saying, 'You sprang from a tender shoot my Son; You laid down and slumbered as a lion' (Genesis 49:9). Isaiah said, 'Behold the Virgin shall conceive and bear a son and they shall call His name Emmanuel' (Isaiah 7:14). Elsewhere again, 'We beheld Him as a root in a dry ground' (Isaiah 53:2), and by the dry ground he means the virgin's womb. Again 'unto us a child is born, unto us a Son is given' (Isaiah 9:6). Again 'there shall come forth a rod out of the root of Jesse, and a flower shall spring out of his root' (Isaiah 11:1). Baruch in the book of Jeremiah said,

[204] Justin Martyr, Dialogue With Trypho, 42.
[205] I.e. it was so incredible regarding how the whole world responded to their preaching.
[206] John Chrysostom, Homily Against Marcionites and Manichaezans, 3.

'This is our God; no other shall be reckoned by the side of Him. He found out every path of knowledge and gave it to Jacob His servant, and Israel his beloved. After these things also He appeared on the earth, and held converse with men' (Baruch 3:35-37 LXX). David signifying His incarnate presence said, 'He shall come down like the rain into a fleece of wool, and like the drop which distills upon the earth' (Psalm 72:6 LXX), because He noiselessly and gently entered into the Virgin's womb".

Christ's Physical Appearance at the Cross

Isaiah's reference to Christ's lack of physical beauty (Isaiah 53:2 LXX) refers to the violence of the Crucifixion: the scourging, the beatings and the bloodshed. Yet there are two portraits of Christ in the Scriptures: one describing His beauty and the other His lack of beauty.

Tertullian stated[207] that the lack of beauty refers to the Crucifixion and this is contrasted with the beauty of the fullness of the Godhead in Him.

"Christ may have been inglorious, ignoble and dishonored; for such was it announced that He should be, both in bodily condition and aspect. Isaiah says, 'We have announced His way before Him. He is like a servant, like a root in a dry ground. He has no form or comeliness. We saw Him, and He had neither form nor beauty; but His form was despised, marred above all men' (Isaiah 52:14, 53:2 LXX). Similarly the Father addressed the Son just before. 'Inasmuch as many will be astonished at You, so also will Your beauty be without glory from men' (Isaiah 52:14). For although, in David's words, 'He is fairer than the children of men' (Psalm 45:2 LXX), yet it is in that figurative state of spiritual grace, when He is girded with the sword of the Spirit, which is truly His form, beauty, and glory. David also said that He is in bodily condition 'a worm, and not a man; a reproach of men, and an outcast of the people' (Psalm 22:6). But no internal quality of such a kind does He announce as belonging to Him. In Him dwelt the fullness of the Spirit; therefore I acknowledge Him to be 'the rod of the stem of Jesse'" (Isaiah 11:1 LXX).

John Chrysostom stated[208] that the lack of comeliness of Christ had two aspects. One was in comparison to His Deity; the other in describing the dishonor He experienced at the Cross.

"Not only in working wonders was He wonderful, but even when merely showing Himself, He was full of great grace. To declare this the prophet said, 'Fair in beauty beyond the children of men' (Psalm 45:2 LXX). If Isaiah said, 'He had no form and He had no majesty that we should look at Him; and He had no attractiveness that we should desire Him' (Isaiah 53:2 LXX), this could refer to a comparison with the glory of His Godhead, which surpasses all utterance and description. Or one could say that this refers to what took place at His passion, and the dishonor which He underwent at the season of the cross, and the low estate which throughout His life He exemplified in all respects".

[207] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 17.
[208] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVII, 3.

Basil the Great stated[209] that the reason that Christ was lacking in physical beauty is because of the work that He chose to do at the Cross. In His humanity, He chose to be poor, ignoble and inferior, just as a physician chooses to stoop to heal the sick.

> "In what is it extraordinary that He who 'is the Word and was made flesh' (John 1:14) confesses His Father to be greater than Himself, when He was seen in glory inferior to the angels, and in form to men? For 'You have made him a little lower than the angels' (Hebrews 2:5), and 'we saw Him and He had neither form nor comeliness, his form was deficient beyond all men' (Isaiah 53:2-3 LXX). All this He endured on account of His abundant loving kindness towards His work, that He might save the lost sheep and bring it home when He had saved it. Will the heretic, because the carpenter's son had no bed to lie on, complain of His being poor? This is why the Son is less than the Father; for your sakes He was made dead to free you from death and make you sharer in heavenly life. For the heretic to complain is as though someone were to find fault with the physician for stooping to sickness, and breathing its foul breath, that he may heal the sick.

Tertullian addressed[210] heresies in his day that claimed that Christ had some kind of "heavenly flesh", different from our own. Tertullian refuted this notion and said that Christ's physical body was not characterized by a handsome appearance.

> "The characteristics which we have enumerated are so many proofs that His was earthy flesh, as ours is; but anything new or anything strange I do not discover. Indeed it was from His words and actions only, from His teaching and miracles solely, that men, though amazed, owned Christ to be man. But if there had been in Him any new kind of flesh miraculously obtained from the stars, it would have been certainly well known. As the case stood, however, it was actually the ordinary condition of His terrene flesh which made all other things about Him wonderful, as when they said, 'Where did this man obtain this wisdom and these mighty works?' (Matthew 13:54) Those who said this despised His outward form. So His body did not reach even to human beauty, to say nothing of heavenly glory. Had the prophets given us no information whatever concerning His ignoble appearance, His very sufferings and the snobbish contempt He endured says everything. The sufferings attested His human flesh, the contempt proved its abject condition. Would any man have dared to touch even with his little finger, the body of Christ, if it had been of an unusual nature? Would any man have dared to smear His face with spit, if it had not invited it, by its abject appearance?"

Christ Was Crucified for Us: Isaiah 53:4-6

"Surely He has borne our sufferings and carried our sorrows; yet we considered Him stricken, struck down by God, and afflicted. But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the punishment that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed. All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned every one to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all" (Isaiah 53:4-6 Dead Sea Scrolls).

[209] Basil the Great, Letter to the Caesareans, VIII, 5.
[210] Tertullian, On the Flesh of Christ, II, v, 9.

Christ Bore Our Infirmities and Sicknesses

The Gospel writer, Matthew, quoted Isaiah to explain what was happening when Jesus healed uncounted multitudes. From Matthew 8:16-17

> "When evening had come, they brought to Him many who were demon-possessed. And He cast out the spirits with a word, and healed all who were sick, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by Isaiah the prophet, saying, 'He Himself took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses'" (Isaiah 53:4).

Paul wrote that the handwriting of requirements against us was nailed to the cross. "And you, being dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, He has made alive together with Him, having forgiven you all trespasses, having wiped out the handwriting of requirements that was against us, which was contrary to us. And He has taken it out of the way, having nailed it to the cross" (Colossians 2:13-14). The way this happened and the mechanism involved was Christ taking our infirmities and bearing our sicknesses.

Just prior to His death on the Cross, Jesus stated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?" (Matthew 27:46) Jesus, in His Deity, is always in the Father, and the Father is in Him (John 14:10-11). In His sinless humanity, He is always beloved by the Father (Matthew 17:5). Therefore, neither in His Divinity nor in His humanity was He ever forsaken by the Father. But when He took our sin on Himself, then He was "forsaken". As Paul said, "For the Father made Him who knew no sin *to be* sin for us, that we might become the righteousness of God in Him" (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Tertullian, writing to a heretic named Praxaes, stated[211] that the death of Christ in the flesh was His being "forsaken" by the Father. In all other respects the Father did not forsake the Son, for it was into His Father's hands that the Son committed His spirit.

> "Did the Son suffer, being 'forsaken' by the Father, and the Father suffered nothing, since He forsook the Son? Or was it the Father who suffered; and if so, then to what God was it that He addressed His cry? This was the voice of flesh and soul, that is to say, of man, not of the Word and Spirit. It was uttered so as to prove the impassability of God, who 'forsook' His Son, so far as He handed over His human substance to the suffering of death. Paul also perceived this, when he writes to this effect, 'If the Father spared not His own Son' (Romans 8:32). Isaiah likewise perceived this, when he declared, 'And the Lord has delivered Him up for our offenses' (Isaiah 53:5-6). In this manner He 'forsook' Him, in *not sparing* Him; 'forsook' Him, in *delivering Him up*. In all other respects the Father did not forsake the Son, for it was into His Father's hands that the Son committed His spirit (Luke 23:46). Indeed, after so committing it, He instantly died; and as the Spirit remained with the flesh, the flesh cannot undergo the full extent of death, *i.e., in corruption and decay*. For the Son, therefore, to die amounted to His being forsaken by the Father. The Son, then, both dies and rises again, according to the Scriptures. It is the Son, too, who ascends to the heights of heaven, and also descends to the inner parts of the earth".

[211] Tertullian, Against Praxaes, II, vii, 30.

John Chrysostom noted[212] that Isaiah's words "He has borne our sufferings and carried our sorrows" (Isaiah 53:4 DSS) seemed to apply to sins, but the Gospel writer Matthew applied the words to diseases (Matthew 8:16-17). Chrysostom connected these together since most of our diseases arise from sins of the soul.

> "Do you see the multitude, by this time, growing in faith? For not even when the time pressed could they endure to depart, nor did they account it unseasonable to bring their sick to Him at evening".
>
> "But note how the evangelists pass quickly over so great a multitude of persons that were healed, not mentioning one by one, and giving us an account of them, but in one word covering an unspeakable sea of miracles. Then lest the greatness of the wonder should drive us again to unbelief, that even so great a people and their various diseases should be delivered and healed by Him in one moment of time, He brings in the prophet also to bear witness to what is going on. This indicates the abundance of the proof we have, in every case, out of the Scriptures. He said that Isaiah spoke of these things, 'He took our infirmities, and bore our sicknesses' (Isaiah 53:4). He did not say, 'He did them away', but 'He took and bore them'. This seems to me to be spoken rather of sins, by the prophet, in harmony with John, where he said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, that bears the sin of the world'" (John 1:29, 36).
>
> "How then does the evangelist here apply it to diseases? Either as rehearsing the passage in the historical sense, or to show that most of our disease arises from sins of the soul. For if the sum of all, death itself, has its root and foundation from sin, much more the majority of our diseases also. Our very capability of suffering did itself originate there".

Athanasius of Alexandria stated[213] that Christ carried our infirmities, not just remedied them. If He remedied them as being something external to the body, rather than taking them on as His own, He would have left us still subject to death.

> "Thus it might be shown, and all might believe, that whereas He was God, and hallowed those to whom He came (in the Old Testament), afterwards for our sakes He became man, and 'bodily,' the Godhead dwelt in the flesh. Being God, He had His own body, and using this as an instrument, He became man for our sakes. And on account of this, the properties of the flesh are said to be His, since He was in it, such as to hunger, to thirst, to suffer, to weary, and the like, of which the flesh is capable. On the other hand the works proper to the Word Himself, such as to raise the dead, to restore sight to the blind, and to cure the woman with an issue of blood, He did through His own body. And the Word bore the infirmities of the flesh, as His own, for His was the flesh; and the flesh ministered to the works of the Godhead, because the Godhead was in it, for the body was God's. And well has the Prophet said 'carried' (Isaiah 53:4) and has not said, 'He remedied our infirmities'. Otherwise, as the Godhead being external to the body, and only healing it, as He has always done, He should leave men subject still to death. But He carries our infirmities, and He Himself bears our sins, that it might be shown that He has become man for us, and that the body which in Him bore them, was His own body. And while He received no hurt Himself by 'bearing our

[212] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVII, 2.
[213] Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, III, xxvi, 31.

sins in His body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24), we men were redeemed from our own affections, and were filled with the righteousness of the Word".

Basil the Great stated[214] that Christ continues to take our infirmities on Himself in His fellowship with us. As we feed, clothe, etc. the members of the Body of Christ, we do so to the Lord Himself. The converse is also true; as we suffer for His sake, He bears this suffering.

> "It is written, 'But when all things shall be subdued unto Him, then shall the Son also Himself be subject unto Him that put all things under Him' (1 Corinthians 15:28, Hebrews 2:8-10). For He makes your subjection His own; and because of your struggling against goodness He calls Himself unsubjected. In this sense too He once spoke of Himself as persecuted. 'Saul, Saul', He says, 'why do you persecute Me?' on the occasion when Saul was hurrying to Damascus with a desire to imprison the disciples. Again He calls Himself naked, when any one of his brethren is naked. 'I was naked and you clothed Me' (Matthew 25:36), and so when another is in prison He spoke of Himself as imprisoned, for He Himself took away our sins and bore our sicknesses. Now one of our infirmities is not being subject, and He bore this. So all the things which happen to us to our hurt He makes His own, taking upon Him our sufferings in His fellowship with us".

Tertullian compared[215] Christ's healing to the prophecy of Isaiah. "Carrying" our sorrows means the same thing as taking them away, and removing unclean spirits implies healing sickness.

> "Christ touched others, upon whom He laid His hands. He was therefore the Christ of Isaiah, the healer of our sicknesses. 'Surely', says he, 'He has borne our grief and *carried* our sorrows' (Isaiah 53:4). Now the Greeks are accustomed to use for *carry* a word which also signifies to *take away*. To liberate men, then, from evil spirits, is a cure of sickness".

Our Punishment Was Upon Him

"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was crushed for our iniquities; upon Him was the punishment that made us whole, and with His stripes we are healed." (Isaiah 53:5 Dead Sea Scrolls).

The Scriptures state that Christ "learned obedience", and it is this that Isaiah refers to. Paul wrote in Hebrews, "Though He was a Son, *yet* He learned obedience by the things which He suffered. And having been perfected, He became the author of eternal salvation to all who obey Him" (Hebrews 5:5-9). By "a Son", Paul means the Son of God and equal to the Father in His Divinity. "Learning obedience" refers to the conflict between His human will and His divine will, the Will of God. We see this in the Garden of Gethsemane,

> "And He was withdrawn from them about a stone's throw, and He knelt down and prayed, saying, 'Father, if it is Your will, take this cup away from Me; nevertheless not My will, but Yours, be done'. Then an angel appeared to Him from heaven, strengthening Him. And being in agony, He prayed more earnestly. Then His sweat became like great drops of blood falling down to the ground" (Luke 22:41-44).

[214] Basil the Great, Letter to the Caesareans, VIII, 8.
[215] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 8.

During our striving for righteousness, we have the fear of God. The fear of God is part of the struggle, but fear is done away with when love is perfected. Even Christ was described as having a godly fear in learning obedience by the things which He suffered. Even Christ was described as having been perfected (Hebrews 5:7-9); i.e. perfected in His flesh, for He was always perfect in His Deity.

John Chrysostom stated[216] that it is in reference to the flesh that lowly things are spoken concerning Christ.

> "'He learned to obey God' (Hebrews 5:8, 9). Here he shows how great is the gain of sufferings. But if He, being the Son, gained obedience from His sufferings, much more shall we. Do you see how many things he discourses about obedience, that they might be persuaded to it?"

Sheep Going Astray: Isaiah 53:6-7

"All we like sheep have gone astray; we have turned, everyone, to his own way; and the Lord has laid on Him the iniquity of us all. He was oppressed and He was afflicted, Yet He opened not His mouth; He was led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before its shearers is silent, so He did not open His mouth" (Isaiah 53:6-7).

Sheep have behavior habits that are very much like people. Without really considering what they are doing or what dangers they will encounter, sheep tend to wander away from the safety of the fold. The shepherd needs to have an eye for this and bring them back as they get too far from safety. Christ described Himself as the Good Shepherd Who cares for His sheep (John 10:1-16), and Peter compared shepherding to caring for the Church. "You were like sheep going astray, but have now returned to the Shepherd and Overseer of your souls" (1 Peter 2:25).

Herding sheep[217] was an important occupation in Jesus' day. The owner of a large flock was considered wealthy because the sheep provided food and clothing. The owner of the flock often did not care for the sheep himself, but entrusted their care to a shepherd. The shepherd, in turn, hired others (hirelings) to help him. Any sheep that were lost to predators, such as lions (Judges 14:5-6), bears (2 Kings 2:24-25), and even hyenas, the shepherd had to reimburse the owner. To protect their flock, shepherds became skilled in the use of a rod (a heavy, nail-studded club) and a sling. Ammunition for the sling were smooth round rocks about 1.5 inches in diameter. This is what David used to kill Goliath (1 Samuel 17:48-50). The sling was also used by the army and the Tribe of Benjamin at one time had 700 left-handed slingers who could hit a hair's width and not miss (Judges 20:16).

Shepherds also used their sling to control their sheep. If a sheep were to wander off too far, a well-placed stone shattering against a nearby rock would scare the sheep into returning to the flock. If a sheep was tired or sick, the shepherd carried it on his shoulders (Luke 15:5). If a sheep was lost, the shepherd went to search for it (Psalm 119:176, Luke 15:3-6), leaving the care of the rest of the sheep temporarily to the hirelings. The hirelings have no stake with the sheep, and therefore are not willing to fight for the safety of the sheep (John 10:12-13). But they can take care of the sheep for a short time, while the shepherd looks for a lost sheep.

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[216] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, VIII, 3.
[217] Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 133-145.

Clement of Alexandria stated[218] that Christ was "assigned to our sins" in the sense that we are like sheep that continually wander away and need to be returned to the sheepfold for our own benefit. Christ continues to shepherd us as a corrector and reformer in our waywardness.

> "If those who are corrected (by secular government) receive good at the hands of justice, and, according to Plato, what is just is acknowledged to be good, fear itself does good, and has been found to be for men's good. 'For the soul that fears the Lord shall live, for their hope is in Him who saves them' (Ecclesiasticus 35:14-15). This same Word who inflicts punishment is judge; regarding whom Isaiah also says, 'The Lord has assigned Him to our sins' (Isaiah 53:6), plainly as a corrector and reformer of sins. Wherefore He alone, who has been appointed by the Father, is able to forgive our iniquities as Instructor of us all. He alone it is who is able to distinguish between disobedience and obedience. While He threatens, He is unwilling to inflict evil to execute His threatening. But by inspiring men with fear, He cuts off the approach to sin, and shows His love to man, still delaying, and declaring what they shall suffer if they continue sinners. He is not like a serpent, which, the moment it fastens on its prey, devours it.

Silent (Dumb) Before His Shearers

It is in comparison to this that Isaiah stated that Christ did not complain (Isaiah 53:7) as He was sheared of His human life. And it was the mystery of this part of Isaiah's prophecy that the Ethiopian eunuch was reading when the Deacon Philip met him (Acts 8:32-33).

Ambrose of Milan stated[219] that those who crucified Christ were called "shearers" because they sheared off His humanity, which was added to Him; but they could not shear off His Essence on the Cross. He laid aside His body but did not lose His Divinity.

The two most important times of the year to a shepherd were "lambing time" in January or February (after about a 5-month gestation period) and sheep shearing in the heat of late summer. Since sheep shearing came in the days of harvest, it was followed by several days of celebration.

Sheep shearing methods today use electric-powered clippers. The sheep is held by the back of the neck and set down vertically on its rump. First the belly is sheared, then the sides, and finally the back. During this process, the sheep is unusually quiet and calm, with no bleating and no struggling, and thus the allusion to Christ before Herod is quite appropriate. In ancient times, scissors or straight razors were used instead of electric clippers, but the behavior of the sheep was the same.

Tertullian stated[220] that the allusion to a lamb being dumb before its shearers refers to Jesus' total silence before Herod. This Herod was the one who had John the Baptist (Jesus' cousin) beheaded two years earlier, and he thought that Jesus was the re-incarnated John

[218] Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, I, 8.
[219] Ambrose of Milan, Letters, LXIII, 93.
[220] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 42.
Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, II, vi, 20.

(Matthew 14:2). He had heard of Jesus' miracles, and he was looking for Jesus to put on a show like the ones Simon Magus[221] put on.

> "The Lord Himself came to a trial with 'the elders and rulers of the people' (Isaiah 3:13-14 LXX). Then He fulfilled all that had been written of His passion. At that time 'the heathen raged, and the people imagined vain things; the kings of the earth set themselves, and the rulers gathered themselves together against the Lord and against His Christ' (Psalm 2:1-2). The *heathen* were Pilate and the Romans; the *people* were the tribes of Israel; the *kings* were represented in Herod, and the *rulers* in the chief priests. When He was sent to Herod gratuitously by Pilate (Luke 23:7), the words of Hosea were accomplished, for he had prophesied of Christ, 'They shall carry Him bound as a present to the king' (Hosea 10:6 LXX). Herod was 'exceedingly glad' (Luke 23:8-9) when he saw Jesus, but he heard not a word from Him. For, 'as a lamb before the shearer is dumb, so He opened not His mouth' (Isaiah 53:7), because 'the Lord had given to Him a disciplined tongue, that he might know how and when it behooved Him to speak' (Isaiah 50:4 LXX) — even that 'tongue which clinged to His jaws' (Psalm 22:15), as the Psalm said it should, through His not speaking.

Cyril of Jerusalem noted[222] that Christ and His Apostles were both referred to as sheep and as shepherds:

> "Christ is called a Door; but do not take the name literally for a thing of wood, but a spiritual, a living Door, discriminating those who enter in. He is called a Way, not one trodden by feet, but leading to the Father in heaven. He is called a Sheep, not an irrational one, but the one which through its precious blood cleanses the world from its sins, which is led before the shearers, and knows when to be silent. This Sheep again is called a Shepherd, who says, 'I am the Good Shepherd' (John 10:11); a Sheep because of His manhood, a Shepherd because of the loving-kindness of His Godhead. Do you know that there are rational sheep? Christ says to the Apostles, 'Behold, I send you as sheep in the midst of wolves'" (Matthew 10:16).

The Sacrifice of Isaac[223]

There is also an analogy between Christ's Passion and the sacrifice of Isaac by his father, Abraham. When Isaac was young, the Lord told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on a mountain top (Genesis 22:1-2). Jewish tradition places[224] this mountain top as the site where the Temple in Jerusalem was later built[225]. However offering Isaac as a sacrifice was contrary to the Lord's Law (which forbade human sacrifice) and was seemingly contrary to the Lord's promise that his posterity would be numbered through Isaac (Genesis 17:16-19). This did not deter Abraham, even after the three-day journey to get there; he told his two servants that he and Isaac were going to worship the Lord on the mountain top and then return (Genesis 22:5). Isaac asked his father: "Where was the lamb for the burnt offering?" They brought wood and fire, but no

[221] For more information about the life of Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2003. Simon lived in Samaria, not too far from Herod's palace, and Herod was undoubtedly familiar with Simon's displays of "magic".

[222] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, X, 3.

[223] For more details regarding the sacrifice of Isaac and its similarity to that of Jephthah's daughter, see the Study for Holy Saturday under the chapter on Genesis 22.

[224] Gower, Manners and Customs of Bible Times 1987, p. 203

[225] See 2 Chronicles 3:1.

animal. Abraham replied that "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8). In saying this, Abraham seems to have understood the coming of the Son of God as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36). Abraham concluded that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead if that was His plan (Hebrews 11:17-19). Josephus stated[226] that Isaac shared Abraham's faith and willingly climbed up on the altar to be sacrificed.

John Chrysostom stated[227] that Isaac, laying on the altar, exhibited the same attitude as did Christ on the Cross at His Crucifixion.

> "Isaac asked his question about the lamb (Genesis 22:8) not of impertinence, not of curiosity, but as anxious about what was proposed. He reflected that had his father not meant to make him a partner in what was done, he would not have left the servants below, and taken him only with him. For this reason, when they were alone, he asked him, when none heard what was said. So great was the judgment of the lad. Are you not all warmed towards him, both men and women, and marvel at his judgment; and venerate the piety which, when he was both bound and laid on the wood, made him not be dismayed nor struggle nor accuse his father as being mad? But he was even bound and lifted up and laid upon it, and endured all in silence, like a lamb, rather like the common Lord of all. 'He was led like a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep dumb before his shearer' (Isaiah 53:7). Yet Isaac spoke; for his Lord spoke also. How was he dumb then? This means, he spoke nothing willful or harsh, but all was humble and mild, and the words more than the silence manifested his gentleness. For Christ also said, 'If I have spoken evil, bear witness of the evil; but if well, why do you strike Me?' (John 18:23) He showed His gentleness more than if He had kept His peace. As Isaac spoke with his father from the altar, so too does Christ from the Cross, saying, 'Father, forgive them, for they don't know what they're doing' (Luke 23:34). What then said the Patriarch? 'God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt-offering, my son'" (Genesis 22:8.).

Jesus said, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). Athanasius of Alexandria stated[228] that this occurred at the offering of Isaac, which prefigured the day of His Crucifixion.

> "Thus the patriarch Abraham rejoiced to see not his own day, but that of the Lord. Looking forward 'he saw it, and was glad' (John 8:56). In offering his son, he worshipped the Son of God. Being restrained from sacrificing Isaac, he saw the Messiah in the ram, which was offered up instead as a sacrifice to God (Genesis 22:13). The patriarch was tried through Isaac, not that he was sacrificed, but He who was pointed out in Isaiah: 'He shall be led as a lamb to the slaughter, and as a sheep before her shearers he shall be speechless' (Isaiah 53:7). On this account Abraham was restrained from laying his hand on the lad. This was done lest the Jews, taking occasion from the sacrifice of Isaac, should reject the prophetic declarations concerning our Savior, especially those uttered by the Psalmist. 'Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; but a body You have

[226] Josephus, Antiquities, I, xiii, 4.
[227] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, III, 7.
[228] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VI, 8.

prepared Me' (Psalm 40:6), and referred all such things as these to the son of Abraham".

Christ's Generation: Isaiah 53:8-9

"In *His* humiliation His judgment was taken away; who shall declare His generation? For His life is taken away from the earth; because of the iniquities of my people He was led to death. And I will give the wicked for His burial, and the rich for His death; for He practiced no iniquity, nor craft with His mouth" (Isaiah 53:8-9 LXX).

His Judgment Taken Away

At Jesus' trial before Pilate, He was humiliated so much by the mocking, the scourging, the spitting, the slapping, the crown of thorns, the robe and the shouting of the crowds that he couldn't possibly get a fair trial. This was the intent of the Jewish leaders: that a fair judgment should be taken away.

John Chrysostom outlined[229] how both the "trial" before the Sanhedrin and the "trial" before Pilate were orchestrated by the Jewish leaders to "take His judgment away".

> "It is clear that both the tearing the garment and the amazement of the Jewish leaders (Matthew 26:64-65) were a pretense. All things they stacked up against Him in order to bring Him to death."
>
> "Pilate asked the same questions. What then said Christ? 'It is as you say' (Matthew 27:11). He confessed that He was a king, but a heavenly king, which elsewhere He spoke more dearly, replying to Pilate, 'My kingdom is not of this world' (John 18:36). Neither the Jewish leaders nor Pilate should have an excuse for accusing Him of such things. He gives a reason that cannot be argued, saying, 'If I were of this world, my servants would fight, that I should not be delivered'. In order to refute this suspicion, He both paid tribute, and commanded others to pay it (Matthew 22:17-22), and when they tried to make Him a king, He fled" (John 6:15).
>
> "Why then did he not bring forward these things, at that time, when accused of usurpation? Because having proof from His deeds, His power, His meekness, His gentleness, beyond number, they were willfully blind, and dealt unfairly, and the tribunal was corrupt. For these reasons He replied to nothing, but held His peace. Yet He answered briefly (so as not to get the reputation of arrogance from continual silence) when the high priest adjured Him, and when the governor asked; but in reply to their accusations He no longer said anything. He was now not likely to persuade them. Even as the prophet declaring this self-same thing from of old, said, 'In His humiliation His judgment was taken away'" (Isaiah 53:8).
>
> "At these things the governor marveled, and indeed it was worthy of admiration to see Him showing such great forbearance, and holding His peace, Him that had countless things to say. They didn't accuse Him of knowing any evil thing, but they accused Him from jealousy and envy only. When they had to set up false witness (Mark 14:56), why did they still urge their point? When they saw Judas was dead (Matthew 27:3-5), and that Pilate had washed his hands of it

[229] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVI, 1.

(Matthew 27:24), why were they not pricked with remorse? He did many things even at that time, that they might recover themselves, but by none were they amended. What then said Pilate? 'Do You not hear how many things they testify against You?' (Matthew 27:13) Pilate wished that He would defend Himself and be acquitted; but since He answered nothing, he devised another thing: the attempt to release Jesus instead of Barabbas."

Christ's Generation

"Christ's generation" refers to His birth from the Virgin Mary. As Gabriel explained to Mary, "The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God" (Luke 1:35). To explain exactly how this occurred is not possible. But it was necessary in order to join us to God.

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[230] that the "generation" that Isaiah referred to was Christ's Deity. His eternal begotten-ness of the Father is unknowable by human wisdom, and therefore who can declare it? Athanasius of Alexandria and others stated[231] that the Father only knows how He generated the Son.

"If you hear the Gospel saying, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1), understand 'according to the flesh'. He is the Son of David at the end of the ages, but the Son of God *before all ages*, without beginning. The flesh, which before He had not, He received; but the other which He has, He has eternally as begotten of the Father. Two fathers He has: one, David, according to the flesh, and one, God, His Father in a Divine manner. As the Son of David, He is subject to time, and to handling, and to genealogical descent. But as Son according to the Godhead, He is subject neither to time, to place, nor to genealogical descent; for 'His generation who shall declare?' (Isaiah 53:8) God is a Spirit; He who is a Spirit is spiritually begotten, as being incorporeal, an inscrutable and incomprehensible generation. The Son Himself says of the Father, 'The Lord said unto Me, You are My Son, today have I begotten You' (Psalm 2:7). Now this today is not recent, but eternal: a timeless today, before all ages. 'From the womb, before the morning star, have I begotten You'" (Psalm 110:3).

Irenaeus wrote[232] that we could not attain immortality unless we were united to immortality that had become flesh like us. When Christ became flesh, His flesh veiled the Godhead, and it was only by the Holy Spirit that any was able to recognize Him.

"By no other means could we have attained to incorruptibility and immortality, unless we had been united to incorruptibility and immortality. But how could we be joined to incorruptibility and immortality, unless, first, incorruptibility and immortality had become that which we also are, so that the

[230] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XI, 5.
[231] Athanasius of Alexandria, De Synodis, II, 28.
Athanasius of Alexandria, Statement of Faith, in Epistola Eusebii, 1.
Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, III, 11, 88.
Hilary of Potiers, On the Trinity, II, 21.
[232] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xix, 1-2.

corruptible might be swallowed up by incorruptibility, and the mortal by immortality, that might receive the adoption of sons?"

"For this reason, it is said, 'Who shall declare His generation?' (Isaiah 53:8) Since 'He is a man, and who shall recognize Him?' (Jeremiah 17:9 LXX) But he, to whom the Father which is in heaven has revealed Him (Matthew 16:16-17), knows Him. We understands that He is the Son of man, who 'was not born either by the will of the flesh, or by the will of man' (John 1:13); this is Christ, the Son of the living God. I have shown from the Scriptures that no one of the sons of Adam is called God, or named Lord. He is Himself in His own right, beyond all men who ever lived, God, and Lord, and King Eternal, and the Incarnate Word. This may be seen by anyone who has attained even a small portion of the truth".

The Wicked for His Burial

"And I will give the wicked for His burial, and the rich for His death; for He practiced no iniquity, nor craft with His mouth" (Isaiah 53:9).

Tertullian maintains[233] that "the wicked for His burial" refers to those who had strenuously maintained that His corpse had been stolen. This included the lying report of the soldiers, from bribery by the Jewish leaders (Matthew 28:11-15), that His body had been taken away. He also stated that "the rich for His death" refers to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathaea, who donated his own unused tomb, plus the cost of the materials for Jesus' burial (John 19:38-42).

To understand the significance of Jesus' burial, which was something only the rich could afford, we might compare the funeral of the son of the widow of Nain. The dead man was being carried in an open coffin (Luke 7:14). When Jesus spoke to him, "Young man, I say to you, arise" (Luke 7:14), he sat up and began to speak immediately. There was no need to "unbind him" as was necessary for Lazarus when he was raised (John 11:44). This is because Lazarus and Jesus were given a rich man's burial, where the dead body was wrapped in special materials to create a mummy-like casing.

Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had wrapped Jesus' body in strips of linen with about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, creating a "mummy" or a cocoon (John 19:39-40). Gower states[234] how this was done. "The dead body was covered in spices and in paste and this was tied to the body by layers of white roller bandage. The paste hardened and impregnated the bandages until a hard preservative mold or cocoon was formed about the body. A cap was put on the head, and often the jaw was held in position by a bandage under the chin". When Peter and John came to the Tomb on the morning of the 16th of Nisan (Pascha morning), they "saw the linen clothes lying there" (John 20:5-6). This is the undisturbed 100-pound cocoon; Jesus had passed through the burial wrappings of the cocoon as He rose, leaving them lying there. No wonder that John and Peter saw and believed[235] when presented with this evidence (John 20:8).

[233] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 23.
[234] Gower, New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, pp. 72-74
[235] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 4.

John Chrysostom added[236] that Christ's Oneness with the Father and the wickedness of those who orchestrated His death would be obvious from the events that followed.

> "You shall know both My power and My unanimity with the Father. Because 'of Myself I speak nothing' (John 8:28, 8:14-18), shows that His Substance does not differ from that of the Father, and He utters nothing except that which is in the mind of the Father. 'When you have been driven away from your place of worship, and you are not allowed to serve Him as before, then you shall know that He does this to avenge Me, and because He is angry with those who would not hear Me'. As though He had said, 'Had I been an enemy and a stranger to God, He would not have stirred up such wrath against you'. This also Isaiah declares, 'He shall give the wicked in return for His burial' (Isaiah 53:9 LXX); and David, 'Then shall He speak to them in His wrath' (Psalm 2:5); and Christ Himself, 'Behold, your house is left to you desolate' (Matthew 23:38). His parables declare the same thing when He says, 'What shall the Lord of that vineyard do to those husbandmen? He shall miserably destroy those wicked men'" (Matthew 21:40, 41).

The Sinless Christ

"He practiced no iniquity, nor craft with His mouth" (Isaiah 53:9). Christ had advantages over us due to His being without sin. The results of this are outlined by John Chrysostom and John of Damascus as follows.

Chrysostom stated[237] that Christ, by being sinless, exchanged curses with us. This was like an innocent man dying for another, who had been sentenced to death.

> "People were subject to a curse, which says, 'Cursed is everyone that continues not in the things that are written in the book of the Law' (Deuteronomy 27:26). To this curse, people were subject, for no man had continued in, or was a keeper of, the whole Law; but Christ exchanged this curse for the other, 'Cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree' (Deuteronomy 21:23, Galatians 3:13). Both he who hanged on a tree and he who transgresses the Law are cursed. It was necessary for him, who is about to relieve from a curse, himself to be free from it, and to receive another instead of it; therefore Christ took upon Him our curse, and thereby relieved us from it. It was like an innocent man's undertaking to die for another sentenced to death, and so rescuing him from punishment. Christ took upon Him not the curse of transgression, but the other curse, in order to remove that of others. For, 'He had done no violence neither was any deceit in His mouth' (Isaiah 53:9; 1 Peter 2:22). By dying He rescued from death those who were dying, so by taking upon Himself the curse, He delivered them from it".

Many of the Church Fathers compared the "tree" that Christ died on to the "tree" that caused mankind to fall in the Garden of Eden (Genesis 3:1-16). This imagery is especially prevalent in the Hymns of the Church. By the "tree" in the Garden, Satan set a trap for Adam and caused him to fall. By the "tree" of the Cross, God also set a trap for Satan, where John of Damascus referred[238] to Christ's death on the Cross as a baited hook for our common enemy. Satan put Christ to death (1 Corinthians 2:7-8) in his attempt to take over the Kingdom of God

[236] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LIII, 2.
[237] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 3, v. 13.
[238] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, III, 27.

on earth (Matthew 21:38-39), and was transfixed on the hook of Divinity. As a result, had Satan known what was happening, he would not have crucified the Lord.

> "Our Lord Jesus Christ was without sin, for He committed no sin. He Who took away the sin of the world had no deceit in His mouth (Isaiah 53:9). He was not subject to death, since death came into the world through sin. He died, therefore, because He took on Himself death on our behalf, and He made Himself an offering to the Father for our sakes. We had sinned against Him, and it was proper that He should receive the ransom for us, and that we should thus he delivered from the condemnation. The blood of the Lord was not offered to the tyrant. As death approached, Satan swallowed up the body as bait, and was transfixed on the hook of divinity. After tasting of a sinless and life-giving body, he perishes, and brings up again all whom of old he swallowed up. Just as darkness disappears on the introduction of light, so is death repulsed before the assault of life, and brings life to all, but death to the destroyer".

The Prophetic Announcement of the Cross: Isaiah 53:10-12

Yet the Lord was willing to crush Him; and He made Him suffer. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, And the will of the Lord shall triumph in His hand. Out of the suffering of His soul, He will see light and be satisfied. By His knowledge My righteous Servant will make many righteous, for He shall bear their iniquities. Therefore I will divide Him a portion with the great, and He shall divide the spoil with the strong, because He poured out His soul unto death, and He was numbered with the transgressors, and He bore the sin of many, and made intercession for their transgressions" (Isaiah 53:10-12 Dead Sea Scrolls).

John Chrysostom described[239] in detail how the prophets knew about the Cross and the reason it was necessary.

> "David foretold the voice which Christ was to utter on the cross saying, 'My God, My God why have You forsaken Me?' (Psalm 22:1) He also describes the burial, 'They laid me in the lowest pit, in dark places, and in the shadow of death' (Psalm 88:5). And the resurrection, 'You shall not leave my soul in hell, neither shall You allow Your Holy One to see corruption' (Psalm 16:10). And the ascension, 'God has gone up with a shout, the Lord with the sound of the trumpet' (Psalm 47:5). And the session on the right hand, 'The Lord said to My Lord: sit at My right hand until I make Your enemies Your footstool'" (Psalm 110:1).
>
> "But Isaiah also declares the cause; saying, 'for the transgressions of my people is He brought to death' (Isaiah 53:12), and because all have strayed like sheep, therefore is he sacrificed (Isaiah 53:6). Then also he adds mention of the result, saying 'by his stripes we have all been healed' (Isaiah 53:5), and 'he has borne the sins of many' (Isaiah 53:12). The prophets then knew the cross, the cause of the cross, that which was affected by it, and the burial, the resurrection, the ascension, the betrayal, and the trial, and described them all with accuracy".

Chrysostom also noted[240] that the events of the Crucifixion turned out exactly according to the prophetic announcement, in spite of the efforts of His enemies.

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[239] John Chrysostom, Homily Against Marcionists and Manichaezans, 1-2.
[240] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 1.

"The Jews crucified Jesus with a different intent than what happened. They crucified Him with thieves, in this unintentionally fulfilling prophecy; for what they did for insult contributed to the truth. From this you may learn how great is His power, since the Prophet had foretold of old, that 'He was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12). The devil therefore wished to cast a veil over what was done, but was unable; for the three were crucified, but Jesus alone was glorious, that you may learn, that His power affected all. Yet the miracles took place when the three had been nailed to the cross; but no one attributed anything of what was done to either of those others, but to Jesus only. So entirely was the plot of the devil rendered vain, that all returned upon his own head".

John Chrysostom continued[241] to say that the effects of Christ's Passion were in fact magnified by the efforts of His enemies to suppress it.

"Truly it is great and unspeakable that Christ became a servant. That He underwent death is far greater. But there is something still greater and stranger. All deaths are not alike; His death seemed to be the most ignominious of all, to be full of shame, to be accursed. For it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree' (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13). For this cause the Jews eagerly desired to slay Him in this manner, to make Him a reproach, that if no one fell away from Him by reason of His death, yet they might from the manner of His death. For this cause two robbers were crucified with Him, and He in the midst, that He might share their ill repute, and that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'And he was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12). Yet the truth shines forth so much the more and becomes bright; for when His enemies plot such things against His glory, and it yet shines forth, so much the greater does the matter seem. Not by slaying Him, but by slaying Him in such a manner did they think to prove Him more abominable than all men, but they availed nothing. And both the robbers also were such impious ones, for even when on the cross, they reviled Him. Neither the consciousness of their own sins, nor their present punishment, nor their suffering the same things themselves restrained their madness. Finally the one spoke to the other, and silenced him by saying, 'Do you not fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?' (Luke 23:40) So great was their wickedness! Because of this it is written, 'God has highly exalted Him, and given Him the Name which is above every name'".

The Barren Woman – the Church: Isaiah 54:1

"Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that do not travail. For more are the children of the desolate than of her that has a husband" (Isaiah 54:1).

Ambrose wrote[242] concerning the widow of Zarephath, who Elijah visited and sustained during the famine (1 Kings 17:8-16), saying that she represents the Church, and the three years represent the time of Christ's public ministry. Similarly, the barren woman that Isaiah refers to also represents the Church, and her many children represent the many nations that have turned to the Lord over the centuries.

[241] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, VII.
[242] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Widows, III, 14-15.

"What is the meaning of the fact that when there was a very great famine in all the land, yet the care of God was not lacking to the widow[243], and the prophet was sent to sustain her? In this story the Lord bids my ears attend to a mystery. What can be truer than the mystery of Christ and the Church? Not without a purpose is one preferred among many widows. Who is such a one, to whom so great a prophet, who was carried up into heaven, should be guided, especially at that time when the heaven was shut for three years and six months, when there was a great famine in the whole land? The famine was everywhere, and yet notwithstanding this widow did not lack. What are these three years? Are they not those in which the Lord came to the earth and could not find fruit on the fig-tree, according to that which is written, 'Behold, there are three years that I came seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none'" (Luke 13:6-9).

"This is assuredly that widow of whom it was said, 'Rejoice, you barren that bear not; break forth and cry, you that do not travail. For more are the children of the desolate than of her that has a husband' (Isaiah 54:1). And well is she a widow of whom it is well said, 'You shall not remember your shame and your widowhood, for I am the Lord, Who made you' (Isaiah 54:4 LXX). Perchance she is a widow who has lost her Husband in the suffering of His body, but in the day of judgment she shall receive again the Son of Man, Whom she seemed to have lost. 'For a short time have I forsaken you' (Isaiah 54:7 LXX), He says, in order that, being forsaken, she may the more gloriously keep her faith".

Epistle: Hebrews 2:11-18 "Christ Calls Us Brethren"

The Father in Christ

This Epistle lesson is also used for the Feast Day of the Annunciation to the Virgin Mary by Gabriel that she would bear the Son of God (Luke 1:26-38). Both the Annunciation and the Suffering of Christ on the Cross deal with His humanity. One of the heresies commonly bantered about in the 1st Century by Simon Magus[244] stated that Christ was not a man, and that He only appeared to die on the Cross. The New Testament writers countered Simon's teaching by repeatedly mentioning and emphasizing aspects of Christ's humanity.

The Epistle lesson begins, "It was fitting for Him, for Whom are all things and by Whom are all things, in bringing many sons to glory, to make the Captain of their salvation perfect through sufferings" (Hebrews 2:10). The one "for Whom are all things" is the Father and "the Captain of our salvation" is His Son. The suffering referred to is the Son's humanity, since He can't suffer in His Deity.

John Chrysostom said[245] that Christ was glorified in His humanity for what He did at the Cross.

"He (the Father) has done what is worthy of His love toward mankind, in showing His Firstborn to be more glorious than all and in setting Him forth as an example to the others, like some noble wrestler that surpasses the rest. Do you

[243] See also Luke 4:24-26, where the Lord used this illustration in the contrary sense against the people of Nazareth.
[244] See Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.
[245] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 4.

> see that to suffer affliction is not the portion of those who are utterly forsaken? Truly His taking flesh to suffer what He did suffer is a far greater thing than making the world and bringing it out of nothing. The Creation is also a token of His loving kindness, but the Cross far more. Paul himself also pointed out this very thing, saying: 'That in the ages to come He might show forth the exceeding riches of His Grace, He both raised us up together and made us sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus' (Ephesians 2:6-7). Suffering not only profits us, but we ourselves also become more glorious and perfect. This too he says in reference to the faithful, comforting them by the way Christ was glorified when He suffered. But do not suppose that there was an accession of glory to Him; for that which is of nature (i.e. His Deity) He always had, and received nothing in addition".

The Epistle continues to address the humanity of Christ, especially in relation to us by stating that, "He is not ashamed to call them brethren, saying:

> 'I will declare Your Name to My brethren; in the midst of the assembly, I will sing praise to You' (Psalm 22:22)

And again:

> 'I will put My trust in Him' (Isaiah 8:17)

And again:

> 'Here am I and the children whom God has given Me' (Isaiah 8:18).

The context from Psalm 22 quoted above was a prophecy of Christ dying on the Cross: "Dogs have surrounded Me; a band of evildoers has encompassed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet. I can count all My bones. They look, they stare at Me; they divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:16-18, Matthew 27:35).

The second quote, 'I will put My trust in Him', is taken verbatim from the Septuagint and was a prophecy regarding the nation of Israel being led into captivity by Assyria (Isaiah 8:7). As quoted by Hebrews, however, it was addressed to the Lord's disciples living in apostate Israel. The complete text from Isaiah is, "Behold I and the children which God has given me: and they shall be for signs and wonders in the house of Israel from the Lord of hosts, who dwells in Mount Zion" (Isaiah 8:18 LXX).

While the text from Isaiah appears to be addressing Isaiah as a "father" to these disciples, Paul quotes this as referring to Christ as a father figure to these disciples. Thus Christ appears both as a brother (Hebrews 2:11, 12) and as a father. In this father-like role, we note His response to Philip. Philip had requested, "Lord show us the Father and it is sufficient for us" (John 14:8). Jesus responded, "Have I been with you so long, and yet you have not known Me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, 'show us the Father'? Do you not believe that I am in the Father and the Father in Me? The words that I speak to you I do not speak on My own authority but the Father who dwells in Me does the works" (John 14:9-10).

Humanity Conquers Death

There were some heretics in the First Century, such as Simon Magus[246] and his followers, who claimed that Christ came in appearance only and not in the flesh, not in reality. They were understandably impressed with the Deity of Christ and assumed He wouldn't stoop to take on the suffering and filth of His Own Creation. Paul addresses this, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same, that through death He might destroy him who had the power of death; that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). Chrysostom stated[247] that Christ "partaking of flesh and blood" refers to the Incarnation. Chrysostom continues[248]

> "Here he points out the wonder that by what the devil prevailed at, by that was he overcome; and the very thing which was his strong weapon against the world (namely death), by this Christ smote him. In this He exhibits the greatness of the conqueror's power. Do you see how great a good death has wrought?"
>
> "Why do you fear him that has been brought to nothing? He is no longer terrible, but has been trodden under foot, has been utterly despised (see 2 Timothy 1:10); he is vile and of no account."

Chrysostom then made[249] an analogy: Life prior to Christ he compared to being held captive in prison awaiting execution, but being fed with choice food all the while. But now, the choice food and the death sentence have been removed and in its place is a contest involving combat that leads not to death but to a kingdom. "Of which group would you wish to be in: Those fed well in prison awaiting execution, or those who contend much and labor willingly that they may crown themselves with the diadem of the kingdom? Not only has death been terminated, but he who is ever showing that war without truce against us (i.e. the devil) has been brought to nothing, since he that doesn't fear death, is out of reach of the devil's tyranny".

Man and Angels in the Age to Come

After going into a lot of reasons why we should not neglect so great a salvation, Paul then goes into some reasons why we should be motivated to pay close attention. "For He has not put the world to come, of which we speak, in subjection to angels" (Hebrews 2:5). Following this statement, he again quotes word for word from the Septuagint:

> "What is man that You are mindful of him, or the Son of Man that You take care of him? You have made Him a little lower than the angels; you have crowned Him with glory and honor, and set Him over the works of Your hands. You have put all things in subjection under His feet" (Psalm 8:4-6 LXX).

From the context of Psalm 8, this would seem to be speaking of men in general. For example, Psalm 8:7 lists some of the "all things in subjection": sheep, oxen, birds and fish. Yet Paul uses this quote from Psalm 8 to refer to Christ. He calls the man Jesus Christ the Captain of our salvation, Who is in the process of bringing many sons to glory (Hebrews 2:10).

[246] See Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.
[247] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 5.
[248] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 6.
[249] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 6.

So then, Psalm 8 **does** refer to men in general, but specifically those men who are related by the second birth to their Older Brother. He is the Firstborn of many brethren (Romans 8:29) and He is not ashamed to call us His brothers (Hebrews 2:11).

Paul then brought in a little reality check: "But now we do not yet see all things put under Him" (Hebrews 2:8). Instead we see Christ, made (in His flesh) a little lower than the angels and suffering death that He might taste death for everyone. As a result He was crowned with glory and honor in His humanity (Hebrews 2:9) and sits at the Right Hand of God (Hebrews 10:12, Mark 14:62, Luke 22:69). When He returns, God the Father will put all things in subjection under Him and leave nothing that is not put under Him (Hebrews 2:8). It was the Father's plan that all things are for Christ and all things are by Christ (Hebrews 2:10). And as He has been exalted and glorified, so shall we be when He returns. Thus, just as Christ was made a little lower than the angels in His humanity, so we are now. But by being united with Him in the Body of Christ, just as He was exalted to His previous glory, which He had prior to the Incarnation, so shall we be as He "brings many sons to glory".

This does not necessarily imply that we will rule angels as He does. The Lord said that, in the Resurrection, we will be equal to angels (Luke 20:36). We will judge angels, i.e. those that had fallen (1 Corinthians 6:3), as the Twelve will judge the Twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:28). But the angels refer to themselves as our fellow servants (Revelation 19:10, 22:9), and they are referred to as "sons of God" also (compare Genesis 6:2, 4; Job 1:6, 2:1, 38:7; Luke 20:36; Romans 8:14). "Equal to angels" however, does not imply being identical to angels, since they are non-physical beings.

Paul mentioned angels again. "For indeed, He does not latch onto (or grasp) angels, but He does latch onto (or grasp) the seed of Abraham" (Hebrews 2:16). Chrysostom stated, "He did not take on an angel's nature, but a man's. He did not grasp that nature which belongs to angels, but ours. This expression "grasp", or "latch onto" (Greek *epilambano)* is derived from the figure of persons pursuing those who turn away from them, and doing everything to overtake them as they flee, and to take hold of them as they are bounding away. When human nature was fleeing from Him, and fleeing far away (Ephesians 2:13), He pursued after and overtook us. It is a great and wonderful thing, and full of amazement, that our flesh should sit on high and be adored by angels and archangels, by Cherubim and Seraphim. God has great zeal on behalf of our nature."

"Moreover, he did not say simply 'of men He latches onto' but of the 'seed of Abraham' (Hebrews 2:16) thus showing that their race is great and honorable. Therefore in all things, he had to be made like His brethren' (Hebrews 2:17). This goes both ways also. Just as He was made like us in the Incarnation, so we will be made like Him in the Resurrection. He did not lose His Deity in taking on humanity; just so, we will not lose our humanity when we take on immortality. But "the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43, Daniel 12:3). Moses and Elijah have already seen this in the Transfiguration; we will join them at the Resurrection. This is a great salvation that is foolish to neglect by drifting away. Instead, it is something worth paying attention to every minute of every day. As Chrysostom said[250], "If He who is worshipped by angels, for our sake endured a little less than the angels, much more ought we, who are inferior to angels, to bear everything for His sake".

[250] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 3.

Good Friday Ninth Hour Prayers
The Death of Christ

Good Friday Ninth Hour Gospel: John 19:23-37 "The Death of Christ"
8th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Luke 23:32-49 "The Death of Christ"

There are many aspects of the death of Christ that sometimes go unnoticed. There is His concern about His mother, the other women at the foot of the Cross, and the very few words that He uttered while hanging on the Cross for six hours. All of this has a great deal of significance.

The Apostle John Assigned the Care of the Virgin Mary: John 19:25-27

> "Now there stood by the cross of Jesus His mother, and His mother's sister (i.e. sister-in-law), Mary the wife of Clopas, and Mary Magdalene. When Jesus therefore saw His mother, and the disciple whom He loved standing by, He said to His mother, 'Woman, behold your son!' Then He said to the disciple, 'Behold your mother!' And from that hour that disciple took her to his own home (John 19:25-27).

Assigning the care of His mother to the Apostle John was necessary in 1st Century Jewish culture. The oldest son in the family had the "birthright" and was expected to care for his mother for the rest of her life in the event of his father's death. He was given an extra share of the birthright to do this with. Out of this extra share, he was also expected to provide for any unmarried sisters, including their dowry upon marriage (Deuteronomy 21:15-17).

In Jesus' case, there were no other natural brothers or sisters, but there were stepbrothers, stepsisters and cousins. John, son of Zebedee, Jesus' cousin, and "the disciple whom Jesus loved" (John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7, 20) was chosen to care for His mother. John's mother, Salome, one of the myrrh-bearing women (Matthew 27:56, Mark 15:40, 16:1) was also Jesus' stepsister (and the Virgin Mary's stepdaughter) and was a very close confidante of the Virgin Mary. It was quite natural for the Lord to entrust the care of His mother to John at the cross (John 19:25-27) since Mary and Salome were so close. Therefore the Virgin Mary lived in John's house along with John's mother, Salome, until her death. This implies that Salome's husband, Zebedee, died shortly after Pentecost.

Theophylact noted[251] how close the women were who were at the Cross and at the Tomb. There were others of the Myrrh-Bearing Women, but some were more prominent and bolder than the others.

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[251] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospal According to St. Mark, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chapter 15, p. 137.

> "'There were also women', the evangelist says, 'among whom was Mary Magdalene, and Mary the mother of James and Joseph'. This Mary was the Theotokos, the Mother of God, who, because she had been betrothed to Joseph, was called the 'mother' of James and Joseph, who were among Joseph's children by his first marriage. She was called 'mother', meaning 'stepmother', just as she was called Joseph's 'wife', instead of, more precisely, his 'betrothed'. Salome was the mother of the sons of Zebedee, James and John. There were many other women disciples present, but Mark mentions by name only the most prominent of them".

John was very prominent in the early Church. This was very noticeable to Paul when he came to Jerusalem in c. 48 AD for the Council in Jerusalem regarding the issue of circumcision of the Gentiles (Acts 15). At that time, Paul perceived that James, Peter and John were the pillars of the Jerusalem Church (Galatians 2:9). This was James the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19), Bishop of Jerusalem[252] until c. 62 AD, and not John's brother James. John's brother had already been martyred in 44 AD (Acts 12:1-3). James was the stepson of the Virgin Mary along with Joseph (Matthew 13:55), and Mary was known as their "mother" for all the love she showed for them (Matthew 27:56). Joseph (also called Barsabas, Judah and Justus) was very prominent in the Early Church as one of the leading men (Acts 15:22), and a prophet (Acts 15:32). He had been put forward along with Matthias as a candidate to replace Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:23-26).

According to tradition[253], the Zebedee family owned property in Jerusalem, which included a small plot in the Garden of Gethsemane, and John had his own home (John 19:27), which was located on Mt. Zion. It was probably due to this family familiarity that John was known to the high priest, Caiaphas, during Jesus' trial, and went with Jesus into the courtyard of Annas, the father-in-law of Caiaphas. Caiaphas may also have known John because of his family wealth. We note that John went out during Jesus' trial and spoke to the doorkeeper to let Peter in (John 18:13-16). Unlike Peter, John was spared the inquisition that Peter received in the courtyard (John 18:17-27), because the people in the courtyard knew John.

In about 44 AD, Herod (i.e. Agrippa) began to persecute the Church, killing James, John's brother, with the sword (Acts 12:1). James, like John, had been very eloquent in proclaiming the Resurrection of Christ following his return from Spain. Herod also arrested Peter since he saw it pleased the Jews; but an angel let Peter out of prison at night (Acts 12:3, 7). Peter stopped by at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where everyone was praying for him. There he told them he was okay; but that he was leaving town, and they should be sure to tell James, the Bishop of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17). From there Peter made his way first to Caesarea and eventually to Antioch. Barnabas brought Paul to Antioch c. 46 AD while Peter was still there (Galatians 2:11-15, Acts 11:25-26).

After Peter's escape, John and the Virgin Mary left Jerusalem due to Herod's persecution. Since John's lot in the evangelization of the world was Asia Minor, they sailed for Ephesus. There they stayed until the death of Herod (Acts 12:20-23). To put this in context,

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[252] We can see the role of James as Bishop at the Council of Jerusalem that dealt with the issue of circumcision of the Gentiles. After everyone had their say, James pronounced the judgment, saying, "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God: (Acts 15:19).

[253] Holy Apostles Convent, The Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, Buena Vista, Colo. 81211, p. 417.

the Apostle Andrew had already been to Ephesus briefly, but the Apostle Paul would not arrive until 52 AD, at the end of his Second Missionary Journey. Since Herod died not too long after he killed James, John and the Virgin Mary most likely stayed in Ephesus less than two years. As was her custom, the Virgin Mary spent her time in prayer, fasting and meditation on the Scriptures.

John and Mary returned to Jerusalem following the death of Herod, and remained there until the early 50's. About that time, Mary received an invitation from Lazarus[254], the brother of Mary and Martha, to visit him on Cyprus. Lazarus had been ordained Bishop of Cyprus by the Apostle Barnabas, but did not dare enter Jerusalem for fear of the Jews. It had been over 20 years since the Jewish leaders had tried to kill him; but they still sought to do so (John 12:9-11).

Bishop Lazarus sent a ship for her so that she might visit him on Cyprus. Out at sea, however, they encountered a violent storm that took them far off course and up to the northern part of the Aegean Sea near Macedonia. There, they put in to the port of Clemes on Athos at the tip of the 50-mile long peninsula. At this location today, there are a number of famous monasteries that trace their origin to the visit of John and the Virgin Mary in the early 50's, and most of the information we have concerning the Virgin Mary's voyage comes from these monasteries.

At that time, the population of Athos consisted of young virgins dedicated to the goddess Diana who were expected to become priestesses to serve in the Greek temples. While John and Mary were there, many miraculous events occurred and all the residents of Athos accepted the Christian Faith. Before leaving, they appointed a leader and teacher for the newly illumined residents of Athos from among their traveling party. In addition, Mary prayed for the blessing of Athos, that the Lord would have mercy on it and keep it free from harm until the end of the world along with its inhabitants. Continuing on to Cyprus, John and Mary stayed there for a while, and Mary blessed the Christians there and returned to Jerusalem with John and the others.

Shortly after Mary and John returned from Cyprus, Mary Magdalene also returned to Jerusalem from her evangelism in Rome and elsewhere. Since she had been very close to the Virgin Mary during Jesus' three-year ministry, she stayed with the Apostle John for several years until the Virgin Mary's death. At this time, the Virgin Mary was in her early 70's and Mary Magdalene was in her late 60's. Mary finally passed away in c. 55 AD, and the Twelve Apostles gathered together from around the world for her funeral. Many miraculous events occurred during her funeral, and she was buried in the family plot in the Garden of Gethsemane[255].

John Chrysostom stated[256] that it was a great honor for the Apostle John to be assigned the care of Jesus' mother. Yet John, in modesty, did not boast about this honor.

> "He on the Cross, commits His mother to the disciple, teaching us even to our last breath to show every care for our parents. When indeed she unseasonably troubled Him, He said, 'Woman, what have I to do with you?' (John 2:4) And,

[254] The Life of the Virgin Mary, the Theotokos, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO 81211, p. 432.
[255] For more details of the life of the Virgin Mary, see Mark Kern, The Life of the Virgin Mary, Unpublished Work, 2002, pp. 67-70
[256] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 2-3.

'Who is My mother?' (Matthew 12:48). But here He shows much loving affection, and commits her to the disciple whom He loved. Again John conceals himself, in modesty; for had he desired to boast, he would have also put in the cause for which he was loved, since probably it was some great and wonderful one".

Christ, having committed His mother to John, said, 'Behold your Son' (John 19:26). O the honor! With what honor did He honor the disciple! When He Himself was now departing, He committed her to the disciple to take care of. Since it was likely that, being His mother, she would grieve, and require protection, He with reason entrusted her to the beloved. To him He said, 'Behold your mother' (John 19:27). This He said, knitting them together in love; which the disciple, understanding, took her to his own home. Why did John make no mention of any other woman, although another stood there? To teach us to pay more than ordinary respect to our mothers! When parents oppose us on spiritual matters, we must not obey them, so when they do not hinder us, we ought to pay them all becoming respect, and to prefer them before others.

Mary, the Wife of Clopas

Also mentioned at the foot of the Cross was Mary, the Wife of Clopas, or Cleopas (Luke 24:18). Cleopas is the Hebrew name for Alphaeus, the father of two of the Twelve Apostles, James and Matthew. This Mary's husband was the brother of Joseph, the Virgin Mary's betrothed; thus she was the Virgin Mary's sister-in-law (John 19:25). Since Joseph died at the age of 110 just before Jesus' public ministry[257], Cleopas was probably also quite old when the risen Lord appeared to him and Luke on the road to Emmaeus (Luke 24:13-18).

In the first year after Pentecost, the Church had conflicts with the Jewish leaders as recorded in Acts, but no major persecution occurred. One year after Pentecost, this peace ended with the stoning of Stephen, and the murder of 200 others[258] by the Jewish leaders. This caused the Church to scatter in an effort to escape the bloodbath, but they went preaching the Word as they left Jerusalem (Acts 8:4). Since there is no mention of Alphaeus (Cleopas) in any of the literature following Pentecost, whereas he was prominent before that time (Luke 24:18), it is probable that he either died during that first year, or was killed during the bloodbath accompanying the death of Stephen.

As the Church was scattered, most of the Twelve also left Jerusalem on their respective missionary journeys. Spanish tradition indicates that Mary, the wife of Cleopas, accompanied James, the son of Zebedee (her niece Salome's son) to help with the missionary work in Spain. She was buried with great honor at Compostela in Spain after she died[259]. James, the son of Zebedee, returned to Jerusalem in 44 AD and was martyred by Herod to please the Jews (Acts 12:1-3). Some accounts state that James' body was returned to Spain for burial with great honor[260].

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[257] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 31.
[258] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.
[259] See the Spanish references cited in Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, July 25, p. 183.
[260] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.
Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, July 25, p. 183.

During Jesus' public ministry, Mary, the wife of Clopas was one of the eight "Myrrh-Bearing women" who financed His public ministry (Luke 8:3) and who were present at the Cross and at the tomb.

Mary Magdalene

Mary Magdalene was also mentioned as being present at the foot of the Cross. She came from the town of Magdala on the shore of the Sea of Galilee, which was known for its industry in the pickling of sardines. Mary Magdalene was probably the wealthiest of the eight "Myrrh-Bearing women" since her name was mentioned first among those who supported Jesus' public ministry (Luke 8:3). These eight women had been together a lot during Jesus' three-year public ministry. These same women had faithfully followed Him from Galilee and had come up with Him to Jerusalem (Matthew 27:55, Mark 15:40-41 and Luke 23:55). The eight are:

- Mary Magdalene
- Mary Theotokos (The Virgin Mary)
- Joanna
- Salome
- Mary the wife of Cleopas (or Alphaeus)
- Susanna
- Mary of Bethany
- Martha of Bethany

Two years earlier in 28 AD, the Myrrh-Bearing women had been traveling with Jesus as "He went through every city and village preaching and proclaiming the Good News of the Kingdom of God" (Luke 8:1). In this case, the women are credited with contributing to the support of the ministry from their possessions, where Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna were mentioned as the most prominent (Luke 8:1-3). This probably means that Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna were the wealthiest and contributed the most financially. Since Joanna was the wife of Herod's steward, she was probably well off financially.

Christ's Words on the Cross
7th Gospel for Holy Thursday Evening: Matthew 27:46-54

It is remarkable how little the Lord spoke while He was nailed to the Cross. For the six hours that He was hanging there, ridiculed and taunted, there are only a few things He said. First He responded to the Repentant Thief (Luke 23:43). Second, He committed the care of His mother to the Apostle John (John 19:26-27). Besides this, He is recorded as saying nothing else until a few minutes before His death.

"After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' Now a vessel full of sour wine was sitting there; and they filled a sponge with sour wine, put *it* on hyssop, and put *it* to His mouth. So when Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit" (John 19:28-30).

From Mark's account, "Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?', which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken

Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that,* said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down'. And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last" (Mark 15:33-37).

From Luke's account, "Now it was about the sixth hour, and there was darkness over all the earth until the ninth hour. Then the sun was darkened, and the veil of the temple was torn in two. When Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit'. Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:44-46).

The sequence of His words at His death would seem to be

1. "I thirst!" (John 19:28)
2. "Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" (Mark 15:34)
3. "It is finished!" (John 19:30)
4. "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit" (Luke 23:46).

Christ Said, "I Thirst!"

1st Century heretics were impressed with all of Jesus' miracles and generally didn't doubt that He was God. But they claimed that He wasn't a man like us. Christ's words on the Cross tell how truly human He was.

The words "I thirst" illustrate Christ's humanity. Consider the events leading up to His statement that He was thirsty! He had been taken captive after midnight in the Garden of Gethsemane, and given a mockery of a "trial" during the night by the Sanhedrin. At daybreak, He was shouted down as an insurrectionist during His "trial" before Pilate and Herod; He was given a very severe beating early in the morning; and He was crucified about 9 AM. From the beating and the resultant loss of blood, He was already in shock. After hanging on the Cross for six hours, with no food or drink since the Passover meal the night before, He finally said that He was thirsty, going into secondary shock from the loss of blood. His statement on the Cross illustrates His humanity and anticipates the heresies spread by Simon Magus[261] and others a few years later, which denied His humanity. Simon's heresies are not just lies, but they are very obvious lies!

Athanasius of Alexandria, in combating the heretics of his day, spoke[262] at length about the implications of Jesus expressing human weakness, such as thirst, while hanging on the Cross. The heretics were saying either that He wasn't really a man, or that He just appeared to have a human body. If either case were true, we are still dead in our sins since Christ could not die for us as one of us.

> "In the Old Testament, He came to the Saints individually, and to make those holy who rightly received Him; but neither was it said that He had become man, nor, when they suffered, was it said that He Himself suffered. But when He came among us from Mary once at the end of the ages for the abolition of sin, then He took flesh and became man. In that flesh He suffered for us, as Peter says, 'Christ therefore having suffered for us in the flesh' (1 Peter 4:1). Whereas He was always God, and hallowed those to whom He came, afterwards for our sakes He became man, and 'bodily', as the Apostle says, 'The Godhead dwelt in the flesh' (Colossians 2:9). That is to say, 'Being God, He had His own body, and

[261] See Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.
[262] Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, III, xxvi, 31, 32, 34.

using this as an instrument, He became man for our sakes'. And on account of this, the properties of the flesh are said to be His, since He was in it, such as to hunger, to thirst, to suffer, to be weary, and the like, of which the flesh is capable. On the other hand the works proper to the Word Himself, such as to raise the dead, to restore sight to the blind, and to cure the woman with an issue of blood, He did through His own body. The Word bore the infirmities of the flesh, as His own, for His was the flesh; and the flesh ministered to the works of the Godhead, because the Godhead was in it, for the body was God's. Isaiah said that He 'carried our infirmities' (Isaiah 53:4); he has not said, 'He remedied our infirmities', lest, as being external to the body, and only healing it, as He has always done, He should leave men still subject to death. But He carries our infirmities, and He Himself bears our sins, that it might be shown that He has become man for us, and that the body which in Him bore them, was His own body. While He received no hurt Himself by 'bearing our sins in His body on the tree' (1 Peter 2:24), we men were redeemed from our own affections, and were filled with the righteousness of the Word".

"When the flesh suffered, the Word was not external to it; and therefore the passion was His. And when He did His Father's works in a Divine manner, His flesh was not external to Him, but in the body itself did the Lord do them. Hence He said, 'If I do not the works of the Father, do not believe Me; but if I do, though you don't believe Me, believe the works, that you may know that the Father is in Me and I in Him' (John 10:37-38). And thus when there was need to raise Peter's mother-in-law, who was sick of a fever, He stretched forth His hand humanly, but He stopped the illness divinely. In the case of the man blind from birth, human was the spit, but divinely did He open the eyes through the clay. In the case of Lazarus, He spoke with a human voice as man; but divinely, as God, did He raise Lazarus from the dead. These things were so done, because He had a body, not in appearance, but in truth. When the Lord put on human flesh, He put it on whole with the affections proper to it. Just as we say that the body was His own, so also we may say that the affections of the body were proper to Him alone, though they did not touch Him according to His Godhead. If then the body had been another's, to this other should the affections be attributed; but if the flesh is the Word's, for 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14), of necessity then the affections also of the flesh are ascribed to Him. To whom the affections are ascribed, such as to be condemned, to be scourged, to thirst, and the cross, and death, and the other infirmities of the body, of Him too is the triumph and the grace. For this cause then, consistently and fittingly such affections are ascribed not to another, but to the Lord. Grace also is from Him, and that we may become, not worshippers of any other, but truly devout towards God. We invoke no originate thing, no ordinary man, but the natural and true Son from God, who has become man".

"He is said to hunger, to thirst, to work, not to know, to sleep, to weep, to ask, to flee, to be born and to pray for deliverance from the cup. That is, He underwent all that belongs to the flesh, in each case Christ then hungered and thirsted for us in the flesh. At times He said He did not know (Matthew 24:36), and was punched with the fist (Matthew 26:67), and worked for us in the flesh (Matthew 14:19-21). He was 'exalted' (John 12:23) too, and born (Luke 2:7), and grew 'in the flesh' (Luke 2:52). He 'feared and hid' (John 8:59) in the flesh; and

said, 'If it be possible let this cup pass from Me' (Matthew 26:39). For on this account has the Apostle himself said, 'Christ then having suffered' (1 Peter 4:1), not in His Godhead, but 'for us in the flesh,' that these affections may be acknowledged as, not proper to the Word by nature, but proper by nature to the flesh".

Athanasius went on to say[263] that many other very human actions done by Christ serve to illustrate that He is a man just like us.

"Wherefore also the Word Himself, being made man for our sakes, condescended to hide Himself when He was sought after, as we do; and also when He was persecuted, to flee and avoid His enemies. Just as He showed that by hungering, thirsting and suffering, so also by hiding Himself and fleeing, He showed that He had taken our flesh, and was made man. Thus at the very first, as soon as He became man, when He was a little child, He Himself by His Angel commanded Joseph, 'Arise, and take the young Child and His Mother, and flee into Egypt; for Herod will seek the young Child's life' (Matthew 2:13). When Herod was dead, we find Him withdrawing to Nazareth because of Archelaus his son (Matthew 2:22-23). When He was showing Himself to be God, and made whole the withered hand, the Pharisees went out, and held a council against Him, how they might destroy Him. But when Jesus knew it, He withdrew Himself from there (Matthew 12:15). When He raised Lazarus from the dead, from that day on, says the Scripture, 'They took counsel to put Him to death. Jesus therefore walked no more openly among the Jews; but went into the country near to the wilderness' (John 11:53-54). Again, when our Savior said, 'Before Abraham was, I AM', 'Then they took up stones to throw at Him; but Jesus hid Himself and went out of the temple, going through the midst of them, and so passed by'" (John 8:58-59, Luke 4:30).

How Was Christ Forsaken By the Father?

"And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?', which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?'" (Mark 15:34). If Jesus is God and equal to the Father, how could the Father forsake him? Some heretics have used this statement to "prove" that Jesus isn't God.

Jesus was quoting from the Psalms that describe the ordeal He was going through. For example, Psalm 22 describes not just His cry to the Father, but also the ordeal and the rigors of crucifixion on a human body. Consider some excerpts from this Psalm:

"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? *Why are You so* far from helping Me, a*nd from* the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You *are* holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel" (Psalm 22:1-3).

"I am poured out like water, and all My bones are out of joint; My heart is like wax; it has melted within Me. My strength is dried up like a potsherd, and My tongue clings to My jaws; You have brought Me to the dust of death. For dogs have surrounded Me; the congregation of the wicked has enclosed Me. They pierced My hands and My feet; I can count all My bones. They look *and* stare at

[263] Athanasius of Alexandria, Defense of His Flight, XII.

Me. They divide My garments among them, and for My clothing they cast lots" (Psalm 22:14-19).

As Jesus said this, His enemies knew the Scriptures that He was quoting, but they chose to ignore and misinterpret His words. This was easy to do because of the similar phonetic sound of His words (*Eloi*, meaning "My God!" versus *Elia* meaning "Elijah"). While Jesus was tipping them off regarding what was going on, they chose to ignore Him and to continue the mockery.

> "Some of those who stood by, when they heard *that,* said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put *it* on a reed, and offered *it* to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down' (Mark 15:35-36).

Gregory of Nazianzen, addressing heretics of his day, stated[264] that the point here is that the Son, in His humanity, subjected everything to God the Father. Arguments that say that the Father abandoned Him have their origin in the heresies of Simon Magus[265], who taught that there were competing deities that created and ruled the world. According to these heresies, the Son was afraid of the Passion, and the Father withdrew Himself from Him in His Sufferings during the Crucifixion. Gregory taught that Christ subjected Himself to the Father in His humanity and was, in His own person, called a curse in order to destroy my curse. He represented us when, in fact, we were the ones that were forsaken by God.

> "Take, in the next place, the subjection of the Son to the Father. You are fashioning your argument as if it concerned some robber, or some hostile deity. But look at it in this manner. For my sake He was called a curse (Galatians 3:13), Who destroyed my curse. He was made sin, who takes away the sin of the world (John 1:29). He became a new Adam (1 Corinthians 15:45) to take the place of the old, just so He makes my disobedience His own as Head of the whole body (Ephesians 1:22-23). As long then as I am disobedient and rebellious, both by denial of God and by my passions, Christ also is called disobedient on my account. But when all things shall be subjected to Him at the Second Coming (Psalm 110:1, 1 Corinthians 15:25), then He Himself will have fulfilled His submission, bringing me, whom He has saved, to God. According to my view, this is the subjection of Christ; namely, the fulfilling of the Father's Will. As the Son subjects all to the Father, so does the Father to the Son; the Son by His Work, the Father by His good pleasure (Ephesians 1:5, 1 Corinthians 1:21). Thus He Who subjects, presents to God that which he has subjected, making our condition His own. Of the same kind, it appears to me, is the expression, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' It was not He who was forsaken either by the Father, or by His own Godhead, as some have thought, as if He were afraid of the Passion, and therefore withdrew Himself from Him in His Sufferings. Who compelled Him either to be born on earth at all, or to be lifted up on the Cross? But He was in His own Person representing us. We were the forsaken and despised before. Similarly, He makes our folly and our transgressions His own; and says what follows in the Psalm, for it is very evident that this refers to Christ. 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me? Why are You so far from helping Me, and from the words of My groaning? O My God, I cry in the

[264] Gregory Nazianzen, Fourth Theological Oration, V.
[265] See Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

daytime, but You do not hear; and in the night season, and am not silent. But You are holy, enthroned in the praises of Israel'" (Psalm 22:1-3).

Ambrose stated[266] that Christ's feeling forsaken on the Cross was evidence that He had a human soul.

> "As being man, therefore, He doubts; as man He is amazed. Neither His power nor His Godhead is amazed, but His soul; He is amazed by consequence of having taken human infirmity upon Him. Seeing, then, that He took upon Himself a soul, He also took the affections of a soul, for God could not have been distressed or could not have died in respect of His being God. Finally, He cried, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' As being man, therefore, He speaks, bearing with Him my terrors; for when we are in the midst of dangers we think ourselves abandoned by God. As man, therefore, He is distressed, as man He weeps, as man He is crucified".

John Chrysostom stated[267] that, in spite of all this, Jesus demonstrated that He honored His Father up to His last breath.

> "Even after this He spoke, that they might learn that He was still alive, and that He Himself did this. And that they might become by this also gentler, He said, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' Up to His last breath, they saw that He honored His Father, and is no adversary of God. Therefore He also uttered a certain cry from the prophet David (Psalm 22:1), even to His last hour bearing witness to the Old Testament. This is not simply a cry from the prophet, but also in Hebrew, so as to be plainly intelligible to them. By all things, He showed how He is of one mind with Him that begot Him".

Thus the Father did not forsake Christ on the Cross; the Cross was part of Christ's mission in becoming incarnate. Misinterpretation of Christ's words comes from the mockers at the scene and from later heretics.

Jesus Cries Out and Gives Up His Spirit: John 19:30, Luke 23:46

From John's Gospel account, Jesus had finished His work. "After this, Jesus, knowing that all things were now accomplished, that the Scripture might be fulfilled, said, 'I thirst!' When Jesus had received the sour wine, He said, 'It is finished!' And bowing His head, He gave up His spirit (John 19:28-30). From the accounts of the other Gospel writers, Jesus spoke His last words with a loud voice. Luke records this as, "And when Jesus had cried out with a loud voice, He said, 'Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit'. Having said this, He breathed His last" (Luke 23:46). It is not clear from the Gospel accounts whether He spoke with a loud voice "It is finished!" or "Father, into Your hands I commit My spirit", but the implication is that it was the former.

John Chrysostom stated[268] that Jesus expired of His own will; He didn't just die of exhaustion when His strength ran out, even though He was in secondary shock. Because He died of His own will, He did not need His legs broken, like the two thieves, to bring on death quicker. Jesus died calmly and with power, which was unusual for crucified criminals, who usually died

[266] Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, II, vii, 56.
[267] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.
[268] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 3.

of sheer exhaustion. Instead Jesus shouted with a loud voice, bowed His head and died with His (human) strength still partly intact.

> "After this, Jesus knew that all things were now accomplished" (John 19:28). That is, that nothing was lacking to the Dispensation. He desired to show that this Death was of a new kind, and everything was in the power of the Person dying, and He did not die before He willed it. He willed it after He had fulfilled all things. Therefore He said, 'I have power to lay down My life; and I have power to take it again' (John 10:18). Knowing therefore that all things were fulfilled, He said, 'I thirst'.
>
> "Having therefore received it, He said, 'It is finished'. Do you see how He does all things calmly, and with power? What follows shows this. When all had been completed, 'He bowed His head, [this had not been nailed] and gave up the spirit' (John 19:30). That is, 'died'. Yet to expire does not come after the bowing the head; but here, on the contrary, it does. He did not, when He had expired, bow His head, as happens with us, but when He had bent His head, then He expired. By all things the Evangelist has shown that He was Lord of all".
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> Chrysostom continued[269], "This cry [It is finished!] tore the veil, and opened the tombs, and made the house desolate. He did this, not as offering insult to the temple. How should He, who said, 'Do not make my Father's house a house of merchandise' (John 2:16, Matthew 21:13), but declaring them to be unworthy of His abiding there; like when He delivered it over to the Babylonians. But not for this only were these things done, but what took place was a prophecy of the coming desolation in c. 70 AD.

Theophylact stated[270] that it was the Lord's voice, which caused the centurion to believe. From the moment that Christ committed His spirit, not to Hades, but to the Father, our souls were freed from Hades.

> "When He had cried out with a loud voice, He gave up His breath. He had the power to lay down His life, and to take it back again. It was the Lord's voice itself, together with the other miracles, which caused the centurion to believe. For the Lord did not die as an ordinary man, but as the Master. He named death a committal, that is, a deposit for safekeeping; because He intended to receive back His life. His last words, the first ever spoken by a man completely free of any claim by the devil, made our souls worthy of freedom. In Christ our souls have likewise been committed to the Father and are no longer held by the devil. Before the death of Christ, the devil had a clear right to our souls. But from the moment that the Son committed His spirit, not to Hades, but into the hands of the Father, our souls were freed from Hades. The very thing which the Lord had said, 'If I be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all men to Me' (John 12:32), is now seen to have been accomplished. When the Lord was lifted up on the Cross, He drew both the thief and the centurion to Himself".

The Love of God and the Cross

One thing that stands out very emphatically in the Gospel account is the absence of justice on the part of the civil and religious authorities. If anyone was ever innocent, it was

[269] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.

[270] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospal According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 313.

Christ; He had not only committed no crime (John 19:4, Luke 23:14-15), but also had committed no sin (2 Corinthians 5:21, Hebrews 4:15, 1 Peter 2:22). Yet the religious authorities arranged false witnesses against Him (Matthew 26:59-60), beat Him and spit on Him (Matthew 26:67). The civil authorities mocked Him with a scarlet robe, a crown of thorns, a reed for a scepter and spit on Him (John 19:2-3, Matthew 27:28-31). Pontius Pilate even had Jesus scourged, bloodying His back, even though Pilate's wife had warned him from a vision she had to have nothing to do with Jesus (Matthew 27:19). Yet Pilate refused to stand up for justice even though he found no fault in Jesus (John 19:4) and then delivered Jesus to the mob (John 19:16).

In spite of this injustice, Jesus willingly went to His Cross, knowing that this would happen (Luke 9:22, 18:31-33). He did this because He loved us (Romans 5:8), and this type of love is the greatest kind (John 15:13).

John Chrysostom commented[271] on the love of God and applied the lessons learned to ourselves and our walk with God:

> "But let us not merely read of these things, but bear them in mind: the crown of thorns, the robe, the reed, the punching with the fist, the slapping on the cheek, the spitting and the irony. These things, if continually meditated on, are sufficient to take down all anger. If we are mocked, if we suffer injustice, let us still say, 'the servant is not greater than his Lord' (John 13:16). On this account He bore all these things in order that we might walk in His footsteps, and endure this mocking which disturbs more than any other kind of reproach. Yet nevertheless, He not only bore these things, but also used every means to save and deliver from the appointed punishment those who did them. He sent the Apostles also to the Jewish people for their salvation, and you hear them saying, 'We know that you did it in ignorance' (Acts 3:17, also 3:25-26). By these means, they drew them to repentance. This let us also imitate."
>
> "All these things, therefore, let us practice in our actions; for if we do not act rightly in these, we have come to no purpose and in vain into the world. Or rather we have come to our harm, for faith is not sufficient to bring men into the Kingdom. It even has power in this way to condemn those who exhibit a sick life. For 'that servant who knew His Master's Will and did not prepare himself or do according to His Will, shall be beaten with many stripes' (Luke 12:47). Again, 'If I had not come and spoken to them, they would have no sin; but now they have no excuse for their sin' (John 15:22). What excuse then shall we have, who have been set within the palace and deemed worthy to peek and enter into the sanctuary, and have been made partakers of the releasing mysteries?".

Cyril of Jerusalem wrote[272] that mankind was the enemy of God through sin. God had to either destroy all men or cancel the sentence. What He did was to preserve the truth of the sentence and also to show His loving-kindness.

> "Christ endured these things, 'and made peace through the Blood of His Cross, for things in heaven, and things in earth' (Colossians 1:20). We were enemies of God through sin and God had appointed the sinner to die. Therefore one of two things must have happened; either God, in His truth, should destroy all men or in His loving-kindness He should cancel the sentence. But behold the

[271] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIV, 3.
[272] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 33.

wisdom of God; He preserved both the truth of His sentence, and the exercise of His loving-kindness. Christ took our sins in 'His body on the tree, that we by His death might die to sin, and live to righteousness' (1 Peter 2:24). Of no small account was He who died for us; He was not a literal sheep; He was not a mere man; He was more than an Angel; He was God made man. The transgression of sinners was not as great as the righteousness of Him who died for them. The sin which we committed was not as great as the righteousness which He wrought who laid down His life for us, who laid it down when He pleased, and took it again when He pleased. Do you know that He didn't lay down His life by violence, or yield up the spirit against His will? He cried to the Father, saying, 'Father, into Your hands I commend My spirit' (Luke 23:46); I commend it, that I may take it again. Having said these things, 'He gave up the spirit' (Matthew 27:50); but not for any long time, for He quickly rose again from the dead".

Propitiation for our Sins

Propitiation was what the Old Testament animal sacrifices were all about. The life of the animal was in the blood, and it was the blood that made an atonement or propitiation for the soul (Leviticus 17:11). This was also true in the days of Noah when God told man to begin eating meat, but not blood. He also specified the death penalty for anyone shedding another's blood (Genesis 9:3-6). Blood for a sacrifice was performed as early as Abel's offering (Genesis 4:4), and probably also prior to Abel's birth where the Lord used the skins of the sacrificed animals to make clothing for Adam and Eve (Genesis 3:21).

This propitiation is graphically illustrated by the Passover in Egypt. When the Lord saw the blood of the Lamb on the doors of the Israelis, He passed over their houses (Exodus 12:13, 23, 29). The Egyptians, who did not have the blood of the lamb for propitiation, died themselves.

In the New Testament, Paul states that Christ was "made like His brethren to make propitiation for the sins of the people" (Hebrews 2:17). That is, He "made Himself of no reputation, taking the form of a bondservant, and coming in the likeness of men" (Philippians 2:7). In His humanity, He was fully human; thus He was able to make propitiation as the Lamb of God, who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29, 36; 1 Peter 1:19). This propitiation illustrates the love of God for man (1 John 4:10).

The Covenant of Blood

The Covenant relationship between God and His people in the Old Testament has been called "a covenant of blood" (Hebrews 9:20). In consecrating the Tabernacle, both the Tabernacle, the vessels inside, the book of the Law and the people were sprinkled with blood (Hebrews 9:19-21). "And according to the Law, almost all things are purified with blood; and without the shedding of blood there is no remission" (Hebrews 9:22).

Yet the Tabernacle made by Moses was just a copy of the one in heaven. Christ purified the Heavenly Tabernacle with His own blood (Hebrews 9:23), which was a better sacrifice than that of the animals offered continually. "Christ was offered once to bear the sins of many"; and "once at the end of the ages, He has appeared to put away sin by the sacrifice of Himself (Hebrews 9:28, 26). The blood of Christ, then:

- Purchased the Church (Acts 20:28)

- Redeemed us (Ephesians 1:7, Revelation 1:5)
- Brought us near to God (Ephesians 2:13)
- Made peace and reconciled us to God (Colossians 1:20)
- Justified us (Romans 5:9)

There are three that bear witness to this in heaven: The Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. There are also three that bear witness on earth: The Spirit, the water and the blood (1 John 5:7-8). The Spirit bears witness that we are children of God and that we are not under bondage (Romans 8:14-17). Christ came by water and blood, (1 John 5:6) and the water that witnesses to this is a living water (John 4:14, 7:38) and is also called the water of Life (Revelation 22:17). The blood also speaks and bears witness. If the blood of Abel could speak from the ground (Genesis 4:10, Hebrews 11:4), the blood of Christ can speak much better and more effectively (Hebrews 12:24) as a witness to these things.

In this regard, the Lord had said that unless one eats His flesh and drinks His blood, one has no life in him. Doing so brings eternal life and resurrection at the last day (John 6:53-54). The Lord's Supper, then, is a sharing or communion in the blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 10:16), and there was a "love feast" accompanying the Lord's Table in the Early Church (Jude 1:12).

1st Century Heretics Denied the Death of Christ

A major heresy that was promoted by Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-25) in the 1st century stated that Jesus did not really die on the Cross but only appeared to. Simon claimed that it was he himself, and not Jesus, who appeared to be crucified. The statements in the Gospels giving the details of the Crucifixion, therefore, served the purpose of contradicting the heresies of Simon. The heretic Marcion (late 2nd Century) and others promoted a teaching similar to that of Simon Magus, and they were opposed very strongly by the Fathers of the Church. For example, the following are the words of Tertullian (early 3rd Century) in opposition to Marcion[273].

> "He calls with a loud voice to the Father, 'Into Your hands I commend my spirit' (Luke 23:46), that even when dying He might expend His last breath in fulfilling the prophets. 'Having said this, He breathed His last'. Did the spirit give itself up; or did the flesh give up the spirit? But the spirit could not have breathed itself out. That which breathes is one thing; that which is breathed out is another. If the spirit is breathed, another must breathe it. If, however, there had been nothing there but spirit, one would say that the spirit *departed* rather than He *expired*. It is the flesh that breathes out the spirit; it both *breathes* the spirit while it has it, and *breathes it out* when it loses it. Suppose, as Marcion said, that it was not flesh upon the cross, but a phantom of flesh. A phantom is but spirit, and so the spirit breathed itself out, and departed as it did so. So the phantom and the spirit disappeared together, and were nowhere to be seen. If this were so, nothing therefore remained on the cross; nothing hung there, after 'the giving up of the spirit' (John 19:30). There was nothing to beg of Pilate, nothing to take down from the cross, nothing to wrap in the linen, nothing to lay in the new sepulcher. This is not what happened! If Christ was a phantom, He is still there. If Christ had departed, He had taken away the phantom also. The only shift left to the impudence of the heretics, is to admit that what remained there was the phantom of a phantom! But Joseph knew that it was a body and he treated Him with so

[273] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 42.

much piety? This is that same Joseph who had not consented with the Jews in their crime (Luke 23:50-52). He was 'the happy man who walked not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stood in the way of sinners, nor sat in the seat of the scornful'" (Psalm 1:1).

9th Gospel: John 19:25-37 "The Taking Down of Christ from the Cross"

Taking Christ down from the Cross required a team of strong men. Beams for the Cross, ones that were strong enough to support a man's body, were also very heavy. In order to erect the Cross in a vertical position, the Cross was probably lifted and dropped into a hole about 3 feet deep. Nails to support the body were probably placed between the two wrist bones (the *radius* and the *ulna*). Otherwise, the weight of the body might pull the hand bones apart and cause the body to drop to the ground. To support the weight of a body for several days, which was the normal period of crucifixion, the nails had to be driven deep into the wood beams of the Cross. Lifting the Cross out of the hole and pulling out the long nails required considerable effort. Joseph and Nicodemus, being wealthy men, probably had servants to help them with this.

Jesus died about the time that the darkness ended at the ninth hour (or 3 PM). At the same time, the Jewish leaders asked Pilate to break the legs of the two thieves. By 6 PM, which was the beginning of the new day (the 15th of Nisan, a Sabbath Day), the two thieves were dead and Joseph and Nicodemus had taken Jesus down from the Cross for burial. As the Lamb of God, Who was proclaimed by John the Baptist three years earlier (John 1:29, 36), none of Jesus' bones were broken according to the Law regarding the Passover (Exodus 12:46).

Joseph and Nicodemus wrapped Jesus' body in a clean linen cloth (Matthew 27:59) for transport to the tomb, which was nearby (John 19:42). At the tomb, they wrapped Jesus' body in strips of linen coated with a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, creating a cocoon or mummy casing that held His body. The Scripture accounts of the taking down of Christ's body from the Cross are as follows. From John's Gospel:

> "Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day,* that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out. And he who has seen has testified, and his testimony is true; and he knows that he is telling the truth, so that you may believe. For these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, 'Not *one* of His bones shall be broken' (Exodus 12:46, Psalm 34:20). Again another Scripture says, 'They shall look on Him whom they pierced' (Zechariah 12:10). After this, Joseph of Arimathea, being a disciple of Jesus, but secretly, for fear of the Jews, asked Pilate that he might take away the body of Jesus; and Pilate gave *him* permission. So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night, also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury. Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the

garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. There they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation *Day*, for the tomb was nearby" (John 19:31-42).

From Luke's Gospel:

"Now behold, *there was* a man named Joseph, a council member, a good and just man. He had not consented to their decision and deed. *He was* from Arimathea, a city of the Jews, who himself was also waiting for the kingdom of God. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus" (Luke 23:50-52).

From Mark's Gospel:

"Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph" (Mark 15:42-45).

From Matthew's Gospel:

"Now when evening had come, there came a rich man from Arimathea, named Joseph, who himself had also become a disciple of Jesus. This man went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Then Pilate commanded the body to be given to him. When Joseph had taken the body, he wrapped it in a clean linen cloth, and laid it in his new tomb which he had hewn out of the rock; and he rolled a large stone against the door of the tomb, and departed. And Mary Magdalene was there, and the other Mary, sitting opposite the tomb" (Matthew 27:57-61).

John Chrysostom pointed out[274] that the prophecies of Christ's Crucifixion were accomplished by the zeal of the Jewish leaders to do the opposite. From this, the mystery of the Eucharistic Feast takes its beginning.

"Do you see how strong a thing truth is? By means of the very things, which are the objects of their zeal, prophecy is fulfilled. The soldiers when they came, broke the legs of the others, but not those of Christ. Yet to gratify the Jews, they pierced His side with a spear, and now insulted the dead body. The things, which these men did from a wicked will, fought on the side of the truth. The deed they dared was a demonstration of the Faith, to those who should afterwards disbelieve; as to Thomas (John 20:24-29), and those like him".

"With this too a mystery was accomplished for 'there came forth water and blood'. Not without a purpose, or by chance, did those founts come forth, but because by means of these two together the Church consists. The initiated know it, being by water regenerate, and nourished by the Blood and the Flesh. From here the Mysteries take their beginning; that when you approach that awe-inspiring cup, you may so approach, as drinking from His very side".

"When John emphasized that his testimony is true, he was saying, 'I didn't hear it from others, but was myself present and saw it, and the testimony is true'. He relates an insult done; he relates not anything great and admirable, that you should suspect his narrative; but securing the mouths of heretics, and loudly

[274] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 3.

proclaiming beforehand the Mysteries that should be, and beholding the treasure laid up in them, he is very exact concerning what took place".

Cyril of Jerusalem wrote[275] that there are several meanings to the blood and water that came out of Jesus' side when He was pierced. There were (1) the signs by Moses, (2) the signs for His accusers, and (3) the signs for the Christians and the martyrs.

> "The beginning of signs under Moses was blood and water; and the last of all Jesus' signs was the same. First, Moses changed the river into blood; and Jesus at the last gave forth from His side water with blood. This was perhaps on account of the two speeches, Pilate's, who judged Him, and theirs who cried out against Him. Pilate said, 'I am innocent' (Matthew 27:24) and washed his hands in water; they who cried out against Him said, 'His blood be on us' (Matthew 27:25). There came therefore these two out of His side; the water, for him who judged Him; but for them that shouted against Him, the blood. Again it is to be understood in another way; the blood for the Jews, and the water for the Christians. On them as plotters came the condemnation from the blood; but to you who now believe, the salvation, which is by water. Nothing has been done without a meaning".
>
> "Comments from our fathers have given another reason. In the Gospels the power of Baptism is twofold. First, baptism is granted by means of water to the illuminated. Second, baptism is granted to holy martyrs, in persecutions, through their own blood. Therefore out of that saving Side came blood and water, to confirm the grace of the confession made for Christ, whether in baptism, or on occasions of martyrdom".

Theophylact noted[276] that Joseph and Nicodemus performed a very courageous act that they knew would bring down the wrath of the Sanhedrin.

> "Although Joseph until now had hidden his faith, now he does a praiseworthy thing. Although he was a member of the council and a rich man, he dares to ask for the body of a man who had been crucified for rebellion and sedition, giving no thought to any danger to himself. Though wealth often gives rise to cowardice, Joseph begs for the body and gives it honorable burial in a tomb that was hewn in stone, where no man had been laid before, so that slanderers could not say that it was a different body that rose".

Good Friday Ninth Hour Epistle: Hebrews 10:19-31 "The Blood of the Covenant"

In order to understand the Epistle lesson, some introduction about the Tabernacle is helpful. The Epistle speaks of Christ entering once for all into the greater and more perfect Tabernacle not made with hands and not of this creation. There is a mystery associated with this.

The Imagery of the Tabernacle

Christ is described as a liturgist (Greek: *leitourgos)* of the true Tabernacle which the Lord erected, not man (Hebrews 8:2). Comparing this to the Tabernacle erected by Moses, the

[275] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIII, 21.

[276] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 310-312.

Levitical priesthood served a copy and shadow of the heavenly things (Hebrews 8:5), and that Moses was instructed to "make all things according to the pattern shown him on the mountain". (See also Exodus 25:8-9, 25:40, 26:30, Numbers 8:4, Acts 7:44). The Levitical priesthood entered the copy every year (on the Day of Atonement) with the blood of animal sacrifices; so the Lord entered the true Tabernacle once for all with His own blood (Hebrews 9:12-26).

The Tabernacle is referred to as the Tabernacle of the Testimony. The testimony (or witness) refers to objects that the Lord told Moses to put inside the Ark of the Covenant (Exodus 25:16, 21). There were three objects there: a jar of manna (Exodus 16:33-35), the two tables of stone that Moses brought down from Mt. Sinai (Exodus 31:18, 32:15-16, Deuteronomy 10:3-5) and Aaron's rod that budded (Numbers 17:1-11). By the time of Solomon's Temple, only the tablets of stone were still in the Ark (1 Kings 8:9). These three objects represented Israel's rejection of God's provisions (the manna), rejection of God's Law (the tablets) and rejection of God's leadership (Aaron's rod which budded at the time of Korah's rebellion). These three objects were a testimony or witness against them just as James, the Lord's brother warns that our riches can become a witness against us when the Lord returns (James 5:1-3). They testify as to whom we serve and obey.

Just before the Lord's return, the sanctuary of the Tabernacle of the Testimony in heaven will be opened and out will come seven angels to dispense the wrath of God on His enemies (Revelation 15:5). The illustration of the heavenly Tabernacle is very similar to the earthly Tabernacle. As the seven angels come out, the Tabernacle will be filled with smoke from the glory of God (Revelation 15:8). This is very similar to events associated with the copy on earth; the copy of the Tabernacle was filled with smoke at the following occasions:

EARTHLY TEMPLE FILLED WITH SMOKE	REFERENCE
In the days of Moses as the Tabernacle was finished	Exodus 40:34-40
In the days of Solomon when the Ark was brought into the Temple	1 Kings 8:10ff, 2 Chronicles 5:11-14
In the days of Isaiah	Isaiah 6:1-4

In Revelation 21:1-3, when the Holy City, New Jerusalem comes down out of heaven from God, it is referred to as a bride adorned for her husband. A loud voice also proclaims from heaven, "Behold, the Tabernacle of God is with men" (Revelation 21:3). Following this, John was shown more detail of "the bride, the Lamb's wife." Included were:

DETAILS OF THE LAMB'S BRIDE	REFERENCE
12 gates which are 12 pearls and are the 12 tribes of Israel	Revelation 21:12-13
12 foundations which are 12 precious stones and are the 12 Apostles	Revelation 21:14
Walls made of jasper (or diamond)	Revelation 21:18
The city constructed of pure gold	Revelation 21:18,21
No temple, because the Lord is its temple	Revelation 21:22

Somehow, the treasure we now have in earthenware vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7) gets refined and put together as this holy city. That way, the glory is God's and not ours for putting it together. As we go about our earthly life, if our tabernacle (2 Corinthians 5:1) is destroyed

(meaning we die), we have a building from God, a house not made with hands, eternal in the heavens. The play on words in the Greek text between the Tabernacle of God and the tabernacle of our bodies seems to be intentional on the part of Paul. It was the building from God that Abraham was looking for: the city with solid foundations, whose craftsman and maker is God (Hebrews 11:10).

Entrance to the Holy of Holies Because of Christ: Hebrews 10:19-22

With this as a background, let us pick up the Epistle text piece by piece. "Therefore, brethren, having boldness to enter the Holy of Holies by the blood of Jesus, by a new and living way which He consecrated for us, through the veil, that is, His flesh, and *having* a High Priest over the house of God, let us draw near with a true heart in full assurance of faith, having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water" (Hebrews 10:19-22).

John Chrysostom stated[277] that Christ's sacrifice of Himself opened the doors of Paradise, and provided access to the Holy of Holies in heaven. There is a great difference between this and the Old Covenant, and faith is required.

> "He shows the difference of the High Priest, and of the sacrifices, etc. This difference is great, since those are temporal, but these eternal, those 'ready to vanish away' (Hebrews 8:13), these permanent, those powerless, these perfect, those figures, these reality. He said it was 'not according to the law of a fleshly commandment, but according to the power of an endless life' (Hebrews 7:16), and 'You are a Priest forever'" (Hebrews 5:6).
>
> "Concerning the Covenant, that is old; but this is new and has remission of sins, while that has nothing of the kind. 'The Law made nothing perfect' (Hebrews 7:19). Again, 'sacrifice and offering You did not desire, but a Body You have prepared for Me' (Hebrews 10:5); that is, sacrifice made with hands, while Christ's Body is 'the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands' (Hebrews 9:11). The Old Covenant "has the blood of goats (Hebrews 9:12); this New Covenant has the blood of the Lord. The Old Covenant has the Priest[278] 'standing'; this New Covenant has the priest 'sitting'. Since all those are inferior and these greater, therefore he says, 'Having therefore, brethren, boldness'".
>
> "Sins produce shame; so having all things forgiven us, being made fellow-heirs, and enjoying so great Love, produces boldness. The entrance into the Holy of Holies means Heaven, and the access to spiritual things. This is 'a new and living way' since now the gates of Heaven have been opened, which was not done even for Abraham. The Old Covenant was a way of death, leading to Hades, but this of life. Yet he did not say, 'of life', but called it 'a living way', the ordinances, that is, that which abides. With good reason did he call His flesh 'a veil'! When it was lifted up on high, then the things in heaven appeared".
>
> "To what should we 'draw near'? We should draw near to the holy things, the Faith, the spiritual service, 'with a true heart, in full assurance of faith!' In the

[277] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XIX, 1-2.

[278] In ancient times, everyone stood in the presence of the king, while the king himself sat. The same imagery is present here. Christ has been seated at the Right Hand of God while His enemies will be made His footstool (Psalm 110:1).

new covenant, nothing is seen, not the priest, the sacrifice, or the altar. Yet neither was that priest visible, but he stood within, and everyone else outside, the whole people. But here, not only has the priest entered into the holy of holies, but we also enter in. Therefore he says, 'in full assurance of faith'".

"For 'here' it is possible to be deceived in the things that are seen, but not there. He shows that not faith only, but a virtuous life also is required, and the consciousness to ourselves of nothing evil, since we have 'our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience'. The Holy of Holies receives 'with full assurance' those who are thus disposed. They are holy, as is the Holy of Holies; no profane person enters here. In the old covenant, they were sprinkled as to the body; we are 'sprinkled' as to the conscience, so that we may be sprinkled over with virtue itself. 'Our body washed with pure water' refers to the soul. We are to depart there and enter into the kingdom. Do not be over-curious, and demand reasoning. Faith is required!"

Holding Fast as the Day of the Lord Approaches: Hebrews 10:23-25

"Let us hold fast the confession of *our* hope without wavering, for He who promised *is* faithful. And let us consider one another in order to stir up love and good works, not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some, but exhorting one another, and so much the more *as you see the Day approaching*" (Hebrews 10:23-25).

Paul wrote Hebrews in the early to mid 60's AD. We can see this from the context, where there are no references to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, but there are references (such as Hebrews 10:25) that such may be coming soon[279]. "The Day of the Lord" had a very specific and clear meaning in the middle of the 1st Century: the vengeance of God on those who had crucified Christ. Hebrews seems to have been written at a time when one could see this vengeance approaching. Paul's antidote to the Days of Vengeance: love one another.

This was also a time of explosive growth for various heresies, mostly attributed to Simon Magus and his followers[280]. Many of the Church Fathers attributed the heresies of the 1st, 2nd and 3rd Century to the teachings of Simon Magus. His teachings were so prolific and powerful that Emperor Claudius even erected a statue of Simon in Rome with the inscription "To Simon, the Holy God". The "cults" that sprang up from Simon's heresy denied the humanity of Christ, and denied that He was ever crucified in the flesh. They stated that Christ never had a human body, and that He only appeared to have been crucified. The resulting cults were all centered on one very knowledgeable and charismatic man. Paul's comments "not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together, as *is* the manner of some" undoubtedly refer to the practices of some of these cults.

[279] For details on how the events of the destruction of Jerusalem and the Temple in Jerusalem were known to the Christians of that day, see the Study for the Holy Monday Evening Liturgy. For anyone who had the eyes to see it, there were continuous signs of the destruction of Jerusalem that increased in both in intensity and frequency as the "Day of the Lord" approached.

[280] For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

John Chrysostom commented[281] on Paul's words to say the Christian communities, on the other hand, were characterized by love as they gathered together. Good works naturally flowed from their love for each other.

> "Again in other places, 'The Lord is at hand; be anxious for nothing' (Philippians 4:5, 6). 'Now our salvation is nearer: henceforth the time is short' (Romans 13:11, 1 Corinthians 7:29). What does he mean by 'not forsaking the assembling of ourselves together?' Paul knew that much strength arises from being together and assembling together. 'Where two or three are gathered together in My name, there am I in the midst of them' (Matthew 18:20). Again, 'That they may be One, as We are' (John 17:11); and, 'They had all one heart and one soul' (Acts 4:32). The gathering together increased the love and, of necessity, the things of God must follow also. 'Earnest prayer was made by the people'" (Acts 12:5).
>
> "He knew that good works also arises from 'gathering together'. As 'iron sharpens iron' (Proverbs 27:17), so also association increases love. If a stone rubbed against stone sends forth fire, how much more soul mingled with soul! This generates a sharpening of love, which means loving and being loved more. As they acquire zeal, they also acquire good works. If doing has greater force for instruction than speaking, you also have in your number many teachers, who effect this by their deeds. For a brother helped by a brother is as a strong city'" (Proverbs 18:19 LXX).

Willful Rejection of Christ: Hebrews 10:26-31

"If we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth, there no longer remains a sacrifice for sins, but a certain fearful expectation of judgment, and fiery indignation which will devour the adversaries. Anyone who has rejected Moses' law dies without mercy on the testimony of two or three witnesses. Of how much worse punishment, do you suppose, will he be thought worthy who has trampled the Son of God underfoot, counted the blood of the covenant by which he was sanctified a common thing, and insulted the Spirit of grace? For we know Him who said, 'Vengeance is Mine, I will repay', says the Lord. And again, 'The LORD will judge His people' (Deuteronomy 32:35-36). It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God" (Hebrews 10:19-31).

Implied in Paul's words here to the Hebrews are references to many of the cults that sprang from the teachings of Simon Magus. Some of their leaders had known the teachings of Christ firsthand. Some had even been numbered among the original Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-20). For example, Scriptural references to some of Simon's followers are:

- **Nicolas** of Antioch was one of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:5) and one of the original Seventy (Luke 10:1-20). When Simon came to Antioch, Nicolas began to follow his teachings, and the Apostle John later rebuked Nicolas very strongly (Revelation 2:14-15).
- **Demas** was a companion of Paul and Luke at the time that Paul was under house arrest in Rome (c. 62 AD), and Paul mentioned him very favorably as he drafted his Epistles to the Colossians and to Philemon (Colossians 4:14, Philemon 1:24). However, Demas began following the teachings of Simon shortly afterward, and within 5 years, Paul stated that

[281] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XIX, 3.

Demas "had forsaken me, having loved this present world" (2 Timothy 4:10). Hippolytus stated that Demas had been one of the Seventy, but became "a priest of idols"[282].

- **Phygellas and Hermogenes**: Just before his death in c. 67 AD, Paul wrote that Phygellas and Hermogenes had turned away from him (2 Timothy 1:15). Hippolytus stated that these two of the Seventy began to follow Simon's teachings, and were therefore deleted from the ranks of the Seventy[283].
- **Alexander** was the son of Simon of Cyrene, who helped to carry Jesus' Cross (Mark 15:21). Together with his father and brother Rufus, who was one of the Seventy, Alexander helped to found the Church in Antioch (Acts 11:20). By the mid 60's AD, Alexander had become a follower of Simon, and Paul delivered him over to Satan for the destruction of his flesh[284] on account of his blasphemy (1 Timothy 1:20). A year or two later, Alexander was instrumental in affecting Paul's martyrdom (2 Timothy 4:14-15).
- **Hymenaeus** was associated with Alexander and was also delivered over to Satan by Paul (1 Timothy 1:20). A year or two later, Hymenaeus was still busy teaching Simon's doctrine of the resurrection (2 Timothy 2:17-18).
- **Philetas** was an associate of Hymenaeus who also taught Simon's doctrine (2 Timothy 2:17-18).

Men of this mindset willfully rejected Christ in a most heinous way. In contrast to them, one might say that David willfully sinned (rejected Christ) in his lust for Bathsheba and subsequent murder of her husband Uriah (2 Samuel 11:1-12:25). Yet David repented! The difference is that David was involved in breaking the Mosaic Law secretly, but the heretics were teaching all their Churches openly to disregard Christ. David repented when Nathan confronted him, but the heretics were not willing to repent. Reading the Epistle and its very strong words against those who "trample the Son of God underfoot" (Hebrews 10:29) makes more sense with these heretics in mind, and understanding that Judgment is about to fall on unrepentant Israel.

John Chrysostom, like the Apostle Jude, compared[285] this to trees that yield no fruit (Jude 1:12). Good works are the fruit that he refers to, and this was notably absent in the followers of Simon Magus.

> "Trees, which have been planted, and have had the advantage of all other care, and the hands and the labors of the cultivator, and yet yield no return for the labors, are pulled up by the roots, and handed over to the fire. Something of this kind also takes place in the case of our illumination. For when Christ has planted us and we have enjoyed the watering of the Spirit, and then show no fruit, fire awaits us, and flame unquenchable".
>
> "For having spoken about forsaking the assembling together, he added, 'For if we sin willfully after we have received the knowledge of the truth'. There is need, he means, of good works. You were cleansed; you were set free from the charges against you, you have become a son. If then you return to your former vomit, there awaits you on the other hand excommunication and fire and whatever such things there are. There is no second sacrifice".

[282] Hippolytus, "On the Seventy Apostles", Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 5.
[283] Hippolytus, "On the Seventy Apostles", Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 5.
[284] Compare 1 Corinthians 5:4-5. The intent was the eventual salvation of the individual through a greater recognition of who it is that he's in league with.
[285] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XX, 1.

In Chrysostom's day, there were two groups that chafed on Paul's words in Hebrews, but for different reasons. One group delayed coming to Baptism, feeling that they would not have any second chance if they sinned willfully afterwards. The other group felt that it was not safe to impart the Mysteries (i.e. the Eucharist) to those who sinned for fear of trampling the Son of God underfoot. Chrysostom stated[286] that God does not thrust away the fallen to despair and He is not the enemy of our salvation. He did not say that there is no more repentance, but that there is no second Cross. 'By one sacrifice He has perfected forever those who are being sanctified' (Hebrews 10:14). Chrysostom explained 'Trampling the Son of God underfoot' as partaking of the mysteries (i.e. the Eucharist) in sin.

> "Just as we make no account of those who are trodden under foot, so also, they who sin have made no account of Christ. You have become the Body of Christ; if you give yourself to the devil, he will tread you underfoot. He that does not accept a benefit, spites the benefactor. He made you a son and you wish to become a slave. He came to dwell with you, and you bring in wicked imaginations to Him. Christ wished to stay with you, and you tread Him down by drunkenness. 'Do not give that which is holy to the dogs, lest in time they trample them under their feet' (Matthew 7:6); that is, lest they despise, lest they repudiate them". Regarding the vengeance, Chrysostom said, "This is said in regard to their enemies, who are doing evil, not to those who are suffering evil".

The Results of the Lord Being Lifted Up

Crucifixion in the first century Roman world meant utter humiliation; this is especially so in Jesus' case. Consider the crown of thorns, the robe, the reed, the blows, the punching on the cheek, the spitting, the unjust "trial", the irony, the nails, the nakedness, the spear, etc. Yet the Scriptures speak of the crucifixion as being Jesus' glorification (John 12:23-24). This is 180 degrees different from most peoples' thinking, which is why Satan misunderstood also (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). And this is the focus of the Word of the Cross.

Much Grain Produced

From John 12:24, in connection with His glorification on the cross, Jesus also said that "unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain". The illustration here is the germination of a seed that is planted. Once in the ground, the seed itself contains enough to get the plant started. But once the roots of the plant get established the seed dies and is dwarfed by the plant. Many kernels of wheat -- each of which is another seed -- are produced on the stalk of the plant, where each new seed contains the same life as the original seed. If the seed never dies, it never germinates and the plant doesn't grow. The seed just remains alone as a seed.

In connection with this, John recorded Jesus' announcement at the Feast of Tabernacles: "He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:38). Then John remarks: "This He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified" (John 7:39). It was for this purpose that Jesus came to the hour of His crucifixion (John 12:27). Having bought with a price those who had fallen, and made their body a Temple

[286] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XX, 2-3.

of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), the new kernels of wheat now have the same life as the original seed given as a down payment (2 Corinthians 5:5; Ephesians 1:14).

Judgment of the World

After Jesus stated that He came to the world for the Cross (John 12:27), He said, "Father, glorify Your Name" (John 12:28). The Father then spoke from heaven with a voice of thunder (John 12:29). Jesus said, "This voice did not come because of Me, but for your sake. Now is the judgment of this world (Greek: *kosmos = world order)*; now the ruler of this world (*kosmos*) will be cast down" (John 12:30-31).

John Chrysostom stated[287] that the devil was judged by his own standards as the accuser of the brethren (Revelation 12:10). As Satan accuses us day and night, he speaks the truth about our sins to God. But what if the tables were turned on him?

> "How then is the world judged in Christ? It shall be said, (as if a court of justice were sitting) to Satan: 'well, you have slain all men because you found them guilty of sin. But why did you slay Christ? Is it not clear that you did it wrongfully?' Therefore in Him the whole world shall be avenged". In other words, the devil was judged by his own standards as the accuser of the brethren.

Augustin of Hippo gave more detail and stated[288] that it was by the Justice of God that the devil was both conquered and outsmarted. Augustin's argument can be paraphrased as follows:

> "The method by which man was surrendered to the devil's power ought not to be understood in the sense that it was the result of God's command: rather He permitted it, but He did so with justice. When God deserted the sinner at the Fall, the instigator of the sin rushed in. Therefore God decided that to rescue man from the devil's power, He should overcome the devil by justice, not by power. A trap was set, and the devil put Christ to death although he found in Him nothing that deserved death. 'The prince of this world is coming, and he finds nothing, that is, no sin, in Me. But that the world may know that I am doing My Father's will, arise, let us go from here' (John 14:30-31). From there He went to His passion. What could be more just than to go as far as the death of the cross for the sake of justice? First justice conquered the devil, because Christ had no sin and was most unjustly put to death by the devil. Then power, in turn, conquered death by rising from the dead and ascending to heaven with the very flesh in which He was slain. Power would have overcome the devil even if Christ could not have been put to death by him; and yet it showed greater power to conquer death itself by resurrection than to avoid it by continuing to live."
>
> "The devil was conquered by his own trophy of victory; that is, death. By seducing the first man (Adam), he slew him. By slaying the last man (Christ), he lost the first from his snare."

Reconciling the World to Christ

As Jesus spoke about the judgment of this world, He also said, "And I, if I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to Myself" (John 12:32). Paul spoke of this a number of times. "In Him all the fullness (that is, of God) was pleased to dwell, and through Him to reconcile all

[287] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXVII, 2.
[288] Aurelius Augustinus, On the Trinity, XIII, xiii-xv, 17-19.

things to Himself, whether things on earth or things in heaven, having made peace through the blood of His Cross" (Colossians 1:19-20).

Speaking about Jews (who had received the oracles of God) versus Gentiles, Paul also said, "to create the two in Himself into one new man, thus making peace, that He might reconcile both in one body to God through the Cross. Through Him, we both have access by One Spirit to the Father (Ephesians 2:15-18). John Chrysostom commented[289] that this does not mean that the Gentiles were raised to the high heritage that belonged to the commonwealth of the Jews, but that He has raised both to one yet higher.

Not only were Jews and Gentiles reconciled, but both were given the deaconate of reconciliation themselves, since both are the Temple of the Holy Spirit. "Now all things are of God who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ and has given us the deaconate of reconciliation. That is, God was in Christ reconciling the world to Himself, not reckoning their trespasses to them and has committed to us the Word (Greek: *logos*) of reconciliation. Therefore, we are ambassadors on behalf of Christ as God (the Father) beseeching through us: we beg on behalf of Christ, 'Be reconciled to God'" (2 Corinthians 5:18-20). John Chrysostom stated[290], "We have succeeded to His functions. But if this appears to you a great thing, hear what follows also. He shows they do this not only on Christ's behalf but also on behalf of the Father."

Thus the reconciliation of the world to Christ encompasses not only everything in heaven and earth but also uses those who are the fruit of the One grain of wheat (that fell in the ground and died) as the chief reconcilers. Their mission requires that they imitate their Master and die also if necessary. Consider Satan's reaction to all of this. In his pride, he thought he was smart; but he was totally outsmarted by the Cross.

Good Friday Ninth Hour Reading: Jeremiah 11:18-12:5, 9-11, 14-15 "Israel Will Be Ruined"

In the mid 2nd Century, Justin Martyr noted[291] that parts of this Reading from Jeremiah, in the Hebrew original, had been changed or deleted by the Jewish Scribes from most copies in his day in order to remove obvious references to Christ. In order to get back to the original Reading, the Septuagint text will be used here, since the Jewish scribes had no access to the Septuagint text used by the Christians. In italics is the portion that Justin said had been deleted. This portion is included in modern versions of the Hebrew text, but the wording is slightly different from the Septuagint. This Reading is also used for Holy Thursday Matins.

Put Wood Onto His Bread: Jeremiah 11:18-23

The Septuagint text reads as follows:

"O Lord, teach me, and I shall know: then I saw their practices. *But I as an innocent lamb led to the slaughter, knew not. Against me they devised an evil device, saying, 'Come and let us put wood onto his bread, and let us utterly destroy him from off the land of the living, and let his name not be remembered any more'.* O Lord, that judge righteously, trying the reins and

[289] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, v. 13.
[290] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XI, 5.
[291] Justin Martyr, Dialog with Tyrpho, 72.

hearts, let me see your vengeance *taken* upon them, for to you I have declared my cause. Therefore thus says the Lord concerning the men of Anathoth[292], that seek my life, that say, 'You shall not prophesy at all in the name of the Lord, but if you do, you shall die by our hands'. Behold, I will visit them: their young men shall die by the sword; and their sons and their daughters shall die of famine. And there shall be no remnant *left* of them; for I will bring evil upon the dwellers in Anathoth, in the year of their visitation" (Jeremiah 11:18-23 LXX).

Jeremiah prophesied here about the Crucifixion and the subsequent destruction of Jerusalem. But there is more to it than just that. To begin, Ambrose of Milan stated[293] that the Son here speaks of the mystery of His coming Incarnation. The "Bread" is the Lord's body which came down from heaven as the Life of the world (John 6:32-33), and this is why we call Him the "Bread of Life" (John 6:35, 48). Putting "wood onto His bread" refers to attaching His body to the Cross. The "men of Anathoth that seek my life" are the residents of Jerusalem and vicinity that crucified Christ, and the sword and famine that will be brought on them "in the year of their visitation" is the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD and in c. 135 AD.

Tertullian, in his writings against the 2nd Century heretic, Marcion, stated[294] that Jeremiah's prophecy was a very ancient figure of the body of Christ. Marcion taught that Christ was not really a man, and therefore this part of Jeremiah's prophecy was difficult for Marcion to interpret.

> "When Jesus so earnestly expressed His desire to eat the Passover (Luke 22:15), He considered it His own feast; for it would have been unworthy of God to desire to partake of what was not His own. Then, having taken the bread and given it to His disciples, He made it His own body, by saying, 'This is my body' (Luke 22:19), that is, the figure of my body. A figure, however, there could not have been, unless there were first really a body. An empty thing, or phantom, is incapable of a figure. If, however, as Marcion might say, He pretended the bread was His body, because He lacked the truth of bodily substance, it follows that He must have given bread for us. It would contribute very well to the support of Marcion's theory of a phantom body, that bread should have been crucified! But why call His body bread, and not rather some other edible thing, say a melon, which Marcion must have had in lieu of a heart! Marcion did not understand how ancient this figure of the body of Christ was. He said Himself by Jeremiah, 'I was like a lamb that is brought to the slaughter, and I knew not that they devised a device against me, saying, Let us cast the tree upon His bread' (Jeremiah 11:19), which means, of course, the cross upon His body. Thus, casting light, as He always did, upon the ancient prophecies, He declared plainly enough what He meant by the bread, when He called the bread His own body".

Tertullian also said[295] that the reference to bread linked Jesus' body on the Cross to the mystery of the Bread of Life.

> "Come, now, if you have read in the utterance of the prophet in the Psalms, 'God has reigned from the tree' (Psalm 96:10); I wait to hear what you

[292] Anathoth was the birthplace of the Prophet Jeremiah, and was located about 3 miles NE of Jerusalem.
[293] Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, IV, xii, 165-167.
[294] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 40.
[295] Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, I, vii, 10. For a similar discussion, see also: Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 19.

understand from this. I fear you may perhaps think some carpenter-king is signified, and not Christ, who has reigned from that time onward when he overcame the death, which ensued from His passion of 'the tree'".

"Similarly, again, Isaiah says: 'For a child is born to us, and to us is given a Son' (Isaiah 9:6). What novelty is that, unless he is speaking of the 'Son' of God? One is born to us the beginning of whose government has been made 'on His shoulder'. What king in the world wears the ensign of his power on his shoulder, and does not bear either diadem on his head, or else scepter in his hand? But the novel 'King of ages', Christ Jesus, alone reared 'on His shoulder' His own novel glory, the Cross, that the Lord 'might reign from the tree'. Of this tree likewise it is that God hints, through Jeremiah, that you would say, 'Come, let us put wood into his bread, and let us bear him away out of the land of the living; and his name shall no more be remembered' (Jeremiah 11:19). Of course on His body that 'wood' was put[296]; for so Christ has revealed, calling His body "bread' (John 6:32-59), whose body the prophet announced under the term 'bread'. If you shall still seek for predictions of the Lord's Cross, the 22nd Psalm will at length be able to satisfy you, containing as it does the whole passion of Christ; singing, as He does, even at so early a date, His own glory. 'They pierced my hands and feet' (Psalm 22:16), which is the peculiar atrocity of the cross. Again when He implores the aid of the Father, 'Save me', He says, 'Out of the mouth of the lion' — of course, of death — 'and from the horns of the unicorn my humility' (Psalm 22:21 LXX), that is, from the ends of the cross. Which cross neither David himself suffered, nor any of the kings of the Jews, that you may not think the passion was of some other particular man than His, who alone was so savagely crucified by the people.

Those That Deal Treacherously: Jeremiah 12:1-5

The Septuagint text reads as follows:

"Righteous are you, O Lord, that I may make my defense to you; I will speak to you *of* judgments. Why does the way of ungodly *men* prosper? Those that deal very treacherously are flourishing. You have planted them, and they have taken root; they have begotten children, and become fruitful; you are near to their mouth, and far from their reins. But you, Lord, know me; you have proved my heart before you; purify them for the day of their slaughter. How long shall the land mourn, and the grass of the field withers for the wickedness of them, that dwell in it? The beasts and birds are utterly destroyed; because *the people* said, 'God shall not see our ways'. Your feet run, and they cause you to faint; how will you prepare *to ride* upon horses? You have been confident in the land of your peace; how will you do in the roaring of Jordan?" (Jeremiah 12:1-5 LXX)

Jeremiah addressed a hardness of heart among the people of Israel in his day that required the Babylonian Captivity to cure. He warned the people that the Captivity was coming (Jeremiah 21), and when it came, He told them why it had come (Jeremiah 44:24-30). There had been total apostasy in Judah; but when the captives returned after the 70 years in captivity, they wept for the sins of Israel prior to the Captivity! (Nehemiah 8:9-10, 9:1-3) Thus the Captivity had served a useful purpose.

[296] That is, when they laid the crossbeam of the Cross on Him to carry it to Golgatha.

John Cassian addressed[297] the people of Jerusalem who crucified Christ as having a similar hardness of heart but the hardness was too much for punishment in this life to cure. Some people can be admonished and corrected by adversities in this life, such as Judah was corrected by the Babylonian Captivity. Those that cannot be corrected, he says, are doomed to be punished with the demons. Cassian compared this situation to Babylon the Great, as described by John in Revelation. Cassian's words also relate to Paul's reference to "the Day approaching" (Hebrews 10:25) in the preceding Epistle.

> "We ought to consider those men truly wretched and miserable who defile themselves with all kinds of sins and wickedness. Yet not only is there no visible sign of the devil's possession shown in them, but no temptation proportionate to their actions, or any scourge of punishment is brought to bear upon them. They are given no swift and immediate remedy in this world, whose 'hardness and impenitent heart', is too much for punishment in this life. They 'heap up for themselves wrath and indignation in the day of wrath and revelation of the righteous judgment of God' (Romans 2:5), 'where their worm does not die, and their fire is not quenched' (Mark 9:44, 46, 48; Isaiah 66:24). Against them, the prophet is perplexed at the affliction of the saints, when he sees them subject to various losses and temptations. On the other hand, he sees sinners not only passing through the course of this world without any scourge of humiliation, but even rejoicing in great riches, and the utmost prosperity in everything, inflamed with uncontrollable indignation and fervor of spirit. He exclaims, 'But as for me, my feet had almost gone, my treading had almost slipped. I was grieved at the wicked, when I saw the peace of sinners. No one takes note of their death, nor are they punished strongly with stripes. They do not labor like men, neither shall they be scourged like other men' (Psalm 73:2-5), since hereafter they shall be punished with the devils, to whom in this world it was not granted to be scourged in the lot and discipline of sons, together with men. Jeremiah also, when conversing with God on this prosperity of sinners, never professes to doubt about the justice of God, as he says, 'You are just, O Lord, if I speak to You *of* judgments' (Jeremiah 12:1). Yet in his inquiry as to the reasons of this inequality, he proceeds to say, 'But yet I will speak what is just to You. Why does the way of the wicked prosper? Why is it well with all them that transgress and do wickedly? You have planted them and they have taken root; they prosper and bring forth fruit. You are near in their mouth and far from their reins'" (Jeremiah 12:1-2).
>
> "And when the Lord mourns for their destruction by the prophet, and anxiously directs doctors and physicians to heal them, and in a manner urges them on to a similar lamentation and says, 'Babylon is suddenly fallen: she is destroyed. Howl for her: take balm for her pain, if so she may be healed' (Jeremiah 51:8; Revelation 18:2, Isaiah 13:19, 21:9). Then, in their despair, the angels, to whom is entrusted the care of man's salvation, make reply. Or at any rate the prophet in the person of the Apostles and spiritual men and doctors who see the hardness of their soul, and their impenitent heart say, 'We have healed Babylon; but she is not cured. Let us forsake her, and let us go every man to his own land because her judgment has reached even to the heavens, and is lifted up to the clouds'" (Jeremiah 51:9).

[297] John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, vii, 31.

The Shepherds Destroyed the Vineyard: Jeremiah 12:9-11, 14-15

The Septuagint text reads as follows:

"Is not My inheritance to Me a cave of robbers, or a cave round about her? Go gather together all the wild beasts of the field, and let them come to devour her. Many shepherds have destroyed My vineyard, they have defiled My portion, they have made My desirable portion a trackless wilderness; it is made a complete ruin. For my sake the whole land has been utterly ruined, because there is no one that lays *the matter* to heart".

"For thus says the Lord, concerning all the evil neighbors that touch My inheritance, which I have divided to My people Israel. Behold, I *will* draw them away from their land, and I will cast out Judah from the midst of them. And it shall come to pass, after I have cast them out, *that* I will return, and have mercy upon them, and will cause them to dwell every one in his inheritance, and every one is his land" (Jeremiah 12: 9-11, 14-15 LXX).

Gregory Nazianzen described[298] the situation of Jeremiah's day in very dire terms, and likened it to the situation in Christ's day:

1. The princes in her midst are like roaring lions, devouring souls in their might (Ezekiel 22:25 LXX).
2. Her priests have violated My laws and profaned My holy things; they have put no difference between the holy and profane, but all things were alike to them (Ezekiel 22:26).
3. The priests said not, 'Where is the Lord?', and they that handled the Law knew Me not (Jeremiah 2:8).
4. My flock became a prey, behold I am against the shepherds, and I will require My flock at their hands, and will gather them and make them My own. But the shepherds shall suffer such and such things, as bad shepherds ought (Ezekiel 34:8-10).
5. Many pastors have destroyed My vineyard, and have polluted My pleasant portion, till it was reduced to a trackless wilderness (Jeremiah 12:10).
6. God will consume both the wall and them that daubed it, that is, those who sin and those who throw a cloak over them (Ezekiel 13:14 LXX).

The situation in Israel, that Jeremiah addressed, repeats itself from time to time when the shepherds that God has established for His people fight against Him. The Early Church had similar difficulties with the leaders of the Jewish synagogue in the centuries that followed the Crucifixion. Early Christian tradition states[299]:

> "Those are most certainly to be avoided who blaspheme God. The greatest part of the ungodly is ignorant of God; but these men, as fighters against God, are possessed with a willful evil disposition, as with a disease. From the wickedness of these heretics 'pollution is gone out on all the earth' (Jeremiah 23:15). For the wicked synagogue is now cast off by the Lord God, and His house is rejected by Him, as He says, 'I have forsaken My house, I have left My inheritance' (Jeremiah 12:7). Again, says Isaiah, 'I will neglect My vineyard, and it shall not be pruned nor spaded, and thorns shall spring up upon it, as upon a desert; and I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon it'" (Isaiah 5:6).

[298] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration in Defense of His Flight to Pontus, II, 67-68.
[299] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, ii, 5.

Good Friday Vespers
The Burial of Christ
The Word of the Cross

Gospel: Matthew 27:55-61 "The Burial of Jesus"
10th Gospel: Mark 15:43-47 "The Burial of Jesus"
11th Gospel: John 19:38-42 "The Burial of Jesus"

The Events of Christ's Burial

On the 14th of the month of Nisan, Jesus died on the Cross at about 3 PM, which was referred to as the Ninth Hour of the day (Mark 15:34-37). The 15th of the month of Nisan was a Sabbath, both from it being Saturday, the 7th day of the week, and because it was the first day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread (Leviticus 23:4-8). Since the 15th day of the month began at sundown, there was a sense of urgency among the Jewish leaders to get the dead bodies down from their crosses and buried to avoid the defilement that arises from dead bodies (John 19:31). Someone who had became defiled from a corpse could still participate in the events of the week-long Feast of Unleavened Bread according to the Law (Numbers 9:9-14), but the Jewish leaders undoubtedly put some restrictions[300] on this. They, themselves, did not even enter the Praetorium (Pontus Pilate's residence) in order to avoid possible defilement from Gentiles and be unable to eat the Passover (John 18:28).

About 3 PM on Friday the 14th of Nisan, the Jewish leaders went to Pontius Pilate and asked that he order the soldiers at the Cross to break the legs of those who were crucified, so that they could be taken down and buried quickly. Death by crucifixion came as one was slowly strangled by his own collarbone. With the legs intact to help support one's weight, death could take days, and the cause of death could be sheer exhaustion. Breaking the legs, probably by large hammers, added to the pain of crucifixion, and brought death on quickly. Since Jesus was already dead, they did not bother to break His legs. John's account of this reads:

> "Therefore, because it was the Preparation *Day,* that the bodies should not remain on the cross on the Sabbath (for that Sabbath was a high day), the Jews asked Pilate that their legs might be broken, and *that* they might be taken away. Then the soldiers came and broke the legs of the first and of the other who was crucified with Him. But when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs. But one of the soldiers pierced His side with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out" (John 19:31-34).

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[300] An example of the strict restrictions on "defilement" imposed by the Jewish leaders is simply washing one's hands: "Then the Pharisees and some of the scribes came together to Him, having come from Jerusalem. Now when they saw some of His disciples eat bread with defiled, that is, with unwashed hands, they found fault. For the Pharisees and all the Jews do not eat unless they wash *their* hands in a special way, holding the tradition of the elders" (Mark 7:1-3).

The Scripture accounts do not give us a time of death of the two thieves, but we can presume that it would have been by 6 PM, or about the time that Joseph and Nicodemus began the burial rite for Jesus. When Joseph went to Pontius Pilate to ask for the body of Jesus, Pilate inquired whether Jesus had been dead for some time (Mark 15:44). Pilate wanted to make sure that it wasn't just an appearance of death that would allow for a subsequent resuscitation.

In order to bury Jesus as the Scripture accounts describe, several distinct tasks were required.

1. Un-nail Him from the Cross, after pulling the Cross down.
2. Transport the Body to the tomb, which was nearby (John 19:42).
3. Embalm His body with the 100 lb. of myrrh and aloes (John 19:39-40).
4. Move His body into the tomb, and roll the stone against the entrance (Matthew 27:60).

The Un-Nailing From the Cross

Taking Jesus' body down from the Cross and un-nailing it was a difficult task. Roman crosses were sturdy pieces of wood. During the siege of Jerusalem that culminated in 70 AD, the Romans crucified people that they captured attempting to escape from the city. At one point, they crucified 500 people per day[301], nailing one body on top of another. For the Roman crosses to be capable of supporting this much weight, they had to be very sturdy, and therefore very heavy, at least 150 lb.

Elevating a condemned man onto a cross was easy. He was nailed to the cross while the cross laid flat on the ground, where the nails were placed between the two wrist bones (the *radius* and the *ulna*) for better support of the body on the cross. Several strong men then lifted the cross part way up while others guided it with ropes attached to the crossbeam. With the cross standing vertical, it could be slid over a little and dropped into a deep hole.

To take the cross down, one had to either lift the cross out of the hole (at least 300 lb. for the cross with its victim), or dig out the hole sideways so that the cross could be lowered slowly. Joseph and Nicodemus were both wealthy, but elderly, men. They obviously didn't do all this themselves, but had a team of servants to help them. This team of servants would have had the task of pulling out the nails, which also required some physical strength. For more discussion on the "Un-Nailing", see the Gospel lesson for Good Friday, 9th Hour Prayers.

Transporting Jesus' Body to the Tomb

In order to transport Jesus' body from the site of the Crucifixion to the tomb, he wrapped His body in fine linen:

> "Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb, which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb" (Mark 15:46).

The tomb was nearby, and was part of the same garden that Golgotha was located in. The tomb had been created, like many tombs in that area, by boring into a hillside of solid rock.

> "Now in the place where He was crucified there was a garden, and in the garden a new tomb in which no one had yet been laid. There they laid Jesus, because of the Jews' Preparation *Day*, for the tomb was nearby" (John 19:41-42).

[301] Flavius Josephus, The Wars of the Jews, V, xi, 1-2.

Joseph, being elderly, had intended for himself to be interred side by side with the Master out of his devotion to Jesus. It was common for many family members to be interred in the same crypt.

In modern times, there has been much attention given to the "Shroud of Turin", which some claim to be the burial wrappings of Jesus. As discussed in the next section, it could not have been the burial wrappings; the only possibility[302] is for it to have been the "fine linen cloth" that was used to transport Jesus' body from the Cross to the site of the tomb.

The Embalming of Jesus

At the site of the tomb, Joseph and Nicodemus, along with their servants performed the embalming of Jesus' body.

> "So he came and took the body of Jesus. Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night (John 3:1-21), came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. They took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury" (John 19:38-40).

This is the same type of burial as was given to Lazarus when he died – that is, Jesus and Lazarus were wrapped with strips of linen to form a mummy-like sarcophagus. This was the type of burial that only rich people could afford. By contrast, the son of the widow of Nain was being carried to a pauper's grave. He was being carried in an open coffin (Luke 7:14). When Jesus spoke to him, "Young man, I say to you, arise", he sat up and began to speak immediately (Luke 7:15). There was no need to "unbind him" as was necessary for Lazarus when he was raised (John 11:44).

Modern studies have been done[303] regarding the burial practices for the wealthy that were common in Jewish society in the 1st Century.

> "The body was covered in spices and in paste and this was tied to the body by layers of white roller bandage. The paste hardened and impregnated the bandages until a hard preservative mold or cocoon was formed about the body. A cap was put on the head, and often the jaw was held in position by a bandage under the chin".

This detail became important later at the Resurrection. When Peter and John came to the tomb at the urging of Mary Magdalene (John 20:2-3), the first thing that they saw was that the "mummy" was empty and undisturbed; Jesus had risen right through the burial wrappings! This was evidence of the Resurrection, since the body could not have gotten out of the sarcophagus without cutting the wrappings. Orthodox iconography is helpful to us in depicting the scene at the tomb with an empty sarcophagus.

> "Then Simon Peter came, following John, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and

[302] There are serious doubts even here. Modern scientists have discovered that the "blood stains" are actually red ochre paint.

[303] Gower, New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, pp. 72-74

believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead" (John 20:6-9).

One might question exactly what the Apostle John meant when he said that he and Peter, "saw and believed"? Did they believe in the Resurrection from seeing the burial clothes, or did they merely believe the report of the women that the tomb was empty? Augustin stated[304] that it was the report of the women that Peter and John believed when they examined the empty sepulchre.

> "Some, by not giving due attention, suppose that John believed that Jesus had risen again; but there is no indication of this from the words that follow. For what does he mean by immediately adding, 'For as yet they knew not the Scripture that He must rise again from the dead'? (John 20:9) He could not then have believed that He had risen again, when he did not know that it behooved Him to rise again. What then did he see? What was it that he believed? What but this, that he saw the sepulcher empty, and believed what the woman had said, that He had been taken away from the tomb? Thus also when they heard of it from the Lord Himself, although it was uttered in the plainest terms, yet from their custom of hearing Him speaking by parables, they did not understand, and believed that something else was His meaning".

John Chrysostom, however, stated[305] that it was the Resurrection that Peter and John believed, but only after they had examined the site very carefully. Chrysostom noted, in John's account, that John admitted his own superficial examination and was convinced by Peter's more careful analysis.

> "Mary didn't know as yet anything clearly concerning the Resurrection, but thought there had been a removal of the body, and told this to the disciples. John did not deprive the woman of such praise, nor thought it a shame that they should have learned these things first from her who had passed the night in watching. When she came and said these things, they drew near with great eagerness to the sepulcher, and saw the linen clothes lying there, which was a sign of the Resurrection. If any person had removed the body, would they, before doing so have stripped it? If any had stolen it, would they have taken the trouble to remove the napkin, and roll it up, and lay it in a place by itself? They would have taken the body as it was. On this account John tells us by anticipation that it was buried with much myrrh, which glues linen to the body as firmly as lead. In order that when you hear that the napkins lay apart, you may not endure those who say that He was stolen. A thief would not have been so foolish as to spend so much trouble on a superfluous matter. Why would he undo the clothes? How could he have escaped detection if he had done so? He would probably have spent much time in so doing, and be found out by delaying and loitering. But why do the clothes lie apart, while the napkin was wrapped together by itself? This was done that you may learn that it was not the action of men in confusion or haste; the placing some in one place, some in another, and the wrapping them together. From this they believed in the Resurrection. On this account Christ afterwards appeared to them, when they were convinced by what they had seen. Observe also the absence of boastfulness in John's account, how he witnesses to

[304] Augustin of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, CXX, 9.
[305] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 4.

the exactness of Peter's search. He himself having gotten there before Peter, and having seen the linen clothes, didn't inquire farther, but withdrew. But Peter, that fervent one, passing farther in, looked at everything carefully, saw somewhat more, and then John too was summoned to the sight".

John Chrysostom also spoke[306] of the courage of Joseph to do what he did. The result of his efforts was the removal of any suspicion regarding the details of the Resurrection.

> "This was Joseph, who was concealing his discipleship; now, however, he had become very bold after the death of Christ. He was not an obscure person, but one of the council, and highly distinguished; from which circumstance especially one may see his courage. He exposed himself to death, making him enemies with everyone by his affection to Jesus, both having dared to beg the body, and not having desisted until he obtained it. But not only by taking it, nor by burying it in a costly manner, but also by laying it in his own new tomb, he showed his love, and his courage. This was not so ordered without purpose, but so there would not be any suspicion, that one had risen instead of another".

Chrysostom continued to speak[307] about Joseph's and Nicodemus' perception of Jesus as still being that of a mere man, and that they acted out of loving affection. Their deeds, however, stand out compared to the scattering and cowardice of the Twelve.

> "Joseph figured that the Cross quenched the anger of the Jews; so he approached without fear, and took charge of His funeral. Nicodemus also assisted him, and furnished a costly burial. They still thought of Him as a mere man. They brought those spices whose special nature is to preserve the body for a long time, and not to allow it quickly to yield to corruption, which was an act of men imagining nothing great respecting Him. But they exhibited very loving affection. But why did no one of the Twelve come, neither John, Peter, nor any other of the more distinguished disciples? Nor does the writer conceal this point. If anyone might say that it was from fear of the Jews, Joseph and Nicodemus were also occupied by the same fear. Joseph was, it said, 'A secret disciple for fear of the Jews' (John 19:38). No one can say that Joseph acted thus because he greatly despised the Jewish leaders; but though himself afraid, still he came. But John, who was present (John 19:25-27), and had seen Him expire, did nothing of the kind. Joseph was a man of high rank, as is clear from the funeral, and known to Pilate, on which account also he obtained the favor. He buried Him, not as a criminal, but magnificently, after the Jewish fashion, as some great and admirable one".

First Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 33:11-23 "The Glory of God"

At the Burial of Christ, we take a moment to look back at Who this is that is being buried, and consider what Moses saw on the Mountain and in the Tabernacle. There are three aspects to "seeing God" presented in the Scriptures.

1. Seeing Him in human form, such as Christ appeared to the people of Nazareth (Luke 4:16-30), or as He appeared to Abraham (Genesis 18:1-15).

[306] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXVIII.
[307] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 3.

2. Seeing Him in a transfigured human form, such as Peter, James and John saw on the mountain (Matthew 17:1-7).
3. Seeing Him in His Divine Essence, which man cannot do (Exodus 33:20, John 1:18)

In this parable from the Old Testament, we have some seeming contradictory statements. It says that "the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as if one should speak to his friend" (Exodus 33:11). But yet it also says that Moses couldn't see the Lord's face. "You shall not be able to see my face; for no man shall see my face, and live" (Exodus 33:20). The Lord said the same thing on the occasion of Miriam's rebellion:

> "My servant Moses *is* not so; he is faithful in all My house. I will speak to him mouth to mouth apparently, and not in dark speeches; and he has seen the Glory of the Lord; and why were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:7-8 LXX).

In the text just prior to this Parable, the Scriptures describe the events surrounding the Lord's speaking to Moses. Moses pitched the tent outside the Camp and called it the Tabernacle of meeting. Moses then went out to the Tabernacle while the people watched. As he entered the Tabernacle, the pillar of cloud descended and stood at the door. When this happened, all the people fell on their face and worshipped.

> "Moses took the tabernacle and pitched it outside the camp, at a distance from the camp; and it was called the Tabernacle of Testimony. It came to pass *that* everyone that sought the Lord went forth to the Tabernacle which was outside the camp. Whenever Moses went into the Tabernacle outside the camp, all the people stood everyone watching by the doors of his tent; and when Moses departed, they took notice until he entered into the Tabernacle. When Moses entered into the Tabernacle, the pillar of the cloud descended, and stood at the door of the Tabernacle, and *God* talked to Moses. All the people saw the pillar of the cloud standing by the door of the Tabernacle, and all the people stood and worshipped everyone at the door of his tent. The Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as if one should speak to his friend; and he retired into the camp: but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, departed not from the Tabernacle" (Exodus 33:7-11 LXX).

As a result of Moses' meetings with the Lord, his face shone, and the people were afraid to come near him. In the words of the LXX text, he "was glorified". So Moses put a veil over his face whenever he spoke with the people. But when he went in to speak to the Lord, he took the veil off.

> "And when Moses went down from the mountain, *there were* the two tablets in the hands of Moses. As he went down from the mountain, Moses knew not that the appearance of the skin of his face was glorified, when God spoke to him. Aaron and all the elders of Israel saw Moses, and the appearance of the skin of his face was made glorious, and they feared to approach him. Moses called them, and Aaron and all the rulers of the synagogue turned towards him, and Moses spoke to them. Afterwards all the children of Israel came to him, and he commanded them all things, whatever the Lord had commanded him on Mount Sinai. When he ceased speaking to them, he put a veil on his face. Whenever Moses went in before the Lord to speak to Him, he took off the veil till he went out, and he went forth and spoke to all the children of Israel whatever the Lord

commanded him. The children of Israel saw the face of Moses, that it was glorified; and Moses put the veil over his face, till he went in to speak with Him" (Exodus 34:29-35 LXX).

If Moses was accustomed to these face to face meetings, where he "was glorified", why did he desire to have the Lord show Himself to him, saying, "Manifest yourself to me" (Exodus 33:18). What was Moses accustomed to seeing, and how was this different from what he saw from the cleft of the rock? Most of the Church Fathers state that Moses did not see a physical Christ in His humanity, but he saw a vision of this. But there is another aspect to the Glory of God that is applicable here.

Christ's Glory Was the Cross

The day before the Crucifixion, Jesus spoke to His disciples about His glorification, where He would be glorified because He went to the Cross of His own free will:

> "The hour has come that the Son of Man should be glorified. Most assuredly, I say to you, unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies, it remains alone; but if it dies, it produces much grain. He who loves his life will lose it, and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life" (John 12:23-25).

Going to the Cross required a great deal of humility and love on the part of Christ. Moses, himself, exhibited an extraordinary measure of humility and love just like Christ, and dealing with a stubborn and stiff-necked people for forty years was a Cross for Moses. Moses, like Christ, was so humble that he didn't even defend himself when Miriam and Aaron spoke against him[308]. "The man Moses *was* very humble, more than all men who *were* on the face of the earth" (Numbers 12:3).

Moses' love for the people of Israel was so great that he pleaded for the Lord's forgiveness following the idolatry of the Golden Calf. The Lord had offered to annihilate them all and raise up a great nation descending from Moses. In this, the Lord was testing Moses' humility and his love for his people. Moses even offered to forfeit his own salvation (Exodus 32:32), as the Apostle Paul later offered to do, in order that his people might be saved (Romans 9:1-5).

> "Then Moses returned to the LORD and said, "Oh, these people have committed a great sin, and have made for themselves a god of gold! Yet now, if You will forgive their sin—but if not, I pray, blot me out of Your book, which You have written" (Exodus 32:31-32).

How Did Christ Speak to Moses Face to Face?

"And the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, as if one should speak to his friend; and he retired into the camp: but his servant Joshua the son of Nun, a young man, departed not from the Tabernacle".

"And Moses said to the Lord, 'You say to me, Lead on this people; but you have not showed me whom You will send with me, but You have said to me, I know you above all, and

[308] Compare Matthew 26:53, where Christ could have defended Himself with more than 12 legions of angels, but didn't.

you have favor with Me. If then I have found favor in Your sight, reveal Yourself to me, that I may evidently see You; that I may find favor in Your sight, and that I may know that this great nation *is* Your people'. And He said, 'I myself will go before you, and give you rest'. And he said to Him, 'If You do not go up with us Yourself, don't bring me up from here. And how shall it be surely known, that both I and this people have found favor with You, except only if You go with us? So both I and Your people shall be glorified beyond all the nations, as many as are upon the earth'".

"And the Lord said to Moses, 'I will also do for you this thing, which you have spoken; for you have found grace before me, and I know you above all'" (Exodus 33:11-17).

In this Reading, the Lord was described as speaking to Moses regularly as a man speaks to his friend. By "the Lord", the Scriptures mean Christ. At the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:14), Christ spoke to Moses, but there was no person that Moses could see. Inside the Tabernacle, with Joshua present, Moses spoke with a person. But Christ was not yet incarnate of the Virgin Mary. How did this happen?

Tertullian stated[309] that the Moses had visions of Christ in the form of man that He would later assume from the Virgin Mary. In His humanity, it is possible to behold Him, but with difficulty, as Peter, James and John discovered on the Mountain of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-9). In His deity, it is not possible to behold Him.

> "When Moses desired to see the Lord, saying, 'If therefore I have found grace in Your sight, reveal Yourself to me, that I may see You distinctly' (Exodus 33:13), the sight which he desired to have was of that condition which He was to assume as man, and which as a prophet he knew was to occur. Respecting the *face* of God, however, he had already heard, 'No man shall see Me, and live' (Exodus 33:20). 'This thing', said He, 'which you have spoken, will I do unto you'. Then Moses said, 'Show me Your glory'. The Lord, with like reference to the future, replied, 'I will pass before you in My glory', etc. Then at the last He says, 'Then you shall see My back' (Exodus 33:17-23). Not loins, or calves of the legs, did he want to behold, but the glory which was to be revealed in the latter days[310]. He had promised that He would make Himself thus face to face visible to him, when He said to Aaron, 'If there shall be a prophet among you, I will make Myself known to him by vision, and by vision will I speak with him; but not so is My manner to Moses; with *him* will I speak mouth to mouth', that is to say, in the form of man which He was to assume, 'and not in dark speeches'" (Numbers 12:7-8).

So then, in what form did Christ appear to Moses? Christ appeared in different forms to him at different times. At the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:14), Christ had no form when He appeared to Moses. On the top of Mt. Sinai, Moses walked into the midst of a huge fire (the Pillar of Fire) that made the mountain top look like it "burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens" (Deuteronomy 4:11). This made a very awesome spectacle, accompanied by the thunder, the lightning and the very loud trumpet sound (Exodus 19:16), in addition to the earthquake (Psalm 114:4), all of which Basil attributed[311] to the angels around the Throne of God. At that time,

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[309] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 22.
[310] "The latter days" refers to the fulfillment of time when Christ was incarnate.
[311] Basil, On the Spirit, 14.

> "The LORD spoke to you out of the midst of the fire. You heard the sound of the words, but saw no form; *you* only *heard* a voice" (Deuteronomy 4:12).

Clement of Alexandria, in speaking[312] about how God can only be known through faith, stated that Moses entered the thick darkness on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:21, Deuteronomy 4:11-12) by faith.

> "Moses, persuaded that God is not to be known by human wisdom, said, 'Show me Your glory' (Exodus 33:18); and into the thick darkness where God's voice was, pressed to enter. That is, he entered into the inaccessible and invisible ideas respecting Existence. God is not in darkness or in place, but above both space and time, and qualities of objects. Wherefore neither is He at any time in a part, either as containing or as contained, either by limitation or by section. 'For what house will you build for Me?' (Isaiah 66:1), said the Lord? He has not even built one for Himself, since He cannot be contained. Though heaven is called His throne, not even thus is He contained, but He rests delighted in the creation".

When the Lord spoke to Moses face to face, Moses did not have any apparent difficulty, such as Peter, James and John did on the Mountain of Transfiguration (Matthew 17:1-6). But then when Moses asked Christ to show him His Glory, Christ had to shield Moses in the cleft of the rock (Exodus 33:22). What was different? Moses never saw Christ's Deity, and if he did, he would have died on the spot, since the Lord said, "No man shall see My face, and live" (Exodus 33:20). The question is whether Moses saw Christ in a form of pre-Incarnate humanity, or whether he saw a vision of Christ.

Moses Saw Visions of Christ in the Tabernacle

Once Christ became incarnate, people had no difficulty looking at Him, including unbelievers, because His humanity veiled His Deity. On the mountain of Transfiguration, Jesus' humanity shone with the uncreated Light of His Deity, and Peter, James and John had difficulty looking at Him. When the Apostle John stated that 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18), this refers to seeing Him in His Deity. In His transfigured state, even His humanity becomes difficult to behold.

John Chrysostom pondered[313] the seeming contradiction of no man ever "seeing God" at any time (John 1:18), and yet others "saw Him" in some way. In all cases, those who "saw God", including the angels, saw some condescension where He made Himself visible to them. No one has seen His Essence, including the angels! The one work of the angels is to praise God, not to behold Him. Only the Son beholds Him. Everyone else can only behold Him in a vision as He allows.

> "By what connection of thought does the Apostle come to say, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18)? After showing the infinite difference between the gifts of Christ and those ministered by Moses, he adds the cause of the difference. Moses, as being a servant, was minister of lower things, but Christ being Lord and King, and the King's Son, brought to us things far greater, being ever with the Father, and beholding Him continually; wherefore He said, 'No man has seen God at any time'. What then shall we answer to Isaiah when he says, 'I

[312] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, II, 2.
[313] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XV, 1-2.

saw the Lord sitting upon a throne high and lifted up' (Isaiah 6:1); and to John himself testifying of Him, that 'Isaiah said these things when he had seen His glory'? (John 12:41) What about Ezekiel; for he too beheld Him sitting above the Cherubim (Ezekiel 1, 10)? What about Daniel; for he too said, 'The Ancient of days did sit' (Daniel 7:9)? What about Moses himself, 'Show me Your Glory, that I may see You so as to know You' (Exodus 33:13, LXX, paraphrased)? Jacob took his name from this very thing, being called 'Israel'; for Israel is 'one that sees God'. How then did John say, 'No man has seen God at any time'"?

"It is to declare, that all these were instances of His condescension, not the vision of the Essence itself unveiled. Had they seen the very Nature, they would not have beheld It under different forms, since His Essence is simple, without form, or parts, or bounding lines. It does not sit, stand, or walk; these things all belong to bodies. But how He is, He only knows. This He has declared by the prophet Hosea saying, 'I have multiplied visions, and used similitude by the hands of the prophets' (Hosea 12:10); that is, 'I have condescended, I have not appeared as I really was'. For since His Son was about to appear in the flesh, He prepared them from old to behold the substance of God, as far as it was possible for them to see It. But what God really is, not only have not the prophets seen, but not even angels or archangels".

"If you ask the angels, you shall not hear them answering anything concerning His Essence, but sending up, 'Glory to God in the Highest, on earth peace, good will towards men' (Luke 2:14). If you desire to learn something from Cherubim or Seraphim, you shall hear the mystic song of His Holiness, and that 'heaven and earth are full of His glory' (Isaiah 6:3). If you inquire of the higher powers, you shall but find that their one work is the praise of God. 'Praise Him', said David, 'all His hosts' (Psalm 148:2). But the Son only beholds Him, and the Holy Spirit. How can any created nature ever see the Uncreated? If we are absolutely unable clearly to discern any incorporeal power whatsoever, even though created, as has been often proved in the case of angels, much less can we discern the Essence which is incorporeal and uncreated. Therefore Paul said, 'Whom no man has seen, nor can see'" (1 Timothy 6:16).

"Does then this special attribute belong to the Father only, not to the Son? It belongs also to the Son; and to show that it does so, hear Paul declaring this point, and saying, that He 'is the Image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15). Now if He is the Image of the Invisible, He must be invisible Himself, for otherwise He would not be an 'image'. And wonder not that Paul said in another place, "God was manifested in the Flesh" (1 Timothy 3:16); because the manifestation took place by means of the flesh, not according to His Essence. Besides, Paul shows that He is invisible, not only to men, but also to the powers above. For after saying, 'was manifested in the Flesh', he adds, 'was seen of angels'. So that even to angels He then became visible, when He put on the Flesh; but before that time they did not so behold Him, because even to them His Essence was invisible".

"How then did Christ say, 'Despise not one of these little ones, for I tell you that their angels do always behold the face of My Father which is in heaven'? (Matthew 18:10) God does not have a face. He also said, 'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5:8), He means that intellectual vision which is possible to us, and the having God in the thoughts. So also in the case of

angels, we must understand that by reason of their pure and sleepless nature they do nothing else, but always image to themselves God. Therefore Christ said that 'No man knows the Father, except the Son' (Matthew 11:27). We are not all in ignorance of God; but no one knows Him as the Son knows Him. Many have seen Him in the mode of vision permitted to them, but no one has beheld His Essence. So many of us know God, but what His substance can be none knows, except only He that was begotten of Him. For by 'knowledge' He here means an exact idea and comprehension, such as the Father has of the Son. 'As the Father knows Me, even so know I the Father'" (John 10:15).

Cyril of Jerusalem generalized[314] to say that the incorporeal couldn't be subject to bodily sight. Human eyes simply cannot see God; but by His works, we can attain some appreciation for Him.

> "To look upon God with eyes of flesh is impossible; for the incorporeal cannot be subject to bodily sight. The Only begotten Son of God Himself has testified, saying, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18). If according to that which is written in Ezekiel anyone should understand that Ezekiel saw Him, yet what did the Scripture say? 'He saw the likeness of the glory of the Lord' (Ezekiel 1:28); not the Lord Himself, but the likeness of His glory, not the glory itself, as it really is. When he saw merely the likeness of the glory, and not the glory itself, he fell to the earth from fear. Now if the sight of the likeness of the glory brought fear and distress on the prophets, anyone who should attempt to behold God Himself would to a certainty lose his life, according to the saying, 'No man shall see My face and live' (Exodus 33:20). For this cause God of His great loving-kindness spread out the heaven as a veil of His proper Godhead that we should not perish. The word is not mine, but the Prophet's. 'If You shall tear open the heavens, trembling will take hold of the mountains at Your sight, and they will flow down' (Isaiah 64:1 LXX). Why do you wonder that Ezekiel fell down on seeing the likeness of the glory?"
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> "The Divine Nature then is impossible to see with eyes of flesh. But from the works, which are Divine, it is possible to attain to some conception of His power, according to Solomon, who says, 'By the greatness and beauty of the creatures proportionately the Maker of them is seen'" (Wisdom 13:5).

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[315] that Moses and the prophets saw Christ, as far as each was able. At the Incarnation, Christ took on a human nature to do this, and by doing so, He revealed and proclaimed the Father, just as He had to Moses. In showing Moses His glory, Christ said, "I will pass by before you with My Glory, and I will call by My Name, the Lord, before you" (Exodus 33:19).

> "That you may be sure that it was Christ who was seen by Moses, hear Paul's testimony. He says, 'They all drank of a spiritual rock that followed them; and the rock was Christ' (1 Corinthians 10:4). Again, 'By faith Moses forsook Egypt', and, 'Accounting the reproach of Christ greater riches than the treasures in Egypt' (Hebrews 11:26-27). This Moses says to Him, 'Show me Yourself' (Exodus 33:18). You see that the Prophets also in those times saw the Christ, that is, as far as each was able. 'Show me Yourself, that I may see You with

[314] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, IX, 1-2.
[315] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, X, 7-8.

understanding'. But He said, 'No man can see My face, and live' (Exodus 33:20). For this reason then, because no man could see the face of the Godhead and live, He took on Him the face of human nature, that we might see this and live. Yet when He wished to show even that with a little majesty at the Transfiguration, when 'His face shone as the sun' (Matthew 17:2), the disciples fell down frightened. If then His bodily countenance, shining not in its full power, but according to the capacity of the Disciples, frightened them, so that even thus they could not bear it, how could any man gaze upon the majesty of the Godhead? 'A great thing,' said the Lord, 'you desire, O Moses; and I approve your insatiable desire, and I will do this thing for you, but according as you are able. 'Behold, I will put you in the cleft of the rock; for as being little, you shall lodge in a little space'" (Exodus 33:22).

"Now here I wish you to make safe what I am going to say, because of the Jews. Our object is to prove that the Lord Jesus Christ was with the Father. The Lord then said to Moses, 'I will pass by before you with My glory, and will proclaim the name of the Lord before you' (Exodus 33:19). Being Himself the Lord, what Lord does He proclaim? You see how He was covertly teaching the godly doctrine of the Father and the Son. Again, in what follows it is written word for word. 'The Lord descended in the cloud, and stood with him there, and proclaimed the name of the Lord. And the Lord passed by before him, and proclaimed, The Lord, the Lord God, merciful and gracious, long-suffering, and abundant in goodness and truth, both keeping righteousness and showing mercy to thousands, taking away iniquities, transgressions, and sins' (Exodus 33:19). Then in what follows, Moses bowed his head and worshipped before the Lord who proclaimed the Father, and said: 'Go then, O Lord, in the midst of us'" (Exodus 33:16).

There is some significance to the Lord's words to Moses, "I know you above all" (Exodus 33:12). Gregory of Nyssa pointed out[316] that "the Lord knows them that are His" (2 Timothy 2:19); and thus He says to Moses, "I knew you above all". This can be contrasted to those condemned in their wickedness, where He Who knows all things says, "I never knew you" (Matthew 7:23).

Moses Sees the Glory of God from the Cleft in the Rock

"And *Moses* says, 'Reveal Yourself to me'. And *God* said, 'I will pass by before you with My Glory, and I will call by My Name, the Lord, before you; and I will have mercy on whom I will have mercy, and will have pity on whom I will have pity'. And *God* said, 'You shall not be able to see My Face; for no man shall see My Face, and live'. And the Lord said, 'Behold, *there is* a place by Me: you shall stand upon the rock; and when My Glory shall pass by, then I will put you into a hole of the rock; and I will cover you over with My Hand, until I shall have passed by. And I will remove My Hand, and then shall you see My Back Parts; but My Face shall not appear to you'" (Exodus 33:18-23 LXX).

The person that Moses addressed in his request to see the Glory of God was the Son of God, not the Father. But did Moses see the Son of God as a man or as a vision? And if the Son

[316] Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Making of Man", Philosophical Works, III, xx, 1.

of God was accustomed to speak to Moses face to face as a man speaks to his friend (Exodus 33:11), why did Moses ask Him to show Himself to him? Moses spoke of his contact with God:

> "He said to them, Hear My words: If there should be of you a prophet to the Lord, I will be made known to him in a vision, and in sleep will I speak to him. My servant Moses *is* not so; he is faithful in all My house. I will speak[317] to him mouth to mouth apparently, and not in dark speeches; and he has seen the Glory of the Lord; and why were you not afraid to speak against My servant Moses?" (Numbers 12:6-8)

Tertullian stated[318] that it was always the person of the Son of God Who spoke to men and Who led them in various ways.

> "He who always spoke to Moses was the Son of God Himself; who was always seen. No one ever saw God the Father, and lived (Exodus 33:20). Accordingly it is agreed that the Son of God Himself spoke to Moses, and said to the people, 'Behold, I send My Angel before your face, to guard you on the march, and to introduce you to the land which I have prepared for you. Listen to Him, and don't be disobedient to Him; for He has not escaped your notice, since My Name is on Him' (Exodus 23:20-26). Now He called Him an 'angel' on account of the magnitude of the mighty deeds which He was to achieve, which mighty deeds Joshua the son of Nun did, and on account of His office of prophet announcing the divine will. This is similar to the Spirit calling the forerunner of Christ, John, a future 'angel', through the prophet. 'Behold, I send My angel before Your — that is, Christ's — face, who shall prepare[319] Your way before You'" (Malachi 3:1).

Tertullian also described[320] the relationship of the Son to the Father in addressing the heresy of Marcion, where Marcion confused the Father and the Son. It was the Son, not the Father Who Moses addressed on Mt. Sinai. The Son became man in order that man might be able to deal on equal terms with God.

> "Now we believe that Christ always acted in the Name of God the Father; that He actually from the beginning held intercourse with men; actually communed with patriarchs and prophets. He was the Son of the Creator; was His Word; whom God made His Son by emitting Him from His own self, and thenceforth set Him over every dispensation and administration of His will. With regard to the Father, the Gospel testifies that He was never visible, according to the word of Christ, 'No man knows the Father, except the Son' (Matthew 11:27). Even in the Old Testament He had declared, 'No man shall see me, and live' (Exodus 33:20). He means that the Father is invisible, in whose authority and in whose Name was He God who appeared as the Son of God. Whatever attributes therefore you require as worthy of God, must be found in the Father, who is invisible and unapproachable. Those qualities, which you censure as unworthy, must be supposed to be in the Son, who has been seen, heard, and encountered.

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[317] Note that the LXX text uses the future tense while the Hebrew text uses the present tense. Tertullian stated that the future tense refers to Christ speaking to Moses face to face at the Transfiguration (Against Praxeas, II, vii, 14-15).

[318] Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, I, vii, 9.

[319] Compare also Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27.

[320] Tertullian, The Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 2, 27.

> The Witness and Servant of the Father united in Himself man and God, God in mighty deeds, in weak ones man, in order that He may give to man as much as He takes from God. What in your esteem is the entire disgrace of my God, is in fact the sacrament of man's salvation. God held converse with man that man might learn to act as God. God dealt on equal terms with man that man might be able to deal on equal terms with God. God was found little, that man might become very great".

There were times when the Son became visible, such as the meeting with Abraham, where Christ and two angels visited Abraham. Abraham washed their feet and Abraham fed them bread, lamb with butter and milk (Genesis 18:1-8), but this was temporary.

Comparison: Christ's Appearance to Abraham

If the Son was only visible to the Patriarchs and the prophets in a glass, and an enigma, in vision and dream, what happened when the Lord visited Abraham, accompanied by two angels? The text reads:

> "And God appeared to him by the oak of Mamre, as he sat by the door of his tent at noon. He lifted up his eyes and beheld, and three men stood before him; and having seen them he ran to meet them from the door of his tent, and bowed himself to the ground. He said, 'Lord, if indeed I have found grace in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant. Let water now be brought, and let them wash Your feet, and refresh *Yourselves* under the tree. I will bring bread, and You shall eat, and after this You shall depart on Your journey, on account of which *refreshment* You have turned aside to your servant'. He said, 'So do, as you have said'. Abraham hurried to the tent to Sarah, and said to her, 'Hurry, and knead three measures of fine flour, and make cakes'. Abraham ran to the herd, and took a young calf, tender and good, and gave it to his servant, and he hurried to dress it. He took butter and milk, and the calf which he had dressed; and he set them before Them; and They ate while he stood by them under the tree" (Genesis 18:1-8 LXX).

In this account, Christ had His feet washed by Abraham, and He and the two angels ate dinner with Abraham as Abraham stood by serving them. Later that afternoon, the two angels went to Sodom, and Lot washed their feet before serving them a feast that included unleavened bread. These angels were in a recognizable-enough human form that the men of Sodom desired to rape them in the street after dinner (Genesis 19:1-11). Yet the angels had to cover a distance of around 40 miles from mid-afternoon, when they finished dinner with Abraham, to arrive at Sodom in the evening. This would be moving rather quickly if they were mere human beings; as angels, this is no problem.

Is all this an enigma, vision or dream? John of Damascus stated[321] that all the appearances of Christ in the Old Testament were "figurative manifestations of God". Hilary of Poitiers stated[322] that the appearances of the angels to Lot "were nothing more than a vision of angels".

[321] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, III, 1.
[322] Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, IV, 28.

The interesting aspect of the account is that both Abraham and Lot recognized them as other-worldly creatures quickly. In the case of Abraham, "He lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, three men were standing by him. When he saw *them*, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the ground, and said, 'My Lord, if I have now found favor in Your sight, do not pass on by Your servant'" (Genesis 18:2-3). In the case of Lot, "The two angels came to Sodom in the evening, and Lot was sitting in the gate of Sodom. When Lot saw *them*, he rose to meet them, and he bowed himself with his face toward the ground. He said, 'Here now, my lords, please turn in to your servant's house and spend the night, and wash your feet; then you may rise early and go on your way'" (Genesis 19:1-2).

What was it about the appearance of the Lord and the two angels that Abraham and Lot recognized? The text (Genesis 18:1) states that God appeared to Abraham (Hebrew: *Jehovah*, Greek LXX: *Theos*). Abraham called Him Lord (Hebrew: Adoni, Greek: Kurios, both meaning Master), and Lot used the same term to refer to the angels who visited him (Genesis 19:2). John Chrysostom, in commenting on the spiritual benefits of hospitality, stated[323] that Abraham and Lot did not recognize the visitors immediately, but acted as they did simply out of a very hospitable spirit. But their recognition of who the visitors were must have come rather quickly.

And conversely, what was it about the appearance of the two angels that the men of Sodom wanted to desecrate, where they even rejected the offer of Lot to let them rape his two virgin daughters instead of the two angels? (Genesis 19:4-8) John Chrysostom speculated[324] that the visitors appeared as young men.

Ephraim the Syrian also stated[325] that Abraham didn't recognize the three visitors immediately, but mentioned that Abraham was expecting something. When he was 99 years old (Genesis 17:1), God had appeared to him; God then promised that his wife, Sarah, would have a son (Genesis 17:15-17). It was shortly after this[326] that the Lord and the two angels appeared to him. Abraham quickly recognized the strangers as the Lord with two angels, and he fell down and worshipped Him (Genesis 18:2).

Justin Martyr confirmed[327] that the person who appeared to Abraham was Christ, accompanied by two angels. He appeared on earth "in human form" in like manner as the two angels who came with Him.

> "Moses, the blessed and faithful servant of God, declares that He who appeared to Abraham under the oak in Mamre is God, sent with the two angels in His company to judge Sodom by Another. The other, who remains ever in the supercelestial places, invisible to all men, holds personal intercourse with none, whom we believe to be Maker and Father of all things".

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[323] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis, XLI, 13-15.
John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis, XLIII, 3.

[324] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis, XLI, 13.

[325] Ephraim the Syrian, Commentary on Genesis, XIV:2-XV:2.

[326] We can see that this was shortly after the first visit. At the earlier visit, the Lord hadn't said when Sarah would have a son. During the second visit, the Lord said that He would return in a year and that Sarah would then have her son (Genesis 18:9-11). When the Lord returned a year later, Isaac had been born when Abraham was 100 years old (Genesis 21:5). Given the normal 9 months for Sarah's pregnancy, the second visit had to be no more than a few months after the first.

[327] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 56.

> "I have proved to you (Trypho) from the Scriptures that one of those three is God, and is called Angel, because He brings messages to those to whom God the Maker of all things wishes messages to be brought. In regard to Him who appeared to Abraham on earth in human form in like manner as the two angels who came with Him, and who was God even before the creation of the world, it was reasonable for you to believe this".

Irenaeus described[328] Christ's appearance to Abraham as one of speaking to him "in human shape".

> "Therefore the Jews have departed from God, in not receiving His Word, but imagining that they could know the Father apart, by Himself, without the Word; that is, without the Son. They are ignorant of that God who spoke in human shape to Abraham, and again to Moses, saying, "I have surely seen the affliction of My people in Egypt, and I have come down to deliver them." For the Son, who is the Word of God, arranged these things beforehand from the beginning in order that He might call the creation into being, and form man, for whom also the creation was made".

Tertullian also pointed out[329] that prior to the Incarnation, we cannot make a distinction between a visible and an invisible God, as the heretic Marcion did, since both the Father and the Son were invisible.

> "The Scriptures call Christ 'the image of the invisible God' (Colossians 1:15). We in like manner say that the Father of Christ is invisible, for we know that it was the Son who was seen in ancient times, whenever any appearance was granted to men in the name of God, as the image of the Father Himself. He must not be regarded, however, as making any difference between a visible and an invisible God. Long before he wrote this we find a description of our God to this effect, 'No man can see the Lord, and live'" (Exodus 33:20).

Thus, there must have been some characteristic of the Presence of the Lord and His angels that tipped Abraham, Lot and Moses off as to who they were. Perhaps they glowed as Moses' face did after he spoke with Christ on various occasions (Exodus 34:29-35, 2 Corinthians 3:7-18). Perhaps they gave off an ethereal appearance. Whatever it was, there was something about them that was quickly recognizable as an other-worldly appearance.

In writing to Trypho, a Jew who thought that Abraham's three visitors were angels, Justin Martyr stated[330] that, while the visitors appeared in human form, the "eating" could very well have been figurative and not chewing and swallowing. Similarly, Justin stated that Christ wrestled[331] in human form with Jacob (Genesis 32:24-32), and called Himself "Captain" when He appeared[332] in human form to Joshua the son of Nun (Joshua 5:13-15).

> "It is written that they ate; and we believe that the three ate, and not the two alone, where the two were really angels, and are nourished in the heavens. This is evident to us, since they are not nourished by food similar to that which

[328] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, vii, 4.
[329] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 5, 19.
[330] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 57.
[331] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 58.
[332] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 61.

mortals use. For, concerning the sustenance of manna which supported your fathers in the desert, Scripture speaks thus, that they ate angels' food (Psalm 78:25). If we believe that three ate, then I would say that the Scripture, which affirms they ate, bears the same meaning as when we would say about fire that it has devoured all things. Yet it is not certainly understood that they ate, masticating with teeth and jaws. So that not even here should we be at a loss about anything, if we are acquainted even slightly with figurative modes of expression, and able to rise above them."

Marcion had contended that these appearances constituted a change in the Godhead, and that change is not possible to a Being who cannot come to an end. Therefore these appearances couldn't have been God. Tertullian stated[333] that there was bodily substance to the appearances of Christ and His angels, but that this bodily substance appeared out of nothing, and returned to nothing afterward. Tertullian refuted Marcion's theory by referring to the appearance of the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove.

"You have read that the Creator's angels have been changed into human form, and have even borne about so veritable a body that Abraham washed their feet, and Lot was rescued from the Sodomites by their hands. Has it been permitted to angels, after they have been changed into human bodily form, nevertheless to remain angels? Are you saying that Christ could not continue to be God, after His real assumption of the nature of man?"

"You are confuted in this matter by the Gospel of John, when it declares that the Spirit descended in the body of a dove, and sat on the Lord. When the Spirit was in this condition, He was as truly a dove as He was also a spirit. He did not destroy His own proper substance by the assumption of an extraneous substance. But, you ask, what became of the dove's body, after the return of the Spirit back to heaven, and similarly in the case of the angels. Their withdrawal was affected in the same manner as their appearance had been. If you had seen how their production out of nothing had been effected, you would have known also the process of their return to nothing. If the initial step was out of sight, so was also the final one. Still there was solidity in their bodily substance, whatever may have been the force by which the body became visible".

Tertullian also stated[334] that the many people that "saw God", during the events recorded in the Old Testament, saw according to the faculties of men, but not according to the full glory of the Godhead. If Abraham[335], Jacob, Isaiah and Ezekiel really "saw God", yet did not die, then the Scripture misleads us when it says, 'No man shall see My Face, and live' (Exodus 33:20). In fact, they did not "see God" in all His Glory, but they saw Him through a glass, dimly (1 Corinthians 13:12), or enigmatically.

"When Moses in Egypt desired to see the face of the Lord, God said, 'You cannot see My Face; for no man shall see My Face, and live'. In other words, he who sees me shall die. Now we find that many persons have seen God, and yet no one who saw Him died at the sight. The truth is, they saw God according to the faculties of men, but not in accordance with the full glory of the Godhead. The patriarchs are said to have seen God (Abraham and Jacob), and the prophets

[333] Tertullian, On the Flesh of Christ, II, v, 3.
[334] Tertullian, Against Praxeas, II, vii, 14.
[335] See for example Genesis 18:1-15, Genesis 32:24-30, Isaiah 6:1-13, Ezekiel 10:1-15.

(for instance, Isaiah and Ezekiel), and yet they did not die. Either they ought to have died, since they had seen Him, or else if they saw God, and yet did not die, the Scripture is false in stating that God said, 'If a man see my face, he shall not live'".

"Either way, the Scripture misleads us, when it makes God invisible, and at the same time, when it produces Him to our sight. Now, then, they must have seen a different Being, because one, who was seen, could not be invisible. It will therefore follow, that by Him who is invisible we must understand the Father in the fullness of His majesty, while we recognize the Son as visible. Similarly, we cannot contemplate the sun, in the full amount of his substance which is in the heavens, but we can only endure with our eyes a ray from him to the earth".

"But the Scripture maintains their difference by the distinction it makes between the Visible and the Invisible. If it was the Son, who spoke to Moses, Praxeas must mean that His face was visible to no one, because He was Himself the invisible Father in the name of the Son. Praxeas states that the Visible and the Invisible are one and the same, just as the Father and the Son are the same. In a preceding passage, before He had refused the sight of His face to Moses, the Scripture informs us that 'the Lord spoke face to face with Moses, even as a man speaks to his friend' (Exodus 33:11). Just as Jacob also says, 'I have seen God face to face'" (Genesis 32:30).

"We declare, however, that the Son also, considered in Himself as the Son, is invisible, in that He is God, and the Word and Spirit of God. He was visible before the days of His flesh, in the way that He spoke to Aaron and Miriam. 'And if there shall be a prophet amongst you, I will make myself known to him in a vision, and will speak to him in a dream. Not as with Moses, with whom I shall speak mouth to mouth, in truth, and not enigmatically' (Numbers 12:6-8) that is to say, in image. The apostle also expresses it, 'Now we see through a glass, dimly, or enigmatically, but then face to face'" (1 Corinthians 13:12).

What Did Moses See: A Vision or a Body?

So then, what exactly did Moses see? If God had not made Himself visible until the Incarnation, did Moses just behold a vision of what was to come? The consensus seems to be that Moses saw some kind of a vision, but that the vision had some bodily substance to it.

Jerome stated[336] that the limiting factor in seeing God is the capacity of mortals to receive it. Even the pure in heart can't do it.

"But if you think that God is seen by those who are pure in heart in this world, why did Moses afterwards entreat that he might see him distinctly? Because he said that he had seen God, the Lord told him, 'You cannot see My face. Man shall not see My face, and live' (Exodus 33:20). Wherefore also the Apostle calls Him the only invisible God, Who dwells in light unapproachable, and Whom no man has seen, nor can see (1 Timothy 1:17, 6:16). John testifies, saying, 'No man has at any time seen God. The only begotten Son Who is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him'" (John 1:18).

[336] Jerome, Against the Pelagians, III, 12.

Basil stated[337] that there is a special place, where we can "see" God, and it is a place of worship. It is not necessarily a physical place, but it is a place "in the Spirit".

> "It is an extraordinary statement, but it is none the less true, that the Spirit is frequently spoken of as the *place* of them that are being sanctified, and it will become evident that by this figure the Spirit is rather glorified. For words applicable to the body are, for the sake of clearness, frequently transferred in scripture to spiritual conceptions. Accordingly we find the Psalmist, even in reference to God, saying 'Be You to me a champion God and a strong place to save me' (Ps 31:2-3 LXX) and concerning the Spirit, 'Behold there is place by me, and stand upon a rock' (Exodus 33:21 LXX). Plainly meaning the place in the Spirit wherein, after Moses had entered, he was able to see God intelligibly manifested to him. This is the special and peculiar place of true worship. For it is said 'Take heed to yourself that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place, but in the place the Lord your God shall choose' (Deuteronomy 12:13-14). Now what is a spiritual burnt offering? 'The sacrifice of praise' (Ps 50:14 LXX)! In what place do we offer it? In the Holy Spirit! Where have we learned this? From the Lord himself in the words, 'The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:21-24). This place Jacob saw and said, 'The Lord is in this place' (Genesis 28:16). It follows that the Spirit is truly the place of the saints and the saint is the proper place for the Spirit. The saint offers himself as he does for the indwelling of God, and is called God's Temple" (1 Corinthians 6:19).

Irenaeus stated[338] that when Moses desired to see openly Him, Who had spoken with him, the vision from the cleft of the rock foretold the end times; i.e. the Transfiguration was the fulfillment of the promise to Moses to see God face to face. The prophets did not behold the actual face of God, but saw mysteries through which man should afterwards see God in the flesh. Christ in the flesh declared the Father with His brightness and His purpose.

> "The Word spoke to Moses, appearing before him, 'just as anyone might speak to his friend' (Numbers 12:8). But Moses desired to see Him openly who was speaking with him, and was thus addressed, 'Stand in the deep place of the rock, and with My Hand I will cover you. But when My splendor shall pass by, then you shall see My back parts, but My face you shall not see. For no man sees My face, and shall live' (Exodus 33:20-23). Two facts are thus signified: that it is impossible for man to see God; and that, through the wisdom of God, man shall see Him in the last times, in the depth of a rock, that is, in His coming as a man. For this reason did the Lord confer with him face to face on the top of a mountain[339], Elijah being also present (Matthew 17:1-9), He thus making good in the end the ancient promise".
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> "The prophets, therefore, did not openly behold the actual face of God, but they saw the dispensations and the mysteries through which man should afterwards see God. He said to Elijah, 'You shall go forth tomorrow, and stand in the presence of the Lord. And, behold, a wind great and strong, which shall tear up the mountains, and break the rocks in pieces before the Lord. But the Lord was not in the wind; and after the wind an earthquake, but the Lord was not in the

[337] Basil, On the Spirit, XXVI, 62.
[338] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xx, 9-11.
[339] I.e. at the Transfiguration, Matthew 17:1-9

earthquake; and after the earthquake a fire, but the Lord was not in the fire; and after the fire a scarcely audible voice' (1 Kings 19:11-12). By such means was the prophet, who was very indignant because of the transgression of the people and the slaughter of the prophets, both taught to act in a gentler manner. The Lord's advent as a man was pointed out, that it should be subsequent to that Law which was given by Moses, in which He would neither break the bruised reed, nor quench the smoking flax (Isaiah 42:3, Matthew 12:20). The mild and peaceful repose of His kingdom was indicated likewise. After the wind, the earthquake, and the fire, comes the tranquil and peaceful times of His kingdom, in which the spirit of God increases mankind in the gentlest manner. Ezekiel made this clearer still, that the prophets saw the dispensations of God in part, but not actually God Himself. He saw the vision of God (Ezekiel 1:1ff), and the cherubim, and their wheels, and had recounted the mystery of the whole progression. He beheld the likeness of a throne, and upon the throne a likeness as of the figure of a man, and his loins as the figure of amber, and what was below like the sight of fire. He set forth all the rest of the vision of the thrones; and lest any one might happen to think that in those visions he had actually seen God, he added, 'This was the appearance of the likeness of the glory of God'" (Ezekiel 2:1).

"Neither Moses, nor Elijah, nor Ezekiel, who had all many celestial visions, saw God. What they did see were a similitude of the splendor of the Lord, and prophecies of things to come. It is clear that the Father is indeed invisible, of whom also the Lord said, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18). But His Word, as He Himself willed it, and for the benefit of those who beheld, showed the Father's brightness, and explained His purposes. As the Lord said, 'The only-begotten God, which is in the bosom of the Father, He has declared Him' (John 1:18). He also interprets the Word of the Father as being rich and great. Not in one figure, nor in one character, did He appear to those seeing Him, but according to the reasons and effects aimed at in His dispensations".

Carrying this discussion over to the Transfiguration, Tertullian continued to say[340] that it was always the Son Who was visible while the Father was not visible. Christ said that He will speak face to face with Moses (LXX text). He was referring to the revealing of His glory on the mountain of the Transfiguration, where Moses and Elijah were present (Matthew 17:1-9).

"He reserves to some future time His presence and speech face to face with Moses, a promise which was afterwards fulfilled on the Mount of Transfiguration. When we read in the Gospel, 'Moses appeared talking with Jesus' (Luke 9:30-31), it is evident that in early times it was always in a glass, and an enigma, in vision and dream, that God, the Son, appeared — to the prophets and the patriarchs, as also to Moses himself. Even if the Lord did possibly speak with him face to face, yet it was not as man that he could behold His face, unless indeed it was in a glass, and by enigma. If the Lord so spoke with Moses, that Moses actually discerned His face, eye to eye, how did it come to pass that immediately afterwards, on the same occasion, he desires to see His face, which he ought not to have desired, because he had already seen it? How, in like manner, does the Lord also say that His face cannot be seen, because He had

[340] Tertullian, Against Praxeas, II, vii, 14-15.

shown it. Or what is that face of God, the sight of which is refused, if there was one which was visible to man?"

"Well, then, was the Son visible? Certainly not! He was the face of God only in vision and dream, and in a glass and enigma, because the Word and Spirit of God cannot be seen except in an imaginary form".

"A like circumstance befell Peter, John, and James. They were unable to endure the glory of the Son, and if they saw the Father, they must have died then and there, 'For no man shall see God, and live' (Exodus 33:20). This being the case, it is evident that Christ was always seen from the beginning that became visible in the end. The Father, on the contrary, was not seen in the end, and had never been visible from the beginning. Accordingly there are two — the Visible and the Invisible. It was the Son, who was always seen, and the Son who always conversed with men, and the Son who has always worked by the authority and will of the Father. Because 'the Son can do nothing of Himself, but what He sees the Father do' — 'do' that is, in His mind and thought. The Father acts by mind and thought; while the Son, who is in the Father's mind and thought, gives effect and form to what He sees. Thus all things were made by the Son, and without Him nothing was made (John 1:3).

Ambrose of Milan spoke[341] of the Hand of God as referring to the Son of God and also to the Holy Spirit. Moses in the cleft of the rock was thus "In the Spirit" with the Son of God.

"We read that the Son is the Hand, for it is written, 'Has not My Hand made all these things?' (Isaiah 66:2) and elsewhere, 'I will place you in the cleft of the rock, and I will cover you with My Hand; I have placed My Hand under the covering of the rock' (Exodus 33:21-22). This refers to the mystery of the Incarnation, because the eternal Power of God took on Itself the covering of a body. It is certainly clear that Scripture used the term hand both of the Son and of the Holy Spirit".

"Again, since we read that the Spirit is the finger of God, we think that fingers, in the plural, are spoken of to signify the Son and Spirit. Lastly, that he may state that he received the sanctification both of the Son and of the Spirit, a certain saint says: 'Your hands have made me and fashioned me'" (Psalm 119:73).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated[342] that creatures cannot either see or know God. Only the Son of God and the Spirit can do that.

"It is impossible for things originate either to see or to know God, for the sight and the knowledge of Him surpasses all. God Himself says, 'No one shall see My face and live' (Exodus 33:20). Yet the Son has declared, 'No one knows the Father, except the Son' (Matthew 11:27); therefore the Word is different from all things originate, in that He alone knows and alone sees the Father. As He says, 'Not that anyone has seen the Father, except He that is from the Father,' (John 6:46), though Arius thinks otherwise[343]. How then did He alone know,

[341] Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, III, v, 33-34.

[342] Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, II, xvi, 22.

[343] Ambrose wrote of the arrogance and inflated ego of Arius as follows: "Moses was prevented from seeing the face of God; Arius merited seeing it in secret. Moses, who appeared with the Lord in glory, then saw only the back parts of God in appearance; Arius beholds God wholly face to face! Paul also speaks of inferior

except that He alone belonged to Him? How could He belong, if He were a creature, and not a true Son from Him?"

Tertullian wrote[344] that Moses' fasting and prayer was a prime reason for his close walk with God.

> "He whose 'heart' was habitually found 'lifted up' rather than fattened up maintained a fast for forty days and as many nights, above the power of human nature, while spiritual faith ministered strength to his body. He both saw with his eyes God's glory, and heard with his ears God's voice, and understood with his heart God's Law. God taught Moses even then, by experience, that man does not live on bread alone, but on every word of God (Deuteronomy 8:3). The People, though fatter than he, could not constantly contemplate even Moses himself, fed as he had been upon God, or his leanness, sated as it had been with God's glory! Deservedly, therefore, even while in the flesh, did the Lord show Himself to him".

John Chrysostom stated[345] that "seeing God" and "knowing God" are related to knowledge of the Son of God. Philip tried to press Jesus on this issue, and was rebuked as trying to know the Father apart from the Son.

> "Consider the exact meaning of the words, 'Have I been so long time with you, and have you not known Me, Philip?' Philip replied, 'Are You the Father after whom I inquire?' (John 14:8-9) 'No', He said. On this account He didn't say, 'have you not known Him', but, 'have you not known Me', declaring that the Son is no other than what the Father is, yet continuing to be a Son. But how did Philip come to ask this question? Christ had said, 'If you had known Me, you should have known My Father also' (John 14:7), and He had often said the same to the Jews. Peter and the Jews had often asked Him, 'Who is the Father?' (John 5:16-47, 8:13-20). Thomas had asked Him (John 14:5-6), but no one had understood. Philip, in order that He might not seem to trouble Him by asking in turn after the Jews, added, 'Show us the Father and it is sufficient for us' (John 14:8). Yet Christ had said, "If you had known Me, you should have known My Father also' (John 14:7), and by Himself He declared the Father. But Philip reversed the order, and said, 'Show us the Father', as though he knew Christ exactly. But Christ did not put up with him, but set him right, persuading him to gain the knowledge of the Father through Himself, while Philip desired to see Him with these bodily eyes, having perhaps heard concerning the Prophets, that they 'saw God'. But those cases, Philip, were acts of condescension. Wherefore Christ said, 'No man has seen God at any time' (John 1:18); and again, 'Every man that has heard and has learned from God comes to Me' (John 6:45). 'You have not heard His voice at any time and you have not seen His shape' (John 5:37). In the Old Testament, 'No man shall see My face, and live' (Exodus 33:20). What did Christ say? Very reprovingly He said, 'Have I been so long

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beings: 'We know in part and we prophesy in part' (1 Corinthians 13:9). Arius says: 'I know God altogether and not in part'. Thus Paul is inferior to Arius, and the vessel of election knows in part, but the vessel of perdition knows wholly". Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, V, xix, 236-237.

[344] Tertullian, On Fasting in Opposition to the Psychics, IV, viii, 6.

[345] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIV, 1.

> time with you, and have you not known Me, Philip?' He said not, 'have you not seen Me', but, 'have you not known Me'".

Leo the Great stated[346] that one of the rewards of the age to come is the ability to see God face to face. This is what Paul said, "that which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man".

> "'Blessed are the pure in heart, for they shall see God' (Matthew 5:8). Great is the happiness, beloved, of him for whom so great a reward is prepared. What, then, is it to have the heart pure, but to strive after those virtues which are mentioned above? How great the blessedness of seeing God, what mind can conceive, what tongue declare? Yet this shall come when man's nature is transformed, so that no longer 'in a mirror', nor 'in a riddle', but 'face to face' (1 Corinthians 13:12) it sees the very Godhead 'as He is' (1 John 3:2), which no man could see (Exodus 33:20, John 1:18, 1 Timothy 6:16). Through the unspeakable joy of eternal contemplation we obtain that 'which eye has not seen, nor ear heard, neither has entered into the heart of man' (Isaiah 64:4, 1 Corinthians 2:9). Rightly is this blessedness promised to purity of heart! The brightness of the true light will not be able to be seen by the unclean sight. That which will be happiness to minds that are bright and clean, will be a punishment to those that are stained".

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 1:18-2:2 "The Word of the Cross"

The "Word of the Cross" is a literal translation of Paul's words (1 Corinthians 1:18), which is often mistranslated "the message of the Cross." In Greek, the word *logos* is used, just as in, "The Word became flesh and dwelt among us" (John 1:14). There are other Greek words that mean message, such as *rhema*: a message or matter, and *kerugma*: a message or proclamation. For example, while Peter was speaking to Cornelius (Acts 10:44), the text reads, "While Peter was still speaking this message (*rhema*), the Holy Spirit fell on all those who heard the Word (*logos*)." One can listen to a message (*rhema*) of this life, as the Apostles were commanded to proclaim (Acts 5:20), and not hear the Word, depending on the condition of one's heart.

Thus, the Word of the Cross is not just a message; it is part of the fabric of Christianity. If one misses the Word, one misses God. If one misses the Word of the Cross, one misses God's ways.

The word translated "foolishness" (Greek *moria* which comes from *moraino* meaning foolish or moronic) could also be translated "moronic behavior" and is the root of the English word "moron." To many people who see only the world's viewpoint, it may seem moronic that we put all our hope for life and being in the teachings of a crucified Jew!

The Chief Priests, Scribes and elders mocked Jesus on the Cross saying, "He saved others; Himself He cannot save. If He is the King of Israel, let Him now come down from the Cross and we will believe Him. He trusted in God; let Him deliver Him now if He will have

[346] Leo the Great, Sermons, XCV, 8.

Him; for He said, 'I am the Son of God'" (Matthew 27:42-43). How can it be reasonable that this crucified Jew is the answer to all the world's problems?

John Chrysostom compared[347] Christ on the Cross with the Three Young Men in the fire (Daniel 3:16-25) and with Jonah in the belly of the sea monster (Jonah 2).

> "The Three Children avoiding the fire would not have been so astonishing as having entered and having trampled on the fire. For Jonah, it was a greater thing by far, after he had been swallowed by the sea monster, to suffer no harm from the monster, than if he had not been swallowed at all." For Christ, "His remaining alive would not have been as inconceivable as having died, He should loose the bonds of death. He did not come down from the Cross for He was hastening on to close conflict with death himself. He descended not from the Cross, not because He could not, but because He would not".

Those who are perishing do not understand this, and the problem is the disease of unbelief. As Chrysostom stated[348]:

> "To the sick and gasping, even wholesome meats are unpleasant, friends and relatives are burdensome. Relatives are oftentimes not even recognized, but are rather accounted intruders. Much like this often is the case of those who are perishing in their souls. The things which tend to salvation they do not know; and those who are careful about them they consider to be troublesome. Now this ensues not from the nature of the thing, but from their disease. Just what the insane do, hating those who take care of them, and besides reviling them, the same is the case with unbelievers also. Be not troubled, therefore, for it is no strange nor unaccountable event; things truly great are mocked by those who are beside themselves".

All this was a perfect illustration of what the Apostle Paul wrote about the "Word of the Cross". The wisdom of the world was unwilling to discover God. Therefore Chrysostom said[349] that

> "God employed what seemed to be foolishness, i.e. the Gospel, to persuade men; not by reasoning but by faith. To believe on Him that was crucified and buried, and to be fully persuaded that this Person Himself both rose again and sat down on high; this did not need wisdom or reasoning, but faith. The Apostles themselves came in not by wisdom, but by faith, and surpassed the heathen wise men in wisdom and loftiness. This transcends all human understanding, since they were uneducated fishermen".

For this reason, the traditional outreach of the Church has been to the poor, not to the rich and the wise.

This is what Paul meant by "destroying the wisdom of the wise" (1 Corinthians 1:19, Isaiah 29:14). Chrysostom continued[350],

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[347] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, IV, 3.
[348] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, IV, 1.
[349] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, IV, 4.
[350] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, IV, 4.

"The wise are not profited at all by wisdom, and the unlearned are not injured at all by ignorance. For the shepherd and the rustic will more quickly receive this, repressing all doubting thoughts and delivering himself to the Lord. In this way then, He destroyed wisdom".

Similarly He "made foolish the wisdom of this world" (1 Corinthians 1:20). Chrysostom stated[351] it this way,

"He has shown wisdom to be foolish in regards to receiving the faith. Since they prided themselves on it, He lost no time in exposing it. What sort of wisdom is it, when it cannot discover the chief things that are good?"

Second Parable from the Old Testament: Job 42:12-17 "Blessings for Job's Faithfulness"

And the Lord blessed the latter end of Job, *more* than the beginning: and his cattle were fourteen thousand sheep, six thousand camels, a thousand yoke of oxen, a thousand she-asses of the pastures. And there were born to him seven sons and three daughters. And he called the first Jemimah, and the second Keziah, and the third Keren-Happuch. And there were not found in comparison with the daughters of Job, fairer *women* than they in all the world: and their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren. And Job lived after *his* affliction a hundred and seventy years[352]; and all the years he lived were two hundred and forty; and Job saw his sons and his sons' sons, the fourth generation. And Job died, an old man and full of days; and it is written that he will rise again with those whom the Lord raises up. This man is described in the Syriac book *as* living in the land of Ausis[353] (Greek: *Ausitidi*), on the borders of Idumea and Arabia. And his name before was Jobab; and having taken an Arabian wife, he begot a son whose name was Ennon (Hebrew *Anub*). And he himself was the son of his father Zerah, one of the sons of Esau, and of his mother Basemath (Genesis 36:9-14), so that he was the fifth from Abraham. And these were the kings who reigned in Edom, which country he also ruled over. First, Bala, the son of Beor[354], and the name of his city was Dinhabah (probably the same as the Hebrew name *Dibon*, which was due East of the Dead Sea); but after Bala, Jobab, who is called Job[355], and after him Husham, who was governor out of the country of Teman[356]. And after him Hadad, the son of Bedad, who destroyed Midian in the plain of Moab; and the name of his city was Avith (perhaps the same as the Hebrew name *Ar*, which was near *Dibon*). And *his* friends who came to him were Eliphaz, of the children of Esau, king of the Temanites, Bilhad sovereign the Shuhites, Zephan king of the Mineans, or Naamathites" (Job 42:12-17 LXX).

Brief history of the life of Job

Job was a descendant of Esau and he lived in Mt. Seir (Genesis 36:1-8), on the borders of Idumea and Arabia (Job 42:17), Southeast of the Dead Sea, during the years that Israel was in

[351] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, IV, 4.
[352] The Hebrew manuscripts state that Job lived 140 years after his affliction.
[353] This town must have been located somewhere in Edom.
[354] A later descendant of Beor was the prophet Balaam, who incited God against Israel during the Exodus (Numbers 22-24, Revelation 2:15).
[355] Thus Job (or Jobab), who ruled in Edom after Bala, lived during the years that Israel was in Egypt. This explains why Job's friends, who initiated the inquisition against him, were the kings of neighboring territories.
[356] Teman was the Southern portion of Idumaea.

Egypt. According to tradition[357], after the death of his father, Zerah, Job traveled to Egypt to marry Rahme[358], the daughter of Ephraim and granddaughter of Joseph, who was second in command to Pharaoh. It was Rahme who had inherited Joseph's "Robe of Beauty" (Genesis 37:3) that Jacob had made for him. After returning to his home country, Job became a prophet to his countrymen, and was later the governor of that region. Israel passed by Mt. Seir[359] during the Conquest of Canaan (Deuteronomy 2:4-6), where the descendants of Esau still lived.

Job's ordeals began with the Lord pointing out to Satan that Job was unique on the earth, "a blameless and upright man, fearing God and turning away from evil" (Job 1:8). In his day, Job was unsurpassed in righteousness. Job even offered prayers and offerings for his ten children, consecrating them just in case they had sinned in their heart (Job 1:6). Satan felt that if Job were poor and destitute, he would curse God to His face (Job 1:11).

Satan recognized Job's godliness, just as he recognized that of Christ (Matthew 4:1-10). Yet Satan felt that all Job's righteousness could be attributed to the Lord's physical blessings in his life. Satan didn't allow for the possibility that Job would actually *want* to love God. So the Lord allowed Satan to take away all Job's possessions in sifting him.

The way this happened is first the Sabeans[360] attacked and took all Job's oxen and donkeys, killing Job's herdsmen in the process (Job 1:14-15). Second, fire fell from heaven and burned up all the sheep, killing the shepherds with the sheep (Job 1:16). Third, the Chaldean raiders came and took all Job's camels, killing the keepers who were defending. Lastly, while Job's children were having a feast at the house of the oldest son "on his day" (probably his birthday, Job 1:4) a great wind (perhaps a tornado) came from across the wilderness, collapsing the house on top of them and killing them all (Job 1:18-19). Today's insurance industry would refer to the second and fourth as "acts of God" even though their source is an act of Satan.

Job's response to all this was to prepare himself to worship the Lord saying, "Naked I came from my mother's womb and naked I shall return there. The Lord gave and the Lord has taken away. Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21). Meanwhile, the Lord pointed out to Satan that Job held fast to his integrity "even though you incited Me against him[361] to ruin him without cause" (Job 2:3). When the Lord pointed out Job's righteousness, Satan challenged the Lord's judgment (Job 2:3-5). Satan was allowed to afflict Job with every evil imaginable (Job 1:13-19, 2:7-13). Yet Job's words were "Blessed be the Name of the Lord" (Job 1:21).

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[357] Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1996, p. 708.

[358] We may presume that he had met Rahme and Joseph (Genesis 50:23) in traveling to Egypt to buy food, as many people had to do (Genesis 42:5).

[359] In Arab tradition, all the territory around Mt. Seir is still referred to as the "Land of Job". Job's tomb is located near the town of Nawa. The growth of legends has probably increased the boundaries of the "Land of Job", but this enduring tradition attests to the extraordinarily charismatic character of Job himself. For details of this, see Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1996, p. 708-715.

[360] This is the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory approximates what is Yemen today. The LXX translates "Sabeans" as spoilers.

[361] We note here that Satan doesn't believe anything that God says, even though he had just been schooled in how correct the Lord's words were concerning Job.

John Chrysostom stated[362], "If you give thanks when you are in comfort and in affluence, in success and in prosperity, there is nothing great, nothing wonderful in that. Compare this to a man giving thanks when he is in afflictions, in anguish, in discouragement". As an example, one might recall Paul and Silas, broken and bleeding and sitting in a Philippian jail, but praying and singing hymns to God – at midnight (Acts 16:23-25).

In the life of Job, there was a larger event that was taking place: the building of Job's faith, and the proving to Satan that he is impotent in overthrowing the things God has established. The same is true in our lives.

The next "messengers from Satan" (compare 2 Corinthians 12:7) was a severe physical one: skin boils from the sole of his foot to the crown of his head (Job 2:7). Now destitute and unable to afford any medical attention, Job's only medical alternative was scrapping the pus off his skin with a piece of broken pottery. Completely disfigured by these diseases, Job's wife advised him: "Just say some word against the Lord, and die!" (Job 2:9 LXX). When three of his friends (kings from other countries) came to see him after hearing of his adversity, they didn't even recognize him at first because of his disfigurement. When they did, they openly wept (Job 2:11-12 LXX). Following this, they sat down with him for seven days without saying a word, for they saw that his affliction was dreadful and very great (Job 2:13 LXX). For Job, it was so bad he wished he had never been born (Job 3:1).

After the seven days of silence came the last messenger: the inquisition. Job's three friends thought that Job had some secret sin that brought all this evil down on his own head. Eliphaz, king of the Temanites[363], suggested that those who plow iniquity and sow trouble harvest it. When can he remember the pure in heart ever being utterly destroyed? (Job 4:7-8 LXX). Bilhad, sovereign of the Shuhites[364], suggested that perhaps Job's sons had sinned and had gotten their just reward. If Job were pure and true, God would listen to his supplication, and would restore to him the habitation of righteousness. After all, God will not reject a man of integrity nor will he receive any gift of the ungodly (Job 8:4, 6, 20 LXX). Job claimed he was innocent. Zophar, king of the Mineans[365], suggested that the Lord knows false men without investigating their circumstances. "If you have made your heart pure and lifted up your hand to Him (that is, in prayer); if iniquity is in your hand, put it far away and do not let unrighteousness lodge in your tents (Job 11:4, 11-14 LXX). The effect of all this on Job was that "the tents of the destroyers prosper while the just and blameless man is a joke (Job 12:4, 6). If Job had been a prophet to his countrymen, this would explain why he was sought out by the kings of neighboring countries.

Israel at this time consisted of just the extended family of Jacob (i.e. Israel), and they are all in Egypt. The above example of Job and his friends shows that the knowledge of God at this time was rather widespread, both to the North and South.

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[362] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX.

[363] Teman was the Southern portion of Idumaea.

[364] The Shuhites were descendants of Shuah, the son of Abraham by Keturah. His descendants were an Arab tribe West of the Euphrates, 500 miles to the Northeast.

[365] The Mineans were a province of the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory is in Yemen today, 700 miles to the South.

The result of this inquisition was perhaps the cruelest and the most difficult aspect of Job's misery to deal with. After all, there was ample evidence all around Job that it was true! Chrysostom commented[366] that "the reproaches of Job's friends appeared more hurtful than the worms and the sores. There is nothing more intolerable to those in affliction than a word capable of stinging the soul". The message of the inquisition is exactly what Satan seeks to convince us of: that God is not faithful; that He doesn't care about us and that we should only trust in what we can see.

Job was a forerunner for Christ regarding suffering and patience (James 5:10-11). He grew spiritually because of all the evil (the Cross) that he had to bear, and he was rewarded for his efforts both in this life and in the age to come (Job 42:1-17).

Gregory the Theologian stated[367] that all of Job's ordeal was for the revealing of his righteousness. This was also true of Christ's ordeal at the Cross.

> "What then of Him who answered Job out of the whirlwind and cloud, Who is slow to chastise and swift to help, Who does not allow the rod of the wicked to come into the lot of the righteous, lest the righteous should learn iniquity? At the end of the contests He declares the victory of the athlete in a splendid proclamation and lays bare the secret of his calamities. 'Do you think that I have dealt with you for any other purpose than the revealing of your righteousness?' This is the balm for his wounds; this is the crown of the contest; this is the reward for his patience. Perhaps his subsequent prosperity was small, great as it may seem to some, and ordained for the sake of small minds, even though he received again twice as much as he had lost".

Ezekiel referred to Job as a model of intercession for his people, along with Noah and Daniel. This is a result of Job's righteousness, where the Lord directed Job to intercede in prayer for his inquisitors and offer up sacrifices for them (Job 42:7-8). Similarly, Christ does the same for us (Hebrews 7:24-28). Ezekiel wrote:

> "The word of the Lord came to me, saying, Son of man, if a land shall sin against me by committing a trespass, then will I stretch out my hand upon it, and will break its staff of bread, and will send famine on it, and cut off from it man and beast. Though these three men should be in the midst of it, Noah, and Daniel, and Job, they *alone* should be delivered by their righteousness" (Ezekiel 14:13-14 LXX).

The reproaches that Job received from the Lord (Job 38:1-23) had to do with his limited understanding of the Godhead that had existed prior to Creation and that had created the world. The Lord never questioned Job's righteousness, and He said that what Job had spoken was right, and that his friends had not done so (Job 42:7-8). But Job still had to learn more about the majesty of God, as we all do. When Christ came as the ultimate intercessor, His Divinity was veiled by His flesh, and He didn't have the weakness in understanding God that Job had.

Job's Reward for His Righteousness

[366] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.
[367] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration On the Great Athanasius, XXI, 18.

It was just after Job finished praying for his friends, those who had just finished their inquisition against him, that Job was rewarded for his faithfulness. This models Christ, who was also rewarded for His ordeal on the Cross and in the tomb (Philippians 2:5-11). Similarly God promised to the nation of Israel rewards after they went through the affliction of the Exile (Isaiah 61:7). Job's losses were restored to twice what he had before. All his brothers and sisters, who had distanced themselves from him during his ordeal, now came and feasted with him, rejoicing in his new-found prosperity (Job 42:10-11). Job did not reject them, even though they had considered him to be forsaken of God during his ordeal. Understanding his situation no longer required faith, so it was easy for them to rejoice with him.

In describing Job's rewards, four different animals are mentioned, where large numbers of these were a measure of wealth. Sheep were used for food and clothing (milk, cheese, wool), while oxen were used as "tractors" for plowing the fields and treading the grain at harvest. Female donkeys were used as "pickup trucks" for the transport of people and supplies to the fields, while camels were used as "large trucks" to carry heavy loads to the large cities and to the seaports.

Part of Job's rewards was an additional ten children, replacing the ones lost at the beginning of his suffering. These children were born to Job's second wife, an Arabian woman (Job 42:17 LXX), where we can presume that Job's first wife, Rahme, died of old age. Only one of his seven sons is mentioned, but his three daughters are mentioned by name as being outstanding. "And there were not found in comparison with the daughters of Job, fairer *women* than they in all the world; and their father gave them an inheritance among their brethren" (Job 42:15 LXX).

Job's daughters' names are Jemimah (from Arabic *jemame*, a dove), Keziah (from Hebrew cassia, meaning cinnamon) and Keren-Happuch (from Hebrew *Qeren Happuk* meaning a horn of antimony, used for makeup). Their names probably imply something about their beauty. Jemimah may have had innocent and attractive eyes like a dove. Keziah may have carried an appealing sense of smell like cinnamon. And Keren-Happuch may have had her beauty made more attractive by the use of makeup of some kind.

For Job to give them an inheritance along with their brothers indicates something outstanding about his daughters. It was customary for only a man's sons to have a share in his inheritance, not his daughters, since a daughter shared in her husband's inheritance. If a man had no sons, then his daughters might obtain his inheritance, but even this was not automatic, as was illustrated by the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11). Because Job's sons did not object to the distribution of part of his inheritance to their sisters, one can surmise that the sons were not greedy and that there was considerable harmony within Job's family.

Job's blessing, where he saw his children's children to four generations, is another analogy to Christ, where Christ's "seed" is the Church. Isaiah spoke of how Christ would be despised (Isaiah 53:3), would be wounded for us (Isaiah 53:5) and would be slaughtered like a lamb (Isaiah 53:7). Following this, Isaiah said,

> "He made His soul an offering for sin, after it pleased the Lord to bruise Him; He put *Him* to grief. When You make His soul an offering for sin, He shall see *His* seed, He shall prolong *His* days, and the pleasure of the Lord shall prosper in His hand" (Isaiah 53:10).

Discussions Moved to Other Good Friday Studies at the Various Hours of Prayer

The following Readings for Good Friday Vespers are covered elsewhere during the Holy Week Study:

1st Good Friday Vespers Gospel: Matthew 27:1-37 "The Crucifixion": 3rd Hour
2nd Good Friday Vespers Gospel: Luke 23:39-43 "One Thief Repented": 6th Hour
3rd Good Friday Vespers Gospel: Matthew 27:39-54 "Ridicule and Earthquake": 6th Hour
4th Good Friday Vespers Gospel: John 19:31-37 "The Breaking of the Legs": 9th Hour
3rd Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 52:13-54:1 "The Suffering Servant": 6th Hour

Good Friday Evening Lamentation
The Sealing of the Tomb

12th Gospel: Matthew 27:62-66 "The Sealing of the Tomb"

This Reading is also used for Holy Saturday Matins.

To Jesus' followers, the sealing of the tomb was the final blow to their hopes and dreams. They had recognized Him as Messiah, but they hadn't understood that He had power over death itself. Their hopes of a Kingdom of God on earth had been thrown down and crushed, and the seal on the tomb was the epitaph.

The chief priests and Pharisees, or their representatives probably watched the embalming of Jesus' body. Their concern was that Jesus had said that He would rise from the dead on the third day, and they were afraid that some of Jesus' followers might steal His body in order to claim that He rose from the dead (Matthew 27:62-64).

Joseph, Nicodemus and their servants finished the burial rite by placing Jesus' embalmed body in the tomb, and rolling the stone across the entrance. By the time they finished, it was probably already dark. Early the next morning, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered to Pontius Pilate to request a guard at the tomb. Pilate reminded them, "You have a guard; go your way, make it as secure as you know how" (Matthew 27:65). The "guard" that Pilate referred to was the detachment of soldiers that was assigned to security around the Temple. Included in this detachment was the Centurion named Longinus. After the Resurrection, this same "guard" immediately reported to the chief priests what had happened (Matthew 28:11), and not to Pilate or to the Roman authorities.

Besides setting the "guard", which was a detachment of soldiers assigned 24 hours per day, they also "sealed the stone". The seal was a wax seal on the stone with an impression of the seal of the chief priest, so that anyone could tell whether the stone was moved or disturbed. When Jesus rose from the dead, He rose right through the burial wrappings and right through the walls of the tomb, leaving the seal undisturbed. When the women came to the tomb early on the third day, the angel rolled back the stone and sat on it (Matthew 28:2) to demonstrate that Christ had already risen.

John Chrysostom stated[368] that Joseph and Nicodemus were very rushed in performing the burial rite for Jesus, but that there were distinct advantages as a result in confirming the Resurrection.

> "They were rushed by the time, since the Death took place at the ninth hour, and it is probable, that what with going to Pilate and what with taking down the body, evening would come upon them when it was not lawful to work. Therefore they laid Him in the tomb that was nearby. Christ being placed in a new tomb was providentially ordered, for several reasons: (1) That some might

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[368] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 4.

not think His Resurrection was that of some other who lay in the tomb with Him. (2) That the disciples might be able easily to come and be spectators of what came to pass, because the place was near. (3) That His enemies should be witnesses of His burial, and not His disciples alone. For the placing seals on the tomb, and the soldiers watching it, were the actions of men testifying to the burial".

"Christ earnestly desired that His death should be confessed[369], no less than the Resurrection. Therefore also the disciples were very earnest about this, the showing that He died. The Resurrection would be confirmed by all succeeding time. But the Death, if at that time it had been partially concealed, or not made very clear, was likely to harm the account of the Resurrection. Nor was it for these reasons only that He was laid nearby, but also that the story about the stealing (Matthew 27:62-66) might be proved false".

1st Epistle: 1 Corinthians 5:6-8 "Christ Our Passover"

The first "Passover" occurred in Egypt in c. 1500 BC. On the 14th day of Nisan (March-April), in the mid to late afternoon (about 3:00 p.m.), the Passover lamb (male, without blemish) was killed. Its blood was to be applied to the side and upper door posts of the house where the given family lived, and where they would later eat the roasted meat of the lamb (Exodus 12:6, 7, 22). In applying the blood as commanded, they couldn't help but trace out the outline of a cross.

Each family could obey God's command and accept the blood "as a token upon the houses" where they lived, or reject the blood and disobey His command. The Lord said: "I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments -- I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12-13).

As is apparent from this quote, the "Lord's Passover" is so called because the Lord "passed over" the houses when He saw the blood, such that the house was delivered from death.

On the 14th of Nisan, 30 AD, Jesus cried out, gave up the spirit, and died on the Cross (Mark 15:34-37). Precisely at this time, there was something happening at the Temple. According to the instruction in the books of Moses, the Passover Lamb was being slain in Jerusalem. As Jesus was dying, so was the Passover Lamb! This was what John the Baptist was talking about when he said, referring to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29).

There are many aspects to the term "Christ our Passover", and a detailed study of all the imagery is included in the Study for Holy Thursday Matins. The aspect that we will pursue here is the theme leading up to Holy Saturday, where Christ descended into Hell to conquer death and Hades.

[369] One of the heresies promoted by early heretics, like Simon Magus and his followers, was the claim that Christ didn't really die on the Cross, but only appeared to do so. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

When Paul spoke of "Christ, our Passover", he was referring to the entire Paschal celebration, which lasted for a week, and not to just the Day of the Lord's Passover, celebrated on the 14th of Nisan. Paul said, in the words of the Epistle,

> "Your glorying *is* not good. Do you not know that a little leaven leavens the whole lump? Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened *bread* of sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:6-8).

The Temple of the Holy Spirit

One aspect of Christ in the tomb was the preparation that He was making for us to become the Temple of the Holy Spirit. To understand this, it is instructive to take a look at a problem with this, which Paul spoke of in the chapter following the Epistle text.

Paul began 1 Corinthians by referring to something he stated on his first visit to Corinth regarding the Mosaic Law. Paul's first visit (Acts 18) on his second missionary journey, came a year or so after the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15). Paul and Silas delivered to all the Churches a decree that was drafted by James and the Jerusalem Church (Acts 15:22-29, 16:4). This decree stated that the Gentiles did not have to observe all the rituals of the Mosaic Law, but said the Gentiles will do well to stay away from three things:

idol sacrifices
blood and things containing blood
fornication (Greek: *porneia)*

Over the next three years, a libertine group[370] had taken the decrees from Jerusalem and Paul's teaching way beyond its intent. Their catch-words were:

foods are for the belly	the belly is for foods
fornication (*porneia)* is for the body	the body is for fornication

They saw no negative connections with this and they thought that both food and sex were necessary for the body. [The Greek word *porneia* is a general term and includes adultery, fornication and incest.]

Paul's answer was threefold. First, he said he will not be ruled by anything (food, fornication, etc.). This is why we fast during Lent, Advent, etc., to begin to break the rule foods have on our bellies.

Second, Paul said the Lord would render both the belly and foods (1 Corinthians 6:13) completely idle[371]. What Paul is saying is that we won't need food to fill our belly after His

[370] This libertine group has all the characteristics of the teachings of Simon Magus. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

[371] The Greek word *katargeo* does not mean to destroy as in pillage, but to render idle. For example, it is sometimes translated as "released" (Romans 7:2); and at other times as "abolished" (2 Timothy 1:10).

return. We can if we want to just as Jesus did in His newly resurrected body (Luke 24:40-43). Since our resurrected bodies will be similar to His, we won't need to eat either.

The third aspect of Paul's answer concerns the proper use of our bodies. Instead of the body for fornication, Paul said the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body (1 Corinthians 6:13). Speaking of union with Christ, Paul stated that our bodies are limbs[372] of Christ. Shall we take the limbs of Christ and make them limbs of a harlot (*porne*)? No way!

On the one hand, one who is joined[373] to a harlot is one body with her (1 Corinthians 6:16). On the other hand, one who is joined or "glued" (*kollao)* to the Lord is one spirit with Him (1 Corinthians 6:17).

John Chrysostom amplified[374] the sin of fornication by comparing it to immersion in sewage.

> "In fornication the entire body becomes defiled. It is polluted as if it had fallen into a vessel of sewage, and been immersed in defilement. Coming from covetousness and extortion no one hurries to take a bath, but as if nothing had happened returns to his house. Whereas coming from intercourse with a harlot, as having become altogether unclean, he goes to a bath first. To such a degree does the conscience retain from this sin a kind of sense of unusual shame".

Chrysostom stated[375] that the contrasting condition of closeness to God is illustrated by the events surrounding Pascha.

> "The Paschal Feast does not consist in pleasant conversation at meals, splendor of clothing (1 Timothy 2:9), or days of leisure, although we may do these things. But it consists in the acknowledgment of God, and the offering of thanksgiving and of praise to Him (1 Corinthians 6:20). Now this belongs to the saints alone, who live in Christ; for it is written, 'The dead shall not praise You, O Lord, neither all those who go down into silence; but we who live will bless the Lord, from henceforth even forever' (Psalm 115:17-18). So was it with Hezekiah, who was delivered from death, and therefore praised God, saying, 'Those who are in Hades cannot praise You; the dead cannot bless You; but the living shall bless You, as I also do' (Isaiah 38:18 LXX). To praise and bless God belongs to those only who live in Christ, and by means of this they go up to the Feast. The Passover is not of the Gentiles, or of those who are yet Jews in the flesh; but of those who acknowledge the truth in Christ, as he declares who was sent to proclaim such a Feast, 'Our Passover, Christ, is sacrificed'" (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Thus our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit in us. If we are joined or glued to the Lord, this follows logically. Thus we are not our own (or of ourselves alone). We have been bought with a price (1 Corinthians 6:20); where the price was Jesus' death on the Cross, and the body is for the Lord and the Lord for the body.

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[372] Greek: *melos*: members or parts of a body.
[373] Greek: *kollao* "glued" or "stuck together"
[374] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XVIII, 2.
[375] John Chrysostom, Festal Letters, VII, 2-3.

Chrysostom pointed out[376] that this settles us "in a state of security against sin, and against following the improper desires of the mind. We have many improper wishes, but we must repress them, for we can. If we could not, Paul's exhortation would be in vain." We are not our own; we have been bought with a price and we have a Master.

Eating the Passover Lamb

The Passover lamb, an unblemished male, was to be slain at twilight and its blood was to be applied to the door posts and the lintel (i.e. the top support of the doorframe). The application of the blood using a branch of hyssop traced the outline of the cross. With the blood on their doors, they would be passed-over when the Lord passed through and struck the land of Egypt (Exodus 12:13). All this was done to show how Christ, as the Lamb of God (John 1:29, 36) would be sacrificed for us (1 Corinthians 5:7).

Eating the Passover lamb was the first thing the Israelis did once the Passover Lamb's blood had been shed, and it is the first thing the believer does once he accepts God's pardon. God's pardon is the blood on the door post. It is given by God and is a free gift (Ephesians 2:8, Romans 5:15-19), and it is both a necessary and sufficient condition for God to pass over the believer, delivering him from death (Romans 5:9).

Jesus Christ is the Passover Lamb (1 Corinthians 5:7, John 1:29). He stated that a person needs to eat His flesh in order to avoid death (John 6:49-51). It is important that the believer do this right away. Because just as the Israelis needed some substantial nourishment to carry them in their journey out of Egypt, so the believer needs some real "meat" for strength to get him "on his feet" and out of his bondage. Applying what Jesus said about this, He also said, "the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). In other words, the "eating" is with one's heart, and the "digesting" is with one's mind.

As the Lamb (Jesus Christ) is "eaten" (accepted, received) and "digested" (understood, sorted out), something different becomes apparent. If the believer has the eyes to see, he can see his new Lord and Master begin to lead him, authoritatively, decisively away from his bondage toward the land promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, the Kingdom of God. Usually, there is a real excitement, rejoicing, and anticipation in a new believer's life around this time as he first sees "the movement of the pillar and the cloud," which is the presence of God directing his life.

We ask for the same assistance from the Lord all our lives. For example, in both "The Evening Prayer" at Vespers and in "The Great Doxology" at Matins, we say:

1. Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.
2. Blessed are You, O Sovereign, let me understand Your statutes.
3. Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten me with Your statutes.

There is a progression here in our understanding of the things of God as we are first taught, then we understand, and finally we are enlightened by the Holy Spirit.

[376] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XVIII, 3.

Note that Paul mentions that, "Our fathers were under the cloud, and were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:1). The cloud was out in front leading the way, yet they were "under" the authority of the cloud just as the new believer is now "under" the authority of his Lord. As they were baptized into Moses[377], the new believer is baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ (along with the Father and the Spirit).

Israel was commanded to eat the Passover lamb with their loins girded, with their sandals on their feet, with their staff in their hand (Exodus 12:11). John Chrysostom stated[378] that we also look for our Exodus, and we need to be ready. Assisting us are the same forces that assisted Israel in her Exodus, and opposing us are the same forces that opposed them.

> "For why did they eat the Passover with their loins girded? They had, we read, their loins girded, their staff in their hands, their shoes on their feet, and thus they ate the Passover. These are awesome mysteries, and of vast depth; and if so awesome in the type, how much more in the reality? They came out of Egypt; they ate the Passover. Listen! 'Our Passover has been sacrificed, even Christ' (1 Corinthians 5:7), it is said. Why did they have their loins girded? Their guise is that of wayfarers; for their having shoes and staves in their hands and their eating standing, declares nothing else than this. The Jews were continually forgetting God's benefits to them. Accordingly then, God tied the sense of these, His benefits, not only to the time, but also to the very habit of them that were to eat. This is why they were to eat girded and sandaled, that when they were asked the reason, they might say, 'we were ready for our journey, we were just about to go forth out of Egypt to the land of promise and we were ready for our exodus'. This then is the historical type. But the reality is this; we too eat a Passover, even Christ; 'for', says he, 'our Passover has been sacrificed, even Christ' (1 Corinthians 5:7). We too ought to eat it, both sandaled and girded. Why? We eat that we too may be ready for our Exodus, for our departure".
>
> "Let not any one of them that eat this Passover look towards Egypt, but towards Heaven, towards 'Jerusalem that is above' (Galatians 4:26). On this account you eat with your loins girded, on this account you eat with shoes on your feet, that you may know, that from the moment you first begin to eat the Passover, you ought to set out, and to be upon your journey. This implies two things, both that we must depart out of Egypt, and that, while we stay, we must stay as in a strange country. 'For our citizenship', says he, 'is in Heaven' (Philippians 3:20); and that all our life long we should always be prepared. So that when we are called we may not put it off, but say, 'My heart is fixed'. (Psalm 108:1). To be girded is the part of a waking soul; listen to what God says to that righteous man, 'Gird up your loins like a man, for I will ask you, and you answer Me' (Job 38:3). This He says also to all the prophets and this He says again to Moses, to be girded. He Himself also appears to Ezekiel (Ezekiel 9:11 LXX) girded. The Angels, too, appear to us girded (Revelation 15:6), as being soldiers. We also are going to depart, and many are the difficulties that intervene. When we have crossed this plain, immediately the devil is upon us, doing everything, contriving every artifice. To the end that those who have been saved out of Egypt, those who have passed the Red Sea, those who are delivered at once from the evil demons, and from unnumbered plagues, may be taken and destroyed by him. But,

[377] Moses being the head of the Israeli nation is often representative of Jesus Christ, who is the head of the Church.
[378] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, v. 14.

> if we are vigilant, we too have a pillar of fire, the grace of the Spirit. The same both enlightens and overshadows us. We have manna, yea rather not manna, but far more than manna. For spiritual drink, we have more than water that springs from the Rock. So we also have our encampment (Revelation 20:9), and we dwell in the desert right now; for a desert indeed without virtue, is the earth now, even more desolate than that wilderness. Why was that desert so terrible? Was it not because it had scorpions in it, and adders (Deuteronomy 8:15)? 'A land', it is said, 'which none passed through' (Jeremiah 2:6). Yet that wilderness is not so barren of fruits as is this human nature. At this instant, how many scorpions, how many asps are in this wilderness, how many serpents, how many 'offspring of vipers' (Matthew 3:7) are these through whom we at this instant pass! Yet let us not be afraid; for the leader of this our Exodus is not Moses, but Jesus".

Gregory the Theologian added[379] to this aspect of eating the Passover with one's loins girded, saying that the purification must take hold of the reins of our life.

> "And what of the loins, or reins, for we must not pass these over? Let the purification take hold of these also. Let our loins be girded and kept in check by continence, as the Law required for Israel of old, when partaking of the Passover! (Exodus 12:11) No one comes out of Egypt easily, or escapes the Destroyer, except he who has disciplined these. Let the reins be changed by that good conversion by which they transfer all the affections to God. So that they can say, Lord, all my desire is before You (Psalm 38:9), and the day of man have I not desired. For you must be a man of desires (Daniel 10:11), but the desires must be those of the spirit".

Eating the Unleavened Bread

According to the Law, unleavened bread was to be eaten throughout each of the seven days of the feast (Exodus 12:14-15). Anyone eating something leavened was to be cut off from the nation of Israel! From the seriousness of the penalty of eating leavened foodstuffs, one can see that eating unleavened bread is the *central issue* of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Anyone who did not wish to comply was, in effect, saying that they did not want to partake of the things of the Kingdom of God. In writing to the Corinthians, Paul mentioned that the "old leaven" which was to be cleaned out of one's dwelling (Exodus 12:19), which is one's life or one's heart, is "malice and wickedness", whereas the unleavened bread of the feast is "sincerity and truth" (1 Corinthians 5:8). Regarding this, John Chrysostom stated[380],

> "When we have driven away lying, bitterness, fornication, uncleanness and covetousness from our souls; when we have become kind, tender-hearted, forgiving one another; when we have rendered ourselves worthy of it; what is there to hinder the Holy Spirit from coming and lighting upon us? Not only will He come to us, but He will fill our hearts, and when we have so great a light kindled within us, then will the way of virtue be no longer difficult to attain, but will be easy and simple".

Paul stated that all sins except fornication are outside the body. Fornication however, is a sin against one's own body because the Holy Spirit dwells there. Thus Paul said to glorify God

[379] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 40 on Holy Baptism, XL
[380] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, v. 17.

in our bodies. One way he said to do this is to "present our bodies as a living, holy sacrifice, well pleasing to God, our reasonable worship" (Romans 12:1).

For those who are unwilling to be transformed but insist on joining their body to a harlot, the Lord has no choice but to give them over in the desires or passions of their heart to uncleanness. Thus their bodies might be dishonored (i.e. abused and maltreated) among them (Romans 1:24). This is what happened to the Prodigal Son in his desire to separate himself from his father (Luke 15:11-32).

Eating unleavened bread during the Feast also speaks of separation and purification. This was the time of leaving behind bondage and slavery in Egypt. Purification is also understood in that unleavened bread (pure, without germ or leaven) is eaten throughout the Feast.

Athanasius stated[381] that the Feast is an eternal and a heavenly Feast, not in shadows, but in truth. And we should treat it and prepare for it accordingly.

> "Blessed Moses ordained the great feast of the Passover, and our celebration of it, because Pharaoh was killed, and the people were delivered from bondage. in those times, when those who tyrannized the people had been slain, temporal feasts and holidays were observed in Judea (Esther 9:20-28, Judith 9:15). Now that the devil, that tyrant against the whole world, is slain, we do not approach a temporal feast, my beloved, but an eternal and heavenly. Not in shadows do we show it forth, but we come to it in truth. They were filled with the flesh of a dumb lamb, accomplished the feast, and having anointed their doorposts with the blood, implored aid against the destroyer. But now we, eating of the Word of the Father, and having the lintels of our hearts sealed with the blood of the New Testament (Matthew 26:28), acknowledge the grace given us from the Savior. He said, 'Behold, I have given to you to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy' (Luke 10:19). No more does death reign; but instead of death we have life, since our Lord said, 'I am the life' (John 14:6). Everything is filled with joy and gladness; as it is written, 'The Lord reigns, let the earth rejoice' (Psalm 97:1). When death reigned, 'sitting down by the rivers of Babylon, we wept' (Psalm 137:1) and mourned, because we felt the bitterness of captivity. But now that death and the kingdom of the devil is abolished, everything is entirely filled with joy and gladness. God is no longer known only in Judea, but in all the earth. 'Their voice has gone forth, and the knowledge of Him has filled all the earth' (Psalm 76:1, 19:4). What follows, my beloved, is obvious; that we should approach such a feast, not with filthy garments, but having clothed our minds with pure garments. We need in this to put on our Lord Jesus, that we may be able to celebrate the feast with Him. Now we are clothed with Him when we love virtue and are enemies to wickedness; when we exercise ourselves in temperance and mortify lasciviousness. Also when we love righteousness before iniquity; when we honor sufficiency and have strength of mind; when we do not forget the poor but open our doors to all men; when we assist humble-mindedness but hate pride".

Athanasius continued[382] to link the ancient Passover to the Church.

[381] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter IV, 2-3.
[382] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter V, 4.

"The Passover is indeed abstinence from evil for exercise of virtue, and a departure from death to life. This may be learned even from the type of old time. Then they worked hard to pass from Egypt to Jerusalem, but now we depart from death to life. They then passed from Pharaoh to Moses, but now we rise from the devil to Christ. At that time, the type of deliverance bore witness every year, so now we commemorate our salvation. We fast meditating on death that we may be able to live. We watch, not as mourners, but as they that wait for the Lord, when He shall have returned from the wedding, so that we may vie with each other in the triumph, hastening to announce the sign of victory over death".

Athanasius also linked[383] the Feast of Unleavened Bread to the Lord's Table, and for those who approach unworthily, it is a danger and a reproach. However, those who draw near to the divine Lamb, touch heavenly food.

"There is no one free from defilement, though his course may have been but one hour on the earth (Job 14:4 LXX), as Job, that man of surpassing fortitude, testifies. But, 'stretching forth to those things that are to come' (Philippians 3:13), let us pray that we may not eat the Passover unworthily, lest we be exposed to dangers. To those who keep the feast in purity, the Passover is heavenly food; but to those who observe it profanely and contemptuously, it is a danger and reproach. It is written, 'Whoever shall eat and drink unworthily, is guilty of the death of our Lord' (1 Corinthians 11:27). Therefore, let us not merely proceed to perform the festal rites, but let us be prepared to draw near to the divine Lamb, and to touch heavenly food. Let us cleanse our hands; let us purify the body. Let us keep our whole mind from guile; not giving up ourselves to excess and to lusts, but occupying ourselves entirely with our Lord, and with divine doctrines; so that, being altogether pure (2 Peter 1:4), we may be able to partake of the Word".

In one word, then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures separation from an old life of a bondage to sin and various wickedness, and the beginning of a life of real righteousness, having been purified from former sins (2 Peter 1:9).

The number seven is generally recognized as representing perfection or completion. Eating unleavened bread for seven days would then represent a complete separation from the old life of bondage and its power. This separation is illustrated very dramatically in the inundation of the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea[384]. Baptism in water makes a fitting conclusion to this "feast of separation" in that it adds a harmonic note of completion to the seven days of sincerity and truth (Compare 1 Peter 3:21).

The believer who has come through this "Feast of Separation" has a unique standing among mankind. Jesus Christ, Himself the firstborn of creation (Colossians 1:15) makes a distinction between "Israel and Egypt" (Exodus 11:7); that is between His own and those of the world (John 10:1-16). Those who are His own are said to have their names written in the Lamb's book of life (Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12-15, 21:27), and are

[383] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter V, 5

[384] According to tradition, the crossing of the Red Sea and the drowning of Pharaoh's army occurred on the 7th day of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which was later commemorated as a Sabbath. For more details, see the Study for Matins of Holy Thursday.

referred to collectively as "the general assembly and church of firstborn ones who have been enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). As such, they represent the firstborn of mankind and are designated to be a kingdom of priests to God the Father (Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6, 1 Peter 2:5, 9). All this was made possible by Christ's death and resurrection, which is why we review this subject here.

Yet there is a mystery here that not all are granted the ability to see. Ambrose of Milan stated[385] that the depth of the mystery was veiled by Moses, so that only those to whom it has been given might know the mystery of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:11-12).

> "All do not see the depths of the mysteries, for they were hid from the Levites, lest they should see who ought not to see, and they who cannot serve should take it up. Moses, indeed, saw the circumcision of the Spirit, but veiled it, so as to give circumcision only in an outward sign. He saw the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth; he saw the sufferings of the Lord, but he veiled the unleavened bread of truth in the material unleavened bread. He veiled the sufferings of the Lord in the sacrifice of a lamb or a calf".

Athanasius continued[386] to exhort his people, saying that some keep the Feast by just going through the motions. The Apostle Paul as well as Moses reproves them such that, by doing this, the Feast becomes just "a feast of the Jews" (John 6:4) and not the real Pascha.

> "God, who brought Israel out of Egypt, at this time calls us to the Feast, saying by Moses, 'Observe the month of new fruits, and keep the Passover to the Lord your God' (Deuteronomy 16:1). By the prophet He said, 'Keep your Feasts, O Judah; pay to the Lord your vows' (Nahum 1:15). If then God Himself loves the Feast, and calls us to it, it is not right, my brethren, that it should be delayed, or observed carelessly. But with zeal we should come to it, so that having begun joyfully here, we may also receive a pledge of that heavenly Feast. If we diligently celebrate the Feast here, we shall doubtless receive the perfect joy which is in heaven, as the Lord says, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer. For I say unto you, that I will no longer eat it until it is fulfilled with you in the kingdom of God' (Luke 22:15-16). Now we eat it if, understanding the reason of the Feast, and acknowledging the Deliverer, we conduct ourselves in accordance with His grace. As Paul said, 'Keep the Feast, not with old leaven neither with the leaven of wickedness; but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8). The Lord died in those days, that we should no longer do the deeds of death. He gave His life that we might preserve our own life from the snares of the devil. What is most wonderful, the Word became flesh, that we should no longer live in the flesh, but in spirit should worship God, who is Spirit. He who is not so disposed, abuses the days, and does not keep the Feast. Like an unthankful person he finds e fault with the grace, and honors the days too much, while he does not supplicate the Lord, Who redeemed him. Though fancying that he keeps the Feast, let him by all means hear the Apostolic voice reproving him, 'You observe days, and months, and times, and years; I fear lest I have labored among you in vain' (Galatians 4:10-11). The Feast is not on account of the days; but for the Lord's sake, who then suffered for us; we celebrate it, for 'our Passover Christ, is sacrificed' (1

[385] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 260.
[386] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 1-3.

Corinthians 5:7). Even as Moses, when teaching Israel not to consider the Feast as pertaining to the days, but to the Lord, said, 'It is the Lord's Passover' (Exodus 12:11). To the Jews, when they thought they were keeping the Passover, because they persecuted the Lord, the Feast was useless. It no longer bore the name of the Lord, even according to their testimony. It was not the Passover of the Lord, but the Passover of the Jews (John 6:4). The Passover was named after the Jews, my brethren, because they denied the Lord of the Passover. On this account, the Lord, turning away His face from such a doctrine of theirs, said, 'Your new moons and your Sabbaths My soul hates' (Isaiah 1:14). So now, those who keep the Passover in like manner, the Lord again reproves, as He did those lepers that were cleansed (Luke 17:15ff). He loved the one as thankful, but was angry with the others as ungrateful, because they did not acknowledge their Deliverer, but thought more of the cure of the leprosy than of Him who healed them".

3rd Parable from Holy Saturday: Exodus 12:1-11 "Christ -- The Passover Sacrifice "

This Reading is read on Holy Saturday, but it is being covered here for the purpose of continuity of subject matter. The Reading describes the "Passover" event in Egypt of c. 1500 BC. On the 14th day of Nisan, in mid to late afternoon (about 3:00 p.m.), the Passover lamb (male, without blemish) was killed. Its blood was applied to the side and upper doorposts of the house where the given family lived, and where they would later eat the roasted meat of the lamb (Exodus 12:6, 7, 22). In applying the blood as commanded, they couldn't help but trace the outline of a cross.

God responded to this. If the given household obeyed His command and accepted the blood "as a token upon the houses" where they lived, they were saved. If they rejected the blood, disobeyed His command, and decided they could make it quite well apart from His way, they weren't. The Lord said: "I will go through the land of Egypt on that night and will strike down all the first-born in the land of Egypt, both man and beast; and against all the gods of Egypt I will execute judgments -- I am the Lord. And the blood shall be a sign for you on the houses where you live; and when I see the blood I will pass over you, and no plague will befall you to destroy you when I strike the land of Egypt" (Exodus 12:12-13).

Thus it is called the "Lord's Passover" because the Lord "passed over" the houses when He saw the blood, such that the house was delivered from death.

In c. 30 AD, at the same time that the Passover Lamb was being slain ceremonially at the Temple in response to the Lord's command, Jesus cried out, gave up the spirit, and died on the Cross (Mark 15:34-37). As Jesus was dying, so was the Passover Lamb! This was what John the Baptist was talking about when he said, referring to Jesus, "Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29). The people present at the ceremonial slaying of the Passover Lamb at the Temple were hindered by the darkness and they could feel the earthquake. They may even have been able to hear Jesus crying out with a loud voice giving up His spirit. To understand that the events were connected was not a stretch at all.

The prophetic significance of the celebration of the Lord's Passover was simply that for almost 1500 years, from the Exodus to 30 AD, the fact that Jesus would die as the Lamb of God taking away the sin of the world was celebrated in advance.

Justin Martyr explained[387] the prophetic significance of the Passover as portraying Christ. Roasting portrays crucifixion, and the Paschal Lamb was affixed to a spit that formed the shape of a cross.

> "The mystery of the lamb which God enjoined to be sacrificed as the Passover, was a type of Christ; with whose blood, in proportion to their faith in Him, they anointed their houses, i.e., themselves, who believe on Him. The creation, which God created, namely Adam, was a house for the spirit, which proceeded from God. This injunction was temporary, however. God does not permit the lamb of the Passover to be sacrificed in any other place than where His Name was named. Knowing that the days will come, after the suffering of Christ, when even the place in Jerusalem shall be given over to your enemies, all the offerings, in short, shall cease. The lamb, which God commanded to be wholly roasted, was a symbol of the suffering of the cross, which Christ would undergo. The lamb, which is roasted, is roasted and dressed up in the form of the cross. One spit is transfixed right through from the lower parts up to the head, and one across the back, to which are attached the legs of the lamb".

Athanasius identified[388] the Church's celebration of Pascha (Greek, meaning *Passover*) with the Old Testament Passover in a number of his Paschal letters, and applies all the imagery of Old Testament Passover to modern Pascha[389].

> "Let us then, my beloved brethren, celebrate with thanksgiving the holy feast which now draws near to us, 'girding up the loins of our minds' (1 Peter 1:13), like our Savior Jesus Christ. Of Him it is written, 'Righteousness shall be the belt of His loins, and faithfulness the belt of His reins' (Isaiah 11:5). Each one of us having in his hand the staff which came out of the root of Jesse, and our feet shod with the preparation of the Gospel (Isaiah 11:1, Ephesians 6:15), let us keep the feast. As Paul said, let us keep the Feast 'not with the old leaven, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth' (1 Corinthians 5:8), reverently trusting that we are reconciled through Christ, and not departing from faith in Him. Let us not defile ourselves with heretics, and strangers to the truth, whose conversation and whose will degrade them. But rejoicing in afflictions, we break through the furnace[390] of iron (Deuteronomy 4:20) and darkness, and pass, unharmed, over that terrible Red Sea".

Athanasius also spoke[391] of the Passover: we should not keep the Feast after an earthly manner, but with the angels in heaven. This includes the forty-day fast – akin to the forty years in the wilderness – to be purified and freed from defilement.

> "Wherefore let us not celebrate the Feast after an earthly manner, but as keeping festival in heaven with the angels. Let us glorify the Lord, by chastity, by righteousness, and other virtues. Let us rejoice, not in ourselves, but in the Lord,

[387] Justin Martyr, Dialog With Trypho, 40.
[388] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter III, 5.
[389] Pascha in the Orthodox Church is roughly equivalent to Easter in the West, but often occurs on a different day due to the use of a different calendar by East and West.
[390] The Furnace of Iron: Some have interpreted this as a figurative reference to a hard life in Egypt. However, it could also refer to the kilns used in Egypt for making brick (Exodus. 1:10-14) and similar kilns for smelting iron to make weapons of war.
[391] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 12.

that we may be inheritors with the saints. Let us keep the Feast then, as Moses. Let us watch like David who rose seven times, and in the middle of the night gave thanks for the righteous judgments of God. Let us be early, as he said, 'In the morning I will stand before You, and You will look upon me; in the morning You will hear my voice' (Psalm 5:3). Let us fast like Daniel (Daniel 9:3); let us pray without ceasing, as Paul commanded (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Let all of us recognize the season of prayer, but especially those who are honorably married; so that having borne witness to these things, and thus having kept the Feast, we may be able to enter into the joy of Christ in the kingdom of heaven. But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement. So that when we depart this life, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber (Luke 14:15) with the Lord, to sup with Him; and may be partakers of the joy which is in heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days".

Chrysostom tied[392] the mystery of the Passover to the mystery of the Lord's Table, just as the Passion and the Cross are mysteries. The Lord's Table was appointed in the fullness of time as the rituals of the Law were passing away. The Twelve had been prepared by Jesus' teaching to be able to understand this.

"Why was it that He ordained this sacrament then, at the time of the Passover? That you might learn from everything, both that He is the lawgiver of the Old Testament, and that the things therein are foreshadowed because of these things. Therefore, I say, where the type is, there He puts the truth".

"This He said, indicating that His passion and His cross are a mystery, by this comforting His disciples. Like Moses said, 'This shall be to you for an everlasting memorial' (Exodus 12:14), so He too, 'in remembrance of Me', until I come. Therefore also He said, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover' (Luke 22:15); that is, to deliver you the new rites, and to give a Passover, by which I am to make you spiritual".

"He Himself drank of it. On hearing this, they might say, What then? Do we drink blood, and eat flesh, and then be perplexed? When He began to speak concerning these things, many were offended (John 6:60-66). Therefore lest they should be troubled, He first did this Himself, leading them to the calm participation of the mysteries. Therefore He drank His own blood. On this account He said, 'Do this', that He might withdraw them from the other (i.e. the slaying of lambs). If this works remission of sins, as it surely does work it, the other is now superfluous".

Athanasius of Alexandria added[393] that by being nourished at the Lord's Table, we shall truly keep the Feast of the Passover:

"In the historical account, in no other place might the feast of the Passover be kept except in Jerusalem. Yet when the things pertaining to that time were fulfilled, and those which belonged to shadows had passed away, the preaching of the Gospel was about to extend everywhere. When the disciples were spreading

[392] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 1.
[393] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, IV, 4.

the feast in all places, they asked the Savior, 'Where do You want us to make ready?' (Matthew 26:17) The Savior also, since He was changing the typical for the spiritual, promised them that they should no longer eat the flesh of a lamb, but His own, saying, 'Take, eat and drink; this is My body, and My blood' (Matthew 26:26-29). When we are thus nourished by these things, we also shall truly keep the feast of the Passover".

6th Parable from Holy Saturday: Exodus 13:20-15:19 "Crossing the Red Sea"

This Reading is read on Holy Saturday, but it is being covered here for the purpose of continuity of subject matter. Immediately following the Passover Sacrifice, this Reading describes the events that occurred during the weeklong Feast of Unleavened Bread, which concluded with the crossing of the Red Sea. The Day of the Lord's Passover was the 14th of Nisan, a Friday, and was the day the Lord was crucified. Holy Saturday, the 15th of Nisan, was the beginning of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which lasted until the 21st of Nisan. The 15th of Nisan and the 21st of Nisan were both Sabbaths, indicating that there was a special meaning for both days.

On the 15th of Nisan, Israel was on their way out of Egypt, beginning the Exodus. Also on the 15th of Nisan, or Holy Saturday, Christ was in Hades leading captivity captive. The 21st of Nisan is regarded by Hebrew tradition as the day of the crossing of the Red Sea. Moreover, this would make good sense logically. The Feast of Unleavened Bread generally speaks of separation and purification. Therefore, a complete and final separation of Israel from Egypt and the ways of Egypt fitly conclude the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

Beginning in the evening of the 15th of Nisan and going on all night, the nation of Israel ate the roasted Passover lamb "with their loins girded, their sandals on your feet, and their staff in their hand; they ate it in haste" (Exodus 12:11). This they did as they left Egypt (Exodus 12:51).

Between the two Sabbaths, God, Himself, went before the Nation of Israel in a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:17-22). This is the first time in the history of the people of God that God, Himself, physically led His people where He wanted them to go. Paul made some very significant statements concerning this week of Unleavened Bread and following: He said that all the people were baptized into Moses in both the cloud and in the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-5). Moses represents Christ as head of the Church, the cloud represents the leading of the Holy Spirit, and the Red Sea represents separation from the things of this world.

1) Separation from the Things of This World

Unleavened bread was eaten because the nation of Israel left Egypt in haste, on short notice, and didn't have time to leaven it (Exodus 12:39). Unleavened bread is later called "the bread of affliction" (Deuteronomy 16:3) because it was supposed to remind them of their affliction in Egypt (Deuteronomy 26:7). We might note that the texture of unleavened bread, being tougher than and not as tasty as leavened bread, might imply some kind of "hardship".

After Israel left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan, Pharaoh changed his mind about letting Israel go, and pursued Israel with his entire army. The Lord led Israel, who was largely unarmed, with a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night (Exodus 13:21).

Trapped between the mountains, the Red Sea and Pharaoh's army, the people were terrified and cried to Moses. On the 21st of Nisan, Moses said, "Stand by and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today. The Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever" (Exodus 14:13). Moses then stretched his hand over the Red Sea and divided the waters (Exodus 14:21). Israel crossed on dry ground, and the Egyptians pursued. Moses then stretched his hand over the Red Sea again and the waters inundated the Egyptians (Exodus 14:22-28). Josephus added[394] that the return of the waters to inundate Pharaoh's army involved a violent electrical storm also.

The two Sabbaths in the Feast of Unleavened Bread can be seen as going together. On the first Sabbath, they were declared free, and left Egypt; but they weren't really free from the power of Egypt. On the second Sabbath, they were set free from the power of Egypt once and for all. Following their deliverance, Israel sang the song of Moses (Exodus 15:1-18) accompanied by timbrels, as Miriam led the women in dancing (Exodus 15:20). This Song of Moses is still used today as part of the hymns of the Church on Holy Saturday.

Egypt is often used metaphorically throughout the Scriptures as a picture of the bondage and slavery of sin (Deuteronomy 5:6, 7:8; Exodus 20:2). Just as the nation of Israel had to leave the land of Egypt (a place of bondage), each believer has to leave his place of bondage, whatever it may be. Different people have different kinds of bondage; some have it with fornication, others with debauchery, others with lying or various forms of deceit, etc. The point is to leave it.

There are times when the power behind the bondage tries to come after us to bring us back to the bondage we've just left, very much as the armies of Pharaoh went after the Israelis. At this point, we should walk by faith and not by sight. Instead of crying out and desiring to go back to the bondage of Egypt as the Israelis did (Exodus 14:10-12), the thing to do is what Moses said: "Do not fear! Take your stand and see the salvation of the Lord which He will accomplish for you today; for the Egyptians whom you have seen today, you will never see them again forever" (Exodus 14:13). What followed was the baptism of Israel in the Red Sea (1 Corinthians 10:1-2).

On the second Sabbath of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, just as Moses called the baptism of Israel in the Red Sea, "The salvation of the Lord", so Peter says that "baptism now saves you -- through the resurrection of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 3:21). By baptism he does not mean merely removing dirt from the flesh (washing or dunking in water), but "an appeal to God for a good conscience". Should the power behind our former bondage try to swallow us up after we have left our former bondage, appealing to our new Lord and Master will not go unheard (1 Corinthians 10:11-13).

[394] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xvi, 3.

2) The Power of Sin

The principle that is involved here is the destruction of the power of sin. If Egypt can be seen as representing the bondage and slavery of sin, then the armies of Pharaoh certainly represent the power of sin. At the baptism of the Israelis in the Red Sea, as the baptism of a believer, the power of sin is buried (cf. also 1 Corinthians 15:56; Romans 6:3-7, 14).

In short, what is happening here is that the baptism in the cloud is the "appeal to God for a good conscience," and the baptism in the Red Sea is the demonstration or burial (in water) that is customarily referred to as "baptism." Both are necessary!

In Orthodox tradition, there is a short prayer service on the evening before the day of the Baptism. This prayer service is called exorcism prayers and is intended to prepare the "newly illumined" for Baptism, and to "appeal to God for a good conscience".

John Chrysostom carried[395] this spiritual application one step further with regard to a desire to return to the Egypt of sin.

> "Not only does he remind them of the 'unleavened bread' (1 Corinthians 5:7-8), but also to point out the affinity of the Old Testament with the New; and to point out also that it was impossible, after the 'unleavened bread', again to enter into Egypt. But if anyone chose to return, he would suffer the same things as the Egyptians did. For those things were shadows of these".

Regarding the removal of all traces of leaven from their houses prior to the Feast of Unleavened Bread, Chrysostom continued[396] to say that this represents instruction for us to clean up our lives.

> "Let us explain why the leaven is cast out of all their borders. What then is the hidden meaning? The believer must be freed from all iniquity. Among the Jews he perishes if he is found with old leaven, so also with us, whoever is found with iniquity. Since of course the punishment being so great in that case (Exodus 12:12, 19), which is a shadow, in our case it cannot choose but be much greater. If they so carefully clear their houses of leaven, and pry into mouse-holes; much more ought we to search through the soul so as to cast out every unclean thought".

In one word, then, the Feast of Unleavened Bread pictures separation: separation from an old life of a bondage to sin and various wickedness, and the beginning of a life of real righteousness, having been purified from former sins (2 Peter 1:9).

The number seven is generally recognized as representing perfection or completion. Eating unleavened bread for seven days would then represent a complete separation from the old life of bondage and its power. This separation is illustrated very dramatically in the inundation of the armies of Pharaoh at the Red Sea. Baptism in water makes a fitting conclusion to this "feast of separation" in that it adds a harmonic note of completion to the seven days of sincerity and truth (Compare 1 Peter 3:21).

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[395] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XV, 7.
[396] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XV, 8.

The believer who has come through this "Feast of Separation" has a unique standing among mankind. Jesus Christ, Himself the firstborn of creation (Colossians 1:15) makes a distinction between "Israel and Egypt" (Exodus 11:7); that is between His own and those of the world (John 10:1-16). Those who are His own are said to have their names written in the Lamb's book of life[397], and are referred to collectively as "the general assembly and church of firstborn ones who have been enrolled in heaven" (Hebrews 12:23). As such, they represent the firstborn of mankind and are designated to be a kingdom of priests to God the Father (Revelation 1:6, 5:10, 20:6, 1 Peter 2:5, 9). All this was made possible by Christ's death and resurrection, and this is illustrated by the sacking of Hades on Holy Saturday.

3) Bright Week in the Church Corresponds to the Feast of Unleavened Bread

According to the Law, unleavened bread was to be eaten throughout each of the seven days of the feast. Anyone eating something leavened was to be cut off from the nation of Israel! From the seriousness of the penalty of eating leavened foodstuffs, one might infer that this issue is at least one of, if not the, central issue of the Feast of Unleavened Bread. Paul writes to the Corinthians and mentions both the Lord's Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. The "old leaven", which was to be cleaned out of one's dwelling (Exodus 12:19), which is spiritually, one's life or one's heart, is mentioned as referring to malice and wickedness, whereas the unleavened bread of the feast is mentioned as referring to sincerity and truth.

The way this works in real life is that our change in attitude becomes obvious to all our neighbors, just as Israel's new life became obvious to all their neighbors. To understand this analogy, we must look carefully at the words that describe the cloud and the pillar that led Israel in the wilderness. At the giving of the Law from Mt. Sinai, the fire on top of Mt. Sinai "burned with fire to the midst of heaven" (Deuteronomy 4:11). This was no longer just a small bush burning, but was a huge fire thousands of feet tall that was visible to Israel's neighbors over 50 miles away. As the Pillar moved, Israel moved; thus Israel's neighbors knew where they were at any moment and when they were getting close. Sometimes we may think of the Pillar and the Cloud as a small dust devil (no pun intended) moving around in the wilderness. However, the Cloud was large enough to block the path of the 250,000-man[398] Egyptian army (Exodus 14:19-20). As the neighbors of Israel watched Israel approach, they were completely demoralized. For example, Rahab, the Jericho harlot who welcomed the spies, testified that "the terror of you has fallen on us, and that all the inhabitants of the land are fainthearted because of you. We have heard how the Lord dried up the water of the Red Sea for you when you came out of Egypt, and what you did to the two kings of the Amorites who were on the other side of the Jordan, Sihon and Og[399], whom you utterly destroyed. As soon as we heard these things, our hearts melted; neither did there remain any more courage in anyone because of you, for the Lord your God, He is God in heaven above and on earth beneath" (Joshua 2:9-11). They knew that Israel's God:

1. Spoke to Israel in person from the fire on Mt. Sinai.
2. Destroyed Egypt's huge army in the Red Sea leaving no survivors.
3. Led Israel day by day through the wilderness.
4. Provided Israel with food from heaven every day.
5. Provided 600,000 Israelis plus all their livestock with water from a Rock.

[397] See for example Philippians 4:3, Revelation 3:5, 13:8, 17:8, 20:12-15, 21:27.
[398] According to Josephus, Antiquities, II, xv, 3, Pharaoh led 600 select chariots, 50,000 cavalry, and 200,000 foot soldiers into the wilderness to bring Israel back.
[399] Both Sihon and Og were much stronger than Israel at that time.

How can anyone fight against an army where the miraculous is normal procedure?

The same thing is true with us. As the veil of our perception is taken away (2 Corinthians 3:13-16), there is a change in our attitude that people can recognize. As we apply ourselves to the things of God, we begin to be led by the Holy Spirit, and people will start to recognize the Holy Spirit in us. This is true of those who have been newly baptized just before Pascha and those who have known the Lord for a long time.

Corresponding to the Feast of Unleavened Bread today is "Bright Week" in the Church. This is the week following Pascha (Easter), and there is a mystery here that not all are granted the ability to see. Having come through the forty days of fasting, corresponding to the forty years in the wilderness, we begin a time of rejoicing to celebrate our separation from the things of this world. Whereas strict fasting for 40 days preceded Pascha, fasting of any kind is forbidden during Bright Week following Pascha. This is a time of great rejoicing and fasting, which is a kind of mourning, is just not appropriate. The sincerity and truth that was displayed as a type in Unleavened Bread (1 Corinthians 5:8) now sees its fulfillment in Bright Week.

Ambrose of Milan stated[400] that the depth of the mystery was veiled by Moses, so that only those to whom it has been given might know the mystery of the Kingdom of God (Mark 4:11-12).

> "All do not see the depths of the mysteries, for they were hid from the Levites, lest they should see who ought not to see, and they who cannot serve should take it up. Moses saw the circumcision of the Spirit, but veiled it, so as to give circumcision only in an outward sign. He saw the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth; he saw the sufferings of the Lord, but he veiled the unleavened bread of truth in the material unleavened bread. He veiled the sufferings of the Lord in the sacrifice of a lamb or a calf".

One can sense in the words of Exodus 11 and 12 an atmosphere of things happening quickly, on very short notice, with little time to prepare (Exodus 12:39; Deuteronomy 16:3). So it is when one comes to know the Lord. A life with God is not just something that one plans; it is a moment by moment walk with the Lord. Knowing the Lord as a name in a book is useless; one needs to listen to His direction as a voice in one's heart. Just as the whole nation of Israel couldn't help but break out in song after its baptism in the Red Sea (Exodus 15), so the new believer often can't help but want to sing about his recent salvation and his newly-discovered Lord.

In the Orthodox calendar, the forty days of Lent preceding Pascha are spent in fasting and in mourning our expulsion from Paradise. We should be zealous in our fasting, but in a spiritual sense and not just in a fleshly sense. At Pascha, we celebrate our return to Paradise and we should earnestly desire this. Athanasius stated[401] it in these words:

> "Ours also is the Passover, the calling is from above, and 'our conversation is in heaven'. As Paul says, 'We have here no abiding city, but we seek that which is to come' (Philippians 3:20, Hebrews 13:14). Looking forward, we properly keep the feast. Heaven truly is high, and its distance from us infinite; for 'the heaven of heavens', he says, 'is the Lord's' (Psalm 115:16). But not, on

[400] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 260.
[401] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter XLIII.

that account, are we to be negligent or fearful, as though the way there were impossible. But rather should we be zealous. Yet not, as in the case of those who journeyed east and, finding a plain in Shinar, began to build a tower. There is no need for us to bake bricks with fire, and to seek asphalt for mortar (Genesis 11:3); for their tongues were confused, and their work was destroyed.

For us the Lord has consecrated a way through His blood, and has made it easy. Not only has He afforded us consolation respecting the distance, but also He has come and opened the door for us, which was once shut. It was shut from the time He cast out Adam from the delight of Paradise, and set the Cherubim and the flaming sword, that turned every direction, to keep the way of the tree of life (Genesis 3:24). This is now, however, opened wide. He that sits on the Cherubim, having appeared with greater grace and loving-kindness, led into Paradise with Himself the thief who confessed (Luke 23:40-43); and having entered heaven as our forerunner, opened the gates to all. Paul also, 'pressing toward the mark for the prize of the high calling' (Philippians 3:14), by it was taken up to the third heaven. Having seen those things which are above, he descended and he teaches us, announcing what is written to the Hebrews. 'You have not come to the mountain that can be touched and that burned with fire, to clouds and darkness, to a tempest, and to the voice of words. But you have come to Mount Zion, to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to an innumerable company of angels, and to the general assembly and Church of the first-born, which are written in heaven' (Hebrews 12:18-23). Who would not wish to enjoy companionship with these! Who would not desire to be enrolled with these, that he may hear with them (Matthew 25:34), 'Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world'.

2nd Epistle: Galatians 3:13-14 "The Curse of the Tree"

"Christ has redeemed us from the curse of the law, having become a curse for us. (For it is written, 'Cursed *is* everyone who hangs on a tree'.) That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13-14).

Blessings and Curses: Galatians 3:13

Blessings and curses were proclaimed from adjacent mountain peaks as soon as Israel entered the Promised Land. Mt. Gerizim and the adjacent peak of Mt Ebal were both about 2500 ft. high and located in the center of Israel. Together they formed a part of an unusual liturgy performed by Joshua at the time of the Conquest (Deuteronomy 27:12-25, Joshua 8:30-35).

The Law was painted on stone on Mt. Ebal as an icon and as a curse for those who refuse to keep it (Deuteronomy 27:2-4). Cyprian stated[402] that the stones on which the Law was written represent Christ, the Lawgiver.

[402] Cyprian, Treatises XII, iii, 16.

The liturgy of blessings and the curses was very dramatic. The elders of six tribes stood on Mt Gerizim to bless the people who obey the Law; the elders of the other six tribes stood on Mt Ebal to curse the people who disobey the Law. And all the people responded with the "Amen" (Deuteronomy 27:12-26).

Since "those who are of faith are blessed with the believing Abraham" (Galatians 3:9), the blessing on Mt. Gerizim represents the blessing Abraham received for loving God and neighbor (Genesis 15:6). Mt. Gerizim continued to stand for holiness to the Samaritans. Photini, the Samaritan woman at the well in Sychar, a town which was at the foot of Mt. Gerizim (John 4:7-9), considered Mt. Gerizim more proper than Jerusalem (John 4: 19-24). There was some logic to her understanding.

On the other hand, "the Law is not made for a righteous person" (1 Timothy 1:9), and "as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse" (Galatians 3:10, Deuteronomy 27:26). In His answer to Photini regarding Mt. Gerizim, Jesus spoke of true worship in spirit and truth – that would take place elsewhere.

The curse on Mt. Ebal represents what those who refuse to love God and neighbor can expect to receive after being reminded by the Law their entire life about what God expects, and yet refusing to obey. To show the love of God for His people, Christ Himself became the curse that was proclaimed on Mt. Ebal in becoming sin and taking away the sin of the world (Galatians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Tertullian referred[403] to the blessing and the curse as good and evil.

> "Behold", says the Lord, "I have set before you good and evil (Deuteronomy 30:15). Choose that which is good. You can choose good if you will because He has proposed it to your free-will. If you cannot because you will not, then you ought to depart from Him whose will you do not do".

Another aspect of the curse comes from a body hanging on a tree. Because the Land was holy, due to the dwelling place of the Lord in its midst, there were certain commandments that the Lord gave to Moses in order to preserve holiness. One of these aimed at preserving the Land from defilement due to dead bodies. This commandment reads:

> "And if there is sin in anyone, *and* the judgment of death *is upon him*, and he is put to death, and you hang him on a tree, his body shall not remain all night on the tree, but you shall by all means bury it on that day. For everyone that is hanged on a tree is cursed of God; and you shall by no means defile the land which the Lord your God gives you for an inheritance" (Deuteronomy 21:21-23 LXX).

The commandment in the Mosaic Law regarding hanging on a tree referred to crucifixion; but the method of crucifixion was different when Moses drafted the Law. In c. 1500 BC, the criminal was first executed, and then crucified. The crucifixion just emphasized the shame of the deed perpetrated by the criminal, and didn't torture the criminal to death like the Roman version of crucifixion. Taking the body down at the end of the day was no problem in Moses' day because the criminal was already dead before crucifixion. In Roman times, when criminals were crucified while still alive, it could take several days for the victim to die. In both

[403] Tertullian, On Monogamy, xiv.

cases, the "curse" of crucifixion was illustrated in the public display of a person's guilt, along with the shame of nakedness.

When Christ redeemed us from the "curse", which was the penalty for our sins, the principle behind the redemption was a buying back from the penalty of our sin (Hebrews 9:12-15). Cyril of Alexandria stated[404],

> "We have seen Him obedient to the Laws of Moses; or rather we have seen Him, Who as God is the Legislator, subject to His own decrees. The reason for this Paul teaches us, saying, 'When we were babes we were enslaved under the elements of the world. But when the fullness of time came, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law, to redeem them that were under the Law' (Galatians 4:3). Christ therefore ransomed from the curse of the Law those who being subject to it, and had been unable to keep its enactment".

The seal on the tomb is analogous to the curse of the Law. The seal proclaimed that death was inevitable for everyone, and there was no avoiding it. Likewise the "curse" of the Law as the penalty of our sins is inevitable. Just as the Jewish leaders applied the seal to guarantee that the Christ's body stayed in the grave, so the "curse" of the Law guaranteed that those who sinned (which is everyone) stayed in Hades. By becoming man and taking the "curse" on Himself via the Cross and the Resurrection, Christ removed the curse and ransomed us.

Much Misinterpretation of the Curse by Heretics

"Over the centuries, there has been a great deal of misinterpretation by heretics of various statements in the Scriptures that deal with Christ taking on our curse. Some interpreted this to mean that He was not really God. To counter this, Gregory the Theologian compared[405] Christ taking on our curse to Christ taking on human flesh. He was not transformed into flesh or a curse, as some of the heretics said, but remained the same God".

> "The passage, The Word was made Flesh, seems to me to be equivalent to that in which it is said that He was made sin (2 Corinthians 5:21), or a curse (Galatians 3:13) for us. The Lord was not transformed into either of these; how could He be? He took sin and the curse upon Him; He took away our sins and bore our iniquities" (Isaiah 53:4).

Athanasius of Alexandria added[406] that Christ's human body is not co-essential with the Father as is His Deity. Just as He was made flesh, so He became a curse for us. He did not Himself become a curse in His Deity, but took it on in His humanity on our behalf.

> "The body in which the Word was is not co-essential with the Godhead, but was truly born of Mary, while the Word Himself was not changed into bones and flesh, but came in the flesh. What John said, 'The Word was made flesh' (John 1:14), has this meaning, as we may see by a similar passage. Paul wrote, 'Christ has become a curse for us' (Galatians 3:13). Just as He has not Himself become a curse, but did so because He took on Him the curse on our behalf, so also He has become flesh, not by being changed into flesh, but because He assumed living flesh on our behalf, and has become Man. To say 'the Word became flesh', is equivalent to saying 'the Word has become man'. According to

[404] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on Luke, Chap. 2.
[405] Gregory Nazianzen, Letter to Cledonius the Priest, Ep. 101.
[406] Athanasius of Alexandria, "Letter to Epictetus", Personal Letters, LIX, 8.

what is said in Joel: 'I will pour forth of My Spirit on all flesh' (Joel 2:28); the promise did not extend to the irrational animals, but is for men, on whose account the Lord has become Man".

Gregory of Nyssa responded[407] to heretics of his day who said that Christ 'becoming obedient' implies that He is not God. His "obedience" had to do with His emptying Himself to accomplish the work of the Cross, and not with His Deity.

> "At what point of time was it said of Him, that He 'became obedient'? (Philippians 2:8) It was when He came in the form of a servant to accomplish the mystery of redemption by the cross, Who emptied Himself, Who humbled Himself by assuming the likeness and fashion of a man (Philippians 2:7-8), being found as man in man's lowly nature. Then it was that He became obedient, even He Who 'took our infirmities and bore our sicknesses' (Matthew 8:17, Isaiah 53:4), healing the disobedience of men by His own obedience. That by His stripes He might heal our wound, and by His own death do away with the common death of all men. Then it was that for our sakes He was made obedient, even as He became 'sin' (2 Corinthians 5:21) and 'a curse' (Galatians 3:13), not being so by nature, but becoming so in His love for man. Every inspired Scripture attests His independent and sovereign power, saying, 'He spoke the word and they were made; He commanded and they were created' (Psalm 148:5). It is plain that the Psalmist says this concerning Him, Who upholds 'all things by the word of His power'" (Hebrews 1:3).

Athanasius also stated[408] that the Arians of his day were in error to call Christ a creature, created by God. Just as Christ put on flesh at the Incarnation, so also He became sin and a curse for us. These things affected His humanity, not His Deity.

> "The Lord, knowing His own Essence to be the Only-begotten Wisdom and Offspring of the Father, says in love to man. 'The Lord created me a beginning of His ways' (Proverbs 8:22), as if to say, 'My Father has prepared for Me a body, and has created Me for men in behalf of their salvation'. When John says, 'The Word was made flesh' (John 1:14), we do not conceive the whole Word Himself to be flesh, but to have put on flesh and become man. On hearing, 'Christ has become a curse for us,' and 'He has made Him sin for us who knew no sin' (Galatians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 5:21) we do not simply conceive this, that the entire Christ has become curse and sin. He has taken on Him the curse, which was against us. As Paul has said, 'Has redeemed us from the curse' (Galatians 3:13); as Isaiah said, 'has carried our sins' (Isaiah 53:4); and as Peter has written, 'has borne them in the body on the wood' (1 Peter 2:24). So, if it is said in the Proverbs 'He created,' (Proverbs 8:22) we must not conceive that the entire Word is in nature a creature".

Ambrose of Milan stated[409] that Christ being all and in all implies that there is no one subject to another in the Trinity, but all are co-equal. He is made the object or goal[410] in us,

[407] Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, II, 11.
[408] Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, II, xix, 47.
[409] Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, V, xiv, 176-178.

however, as we treat the least of our brethren as Him. Similarly, He was made sin and a curse not in His Eternal Nature, but in bearing our sin and our curse. He continues to be made sin and a curse as He is subject to this condition in our weak brethren. Conversely, through Him, we sit in heavenly places and He makes us partakers of the Divine Nature in His power.

> "That you might know that when he says, 'That God may be all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28), he does not separate Christ from God the Father. He also says, 'Where there is neither male nor female, Jew nor Greek, Barbarian nor Scythian, bond nor free, but Christ is all and in all' (Colossians 3:11). So also, 'That God may be all and in all', he comprehended in that the unity and equality of Christ with God the Father, for the Son is not separated from the Father. And in like manner as the Father works all and in all, so also Christ works all in all (1 Corinthians 12:6). If, then, Christ also works all in all, He is not made the goal in the glory of the Godhead, but in us. He is made the goal in us by being made lower than the angels, I mean in the sacrament of His body. Yet all things which served their Creator from their first beginning seemed not as yet to be made the goal to Him in that."
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> "If you should ask how He was made the goal in us, He Himself shows us, saying, 'I was in prison, and you came to Me; I was sick, and you visited Me. Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these you have done it to Me' (Matthew 25:36-40). You hear of Him in subjection, and are moved, though He is sick and weak in Him in whom He is in subjection, in whom He was made sin and a curse for us."
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> "He was made sin and a curse not on His own account but on ours, so He became the goal in us not for His own sake but for ours, being not in subjection in His eternal Nature, nor accursed in His eternal Nature. 'For cursed is everyone that hangs on a tree' (Galatians 3:13). Cursed He was, for He bore our curses. He was in subjection, also, for He took upon Him our subjection, but in the assumption of the form of a servant, not in the glory of God. While he makes Himself a partaker of our weakness in the flesh, He makes us partakers of the Divine Nature in His power. But neither in one nor the other have we any natural fellowship with the heavenly Generation of Christ, nor is there any subjection of the Godhead in Christ. But as the Apostle has said that on Him through that flesh which is the pledge of our salvation, we sit in heavenly places (Ephesians 2:6), though certainly not sitting ourselves. So also He is said to be the goal in us through the assumption of our nature."

John Chrysostom stated[411] that the Jewish leaders eagerly desired to apply the curse of crucifixion to Christ in order to make Him an abomination among men. Therefore two robbers were crucified with Him. But it turned out the opposite and His glory shone forth all the greater.

> "Truly it is a great and unspeakable thing, that He became a servant; that He underwent death, is far greater. But there is something still greater, and stranger. All deaths are not alike; His death seemed to be the most ignominious of all, to be full of shame, to be accursed; for it is written, 'Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree' (Deuteronomy 21:23; Galatians 3:13). For this cause the

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[410] "The object" implies a goal where we are subject to Christ, where the words "object" versus "subject" are trying to convey a difficult point. We don't normally think of Christ being still subject to sin and a curse; but if He is living in our weak and downtrodden brethren, this is the case.

[411] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, VII.

> Jews eagerly desired to slay Him in this manner, to make Him a reproach. If no one fell away from Him by reason of His death, yet they might from the manner of His death. For this cause two robbers were crucified with Him, and He in the midst, that He might share their ill repute, and that the Scripture might be fulfilled, 'He was numbered with the transgressors' (Isaiah 53:12). Yet so much the more does truth shine forth; for when His enemies plot such things against His glory, and it yet shines forth, so much the greater does the matter seem. By slaying Him in such a way they thought to make Him more abominable than all men, but they availed nothing. Both the robbers also were such impious ones, (for it was afterward that the one repented) that, even when on the cross, they reviled Him. Neither the consciousness of their own sins, their present punishment, or their suffering the same things themselves, restrained their madness. Wherefore the one spoke to the other, and silenced him by saying, 'Do you not even fear God, seeing you are in the same condemnation?" (Luke 23:40) Their wickedness was this great!"

The Blessing of Abraham: Galatians 3:14

Paul stated, "That the blessing of Abraham might come upon the Gentiles in Christ Jesus, that we might receive the promise of the Spirit through faith" (Galatians 3:13-14).

Old Testament and New Testament writers alike used the life of Abraham as the model of a righteous life and a close walk with God. He was called "The friend of God" (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:21-24), and because of his faith, Israel inherited the Promised Land. The Church, with Christ as Head, has inherited the blessing of Abraham in the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:14). By faith Abraham obeyed and he had the vision to wait for the city which has foundations, whose craftsman and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8-10). Abraham believed God and belief (i.e. faith) was reckoned to him as righteousness. He is called the father of all who believe and the heir of the world (Genesis 15:6, Romans 4:11ff). Thus Abraham exemplifies the Grace of God. Abraham received faith according to grace (Romans 4:16), just as all who since him have received faith.

Yet Abraham didn't live in a vacuum; he lived according to the Law that had been handed down from Adam. Tertullian[412] expressed this as follows,

> "For in this law given to Adam, we recognize in embryo all the precepts which afterward sprouted forth when given through Moses. That is, You shall love the Lord your God from your whole heart and out of your whole soul; you shall love your neighbor as yourself; you shall not kill, etc."

John Cassian added[413] that the saints prior to Abraham observed the commands not only of the Law but even anticipated those of the Gospel. In Abraham this "law of love" produced a close relationship with God and Abraham was called "The friend of God" (James 2:23, 2 Chronicles 20:7). This also occurred with Moses, where God spoke to Moses as a man speaks to his friend (Exod. 33:11). Christ illustrated this further. Speaking to His disciples, the Lord said, "No longer do I call you slaves, for a slave does not know what his Master is doing; but I have called you friends" (John 15:15).

[412] Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, iii, 2
[413] John Cassian, Conferences, I, viii, 23

As it is written, "The law is not made for a righteous person" (1 Timothy 1:9). Abraham did not need the details of the Law because his heart was right. In light of this, Irenaeus wrote[414],

> "The righteous fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls; that is, they loved the God who made them, and did no injury to their neighbor. There was therefore no occasion that they should be cautioned by prohibitory mandates, because they had the righteousness of the law in themselves".

The Early Church taught[415] that the purpose of all the details of the Mosaic Law was as medicine for an obstinate people who were forgetful and ungrateful, and who were prone to fall into idolatry, like the Golden Calf, at any moment. For these people and others like them the details of the Law were necessary and He bound them with bonds, a burden and a hard collar. When Christ came in the flesh, He did not take away the Law, but the bonds and the collar.

The purpose of the Law was as our pedagogue until Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). Yet Jesus said of Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). As a result, Abraham is referred to as "The father of all those who believe" (Romans 4:11). Those who obey the Law as Abraham did are now sons of Abraham and heirs according to the promise and are blessed with the believing Abraham (Galatians 3:7, 9, 29). John Chrysostom added[416],

> "Paul showed that Faith was prior to the Law, as is evident from Abraham's case, who was justified before the giving of the Law. He shows too that late events fell out according to prophesy. 'The Scripture', says he, 'foreseeing that God would justify the Gentiles by faith, preached the Gospel beforehand to Abraham' (Galatians 3:8-9). Before He gave the Law, He Himself had decreed that the Gentiles should be justified by Faith. For He said, referring to the words spoken to the Patriarch, 'In you shall all nations be blessed' (Gen. 12:4) at a time when Faith existed, not the Law. 'So then they which are of faith are blessed with the faithful Abraham'.

Comparing Israel to the Church, Chrysostom continued[417] to say that the same Grace saves us, but the honor is greater.

> "If now they were chosen by God not for their own good deeds, it is clear that by grace they obtained this honor. We too are all saved by grace, but for objects much greater and higher. By this grace we have become the beloved of God, no longer as servants, but as sons and friends".

Impacts of the Curse

With the seal on the stone, Christ in the grave descended into hell, which is the subject for the Study of Holy Saturday. John Chrysostom stated[418] that Christ, by being sinless,

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[414] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xvi, 3.
[415] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, iv, 20-21
[416] John Chrysostom, Commentary On Galatians, 3.
[417] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIV, 2.
[418] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 3, v. 13.

exchanged curses with us. This was like an innocent man dying for another, who had been sentenced to death.

> "People were subject to a curse, which says, 'Cursed is every one that continues not in the things that are written in the book of the Law' (Deuteronomy 27:26). To this curse, people were subject, for no man had continued in, or was a keeper of, the whole Law; but Christ exchanged this curse for the other, 'Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree' (Deuteronomy 21:23, Galatians 3:13). Both he who hanged on a tree, and he who transgresses the Law is cursed. As it was necessary for Christ to be free from the curse that He was about to relieve us from, He received another curse instead of it. Therefore Christ took upon Him our curse, and thereby relieved us from it. It was like an innocent man's undertaking to die for another sentenced to death, and so rescuing him from punishment. Christ took upon Him not the curse of transgression, but the other curse, in order to remove that of others. For, 'He had done no violence neither was any deceit in His mouth' (Isaiah 53:9; 1 Peter 2:22). By dying He rescued from death those who were dying, so by taking on Himself the curse, He delivered them from it".

John Chrysostom also stated[419] several reasons why the Holy Spirit had to wait for Christ to leave at the Ascension. One of these is that the curse had not yet been taken away, sin was not yet loosed, but all were yet subject to vengeance; therefore He could not come. It was necessary that the enmity be put away, and that we be reconciled to God; then we could receive that Gift from the Holy Spirit.

Many Church Fathers, in their commentaries, referred to the cross as "the tree" or just as "the wood". This is reasonable, since the word used for "cross" most of the time is *stauros*, meaning "an upright stake", but sometimes the word *xulon*, meaning "wood", is used[420]. The Greek word, *stauros*, does not have to have a crossbeam in order to be called a "cross", and for executions in Roman times, different types of crosses were sometimes used. A "Cross" could be just a plain vertical stake where the victim's hands were tied or nailed above his head. If a "cross" did not have to have a crossbeam, referring to the Cross that Jesus died on as "a tree" (1 Peter 2:24, Galatians 3:13) is perfectly consistent with the meaning of *stauros*.

In contrast to the teachings of the Church, Tertullian addressed[421] the heretic Marcion's notion of competing deities by spelling out the blessings of faith and the curse inherent in the Law. In becoming man, Christ submitted to the curse of the Law. What the heretic omitted was the mention of Abraham, and how we are children of faith by believing as Abraham did.

> "The object of the faith, whereby the just man shall live, will be that same God, to whom belongs the law; by doing the Law, however, no man is justified. Since there equally are found the curse in the Law and the blessing in faith, you have both conditions set forth by the Creator. 'Behold, I have set before you a blessing and a curse' (Deuteronomy 11:26). Paul declares that 'Christ was made a curse for us' (Galatians 3:13) as the result of the Creator's appointment. But yet it by no means follows, because the Creator said of old, 'Cursed is every one that hangs on a tree' (Deuteronomy 21:23 LXX), that Christ belonged to another god,

[419] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 3.
[420] See for example Galatians 3:13, 1 Peter 2:24, Acts 5:30, 10:39, 13:29.
[421] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 5, 3.

and on that account was accursed even then in the Law. It is more suitable for the Creator to have delivered His own Son to His own curse, than to have submitted Him to the malediction of that god of yours".

"What I say, then, is this, that God is the object of faith, who prefigured the grace of faith. But when he also adds, 'You are all the children of faith' (Galatians 3:26), it becomes clear that what the heretic erased was the mention of Abraham's name. By faith Paul declares us to be 'children of Abraham' (Galatians 3:7, 9, 29), and after mentioning him he expressly called us 'children of faith' also. But how are we children of faith, and of whose faith, if not Abraham's? For 'Abraham believed God, and it was accounted to him for righteousness' (Genesis 15:6, Galatians 3:6). He deserved for that reason to be called 'the father of many nations' (Genesis 17:4-5, Romans 4:17-18). We, who are even more like him (Romans 4:11) in believing in God, are thereby justified as Abraham was, and thereby also obtain life, since the just lives by his faith. It therefore happens that, as he called us 'sons of Abraham', so here he named us 'children of faith', for it was owing to his faith that it was promised that Abraham should be the father of many nations".

Old Testament Reading: Ezekiel 37:1-14 "The Dry Bones Come Together"

"And the hand of the Lord came upon me, and the Lord brought me forth by the Spirit, and set me in the midst of the plain, and it was full of human bones. And he led me round about them every way: and, behold, there were very many on the face of the plain, very dry. And he said to me, 'Son of man, will these bones live?' And I said, 'O Lord God, you know this'. And he said to me, 'Prophesy upon these bones, and you shall say to them, You dry bones, hear the word of the Lord. Thus says the Lord to these bones; Behold, I will bring upon you the breath of life. And I will lay sinews upon you, and will bring up flesh upon you, and will spread skin upon you, and will put my Spirit into you, and you shall live; and you shall know that I am the Lord'. So I prophesied as the Lord commanded me. And it came to pass while I was prophesying, that, behold, there was a shaking, and the bones approached each one to his joint. And I looked, and behold, sinews and flesh grew upon them, and skin came upon them above; but there was no breath in them. And he said to me, 'Prophesy to the wind, prophesy, son of man, and say to the wind, Thus says the Lord; Come from the four winds, and breathe upon these dead men, and let them live'. So I prophesied as he commanded me, and the breath entered into them, and they lived, and stood upon their feet, a very great congregation. And the Lord spoke to me, saying, 'Son of man, these bones are the whole house of Israel; and they say, Our bones are become dry, our hope has perished, we are quite spent. Therefore prophesy and say, Thus says the Lord. Behold, I will open your tombs, and will bring you up out of your tombs, and will bring you into the land of Israel. And you shall know that I am the Lord, when I have opened your graves that I may bring up my people from their graves. And I will put my Spirit within you, and you shall live, and I will place you upon your own land. You shall know that I am the Lord; I have spoken, and I will do it, says the Lord'" (Ezekiel 37:1 LXX).

Some modern commentaries have interpreted this prophecy as referring to the modern reforming of the nation of Israel, but the Church Fathers don't interpret it that way. Ezekiel's prophecy of the dry bones refers to the Resurrection of the dead at the Second Coming of Christ. This relates to the sealing of Christ's tomb in that we were buried with Him. In the words of Paul, "Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was

raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life. If we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection" (Romans 6:4-5).

Regarding Ezekiel's prophecy, Ambrose noted[422] that the bones could hear the Lord's words while they were dry and scattered. This should not be reckoned as being improbable, since (1) the mute earth was told to produce grass and trees, (2) the rock gave water at the touch of the rod, and (3) the rod changed into a snake. Living things can be produced from those that are without life[423].

> "The prophet shows that there was hearing and movement in the bones before the Spirit of life was poured upon them. The dry bones are asked to hear, as if they had the sense of hearing, and that upon hearing, each of them came to its own joint. 'The bones came together, each one to its joint'" (Ezekiel 37:7).
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> "Great is the loving kindness of the Lord, that the prophet is taken as a witness of the future resurrection, that we, too might see it with his eyes. All could not be taken as witnesses, but in that one, we all are witnesses, for neither does lying come upon a holy man, nor error upon so great a prophet".
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> "This should not appear to be improbable, that at the command of God the bones were fitted again to their joints, since we have numberless instances in which nature has obeyed the commands of heaven. For example, the earth was told to bring forth grass and trees (Genesis 1:11-12). The rock at the touch of the rod gave forth water for the thirsting people (Exodus 17:6). The hard stone poured forth streams by the mercy of God for those parched with heat (Numbers 20:7-11). The rod changed into a serpent (Exodus 4:2-5, 7:8-13) to signify that, at the will of God, living things can be produced from those that are without life. Do you think it more incredible that bones should come together when commanded, than that streams should be turned back or the seas flee? The prophet testifies, 'The sea saw it and fled, Jordan was driven back' (Psalm 114:3-5). Nor can there be any doubt about this fact, which was proven by the rescue of one and the destruction of the other of two peoples. The waves of the sea stood restrained, and at the same time surrounded one people, and poured back upon the other for their death, that they might overwhelm the one, but preserve the other (Exodus 14:21-29). In the Gospel, did not the Lord Himself prove there that the sea grew calm at a word, the clouds were driven away, the blasts of the winds yielded, and the dumb elements obeyed God?" (Mark 8:23-27).

Gregory of Nyssa stated[424] that Ezekiel's prophecy establishes, along with other events, the doctrine of the Resurrection. In His three-year ministry, the Lord gave glimpses of this by using things more within our reach. By various miracles and by raising the dead, He showed His life-giving power.

> "There are many passages of Holy Scripture that establish the doctrine of the Resurrection. For instance, Ezekiel leaps in the spirit of prophecy over all the

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[422] Ambrose, "On the Belief in the Resurrection", Decease of His Brother Satyrus, II, 72-75.

[423] Other examples are the words of John the Baptist, "I say to you that God is able to raise up children to Abraham from these stones" (Matthew 3:9). Christ's words to the Pharisees on Palm Sunday, when they asked Him to quiet down His disciples, "But He answered and said to them, 'I tell you that if these should keep silent, the stones would immediately cry out'" (Luke 19:40).

[424] Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Soul and the Resurrection", Philosophical Works.

intervening time, with its vast duration. He stands, by his powers of foresight, in the actual moment of the Resurrection, and, as if he had really gazed on what is still to come, brings it in his description before our eyes. He saw a mighty plain, unfolded to an endless distance before him, and vast heaps of bones upon it flung at random, some this way, some that. Then under an impulse from God these bones began to move and group themselves with their fellows that they once owned, and adhere to the familiar sockets, and then clothe themselves with muscle, flesh, and skin. A Spirit in fact was giving life and movement to everything that lay there".

"But as regards Paul's description of the wonders of the Resurrection, 'with a shout' and the 'sound of trumpets', in the language of the Word, all dead and prostrate things shall be 'changed in the twinkling of an eye' into immortal beings (1 Corinthians 15:50-54, 1 Thessalonians 4:16-17). In the Gospels, our Lord does not declare in word alone that the bodies of the dead shall be raised up again. But He shows in action the Resurrection itself, making a beginning of this work of wonder from things more within our reach and less capable of being doubted. First, He displays His life-giving power in the case of the deadly forms of disease, and chases those maladies by one word of command (Matthew 4:24). Then He raises a little girl just dead (Mark 5:38-42); then He makes a young man, who is already being carried out, sit up on his bier, and delivers him to his mother (Luke 7:11-15). After that He calls forth from his tomb the four-days-dead and decomposing Lazarus (John 11:38-44), giving life to the prostrate body with His commanding voice. Then after three days He raises from the dead His own human body (Romans 6:4), pierced though it was with the nails and spear, and brings the print of those nails and the spear-wound to witness to the Resurrection (John 20:25-29).

Irenaeus wrote[425] that the dry bones speak of the bodily Resurrection of the saints, which was not taught by some of the early heretics. To demonstrate that He was the same God, Who created man in the beginning, Christ re-formed the eyes of the man born blind. He supplied in public what He had omitted to form in the womb. Thus He demonstrated His ability to put the dry bones back together.

"We perceive that the Creator is, in this passage from Ezekiel, represented as giving life to our dead bodies, promising resurrection to them, and resuscitation from their sepulchers and tombs, conferring upon them immortality also. He says, 'As the tree of life, so shall their days be' (Isaiah 65:22 LXX). He is shown to be the only God who accomplishes these things, and as Himself, the good Father, benevolently conferring life on those who have not life from themselves".

"For this reason the Lord most plainly revealed Himself and the Father to His disciples, lest they might seek after another God besides Him, who formed man, and who gave him the breath of life. He did this that man might not rise to such a pitch of madness as to pretend that there is another Father[426] above the Creator. Thus also He healed by a word all the others who were in a weakly condition because of sin. To whom He said, 'Behold, you are made whole, sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you' (John 5:14). He pointed out by this,

[425] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, xv, 1-2.

[426] "Another father above the Creator" was the heretical teaching of Simon Magus and his followers. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2003.

that, because of the sin of disobedience, infirmities have come upon men. To that man, however, who had been blind from his birth, He gave sight, not by means of a word, but by an outward action. He did this with a purpose, that He might show forth the hand of God, that which at the beginning had molded man. And therefore, when His disciples asked Him for what cause the man had been born blind, whether for his own or his parents' fault, He replied, 'Neither has this man sinned, nor his parents, but that the works of God should be revealed in him'" (John 9:2-3).

"Now the work of God is the fashioning of man. As the Scripture says, He made man by a kind of process. 'The Lord took clay from the earth, and formed man' (Genesis 2:7). Also the Lord spit on the ground and made clay, and smeared it on the eyes (John 9:6-7), pointing out the original fashioning of man, how it was effected, and demonstrating the hand of God to those who can understand. That which the artificer, the Word, had omitted to form in the womb, that is, the blind man's eyes, He then supplied in public, that the works of God might be demonstrated in him. He did this in order that we might not be seeking out another hand by which man was fashioned, or another Father".

Ambrose noted[427] that the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit are involved in raising the dead.

"It is a prerogative of God to raise the dead. 'As the Father raises the dead and quickens them, so the Son also quickens whom He will' (John 5:21). But the Spirit also raises them, for it is written, 'He shall quicken also your mortal bodies through His Spirit that dwells in you' (Romans 8:11). But that you may not think this a trivial grace, learn that the Spirit also raises, for the prophet Ezekiel says, 'Come, O Spirit, and breathe on these dead, and they shall live. And I prophesied as He commanded me, and the Spirit of life entered into them, and they lived, and stood up on their feet an exceeding great company' (Ezekiel 37:9-10). Farther on God says, 'You shall know that I am the Lord, when I shall open your graves, that I may bring My people out of their graves, and I will give you My Spirit, and you shall live'" (Ezekiel 37:13-14).

[427] Ambrose, On the Holy Spirit, III, xix, 149.

Holy Saturday: Deliverance and the Descent into Hell
Resurrection of the Dead

Holy Saturday

GOSPEL: Matthew 28: 1-20
EPISTLE: Romans 6:3-11

Today's Gospel lesson is used in Western churches as the Gospel for Easter Sunday; the last few verses (Matthew 28:16-20) are generally used for Trinity Sunday in the West, which is the Sunday after Pentecost. In the Orthodox Church, the narrative of the Resurrection (today's Gospel) plus the Lord's commission to evangelize the earth (Matthew 28:16-20) are used for Holy Saturday. Easter Sunday (i.e. Pascha in the Orthodox Church) then becomes a victory celebration of light triumphing over darkness and the Sunday after Pentecost becomes All Saints Sunday.

Today's Epistle lesson is used in the West either for Easter or in late June.

The study of Holy Saturday gives us great insight into the extent of the mercies of God, and how He gives everyone ample opportunity to be part of His Kingdom. This includes people who had never heard of Christ during their lifetime, or who were very remote from Israel during the Old Testament. As the Apostle Peter wrote, the Gospel was preached to the dead in Hades (1 Peter 4:6), and this will happen again. Many were given an opportunity that they never had, which illustrates the mercy of God.

The Descent Into Hell

To understand the Orthodox perspective on Pascha, it helps to understand the events of Holy Saturday -- when the Lord Jesus descended into hell. The Apostle Paul mentioned that Christ descended into hell (i.e. Hades); by doing so He led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8-9). In writing this, Paul quoted from David (Psalm 68:18), indicating that Old Testament prophecy had predicted this. David used the words "to God the Lord belong escapes from death" (Psalm 68:20). Other psalms also address Christ's Descent into Hell as follows. "He has looked out from the height of His sanctuary; the Lord looked upon the earth from heaven; to hear the groaning of the fettered ones, to loosen the sons of the slain" (Psalm 102:19-20 LXX). "And He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death, and broke their bonds apart. Let them acknowledge to the Lord His mercies, and His wonders to the children of men. For He broke to pieces the brazen gates, and crushed the iron bars" (Psalm 107:14-16 LXX). The Apostle Peter also addressed Christ's Descent into Hell when he wrote of Christ "preaching to the demons in prison" (1 Peter 3:19), and preaching to the dead (1 Peter 4:6).

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From an Old Testament prophetic point of view, Holy Saturday is a very important day. Three major feasts existed under Mosaic Law where attendance was mandatory: Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles (Exodus 23:14-17). Ignoring these feasts resulted in one being cut off from Israel (Numbers 9:10-14). Within these feasts were certain days being proclaimed a Sabbath -- no matter which day of the week it fell on. Of the first three days of Passover in 30 AD, Good Friday (the 14th of Nisan) was not a Sabbath, Holy Saturday (the 15th of Nisan) was both a Sabbath and the weekly Sabbath and Paschal Sunday (the 16th of Nisan) was not a Sabbath. The 14th of Nisan was the day of the slaying of the Passover lamb, and was the day Jesus was crucified. The 16th of Nisan was the day of the offering of the First-Fruits of the barley harvest and was the day of the Lord's Resurrection. Between these two days was the Sabbath of the 15th of Nisan. By being set aside as a Sabbath, the Mosaic Law taught that this was a very important and holy day.

In "leading captivity captive", Paul was referring to raising the righteous out of captivity in Hades where they had been held captive awaiting their redemption. There are many references to this in the Psalms, but the references are difficult to put in their context. A very interesting reference is the early historical account called The Gospel of Nicodemus.[428]

This work can be traced to Nicodemus and Joseph of Arimathea, both prominent members of the Sanhedrin (Matthew 27:57-60, Mark 15:42-46, Luke 23:50-53, John 19:38-42) who had performed the burial rite for Jesus. Joseph was described as a "rich man" (Matthew 25:57) and Nicodemus was referred to in this work as a toparch (ruler of several cities, compare John 3:1) and the third richest man in Jerusalem. Interesting aspects of "The Descent into Hell" are quotes from the Psalms that are otherwise difficult to place in context. (See Appendix G for a summary of the Gospel of Nicodemus.)

The Gospel of Nicodemus is not a "Gospel" in the sense of the four Gospels of the New Testament, but is a historical account of the death and resurrection of Christ. It has two parts: Part I: "The Acts of Pilate" and Part II: "The Descent into Hell". There are three versions of each part: Part I has two Greek versions and one Latin version; Part II has one Greek version, two Latin versions. These different versions probably resulted from copying efforts at various times and places. Thus, one cannot use it word for word like Scripture but one can treat it as a historical source like Josephus' writings. Some of the imagery and quotes from Scripture found in the Gospel of Nicodemus are also used in the Orthodox Liturgy for Pascha. Thus it's applicability.

The Psalms picture mankind as bound in darkness and fettered behind brazen gates and iron bars (Psalm 107:14-16, 102:19-20 LXX). David also wrote, "Lift up your gates, you princes, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors; and the king of glory shall come in" (Psalm 24:7). These ancient doors (Hebrew: *olam*: long duration, antiquity) have very little meaning aside from the events of Holy Saturday. Two distinct images are described here. The darkness, the brazen gates and the iron bars refer to Hades, while the everlasting doors can also refer to the prince of the power of the air (Ephesians 2:1-2), who barred man's entrance into heaven, and which Jesus dealt with at His Ascension.

[428] Roberts and Donaldson, "The Gospel of Nicodemus", Ante-Nicean Fathers, vol. 8.

The Church Fathers on the Descent into Hell

The Church Fathers present a viewpoint and a perspective that is not common today. They speak of the repentance of those in Hades who, in ignorance, never knew God. Not all were rescued from Hades by the Lord's descent, as the heretics claimed, but there was an opportunity to choose. Those who lived an evil life were not rescued, but those who tried to live a good life, but never had an opportunity to know God, received an opportunity.

Clement of Alexandria wrote at length about the Lord's descent into hell, and stated[429] that Christ preached the Gospel to Jews and Gentiles in Hades. Of those in Hades, he distinguished some as "righteous according to the Law", but lacking in faith and some as "righteous according to philosophy", but lacking in faith and further needing to abandon idolatry. Some had sinned in ignorance without clearly knowing God. People in Hades obtained the same opportunity as those in this life, either choosing repentance or confessing that their punishment was just, because they didn't believe.

> "The Lord preached the Gospel to those in Hades. Accordingly the Scripture says, 'Hades says to Destruction, We have not seen His form, but we have heard His voice' (Clement's paraphrase of Job 28:22). It is not the place that heard the voice, but those who have been put in Hades, and have abandoned themselves to destruction, as persons who have thrown themselves voluntarily from a ship into the sea. They, then, are those that hear the divine power and voice. Who in his senses can suppose the souls of the righteous and those of sinners in the same condemnation? Do not the Scriptures show that the Lord preached the Gospel to those that perished in the flood, to those kept 'in prison'" (1 Peter 4:6)?
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> "Christ also exerts His might because it is His work to save. He did this by drawing to salvation those who became willing, by the preaching[430] of the Gospel, to believe on Him, wherever they were. The Lord descended to Hades to preach the Gospel to all. All who believe shall be saved, even the Gentiles, on making their profession there. God's punishments are saving and disciplinary, leading to conversion, and choosing rather the repentance than the death of a sinner (Ezekiel 18:23, 32; 33:11). Souls, who had been darkened by passions, when released from their bodies, are able to perceive more clearly, because they are no longer obstructed by the flesh".
>
> "Further the Gospel says, 'that many bodies of those that slept arose' (Matthew 27:52), plainly as having been translated to a better state. There took place, then, a universal movement and translation[431] through the economy of Christ".
>
> "Those who lived rightly before the Law were classed under faith (Romans 3:29-30; 10:12), and judged to be righteous. It is evident that those, who were outside of the Law, having lived rightly, though they are in Hades (1

[429] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, VI, 6.

[430] To those in Hades, the preaching of John the Baptist after his beheading prepared them for the coming of Christ as well as the people alive on the earth.

[431] Clement is probably quoting the following, "Most assuredly, I say to you, he who hears My word and believes in Him who sent Me has everlasting life, and shall not come into judgment, but has passed from death into life. Most assuredly, I say to you, the hour is coming, and now is, when the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God; and those who hear will live" (John 5:24-25). We may think that this is referring to the Second Coming of Christ, but we may want to reconsider in the light of Holy Saturday.

Peter 3:19), on hearing the voice of the Lord, turned and believed. We remember that the Lord is 'the power of God'" (1 Corinthians 1:24).

"People obtained the same dispensation in Hades, so that even there, all the souls, on hearing the proclamation, might either exhibit repentance, or confess that their punishment was just, because they didn't believe. This was not the exercise of arbitrariness. Those who had departed before the Advent of the Lord, who didn't have the Gospel preached to them, and had no ground for believing or not, needed the opportunity to obtain either salvation or punishment. It is not right that these should be condemned without trial, and that those alone who lived after the Advent should have the advantage of the divine righteousness. But to all rational souls it was said from above, 'Whatever you have done in ignorance, without clearly knowing God, if, on becoming conscious, he repent, all his sins will be forgiven him' (Acts 3:17-19, 17:30). 'Behold, I have set before your face death and life, that you may choose life' (Deuteronomy 30:15, 19). God says that He set, not that He made, in order to offer the comparison of choice. In another Scripture He says, 'If you listen tor Me, and are willing, you shall eat the good of the land. But if you do not listen to Me, and are not willing, the sword shall devour you; for the mouth of the Lord has spoken these things'" (Isaiah 1:19-20).

"Again, David expressly says, 'My heart was glad, and My tongue rejoiced, and My flesh shall still rest in hope. You shall not leave My soul in hell, nor will You give Your Holy One to see corruption. You have made known to Me the paths of life, You will make Me full of joy in Your presence' (Psalm 16:9-11 LXX; Acts 2:26-28). As, then, the people were precious to the Lord, so also is the entire holy people, and he who is converted from the Gentiles. Rightly the Scripture says, that 'the ox and the bear shall come together' (Isaiah 11:7). The Jew is designated by the ox, from the animal under the yoke being reckoned clean, according to the Law; for the ox both parts the hoof and chews the cud (Leviticus 11:3-9). The bear designates the Gentile, which is an unclean and wild beast. He who is converted from among the Gentiles is formed from a beast-like life to gentleness by the word; and, when once tamed, is made clean, just as the ox. For example, the prophet says, 'Jackals and ostriches, and all the beasts of the field, shall bless me' (Isaiah 43:20). Of the number of unclean animals, the wild beasts of the field are known to be of the world. Those who are wild with respect to faith, polluted in life, and not purified by righteousness, which is according to the Law, are called wild beasts. But changed from wild beasts by the faith of the Lord, they become men of God. For some the Lord exhorts, and to those who have already made the attempt he stretches forth His hand, and draws them up. 'The Lord does not dread the face of anyone, nor does He bow to greatness; for He has made small and great, and cares alike for all' (Wisdom 6:7). David says, 'The heathen are fixed in the destruction they have caused; their foot is taken in the snare which they hid' (Psalm 9:15 LXX). 'But the Lord was a refuge to the poor, a help in season also in affliction' (Psalm 9:9 LXX). Those, then, that were in affliction had the Gospel seasonably proclaimed. Therefore it said, 'Declare among the heathen his pursuits' (Psalm 9:11 LXX), that they may not be judged unjustly".

"If, then, He preached the Gospel to those in the flesh that they might not be condemned unjustly, how is it conceivable that He did not also preach the Gospel to those who had departed this life before His Advent? 'The righteous

Lord loves righteousness; His countenance beholds uprightness' (Psalm 11:7 LXX). 'But he that loves wickedness hates his own soul'" (Psalm 11:5 LXX).

Gregory the Great stated[432] emphatically that Christ did not rescue everyone from Hades at His descent, as the heretics stated. He only rescued those who exhibited a life of faith and who in deeds did not deny Him. Someone, who had separated himself from God by evil living, cannot be drawn to God after death.

> "Some had said that Christ, when He descended into hell, saved all who there acknowledged Him as God, and delivered them from the pains due to them. I desire that we should think very differently. When He descended into hell, He delivered through His grace those only who both believed that He should come and observed His precepts in their lives. It is evident that after the Incarnation of the Lord no one can be saved, even of those who hold His Faith, who don't have the life of faith. Since it is written, 'They acknowledge that they know God, but in deeds they deny Him' (Titus 1:16). John says, 'He that says that he knows Him, and does not keep His commandments, is a liar (1 John 2:4). James also, the brother of the Lord, writes saying, 'Faith without works is dead' (James 2:20). Are believers now saved without good works, while the unbelieving and reprobate without good action were saved by our Lord descending into hell? If so, then the lot of those who never saw the Incarnation of the Lord was better than that of these who have been born after the mystery of His Incarnation. But it is stupid to say or think this, and the Lord Himself testifies to His disciples, 'Many kings and prophets have desired to see the things which you see, and have not seen them'" (Matthew 13:17; Luke 10:24).
>
> "Considering, therefore, all these things; and do not hold anything but what the true faith teaches through the Catholic Church. The Lord, in descending into hell, rescued from infernal durance those only whom while living in the flesh He preserved through His grace in faith and good conduct. He says in the Gospel, 'When I shall be lifted up from the earth, I will draw all to myself' (John 12:32); He means all that are elect. One could not be drawn to God after death who had separated himself from God by evil living".

Chrysostom went off on a bit of a tangent in commenting on this. He began with how inappropriate the tears were in Joppa. "If the Emperor were to send and invite some one of us to the palace, would it be right, I ask, to weep and mourn? Angels are present, commissioned from heaven, sent from the King Himself to call their fellow servant (Tabitha); and say, do you weep? Do you not know what a mystery it is that is taking place, how awesome, how worthy of hymns and praise? Like the spectacle of the Emperor as he comes in state to take possession of the city is the soul having left the body and departing in company with angels. Think what the soul must then be! In what amazement, what wonder, what delight! Why do you mourn?"

Chrysostom also suggested[433] not just that we pray for the dead, but also that alms be given in their name. Consider, he said:

> "A man has lost all the labor of a whole life: not one day has he lived for himself, but only to luxury, to debauchery, to covetousness, to sin, to the devil. Shall we not bewail this man? Shall we not try to snatch him from his perils? For

[432] Gregory the Great, Epistle to George the Presbyter, VII, 15.
[433] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXI,

it is, yes, it is possible, if we will, to mitigate his punishment, if we make continual prayers for him; if for him we give alms. Has he no alms-deeds of his own to exhibit? Let him have at least those of his kindred, which are done for him. The more sins he has to answer for, the greater need he has of alms; not only for this reason, but because the alms have not the same virtue now, but far less. It is not the same to have done it himself, versus to have another do it for him. Even this pertains to the mercy of God: widows, like the widows in Joppa (Acts 9:36-41) standing around and weeping know how to rescue, not indeed from the present death, but from that which is to come. Many have profited even by the alms done by others on their behalf".

John of Damascus stated[434] that Christ, as the Sun of Righteousness, brought light to those in Hades just as He did for those in Galilee and elsewhere.

"The soul, when it was deified, descended into Hades, in order that, just as the Sun of Righteousness rose for those upon the earth, so likewise He might bring light to those who sit under the earth in darkness and shadow of death (Matthew 4:16, Luke 1:79). He brought the message of peace to those upon the earth, of release to the prisoners and of sight to the blind. He became to those who believed the Author of everlasting salvation and to those who did not believe a reproach of their unbelief; so He might become the same to those in Hades. He did this that every knee should bow[435] to Him, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth (Philippians 2:10). After He had freed those who had been bound for ages, immediately He rose again from the dead, showing us the way of resurrection".

Hilary of Poitiers pointed[436] out that Christ was never absent from Paradise even while He descended into Hades. Bodily fear did not touch Him, and He promised the thief a home in Paradise, even while He was dying on the Cross.

"Christ's Divine Nature, with such power, could not be shut up within the confines of the nether world, nor even subjected to fear of it. When He descended to Hades, He was never absent from Paradise, just as He was always in Heaven when He was preaching on earth as the Son of Man. He promised His martyr a home there, and held out to him the transports of perfect happiness. Bodily fear cannot touch Him, Who reaches down as far as Hades, but by the power of His nature is present in all things everywhere. The abyss of Hell and the terrors of death cannot lay hold on the nature, which rules the world, boundless in the freedom of its spiritual power, confident of the raptures of Paradise. The Lord, Who was to descend to Hades, was also to dwell in Paradise. Separate, if you can, from His indivisible nature a part, which could fear punishment; send the one part of Christ to Hades to suffer pain, the other, you must leave in Paradise to reign. The thief said, 'Remember me when You come in Your Kingdom' (Luke 23:42). It was the groan he heard, I suppose, when the nails pierced the hands of our Lord, which provoked in him this blessed confession of faith. He learned the Kingdom of Christ from His weakened and stricken body! He begs that Christ

[434] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, III, 29.

[435] We sometimes think that Paul was referring to the Second Coming. But John of Damascus applied Paul's words to Holy Saturday, which would seem to fit the context better (Philippians 2:10).

[436] Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, X, 34.

will remember him when He comes in His Kingdom. Did Christ fear as He hung dying on the cross? The Lord promised him, 'Today, shall you be with Me in Paradise'. The thief confessed Christ in His Kingdom as He hung on the cross, and was rewarded with Paradise from the cross. You who impute to Christ the pain of punishment and the fear of death, will fail to enter Paradise and His Kingdom".

Rufinus of Aquilea stated[437] that Christ's descent into hell was like a baited hook to catch the prince of this world, where the hook was Christ's Divinity and the bait was His human flesh. It was like a king going to a prison to liberate the prisoners. Christ's descent into hell was foretold in many places in the Psalms. Rufinus describes many places in the Psalms and elsewhere that refer to Holy Saturday. Without the understanding of the Church, it is easy to miss most of these references in the Scriptures.

"The object of the mystery of the Incarnation was the divine virtue of the Son of God, as a hook, concealed beneath the form of human flesh. He being 'found in fashion as a man' (Philippians 2:8), lured the Prince of this world to a conflict, offering His flesh as a bait. His divinity underneath caught him and held him fast with its hook, through the shedding of His immaculate blood. He, Who knew no stain of sin, has destroyed the sins of all, of those, at least, who have marked the doorposts of their faith with His blood (Exodus 12:7-14). As a fish seizes a baited hook, it not only does not take the bait off the hook, but is drawn out of the water to be itself food for others. So He, Who had the power of death, seized the body of Jesus in death, not being aware of the hook of Divinity enclosed within it, but swallowed it and was caught. The bars of hell being broken apart, he was drawn out as it were from the abyss to become food for others. Ezekiel foretold this under the same figure, saying, 'I will draw you out with My hook, and stretch you out on the earth. The plains shall be filled with you, and I will set all the fowls of the air over you[438], and I will satiate all the beasts of the earth with you' (Ezekiel 29:4-5, 32:3-8). David also says, 'You have broken the heads of the great dragon. You have given him to be meat to the people of Ethiopia' (Psalm 74:13-14). Job in like manner says in the person of the Lord speaking to him, 'Will you draw forth the dragon[439] with a hook, and will you put your bit in his nostrils?'" (Job 41:1-2)

"It is with no loss of His Divine nature that Christ suffered in the flesh, but His Divine nature through the flesh descended to death. By the infirmity of the flesh He might affect salvation. He was not detained by death according to the law of mortality, but, in his resurrection, He opened the gates of death. It is as if a king were to proceed to a prison, and to go in and open the doors, undo the fetters, break in pieces the chains, the bars, and the bolts. Bringing forth and setting at liberty the prisoners, He restored to light and life those who are sitting in darkness and in the shadow of death (Matthew 4:16, Isaiah 42:7 LXX). The king, therefore, is said indeed to have been in prison, but not under the same condition as the prisoners who were detained there. They were in prison to be punished, He to free them from punishment".

[437] Rufinus of Aquilea, A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed, 16-17, 28, 30.
[438] We often apply these words from Ezekiel to the Second Coming of Christ, and not to Holy Saturday.
[439] The "dragon" that Job referred to was probably a large dinosaur.

"That Christ descended into hell is also foretold in the Psalms, 'You have brought Me also into the dust of the death' (Psalm 22:15). Again, 'What profit is there in my blood, when I shall have descended into corruption?' (Psalm 30:9) Again, 'I descended into the deep mire[440], where there is no bottom' (Psalm 69:2). Moreover, John says, 'Are You He that shall come (into hell, without doubt), or do we look for another?' (Matthew 11:3, Luke 7:20) Also Peter says that 'Christ being put to death in the flesh, but quickened in the Spirit which dwells in Him, descended to the spirits who were shut up in prison; who in the days of Noah believed not, to preach unto them' (1 Peter 3:18-20). What He did in hell is declared by this. Moreover, the Lord says by the Prophet, as though speaking of the future, 'You will not leave my soul in hell, neither will You suffer Your Holy One to see corruption' (Psalm 16:10). In prophetic language he speaks of the descent into hell as actually fulfilled, 'O Lord, You have brought my soul out of hell; You have saved me from them that go down into the pit'" (Psalm 30:3 LXX).

"It is said then in the Psalms, 'I laid me down and slept, and rose up again, because the Lord sustained me' (Psalm 3:5). Again, 'Because of the wretchedness of the needy and the groaning of the poor, now will I arise, says the Lord' (Psalm 12:5). In another place, 'Because You have turned and quickened me, and brought me out of the deep of the earth again' (Psalm 71:20 LXX). He is also spoken of, 'He became as a man without help, free among the dead' (Psalm 88:4-5). It is not said 'a man', but 'as a man'. In that He descended into hell, He was 'as a man'; but He was 'free among the dead', because He could not be detained by death. Therefore in the one nature, the power of human weakness; in the other, the power of divine majesty is exhibited. Hosea also speaks clearly of the third day, 'After two days He will heal us; but on the third day we shall rise and shall live in His presence' (Hosea 6:2). This he says in the person of those who, rising with Him on the third day, are recalled from death to life. They are the same persons who say, 'On the third day we shall rise again, and shall live in His presence'. But Isaiah says plainly, 'Who brought forth from the earth the great Shepherd of the sheep' (Hebrews 13:20, Isaiah 63:11). Then, that the women were to see His resurrection, while the Scribes and Pharisees and the people disbelieved, this Isaiah also foretold. 'You women, who come from beholding, come, for it is a people that has no understanding' (Isaiah 27:11 LXX). The Canticles also foretold the women who went to the sepulcher after the resurrection, and sought Him without finding; for example Mary Magdalene, who came to the sepulcher before it was light. Not finding Him, they said, weeping, to the angels who were there, 'They have taken away the Lord, and I know not where they have laid Him' (John 20:13). The Canticles foretold, 'On my bed I sought Him, Whom my soul loves; I sought Him in the night, and found Him not' (Song of Solomon 3:1). Of those who found Him, and held Him by the feet (Matthew 28:9), it is foretold, 'I will hold Him Whom my soul loves, and will not let Him go'"(Song of Solomon 3:4).

[440] Ancient dungeons had dirt floors that might never dry out. To be imprisoned in a dungeon meant to dwell in deep mire that included human waste.

Ignatius of Antioch addressed[441] 1st Century heretics that stated that Christ was crucified in appearance only[442]. Christ was truly crucified and descended into Hades alone, but arose accompanied by a multitude.

> "He really, not merely in appearance, was crucified, and died, in the sight of beings in heaven, and on earth, and under the earth. By those in heaven I mean such as are possessed of incorporeal natures. By those on earth, the Jews and Romans, and such persons as were present at that time when the Lord was crucified. Those under the earth are the multitude that arose along with the Lord. The Scripture says, 'Many bodies of the saints that slept arose' (Matthew 27:52), their graves being opened. He descended, indeed, into Hades alone, but He arose accompanied by a multitude. He tore apart that means of separation which had existed from the beginning of the world, and cast down its partition-wall".

Leo the Great stated[443] that it was the heretics of his day that taught differently about Christ's descent into hell and His Resurrection. They didn't believe in the Incarnation, and therefore they had a problem with Christ's body resting in the Tomb while His soul descended into Hades.

> "I am surprised that any intelligent Christian should have difficulty as to whether Christ descended to the realms below. His flesh rested in the tomb; since it truly died and was buried, so it was truly raised the third day. The Lord Himself had announced to the Jews, 'destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up' (John 2:19). Where the evangelist adds this comment: 'But this He spoke of the temple of His body' (John 2:21). The prophet David also had predicted, speaking in the person of the Lord and Savior, 'Moreover my flesh also shall rest in hope; because You will not leave my soul in Hades, nor give Your Holy One to see corruption' (Psalm 16:9-10). From these words surely it is clear that the Lord's flesh, being buried, both truly rested and did not undergo corruption, because it was quickly revived by the return of the soul, and rose again. Not to believe this is blasphemous enough, and is undoubtedly part of the doctrine of Manichaeus and Priscillian, who, with their blasphemous conceptions, pretend to confess Christ, but only in such a way as to destroy the reality of His incarnation, death and resurrection".

Athanasius of Alexandria stated[444] that the "gates" and "everlasting doors" (Psalm 24:7) were those between heaven and earth that barred man from entrance to heaven. Thus Athanasius distinguished these gates from the gates of hell.

> "The devil, the enemy of our race, having fallen from heaven, wanders about our lower atmosphere, and there bears rule over his fellow-spirits, as his peers in disobedience. Not only does he work illusions by their means, in them that are deceived, but tries to hinder them that are going up. About this the Apostle says, 'According to the prince of the power of the air, of the spirit that

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[441] Ignatius, Epistle to the Trallians, IX.

[442] This heresy originated with Simon Magus and his followers, and was very widespread by the middle of the 1st Century. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

[443] Leo the Great, Letter to Turribius, XV, 18.

[444] Athanasius of Alexandria, On the Incarnation of the Word, XXV, 5-6. See also:
Hippolytus, Fragments from Commentary on Psalm 24, Part I Exegetical.
Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxiii, 13.
Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, I, xi, 41.

now works in the sons of disobedience' (Ephesians 2:2). The Lord came to cast down the devil, clear the air and prepare the way for us up into heaven. As Paul said, we enter 'Through the veil, that is to say, His flesh' (Hebrews 10:20). This must be by death. By what other kind of death could this have come to pass, than by one that took place in the air, I mean the cross? Only he that is perfected on the cross dies in the air. Thus it was quite fitting that the Lord suffered this death.

Thus being lifted up, He cleared the air of the malignity both of the devil and of demons of all kinds. As He says, 'I beheld Satan as lightning fall from heaven' (Luke 10:18). He made a new opening[445] of the way up into heaven as He says once more, 'Lift up your gates, O princes, and be lifted up, you everlasting doors' (Psalm 24:7). It was not the Word Himself that needed an opening of the gates, being Lord of all; but we needed it, whom He carried up by His own body. As He offered it to death on behalf of all, so by it He once more made ready the way up into the heavens.

Parables from the Old Testament for Holy Saturday

There are fifteen Readings from the Old Testament prescribed for Holy Saturday, listed below, that give us some perspective regarding the significance of Holy Saturday for the Church. There are three major sections to this Study on Holy Saturday as follows:

1. The Climax of Christ's Mission
2. Deliverance and Baptism with the Epistle Reading, Romans 6:3-11
3. Resurrection of the Dead with the Gospel Reading, Matthew 28: 1-20

Discussion on these 15 Readings is distributed among the three major sections of the Study for Holy Saturday according to the following Table. Two of the parables have been moved to the section on Good Friday Lamentation for subject matter continuity.

Parables from the Old Testament for Holy Saturday

Reading	Reading	Subject	Location
1	Genesis 1:1-13	The Creation	Climax Christ's Mission
2	Isaiah 60:1-16	The Gathering of the Elect	The Resurrection
3	Exodus 12:1-11	Christ -- The Passover Sacrifice	Good Friday Lamentation
4	Jonah 1:1-4:11	The Belly of the Sea Monster	Deliverance
5	Joshua 5:10-15	The Captain of the Lord's Host	Climax Christ's Mission
6	Exodus 13:20-15:19	Crossing the Red Sea	Good Friday Lamentation
7	Zephaniah 3:8-15	The Remnant	The Resurrection
8	1 Kings 17:8-24	Elijah Raises the Widow's Son	The Resurrection
9	Isaiah 61:10-62:5	The Garment of Salvation	The Resurrection
10	Genesis 22:1-18	Isaac Prefigures Christ	Deliverance
11	Isaiah 61:1-9	Christ Preaches the Gospel	Climax Christ's Mission
12	2 Kings 4:8-37	The Shunammite's Son	The Resurrection
13	Isaiah 63:11-64:5	The Second Coming	The Resurrection
14	Jeremiah 31:31-34	The New Covenant	Climax Christ's Mission
15	Daniel 3:1-30 plus	The Children in the Furnace	Deliverance
	Song of the Three Children 1:1-65		

[445] Thus Psalm 24 refers to both the descent into Hades and to the Ascension.

The Climax of Christ's Mission

Christ's mission in becoming incarnate from the Virgin Mary was not a spur-of-the-moment decision; it had been planned before the Garden of Eden. Peter stated that Christ was "foreordained before the foundation of the world, but was manifest in these last times for you" (1 Peter 1:20). Paul spoke of Christ's works that "were finished from the foundation of the world" (Hebrews 4:3). This is a mystery, hidden in God, that was revealed to mankind slowly over the ages (Romans 16:25-26, Ephesians 3:8-13). Part of this mystery was the Lord's purpose to make His grace available to everyone, including those in Hades. The "busting-out" of those in Hades was thus the climax of a mission that had been planned for a long time.

In Western tradition, little attention has been given to Holy Saturday. As a result, "Easter" in the West doesn't have the same depth of meaning as Pascha in the Orthodox Church.

Irenaeus stated that the Lord preached His Advent to those in hell also. Those who directed their eyes toward His light prior to His Advent were in much the same condition as the Gentiles after His Advent. We would despise the Grace of God if we would say that they have no opportunity to repent.

> "The Lord descended[446] into the regions beneath the earth, preaching His Advent there also, and declaring the remission of sins received by those who believe in Him. Now all those believed in Him who had hope towards Him, that is, those who proclaimed His Advent, and submitted to His dispensations. This included the righteous men, the prophets, and the patriarchs, to whom He remitted sins in the same way as He did to us, which sins we should not lay to their charge, if we would not despise the grace of God. These men did not impute to us Gentiles our transgressions; so also it is not right that we should lay blame on those who sinned before Christ's coming. For 'all men come short of the glory of God' (Romans 3:23), and are not justified of themselves, but by the Advent of the Lord, — they who earnestly direct their eyes towards His light. It is for our instruction that their actions have been committed to writing, that we might know, in the first place, that our God and theirs is one".
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> "God was patient[447] regarding the state of slumber in which men lay just as He aroused His sleeping disciples at His passion. On their account 'He also descended into the lower parts of the earth' (Ephesians 4:9), to behold with His eyes the state of those who were resting from their labors. In reference to this, He declared to His disciples, 'Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see and hear what you see and hear'" (Matthew 13:16).
>
> "It was not merely for those who believed on Him in the time of Tiberius Caesar that Christ came, nor did the Father exercise His providence for the men only who are now alive. He came for all men altogether, which from the beginning, according to their capacity, in their generation have both feared and loved God, practiced justice and piety towards their neighbors, and have earnestly desired to see Christ, and to hear His voice".

[446] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxvii, 2.
[447] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxii, 1-2.

Irenaeus also wrote[448] that following His Descent into Hell, breaking the brazen gates and iron bars, He then ascended to heaven, from which He came, and opened the doors of heaven.

> "The prophets spoke of His having slept, and of His having risen again because the Lord sustained Him (Psalm 3:5). David commanded the principalities of heaven to set open the everlasting doors, that the King of glory might go in (Psalm 24:7), proclaiming beforehand His resurrection from the dead through the Father's power, and His reception into heaven. They expressed themselves thus, 'His going forth is from the extremity of heaven, and his circuit to the *other* end of heaven; and no one shall be hidden from his heat' (Psalm 19:6 LXX). Thus they announced His being taken up again to the place from which He came down, and that there is no one who can escape His righteous judgment".

Gregory Thaumaturgus, speaking of the conversation of Jesus with John the Baptist before His baptism, spoke[449] of how Jesus convinced John to proceed. John had said that he needed to be baptized by Him, and was reluctant to proceed (Matthew 3:13-15). One aspect of Jesus' explanation was His need to descend into hell on behalf of the dead there.

> "It is fitting for me to ascend the cross, to be pierced with its nails, and to suffer after the manner of that nature which is capable of suffering. I must heal sufferings by my suffering, and, by the tree, cure the wound that was inflicted upon men by the tree. It is fitting for me to descend even into the very depths of the grave, on behalf of the dead who are detained there. It is fitting for me, by my three days' dissolution in the flesh, to destroy the power of the ancient enemy, death. It is fitting for me to kindle the torch of my body for those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death".

Methodius stated[450] that Christ's baptism by John was a mystery that prophesied of His descent into hell.

> "He showed the world a mystery, rising superior to the natural elements in the Jordan, and thus exhibiting, in signs beforehand, the descent of our Lord into Hades, and His wonderful deliverance of those who were held fast in corruption. All things yielded and succumbed to that divine image which prefigured you".

John Chrysostom linked[451] Paul's words, "He descended into the lower parts of the earth" (Ephesians 4:9) with his words, "He became obedient even to death" (Philippians 2:8, 9). On both occasions, Paul was speaking of Christ's humility.

> "From His ascending, he implies His descent, and by 'the lower parts of the earth', 'death', according to the notions of men. As Jacob also said, 'Then shall you bring down my gray hairs with sorrow to the grave' (Genesis 32:48). Again, 'Lest I become like them that go down into the pit' (Psalm 143:7), that is like the dead. Why does he descend upon this region? Of what captivity does he speak? Of that of the devil; for He took the tyrant captive, the devil, I mean, and death, the curse, and sin. Behold His spoils and His trophies".

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[448] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxxiii, 13.

[449] Gregory Thaumaturgus, "On the Holy Theophany", Four Homilies, IV, Dubious or Spurious Writings, Part II, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 6.

[450] Methodius, Oration Concerning Simeon and Anna, IX.

[451] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XI, vv. 4:8-12.

"He descended into the lower parts of the earth, beyond which there are no other; and He ascended up far above all things, to that place, beyond which there is no other. This is to show His divine energy, and supreme dominion. It did Him no injury that He came down into the lower parts of the earth, nor was it any hindrance to His becoming far higher than the Heavens. So that the more a man is humbled, so much the more is he exalted".

In reviewing the history of the Advent of Christ, Athanasius of Alexandria mentioned[452] that the gatekeepers of hell shuddered at the descent of Christ to their realm.

"We know that He, the Only-begotten Son of God, at the Father's bidding came from the heavens for the abolishment of sin, and was born of the Virgin Mary. He conversed with the disciples, and fulfilled the Economy according to the Father's will, and was crucified. He died and descended into the parts beneath the earth, and regulated the things there. The gatekeepers of hell saw Him (Job 38:17 LXX) and shuddered. He rose from the dead the third day, and conversed with the disciples, and fulfilled the whole Economy. When the forty days were full, He ascended into the heavens, and sits on the right hand of the Father. He is coming in the last day of the resurrection in the glory of the Father, to render to everyone according to his works".

Giving us more insight into Christ's mission in becoming Incarnate are four Readings from the Old Testament. They will be covered in the following order:

1. 1st Parable from the Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-13 "The Creation"
2. 5th Parable from the Old Testament: Joshua 5:10-15 "The Captain of the Lord's Host"
3. 11th Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 61:1-9 "Christ Preaches the Gospel"
4. 14th Parable from the Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:31-34 "The New Covenant"

1st Parable from the Old Testament: Genesis 1:1-13 "The Creation"

There are many parallels between Genesis 1 and John 1, and the Reading prescribed for Pascha is John 1:1-17. Just as Holy Saturday and Pascha go together hand-in-hand, so these two Readings go hand-in-hand. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote[453] of this connection as follows, where the testimony of Creation has benefit to those who never heard of Christ, but are inclined to see the hand of the Creator in His works.

"Creation testifies of its Creator and is itself a revelation of God, especially in the order and harmony pervading the whole. God being good and loving to mankind, but having His being beyond all created existence, mankind was likely to miss the way to the knowledge of Him. For this cause God, by His own Word, gave the universe the order it has in order that men might be enabled to know Him by His works even though He is by nature invisible and incomprehensible. Even in human works, the artist is known by his works even when he is not seen".

[452] Athanasius of Alexandria, De Synodis, Part I, 8.
Athanasius of Alexandria, De Synodis, Part II, 30.
[453] Athanasius of Alexandria, Prolegomena III, 35.

"For the heavens declare the glory of God and the firmament shows His handiwork" (Psalm 19:1). "Since the creation of the world His invisible attributes are clearly seen, being understood by the things that are made" (Romans 1:20).

Seeing a revelation of God can be dependent on the condition of one's heart, however. The people accompanying Paul at his conversion didn't see what he saw (Acts 9:3-7). The wisdom of this world and the heretics of the ages have seen the Creation but have misinterpreted it, accepting the ideas of Plato and others who state that matter is uncreated and therefore co-eternal with God. A modern rephrase of this would state that matter or its equivalent energy is uncreated in conjunction with the First Law of Thermodynamics.

If matter is uncreated, God then becomes either a mechanic working on matter external to Himself, or a material god, if matter was part of His essence. The heretics supposed that Christ was a secondary god and a part of creation, not the Creator Himself. The Church Fathers were adamant about the Father and the Son being co-operators in creating the heavens and the earth out of nothing, and the words of the Nicene Creed were chosen very carefully to reflect this.

Gregory of Nazianzus stated[454] that in creating the heavens and the earth (Genesis 1:1), God first created the heavenly and angelic powers out of an invisible nature. This was a work fulfilled by His Word, and perfected by His Spirit. Then when His first creation was in good order, He conceived a second world, material and visible. This is a compound of earth and sky, and all that is in the midst of them — an admirable creation indeed, when we consider the harmony and the unison of the whole.

When God spoke during the six days of Creation, the Father addressed the Son, saying, "Let there be light", as the Spirit moved over the waters (Genesis 1:2-3). Basil the Great stated[455] that God spoke and creation appeared instantaneously as a vast nature and an elaborate system. Thus David quotes the Father addressing the Son, "You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of your hands" (Psalm 102:25, Hebrews 1:10).

The Son is called "the brightness of His Glory and the express image of His person" (Hebrews 1:3), and "the image of the invisible God" (Colossians 1:15). In this regard, Christ said, "I and My Father are one", and "He who has seen Me has seen the Father" (John 10:30, 14:9). It is then to Christ, the Image of God, that the Father said, "Let us make man in our image" (Genesis 1:26). The Son then created man with both a visible nature (i.e. from matter) and an invisible nature (i.e. his soul) as He breathed into him the breath of life. Man was created as part earthly and part heavenly, and able to live in either realm. Clement of Alexandria stated[456]:

> "The other works of creation He made by the word of command alone, but man He framed by Himself, by His own hand, and breathed into him what was peculiar to Himself".

[454] Gregory of Nazianzen, Oration on the Theophany, 38
[455] Basil the Great, Hexaemeron I:6, V:6, V:10
[456] Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor I, 3

Gregory of Nyssa linked[457] the Creation to the Resurrection of the Dead, and one of the major themes for Pascha is a return to Paradise for those who had been expelled.

> "It is helpful in understanding the Creation to also understand the end of time, since the end must be like the beginning. He who admits a beginning of motion surely does not doubt also as to its having an end, and vice versa. We must use the same faith as to the Word of God when He foretells the necessary stoppage of existing things. Those who deny the Creation often deny the Resurrection. The resurrection promises us nothing else than the restoration of the fallen to their ancient state. The grace we look for is a certain return to the first life, bringing back again to Paradise him who was cast out from it".

In John 1 as in Genesis 1, one of the themes is the subject of light versus darkness. The initial state described for the earth was darkness. "Darkness was over the surface of the deep" as the Spirit of God moved over the surface of the waters (Genesis 1:2).

On the first three days of Creation, the following occurred:

- Day One: Separation of light from darkness.
- Day Two: Separation of waters above the horizon from waters below the horizon.
- Day Three: Separation of dry land; sprouting of vegetation.

On each of these three days, there was not yet any embodied light. That didn't occur until the creation of the sun, moon and stars on Day Four. One might ask how Christ could separate the light from the darkness if there was no (embodied) light yet. What was He separating?

John gives the answer, "In Him was life and the life was the light of men. And the light shines in the darkness and the darkness did not overcome it" (John 1:5). The darkness spoken of here takes on an evil dimension as the forces of darkness. John mentions this again "Men loved darkness rather than light because their deeds were evil" (John 3:19).

Darkness is spoken of throughout Scripture as the eternal abode of the ungodly. For example, speaking of Cain, Balaam, Korah and others: for them, "The gloom of darkness is reserved forever" (Jude 13, 2 Peter 2:17). Those who are judged unrighteous at the Last Judgment are said to be "cast into the outer darkness" (Matthew 8:12, 22:13, 25:30), where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.

A similar situation will occur at the end of time, where there will be no sun or moon because the Glory of God will illumine everything (Revelation 21:23, Isaiah 60:19, 20). At that time, the light and the darkness will already be separated.

Even today, "We wrestle not against flesh and blood but against the rulers of the darkness of this age" (Ephesians 6:12). In doing so, we have become sons (and daughters) of light and are not of the darkness (1 Thessalonians 5:5, John 12:35-36). In fact, we have been delivered out of darkness into the light of God (1 Peter 2:9, Ephesians 5:8, Colossians 1:13).

[457] Gregory of Nyssa, On the Making of Man, 23, 17.

John Chrysostom stated[458] that all men receive "light" from God, but some close their eyes to it. Their "darkness" arises from their own wickedness. This has direct bearing on Christ's purpose in descending into Hades. There were those in Hades who had responded to His Light, but who didn't have the opportunities of those living in Israel.

> "If He 'gives light to all men that come into the world' (John 1:9), how is it that so many continue unenlightened? Not all have known the majesty of Christ. How then does He give light to all men? He gives light to all as far as in Him lies. But if some, willfully closing the eyes of their mind, would not receive the rays of that Light, their darkness arises not from the nature of the Light, but from their own wickedness, who willfully deprive themselves of the gift".

When the Lord created Adam and Eve, not only were they created in the Image of God, but God commanded light to shine out of darkness (2 Corinthians 4:6) through them. John Chrysostom comments[459] on this to say that Christ Himself became Light at the Incarnation to restore the light in men.

> "Where did He command light to shine out of darkness? In the beginning and in prelude to the creation; for He says, 'Darkness was on the face of the deep. And God said, let there be light, and there was light' (Genesis 1:2, 3). Then, He said, 'Let it be, and it was'; but now He said nothing, but Himself became Light for us. He did not say, 'has now commanded light', but 'has Himself shined' (2 Corinthians 4:6). Therefore, we do not see tangible objects by the shining of this light, but we see God Himself through Christ. Of the Spirit, he says, 'But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory even as from the Lord Spirit' (2 Corinthians 3:18). Of the Son He says, 'That the light of the Gospel of the glory of Christ, who is the image of God, should shine on them' (2 Corinthians 4:4). And of the Father, He says 'He that said Light shall shine out of darkness shined in your hearts, to give the light of the knowledge of the glory of God in the face of Christ'" (2 Corinthians 4:6).

Paul also spoke of the work of Creation as having been the work of Christ, along with the Father and the Holy Spirit:

> "But to the Son, He says 'You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands'" (Hebrews 1:8, 10; Psalm 102:25).
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> Also to the Colossians: "By Him (Christ) all things were created that are in heaven and that are on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones, lordships, principalities or authorities. All things were created through Him and for Him" (Colossians 1:16, also Revelation 4:11).

5th Parable from the Old Testament: Joshua 5:10-15 "The Captain of the Lord's Host"

"And it came to pass, when Joshua was by Jericho, that he lifted his eyes and looked, and behold, a Man stood opposite him with His sword drawn in His hand. And Joshua went to Him and said to Him, '*Are* You for us or for our adversaries?' So He said, 'No, but *as* Commander of the army of the Lord I have now come'. And Joshua fell on his face to the earth and worshiped,

[458] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, VIII,
[459] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, VIII, 3.

and said to Him, 'What does my Lord say to His servant?' Then the Commander of the Lord's army said to Joshua, 'Take your sandal off your foot, for the place where you stand *is* holy'. And Joshua did so" (Joshua 5:10-15 LXX).

Entering the Promised Land: Overview

On Holy Saturday, 30 AD, many were entering the Promised Land as Christ led captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8). Others of us still face the great wilderness of this life, full of scorpions and adders. Joshua's encounter with Christ at Jericho gives us some illumination about our present situation.

As Joshua led the people into the Promised Land, the Lord spoke to him, "Today I have rolled away the reproach of Egypt from you" (Joshua 5:9). As they celebrated their first Passover in the Promised Land, the manna ceased as suddenly as it started (Joshua 5:12).

Manna was God's special provision to get His people through the wilderness (Exodus 16:35, Numbers 11:7). Jesus called the manna "bread from heaven" and said that the "true bread from heaven is He who comes down from heaven and gives life to the world" (John 6:32-33). He then went on to say, "I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever; and the bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world" (John 6:51). Here He is speaking of the Lord's Supper, which is God's special provision for the wilderness of this life.

Once we have arrived in the Promised Land at the Second Coming, the manna will not be necessary and we will drink of the fruit of the vine new with our Lord (Matthew 26:29). At that time, everyone will know the Lord (Jeremiah 31:34), and everywhere will be holy ground. And we will all join the saints and angels in worshipping the captain of the host of the Lord.

There is dual imagery here. The manna ceased when Israel entered the Promised Land. But yet, manna is also an image of the Eucharist, which we need to carry us through the wilderness of this life[460]. Just as the manna was called "Angels' food" (Psalm 78:25), so the Eucharist is called "heavenly food". In both cases the people of God ate this food in anticipation of the heavenly rest that they were heading for. The manna and the Eucharist both speak about the future Kingdom of God.

Israel was commanded to eat the Passover lamb with their loins belted, with their sandals on their feet, with their staff in their hand (Exodus 12:11). John Chrysostom stated[461] that we also look for our Exodus, and we need to be ready. We have an encampment in the desert, where the encampment is our body (2 Corinthians 5:1). We are on our journey home and we do not lay up any treasure in the desert. If the thief should come, we must in a moment arise and depart for our Exodus. Quoting the Lord: "Watch, for you know not at what hour the thief comes" (Matthew 24:42-43) thus the Lord calls the thief death. Assisting us are the same forces that assisted Israel in her Exodus, and opposing us are the same forces that opposed them.

> "We too have our encampment (Revelation 20:9), and we dwell in the desert; for a desert indeed without virtue, is the earth now, even more desolate

[460] For more information on the "bread of heaven", see the Study for the Feeding of the 5000 at the 8th Sunday After Pentecost at Mark Kern, The Whole Counsel of God, St. Athanasius Press, 2004, p. 129.
[461] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, Moral.

than that wilderness. Why was that desert so terrible? Was it not because it had scorpions in it, and cobras (Deuteronomy 8:15)? 'A land', it is said, 'which none passed through' (Jeremiah 2:6). Yet that wilderness is not as barren of fruits as is this human nature. At this instant, how many scorpions, how many cobras are in this wilderness, how many serpents, how many 'offspring of vipers' (Matthew 3:7) are these through whom we at this instant pass! Yet let us not be afraid; for the leader of this our Exodus is not Moses, but Jesus".

The Day of First-Fruits

Table 1 shows where the "Day of First-Fruits" fits into the celebration of the Passover. It was the "day after the Sabbath" when Jesus rose from the dead[462].

The manna, the food the Israelis ate during their 40-year stay in the Sinai wilderness, ceased on the Day of First-Fruits. On the 14th of Nisan, they observed the Passover. On the next day, the 15th, a Sabbath, they ate some of the produce of the land. The next day, the manna stopped (Joshua 5:11-12). In 30 AD, the 14th of Nisan was the day Jesus was crucified, and the 15th of Nisan was Holy Saturday. The day the manna stopped was the 16th of Nisan, or the day Christ rose from the dead.

Both the first year, and virtually every year since, the central theme preceding and following the Day of First-Fruits was the celebration of the fact that they had been delivered from Egypt. Also, being in the middle of the week of the Feast of Unleavened Bread, they were in the midst of eating unleavened bread for seven days. Further, the barley crop was ripe, but as yet not harvested.

Table 1
Dates of the First Three of the Seven Set Feasts

Feast	Date	Sabbath?	Other Names
The Day of the Lord's Passover	14 Nisan	No	Preparation Day Mark 15:42. This was the day Jesus was crucified.
The Feast of Unleavened Bread	15 Nisan to 21 Nisan	15 Nisan and 21 Nisan	Called the Feast of the Passover in the New Testament; e.g. John 13:1, Luke 2:41
The Day of First-Fruits	16 Nisan	No	Called the "day after the Sabbath" (of 15 Nisan) Leviticus 23:10-14. This was the day Jesus rose from the dead.

According to Paul, Jesus was "the First-Fruits of those that are asleep" (1 Corinthians 15:20). As such, He is the barley sheaf that was waved before the Lord in celebration that the harvest is at hand (Leviticus 23:9-14). Later, Paul makes it clear that the harvest, of which Jesus Christ is the First-Fruits, is all "those who are His at His coming" at the end of the age (1 Corinthians 15:23, 24). Since the Day of First-Fruits was not a Sabbath day, the actual

[462] For more discussion on the implications of this, see the Study for Holy Thursday Morning.

harvesting of the barley could begin on this same day. And so the Lord's harvest began this day, also.

Consider some Old Testament passages relating to the death of Old Testament believers (e.g. Genesis 37:35, 42:38, Job 14:13, 19:25, Psalms 16:10, 49:15, 88:3, 89:48). Old Testament believers expected to be in the grave, or Sheol, to await the coming of their Redeemer. They realized, however, that

(1) Their Redeemer lived (Job 19:25) and

(2) He would not abandon their soul to Sheol (Psalms 16:10).

Jesus referred to Lazarus (the poor man) as being in "Abraham's bosom", not heaven, or with the Lord, while the rich man, who had no compassion on Lazarus, was in "Hades" and in torment (Luke 16:22-26). From these and other passages, it seems that there were two parts to "the grave" (or Sheol): one for the righteous (i.e. Abraham's bosom), and one for the unrighteous, containing flames (Luke 16:24). Between the two was a great chasm so that no one can cross (Luke 16:26).

This transition of believers from Sheol (Abraham's bosom) to heaven occurred at the Resurrection. This is what Paul referred to as the Lord leading captivity captive (Ephesians 4:8, Psalm 68:18). This transfer was the beginning of the harvest of which the First-Fruit sheaf was a promise or declaration. Since that day, the anticipation of the harvest has been going on, with each believer's death being one more stalk that is added. At the end of the age comes the grand finale of the harvest (Revelation 14:14-20) where first all the "tares" are gathered (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43) and bundled and prepared to be burned.

Jesus said that it was written in the Scriptures that the Christ was to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day (Luke 24:44-46, 1 Corinthians 15:4 see also Luke 24:26, 27; John 20:9). There are numerous references to Christ's suffering (Psalm 22, Isaiah 53, etc.), but few references, apart from First-Fruits, to Christ rising precisely on the third day[463]. Jesus used Jonah's three days in the belly of the sea monster as an illustration of His three-day burial. But to make this connection before Christ was incarnate took some keen insight. The Day of First-Fruits was to be taken unmistakably as a resurrection prophecy; this can be seen by connecting the "history lesson" (Deuteronomy 26:1-11) to the First-Fruit sheaf offering. In the "history lesson", the predominant theme is the resurrection of the Israeli nation from the point of certain death by (1) a mighty hand, (2) an outstretched arm, (3) awe-inspiring terror, (4) signs, and (5) wonders or miracles. And in the First-Fruit sheaf one is celebrating the resurrection of the seed that was buried in the ground.

At the time of the Day of First-Fruits, Israel was in the midst of eating unleavened bread for seven days, and eating unleavened bread implies a new and different life-style[464] (1 Corinthians 5:8). Thus, Paul says, "so we too might walk in newness of life." It is this "walking in newness of life" that baptism is all about.

"Walking in newness of life" is not just following a bunch of rules and gutting it out. At the time that the Israeli army entered Canaan, the manna ceased on the Day of First-Fruits (Joshua 5:11-12). The reason it ceased was because God had made provision for them to walk in

[463] Hosea speaks of Christ reviving His saints after two days, and raising them up on the third day (Hosea 6:2).

[464] For more discussion on the Day of First-Fruits, refer to the Study for Holy Thursday Matins in Mark Kern, The Whole Counsel of God, St. Athanasius Press, 1996, 1998, 2004.

a newness of life. They were now at a point where they could begin to draw from the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, the Kingdom of God. Today, once we have "appealed to God for a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:21) in baptism; the resources of the Kingdom of God are available to enable us to, in fact, walk in newness of life.

Joshua Meets Christ

After crossing the Jordan into the Promised Land, but before getting to Jericho, Joshua met a man standing opposite him with a drawn sword in His hand. Not recognizing the man, Joshua asked if He were for them or against them. The Man replied "No, rather I indeed come now as Captain of the host of the Lord" (Joshua 5:14). Joshua fell on his face and bowed down and said, "What has My Lord to say to His servant?" The Captain of the Lord's host said, "Remove your sandals from your feet for the place where you are standing is holy. And Joshua did so."

Some might say that the Captain of the Lord's host is the archangel Michael, since Michael is "the great prince who stands guard over the sons of your people Israel" (Daniel 12:1). But yet the archangels don't ask to be worshipped; and even go out of their way to prevent people from worshipping them, as did the angel who revealed Revelation to the Apostle John (Revelation 19:10, 22:9). On that occasion, John fell down to worship the angel, but the angel said "see that you do not do that. I am your fellow servant and of your brethren the prophets. Worship God!" We would conclude that the "Captain of the Lord's host" is Christ!

Christ called the place where He was standing "holy ground", and this has major implications. The Scriptures refer to things, animals, and people as being holy, but always by association with a Holy God. Made in the image of God (Genesis 1:26, Ephesians 4:24), His people were to be holy as He is holy (Leviticus 19:2), and they are to be partakers of His Holiness (Hebrews 12:10). Consequently, the Tabernacle and all its furnishings and utensils were anointed with holy oil (Exodus 40:9) in preparation for the Presence of God dwelling there (Exodus 29:43-46, Numbers 7:89). Holy clothing was worn by the priests (Exodus 28:2) in serving God, and holy water was used by the priests in performing the judgments of God both for discernment in concealed sin (Numbers 5:17ff) and for removing uncleanness (Numbers 19:9). The offerings to the Lord were also holy, whether animal or vegetable (Exodus 29:33, Leviticus 2:3, 6:25). Therefore, for the ground to be holy (Joshua 5:15), the Presence of the Lord was there, just as it was at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:4). Similarly, the camp of Israel was not allowed to become defiled (Deuteronomy 23:14, Numbers 5:2-3) because the Tabernacle and the Presence of God were in its midst. The Commandments, Statutes and Judgments of the Lord were similarly holy (Romans 7:12, Psalm 19:7-10) because they represented the Word of God for His people (Deuteronomy 4:8, Leviticus 18:26-28, Psalm 105:42). All this carries over into the New Testament, where the people of God "are not called to uncleanness but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Ambrose stated[465] that the Church is the holy ground, fruitful with sanctity and fertile with virtues. Christ in us is like the burning bush, consuming our thorns, showing us Grace.

[465] Ambrose of Milan, Epistles, LXIII, 41-42.

Cyprian noted[466] a mystery shown by Joshua, whom he calls Jesus[467]. He who was instructed to remove his shoes (Joshua 5:13-15) was not the Bridegroom. He who kept His shoes on was to be the Bridegroom. The same was true of Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:2-6).

Similarly, Ambrose of Milan, in speaking of Christ as the Bridegroom of the Church, contrasted[468] Him with Moses and Joshua. Both Moses and Joshua were asked to remove their shoes in His Presence.

> "Moses was not the Bridegroom, for to him came the word, 'Loose your shoe from off your foot' (Exodus 3:5), that he might give place to his Lord. Nor was Joshua, the son of Nun, the Bridegroom, for to him also it was told, saying, 'Loose your shoe from off your foot' (Joshua 5:15), lest, by reason of the likeness of his name, he should be thought the spouse of the Church. None other is the Bridegroom but Christ alone, of Whom John the Baptist said, 'He Who has the bride is the Bridegroom' (John 3:29). They, therefore, loose their shoes, but His shoe cannot be loosed, even as John the Baptist said, 'I am not worthy to loose the strap of His sandal'" (John 1:27).

Justin Martyr, in his argument with the Jewish philosopher, Trypho, over the words "Let Us make" (Genesis 1:26), used[469] the account of Joshua with the Captain of the Lord's Host to strengthen his case. Trypho agreed that the "Captain of the Lord's host" was God; he had difficulty believing that God became flesh by the Virgin Mary.

> "Do not change the force of the words I quoted, and repeat what your teachers assert. They say either that God said to Himself, 'Let Us make,' just as we, when about to do something, sometimes say to ourselves, 'Let us make'. Or they say that God spoke to the elements: the earth and other similar substances of which we believe man was formed. I shall quote again the words narrated by Moses himself, from which we can indisputably learn that God conversed with someone who was numerically distinct from Himself, and also a rational Being. These are the words: 'And God said, Behold, Adam has become as one of us, to know good and evil' (Genesis 3:22). In saying, therefore, 'as one of us', Moses has declared that there is a certain number of persons associated with one another, and that they are at least two. I would not say that the dogma of that heresy which is among you is true, or that the teachers of it can prove that God spoke to angels, or that the human frame was the workmanship of angels[470]. But this Offspring, which was truly brought forth from the Father, was with the Father before all the creatures, and the Father communed with Him. The Scripture by Solomon has made this clear, that He whom Solomon calls Wisdom, was begotten as a Beginning before all His creatures and as Offspring by God (Proverbs 8:22-31). He has also declared this same thing in the revelation made to Joshua the son of Nun, where the Lord, after He revealed Who He was, said to Joshua, 'Behold, I give into your hand Jericho, and its king, and its mighty men'" (Joshua 5:13-6:2).

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[466] Cyprian, Treatises, XII, ii, 19.
[467] In Hebrew, the name for Jesus and Joshua are the same name.
[468] Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, III, x, 71.
[469] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 62.
[470] This heresy originated with Simon Magus and his followers, and was very widespread by the middle of the 1st Century, especially among the Jews. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

According to early Christian tradition[471], there were a number of "theophanies" or appearances of the Son of God prior to His Incarnation. Included in these appearances are the following:

1. He rained down fire on Sodom from the Father in heaven (Genesis 19:24).
2. He wrestled with Jacob all night (Genesis 32:24).
3. He was a Guest of Abraham, where they discussed the judgment of Sodom (Genesis 18:2-3, 22-33).
4. He spoke with Moses at the Burning Bush (Exodus 3:2-6).
5. Moses wrote of Him as "That Prophet" Who was to come (Deuteronomy 18:15).
6. Joshua saw Him as "The Captain of the Lord's Host" (Joshua 5:13-15) and worshipped Him.
7. Samuel knew Him as the "Anointed of God", and then named the priests and kings as the anointed (1 Samuel 12:1-5).
8. David knew Him as "The Beloved" (Psalm 45:6-17).
9. Solomon spoke of Him as "The Beginning" and as "Wisdom" (Proverbs 8:22-31, 9:1-10).
10. Isaiah knew Him as "The Branch from Jesse" (Isaiah 11:1, 10).
11. Zechariah wrote of His coming on Palm Sunday (Zechariah 9:9).
12. Daniel wrote of Him as the Son of Man coming to the Father (Daniel 7:13-14), and as the "Stone cut out of the mountain without hands" (Daniel 2:34-35).
13. Jeremiah wrote of living under His shadow among the Gentiles (Lamentations 4:20).

John Cassian mentioned[472] that our feet are shod as we go out into the world to preach the Gospel (Ephesians 6:15). But yet many people in his day removed their shoes to approach the holy mysteries (i.e. the Eucharist) in imitation of Joshua.

> "But though lawfully enough they make use of these sandals, as permitted by the Lord's command, yet they never allow them to remain on their feet when they approach to celebrate or to receive the holy mysteries. They think that they ought to observe in the letter that which was said to Moses and to Joshua, the son of Nun, 'Take your sandals off your feet, for the place where you stand is holy ground'" (Exodus 3:5).

11th Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 61:1-9 "Christ Preaches the Gospel"

There are two parts to this Reading: one having to do with the Anointing of Christ in His humanity to preach the Gospel, and the other having to do with the end of the age.

The Anointing of Christ: Isaiah 61:1-3

The Anointing of Christ saw its fulfillment early in Jesus' three-year ministry, beginning with His Baptism by John the Baptist. Following His Baptism, Jesus returned "in the power of the Spirit to Galilee" (Luke 4:14) and read from Isaiah 61:1-2 for the Public Reading of the Scriptures during the Synagogue worship in Nazareth (Luke 4:16-19). This Reading was part of the Old Testament lectionary for that day. After reading it, He proclaimed, "Today this Scripture

[471] Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, V, iii, 20.
[472] John Cassian, The Institutes of the Coenobia, I, 9.

is fulfilled in your hearing" (Luke 4:21). However, this proclamation was too much for Nazareth and they tried to throw the Lord off a cliff (Luke 4:29).

The passage that Jesus read is messianic throughout (Messiah means anointed one): "The Spirit of the Lord God is upon Me because the Lord has anointed Me." (Isaiah 61:1). In this passage, Messiah will:

- Bring the Gospel to the afflicted, heal the broken hearted, proclaim liberty to captives and restore the sight of the blind (Isaiah 61:1 LXX)
- Proclaim the favorable year of the Lord and the day of God's vengeance (Isaiah 61:2)
- Comfort all who mourn (Isaiah 61:2-3)
- The people of God will rebuild the ancient ruined cities (Isaiah 61:4)
- Gentiles will be their servants (Isaiah 61:5)
- They will be priests of the Lord and they will eat the strength of the Gentiles (Isaiah 61:6 LXX)
- They will inherit the land a second time, and everlasting joy shall be upon their heads (Isaiah 61:7 LXX)
- Their seed will be blessed of God and known all over the earth (Isaiah 61:8-9)

There are six items included in the (shortened) Reading Jesus read in the Nazareth synagogue and most of them relate to the Feast of Trumpets[473]. What made this reading all the more powerful is that Jesus stated after He read it: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). The six items that He read are:

I am the Messiah: "The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me because He has anointed Me." Messiah means "Anointed One." In saying that this Scripture was fulfilled in their ears, Jesus meant that He claimed to be Messiah. The villagers found this hard to believe (Luke 4:22ff).

Preaching the Good News (Gospel) to the Poor: The rich generally have difficulty receiving the Good News. An example is the rich young (synagogue) ruler that Jesus asked to sell all that he had to obtain treasure in heaven. The burden of their wealth makes it difficult for them to enter the Kingdom of Heaven. The poor, however, receive it much easier. The Beginning of the Indiction is the proclamation of the Good News to the poor. So it was with the preaching of the Twelve and the Seventy: largely to the poor.

Send Out the Downtrodden Forgiven: Luke's Gospel quotes the Septuagint text of Isaiah 61 word for word except for this phrase. The Septuagint reading of this phrase is "heal the brokenhearted." The word "send out" in Luke's Gospel is the Greek word *apostollo* from which comes the word apostle. The Twelve and the Seventy Apostles and others like them throughout the centuries have been sent out forgiven. Cyril of Alexandria stated[474] that the words "heal the brokenhearted" referred to those "whom Satan had broken by the rod of spiritual violence".

Proclaim Release to the Captives: This refers to those saints of all ages held captive in Hades awaiting the coming of Messiah. When Christ rose from the dead, He led captivity captive

[473] The Feast of Trumpets refers to the Second Coming of Christ, and it is celebrated in the Church on September 1st as the Beginning of the Indiction, or the preaching of the Church. For more details, see Mark Kern, The Meaning and Prophetic Significance of the Hebrew Feast Days, St Athanasius Press, 3rd edition, 2009.

[474] Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Chapter 4.

(Ephesians 4:8, Psalms 68:18) and plundered Hades. Celebration of this event is a part of the Pascha sunrise service in the Orthodox Church[475]

Proclaim Recovery of Sight to the Blind: Many people are unable to see what is going on around them. This was true of the villagers in Nazareth who tried to throw Jesus off a cliff shortly after He read these passages (Luke 4:28-30). This was also true of the Pharisees who had such difficulty with Jesus' healing of a blind man on the Sabbath (John 9:1-34). Jesus spoke to them afterward: "For judgment I have come into this world, that those who do not see may see, and that those who see may be made blind" (John 9:39). The problem here is the blindness caused by sin (John 9:41).

Proclaim an Acceptable Year of the Lord: In the Mosaic Law, every seventh year "the Land shall have a Sabbath rest, a Sabbath to the Lord; you shall not sow your field nor prune your vineyard" (Leviticus 25:4). After seven Sabbaths of years, or seven times seven, the fiftieth year was the Year of Jubilee. If the seventh year was a Sabbath to the Lord, the fiftieth was more so.

Beginning each year in the Church calendar[476], we ask that this be an acceptable year of the Lord. As Paul said, after quoting a Messianic passage from Isaiah 49:8, "Behold, now is the acceptable time; behold, now is the day of salvation" (2 Corinthians 6:2).

Ambrose of Milan pointed out[477] that just as the Son sent the Holy Spirit to the Church after His Ascension, so the Holy Spirit had earlier sent the Son in His humanity to save man. Just as the Holy Spirit anointed the Son, so the Holy Spirit anointed the Prophets and Apostles also.

> "In the former book[478] we have shown by the clear evidence of the Scriptures that the apostles and prophets were appointed, the latter to prophesy, the former to preach the Gospel, by the Holy Spirit in the same way as by the Father and the Son. Now we add what all will rightly wonder at, and not be able to doubt, that the Spirit was upon Christ; and that as He sent the Spirit (John 16:7), so the Spirit sent the Son of God. The Son of God says, 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me, etc.' (Isaiah 61:1 LXX). He says in the Gospel, 'Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears' (Luke 4:21), that He might point out that this was written of Himself. Rightly did He say 'upon Me', because He was speaking as the Son of Man. As the Son of Man He was anointed and sent to preach the Gospel".

Irenaeus pointed out[479] how the Trinity was involved at the anointing of Jesus at His baptism.

> "In the Name of Christ is implied, He that anoints, He that is anointed, and the unction itself with which He is anointed. It is the Father who anoints, but the

[475] For more discussion on this, see the Study for the Pascha Gospel Reading.

[476] The occasion of "The Beginning of the Indiction" contains much of the imagery of the Old Testament Feast of Trumpets. The Church Lectionary proclaims the Messiah and preaches the good news (Gospel) to the poor. Those broken by Satan will be healed and the bishops will be sent out to do the Lord's work. The Church will remember the Lord's victory over sin, death and Hades in leading captivity captive, and those, whose sin is forgiven, will have the eyes of their heart opened. This is the preaching of the Church.

[477] Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, III, i, 1-2.
See also Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, II, ix, 74-79.

[478] See Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, II, xii.

[479] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xviii, 3.

Son who is anointed by the Spirit, who is the unction, as the Word declares by Isaiah. 'The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, because He has anointed Me' (Isaiah 61:1), pointing out both the anointing Father, the anointed Son, and the unction, which is the Spirit".

Irenaeus also stated[480] that Christ did not speak of Himself (John 14:9-11, 12:44-45), but spoke because of His anointing by the Holy Spirit. This also applied to the Apostles who followed Him.

"'The Spirit of the Lord is upon Me, because He has anointed Me' (Isaiah 61:1). That is the Spirit of whom the Lord declares, 'It is not you that speak, but the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you' (Matthew 10:20). Again, giving to the disciples the power of regeneration into God, He said to them, 'Go and teach all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 28:19). God promised, that in the last times He would pour Him [the Spirit] upon His servants and handmaids that they might prophesy. Therefore He descended upon the Son of God, Who had been made the Son of man, becoming accustomed in fellowship with Him to dwell in the human race, to rest with human beings, and to dwell in the workmanship of God. He worked the will of the Father in them, and renewed them from their old habits into the newness of Christ".

Irenaeus further stated[481] that while the Holy Spirit rested on Jesus' humanity, He did not need to rest on His Deity. Since we, on the other hand, were bound and mourned from being led captive by our own sins, He was anointed to free us. We are saved as we receive the anointing of the Holy Spirit.

"Inasmuch as the Word of God was man from the root of Jesse, in this respect did the Spirit of God rest upon Him, and anoint Him to preach the Gospel to the lowly. But inasmuch as He was God, He did not judge according to glory, nor reprove after the manner of speech. 'He did not need that any should testify to Him of man, for He Himself knew what was in man' (John 2:25). He called all men that mourn; and granting forgiveness to those, who had been led into captivity by their sins. He loosed them from their chains, of whom Solomon says, 'Everyone shall be bound with the cords of his own sins' (Proverbs 5:22). Therefore the Spirit of God descended upon Him, the Spirit of Him who had promised by the prophets that He would anoint Him. So we, receiving from the abundance of His unction, might be saved. Such, then, is the witness of Matthew that Jesus and was anointed by the Spirit from the Father at His baptism" (Matthew 3:16-17).

Tertullian compared[482] the anointing of the High Priest, Aaron, with our baptism. A physical act of anointing generates a spiritual effect on our lives.

"When we have come up from the baptismal font, we are thoroughly anointed with a blessed unction, which is a practice derived from the old discipline, where on entering the priesthood, men were anointed with oil from a horn, ever since Moses anointed Aaron (Exodus 39:1, Leviticus 8:12, Psalm

[480] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xvii, 1.
[481] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, ix, 3.
[482] Tertullian, On Baptism, III, ii, 7.

133:2). Aaron is called[483] 'Christ' (Leviticus 4:5, 16 LXX), from the 'chrism', which is the 'unction'; which, when made spiritual, furnished an appropriate Name to the Lord, because He was 'anointed' with the Spirit by God the Father. As written in the Acts: 'Truly they were gathered together in this city against Your Holy Son whom You[484] have anointed' (Acts 4:27). Thus, too, in our case, the unction runs on the body, but profits spiritually; in the same way as the act of baptism itself is on the body, in that we are plunged in water, but the effect is spiritual, in that we are freed from sins.

John of Damascus also applied Isaiah's words (free the prisoners, sight to the blind, etc.) to those in Hades awaiting the coming of Christ. In doing so, he distinguished[485] between two meanings of the word "corruption". The first applied to Christ because He was truly human and was subject to death. The second did not apply to Him because He was not allowed to decay in His humanity. After His Resurrection, neither meaning applied to Him. At His descent into Hades in His deified soul, He released the prisoners and gave sight to the blind (Isaiah 61:1) for those who had been bound for ages.

> "The word corruption has two meanings. It signifies all the human sufferings, such as hunger, thirst, death, that is, the separation of soul and body. In this sense we say that our Lord's body was subject to corruption. He voluntarily accepted all these things. But corruption means also the complete resolution of the body into its constituent elements, and its utter disappearance, which is spoken of by many as destruction. The body of our Lord did not experience this form of corruption, as the prophet David says, 'You will not leave my soul in hell, neither will You allow Your Holy One to see corruption'" (Psalm 16:10).
>
> "Saying that our Lord's body was incorruptible, in the first sense of the word, before His resurrection, is impious. If it were incorruptible it was not really, but only apparently, of the same essence as ours, and what the Gospel tells us happened, viz. the hunger, the thirst, the nails, the wound in His side, the death, did not actually occur. But if they only apparently happened, then the mystery of the dispensation is an imposture and a sham, and He became man only in appearance, and not in actual fact[486], and we are saved only in appearance, and not in actual fact. But God forbid, and may those who say so have no part in salvation. But in the second meaning of the word 'corruption', we confess that our Lord's body is incorruptible, that is, indestructible, for such is the tradition of the inspired Fathers. Indeed, after the resurrection of our Savior from the dead, we say that our Lord's body is incorruptible even in the first sense of the word. Our Lord by His own body bestowed the gifts both of resurrection and of subsequent incorruption even on our own body, He Himself having become to us the First-Fruits both of resurrection and incorruption. As Paul says, 'This corruptible must put on incorruption'" (1 Corinthians 15:53).

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[483] In the LXX, Aaron and his successors were called "the anointed priest".

[484] Luke testifies further of Christ's anointing (Acts 10:38). Similarly, for a priest to serve in the Temple, he had to have been "anointed" (Leviticus 4:18).

[485] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, III, 28-29.

[486] This heresy originated with Simon Magus and his followers, and was very widespread by the middle of the 1st Century, especially among the Jews. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2003.

> "His soul, when it was deified, descended into Hades, in order that, just as the Sun of Righteousness rose for those on the earth, so likewise He might bring light to those who sit under the earth in darkness and shadow of death. He brought the message of peace to those on the earth, and release to the prisoners and sight to the blind. He became to those who believed, the Author of everlasting salvation and to those who did not believe, a reproach of their unbelief. He might became the same to those in Hades that every knee should bow to Him, of things in heaven, and things in earth and things under the earth. After He had freed those who had been bound for ages, immediately He rose again from the dead, showing us the way of resurrection".

Contrast of This Age to the End of the Age: Isaiah 61:4-9

Isaiah wrote, "They shall build the old waste places, they shall raise up those that were before made desolate, and shall renew the desert cities, *even* those that had been desolate for *many* generations. Strangers shall come and feed your flocks, and aliens *shall be your* plowmen and vine-dressers. But you shall be called priests of the Lord, the ministers of God: you shall eat the strength of nations, and shall be admired because of their wealth. Thus shall they inherit the Land a second time and everlasting joy shall be upon their head! For I am the Lord who loves righteousness, and hate robberies of injustice; and I will give their labor to the just, and will make an everlasting covenant with them. Their seed shall be known among the Gentiles, and their offspring in the midst of peoples; everyone that sees them shall take notice of them, that they are a seed blessed of God" (Isaiah 61:4-9).

Isaiah lived in Northern Israel in the years just prior to the conquest of (the Ten Tribes of) Israel by Assyria. About 135 years later, (the remaining two Tribes of) Judah would also be conquered by Babylon and led into exile. For Isaiah to say, "They shall inherit the Land a second time, and everlasting joy shall be upon their head" (Isaiah 61:7 LXX), he is not speaking of a return from captivity, but a much greater event. "The Land" refers to the Promised Land, where the "first inheritance" occurred after the Conquest by Joshua. Thus, Isaiah has switched from speaking of Christ's "anointing" at His Advent and is now speaking of His Second Coming.

Gone at this time will be the evil, which was common to Israel both prior to and following the rejection of Christ. Tertullian elaborated[487] on the "day of retribution" (Isaiah 61:2) as something subsequent to the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD.

> "It is for these deserts of yours that Ezekiel announces your ruin as about to come: and not only in this age — a ruin which has already[488] befallen — but in the 'day of retribution' (Isaiah 61:2), which will be subsequent. None will be freed from this ruin but he who shall have been frontally sealed with the passion of the Christ whom you have rejected. Thus it is written: 'The Lord said to me, Son of man, you have seen what the elders of Israel do, each one of them in darkness, each in a hidden bed-chamber. Because they have said, 'The Lord does not see us; the Lord has forsaken the earth'" (Ezekiel 8:12).

[487] Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, I, vii, 11.
[488] That is, at the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD and in c. 135 AD.

Characteristic of the things of this age are "robberies of burnt offerings" (Isaiah 61:8), which the Lord hates. John Cassian referred[489] to these "offerings" as our offices and our actions, which benefit our flesh but do nothing for the Lord. To this the Lord says, "Cursed is he that does the work of the Lord fraudulently" (Jeremiah 48:10). Paul refers to this as "Your reasonable service" (Romans 12:1), and Moses said, "Let the balance be just and the weights equal, the bushel just and the sextarius[490] equal" (Leviticus 19:35).

Pope Gregory the Great elaborated[491] on this, saying that when sin is mixed with showing mercy, it can no longer be called mercy.

> "It is one thing to show mercy on account of our sins; another thing to sin on account of showing mercy. It can no longer be called mercy, since it cannot grow into sweet fruit, being embittered by the poison of its pestiferous root. The Lord through the prophet rejects even sacrifices themselves, saying, I the Lord love judgment, and I hate robbery in a whole burnt offering (Isaiah 61:8 LXX). Again He has said, 'The sacrifices of the ungodly are abominable, which are offerings of wickedness' (Proverbs 21:28). Such persons also take from the indigent what they give to God".

In words attributed[492] to Clement of Rome, "Let us 'not be as the foolish, but as the wise' (Matthew 25:1-13), in all the self-restraint of the fear of God, that God may be glorified in everything through our Lord Jesus Christ, through our chaste and holy behavior. 'Whether we eat, or drink, or do anything else, let us do it as for the glory of God' (1 Corinthians 10:31). Let 'all those who see us acknowledge that we are a blessed seed' (Isaiah 61:9). Let them recognize us as 'sons of the living God' (Hosea 1:10, Romans 9:26), in everything — in all our words in purity, in humility. We do not copy the heathen in anything, nor are believers like other men, but in everything they are estranged from the wicked".

14th Parable from the Old Testament: Jeremiah 31:31-34 "The New Covenant"

"Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took hold of their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; for they abode not in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. For this is my covenant, which I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will surely put my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts. And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people. They shall not at all teach every one his *fellow* citizen, and every one his brother, saying, Know the Lord: for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them. For I will be merciful to their iniquities, and their sins I will remember no more" (Jeremiah 31:31-34 LXX).

This Reading from Jeremiah covers not just the New Covenant, but also the transition to the New Covenant and life in the Kingdom of God following the Second Coming. All this was set in motion by Christ's victory over death on Holy Saturday. To understand this, it is helpful to begin by backing up and looking at the purpose of the Law (the Old Covenant) as given at Mt.

[489] John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Theonas, III, xxi, 22.
[490] A sextarius was a measure of liquid capacity, about half a liter.
[491] Gregory the Great, Book of Pastoral Rule, III, 21.
[492] Clement of Rome, "Two Epistles Concerning Virginity", II, 6, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 7.

Sinai. We will also look at what constituted the Law, and how it was used as a "Creed" in the 1st Century synagogue worship. When Christ came, He said that He came to fulfill the Law; therefore we will look at the Law from Abraham's viewpoint and the Law in the light of Grace. The pillar and central focus of the Law is the love of God.

Since Christ is our Great High Priest, there is of necessity a change in the Law (Hebrews 7:11-12). We will look at the New Covenant spoken of by Jeremiah during the Age of the Church. Since the Law has a spiritual dimension to it (Romans 7:14), we will look at the Law as it relates to the Holy Spirit. Finally, we will conclude with the place of the Law in the Kingdom of God at the Second Coming.

1) What Constituted the Mosaic Law?

The central pillar of the Mosaic Law was the love of God. Jesus referred to this as the "Greatest Commandment" of the Law and stated it in these terms:

- You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul, and with all your mind (Matthew 22:37), and
- You shall love your neighbor as yourself (Matthew 22:39).

Jesus called these two parts "the first" and "the second", where the second is like the first (Matthew 22:39). But these words did not just fall out of the sky; they had been an integral part of the Mosaic Law from the beginning (Deuteronomy 6:5, 10:12, 30:6, Leviticus 19:18). Israel was instructed to teach this to their children diligently (Deuteronomy 6:7). They were instructed to bind them into phylacteries on their foreheads (Deuteronomy 6:8) and write them on the door posts of their houses (Deuteronomy 6:9).

Breaking down the Mosaic Law into more detail, it consisted of Commandments, Statutes, Judgments and Testimonies. The core of the Law was the "Greatest Commandment", and on this hangs all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:37-40). Tertullian stated[493] that Adam and Eve were aware of this in the Garden of Eden, and that if they had obeyed it, they would not have fallen. Thus the Gentiles had the Law prior to Moses. Until the coming of Christ, when the Law would be written on men's hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34), the Lord commanded that the Law should be written in stone on Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:1-8). Without the Holy Spirit resident in men's bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20) as a teacher of all things, the text of the Law served as medicine for an obstinate people who were forgetful and ungrateful, and who were prone to fall into idolatry.

An outline of the Mosaic Law is as follows, comprising Commandments, Statutes, Judgments and Testimonies. All features of these parts of the Law are aimed at instructing the people of God in loving the Lord and in loving their neighbor.

Commandments.

- The Ten Commandments, which give details of the Greatest Commandment (Deuteronomy 5:6-21)
- Atonement for sin in anticipation of the work of Christ (Leviticus 4, Leviticus 5, Numbers 15)

[493] Tertullian, Answer to Jews, I, iii, 2.

- Separation from the world; no intermarriage with Canaanites (Deuteronomy 7:1-11, 2 Corinthians 6:14-18)
- Tithes and Alms to guard against greed (Deuteronomy 26, 2 Corinthians 9:6-15)
- The year of remission to teach forgiveness (Deuteronomy 15:1-18, Mark 11:25, James 2:13)
- Manna to teach about real food (Deuteronomy 8:1-10, John 6:31-58)
- Blessings for those who obey; curses for those who don't (Deuteronomy 28, Matthew 25:14-46)

Statutes.

- The Major Festivals: Passover, Pentecost, and Tabernacles to teach about the Kingdom of God.
- Portions for the priests (Leviticus 6:14-30, Leviticus 7, Leviticus 10:12-20, Numbers 18:8-24, 1 Timothy 5:17-18)
- Duties of the priests before God in the House of God (Exodus 27-30, Leviticus 10:8-11)
- Maintain holiness and avoid uncleanness (Leviticus20, Numbers 19, 2 Corinthians 6:14-7:1, 1 John 2:6)
- Evenhandedness for Jew and Gentile (Numbers 15:14-16, Leviticus 19:33-34, Ephesians 2:11-22)

Judgments. The Judgments represent "case law" that resolved some uncertainty on how to interpret the Mosaic Law. Some examples are the question of inheritance brought by the daughters of Zelophehad (Numbers 27:1-11), and the question of working on the Sabbath during the 40 years in the wilderness (Numbers 15:32-36). Difficult cases were brought to the Levitical judges in Jerusalem for a decision, and if the Levitical judges had difficulty, they brought the case before the Lord Himself in the Holy of Holies for a decision (Deuteronomy 17:8-13, Deuteronomy 19:15-21, Numbers 28:21, Deuteronomy 1:17). These cases foreshadowed a time when "They shall not at all teach every one his *fellow* citizen, and every one his brother, saying, 'Know the Lord', for all shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:34 LXX).

Testimonies. The Testimony or Witness (i.e. singular) was the Ark of the Covenant that was kept in the Holy of Holies, and upon which the Lord dwelt between the Cherubim (Numbers 7:89). Things associated with the Presence of God are also referred to as part of the Testimony. For example, there is the Ark of the Testimony, the Tent (or Tabernacle) of the Testimony (Numbers 1:53), the Veil of Testimony (Leviticus 24:3), and the Tablets of the Testimony (Exodus 31:18) which were in the Ark (Deuteronomy 10:5). The Testimonies or Witnesses (i.e. plural) are the recorded deeds and mercies of God among His people coming from His Presence on the Ark of the Testimony. Part of the Mosaic Law was teaching future generations what the Lord had done (Deuteronomy 6:20-25).

2) The Purpose of the Law of Moses

The purpose of the giving of the Law was to lead the people of God to Christ (Romans 10:4). As such, the Law was our tutor or pedagogue[494] until Christ, that we might be justified by faith (Galatians 3:24). Adam knew major aspects of the Law. Tertullian expressed[495] this as follows,

> "In this law given to Adam, we recognize in embryo all the precepts which afterward sprouted forth when given through Moses. That is, you shall love the

[494] A pedagogue was a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys.
[495] Tertullian, Answer to Jews, I, iii, 2.

> Lord your God from your whole heart and out of your whole soul; you shall love your neighbor as yourself, etc."

John Cassian added[496] that how else could Abel have known to offer to God a sacrifice of the firstlings of his flock using their fat (Genesis 4:4), unless he had been taught by the Law (Exodus 13:12, Leviticus 3:7-10)? How could Noah have distinguished what animals were clean and what were unclean (Genesis 7:2), when the commandment of the Law (Deuteronomy 14) had not yet made a distinction?

Circumcision was the sign of the Covenant God made with Abraham (Genesis 17:10-14), and Israel needed to embrace circumcision of the flesh in order to participate in the things of God (Exodus 12:43-49). Moses repeatedly admonished Israel to circumcise their heart (Leviticus 26:41, Deuteronomy 30:6), and so did the Prophets (Jeremiah 4:4, 9:26, Ezekiel 44:7). This pointed to Christ, Who is the end of the Law for everyone who believes (Romans 10:4), and Who also applied the Law to address the condition of men's hearts (Matthew 5:17-48). Tertullian stated[497]:

> "Since both circumcision and un-circumcision were attributed to the same God, both lost their power in Christ, by reason of the excellence of Faith. Of that faith it has been written, 'And in His name shall the Gentiles trust' (Isaiah 42:4 LXX), and of that faith 'which works by Love' (Galatians 5:6). By this saying he also shows that the Creator is the source of that grace. Whether he speaks of the love, which is due to God, or that which is due to one's neighbor, in either case, the Creator's grace is meant; for it is He who commands it as the Greatest Commandment. This implies that the Law would lead him, who circumcised the flesh under the Old Covenant, to circumcision of the heart".

Knowledge of the Law by faith brought Abraham to Christ. Jesus said of Abraham, "Your father Abraham rejoiced to see My day, and he saw it and was glad" (John 8:56). As a result, Abraham is referred to as "The father of all those who believe" (Romans 4:11). Those who obey the Law as Abraham did are now sons of Abraham and heirs according to the promise and are blessed with the believing Abraham (Galatians 3:7, 9, 29).

One might say, "The Law is not made for a righteous person" (1 Timothy 1:9). The Law was very versatile and was designed both for those who had a heart of faith and for those who were stiff-necked. Abraham did not need the details of the Law because his heart was right. The Early Church taught[498] that God bound Israel for the hardness of their hearts, that by sacrificing, resting, and purifying themselves, etc., they might come to the knowledge of God, who ordained these things for them. The Mosaic Law bridged a gap until the coming of Christ when the Law would be written on men's hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34) and the Holy Spirit would take up residence in men's bodies (1 Corinthians 6:19-20).

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[496] John Cassian, Conferences I, viii, 23.
[497] Tertullian, Contra Marcion II, v, 4.
Tertullian, Contra Marcion II, v, 13.
[498] Apostolic Constitutions VI, iv, 20

John Chrysostom stated[499] that the Law saves us by exposing sin and bringing us to the realization of our need for faith. Instead of excluding us from the Promises, it aids us in obtaining them.

> "Having exalted Faith, and having proved its claims, that the Law may not be considered superfluous, Paul sets this side of the doctrine right also in his letter to the Galatians (Galatians 3:15-25). He proves that the Law was given with a purpose, and very profitably. 'It was added because of transgressions'; that is to say, that the Jews might not live carelessly, and plunge into the depth of wickedness. The Law was placed upon them as a bridle, guiding, regulating, and checking them from transgressing, if not all, at least some of the commandments. The Law was a great advantage until the Advent of Christ".
>
> "The Law is not contrary to the promises of God (Galatians 3:21). If we had our hope of life in the Law, and our salvation depended on it, we might object to Faith superseding the Law. But if the Law saves you, by means of Faith, though it brings you under the curse, you suffer no harm from it, in that Faith comes and sets everything right. Had the promise been by the Law, you had reason to fear lest, separating from the Law, you should separate from righteousness. But if it was given in order to convince all and to expose their individual sins, far from excluding you from the promises, it now aids you in obtaining them".
>
> "The Jews were not even conscious of their own sins, and in consequence did not even desire forgiveness. The Law was given to probe their wounds that they might long for a physician. The words 'confined under sin' (Galatians 3:22) means 'convinced' and the conviction held them in fear. You see then, the Law was given to implement the promises. Had the Law not been given, all would have been wrecked on wickedness, and there would have been no Jews to listen to Christ. But now being given, it has affected two things. 1) It has schooled its followers in a certain degree of virtue, and 2) it has pressed on them the knowledge of their own sins. This especially made them more zealous to seek the Son; for those who disbelieved, they did so from having no sense of their own sins. As Paul shows, 'Being ignorant of God's righteousness, and seeking to establish their own righteousness, they did not subject themselves to the righteousness of God'" (Romans 10:3).

The giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai was a very dramatic event, where God spoke directly to all His people for the first time, and this made a lasting impression on the people of God. The appearance of the mountaintop looked like it "burned with fire to the very heart of the heavens" (Deuteronomy 4:11). This was an awesome spectacle, accompanied by the thunder, the lightning, the smoke and the very loud trumpet sound (Exodus 19:16), in addition to the earthquake (Psalm 114:4), all of which Basil the Great attributed[500] to the angels that surround the Throne of God. Moses reminded Israel not to forget these spectacular events (Deuteronomy 4:10), and so did the Psalmist (Psalm 104:32). Not only did God speak to His people personally from the midst of the fire (Deuteronomy 4:36), but Moses walked up the mountain right into this fire (Exodus 24:16-18).

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[499] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap 3, vv. 19-21.
[500] Basil, On the Spirit, Ch. 14

The Law is still useful today, especially for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). Tertullian stated[501]:

> "Plainly we assert that the Law has deceased in one sense that its burdens, which not even the fathers were able to sustain, have wholly ceased. Such parts, however, as relate to righteousness not only permanently remain reserved, but even amplified, in order that our righteousness may be able to excel above the righteousness of the scribes and of the Pharisees".

Early Apostolic teaching warned[502] people about speaking evil of the Law. This continues to our day, where the prayers in many of the Orthodox services ask:

(1) Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your commandments.
(2) Blessed are You, O Sovereign Lord, let me understand Your commandments.
(3) Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten me with Your commandments.

There is a progression outlined here, beginning as catechumens and finishing with true enlightenment. First we learn; then we understand; and finally we are enlightened. As the Holy Spirit burns within us, we can also hear God speaking to us from the fire within us if we have a heart to listen.

a) The "Greatest Commandment" as a Creed

The "Greatest Commandment" of the Law was also used as a Creed[503] in the Synagogue worship, and it was one of the first things children learned in school. Thus, in questions with the Jewish leaders (Mark 12:28-34), there was no argument about what was the Greatest Commandment. This was so fundamental to the Mosaic Law that it was obvious. In their rejection of Christ, and later in their rejection of His Apostles, the nation of Israel turned the love of God as expressed in the "Creed" into a nationalistic zeal. The Apostle Simon the Zealot had even been a member of this political party of the "Zealots" before he was called as an Apostle. Toward the end of the Age of Israel in c. 70 AD, the "Zealot" party was largely responsible for the destruction of Israel[504] in their zeal to rid themselves of the Romans.

The Mosaic Law defined keeping the Greatest Commandment as being "circumcised in heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6, 10:16). If the people obeyed the Lord and kept this commandment (and its corollaries), the Lord promised to bless them above all the nations of the earth. He would open for them His good storehouse to bless them so that they could lend to and evangelize the nations (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 12). To the nationalistic "Zealots", however, all they could see were materialistic aspects of their nation.

In Mark's account, Jesus prefaced His response with the introduction to the Creed used in the Synagogue worship, "Hear, O Israel, the Lord our God, the Lord is one" (Deuteronomy 6:4). After reciting the Greatest Commandment, Jesus concluded, "There is no other commandment greater than these" (Mark 12:29-31). In Matthew's account, Jesus summarized the Greatest Commandment by saying, "On these two commandments hang all the Law and the prophets" (Matthew 22:40).

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[501] Tertullian, On Monogamy IV, vi, 7.
[502] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, iv, 19.
[503] Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 245, 101-104.
[504] For more details of this, see the Study for Holy Monday evening.

On one occasion, a lawyer (that is, one skilled in interpreting the Mosaic Law) asked Jesus "What shall I do to inherit eternal life?" (Luke 10:25) Jesus asked him what the Law said; the lawyer replied with the "Greatest Commandment". Jesus answered, "You have answered rightly; do this and you will live" (Luke 10:28). That is, you will have eternal life. Wishing to justify himself, the lawyer replied, "And who is my neighbor?" Jesus then proceeded with the story of the Good Samaritan to illustrate the second part of the Greatest Commandment. This example illustrates someone trying to get by with the minimum, and not someone like Abraham, who loved the Lord with all his heart, soul and strength.

b) Christ Fulfilled the Law

When Christ came, He stated, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. Assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod[505] or one piece of a Hebrew letter[506] will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

John Chrysostom mentioned[507] three ways in which Christ fulfilled the Law.

1. He transgressed none of the precepts of the Law, and thus "fulfilled" the Law by keeping it perfectly. There are a number of occasions where the Scripture states[508] this.
2. He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit (Romans 8:3-4). "Since the Law[509] was laboring to make man righteous, but didn't have power, He came and brought in the way of righteousness by faith, and so established that which the Law desired; and what the Law could not do by letters, this He accomplished by faith. On this account He said, 'I am not come to destroy the Law'" (Matthew 5:17).
3. He upgraded the Law to what was the original intent, and Chrysostom called this the "future code of laws". "Do not murder" became "Do not even be angry" (Matthew 5:21-22); "Do not commit adultery" became "Do not even lust in your heart" (Matthew 5:27-28).

Some people try to keep the Law without loving the Lawgiver. Paul addressed this by quoting from the Law[510], "Moses writes that the man who practices the righteousness which is based on the Law shall live by that righteousness" (Romans 10:5). These words of Moses were also quoted by Nehemiah and Ezekiel in a negative context where the people hadn't kept the Lord's statutes and judgments and were suffering or were about to suffer the consequences (Nehemiah 9:29, Ezekiel 20:11, 13, 21).

Paul continued by quoting Moses loosely again to say that the righteousness of faith does not involve heroic efforts to bring Christ down from heaven or up from the abyss. It is not difficult, and is really very simple; it is near you in your mouth and in your heart (Romans 10:6-8). The full text of this, as written by Moses reads, "For this commandment which I command you today is not too difficult for you nor is it out of reach. It is not in heaven that you should say, 'Who will go up to heaven for us to get it for us and make us hear it, that we may observe

[505] A "yod" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, about the size of an apostrophe.
[506] This refers to the projection of one Hebrew letter that distinguishes it from another. It would be equivalent in English letters to the dot of an "i" or the crossing of a "t".
[507] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XVI, 3-4.
[508] For example Matthew 3:15, John 8:46, John 14:30, Isaiah 53:9.
[509] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XVI, 3-4.
[510] That is, from Leviticus 18:5 which reads, "And you shall keep My statues and My judgments which a man shall do them and he shall live by them."

it?' Nor is it beyond the sea that you should say 'Who will cross the sea for us to get it for us and make us hear it that we may observe it?' The Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart, that you may observe it" (Deuteronomy 30:11-14). Moses went on to say that the Lord's people had a choice. If they loved the Lord and walked in His ways, they would have life and prosperity; if they were drawn away to worship other gods, they would have death and adversity (Deuteronomy 30:15-17).

Paul clarified Moses' words, "If you confess with your mouth Jesus as Lord and believe in your heart that God raised Him from the dead, you shall be saved. With the heart man believes, resulting in righteousness[511], and with the mouth he confesses, resulting in salvation" (Romans 10:9-10). We note that Paul said, "With the heart man believes," and not just with the head man believes.

Under the Old Covenant people did this also. Contained within the details of the sacrificial statutes and festivals was Jesus as the Lamb of God who would be raised on the third day. This is why Moses added, "That you may observe it" (Deuteronomy 30:12, 13, 14). Paul omitted "observing it," since the sacrifice of the Lamb of God had by then been made once for all. In Moses' day, the Law continually pointed forward to the Lamb of God. Thus Paul and Moses both taught righteousness by faith, but from different viewpoints in time. "Now the righteousness of God apart from the Law is revealed, being witnessed by the Law and the Prophets" (Romans 3:21).

John Chrysostom stated[512] that the end of the Law was that man might be justified, but Christ gave a fuller accomplishment of this through faith.

> "What was the object of the Law? To make man righteous! But it had not the power, for no one fulfilled it. This then was the end of the Law and to this it looked throughout; and for this all its parts were made: its feasts and commandments, and sacrifices, and all besides, that man might be justified. But this end Christ gave a fuller accomplishment through faith. Do not be afraid then, he says, as if transgressing the Law in having come over to the Faith. You transgress the Law when you do not believe Christ. If you believe in Him, then you have fulfilled it also, and much more than it commanded. You have received a much greater righteousness."

The Jews opposing Paul not only ridiculed Grace as too easy, but even stressed that it was not possible to be justified by faith. Chrysostom went on[513] to refute the notion that Grace is easy and cheap while there is a virtue manifested in works. Included in faith is a requirement for a wakeful soul that does not yield to listlessness.

> "Thus when one begins to believe, there are thoughts which confuse and make havoc of the minds of most men, and it takes a soul of some vigor to shake them thoroughly off. This is a soul that takes in things beyond expectation, and does not stumble at appearances."

Some people have tried to keep the Law without honoring the Lawgiver. The result is usually the Law being perceived as a rigid rulebook unrelated to the Lawgiver. For example, the

[511] It is easy to confuse "righteousness" and "salvation", where the issue is "faith" versus "works".
[512] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XVII, v. 4.
[513] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XVII, v. 6.

Jewish leaders were seeking the death penalty for Jesus because He healed people on the Sabbath (John 5:9-10). Doing good had been the intent of the Sabbath as a time for rest and concentration on the things of God[514]. One who loves and honors the Lawgiver can see this. The Jewish leaders, however, could only see the letter of the Law that demanded the death penalty for anyone "breaking" the Sabbath rest laws (Exodus 31:13-17). The zeal of the Jewish leaders for the letter of the Law was very strong. After all, God gave it!

By not seeking the righteousness of faith that Moses (and Paul) taught, they were seeking to establish their own righteousness (Romans 10:3). But what did their righteousness produce? They ignored the details of the Law when it conflicted with their personal agenda (John 7:45-52, 12:9-19; 11:43-53; Matthew 26:3-5). The ultimate example of this is the crucifixion of the Lawgiver.

Early Christian teaching included[515] a greater emphasis on the Law than is present today. The emphasis was on the details of the Law as demonstrating the Grace of Christ. The original intent was to give the people a way that they could express love for God. But when they turned that opportunity into idolatry, then it became a commandment and a "hard collar" regarding exactly how God was to be worshipped.

> "He nowhere has dissolved the Law, but fulfilled it. He says, 'One yod, or one piece of a Hebrew letter, shall not pass from the Law until all is fulfilled' (Matthew 5:18). He says, 'I come not to dissolve the Law, but to fulfill it' (Matthew 5:17). Moses himself was at once the lawgiver, the high priest, the prophet, and the king; Elijah, the zealous follower of the prophets, was also present at our Lord's transfiguration in the mountain. They were witnesses of His incarnation and of His sufferings, as the intimate friends of Christ, but not as enemies and strangers. Thus it is demonstrated that the Law is good and holy (Romans 7:12), as also the prophets."
>
> "Now the Law is the Decalogue, which the Lord spoke to them with an audible voice (Exodus 20:1, Deuteronomy 4:15), before the people made that calf (Exodus 32:1-4) which represented the Egyptian Apis. The Law is righteous, and therefore is it called the Law, because judgments are made according to the Law of nature. This Law is good, holy, and lays no compulsion on things positive. He says, 'If you will make me an altar, you shall make it of earth' (Exodus 20:24). It does not say, 'Make one', but, 'If you will make'. It does not impose a necessity, but gives room to their own free liberty. God does not stand in need of sacrifices, being by nature above all want. But knowing that, Abel, Noah and Abraham, not out of requirement, but moved of themselves by the law of nature, offered sacrifice to God out of a grateful mind. So He permitted the Hebrews, not commanded, if they wanted to offer sacrifice. If they offered from a right intention, He showed Himself pleased with their sacrifices. Therefore He says, 'If you desire to offer, do not offer to me as to one that stands in need of it, for I stand in need of nothing; for the world is mine, and the fullness thereof'" (Psalm 50:12).
>
> "But later this people became forgetful of that, and called on a calf as God, instead of the true God. To him they ascribed the cause of their coming out of Egypt, saying, 'These are your gods, O Israel, which have brought you out of the

[514] For example, see Luke 6:6-11, Exodus 20:10-11, 31:15, Numbers 10:10, Leviticus 24:5-9, Ezekiel 20:12, 20.
[515] Apostolic Constitutions VI, iv, 19-20.

land of Egypt' (Exodus 32:4). When these men had committed wickedness with the 'similitude of a calf that eats hay' and denied God who had visited them by Moses (Exodus 4) in their afflictions, and had done signs with his hand and rod, then was God angry, as being ungratefully treated by them. He bound them with bonds which could not be loosened, with a mortifying burden and a hard collar, and no longer said, 'If you make', but, 'Make an altar', and sacrifice perpetually. You are forgetful and ungrateful. Offer burnt offerings therefore continually, that you may be mindful of Me. Since you have wickedly abused your power, I lay a necessity upon you for the time to come, and I command you to abstain from certain meats. I ordain to you the distinction of clean and unclean creatures, although every creature is good, as being made by Me. I appoint to you several separations, purging, frequent washings and sprinklings, several purifications, and several times of rest. If you neglect any of them, I will determine that punishment which is proper to the disobedient; that being pressed and galled by your collar, you may depart from the error of polytheism".

"Laying aside that idolatry, they may be mindful of, 'Hear, O Israel, the Lord your God is one Lord' (Deuteronomy 6:4). They may run back again to that Law, which I inserted in the nature of all men. 'There is only one God in heaven and on earth, and it was important for them to love Him with all their heart, all their strength, and all their mind' (Deuteronomy 6:5), and to fear none but Him. They were not to admit the names of other gods into their mind, nor to let their tongue utter them out of their mouth. He bound them for the hardness of their hearts, that by sacrificing, resting, and purifying themselves, and by similar observances, they might come to the knowledge of God, who ordained these things for them".

John Chrysostom stated[516] that while the Old Covenant sounds very much like the New Covenant, there is a difference in sense. The first is like a model of the reality of the second. The first is like lessons for children and mortals; the second, for grown men and angels.

"The words in the first covenant[517] are used as types, in the second as realities, preserving a sameness of sound, though not of sense. Just as in patterns and figures, the shape of a man scratched with white lines upon a black ground is called a man as well as that which has received the correct coloring. In the case of statues, the figure, whether formed of gold or of plaster, is alike called a statue, though in the one case as a model, in the other as a reality".

"Do not then, because the same words are used, suppose that the things are identical. In the sense that aspects of the First Covenant were models, they did not differ from the truth; but in that they merely preserved the outline, they were less than the truth. The First Covenant was lessons for children, the Second for high-minded full-grown men; the first Laws were made as for mortals, the latter as for angels".

Irenaeus noted[518] that the New Covenant and the Old Covenant have much in common, and have the same author, but that the New Covenant is greater than the Old Covenant.

[516] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIV, 1-2.
[517] That is sanctification, baptism, sacrifice, temple, circumcision and grace.
[518] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, ix, 1-2.

> "One and the same householder produced both covenants, the Word of God, who spoke with both Abraham and Moses, and who has restored us to liberty, and has multiplied that grace which is from Himself".
>
> "He declares, 'For in this place is One greater than the temple' (Matthew 12:6). But the words *greater* and *less* are not applied to those things which have nothing in common between themselves, and are of an opposite nature, and mutually exclusive. They are used for those things of the same substance, and which possess properties in common, but merely differ in number and size; such as water from water, and light from light, and grace from grace. Greater, therefore, is that legislation which has been given for liberty than that given for bondage; and therefore it has been diffused, not throughout one nation, but over the whole world".

c) Abraham and the Law

Paul had said, "Therefore the Law has become our pedagogue[519] until Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). The life of Abraham illustrates this, since justification always has been by faith, and the Law, by itself, cannot dictate conditions of the heart. "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4). "Yet we know that the Law *is* good if one uses it lawfully. Knowing this; the Law is not made for a righteous person. It is made for *the* lawless and insubordinate, for the ungodly and for sinners, etc." (1 Timothy 1:8-9).

Old Testament and New Testament writers alike used the life of Abraham as the model of a righteous life and a close walk with God. He was called "The friend of God" (2 Chronicles 20:7, James 2:21-24), and because of his faith, Israel inherited the Promised Land. The Church, with Christ as Head, has inherited the blessing of Abraham in the promise of the Holy Spirit through faith (Galatians 3:14). By faith Abraham obeyed and he had the vision to wait for the city which has foundations, whose craftsman and maker is God (Hebrews 11:8-10). Abraham believed God and the belief (i.e. faith) was reckoned to him as righteousness. He is called the father of all who believe, and the heir of the world (Romans 4:11-13). Thus Abraham exemplifies the Grace of God. Abraham received faith according to grace (Romans 4:16), just as all who since him have received faith.

Abraham did not need the details of the Law because his heart was right. In light of this, Irenaeus wrote[520],

> "The righteous fathers had the meaning of the Decalogue written in their hearts and souls; that is, they loved the God who made them, and did no injury to their neighbor. There was therefore no occasion that they should be cautioned by prohibitory mandates, because they had the righteousness of the Law in themselves".

The Early Church taught[521] that the purpose of all the details of the Mosaic Law was as medicine for an obstinate people who were forgetful and ungrateful, and who were prone to fall into idolatry, like the Golden Calf, at any moment. For these people and others like them the

[519] A pedagogue was a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys.
[520] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xvi, 3.
[521] Apostolic Constitutions, VI, iv, 20-21

details of the Law were necessary and He bound them with bonds, a burden and a hard collar. When Christ came in the flesh, He did not take away the Law but the bonds and the collar".

d) The Law and Grace

John Chrysostom pointed[522] out that the Lord had said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). Chrysostom continued, "But His commandments and the sum of them are, 'You shall love the Lord your God, and your neighbor as yourself'. To love God is to love one's neighbor, 'For if you love Me', He said, 'O Peter, feed My sheep' (John 21:16, 17). But to love one's neighbor works a keeping of the commandments. With reason does He then say, "On these hang all the Law and the Prophets".

Sometimes overlooked in Paul's famous argument of Law vs. Grace are Paul's statements: "Therefore the Law is holy and the Commandment is holy, just and good" (Romans 7:12). "For we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14). "I agree with the Law that it is good" (Romans 7:16).

On the other hand, Paul argues, "I am fleshly, sold under sin" (Romans 7:14). "I delight in the Law of God according to the inward man. But I see another law in my members, warring against the law of my mind, and bringing me into captivity to the law of sin which is in my members" (Romans 7:22, 23).

The guiding principle of the Mosaic Law was the "Greatest Commandment", which focused on the love of God. The use of the "Greatest Commandment" as a creed in the synagogues in the 1st Century, was in itself in obedience to one of the commandments (Deuteronomy 6:6-9). Taken as a whole, the Law contained all the elements of Grace as described with the advent of Christ as Messiah in the New Testament, and the Law pointed toward the work that Christ accomplished (Galatians 3:24). The intent of the Law was that God might cause His people to know that man shall not live by bread alone, but man shall live by every word coming out of the mouth of God (Deuteronomy 8:3, Matthew 4:4). The expectation of the Law was Christ, and the Prophets understood this. Jeremiah wrote of this and Paul quoted Jeremiah in addressing the Hebrews:

> "Behold, the days come, says the Lord, when I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel, and with the house of Judah. Not according to the covenant which I made with their fathers in the day when I took hold of their hand to bring them out of the land of Egypt; for they abode not in my covenant, and I disregarded them, says the Lord. This is my covenant, which I will make with the house of Israel; after those days, says the Lord, I will surely put my laws into their mind, and write them on their hearts. And I will be to them a God, and they shall be to me a people" (Jeremiah 31:31-33 LXX, Hebrews 8:8-12).

The Law aimed at establishing faith and the condition of man's heart, and the command was to circumcise their hearts (Deuteronomy 10:16, Colossians 2:11) as well as their flesh. But the Holy Spirit had not yet been poured out (Joel 2:28-29, Acts 2:16-18). In anticipation of the Lamb of God, He commanded that offerings for sin should be established using the blood of bulls and goats (Compare Hebrews 9:13) for sins done in ignorance (Leviticus 4), and using the blood of a lamb for sins done willfully (Leviticus 5). These offerings had to be performed

[522] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXI.

repeatedly, because sin was repeated (Hebrews 7:26-28). It took a vision to see the end result of Christ's one sacrifice, where He became sin for us (2 Corinthians 5:21).

Following the Law with all one's heart and soul was not supposed to be difficult, as testified by both Moses and Jesus. "This commandment which I am commanding you today is not too difficult for you, nor is it out of reach. For the Word is very near you, in your mouth and in your heart that you may do it" (Deuteronomy 30:11-15). Jesus said the same thing: "My yoke is easy and My burden is light" (Matthew 11:30). With the coming of the Lamb of God to take away the sin of the world (John 1:29-36), the Holy Spirit is now resident within us (1 Corinthians 3:16, 6:19-20) and Law is written on our hearts. Our illumination regarding the things of God has greatly increased, and the writing of the Law on Mt. Ebal (Deuteronomy 27:1-8) along with the offerings for sin is unnecessary. But this doesn't mean that the Mosaic Law is useless now that Grace has taken its place.

Men under Grace have a greater responsibility than do men under the Law; because more has been given, more is expected (Luke 12:48, Matthew 25:29). John Cassian stated[523],

> "How can those men be partakers of the grace of the gospel who disregard the fulfillment even of the lighter commands of the Law, to the easy character of which the words of the lawgiver bear testimony?"

Jesus had said something similar. In His discussion about fulfilling, but not deleting the Law, He said:

> "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the kingdom of heaven; but whoever does and teaches *them,* he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. For I say to you, that unless your righteousness exceeds *the righteousness* of the scribes and Pharisees, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 5:19-20).

Irenaeus stated[524] that while the Law had been given for bondage to Israel, its scope has been widened for those under Grace that we might have greater love for our Father.

> "He has increased and widened those laws, granting to men, by means of adoption, to know God the Father. We love Him with the whole heart, while we abstain not only from evil deeds, but even from the desire after them. But He has also increased the feeling of reverence; for sons should have more veneration than slaves, and greater love for their Father. We shall give account to God not of deeds only, as slaves, but even of words and thoughts. We have truly received the power of liberty, in which condition a man is more severely tested, whether he will reverence, fear, and love the Lord".

The Law is very useful today, especially for training in righteousness (2 Timothy 3:16). In both Orthodox Vespers and Matins, we pray

1. Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your commandments.
2. Blessed are You, O Sovereign Lord, let me understand Your commandments.
3. Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten me with Your commandments.

[523] John Cassian, Conferences III, 21, 5
[524] Irenaeus, Against Heresies IV, xvi, 5

The Law teaches us that man "does not live by bread alone, but by everything that proceeds out of the mouth of the Lord" (Deuteronomy 8:3). As the Holy Spirit burns within us, we can also hear God speaking to us from the fire within us if we have a heart to listen.

3) The New High Priest and the Changing of the Law

Paul had a long discussion in Hebrews about the effects of Christ's coming as our Great High Priest (Hebrews 5:5). Because of a change in the priesthood, there must also be a change in the Law (Hebrews 7:12). John Chrysostom pointed out[525] how this changed things.

> "If the priesthood changed from the Levitical priesthood to the Melchizedek priesthood in the 1st Century, 'of necessity there is also a change of the Law' (Hebrews 7:12). The Levitical priesthood had dealt with 'a law of a fleshly commandment' (Hebrews 7:16). Included in this Law were procedures to anoint the flesh (Exodus 28:41), wash the flesh (Numbers 19:7-10), purify the flesh (Numbers 19:9, Leviticus 14:9), shave the flesh (Leviticus 13:33, 14:8-9), bind upon the flesh (Deuteronomy 6:8), cherish the flesh (Deuteronomy 13:6), rest as to the flesh (Exodus 31:14-15). These procedures were weak and unprofitable (Hebrews 7:18) because they made nothing perfect (Hebrews 7:19). Paul pointed out (Romans 8:3) that it was not the Law itself that was weak, but we were because of our flesh".

With the change in the Law, the Law of God is written on our hearts, and it is within us (Jeremiah 31:33). Also within us is the Holy Spirit, Who teaches us to discern all things (1 Corinthians 2:10-16). For example, He teaches us that circumcision needs to be applied to the heart to be made perfect (Romans 2:29). Thus, the Law is not thrown out, it is just changed and refined (Matthew 5:18). Adultery applies not just to the fleshly act, but also to the thought (Matthew 5:27-28). Murder applies not just to killing the flesh, but also to hate (Matthew 5:21-24).

Our High Priest teaches us that, "The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God is Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth" (John 4:23-24). At the Presentation of Jesus[526] in the Temple as an infant (Luke 2:22-38), the changeover began. No wonder, at age 33, on the day after Palm Sunday, Jesus drove the moneychangers, etc., out of the Temple. Quoting Isaiah, He said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7). But you have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:17). He had done this same thing three years earlier, just as He began His public ministry. In describing this, the Apostle John stated that the disciples then remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has consumed Me" (John 2:13-17, Psalm 69:9).

As a result of this, we now have a "greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands; that is, not of this creation. Our High Priest entered the Most Holy Place once for all, not with the blood of goats and calves, but with His own blood. Through the eternal Spirit, He offered Himself without spot to God that He might cleanse our conscience from dead works to serve the Living God" (Hebrews 9:11, 12, 14).

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[525] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XIII, 2.

[526] The "Presentation of Jesus" is celebrated on February 2nd as one of the Twelve Major Feast Days in the Orthodox Church.

John Chrysostom interprets this imagery as follows. The more perfect tabernacle is His human body (where Paul refers to our human bodies as tabernacles also -- 2 Corinthians 5:1). The Most Holy Place where He entered to appear in the presence of God for us (Hebrews 9:24) is heaven, where heaven is veiled off from curious bystanders. His flesh also was a veil hiding the Godhead. In this imagery, Christ did not become a high priest; He came as the High Priest.

The Law today can be illustrated by addressing our love for God, which is the ultimate basis for both the "Greatest Commandment" and our ultimate salvation. The love of God as seen in His Church is not a static situation, but is always growing. We can either grow toward being perfected in Christ or we can grow cold. An example of growing cold can be seen from John's vision while he was in exile on Patmos (Revelation 1:9). He wrote to the Church in Ephesus that they had left their first love (Revelation 2:4). In other words, they had grown cold in their love toward God and their brethren. In contrast to this, John wrote in his Epistle that we can and should be perfected in love. This begins with faith: "And we have known and believed the love that God has for us" (1 John 4:16).

For love to be perfected we need a continuing vision of Christ; this was true under the Old Covenant as well as the New Covenant. "No one has seen God at any time. If we love one another, God abides in us, and His love has been perfected in us" (1 John 4:12). Love for one another is the result or the evidence of the continuing vision of Christ. Keeping His Commandments is one of the tools for achieving that result. "Whoever keeps His Word, truly the love of God is perfected in him. By this we know that we are in Him" (1 John 2:5). Keeping His Commandments does not imply a mere lip service to the Ten Commandments, although the Ten Commandments are a good place to start in our culture. It seems curious that there is such strong opposition from our culture today toward any public display of the Ten Commandments. Keeping His Commandments rather implies living by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God, which is tone of both the Old Covenant and the New Covenant (Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3). Our bodies are a Temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20), and we have the Law written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:33, 2 Corinthians 3:3). Therefore we do not need to make great efforts to go somewhere or do something to find out what God would have us do at any moment (Deuteronomy 30:11-15, Romans 10:5-13).

Keeping His Commandments is part of a process of striving for righteousness. It is like faith versus works (James 2:24-26). Without both, one has neither. If one says he has faith, but he consistently has no works to demonstrate what his faith consists of, the real issue is that he doesn't really have faith at all. Without striving for righteousness, one does not have the love of God, and vice versa. "If we say that we have fellowship with Him, and walk in darkness, we lie and do not practice the truth. But if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus Christ His Son cleanses us from all sin. If we say we have no sin, we deceive ourselves, and the truth is not in us. If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1 John 1:6-9). We all sin (Romans 3:23); therefore we all need to confess our sins as part of our striving for righteousness. A study of the lives of the saints is helpful for us in that we see examples of people who struggled in their striving for righteousness, and who exhibited the love of God as a result.

In our striving for righteousness, it is also helpful to see where the battlefront is. It is our own desires that we need to fight. James, the Lord's brother, said, "Let no one say when he is tempted, 'I am tempted by God.' God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does He Himself tempt anyone. But each one is tempted when he is drawn away by his own desires and enticed. Then when desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin. Sin, when it is full-grown, brings forth death" (James 1:13-15). It is the things that come from our own hearts that really defile us (Matthew 15:18-20). Thus the striving forces us to concentrate on the plank in our own eyes, rather than looking for specks in the eyes of others (Matthew 7:3). The Law, especially as amplified by the Lord (Matthew 5:48) can be helpful to us in our striving for righteousness.

As a result of the change in the Law that started when Christ arrived, mankind has returned to the original intent of the Law, which was holiness and a faith like that of Abraham.

4) The New Covenant During the Age of the Church

There is a connection between the Law and the Grace of the Holy Spirit. Historically, the day of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai was also the same day[527] as the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost following the Resurrection of Christ. These two events are related because the Law is spiritual (Romans 7:14) and needs to be understood spiritually. When Christ came, He stated, "Do not think that I came to destroy the Law and the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod[528] or one piece of a Hebrew letter[529] will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:17-18).

Prior to that, the Lord had said to His disciples, "If you love Me, keep My commandments. I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever — the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him. But you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you. I will not leave you orphans; I will come to you" (John 14:15-17). Thus, keeping the Lord's commandments goes hand in hand with the help of the Holy Spirit. In the same breath, He said to keep His Commandments and to receive the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is called "The Helper" meaning one called alongside to help (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7), and Jesus described the role of the Holy Spirit again later in this conversation after the Last Supper (John 16:13). The Holy Spirit in us is a key element in the coming together of "the city with solid foundations whose craftsman and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10). With the Holy Spirit at work in us, we are described as containing treasure in earthenware vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). The exterior of our human frailties may be rough, but God has chosen to dwell there.

From this point of view, the question of Jesus' disciples just before He ascended is very timely, "Lord will You at this time restore the Kingdom to Israel?" (Acts 1:6). The answer was no; the city's not ready yet! The treasure in the earthenware vessels still needs some work.

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[527] For details on this, see the Study for the Sunday of Pentecost.

[528] A "yod" is the smallest letter in the Hebrew alphabet, about the size of an apostrophe.

[529] This refers to the projection of one Hebrew letter that distinguishes it from another. It would be equivalent in English letters to the dot of an "i" or the crossing of a "t".

Isaiah prophesied about the coming of the Holy Spirit, and spoke of the Gentiles as being involved. He said, "Thus says the Lord, 'In a favorable time I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you'" (Isaiah 49:8). The help referred to is the Lord's guidance to springs or fountains of water (Isaiah 49:10, John 7:37-39) which represents the Holy Spirit. Gentiles will be part of this, "Behold, they shall come from afar; and these will come from the North and the West, and these from the land of Persia (Isaiah 49:12 LXX). The Church Fathers have interpreted the reference to Persia as referring to the Magi coming to visit the infant Jesus. In this day of salvation, the Lord will comfort His people (Isaiah 49:13) and have compassion on them (Isaiah 49:10, 13), as a nursing mother does her child (Isaiah 49:14-15). Thus we receive the Comforter (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, Acts 9:31, Romans 8:15) with baptism and the newly baptized receive the pure milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2).

5) The Place of the Law with the Help of the Holy Spirit

Immediately prior to mentioning the Holy Spirit, Jesus said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15). And "He who has My Commandments and keeps them, it is he who loves Me" (John 14:21). And "He who does not love Me does not keep My words; and the word which you hear is not Mine but the Father's who sent Me" (John 14:24). We sometimes dissociate "The Commandments" from the Grace of the Holy Spirit as if we're beyond the elementary principles of Christ (Hebrews 6:1-8). We sometimes don't notice that Paul had said, "Therefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment holy and just and good" (Romans 7:12). Also, "For we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14); and "I agree with the Law that it is good" (Romans 7:16).

Paul stated, "Therefore the Law was our pedagogue[530] until Christ, that we might be justified by faith" (Galatians 3:24). As a pedagogue, the Law was intended to teach us to love God. But the Law, by itself, cannot dictate conditions of the heart. "For Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes" (Romans 10:4).

The Evlogetaria, that is sung during Sunday Matins, illustrates the interaction of the Law with the Holy Spirit. As the cantor describes the work of the Holy Spirit during the Resurrection, the congregation responds by asking the Lord to teach us His Statutes. If we understand the Lord's statutes, and are enlightened by them, we will also understand what the Holy Spirit is doing in our midst! The Evlogetaria goes as follows:

Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.
Cantor: The company of the angels was amazed, when they beheld You numbered among the dead. Yet You, O Savior, destroyed the power of death, and with You raising up Adam and releasing all men from Hell.
Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.
Cantor: Why, O women disciples, do you mingle sweet-smelling spices with your tears of pity? The radiant angel within the sepulchre cried to the Myrrh-Bearing women. 'Behold the grave and understand; for the Savior is risen from the tomb'.
Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.

[530] A pedagogue was a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys.

Cantor: Very early in the morning the Myrrh-Bearing women ran lamenting to Your tomb. But an angel came toward them saying: 'The time for lamentation is passed; do not weep; but announce to the Apostles the Resurrection'.

Refrain: Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your statutes.

Cantor: The Myrrh-Bearing women mourned; as bearing ointments they drew near Your tomb, O Savior. But the angel spoke to them, saying, 'Why do you seek the living among the dead? In that He is God, He is risen from the dead'.

John Chrysostom pointed[531] out that the when the Lord said, "If you love Me, keep My commandments" (John 14:15), "His commandments and the sum of them are, 'You shall love the Lord your God, and your neighbor as yourself'. Therefore to love God is to love one's neighbor, 'For if you love Me', He said, 'O Peter, feed My sheep' (John 21:16, 17). But to love one's neighbor works a keeping of the commandments; with reason, then, does He say, "'On these hang all the Law and the Prophets'".

John Chrysostom went on to say[532] that the problem the disciples had, as Christ's Passion approached, was actually a lack of love for God. True love for God would not have displayed sorrow and cowardice. Their despondency, at His words about going to the Cross, displayed a lack of faith and a lack of love for God. The hearing of His Commandments is a proof of love for God.

> "It is not enough merely to have the Law; we need also an exact keeping of it. But why does He frequently repeat the same thing to them? (John 14:15, 21, 24) I think that He alluded to their despondency; for He had uttered many wise sayings to them concerning death, saying, 'He that hates his life in this world shall save it unto life eternal' (John 12:25). And, 'Unless a man take his cross and follow Me, he is not worthy of Me' (Matthew 10:38). He is about to say other things besides, rebuking them, 'Do you think that you suffer sorrow from love? Not sorrowing would be a sign of love'. Because He wished all along to establish this, as He went on He summed up His discourse in this same point; 'If you loved Me you would have rejoiced, because I go to My Father' (John 14:28), but now you are in this state through cowardice. To be thus disposed towards death is not for those who remember My commandments; for you ought to be crucified, if you truly loved Me, for My word exhorts you not to be afraid of those that kill the body. These both the Father and I love".
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> "He that won't hear these sayings not only does not love Me, but neither does he love the Father. If this is the sure proof of love, the hearing the Commandments, and these are of the Father, he that hears them loves not the Son only, but the Father also. 'I don't speak without the Father, nor say anything of Myself contrary to what seems good to Him'".

6) The Mosaic Law as Being Spiritual

Paul spoke of the Law as having a spiritual dimension to it. "Therefore the Law is holy, and the Commandment holy, just and good" (Romans 7:12). Also, "For we know that the Law is spiritual" (Romans 7:14); and "I agree with the Law that it is good" (Romans 7:16). The heart of

[531] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXI.
[532] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

the Law is the "Greatest Commandment", which centers on love, and love is the greatest of the Gifts of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 13:13).

The Mosaic Law defined keeping the Greatest Commandment as being "circumcised in heart" (Deuteronomy 30:6, 10:16). If the people obeyed the Lord and kept this commandment (and its corollaries), the Lord promised to bless them above all the nations of the earth. He would open for them His good storehouse to bless them so that they could lend to and evangelize the nations (Deuteronomy 28:1, 2, 12).

Some people today feel that the Ten Commandments aren't applicable anymore; they say we're under Grace not Law because of the New Covenant (Romans 6:14). Yet does this mean that we don't need to love the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength and our neighbor as our self?

We still need to apply the love of God to our lives. The Lord stated that, "Whoever therefore breaks one of the least of these commandments, and teaches men so, shall be called least in the Kingdom of Heaven; but whoever does and teaches them, he shall be called great in the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5:17-19). The Lord went on to describe how we need to take the precepts of the Law to heart and apply them to our thoughts and intentions as well as to our deeds (Matthew 5:21-48).

The usefulness of the Law is as a tutor or pedagogue[533] to get us started in the right direction (Galatians 3:24, 25). As we grow in the Faith and can distinguish the Holy Spirit speaking to us, we don't need the Law anymore, because it is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 10:16-17). John Chrysostom stated[534],

> "The Law is not the adversary but the fellow worker of Grace. But if when Grace is come, the Law continues to hold us down, it becomes an adversary. If it confines those who ought to go forward to Grace, then it is the destruction of our salvation. If a candle which gave light by night[535] kept us, when it became day, from the sun, it would not only cease to benefit us, but would injure us. So does the Law if it stands between the greater benefits of Grace and us. Just so a tutor or *pedagogue* makes a youth ridiculous, by retaining him with himself, when time calls for his departure".

7) Our Relationship with God Following the Second Coming

Some things that we see as being extremely important in this life will not be very important after the Second Coming. One of these is the Mosaic Law! Paul referred to this, saying:

> "We know in part and we prophesy in part. But when that which is perfect has come, then that, which is in part, will be done away. When I was a child, I spoke as a child, I understood as a child, I thought as a child; but when I became a man, I put away childish things. Now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face. Now I know in part, but then I shall know just as I also am known. And

[533] A pedagogue was a trustworthy slave who was charged with the duty of supervising the life and morals of boys.
[534] John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap 3, v. 25.
[535] For example, if one is living in the midst of a great deal of sin or darkness, one may benefit from the light of a candle.

now abide faith, hope, love, these three; but the greatest of these *is* love" (1 Corinthians 13:9-13).

There are some things included in the Mosaic Law that have an eternal dimension to them, such as our salvation and deliverance from death. One example of this is the Passover, celebrated as Pascha in the East, and as Easter in the West. There is an eternal dimension to Passover, which will be celebrated forever. Athanasius of Alexandria, referring[536] to the Passover, said that we should not keep the Feast in this life after an earthly manner, but with the angels in heaven. Just as Israel's forty years in the wilderness speak of the forty-day fast prior to Pascha -- to be purified and freed from defilement – so this life itself is a preparation for life in the Kingdom of God when Christ returns.

> "Wherefore let us not celebrate the Feast after an earthly manner, but as keeping festival in heaven with the angels. Let us glorify the Lord, by chastity, by righteousness, and other virtues. Let us rejoice, not in ourselves, but in the Lord, that we may be inheritors with the saints. Let us keep the Feast then, as Moses. Let us watch like David who rose seven times, and in the middle of the night gave thanks for the righteous judgments of God. Let us be early, as he said, 'In the morning I will stand before You, and You will look upon me; in the morning You will hear my voice' (Psalm 5:3). Let us fast like Daniel (Daniel 9:3); let us pray without ceasing, as Paul commanded (1 Thessalonians 5:17). Let all of us recognize the season of prayer, but especially those who are honorably married; so that having borne witness to these things, and thus having kept the Feast, we may be able to enter into the joy of Christ in the kingdom of heaven. But as Israel, when going up to Jerusalem, was first purified in the wilderness, being trained to forget the customs of Egypt, the Word by this typifying to us the holy fast of forty days, let us first be purified and freed from defilement. So that when we depart hence, having been careful of fasting, we may be able to ascend to the upper chamber (Luke 14:15) with the Lord, to sup with Him; and may be partakers of the joy which is in heaven. In no other manner is it possible to go up to Jerusalem, and to eat the Passover, except by observing the fast of forty days".

Chrysostom tied[537] the mystery of the Passover to the mystery of the Lord's Table, just as the Passion and the Cross are mysteries. The Lord's Table was appointed in the fullness of time as the rituals of the Law were passing away. The Twelve had been prepared by Jesus' teaching to be able to understand this.

> "Why was it that He ordained this sacrament then, at the time of the Passover? That you might learn from everything, both that He is the lawgiver of the Old Testament, and that the Passover foreshadows the Lord's Table. Therefore, I say, where the type is, there He puts the truth".
>
> "He gives thanks, to teach us how we ought to celebrate this sacrament, to show that He comes willingly to the passion, and to teach us that whatever we may suffer to bear it thankfully. If the type was a deliverance from such bondage, how much more will the truth set the world free, and will He be delivered up for the benefit of our race. He did not appoint the sacrament of the Lord's Table before this, but only when the rites of the Law were to cease. Thus the very chief of the feasts He brings to an end, removing them to another most awesome table.

[536] Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 12.
[537] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 1.

He said, 'Take, eat, This is my body, Which is broken for many'" (1 Corinthians 11:24).

"He calls it blood of a New Testament, that of the promise, the new Law. Do you see how He removes and draws them off from Jewish customs? Just as you did that, He said, in remembrance of the miracles in Egypt, so do this likewise in remembrance of Me. That was shed for the preservation of the firstborn, this for the remission of the sins of the whole world. For, 'This is my blood, which is shed for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:28).

"But this He said, indicating thereby, that His passion and His cross are a mystery, by this too again comforting His disciples. As Moses said, 'This shall be to you for an everlasting memorial' (Exodus 12:14), so He too, 'in remembrance of Me', until I come. Therefore also He said, 'With fervent desire I have desired to eat this Passover' (Luke 22:15), that is, to deliver you the new rites, and to give a Passover, by which I am to make you spiritual".

"He Himself drank of it; lest on hearing this, they should say, What then? Do we drink blood, and eat flesh, and then be perplexed? When He began to speak concerning these things, many were offended at His words (John 6:60-66). Therefore lest they should be troubled, He first did this Himself, leading them to the calm participation of the mysteries. Therefore He drank His own blood. On this account He said, 'Do this', that He might withdraw them from the other (i.e. the slaying of lambs). If this works remission of sins, as it surely does work it, the other is now superfluous".

The mystery of the Lord's Table translates us to Eternity. As we gather around the Lord's Table, in a mystical way we do so in the presence of the saints who have gone before us. If the Lord's Table in this life is the type, the Great Supper that Jesus referred to in a parable (Luke 14:15-24, Matthew 22:1-14) is the reality. All are invited, but not all choose to come.

At the Last Supper, Jesus said, "I will not drink of this fruit of the vine from now on until that day when I drink it new with you in My Father's kingdom" (Matthew 26:29). Was He referring to some time after the Second Coming, or to this present age? John Chrysostom stated that Christ's statement refers to this present age, where the Church is "His Father's Kingdom". Chrysostom used[538] this text as proof of the Resurrection, where the Apostles were witnesses to Jesus drinking wine with them prior to His Ascension.

"When Christ instituted the Eucharist at the Last Supper before His Crucifixion, He said, 'I will not drink of the fruit of this vine, until that day when I drink it new with you in my Father's kingdom' (Matthew 26:29). When did He drink after He was risen again? The common men made this an infallible test of His having risen again. The Apostles also persuaded them concerning the resurrection saying, 'We who ate and drank with Him'" (Acts 10:41).

"To show that they would see Him clearly risen again, that He would be with them once more, and that they themselves would be witnesses to the things that are done, both by sight and by act, He said, 'Until I drink it new with you'. You will bear witness, for you shall see me risen again".

"But what does the word 'new' refer to? It refers to a new and strange manner, not having a passable body, but now immortal, incorruptible, and not

[538] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 2.

needing food. It was not then for hunger that He both ate and drank after the resurrection, for neither did His body need these things any more, but for the full assurance of His resurrection".

"Why did He not drink water after He was risen again, but wine? To pluck up by the roots another wicked heresy, in which there are some, who use water in the mysteries (i.e. the Eucharist). To show that both when He delivered the mysteries, He had given wine, and that when He had risen and was setting before them a meal without mysteries, He used wine, He said, 'of the fruit of the vine'. A vine produces wine, not water".

Jeremiah had said, "Everyone shall know me, from the least of them to the greatest of them" (Jeremiah 31:34). Jerome stated[539] that this refers to the Second Coming of Christ. In that future kingdom, there will be those who are greater than others as a result of keeping the Law and teaching others to do so also. The mansions that Christ is preparing also reflect this, and this is described in both Old Testament and New Testament. Similarly, the ranks of the heavenly powers reflect the fact that there are some creatures in heaven that are greater than others.

"The context of this passage clearly shows that the prophet is describing the future kingdom. But how can there possibly be in it a least or greatest, if all are to be equal? The Lord had treated the laborers hired at the 1st hour with the same wage as those hired at the 11th hour (Matthew 20:1-16). The secret is disclosed in the Gospel. 'Whoever shall do and teach, he shall be called great in the kingdom of heaven. But whosoever shall teach, and not do, shall be least' (Matthew 5:19). The Savior taught us at a feast to take the lowest place, lest, when one greater than us came, we should be thrust with disgrace from the higher place" (Luke 14:10-11).

"The place and the mansions which Christ says He would prepare for the Apostles are of course in the Father's house, that is, in the Kingdom of Heaven, not on earth, where for the present He was leading the Apostles. At the same time one must regard the sense of Scripture. "I go to prepare a place for you, for there are many mansions in My Father's house" (John 14:2); that is to say, each individual prepares for himself a mansion through his own works. The preparation is therefore not His, but ours. This view is supported by the fact that it profited Judas nothing to have a place prepared, since he lost it by his own fault. We must interpret in the same way what our Lord said to the sons of Zebedee, one of whom wished to sit on His left hand, the other on His right. "My cup indeed you shall drink. But to sit on My right hand, and on My left hand, is not Mine to give, but it is for them for whom it has been prepared of My Father" (Matthew 20:23)

"If there are not many mansions, how is it taught in the Old Testament correspondingly with the New, that the chief priest has one rank, the priests another, the Levites another, the door-keepers another, the sacristans[540] another? How is it that in the book of Ezekiel, where a description is given of the future Church and of the heavenly Jerusalem, the priests who have sinned are degraded to the rank of sacristans and doorkeepers? (Ezekiel 44:10-14) Why do we read that in the kingdom of heaven there are Archangels, Angels, Thrones, Dominions,

[539] Jerome, "Against Jovinianus", II, 27-28, Treatises.
[540] Sacristans were keepers of a room that was used to store vestments.

> Powers, Cherubim and Seraphim, and every name which is named, not only in this present world, but also that which is to come? (Ephesians 1:21, Romans 8:38) A difference of name is meaningless where there is not a difference of rank. An Archangel is of course an Archangel to other inferior angels; and Powers, and Dominions have other spheres over which they exercise authority. This is what we find in heaven and in the administration of God".

John Chrysostom stated[541] that the New Covenant is far better than the Old Covenant, but there is a danger of neglect on our part. We shouldn't need the written word to receive the grace of the Spirit; but if we don't profit even after receiving the written word, we bring down upon ourselves increased punishment.

> "That you may learn that the New Covenant was far better, hear what He said, 'I will make a new covenant with you, putting my laws into their mind, and in their heart I will write them' (Jeremiah 31:33), and, 'they shall be all taught of God' (Isaiah 54:13, John 6:45). Paul too, pointing out the same superiority, said that they had received a Law 'not in tables of stone, but in fleshy tables of the heart' (2 Corinthians 3:3). But over time they were shipwrecked, some with regard to doctrines, others as to life and manners; there was again need that they should be put in remembrance by the written word".
>
> "Reflect then how great an evil it is for us, who ought to live so purely, as not to need written words, but to yield up our hearts, as books, to the Spirit. Now that we have lost that honor, and have need of these, we fail also in employing even this second remedy. If it is bad to stand in need of written words, and not to have brought down on us the grace of the Spirit; consider how heavy the charge of not choosing to profit even after this assistance. If rather we should treat what is written with neglect, as if it were cast forth without purpose, and at random, we will bring down upon ourselves punishment with increase".

[541] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, I, 1-2.

Deliverance

Holy Saturday

Epistle Lesson - Romans 6:3-12 – Deliverance By Baptism

The Epistle lesson for Holy Saturday emphasizes deliverance. This Reading is also used for the Baptismal Service in the Orthodox Church. The main points in the Epistle Reading are:

- We were baptized into Christ's death (Romans 6:3)
- We were buried with Him through baptism into death (Romans 6:4)
- Just as Christ was raised, so we should walk in newness of live (Romans 6:4)
- If we were united in the likeness of His death, so we shall be in His resurrection (Romans 6:5)
- We are no longer slaves of sin (Romans 6:6)
- Death no longer has dominion over Him (Romans 6:.9)
- Likewise we are dead to sin and alive to God in Christ Jesus (Romans 6:11)

In the Scriptures, Egypt is often used figuratively as a model of slavery and sin. For example, the Lord delivered Israel from "the house of slavery" (Deuteronomy 5:6, 7:8; Exodus 20:2). And Moses chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to enjoy the temporary pleasures of sin in Egypt (Hebrews 11:25). Holy Saturday speaks of us as being delivered from this slavery also, and the Old Testament Readings from Exodus bring out this imagery quite well.

The word in Galatians 6:5 translated *united* (Greek: *sumphutos*) means to *grow up together with* as a plant grows up together with other plants. Thus we grow up together with Christ in the likeness of His death. John Chrysostom explained[542] this section as follows:

> "Baptism is the Cross for us. What the Cross then, and burial, is to Christ, that Baptism has been to us, even if not in the same respects. He died Himself and was buried in the Flesh, but we have done both to sin. Wherefore Paul does not say, planted together (i.e. united) in His death, but in *the likeness of His death*. Both the one and the other is a death, but not of the same subject. The one is of the Flesh, that of Christ; the other is of sin, which is our own. Do you believe that Christ died, and that He was raised again? Believe then the same of yourself"

Chrysostom said [543]that there are actually two deaths for us that are involved here.

> "The one is done by Christ in Baptism, and the other it is our duty to effect by earnestness afterwards. That our former sins were buried came because of His gift. But the remaining death to sin after baptism must be the work of our own earnestness; however, we find God here also giving us considerable help".

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[542] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, X, v. 6:3.
[543] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XI, v. 6:5.

The Day of First-Fruits – Effects of Christ's Resurrection on Deliverance

The Day of First-Fruits was outlined earlier in conjunction with the Conquest of Canaan, when Joshua met Christ as the Captain of the Lord's Host. See the 5th Parable from the Old Testament: Joshua 5:10-15. Here we address the impact of the Day of First-Fruits on baptism.

There are two aspects of the Day of First-Fruits to our lives today. One has to do with the harvest (of which Jesus Christ was the first) which concludes at the end of the age. The other has to do with our walk in this present age.

Referring to the harvest, Paul states that if Jesus Christ is not raised, our faith is worthless, we are still in our sins, and those who have fallen asleep (Old Testament believers included) have perished. They are still in Sheol (1 Corinthians 15:16-18). However, since Jesus Christ was in fact raised, and as a First-Fruit of those who are asleep (1 Corinthians 15:20); therefore, we also shall be raised up (2 Corinthians 4:14, Ephesians 2:7, Romans 6:8, 9). We shall also be present together with all believers when Jesus Christ returns on the throne of His father David and rules the earth with justice (Isaiah 9:6, 7), and with the strength of an iron rod (Revelation 12:5).

Referring to our walk in this present age, the Day of First-Fruits is related to baptism. Paul stated, "Therefore, we have been buried with Him through baptism into death, in order that as Christ was raised from the dead through the glory of the Father, so we too might walk in newness of life" (Romans 6:4).

Part of the liturgy for the Day of First-Fruits involved a "history lesson" on the events of the Exodus (Deuteronomy 26:1-11). There is a spiritual application of this "history lesson". Just as Israel was raised from certain death to become a great, mighty nation and to live in a land flowing with milk and honey by means of:
(1) a mighty hand,
(2) an outstretched arm,
(3) awe-inspiring terror,
(4) signs, and
(5) wonders; so, too, the Kingdom of God today.

That the Kingdom of God today consists of an uncountable multitude is well attested to (Revelation 7:9, Hebrews 12:1). That these believers belong to a Kingdom flowing with milk and honey (i.e., uncountable riches) is witnessed by Paul (Ephesians 1:18-23, Colossians 1:27, 2:2-3). And that our Lord works by means of a mighty hand, an outstretched arm, awe-inspiring terrors, signs, and wonders is found by merely reading through the book of Acts.

What then is the connection to baptism? Baptism implies burial. Since the charges against us (our sins, guilt, etc.) have been nailed to the cross (Colossians 2:14); and since by faith we have accepted this, God's provision, we have identified ourselves into Christ's death (Romans 6:3-4). Baptism proclaims this by burying the new believer in water. But baptism does not end in the water. The new believer emerges from the water just as Christ emerged from the grave and just as the Israeli nation emerged from certain death.

But just a "resurrection experience" is not the only point of baptism either; it is a means to an end. At the time of the Day of First-Fruits, Israel was in the midst of eating unleavened bread for seven days, and eating unleavened bread implies a new and different life-style[544] (1 Corinthians 5:8). Thus, Paul says, "so we too might walk in newness of life." It is this "walking in newness of life" that baptism is all about.

This "walking in newness of life" is not just following a bunch of rules and gutting it out. At the time that the Israeli army entered Canaan, the manna ceased on the Day of First-Fruits (Joshua 5:11-12). The reason it ceased was because God had made provision for them to walk in a newness of life. They were now at a point where they could begin to draw from the land that God had promised to Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob; that is, the Kingdom of God. So today with the new believer, once he has "appealed to God for a good conscience" (1 Peter 3:21) in baptism; the resources of the Kingdom of God are available to enable him to, in fact, walk in newness of life.

The Lord had said that the Levites were the First-Fruits of Israel. "Behold, I have taken the Levites from the midst of the children of Israel, instead of every male that opens the womb from among the children of Israel: they shall be their ransom, and the Levites shall be mine. For every first-born *is* mine; in the day in which I smote every first-born in the land of Egypt, I sanctified to myself every first-born in Israel: both of man and beast, they shall be mine" (Numbers 3:12-13 LXX).

Ambrose of Milan also emphasized[545] that the Levites were the First-Fruits of Israel:

> "We know that the Levites are not reckoned among the rest, but are preferred before all, for they are chosen out of all. They are sanctified like the First-Fruits and the firstlings which belong to the Lord, since the payment of vows and redemption for sin are offered by them".

Similar to the Levites, we have been made a kingdom of priests to God the Father and to Christ (1 Peter 2:5, 9; Revelation 1:6, 20:6), as a result of Christ's Resurrection. This was the intent at the time of the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai (Exodus 19:5-6) and it has been realized by the fulfilling of the Law by Christ regarding the Day of First-Fruits.

1) Comments from the Church Fathers on First-Fruits

Christ is the First-Fruits as our Great High Priest (Hebrews 8). As His fellow priests, we are part of the crop that followed. Ambrose stated[546] that Christ, our First-Fruits, has the same nature as the remaining fruits:

> "Now the First-Fruits are undoubtedly of the same nature and kind as the remaining fruits, the first of which are offered to God as a petition for a richer increase. They are a holy thank-offering for all gifts and as a kind of libation of that nature which has been restored".

Referring to the manner of the Resurrection, Paul wrote, "What you sow, you do not sow that body that shall be, but mere grain -- perhaps wheat or some other *grain.* But God gives it a

[544] For details, see the Study for Holy Thursday, in the section titled, "Spiritual Application of the Feast of Unleavened Bread".
[545] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 259.
[546] Ambrose of Milan, Decease of His Brother Satyrus II, 91.

body as He pleases, and to each seed its own body" (1 Corinthians 15:37-38). Referring to this, Chrysostom emphasized that Christ rose with the same body that died, and that this is the First-Fruits:

> "Here[547] his discourse no longer regards the resurrection, but the manner of the resurrection: what is the kind of body which shall rise again; is it the same kind, or better and more glorious. He takes both from the same analogy, intimating that it will be much better. But the heretics, considering none of these things, say, 'One body falls and another body rises again'. It is not one substance that is sown, and another that is raised, but the same substance improved. Otherwise neither will Christ have resumed the same body when He became the First-Fruits of them that rise again. As some of the Corinthians heretics were saying (1 Corinthians 15:12), He threw aside the former body, although it had not sinned, and took another".

Chrysostom continued[548] to say that this is a motivation for a life of virtue, because we are a new creature:

> "Christ now leads them on from what has been actually done for them; wherefore also he added, 'If any man is in Christ, he is a new creation' (2 Corinthians 5:17). 'He has been born again by the Spirit. So that for this cause, he says, we ought to live to Him. Not only because we are not our own (1 Corinthians 6:19), nor only because He died for us (1 Corinthians 5:15), nor only because He raised up our First-Fruits (1 Corinthians 15:20-23), but because we have come to another life. See how many just grounds he urges for a life of virtue".

Chrysostom continued[549] to address the attitude we should have. If we are a new creation and are citizens of heaven, we should act as citizens of heaven even while on earth.

> "This is the language of a right-minded child, not to be riveted to things that are seen, neither to account things present some great matter; but to hasten to our Father, and to long for the things to come. This springs out of a good conscience, and a soul set free from things that are on earth. Paul himself was longing after this every day: wherefore he also said, that 'even we ourselves, who have the First-Fruits of the Spirit, groan, waiting for an adoption, the redemption of our body' (Romans 8:23). For he who has this fondness can neither be puffed up by the good things of this life, nor abashed by its sorrows; but as though dwelling in the very heavens, is freed from each sort of irregularity".
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> "'Thy will be done in earth, as it is in Heaven' (Luke 11:2). Behold a most excellent train of thought! He asks that we long for the things to come, and hasten towards our life there; till that may be, even while we live here, we are eager to show the same conversation as those above. You must long for heaven, and the things in heaven. However, even before heaven, He asks us make the earth a heaven and to do and say all things, even while we are continuing in it, as having our conversation there; insomuch that these too should be objects of our prayer to the Lord. There is nothing to hinder our reaching the perfection of the

[547] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLI, 3.
[548] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XI, 4.
[549] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XIX, 7.

powers above, because we inhabit the earth; but it is possible even while abiding here, to do all, as though already placed on high".

John of Damascus spoke[550] of Christ as the First-Fruits of man's compound nature (i.e. the flesh animated with the intelligent and rational soul), yet without confusing or mixing Divinity and humanity.

> "After the assent of the holy Virgin, the Holy Spirit descended on her, according to the word of the Lord which the angel spoke, purifying her, and granting her power to receive the divinity of the Word, and likewise power to bring forth. She was then overshadowed by the hypostatic Wisdom and Power of the Most High God, the Son of God Who is of like essence with the Father as of Divine seed. From her holy and most pure blood He formed flesh animated with the spirit of reason and thought, the First-Fruits of our compound nature; not by procreation but by creation through the Holy Spirit. Not developing the fashion of the body by gradual additions but perfecting it at once. The divine Word was not made one with flesh that had an independent pre-existence. But taking up His abode in the womb of the holy Virgin, He unreservedly in His own subsistence took on Himself through the pure blood of the eternal Virgin a body of flesh animated with the spirit of reason and thought. Thus He assumed to Himself the First-Fruits of man's compound nature, Himself, the Word, having become subsistence in the flesh. So that He is at once (human) flesh, and at the same time flesh of God the Word, and likewise flesh animated, possessing both reason and thought. Wherefore we speak not of man as having become God, but of God as having become Man. Being by nature perfect God, He naturally became likewise perfect Man. He did not change His nature nor make the dispensation an empty show, but became, without confusion or change or division, one in subsistence with the flesh, which was conceived of the holy Virgin, and animated with reason and thought, and had found existence in Him. He did not change the nature of His divinity into the essence of flesh, nor the essence of flesh into the nature of His divinity. He did not make one compound nature out of His divine nature and the human nature He had assumed".

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Gregory of Nyssa defined[551] some of the terms such as "First-born among brethren", which he applied to Baptism, that we might inherit the Holy Spirit. The term, "First-born from the dead", he applied to the Resurrection and stated how the First-Fruits is the same as the First-born from the dead. By being the First-Fruits of the dead, He implanted in our nature the power of rising again from the dead. Then He ascended to heaven and in Himself presented all humanity to its God and Father.

> "The inspired apostle on four occasions employs this term, calling Him, 'first-born of all creation' (Colossians 1:15); another time, 'the first-born among many brethren' (Romans 8:29); again, 'first-born from the dead' (Colossians 1:18). On another occasion he employs the term absolutely, without combining it with other words, saying, 'But when again He brings the first-born into the world', He says, 'Let all the angels of God worship Him' (Hebrews 1:6, Deuteronomy 32:43 LXX). All these titles we shall in consistency apply to the

[550] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith III, 2.
[551] Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius II, 8.

phrase 'first-born of all creation'. Since the title is one and the same it must be that the meaning conveyed is also one".

"In what sense then does He become 'the first-born among many brethren'? In what sense does He become 'the first-born from the dead'? We are by birth flesh and blood, as the Scripture says, 'He Who for our sakes was born among us and was partaker of flesh[552] and blood'. Purposing to change us from corruption to incorruption by the birth from above (John 3:3-7), Himself led the way in this birth, drawing down upon the water, by His own baptism, the Holy Spirit. So that in all things He became the first-born of those who are spiritually born again, and gave the name of brethren to those who partook in a birth like to His own by water and the Spirit".

"But since it was also meet that He should implant in our nature the power of rising again from the dead, He became the 'First-Fruits of them that slept' (1 Corinthians 15:20) and the 'first-born from the dead'. By His own act, He loosed the pains of death, so that His new birth from the dead was made a way for us also, since the pains of death, wherein we were held, were loosed by the resurrection of the Lord. By having made Himself the First-Fruits of the resurrection, He obtained the name of the 'first-born from the dead'".

"This first-born also has brethren, concerning whom He speaks to Mary, saying, 'Go and tell My brethren, I go to My Father and your Father, and to My God and your God' (John 20:17). In these words He sums up the whole aim of His dispensation as Man. Men revolted from God, and 'served those which by nature were not gods' (Galatians 4:8); though being the children of God, they became attached to an evil father falsely so called. For this cause, the mediator between God and man, having assumed the First-Fruits of all human nature, sent to His brethren the announcement of Himself, not in His divine character, but in that which He shares with us. He said, 'I am departing in order to make by My own self that true Father, from whom you were separated, to be your Father, and by My own self to make that true God from whom you had revolted to be your God. By that First-Fruit, which I have assumed, I am in Myself presenting all humanity to its God[553] and Father'".

"Since the First-Fruits made the true God to be its God, and the good Father to be its Father, the blessing is secured for human nature as a whole, and by means of the First-Fruits the true God and Father becomes Father and God of all men. Now 'if the First-Fruits is holy, the lump also is holy' (Romans 11:19). But where the First-Fruit is, and the First-Fruit is none other than Christ, there also are they that are Christ's".

Gregory was clear[554] that Christ, as the First-Fruits, applies to His humanity, not to His Deity. He is the First born of many brethren (Romans 8:29) in His humanity, but the Only begotten of the Father (John 1:14) in His Deity. In His Deity, He has no brethren; only in His humanity did He have brethren.

"Of this new creation therefore in Christ, which He Himself began, He was called the first-born, being the First-Fruits of all, both of those begotten into life, and of those quickened by resurrection of the dead. 'That He might be Lord

[552] This is Gregory's paraphrase of Hebrews 2:14.
[553] This is Gregory's paraphrase of John 14.
[554] Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius IV, 3.

both of the dead and of the living' (Romans 14:9), and might sanctify the whole lump by means of its First-Fruits in Himself. The character of 'first-born' does not apply to the Son with respect to His pre temporal existence; the appellation of "Only-begotten" testifies of this. He who is truly only-begotten has no brethren, for how could anyone be only-begotten if numbered among brethren?

2) Humanity Conquers Death

There were some heretics in the First Century who claimed that Christ came in appearance only and not in the flesh, not in reality. They were understandably impressed with the Deity of Christ and assumed He wouldn't stoop to take on the suffering and filth of His own Creation. Paul addresses this, "Inasmuch then as the children have partaken of flesh and blood, He Himself likewise shared in the same. That through death He might destroy him who had the power of death; that is the devil, and release those who through fear of death were all their lifetime subject to bondage" (Hebrews 2:14-15). John Chrysostom stated[555] that Christ "partaking of flesh and blood" refers to the Incarnation. Chrysostom also stated[556],

> "Here he points out the wonder that by what the devil prevailed at, by that was he overcome; and the very thing which was his strong weapon against the world (namely death), by this Christ smote him. In this He exhibits the greatness of the conqueror's power. Do you see how great a good death has wrought?"
>
> "Why do you fear him that has been brought to nothing? He is no longer terrible, but has been trodden under foot, has been utterly despised (see 2 Timothy 1:10); he is vile and of no account."

Chrysostom then made[557] an analogy. Life prior to Christ he compared to being held captive in prison awaiting execution, but being fed with choice food all the while. But now, the choice food and the death sentence have been removed and in its place is a contest involving combat that leads not to death but to a kingdom. "Which group would you want to be in: Those fed well in prison awaiting execution, or those who contend and labor willingly that they may crown themselves with the diadem of the kingdom? Not only has death been terminated, but he who is ever showing that war without truce against us (i.e. the devil) has been brought to nothing, since he that doesn't fear death is out of reach of the devil's tyranny".

3) Aspects of Baptism in the Light of the Descent into Hell

John the Baptist understood something of Christ's descent into hell. Gregory Thaumaturgus, speaking of the conversation of Jesus with John the Baptist before His baptism, spoke[558] of how Jesus convinced John to proceed. One aspect of Jesus' explanation was His need to descend into hell on behalf of the dead there.

> "Jesus answered and said to John, 'Permit *it to be so* now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness' (Matthew 3:15). Permit *it to be so* now; grant the favor of silence, O Baptist, to the season of My economy. Learn to will whatever is My Will. Learn to minister to Me in those things on which I am bent,

[555] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 4-5.
[556] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 6.
[557] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, IV, 6.
[558] Gregory Thaumaturgus, "On the Holy Theophany", Four Homilies, IV, Dubious or Spurious Writings, Part II, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 6.

and do not pry curiously into all that I wish to do. Permit *it to be so* now; do not yet proclaim My Divinity; do not yet herald My Kingdom with your lips, in order that the tyrant may not learn the fact and give up the counsel he has formed with respect to Me. Permit the devil to come on Me, and enter the conflict with Me as though I were but a common man, and thus receive his mortal wound. Permit Me to fulfill the object for which I have come to earth. It is a mystery that is being gone through this day in the Jordan. My mysteries are for Myself and My own. There is a mystery here, not for the fulfilling of My own need, but for the designing of a remedy for those who have been wounded. There is a mystery, which gives in these waters the representation of the heavenly streams of the regeneration of men. Permit *it to be so* now; when you see Me doing what seems to Me good among the works of My hands. In a manner befitting divinity, then attune your praises to the acts accomplished. When you see Me cleansing the lepers, then proclaim Me as the framer of nature. When you see Me make the lame ready runners, then with quickened pace prepare your tongue to praise Me. When you see Me cast out demons, then hail My Kingdom with adoration. When you see Me raise the dead from their graves by My Word, glorify Me as the Prince of Life. When you see Me on the Father's right hand, then acknowledge Me to be divine, as the equal of the Father and the Holy Spirit. Permit *it to be so* now; for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness. I am the Lawgiver, and the Son of the Lawgiver; and it is fitting for Me first to pass through all that is established, and then to set forth everywhere the intimations of My free gift. It is fitting for Me to fulfill the Law, and then to bestow grace. It is fitting for Me to use the shadow as an example, and then introduce the reality. It is fitting for Me to finish the old covenant, and then to dictate the new, to write it on the hearts of men, to subscribe it with My Blood, and to seal it with My Spirit. It is fitting for Me to ascend the cross, to be pierced with its nails, to suffer after the manner of that nature which is capable of suffering, and to heal sufferings by My suffering. By the tree I will cure the wound that was inflicted on men by the medium of a tree. It is fitting for Me to descend even into the very depths of the grave, on behalf of the dead who are detained there. It is fitting for Me, by My three days' dissolution in the flesh, to destroy the power of the ancient enemy, death. It is fitting for Me to kindle the torch of My body for those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death. It is fitting for Me to ascend in the flesh to that place where I am in My Divinity. It is fitting for Me to introduce to the Father the Adam reigning in Me. It is fitting for Me to accomplish these things, for on account of these things I have taken My position with the works of My hands. It is fitting for Me to be baptized with this baptism for the present, and afterwards to bestow the baptism of the consubstantial Trinity on all men. Lend Me, therefore, O Baptist, your right hand for the present economy, even as Mary lent her womb for My birth. Immerse Me in the streams of Jordan, even as she who bore Me wrapped Me in children's swaddling clothes. Grant Me your baptism even as the Virgin granted Me her milk. Lay hold of this head of Mine, which the seraphim revere. With your right hand lay hold of this head that is related to yourself by birth. Lay hold of this head, which nature has made to be touched. Lay hold of this head, which for this very purpose has been formed by My Father and Myself. Lay hold of this head of Mine, which, if one does lay hold of it in piety, will save him from ever suffering shipwreck. Baptize Me, who am destined to baptize those who

believe on Me with water, with the Spirit, and with fire. With water, capable of washing away the defilement of sins; with the Spirit, capable of making the earthly spiritual; with fire, naturally fitted to consume the thorns of transgressions. On hearing these words, the Baptist directed his mind to the object of the salvation, comprehended the mystery which he had received, and discharged the divine command; for he was at once pious and ready to obey. Stretching slowly his right hand, which seemed both to tremble and to rejoice, he baptized the Lord".

John Chrysostom also stated[559] that John the Baptist knew that Jesus was going to descend into hell, but he didn't know when. John anticipated himself as being a forerunner of Christ in hell as well as in Israel. Chrysostom also affirmed that the "gates of brass" and "bars of iron" (Psalm 107:16 LXX) refer to hell. He noted that some kinds of suffering in this life can deliver us from suffering in hell, depending on how we respond to it. There are degrees to the punishments in hell. We who live in the light of Christ's Advent consequently have more responsibility than those who lived before His Advent.

"John the Baptist was not ignorant; that Jesus was the Christ, he knew, but he also knew He was to die for mankind. Therefore he said, 'Are You He that should come?' (Luke 7:18-20), that is, He that is to descend into hell? This he proclaimed before all the others. 'Behold', he said, 'the Lamb of God, which takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29, 36). Now he called Him a lamb, as proclaiming the cross".

"Why did John not say, 'Are You He that should come to hell', but simply, 'He that should come?' (Luke 7:18-20) John said these things that he might preach there (i.e. in hell) also after his departure. It would be proper to say, 'Brethren, don't be childish in understanding; in malice be like babies, but in understanding be mature' (1 Corinthians 14:20). For the present life is the season for proper conversation, but after death is judgment and punishment. 'For in hell', it is said, 'who will confess You?'" (Psalm 6:5 LXX)

"How then were 'the gates of brass burst, and the bars of iron broken apart'? (Psalm 107:16 LXX) By Christ's body; for then, for the first time, was a body shown, immortal, and destroying the tyranny of death. Besides, this indicates the destruction of the power of death, not the loosing of the sins of those who had died before His coming. If this were not so, but He had delivered all that were before Him from hell, how does He say, 'It shall be more tolerable for the land of Sodom and Gomorrah?' (Matthew 10:15, 11:23-24) These words suppose that Sodom and Gomorrah are also to be punished; more mildly indeed, yet still they are to be punished. Yet they suffered the most extreme punishment[560], nevertheless not even this will deliver them. If it is so with them, much more it is so with those who have suffered nothing.

One might say, 'Were they wronged who lived before His coming?' By no means! Men might then be saved, even though they had not confessed Christ. Confessing Christ was not required of them, but to avoid worshipping idols, and to know the true God. 'For the Lord your God', it is said, 'is one Lord' (Deuteronomy 6:4). Therefore the Maccabees were admired, because for the observance of the Law they suffered (2 Maccabees 3-7); similarly with the three

[559] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXVI, 3-4.
[560] That is, the raining of fire and brimstone from the Lord out of heaven (Genesis 19:24).

children (Daniel 3:8-30). Many others too among the Jews, having shown forth a very virtuous life; and having maintained the standard of their knowledge, had nothing more required of them. Then it was sufficient for salvation to know God only; but now there is need also of the knowledge of Christ. Therefore He said, 'If I had not come and spoken unto them, they had no sin, but now they have no cloak for their sin'" (John 15:22).

"Where now, tell me, are the unbelievers in hell? Those before Christ's coming, who had not so much as heard the name of hell or resurrection, were punished here, and shall suffer punishment there also. How much more will we be punished, who have been nurtured in so many lessons of strict virtue in the Church, and ignored it?"

Hippolytus also stated[561] that John the Baptist was a forerunner for Christ both in Israel and in Hades.

"At the Jordan, seeing the Savior with his own eye, John pointed Him out, and said, 'Behold the Lamb of God that takes away the sin of the world!' (John 1:29, 36) He also first preached to those in Hades, becoming a forerunner there when he was put to death by Herod, that there too he might proclaim that the Savior would descend to ransom the souls of the saints from the hand of death".

Referring to the Baptismal service, John Chrysostom stated[562] that the confession of the resurrection of the dead at Baptism is important, since the immersion in and the emerging from the water is a symbol of our descent into Hades and our return from Hades.

"After the enunciation of those mystical and fearful words, this also we add at the end when we are about to baptize, bidding them say, 'I believe in the resurrection of the dead', and upon this faith we are baptized. After we have confessed this together, then at last are we let down into the fountain of those sacred streams. This Paul recalled[563] to their minds saying, 'If there is no resurrection, why then are you baptized for the dead?' You confess a resurrection of the dead in words; but the priest, as in a kind of image, signifies to you in deed the things, which you have believed and confessed in words. In your confession without a sign you believe; then he gives you the sign also. When you have done your own part, then God fully assures you by the water. the being baptized, immersed and then emerging, is a symbol of the descent into Hades and the return from there. Therefore Paul calls baptism a burial, saying, 'Therefore we are buried with Him by baptism into death'" (Romans 6:4).

Basil the Great also made an analogy between our baptism and the Descent into Hell. We imitate Christ's Descent into Hell as we are buried with Him in baptism (Romans 6:4). It is an end to our first life by death and burial, a putting off of the works of the flesh and a beginning of our new life in Christ.

"The sea and the cloud led the people[564] through amazement to faith, but for the time of the Exodus, they, in type, prefigured the grace to be. He who is

[561] Hippolytus, "On Christ and Antichrist", 45, Extant Works and Fragments, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 5.
[562] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XL, 2.
[563] By "baptized for the dead", Chrysostom is referring to our own bodies. See John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXIII, 3.
[564] Basil, On the Spirit, XIV, 31-32.

wise shall understand these things, how the sea is, in type, a baptism bringing about the departure of Pharaoh. In like manner, this washing causes the departure of the tyranny of the devil. The sea slew the enemy in itself, and in baptism too our enmity towards God dies. From the sea the people came out unharmed; we too, alive from the dead, step up from the water 'saved' by the 'grace' of Him who called us. The cloud is a shadow of the gift of the Spirit, who cools the flame of our passions by the 'mortification' of our 'members'".

"In baptism, it is necessary[565] that the continuity of the old life be cut. This is impossible unless a man is born again; for the regeneration is a beginning of a second life. So before beginning the second, it is necessary to put an end to the first. In making a change in lives, it is necessary for death to come as mediator between the two, ending all that goes before, and beginning all that comes after. We achieve the descent into hell by imitating, through baptism, the burial of Christ. The bodies of the baptized are buried in the water. Baptism then symbolically signifies the putting off of the works of the flesh. As the Apostle says, you were 'circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, in putting off the body of the sins of the flesh by the circumcision of Christ; buried with him in baptism' (Colossians 2:11-12). There is, as it were, a cleansing of the soul from the filth that has grown on it from the carnal mind, as it is written, 'You shall wash me, and I shall be whiter than snow'" (Psalm 51:7).

Of the fifteen Old Testament readings prescribed for Holy Saturday, the following have to do with the theme of "Deliverance". These five Readings give us additional illumination regarding Baptism, and will be covered in the following order:

1. 3rd Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 12:1-11 "Christ -- The Passover Sacrifice"
2. 6th Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 13:20-15:19 "Crossing the Red Sea"
3. 10th Parable from the Old Testament: Genesis 22:1-18 "Isaac Prefigures Christ"
4. 15th Parable from the Old Testament: Daniel 3:1-30 "The Children in the Furnace", including the Song of the Three Children 1:1-65
5. 4th Parable from the Old Testament: Jonah 1:1-4:11 "The Belly of the Sea Monster"

3rd Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 12:1-11 "Christ -- The Passover Sacrifice "
6th Parable from the Old Testament: Exodus 13:20-15:19 "Crossing the Red Sea"

Discussion of these Readings has been moved to the section on Good Friday Evening Lamentation to help with the continuity of subject matter.

10th Parable from the Old Testament: Genesis 22:1-18 "Isaac Prefigures Christ"

Abraham's willingness to sacrifice his only son models that of God the Father. Also Isaac's willingness to become the sacrifice models the will of the Son. Abraham was tested and his faith was demonstrated to be of the highest order, since he had to see beyond the events of this life. In comparison with Abraham's faith, we will also look at the faith of Jephthah and his daughter.

[565] Basil, On the Spirit, XV, 34.

1) God Commands Abraham to Sacrifice Isaac

"By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would receive as an inheritance. He went, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country" (Hebrews 11:8-9). He was told he was going to inherit this land; yet he lived in it and never received it. This is because "he waited for the city which has foundations whose craftsman and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

John Chrysostom stated[566] that Abraham's task was more difficult than Abel's, Enoch's and Noah's. They had to go beyond human reasoning, but Abraham was asked to obey the Lord's commands even though the commands seemed to oppose the Lord's promises.

> "Great indeed was the faith of Abraham. In the case of Abel, Noah and Enoch, there was an opposition of reasoning[567] only, and it was necessary to go beyond human reasoning. In this case it was necessary not only to go beyond human reasoning, but to see something more. What was of God seemed to be opposed to what was of God; and faith opposed faith, and command opposed promise".

In addition, the Lord had told him that his descendants would be as numberless as the dust on the earth (Genesis 13:16), yet it would be through Sarah that they would be numbered (Genesis 17:16-19). The Lord first mentioned how numerous Abraham's posterity could be when Abraham was 75 years old and Sarah was 66 years old (Genesis 12:1-3). It wasn't until 25 years later that Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5, 17:17). This required considerable patience on the part of Abraham. It taught Abraham to expect the miraculous in his dealings with God, since Sarah was at least 40 years past the age of child bearing when Isaac was born.

When Isaac was young, the Lord told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on the top of Mt. Moriah (Genesis 22:1-2). Hebrew tradition[568] places this mountain top as the site where the Temple in Jerusalem[569] was later built. However, offering human sacrifice was contrary to the Lord's Law (Leviticus 18:21, Deuteronomy 18:10) and was seemingly contrary to the Lord's promise that his posterity would be numbered through Isaac (Genesis 17:16-19). This did not deter Abraham.

After traveling three days, they reached the foot of the mountain (Genesis 22:4). Abraham told his servants to stay there at the foot of the mountain with the donkey, "and I and the lad will go yonder; and we will worship and return to you" (Genesis 22:5). As they walked up the mountain, with Isaac carrying the wood, and his father the fire and the knife, young Isaac asked his father, "Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for the burnt offering?" (Genesis 22:7). Abraham replied, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering, my son" (Genesis 22:8). In saying this, Abraham seems to have understood the coming of the Son of God as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36). Abraham concluded that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead if that was His plan

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[566] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXV, 1.

[567] For example, Abel offered the firstborn of his flock to be burned to ashes (Genesis 4:4). Enoch was translated and never died (Genesis 5:24, Jude 1:14-15). Noah built a huge boat (Genesis 6:15) that couldn't possibly be transported to the water, and at a time when it had never rained (Genesis 2:5-6).

[568] Gower, Manners and Customs of Bible Times 1987, p. 203

[569] Solomon built the First Temple on Mt. Moriah (2 Chronicles 3:1).

(Hebrews 11:17-19). Josephus stated[570] that Isaac shared Abraham's faith and willingly climbed up on the altar to be sacrificed. Ambrose of Milan stated[571] it this way: "Isaac feared the Lord, as might be expected from the son of Abraham. He was subject to his father to such an extent that he would not avoid death in opposition to his father's will".

Jerome applied[572] the circumstances of the sacrifice of Isaac to his day as a sowing of seed, for which we will receive a reward.

> "Thus we have received more than we have given. The things we have renounced are small; the things we possess are great. All that Christ promises is duly performed and for what we have given up we have received a hundredfold. This was the ground in which Isaac sowed his seed, Isaac who in his readiness to die bore the cross of the Gospel before the Gospel came".

Commenting on the contrary signals Abraham received and comparing them to our own, John Chrysostom said[573] that God is not limited by nature, form and order. He is able to give contraries by means of contraries.

> "What are you saying? If I give drink to my enemy, do I then punish him? (Proverbs 25:21-22, Romans 12:20). If I give up my goods, do I then possess them? (Matthew 19:29). If I humble myself, shall I then be exalted? (Matthew 20:26, 23:12). Yes, He says, for such is My power to give contraries by means of contraries. I abound in resources and in stratagems: be not afraid. The nature of things follows My Will; I don't wait for nature. I do all things; I am not controlled by them; wherefore I am able to change their form and order". "He then who admires the things here slights those yonder, since he judges these worthy of exertion, even though they're so far inferior to the other".

Chrysostom also noted[574] that Abraham did not tell his wife or his servants what he was doing. He did not even tell Isaac, fearing that Isaac might be astounded and prove unworthy. There were no tears, and no sentimentality; his sole purpose was to fulfill the command. We should act similarly regarding our charitable deeds.

> "Abraham, who had an admirable wife, when he was about to offer up his son, concealed it from her, though he knew not what was to happen, but was fully persuaded that he must slaughter his son. What would any ordinary man have said? 'Who is this that perpetrates such acts?' Would he not have accused him of cruelty and brutality? His wife was not even allowed to see her son, to receive his last words, to witness his dying struggles. But he led him away like a captive. Abraham, that just man, was inebriated with zeal, and looked only how to fulfill that which was commanded. No servant, no wife was present; he himself did not know what would happen. But intent upon offering up a pure victim, he would not defile it with tears, or with any opposition. Mark too with what gentleness Isaac asks, 'Behold the fire and the wood, but where is the lamb for a burnt offering?' What was the father's answer? 'My son, God will provide Himself a lamb for a burnt offering' (Genesis 22:7, 8). In this he uttered a prophecy that

[570] Josephus, Antiquities, I, xiii, 4.
[571] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy, I, xvii, 66.
[572] Jerome, Letters, LXVI, 7.
[573] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXV, 4, 6.
[574] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIV, v. 9.

God would provide Himself a burnt offering in His Son, and it also came true at the time. But why did he conceal it from him who was to be sacrificed? He feared lest he should be astounded, lest he should prove unworthy. With such care and prudence did he act throughout this affair! Well then has the Scripture said, 'Do not let your left hand know what your right hand is doing' (Matthew 6:3). If we have one dear to us as one of our own members, let us not be anxious to show to him our charitable works, unless it is necessary".

Tertullian noted[575] that in carrying the wood for his own sacrifice, Isaac speaks of Christ who carried the wood of His Cross.

"This 'wood', Isaac personally carried for his own sacrifice, when God said that he should be made a victim to Himself. These were mysteries which were being kept for perfect fulfillment in the times of Christ. Isaac, on the one hand, with his 'wood', was reserved, the ram being offered which was caught by the horns in the bramble. Christ, on the other hand, in His times, carried His 'wood' on His own shoulders, adhering to the horns of the cross, with a thorny crown encircling His head".

John Cassian stated[576] that God's testing of Abraham involved faith and works, where his faith was tested to the limits of his ability to bear it. A way of escape was provided at the last minute. Similarly, false prophets were allowed to rise up in ancient Israel to test the faith of the people and their will to fight for what is right. We are also tested in our wrestling with spiritual wickedness. God does not forbid us to be tested, but desires us to use our will power and our human efforts, aided by His grace, in our efforts.

"In a searching trial of faith, the Divine righteousness brought about the case of the grandest of the patriarchs. 'And it came to pass after these things that God tested Abraham' (Genesis 22:1). For the Divine righteousness wished to try not that faith with which the Lord had inspired him, but that which he could show by his own free will, when called and enlightened by the Lord. The firmness of his faith was proven, and when the grace of God, which had left him for a while to prove him, came to his aid, it said, 'Lay not your hand on the lad, and do nothing to him. Now I know that you fear the Lord, and for My sake have not spared your beloved son'" (Genesis 22:12).

"This kind of temptation can befall us, for the sake of proving us, and is clearly foretold by the giver of the Law. 'If there arises among you a prophet or a dreamer of dreams, and he gives you a sign or a wonder, and the sign or the wonder comes to pass, of which he spoke to you, saying, 'Let us go after other gods' -- which you have not known -- 'and let us serve them,' you shall not listen to the words of that prophet or that dreamer of dreams. The Lord your God is testing you to know whether you love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul' (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). What then follows? When God has permitted that prophet or dreamer to arise, we must hold that He will protect those, whose faith He about to try. There will need to be a place for their own free will, where they can fight with the tempter with their own strength. But why is it necessary for them even to be tried, if He knows them to be so weak as to be unable to resist the tempter by their own power? Certainly the Divine

[575] Tertullian, Answer to the Jews, I, vii, 13.
[576] John Cassian, Conferences, II, xiii, 14.

righteousness would not have permitted them to be tempted, unless it knew that they had an equal power of resistance, by which they could be found either guilty or worthy of praise".

"Let us illustrate this incomparable mercy of our Creator from something earthly. Consider a tender and anxious nurse who carries an infant in her bosom for a long time in order to teach it to walk. First she allows it to crawl, then supports it that, by the aid of her right hand, it may lean on its alternate steps, and later leaves it for a little. If she sees it tottering at all, she catches hold of it, and grabs at it when falling. When down she picks it up and either shields it from a fall, or allows it to fall lightly, and sets it up again after a tumble. But when she has brought it up to boyhood or early manhood, she lays upon it some burdens or labors by which it may be not overwhelmed but exercised. She allows it to vie with those of its own age. How much more does our heavenly Father know whom to carry in the bosom of His grace and whom to train to virtue in His sight by the exercise of free will! He helps him in his efforts, hears him when he calls, leaves him not when he seeks Him, and sometimes snatches him from peril even without his knowing it".

John Chrysostom stated[577] that Abraham was not bothered that God's promises seemed to be out of harmony with His commands. He had seen Isaac born of a 90-year old woman, and he assumed that if God can raise a dead womb, he could also raise a dead child. God's "testing" of Abraham in these matters was simply an exercise of His own athletes to demonstrate how proficient Abraham had become.

"He heard the opposite of the promises from Him who had made them; and yet he was not disturbed, but did them as if they were completely in harmony. They were in harmony; being opposed according to human calculations, but in harmony when viewed by Faith. How this was, Paul has taught us, 'accounting that God was able to raise Him up, even from the dead' (Hebrews 11:19). By the same faith by which he believed that God gave what couldn't be and raised up a dead womb, by the same was he persuaded that He would also raise him up after he had been slain in sacrifice. It was alike impossible, from a womb which was dead and grown old and already become useless for child-bearing, to give a child, and to raise again one who had been slain. But his previous faith prepared the way for things to come".

"Moses shows another thing too, by saying, that 'God tested Abraham' (Genesis 22:1). Did not God know that the man was noble and approved? Why then did He test him? Not that He Himself might learn, but that He might show to others, and make Abraham's fortitude clear to everyone. He shows the cause of trials, that we may not suppose we suffer these things as being forsaken of God. If then temptations make men approved, even where there is no occasion, as God exercises His own athletes; much more should we bear all things nobly".

"Paul said emphatically, 'By faith, when he was tried, he offered up Isaac' (Hebrews 11:17), for there was no other cause for his bringing the offering but that".

[577] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXV, 2.

2) Contrasts Between Abraham's Sacrifice and Jephthah's Sacrifice

Jephthah was one of the Judges of Israel during the 400 years between Moses and Samuel. He was born of a harlot, and even though he was a mighty man of valor, his brothers drove him into exile; saying, "You shall have no inheritance in our father's house, for you *are* the son of another woman" (Judges 11:2). When war with neighboring Ammon broke out, the elders of Gilead begged Jephthah to lead them into battle. Jephthah agreed. Heading for battle, the Spirit of the Lord came upon Jephthah and he made a vow to the Lord. He said, "If You will indeed deliver the people of Ammon into my hands, then it will be that whatever comes out of the doors of my house to meet me, when I return in peace from the people of Ammon, shall surely be the Lord's. And I will offer it up as a burnt offering" (Judges 11:29-31).

On his return from the defeat of Ammon, Jephthah's daughter, his only child, came running out to meet him[578] with timbrels and dancing (Judges 11:34). Jephthah was understandably upset, but felt that he had to pay his vow to the Lord, "I have given my word to the Lord, and I cannot go back on it" (Judges 11:35). His daughter agreed with him that he should pay his vow, but asked for two months time to mourn her virginity with her friends. From that time on, it became a custom in Israel *that* the daughters of Israel spent four days each year lamenting the daughter of Jephthah (Judges 11:39-40).

Jephthah's daughter had a faith similar to Isaac in her willingness to become a sacrifice according to her father's will. She didn't question her father or complain; she just asked for time to prepare. The Church Historian, Severus, admired[579] the courage of Jephthah's daughter, who did not refuse to die. She willingly returned to her father, and fulfilled the vow to God.

There are similarities between Jephthah and Jesus, in that both were persecuted. His brethren drove Jephthah out of his father's house, and Jesus was lifted up and crucified by His brethren. Although persecuted, Jephthah arose as leader of the people; Jesus was persecuted and arose as King of Kings. Jephthah offered up his firstborn daughter as a sacrifice; Jesus was lifted up as a sacrifice to his Father for all the Gentiles.

Paul commends the faith of Jephthah along with others who were outstanding in their faith. Among them, Paul mentioned Gideon, Barak, Samson, David and Samuel after speaking of Abraham, Isaac, Jacob and Moses (Hebrews 11:32). All these, including Jephthah, obtained a good testimony through faith (Hebrews 11:39).

Jephthah's story is set against the backdrop of significant demonic activity going on in Israel. It was customary among the neighboring nations to offer one's firstborn child as a human sacrifice by fire to their deity, such as Molech (Leviticus 18:21). The Canaanite gods were portrayed as very cruel[580], and could be appeased only by very dear sacrifices for the salvation of men. Human sacrifice, however, was strictly forbidden in Israel, and God stated that He would

[578] That is, as the leader of a group of women singing and dancing in a manner similar to Miriam after the Crossing of the Red Sea (Exodus 15:20-21).

[579] Sulpitius Severus, Sacred History, I, 26.

[580] In the Early Church, the heretic Simon Magus similarly taught that God is very cruel and that the persons in the "Godhead" were always quarreling. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

curse the offender, his family, and anyone who knew about it and turned their eyes away (Leviticus 20:1-5).

a) Divided Opinion over Jephthah

Opinions of Jephthah's sacrifice are divided, even among the Church Fathers. In one camp are those who say that Jephthah acted wrongly, that he was tricked or that he made his vow rashly. But that he did offer his daughter as a human sacrifice.

In another camp, Jephthah is regarded as one of the Saints and that his sacrifice of his daughter was something noble and pleasing to God.

A more modern opinion regards Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter as not her death, but her dedication to perpetual virginity, serving in the Tabernacle of God at Shiloh.

Those who feel Jephthah actually did offer human sacrifice make the following arguments:

1. Jephthah stated, "I will offer it up as a burnt offering" (Judges 11:31), and "he carried out his vow with her which he had vowed" (Judges 11:40).
2. Jephthah was half heathen, born of a harlot (Judges 11:1), and human sacrifices were common in that area.
3. His grief when his daughter was the first to meet him on his return (Judges 11:35).
4. The mourning for Jephthah's daughter for four days every year by the daughters of Israel (Judges 11:40).
5. There is no indication in the account that God sanctioned Jephthah's actions.
6. This was a time in the history of Israel when every man did that which was right in his own eyes, because there was no king in Israel (Judges 17:6). Jephthah may have been able to do something that people later couldn't do.

b) First Opinion: Jephthah Made a Mistake

Among those who stated that Jephthah made a mistake, John Chrysostom stated[581] that it was Satan who tricked Jephthah into making his vow, just as Satan also tricked Adam, pretending that he was concerned over Adam's best interests.

> "When conversing with Adam, he puts on the air of one concerned and watching over his interests, and says, that 'your eyes shall be opened in the day that you eat of the tree' (Genesis 3:5). Jephthah too he persuaded, under the pretext of religion, to slay his daughter, and to offer the sacrifice the Law forbade. Do you see what his wiles are, what is his varying warfare? Be then on guard, and arm yourself at all points with the weapons of the Spirit; get exactly acquainted with his plans, that you may both keep from being caught, and easily catch him".

Chrysostom labeled[582] as perjury the breaking of any vows made to the Lord. Jephthah made a vow, and he was required to keep it; but he was not following the Mind of God as Abraham was in the sacrifice of Isaac. To insure that others did not repeat Jephthah's rash vow, Hebrew law required virgin girls to lament the memory of Jephthah's daughter for four days every year to commemorate her death.

[581] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, X, v. 3.
[582] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statutes, XIV, 7.

"Many unbelievers accuse us of cruelty and inhumanity on account of this sacrifice; but I say that the concession in the case of this sacrifice was a striking example of providence and clemency. It was out of care for our race that He allowed that sacrifice. If after that vow and promise, He had forbidden the sacrifice, many who were subsequent to Jephthah, expecting that God would not receive their vows, would have increased the number of such vows, and would have fallen into child-murder. By allowing this vow to be actually fulfilled, He put a stop to all such cases in the future. We can see that this is true; after Jephthah's daughter had been slain, in order that the calamity might be always remembered, her fate was not be consigned to oblivion. It became a law among the Jews, that the virgins assembling at the same season should bewail for four days the sacrifice, which had taken place. By renewing the memory of it by lamentation, they should make all men wiser for the future. Thus they might learn that it was not after the mind of God that this should be done, for in that case He would not have permitted the virgins to bewail and lament her. That what I have said is not conjectural, the event demonstrated; for after this sacrifice, no one vowed such a vow to God. Therefore He did not forbid this. What He had expressly commanded in the case of Isaac, that He directly prohibited; plainly showing through both cases, that He does not delight in such sacrifices".

Ambrose compared[583] Jephthah to Herod Antipas, who made a rash vow that resulted in the beheading of John the Baptist (Matthew 14:7-8). It is sometimes contrary to duty to fulfill such a vow. Other early Christian tradition also stated[584] that Jephthah's vow concerning his daughter was rash and not well thought out.

"It is also sometimes contrary to duty to fulfill a promise, or to keep an oath. As was the case with Herod, who swore that whatever was asked he would give to the daughter of Herodias, and so allowed the death of John, that he might not break his word. What shall I say of Jephthah, who offered up his daughter in sacrifice, she having been the first to meet him as he returned home, victorious. He fulfilled the vow, which he had made that he would offer to God whatever should meet him first. It would have been better to make no promise at all, than to fulfill it in the death of his daughter".

Jerome stated[**585**] that most Hebrews of his day blamed Jephthah for the rash vow he made. Supposing, they say, a dog or a donkey had met him, what would he have done? (He could not offer an unclean animal!) Their meaning is that God so ordered events, that he who had improvidently made a vow, should learn his error by the death of his daughter.

Josephus stated[**586**] that Jephthah "sacrificed his daughter as a burnt offering, offering such an oblation as was neither conformable to the Law nor acceptable to God. He did not weigh with himself what opinion the hearers would have of such a practice".

[583] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy, I, l, 264.
[584] Constitution of the Holy Apostles, VII, ii, 37.
[585] Jerome, Against Jovinianus, I, 23.
[586] Flavius Josephus, Antiquities of the Jews, V, vii, 266.

c) Second Opinion: Jephthah Was Among the Saints

Others of the Church Fathers see Jephthah's sacrifice as something pleasing to God, similar to Abraham's sacrifice of Isaac. Jerome noted that Paul numbered Jephthah among the Saints (Hebrews 11:32) for the sacrifice of his daughter. He likened this to Jephthah giving everything he had to the Lord, just as the Twelve Apostles left everything to follow Christ. Others also numbered Jephthah[587] among the Saints. Jerome stated[588]:

> "Great was the triumph that was won by Abraham, who was content to slay his only son, of whom he had been told that he was to inherit the world (Exodus 32:13, Deuteronomy 32:8-9). Yet he did not cease to hope that after death, Isaac would live again. Jephthah too offered up his virgin daughter, and for this is placed by the Apostle in the roll of the saints (Hebrews 11:32). I would not therefore have you offer to the Lord only material things, what a thief may steal from you or an enemy fall upon, or a proscription confiscate, or what is liable to fluctuations in value now going up and down. Nor what belongs to a succession of masters who follow each other as fast as wave follows wave in the sea, and what you must leave behind you when you die. Rather offer to God that which no enemy can carry off and no tyrant can take from you, which will go down with you into the grave, and on to the kingdom of heaven and the enchantments of Paradise. You already build monasteries and support a large number of holy men in the various islands of Dalmatia. But you would do better still if you were to live among these holy men as a holy man yourself. 'Be holy', says the Lord, 'for I am holy' (Leviticus 19:2, 1 Peter 1:16). The apostles boasted that they had left all things and had followed the Savior (Matthew 19:27-30). We do not read that they left everything except their ship and their nets. Yet they were crowned with the approval of Him who was to be their judge. Why? In offering up themselves, they had indeed left all that they had".

Similarly, Jephthah's daughter was very highly regarded for her willingness and courage. Ephraim the Syrian, in his Nisibene Hymns, wrote[589] that Jephthah's daughter was to her father a mirror of life from the dead. As she gave herself for her father, so we should commend our life to the Father of all, in the hope of our end.

Ambrose, who felt that Jephthah's vow was rash, stated that the example of Jephthah's daughter is a glorious and ancient example[590] of someone willing to die for another, especially being the case of a virgin.

> "She said to her sorrowing father, 'Do to me according to that which has proceeded out of your mouth' (Judges 11:36). But she asked for a delay of two months in order that she might go about with her companions upon the mountains to bewail fitly and dutifully her virginity now given up to death. The weeping of her companions did not move her, their grief did not prevail upon her, nor did their lamentations hold her back. She did not allow the day to pass, nor did the hour escape her notice. She returned to her father as though returning according

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[587] Athanasius of Alexandria, Letter to the Bishops of Egypt, II, 21.
Jerome, "To Pammachius Against John of Jerusalem", xxii, Treatises.
Jerome, Letter to Heliodorus, LX, 8.

[588] Jerome, Letter to Julian, CXVIII, 5.

[589] Ephraim the Syrian, Nisibene Hymns, LXIII, 6-7.

[590] Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy, III, xii, 80-81.

to her own desire, and of her own will urged him on when he was hesitating. She acted thus of her own free choice, so that what was at first an awful chance became a pious sacrifice".

Methodius portrayed[591] Jephthah's daughter as a freshly slaughtered lamb, nobly fulfilling the type of Thy Body, O blessed One. She bravely cried, "I keep myself pure for Thee, O Bridegroom, and holding a lighted torch I go to meet Thee".

d) Third Opinion: Service in the Tabernacle as a Virgin

A more modern opinion regards Jephthah's sacrifice of his daughter as not her death, but her dedication to perpetual virginity, serving in the Tabernacle at Shiloh, about 25 miles away. This viewpoint seems to have grown up somewhere after the 5th Century AD from careful examination of the text. Arguments in favor of this are as follows:

1. Jephthah's vow specifically referred to whichever *human being* first came out of his house. The words could not be applicable to any kind of animal.
2. The sacrifice of children to Molech was not just forbidden, but there was a mandatory death penalty for anyone involved and anyone who knew about it (Leviticus 20:1-5, 18:21; Deuteronomy 12:31, 18:10). To sacrifice a child to the Lord was the ultimate insult. It was akin to carrying out the work of the Lord by a worshipper of Molech.
3. No father could even put an *offending* child to death, much less one that was innocent (Deuteronomy 21:18-21, 1 Samuel 14:24-45).
4. The emphasis regarding what Jephthah did to his daughter is "He carried out his vow" and "She knew no man" (Judges 11:39). If she were offered as a human sacrifice, one would think that the location of the burnt offering and her gravesite would have been mentioned as part of the annual commemoration.
5. Jephthah's daughter asked for two months to mourn her virginity in the mountains. It seems strange that she would mourn just her virginity and not her imminent death.
6. There was a class of women devoted to service in the Tabernacle at Shiloh (Exodus 38:8), of whom the Prophetess Anna was one who served later at the Temple in Jerusalem (Luke 2:36-38). The Virgin Mary also served with this group of virgins until her betrothal to Joseph. At the time of Samuel, the apostate sons of Eli engaged in adulterous relations with these women (1 Samuel 2:22). These women were Nazirites (Numbers 6:1-20) and were dedicated to the Lord's service by a vow. Jephthah's daughter could have joined these women leaving her father with no offspring.
7. The annual commemoration of Jephthah's daughter celebrated her with songs of praise for her service to the Lord rather than lamenting her death. The Hebrew word "*tanah*", sometimes translated *lament* (Judges 11:40), means to celebrate with the giving of presents[592].
8. At the time Jephthah made his vow, he had just finished a long and careful negotiation with the king of Ammon. These careful negotiations suggest that he was not a rash individual at all.
9. At the time he made his vow, the Spirit of the Lord had come upon Jephthah (Judges 11:29), and there appears to have been a considerable spiritual dimension to Jephthah that Paul acknowledged (Hebrews 11:32). For example, when Jephthah made his treaty with the elders of Gilead, he did so such that "The Lord will be a witness between us" (Judges 11:10).

[591] Methodius, Banquet of the Ten Virgins, XI, ii, 13.
[592] H. W. F. Gesenius, Hebrew-Chaldee Lexicon to the Old Testament, Baker Books, Grand Rapids, 1996.

In recounting the history of the Exodus involving the territory disputed between Israel and Ammon, Jephthah was very knowledgeable regarding the events c. 300 years earlier.

10. As Jephthah's firstborn, his daughter belonged to the Lord, Jephthah was required to redeem her (Numbers 18:15-16), and he could not sacrifice her. To sacrifice her anyway was a gross violation of the Mosaic Law. His daughter could not have been set apart for destruction in the sense of anathema (Leviticus 27:28-29), since that only applied to the enemies of God. An example of this anathema was everything in Jericho except Rahab and her family (Joshua 6:17-26).

15th Parable from the Old Testament: Daniel 3:1-30 "The Young Men in the Furnace" Song of the Three Children 1:1-65

The three young men in the Babylonian furnace present an Old Testament picture of Christ's descent into hell. Just as the Son of God descended into the Babylonian furnace to save the three young men, so He descended into hell to save those imprisoned there. This parable also presents a secondary picture of how the Gentiles would recognize the Incarnate Christ.

During the Babylonian captivity, King Nebuchadnezzar ruled most of the civilized world. Near Babylon, he had a 90 foot tall gold statue of himself made[593] and sent word to all his officials to come bow down to it at the dedication of the statue (Daniel 3:1-5). Anyone not doing so was to be thrown into a huge furnace (Daniel 3:6, 11). There was an awakening going on in Nebuchadnezzar's life, but it was going to take some refining.

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego had been appointed by the Prophet Daniel as officials over the province of Babylon, where Daniel was ruler over the whole province and chief prefect over the Magi (Daniel 2:48-49). Some of the Chaldeans complained to the king that the Jews (Daniel's officials) were not obeying the king's command (Daniel 3:12). The king was angry and called them in to give an account, threatening them with the furnace, and asking, "What god is there who can deliver you out of my hands?" (Daniel 3:14-15) They replied, "Our God, whom we serve, is able to deliver us from the furnace of blazing fire; and He will deliver us out of your hand, O king. But even if He does not, let it be known to you, O king, that we are not going to serve your gods or worship the golden image that you have set up" (Daniel 3:17-18). One aspect of religious life in this part of the world was the worship of fire. Throwing the three young men into the furnace was delivering them over to the Babylonian "gods".

Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego were bound with ropes (Daniel 3:19-21), and were taken to the furnace by Nebuchadnezzar's mighty men. The soldiers put the three young men (probably down a ramp) into the midst of the furnace (Daniel 3:22). They then proceeded to make the fire hotter by adding fuel to the fire. As they were doing so, the fire streamed 73 feet above the furnace and killed them. Inside the flame, the angel surrounded the three young men with a moist whistling wind (Song of the Three Children 1:22-26). According to Hippolytus[594], the angel inside the furnace drove the flames that killed the soldiers.

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[593] The gold statue that Nebuchadnezzar made was an image of what he saw in his dream (Daniel 2:27-45), that Daniel interpreted in the 2nd year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (Daniel 2:1). In the 18th year of Nebuchadnezzar's reign (Daniel 3:1), he had become puffed up from the lofty words that Daniel had addressed him with, so he made a copy of this image, in order that he might be worshipped by all as God. See Hippolytus, "On Daniel", III, 3:1, Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture.

[594] Hippolytus, "On Daniel", III, 3:47, Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture.

> "See how even the fire appears intelligent, as if it recognized and punished the guilty. It did not touch the servants of God, but it consumed the unbelieving and impious Chaldeans. Those who were within were sprinkled with (cooling) dew by the angel, while those who thought they stood in safety outside the furnace were destroyed by the fire".

Nebuchadnezzar observed the three young men loose and walking about in the flames accompanied by one he described as "the Son of God" (Daniel 3:24-25 LXX). While in the flames, they sang a song of praise to God while they walked about in the furnace. This Song was originally part of the text of Daniel, but is now listed in the Old Testament Apocrypha (in the Septuagint) as "The Song of the Three Children".

According to Hippolytus[595], Nebuchadnezzar was the only one among his governors, captains, princes, etc. that saw the Son of God in the flames. This foreshadowed the recognition by the Gentiles of the Incarnate Christ. Hippolytus stated:

> "Tell me, Nebuchadnezzar, when did you see the Son of God, that you should confess that this is the Son of God? Who pricked your heart, that you should utter such a word? With what eyes were you able to look into this light? Why was this revealed to you alone, and to none of the satraps about you? As it is written, 'The heart of a king is in the hand of God' (Proverbs 21:1). The hand of God is here; the Word pricked his heart, so that he might recognize Him in the furnace, and glorify Him. Since the children of Israel were destined to see God in the world, and yet not to believe on Him, the Scripture showed beforehand that the Gentiles would recognize Him incarnate. While He was not yet incarnate, Nebuchadnezzar saw and recognized Him in the furnace, and acknowledged Him to be the Son of God".

Coming out of the fire, the three young men were not singed, and didn't even smell like the fire (Daniel 3:26-27). King Nebuchadnezzar then issued another decree ordering the death penalty for anyone speaking anything offensive against the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego (Daniel 3:19). This is a dramatic change in king Nebuchadnezzar. Prior to the defiance of the three young men, he stated, "Who is the God that shall deliver you out of my hand?" (Daniel 3:15) After seeing the Son of God in the flames, he stated, "Blessed is the God of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-Nego, who has sent His angel, and delivered His servants, because they trusted in Him. They have changed the king's word; they have delivered their bodies to be burned, that they might not serve any god, except their own God" (Daniel 3:28). Nebuchadnezzar's enlightenment[596] was similar to that of Emperor Constantine[597] about a millennium later

John Chrysostom noted[598] the details inside the furnace; the fire was close enough to burn off the ropes binding the three young men, but not close enough to singe them or even to make

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[595] Hippolytus, "On Daniel", III, 3:92 LXX (MT 3:25), Fragments from Commentaries on Various Books of Scripture.

[596] Some comments from the Church Fathers can be found at:
John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statutes, VI, 11-13.

[597] Emperor Constantine, a pagan on his way to battle, saw a vision of the Cross in the sky, with the words, By this sign, conquer". He went on to win the battle, and subsequently stopped the persecution of Christians with the Edict of Milan, and later made Christianity the state-supported religion.

[598] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statutes, IV, 7-8.

them smell of smoke. This miracle was directed at Nebuchadnezzar to demonstrate that the Babylonian fire gods were impotent against the Son of God.

> "The force of the fire was both quenched and not quenched. While it came in contact with the bodies of these saints, it was quenched; but when it was needful to burn off their ropes, it was not quenched. It broke their ropes, but didn't touch their ankles (Daniel 3:25). Do you see how very close it was? Yet the fire was very real, but dared not penetrate past the ropes. The tyrant bound, and the flame set loose; that you might learn the fierceness of the barbarian, and the submissiveness of the element. Why did he tie them up, when he was about to cast them into the fire? In order that the miracle might be greater; that the sign might be the more unaccountable; and that you may not suppose that the things seen were an optical illusion. If that fire hadn't been real, it would not have consumed the ropes. What is much more, it would not have seized the soldiers who were placed outside the furnace (Daniel 3:4, 6, 20). But as the case was, it showed its power on those outside; but towards those inside, its submissiveness".

In the 16 years since the Lord sent Nebuchadnezzar his dream of the golden headed statue, that Daniel interpreted, Nebuchadnezzar seems to be trying to follow the word that the Lord sent him, but he was clueless as to what to do. His only vision was the statue with the golden head (which was himself), silver chest and arms, etc. Besides this, he knew little, and his own ego got in the way of further inquiry. It would take seven years of a very humbling homeless existence (Daniel 4:30-33) and the loss of his kingdom to educate him. Following this humbling experience, Nebuchadnezzar repented, his kingdom was restored to him, and he, himself, wrote[599] part of the Book of Daniel (Daniel 4:34-37).

John Chrysostom noted[600] especially the language used by Nebuchadnezzar in addressing the three young men in the furnace. The king himself became a preacher of the Gospel!

> "By what title does he call them? He called to them, 'You servants of the most high God' (Daniel 3:26). To the servants of God, all things are possible. If some, who are the servants of men, have power and authority, much more have the servants of God".
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> "Let us look at the words of the Philippian jailer, who was responsible for Paul and Silas. 'Sirs, what must I do to be saved?' (Acts 16:30) What language is nicer than this? This makes the angels leap for joy. To hear this language, even the Son of God Himself became a servant. This language they who believed at the beginning addressed to Peter (Acts 2:37) 'What shall we do?' Peter answered, 'Repent and be baptized'" (Acts 2:37-38).
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> "The king here does not say, 'What must I do to be saved?', but the teaching is plainer in his case than any language whatever. He immediately becomes a preacher; he does not need to be instructed like the jailer. He proclaims God, and makes confession of His power. "Truly your God is the God of Gods and the Lord of Kings, because He has sent His Angel, and has delivered you." (Daniel 3:28, 2:47) What was the result? Not a single jailer, but numbers are instructed by the king's writings, by the sight of the facts. That the king would not have told a falsehood is evident enough to everyone, because he never would have chosen to bear such testimony to captives, nor to overthrow his own

[599] Note the change in tense from the third person in verse 33 to the first person in verse 34.
[600] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VIII.

acts. He never would have chosen to imply such utter madness. Had not the truth been abundantly clear, he would not have written in such terms, and with so many persons present".

The text of the "Song of the Three Children" speaks to us of our deliverance from the fires of hell that we and our brothers and sisters, the saints, will be blessed with. Our enemy, here pictured by an ungodly king of this world, endeavors to throw us into the fire, but the Son of God rescues us by going into the fire Himself. Cyprian stated[601] that this proves that the heat of hell can have no power against the confessors and martyrs of Christ.

John Chrysostom compared[602] Christ on the Cross with the Three Children in the fire (Daniel 3:16-25) and with Jonah in the belly of the sea monster (Jonah 2).

> "The Three Children not entering the fire would not have been as astonishing as having entered and having trampled on the fire. For Jonah, it was a greater thing by far, after the fish swallowed him, to suffer no harm from the monster, than if he had not been swallowed at all. For Christ, not dying wouldn't have been as inconceivable as having died and then loosening the bonds of death. He did not come down from the Cross, for He was hastening on to close conflict with death himself. He descended not from the Cross; not because He could not, but because He would not".

Sometimes we also find ourselves in predicaments from which there appears to be no escape, such as Moses, who was trapped between the Red Sea, the mountains and a powerful army. Sometimes the only solution may be the resolve of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego as they were about to be thrown into the furnace. "The Lord can save us if He wills; but even if He does not, we will not bow to idolatry" (Daniel 3:13-27).

John Chrysostom also compared[603] poverty to a furnace because of the effect it has on its victims, forcing them into idolatry just to obtain food, clothing and shelter. As examples, he gives Lazarus sitting at the rich man's gate (Luke 16:20-21) and Christ's words, "You saw Me hungry and fed Me" (Matthew 25:34-36). Like the Son of God, he encourages us to go down into the furnace with almsgiving to provide a "moist, whistling wind" for those trapped there.

> "Let us imitate these young men, because there is set up today a golden image, namely the tyranny of mammon (i.e. possessions). Let us not pay attention to the timbrels, to the flutes, to the harps, nor to the rest of the pomp of riches. Though we fall into a furnace of poverty, let us choose it, rather than worship that idol; and there will be 'in the midst a moist whistling wind' (Song of the Three Children 1:26 LXX). Let us not shudder at hearing of 'a furnace of poverty'. Those that fell into the furnace were shown the more glorious, but they that worshipped the fire were destroyed (Daniel 3:22, Song of the Three Children 1:22-24 LXX). Those that have chosen poverty, in order that they might not worship mammon, will be more glorious both here and then, but they that have been rich unjustly here, shall then pay the utmost penalty".

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[601] Cyprian, Epistles, LXXX, 3.
[602] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, IV, 3.
[603] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 19-20.

"From this furnace of poverty Lazarus came out at least as glorious as those young men; but the rich man who was in the place of those that worshipped the image, was condemned to hell" (Luke 16:22-23).

"The saints walking through the river of fire (Daniel 7:10 LXX) shall suffer no pain, and they will even appear joyous; but they that have worshipped the image, shall see the fire rest upon them fiercer than any wild beast, and draw them in. So if anyone disbelieves hell, when he sees this furnace, let him from the things present believe things to come, and fear not the furnace of poverty, but the furnace of sin".

"These things let them hear that are rich that are kindling the furnace of poverty. Though they shall not hurt those others, 'the dew' coming to their aid; yet they themselves will be an easy prey to the flame, which they have kindled with their own hands".

"In Babylon, an angel went into the flame with those young men; now let us go down with them that are in the furnace of poverty, and by alms-deeds let us make a 'dewy air', and blow the flame aside, that we may be partakers of their crowns also. In this way, the flames of hell may likewise be scattered by the voice of Christ saying, 'You saw me hungry, and fed me' (Matthew 25:35). Christ's voice shall then be with us instead of a 'moist wind whistling' through the midst of the flame. Let us then go down with alms-giving, into the furnace of poverty; let us behold them that in self-restraint walk therein, and trample on the burning coals. Let us behold the marvel, strange and beyond thought, a man singing praise inside a furnace, a man giving thanks in fire, chained to extreme poverty, yet offering praise to Christ. They, who bear poverty with thankfulness, really become equal to those young men. No flame is as terrible as poverty, nor so apt to set us on fire".

John Cassian compared[604] the furnace in Babylon to the burning for sins and vices in our body. By the Holy Spirit, as dew, we can overcome this heat.

"We shall succeed in extinguishing the fiery furnace of our body, which is kindled by the Babylonian king who continually furnishes us with opportunities for sin and vices, with which we burn more fiercely, than with naphtha and pitch. Through the grace of God, instilled like dew by His Spirit in our hearts, we can altogether deaden the heats of fleshly lusts. This then is our first contest; this is as it were our first trial in the Olympic Games, to extinguish the desires of the palate and the belly by the longing for perfection".

4th Parable from the Old Testament: Jonah 1:1-4:11 "The Belly of the Sea Monster"

Jonah was born in the city of Gath Hepher, about 3 miles from Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25), during the days of Elijah the Prophet. As a child, Jonah lived[605] with his widowed mother in Zarephath, just south of Sidon, when Elijah prophesied that there would be no rain for 3 ½ years (1 Kings 17:1, 18:1, Luke 4:25). Sidon was a Gentile city where Elijah was "hiding out" from the wrath of King Ahab and Queen Jezebel (1 Kings 17, Luke 4:24-27). During most of that period, Elijah lived in an upper room at the house of Jonah's mother (1 Kings 17:9-10). His

[604] John Cassian, Institutes of the Coenobia, V, 14.
See also Jerome, Letter to Demetrios, CXXX, 10-11.
[605] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, September 22.

mother was expecting to starve to death due to the famine (1 Kings 17:12), but Elijah saw to it that the jar of flour and the jar of oil never ran out (1 Kings 17:16). Near the end of the 3½ years, Jonah died, and Elijah raised him from the dead (1 Kings 17:17-24).

Jonah Refused to Convert Gentile Nineveh:

The Book of Jonah is unusual in that the entire focus of the book is the mission of a Hebrew prophet to a Gentile city. In the early 8th Century BC, Jonah was told by the Lord to prophesy against Nineveh, a city in Northern Assyria, 600 miles from Jerusalem. Nineveh was an ancient city, was built by Nimrod following the Flood (Genesis 10:11) and was the Capital city of the Assyrian Empire in the late 8th Century BC.

Instead of going to Nineveh, Jonah "fled to Tarshish (i.e. Spain) from the presence of the Lord" (Jonah l:3). The Lord then sent a fierce storm on the Mediterranean Sea so that the ship was about to break up (Jonah 1:4). The sailors ascertained by casting lots that the storm came up on account of Jonah (Jonah 1:7). They therefore asked Jonah what they should do to him in order to calm the storm (Jonah 1:11). Jonah replied, "Pick me up and throw me into the sea" (Jonah 1:12). The sailors were unwilling to shed innocent blood and tried rowing harder; when all hope seemed lost, they asked the Lord to forgive them and threw Jonah overboard (Jonah 1:13-15). Immediately the storm ceased and the sailors all made vows and offered sacrifices to the Lord (Jonah 1:16). Jonah, however, was swallowed by a great sea creature that the Lord appointed (Jonah 1:17). The great sea creature was not a modern "whale" and was larger than anything that is common today. According to Tertullian[606],

> "Jonah was swallowed by the monster of the deep, in whose belly whole ships were devoured, and after three days was vomited out again safe and sound".

The Hebrew text refers to this sea monster as *dag*, or just the generic word for fish. The LXX refers to the sea monster as *ketos*, or a huge fish. Neither of these words are very helpful in identifying what species of sea creature it was that was large enough both to swallow Jonah, and whose belly was large enough to allow Jonah to breathe for three days (Jonah 1:17).

We can get some understanding of Jonah's experience from Jonah's prayer while he was in the sea creature's belly.

1. Jonah prayed from the "belly of hell" (Jonah 2:2 LXX). This indicates that it was quite unpleasant, and the stench must have been unbearable.
2. Jonah stated that "The waters closed over me, the deep encircled me; the weeds[607] were wrapped around my head" (Jonah 2:5, Dead Sea Scrolls). Thus the sea creature swallowed other things besides Jonah, and Jonah had difficulty moving and untangling himself in the sea creature's belly.
3. Jonah stated that he "went down to the roots of the mountains; the earth with its bars *closed* behind me forever; yet You have brought up my life from the pit[608], O Lord, my God" (Jonah 2:6 DSS). This indicates that the sea creature was a deep diver, and that the pressure from the deep water was quite high.

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[606] Tertullian, On the Resurrection of the Flesh, II, vi, 58.

[607] According to Keil and Delitzsch, these weeds, Hebrew *suph*, are sea grasses, which grow on the ocean bottom. See Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 10, p. 271.

[608] Keil and Delitzsch suggest that the word translated "pit" probably refers to an undersea cavern, perhaps the lair of the sea creature. See Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 10, p. 272.

4. Jonah stated, "When my soul was failing me[609], I remembered the Lord" (Jonah 2:7 LXX). This indicates that Jonah was near death in the sea creature's belly, possibly from lack of oxygen, possibly from the "bends", which is a very painful death for deep-sea divers.
5. Finally, after three days, "The Lord spoke to the sea creature and it vomited Jonah out on the dry land" (Jonah 2:10 DSS). For the sea creature to do this, it was likely a species that could move as easily in shallow water as in deep water.

Only one sea creature mentioned in the Scripture was large enough to swallow Jonah, and this was the "leviathan", which is probably extinct now. Leviathan was described as having the following characteristics:

1. He is very large. "And all the ships coming together[610] would not be able to bear the mere skin of his tail; neither *shall they carry* his head in fishing-vessels" (Job 41:7 LXX).
2. His skin is like armor plate, and harpoons cannot penetrate it. His face is as large as a door. "Who will open the doors of his face? Terror is round about his teeth. His inwards are as brass plates and the texture of his *skin* as a smyrite stone" (Job 41:14-17 LXX). "If spears should come against him, *men* will affect nothing, *either with* the spear or the breast-plate. He considers iron as chaff, and brass as rotten wood. The bow of brass shall not wound him; he deems a slinger as grass" (Job 41:26-28 LXX).
3. He can breathe fire and smoke out of his mouth. "At his sneezing a light shines, and his eyes are *as* the appearance of the morning star. Out of his mouth proceed as it were burning lamps, and as it were hearths of fire are cast abroad. Out of his nostrils proceeds smoke of a furnace burning with fire of coals. His breath is *as* live coals, and a flame goes out of his mouth" (Job 41:18-21 LXX).
4. His swimming motion is so strong that it makes the sea appear to boil (Job 41:31 LXX).
5. He lives in the deepest parts of the ocean, and is king of all that are in the waters (Job 41:32-34 LXX).
6. Leviathan was also used figuratively as an image of Satan (Isaiah 27:1).

After his deep-sea adventure, Jonah received another vision directing him to go to Nineveh (Jonah 3:1). This time he obeyed. Walking through the streets, he proclaimed that Nineveh would be overthrown[611] in 40 days (Jonah 3:4). Word of his encounter with the sea creature and the storm may have gotten back to Nineveh, because Jonah received instant attention! All the people of Nineveh believed God and began fasting in sackcloth and ashes, including the King of Nineveh (Jonah 3:5-6). When God saw their repentance, He relented concerning their destruction and spared the city (Jonah 3:10). Succeeding generations in Nineveh, however, forgot the Lord; about 150 years later, Nineveh was obliterated so completely that it wasn't until the 19th Century that archaeologists finally discovered its location.

One message for us from Jonah is that "as Jonah was three days and three nights in the belly of the great sea creature, so will the Son of Man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth" (Matthew 12:40). Just as leviathan, who swallowed Jonah, represents Satan, so

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[609] Small parts of Jonah 2:7 are missing from the Dead Sea Scrolls text, so the LXX is used here.

[610] These fishing vessels are larger than rowboats and could carry the Twelve Apostles across the Sea of Galilee. This suggests a rough weight of the head of leviathan as over 2000 pounds.

[611] The LXX reads "3 days", while the Masoretic Text and the Dead Sea Scrolls read "40 days". Justin Martyr (2nd Century) mentioned that this difference existed in his days also. There is probably a copying error in the LXX text used today that was also present in the 2nd century. See Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, CVII.

Hades, who "swallowed" Christ in His death, represents the efforts of Satan (1 Corinthians 2:7-8).

Another message for us is "the men of Nineveh will rise up in the judgment with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and indeed a greater than Jonah is here" (Matthew 12:41, compare also Hebrews 2:3).

Gregory Nazianzen stated[612] that Jonah's flight from God does not make sense, especially for a prophet. Jonah knew what God had in mind at Nineveh: the passing over of the grace of prophecy to the Gentiles. Thus Jonah reacted in a similar fashion to the Chief Priests and Scribes when Jesus told them that the Gentiles would inherit the Kingdom of God instead of them. Their reaction was, "May it never be!" (Luke 20:16).

> "To imagine that Jonah hoped to hide himself at sea, and escape by his flight the great eye of God, is surely utterly absurd and stupid. It is unworthy of credit, not only in the case of a prophet, but even in the case of any sensible man, who has only a slight perception of God, Whose power is over all. On the contrary, Jonah knew better than anyone the purpose of his message to the Ninevites".
>
> "Jonah did not imagine that he could utterly escape the Divine power; this we are not to believe. But when he saw the falling away of Israel, and perceived the passing over of the grace of prophecy to the Gentiles — this was the cause of his retirement from preaching and of his delay in fulfilling the command. Accordingly he left Joppa, in Hebrew *beauty*, (Jonah 1:3), I mean his former dignity and reputation, and flung himself into the deep of sorrow. Then he was tempest-tossed, fell asleep, and was wrecked, aroused from sleep, taken by lot, confessed his flight, was cast into sea, and swallowed, but not destroyed, by the 'sea creature'. But there he called upon God, and, marvelous as it is, on the third day he, like Christ, was delivered".

Irenaeus used[613] the great sea monster as an illustration of Satan engulfing man. The righteous, then, are resurrected out of the "belly of hell".

> "From the beginning, did God permit man to be swallowed up by the great 'sea creature', who was the author of transgression, not that he should perish altogether when so engulfed. But, arranging and preparing the plan of salvation, which was accomplished by the Word, through the sign of Jonah. This benefited those who held the same opinion as Jonah regarding the Lord, and who confessed, and said, 'I am a servant of the Lord, and I worship the Lord God of heaven, who has made the sea and the dry land' (Jonah 1:9). This was done that man, receiving an unhoped-for salvation from God, might rise from the dead, and glorify God, and repeat that word which was uttered in prophecy by Jonah. 'I cried by reason of my affliction to the Lord my God, and He heard me out of the belly of hell'" (Jonah 2:2).

Cyril of Alexandria stated[614] that the Gentiles on the ship bound for Tarshish (Spain) knew that Jonah was a prophet and that he had a special relationship with God.

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[612] Gregory Nazianzen, Oration in Defense of His Flight to Pontus, II, 107-109.
[613] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xx, 1.
[614] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, V, 14.

> "Jonah, the prophet, intimates this in what he says: 'And the shipmaster came to him, and said to him, 'Why do you snore? Rise, call on your God, that He may save us, and that we may not perish'' (Jonah 1:6 LXX). The expression 'your God' implies one who knew Him by way of knowledge; and the expression, 'that God may save us', revealed the consciousness in the minds of heathen, who had applied their mind to the Ruler of all, but had not yet believed. Again the same: 'He said to them, I am the servant of the Lord; and I fear the Lord, the God of heaven' (Jonah 1:9). And again the same, 'Let us by no means perish for the life of this man'" (Jonah 1:14).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated[615] that Jonah in the belly of the sea monster was a parallel to Christ in Hades. The limitation of this imagery is that Jonah did not bring up others who had been swallowed by the sea monster.

> "When Christ said, 'As Jonah was three days and three nights in the sea monster's belly, so shall the Son of man be three days and three nights in the heart of the earth' (Matthew 12:40). Jonah was not as the Savior, nor did Jonah go down to Hades; nor was the sea monster Hades; nor did Jonah, when swallowed up, bring up those who had before been swallowed by the sea monster. But he alone came forth, when the sea monster was asked. There is no equality signified in the term 'as,' but it shows a certain kind of parallel in the case of Jonah on account of the three days. In like manner we too, when the Lord says 'as,' we neither become as the Son in the Father, nor as the Father is in the Son. We become in mind and agreement of spirit. As Jonah was swallowed up, so did the Savior descend into Hades, but it is a parallel. In like manner, we too become one, as the Son in the Father. We shall not be equal to Him; for He and we are but parallel".

The Fasting and Repentance of Nineveh: A Prelude to the Church

John Chrysostom had a great deal to say about the fasting and repentance of Nineveh that can be applied to life within the Church. First, he stated[616] that the repentance of Nineveh is nothing short of incredible. It rivals the repentance of the world at the preaching of the Apostles hundreds of years later.

> "The Ninevites were a barbarous and foreign people, who had never participated in any of the benefits of Israel. When they saw a man, who had been saved from shipwreck, who had never associated with them before, enter their city and say 'Nineveh shall be overthrown' (Jonah 3:4), they were converted and reformed by the mere sound of these words. Putting away their former wickedness, they caused the sentence of God to be revoked, and stopped the threatened disturbance of their city. They averted the heaven-sent wrath, and were delivered from every kind of evil. 'God saw that every man turned from his evil way, and was converted to the Lord' (Jonah 3:10). Their wickedness was great, their iniquity unspeakable, which was plainly shown by the prophet when he said 'their wickedness ascended even to heaven' (Jonah 1:2, Genesis 18:20), indicating the magnitude of their wickedness. Nevertheless such great iniquity, which was piled up to such a height as to reach even to heaven, all this in the course of a few days they abolished. They had the happiness of hearing the

[615] Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses Against the Arians, III, xxv, 23.
[616] John Chrysostom, Treatise on the Man Who Does Not Injure Himself, XIV.

declaration, 'God saw that everyone turned from his evil way, and He relented of the evil which He said He would do to them' (Jonah 3:10). Do you see that he who is temperate and watchful not only allows no injury at the hands of man, but even turns back Heaven-sent wrath? Whereas he who betrays himself and harms himself by his own doing, even if he receives countless benefits, reaps no great advantage. So the Jews were not profited by those great miracles, nor did having no share in them harm the Ninevites. But inasmuch as they laid hold of a slight opportunity they became better, barbarians and foreigners though they were, and ignorant of all divine revelation, and dwelling at a distance from Palestine".

Second, Chrysostom looked[617] at the methods of fasting used by the Ninevites. Fasting is a medicine for the soul, and it has been used extensively in the Church; but it needs to be applied carefully. In Nineveh, both man and beast fasted, just like man and beast wear sackcloth at a funeral to show pity for the deceased. But fasting by itself is useless without an accompanying change of life; it was the change of life by the Ninevites that really saved them.

"The Ninevites fasted, and won the favor of God (Jonah 3:10). The Jews, fasted too, and profited nothing (Matthew 6:16-18); they even departed with blame (Isaiah 58:3, 7). Since then the danger in fasting is so great to those who do not know how they ought to fast, we should learn the laws of this exercise. We do not wish to 'run uncertainly', 'beat the air' (1 Corinthians 9:26), or while we are fighting contend with a shadow. Fasting is a medicine; but a medicine, though it is profitable, becomes frequently useless owing to the lack of skill of him who employs it. It is necessary to know when it should be applied, and how much; and the temperament of body that admits it. Also important are the nature of the country, and the season of the year; the corresponding diet; as well as various other particulars; any of which, if one overlooks, he will mar all the rest that have been named. When the body needs healing, exactness is required on our part; much more exactness is needed when our care is about the soul. When we seek to heal the distempers of the mind, we need to search into every particular with the utmost accuracy".

"Let us see then how the Ninevites fasted, and how they were delivered from that wrath. 'Let neither man, beast, herd or flock taste anything' (Jonah 3:7), said the prophet. What are you saying? Must even the irrational things fast, and must the horses and the mules be covered with sackcloth? 'Even so', he replies. At the decease of some rich man, the relatives clothe not only the men servants and maidservants, but also the horses with sackcloth, and give orders that they should follow the procession to the sepulcher, led by their grooms. This signifies the greatness of the calamity, and invites all to pity. Thus also, when that city was about to be destroyed, even the irrational nature was enveloped in sackcloth, and subjected to the yoke of fasting".

"Was it only fasting and sackcloth? We say not so; but the change of their whole life. This appears from the language of the prophet. He who has discoursed of the wrath of God, and of their fasting, when speaking of the reconciliation, speaks to this effect, 'God saw their works'. What kind of works? 'That everyone turned from their evil ways, and the Lord repented of the evil that He had said He would do to them' (Jonah 3:10). Do you see that fasting did not

[617] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statutes, III, 8-10.

rescue from this danger, but it was the change of life, which rendered God propitious and kind to these barbarians?"

To contrast the fasting of the Ninevites, Chrysostom stated[618] that some people in the Church go through the motions of fasting, even wearing rough garments and bewailing their sins, but never seem to change. They never accrue any benefit from their fasting; never show any fruit; and Satan ends up destroying them through their "repentance".

> "These things are not repentance; these things are the semblance and shadow only of repentance, not repentance itself. In the case of these persons, it is well to say, 'Take heed lest Satan should get an advantage over us, for we are not ignorant of his devices' (2 Corinthians 2:11). Some he destroys through sin, others through repentance; but these in yet another way, by allowing them to gain no fruit from repentance. When he didn't find how he might destroy them by direct attack, he came by another road, heightening their toils, while robbing them of the fruits. He persuaded them, as if they had successfully accomplished all they had to do, to be neglectful of what remains".
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> "In ancient time the Ninevites sinned, and they did the things which you too now are doing. Let us see however what it was that helped them. They applied extreme fasting to the wounds, sleeping on the ground, putting on sackcloth, and ashes, and lamentations; they applied also a change of life. Let us then see which of these things made them whole".
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> "'God', said He, 'saw that they turned everyone from his evil way, and He repented of the evil that He had said He would do to them' (Jonah 3:10). He didn't say not, 'He saw their fasting, sackcloth and ashes'. I don't say this to overturn fasting, (God forbid!) but to exhort you that with fasting you do that which is better than fasting, the abstaining from all evil".

To put the fasting of Nineveh in perspective, Chrysostom stated**[619]** that the events at Nineveh are, to this day, a model for repentance. If they can be saved, anyone can! They knew almost nothing about God; yet they generated true repentance just on the uncertainty that God might spare them.

"He threatened the city of Nineveh, and yet Nineveh was not overthrown, but it arose, and became still more distinguished. We all still celebrate and admire it even to this day. From that time it has been a sort of excellent haven for all who have sinned, not allowing them to sink into desperation, but calling all to repentance. By what it did, and by what it obtained of God's favor, it persuades men never to despair of their salvation".

"They had heard that the buildings would fall, and yet they fled not from the buildings, but they fled from their sins. They did not depart each from his house as we do now, but each departed from his evil way. They said, 'Why should we think the walls have brought forth the wrath? We are the causes of the wound; we then should provide the medicine'. To insure their safety, they trusted not a change of habitations, but of habits".

"Let us imitate the spiritual wisdom of the barbarians. They repented even on uncertain grounds! The sentence had no such clause, 'If you turn and repent, I will set up the city', but simply, 'Yet three days[620], and Nineveh shall be overthrown' (Jonah 3:4). What then did they

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[618] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, IV, 6.

[619] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statutes, V, 16-17.

[620] The LXX reads "3 days", while the Masoretic Text and the Dead Sea Scrolls read "40 days". Justin Martyr (2nd Century) mentioned that this difference existed in his days also. There is probably a copying error in the

say? 'Who knows whether God will repent of the evil He said He would do unto us?' (Jonah 3:9) They did not know the outcome, and yet they do not neglect repentance! They are unacquainted with God's method of showing mercy, and yet they change habits upon the strength of uncertainties! Neither was it in their power to look at other Ninevites, who had repented and been saved; nor had they read prophets. They had not heard the patriarchs; they had not enjoyed counsel, or partaken of admonition; nor had they persuaded themselves that they should certainly propitiate God by repentance. The threatening did not imply this; they were doubtful, and hesitating concerning it; and yet they repented with all diligence. What reason shall we have to shrink back, when those who had no ground for confidence as to the outcome, are seen to have exhibited so great a change. We have grounds for confidence in the mercy of God, and have frequently received many pledges of His care, and have heard prophets, and Apostles. We have been instructed by actual events; and yet have no desire to reach the same measure of virtue as these did! Great assuredly was their virtue!"

LXX text used today that was also present in the 2nd century. See Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, CVII. Obviously Chrysostom is quoting from the LXX.

The Resurrection of the Dead

Holy Saturday

Gospel: Matthew 28:1-20 – The Resurrection

On the 3rd Sunday of Pascha two weeks from today, the Gospel lesson is the parallel account of the Resurrection from Mark 15:43-16:8. There the focus is on the role of the Myrrh-Bearing Women at the Cross, the Tomb, etc., and the sequence of events at the Tomb. Therefore that aspect of today's Gospel lesson will be postponed for two weeks.

The use of this Gospel lesson for Holy Saturday takes on a more global perspective than just a remembering of the historical events of that Sunday morning. First, the Gospel lesson describes the events of Sunday morning, yet it is used here in anticipation of the Resurrection on Holy Saturday. Second, the Gospel lesson concludes with the Lord's commission to evangelize the earth. Thus Holy Saturday deals not just with the events but with the longer term implications of the events.

1) The Cover-up by the Jewish Leaders:

On the next day, which followed the Day of Preparation, the chief priests and Pharisees gathered together to Pilate, saying, 'Sir, we remember, while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days I will rise'. Therefore command that the tomb be made secure until the third day, lest His disciples come by night and steal Him *away*, and say to the people, 'He has risen from the dead'. So the last deception will be worse than the first'. Pilate said to them, 'You have a guard; go your way, make *it* as secure as you know how'. They went and made the tomb secure, sealing the stone and setting the guard" (Matthew 27:62-66).

"Now while the women were going home, behold, some of the guard came into the city and reported to the chief priests all the things that had happened. When they had assembled with the elders and consulted together, they gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, saying, 'Tell them, 'His disciples came at night and stole Him *away* while we slept'. And if this comes to the governor's ears, we will appease him and make you secure'. So they took the money and did as they were instructed; and this saying is commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matthew 28:11-15).

We notice that the Chief Priests and Pharisees remembered that Jesus had said that He would rise from the dead after three days (Matthew 27:63). In this they may have been more cognizant of His words than His disciples were. But their reaction was to conspire with Pilate to seal the stone and set a 24-hour guard. On this, John Chrysostom comments[621]:

> "Everywhere deceit recoils upon itself, and against its will supports the truth. Observe: it was necessary for it to be believed that He died, that He rose again, and that He was buried; and all these are brought to pass by His enemies".

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[621] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIX, 1.

"If the sepulcher was sealed, the proof of His resurrection has become incontrovertible. Because it was sealed, and the sepulcher was found empty, it is clear that He is risen, plainly and incontrovertibly".

"But it is worthwhile to inquire concerning that point also, where He said, 'After three days I rise again' (Matthew 20:19). One would not find this distinctly stated, but rather in the example of Jonah[622]. So this demonstrates that they understood His saying, and of their own will, they dealt to prevent it".

"If only the soldiers had sealed the tomb, they might have said that the soldiers, having given up the body to be stolen, gave His disciples opportunity to feign the history concerning His Resurrection. But now having themselves made it secure, they are not able to say this".

"Do you see how they labor for the truth against their will? They themselves came to Pilate, themselves asked, themselves sealed, setting the watch, so as to be accusers and refuters one of another".

This was carried to extreme when some of the guards that had kept watch at the Tomb reported these events to the Chief Priests (Matthew 28:11). After consulting together, the Chief Priests and elders gave a large sum of money to the soldiers, telling them to say that Jesus' disciples stole the body by night (Matthew 28:12-13). Matthew concludes that this falsehood "was commonly reported among the Jews until this day" (Matthew 28:15).

Some of the soldiers refused to accept the bribe, however. The centurion at the cross (Matthew 27:54) was also in charge at the tomb. Longinus (his name) and two of his soldiers would not accept the bribe, so the Jewish leaders conspired to kill them also. Hearing of the plot, Longinus and his friends resigned their commission, received baptism from the Apostles, and left for Cappadocia. The Jewish leaders, however, slandered them to Pilate, and Pilate sent other soldiers to hunt them down and behead them[623]. When Pilate's soldiers arrived, Longinus and his two friends knew what their mission was, but the soldiers didn't know who Longinus was. He let them stay at his house that night, fed them, and announced who he was the next morning. The soldiers were so embarrassed that they volunteered to leave and report to Pilate that they couldn't find their quarry. But Longinus persuaded them that they had a job to do and that they needed to be truthful about what they did. They beheaded Longinus and the two others, brought their heads back to Pilate, but then became Christians themselves. Thus the testimony of the deceit and the cover-up was not snuffed with the death of Longinus, but it was exposed and amplified.

Chrysostom spoke[624] at length about the cover-up and how illogical it was. The Jewish leaders were afraid of the disciples, who were so afraid for their lives that they rarely ventured outdoors. The Jewish leaders were afraid of Christ as a deceiver, and tried to prove that His claim of a third day Resurrection was a falsehood. But all they did was prove it to be true by the seal and the guard. As a result, the burial was published abroad and the Resurrection was proven beyond doubt. In doing all this, they violated the Sabbath by doing work, an infraction that they used as a reason to kill Jesus (John 5:18)

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[622] We also find this stated in the imagery surrounding the Day of First-Fruits. For more details of this, see the Study for Holy Thursday morning.

[623] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 16.

[624] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIX, 1-2.

"When could the disciples have stolen Him? On the Sabbath? How? It was not lawful so much as to go out. Even if they transgressed the law, how should they have dared to come out, who were so timid? How could they also have been able to persuade the multitude? By saying what? By doing what? From what sort of zeal could they have stood up on behalf of the dead? Expecting what recompense? Seeing Him yet alive and merely seized, they had fled; and after His death were they likely to speak boldly in His behalf, unless He had really risen again? How should these things be reasonable? That they were neither willing nor able to feign a resurrection that did not take place is plain from the circumstances. He spoke to them much of a resurrection, and continually said, as indeed these very men have stated, 'After three days I rise again' (Matthew 20:19). If therefore He did not rise again, it is quite clear that His disciples, who had been deceived and made enemies to an entire nation for His sake, and who had come to be without home and without city, would have abhorred Him. They would not have been willing to invest Him with such glory, after having been deceived, and after having fallen into the utmost dangers on His account. That they would have been unable to feign the Resurrection, unless it had been true, this does not need much reasoning".

"But note the craftiness of the Jewish leaders, how ridiculous it is. 'We remember', these are their words, 'that that deceiver said, while He was yet alive, 'After three days I rise again'' (Matthew 27:63). Yet if He were a deceiver, and boastfully uttered falsehood, why are you afraid and run to and fro, and use so much diligence? We are afraid, it is replied, lest perchance the disciples steal Him away, and deceive the multitude. Yet this has been proven to have no probability at all. Malice, however, is a thing contentious and shameless, and attempts what is unreasonable".

"They commanded it to be made secure for three days, as contending for doctrines, and being minded to prove that before that time also He was a deceiver, and they extend their malice even to His tomb. For this reason then He rose before the three days ended, that they might not say that He spoke falsely, and was stolen. If He had not risen then, when they were sitting there and watching, but when they had withdrawn after the three days, they would have had something to say, and to speak against it, although foolishly. For this reason then He anticipated the time. It was fitting that the resurrection should take place while they were sitting by and watching. Therefore also it was fit it should take place within the three days, since if it had been when they were passed, and the men had withdrawn, the matter would have been regarded with suspicion. Therefore He allowed them to seal it, as they were minded, and soldiers sat around it".

"They didn't care about doing these things, and working on a Sabbath day, but they looked to one object only, their own wicked purpose. Those who seized Him, when living, are afraid of Him when He's dead! Yet if He had been a mere man, they had reason to have taken courage. But that they might learn, that when living He endured everything of His own will; behold, a seal, a stone, and a watch, and they were not able to hold Him".

Theophylact stated[625] that it was incredible that the tremendous signs from heaven did not move the Jewish leaders to repentance. They had taunted Him about coming down from the Cross as a sign that He was Who He said He was. The sign He gave was greater than they had asked for, but they still refused to believe.

> "Marvel with me at the hard heartedness of the Jews. Those who said, 'Let Him now come down from the Cross, and we will believe' (Matthew 27:39-43), when they see even greater things than this they still do not believe. Was coming down from the Cross the equal to darkening the sun, breaking the rocks, causing a fearful earthquake, raising the dead, tearing the veil, and altering the elements of creation? Therefore, let no one wonder why the Lord did not come down from the Cross to make them believe, but let him accept these things without idle curiosity, realizing that, even if He had come down, they would still not have believed. Moreover, had He come down from the Cross, it would have eliminated any hope of our salvation through the Cross. The Cross, above all else, is the glory of Christ. By working greater miracles than coming down from the Cross, none of which brought the Jews to belief, He achieved two things at once. He endured and accepted the Cross until the end, making it the great trophy[626] of victory. He showed these unbelieving Jews to be complete ingrates with no trace of good in them, who were fused to their unbelief".

2) The Logic of the Resurrection:

In contrast to the campaign of falsehood on the part of the Jewish leaders, we note that the disciples reported events objectively as they happen. For example, the Chief Priests' conversation with Pilate was reported as "Sir, we remember while He was still alive, how that deceiver said, 'After three days, I will rise'" (Matthew 27:63). Matthew, one of the Twelve, in writing his Gospel, didn't have to repeat the term "deceiver", but he did even though it was derogatory toward himself and his cause. Even after the Resurrection when the Lord met them in Galilee, Matthew reported that "some doubted" (Matthew 28:17). These are not the words of someone who stole the body in order to pretend a resurrection occurred. These are the words of someone who is reporting things objectively as they happen. John Chrysostom went into[627] this at length.

> "When should they have stolen Him? On the Sabbath? But how? It was not lawful so much as to go out (Exodus 16:29). Even if they transgressed the Law, how should they have dared to come out when they were so timid (John 20:19)? How could they also have been able to persuade the multitude at Pentecost (Acts 2:14-36)? By saying what? By doing what? From what sort of zeal could they have stood in behalf of the dead? Expecting what recompense? Seeing Him still alive and merely seized by the Jews, they had fled (Matthew 26:56). After His death, were they likely to speak boldly in His behalf, unless He had risen again? How should these things be reasonable? That they were neither willing nor able to feign a resurrection that did not take place is plain from all this".

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[625] Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chapter 23, p. 313-314.

[626] A trophy [tropaion] in the ancient world was a monument of victory in war. It consisted of the weapons of the defeated enemy, which were hung on a tree or post.

[627] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIX, 1.

Responding to the claim of the Jewish rulers that His disciples stole His body, Chrysostom continued[628],

> "How did they steal Him? O most foolish of all men! For because of the clearness and conspicuousness of the truth, they are not even able to make up a falsehood. what they said was highly incredible. For how, I ask, did the disciples steal Him, unlearned men not venturing so much as to show themselves? (John 20:19) What? Was not a seal put upon it? What? Were there not so many watchmen, and soldiers, and Jews stationed round it? What? Did not those men suspect this very thing, take thought, break their Sabbath rest, and continue anxious about it? Why moreover did they steal it? That they might feign the doctrine of the resurrection? How should it enter their minds to feign such a thing, men who were well content to be hidden and to live? How could they remove the stone[629] that was made sure? How could they have escaped the observation of so many? No, though they had despised death, they would not have attempted without purpose, and fruitlessly, to venture in defiance of so many[630], who were on the watch? If they did not dare so much as to stand their ground when they saw Him alive (Matthew 26:56), how when He was dead could they but have feared such a number of soldiers?
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> If the disciples did not have the strength to watch with Him, and that, though criticized by Him (Matthew 26:40-46), how could they have ventured on these things?" If they were going to steal His body, they would have done it the first night before the Jewish rulers set the guard in place.

John Chrysostom noted[631] that there were other difficulties in trying to steal the body from the tomb. Getting the burial wrappings off would have been a very difficult task to do quickly.

> "And what does it mean that the napkins were stuck on with the myrrh; for Peter saw these lying (John 20:6-8). If they had been disposed to steal, they would not have stolen the body naked, not because of dishonoring it only, but in order not to delay and lose time in stripping it, and not to give them that were so disposed opportunity to awake and seize them. Especially when it was myrrh! This is a drug that adheres so to the body, and cleaves to the clothes, such that it was not easy to take the clothes off the body. People that do this need much time, so that from this again, the tale of the theft is improbable".

There is a significant testimony from the burial clothes themselves. Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus had wrapped Jesus' body in strips of linen with about a hundred pounds of myrrh and aloes, creating a "mummy" or a cocoon (John 19:39-40). This was a burial rite used only by the wealthy. From a modern study[632] on customs of that time, the technique used in the burial rite was described as follows.

> "The body was covered in spices and in paste and the spices and paste were tied to the body by layers of white roller bandage. The paste hardened and

[628] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XC, 1.
[629] A stone 4 feet diameter by 1 foot thick weighs about 2,200 lb
[630] If a centurion was in charge, 100 soldiers were involved!
[631] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XC, 2.
[632] Gower, New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, pp. 72-74

impregnated the bandages until a hard preservative mold or cocoon was formed about the body. A cap was put on the head, and often the jaw was held in position by a bandage under the chin".

When Peter and John came to the Tomb on Pascha morning, they "saw the linen clothes lying there" (John 20:5-6). This was the undisturbed 100-pound empty cocoon; Jesus had passed through the cloth of the cocoon as He rose, leaving them lying there. No wonder that John and Peter saw and believed when presented with this evidence (John 20:8).

From all this, the Resurrection is the only logical conclusion. As John Chrysostom said[633],

> "The Jewish rulers confessed the body was not there, but the stealing it is shown to be false and incredible. By their watching it and by the seals and by the timidity of the disciples, the proof of the Resurrection even to this day appears incontrovertible".

3) Our Descent into Hades and Our Resurrection at the Second Coming

Earlier we covered Christ's Descent into Hell to rescue those that had been dwelling there in Abraham's bosom, like Lazarus (Luke 16:20-26). Yet, when Christ returns in glory at the Second Coming, Paul stated that the dead in Christ would be raised first to meet Him as He comes.

> "But I do not want you to be ignorant, brethren, concerning those who have fallen asleep, lest you sorrow as others who have no hope. For if we believe that Jesus died and rose again, even so God will bring with Him those who sleep in Jesus. For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord" (1 Thessalonians 4:13-17).

This implies that "the dead in Christ", who rise first, will still be on earth and not in heaven. If they are caught up together with those still alive, they must be in the graves, similar to Lazarus, awaiting the Second Coming. But then who is in heaven that comes with Christ at His return?

Tertullian stated[634] that Christ descended into hell after His death and removed the Patriarchs and Prophets to be with Him in Paradise. But those that have died since His descent will remain in Hades until His Second Coming. John describes the souls of just the martyrs under the altar in heaven (Revelation 6:9), where the souls of everyone else must be still on earth in Abraham's Bosom (Hades) where Lazarus was at one time (Luke 16:22-23). The dead that are raised at the Second Coming to meet the Lord in the air (1 Thessalonians 4:17) must have been also dwelling in Hades.

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[633] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XC, 2.
[634] Tertullian, A Treatise on the Soul, I, ix, 55.

"We suppose the lower regions of Hades are not a bare cavity, nor some subterranean sewer of the world, but a vast deep space concealed in the interior of the earth. We read that Christ in His death spent three days in the heart of the earth (Matthew 12:40), that is, in the secret inner recess which is hidden in the earth. Now although Christ is God, yet being also man, 'He died according to the Scriptures' and 'was buried' (1 Corinthians 15:3-4). He fully complied with His own law by remaining in Hades in the form and condition of a dead man. He did not ascend into the heights of heaven before descending into the lower parts of the earth, that He might there make the patriarchs and prophets[635] partakers of Himself (1 Peter 3:19). This being the case, you must suppose Hades to be a subterranean region, and keep at arm's length those who are too proud to believe that the souls of the faithful deserve a place in the lower regions. These persons, who are 'servants above their Lord, and disciples above their Master' (Matthew 10:24), would no doubt spurn the comfort of the resurrection, if they must expect it in Abraham's bosom. They say that Christ descended into hell that we might not ourselves have to descend there".

"Well, then, what difference is there between the heathen and Christians, if the same prison awaits them all when dead? How shall the soul mount up to heaven, where Christ is already sitting at the Father's right hand, when as yet the archangel's trumpet has not been heard by the command of God? (1 Corinthians 15:52, 1 Thessalonians 4:16) Those, whom Christ will find on the earth at the Second Coming, have not yet been caught up into the air to meet Him at His coming. When He comes, the dead in Christ shall be the first to arise (1 Thessalonians 4:15-17). To no one is heaven opened; the earth is still safe for us, but I would not say it is shut against us. When the world shall pass away, then the kingdom of heaven shall be opened. We shall sleep in Paradise, you tell me, where already the patriarchs and prophets have been removed from Hades in the retinue of the Lord's resurrection. How is it, then, that the region of Paradise, which as revealed to John in the Spirit lay under the altar, displays no other souls in it besides the souls of the martyrs? (Revelation 6:9) How is it that the most heroic martyr Perpetua[636] on the day of her passion saw only her fellow-martyrs there, in the revelation which she received of Paradise? The sword which guarded the entrance permitted no one to go in there, except those who had died in Christ and not in Adam."

"Observe, then, the difference between a heathen and a Christian in their death. If you have to lay down your life for God, as the Comforter counsels (Matthew 10:37-39, Mark 8:34-38), it is not in gentle fevers and on soft beds, but in the sharp pains of martyrdom. You must take up the cross and bear it after your Master, as He has Himself instructed you (Matthew 16:24-27). The sole key to unlock Paradise is your own life's blood. Every other soul is detained in safe keeping in Hades until the day of the Lord".

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[635] The "Patriarchs" in the context of the pre-Flood civilization that Peter referred to represents the people numbered in Genesis 5. But Tertullian generalized the text of Peter's Epistle to include others who lived prior to Christ's Advent, such as the Prophets, Abraham, etc.

[636] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, February 1 gives a brief summary of the life of Perpetua and her friends, but not her vision.
The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2004, February 1.

Irenaeus stated[637] that Christ observed the law of the dead, and spent three days in the lower parts of the earth. Just as no disciple is above his Master, so we will do the same, awaiting our resurrection.

> "Christ dwelt for three days in the place of the dead, as the prophet says[638] concerning Him. 'And the Lord remembered His dead saints who slept formerly in the land of sepulture; and He descended to them, to rescue and save them'. The Lord Himself says, 'As Jonah remained three days and three nights in the belly of the sea monster, so shall the Son of man be in the heart of the earth' (Matthew 12:40). Paul says, 'But when He ascended, what is it but that He also descended into the lower parts of the earth?' (Ephesians 4:9) This, too, David says when prophesying of Him, 'You have delivered my soul from the nethermost hell' (Psalm 86:13 LXX). When He rose again on the third day, He spoke to Mary, who was the first to see Him and to worship Him. 'Don't touch Me, for I have not yet ascended to the Father; but go to the disciples, and say to them, I ascend to My Father, and to your Father'" (John 20:17). Christ observed the law of the dead, that He might become the first-begotten from the dead, and waited until the third day 'in the lower parts of the earth' (Ephesians 4:9). Afterwards He rose in the flesh, so that He even showed the print of the nails to His disciples (John 20:20, 27); He thus ascended to the Father. The Lord 'walked in the midst of the shadow of death' (Psalm 23:4 LXX), where the souls of the dead were kept; yet afterwards He arose in the body. After the resurrection, He was taken up into heaven. It is clear that the souls of His disciples also, upon whose account the Lord underwent these things, shall go away into the invisible place allotted to them by God, and there remain until the resurrection, awaiting that event. Then they will receive their bodies, and rise in their entirety; that is, bodily; just as the Lord arose, they shall come into the presence of God. 'For no disciple is above the Master, but everyone that is perfect shall be as his Master' (Luke 6:40). Our Master, therefore, did not immediately depart, taking flight to heaven, but awaited the time of His resurrection prescribed by the Father. This had been also shown through Jonah; rising again after three days, He was taken up to heaven. So we also should await the time of our resurrection, prescribed by God and foretold by the prophets; and so be taken up, as many as the Lord shall account worthy of this privilege".

John Cassian stated[639] that the souls of people who have died are still capable of reason and feelings such as hope, sorrow, joy and fear. They are in a state where they are already beginning to taste something of what is reserved for them at the Last Judgment.

> "People are not idle after the separation from this body, and are capable of feeling. In the parable of the beggar Lazarus and Dives, the rich man clothed in purple, one obtained a position of bliss, in Abraham's bosom, the other was consumed with the dreadful heat of eternal fire (Luke 16:19-24). But understand the words spoken to the thief 'Today you shall be with Me in Paradise' (Luke

[637] Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, xxxi, 1-2.

[638] In Justin Martyr, Dialogue With Trypho, 72, Justin stated that the Jews of his day had intentionally deleted this from the Hebrew text of Jeremiah's writings. In Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xx, 4, Irenaeus attributed the quote to Isaiah, and in Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxii, 1, he attributed it to Jeremiah. All we can say is that it is not in any of our texts today, either the Hebrew text, the LXX or the Dead Sea Scrolls.

[639] John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Moses, I, i, 14.

23:43). They clearly show that not only their former intelligence continues with the souls, but also in their changed condition they partake of some state, which corresponds to their actions and deserts? The Lord would certainly never have promised him this, if He had known that his soul, after being separated from the flesh, would either have been deprived of perception or have been resolved into nothing. It was not his flesh but his soul which was to enter Paradise with Christ. We must avoid, and shun with the utmost horror, that wicked punctuation of the heretics, who do not believe that Christ could be found in Paradise on the same day on which He descended into hell. They punctuate 'Verily, I say unto you to-day', and making a stop apply 'you shall be with Me in Paradise', in such a way they imagine that this promise was not fulfilled at once after he departed from this life, but that it will be fulfilled after the resurrection. They do not understand what He declared to the Jews, who fancied that human difficulties and weakness of the flesh hampered him as it did them. 'No man has ascended into heaven, but He who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven' (John 3:13). By this He clearly shows that the souls of the departed are still endowed with reason, but that they even have such feelings as hope and sorrow, joy and fear. They already are beginning to taste beforehand something of what is reserved for them at the last judgment, and they are not resolved into nothing after their departure from this life. They live a more real life, and are still more earnest in waiting on the praises of God".

Rufinus of Aquilea stated[640] that Christ's descent into hell brought three kingdoms at once under His subjection: things in heaven, things on earth, and things under the earth (Philippians 2:10). He achieved this victory over the angelic world-rulers whom He had established at the Creation.

"When God made the world in the beginning, He set over it certain powers of celestial virtues by which the race of mortal men might be governed and directed. Moses signifies this, 'When the Most High divided the nations, He appointed the bounds of the nations according to the number of the angels of God' (Deuteronomy 32:8 LXX). But some of these, as he who is called the Prince of this world, did not exercise the power, which God had committed to them according to the laws by which they had received it. They didn't teach mankind to obey God's commandments, but taught them rather to follow their own perverse guidance. Thus we were brought under the bonds of sin, because, as the Prophet said, 'We were sold under our sins' (Romans 7:14). Every man, when he yields to lust, is receiving the wages for his own soul (Matthew 16:26). Those wicked rulers held every man under that bond; when Christ came, He tore them down and stripped them of their power. Paul signifies this under a great mystery when he says of Him, 'He destroyed the hand-writing which was against us, nailing it to His cross, and led away principalities and powers, triumphing over them in Himself' (Colossians 2:14-15). Those rulers, whom God had set over mankind, had become tyrannical, had attacked the men who had been committed to their charge and had routed them utterly in the conflicts of sin. Ezekiel mystically intimates this when he says, 'In that day angels shall come hastening to exterminate Ethiopia, and there shall be perturbations among them in the day of

[640] Rufinus of Aquilea, A Commentary on the Apostles' Creed, 15.

Egypt; for behold He comes' (Ezekiel 30:9 LXX). Having stripped them of their power, Christ is said to have triumphed, and to have delivered to men the power which was taken from them. Also He said to His disciples, 'Behold I have given you power to tread on serpents and scorpions, and on all the might of the enemy' (Luke 10:19). The Cross of Christ brought those, who had wrongfully abused the authority which they had received, into subjection to those who had before been in subjection to them. This teaches mankind first of all to resist sin even to death, and to be willing to die for the sake of the Faith."

4) The Great Commission:

On the evening of the Resurrection, the Eleven minus Thomas were huddled together in the upper room in Jerusalem when the Lord appeared to them (John 20:19). A week later the same thing occurred when Thomas was present (John 20:26). The end of Matthew's Gospel picks up just after this after they all had returned to Galilee to the mountain which Jesus had appointed (Matthew 28:16; also Matthew 28:7, 10; Matthew 26:32). The occasion described (Matthew 28:16) may be the same event (or series of events) that Paul described where the Lord appeared to 500 brethren at one time (1 Corinthians 15:6).

Included in the Gospel reading for Holy Saturday are Jesus' words, "All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you. And lo, I am with you always, even to the end of the age" (Matthew 28:18-20). Since Matthew's Gospel ends here, the implication is that the Twelve Apostles are just about to go do this, and that they haven't started yet. They began to go to all the nations shortly after the stoning of Stephen and the scattering of the people of God (Acts 8:4), which occurred less than one year after Pentecost[641]. Thus the Holy Saturday reading speaks of longer term implications of the Resurrection than is immediately at hand.

At this occasion in Galilee, the Holy Spirit had not yet been given since Christ had not yet ascended. Thus, they are not yet able to do these things (make disciples of all nations) because they didn't have the means yet. But they will acquire the means in a few weeks at Pentecost.

John Chrysostom pointed out[642] that when the Lord said, "I am with you", "He said this to the prophets in the Old Testament continually; such as to Jeremiah, when Jeremiah objected to his mission because of his youth (Jeremiah 1:6, 8). He said it to Moses, when Moses object to his unskilled speech (Exodus 4:10, 12), and to Ezekiel shrinking from the office (Ezekiel 2, 3). He promised to be with not just these men only, but also with all that believe after them".

[641] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.
Demetrius of Rostov, The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2000, December 27.
[642] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XC, 2.

5) Parables from the Old Testament

Of the fifteen Old Testament readings prescribed for Holy Saturday, the following have to do with various aspects of the theme of "Resurrection". These six Readings will be covered in the following order:

1. 8th Parable from the Old Testament: 1 Kings 17:8-24 "Elijah Raises the Widow's Son"
2. 12th Parable from the Old Testament: 2 Kings 4:8-37 "Elisha Raises the Shunammite's Son"
3. 7th Parable from the Old Testament: Zephaniah 3:8-15 "The Remnant"
4. 2nd Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 60:1-16 "The Gathering of the Elect"
5. 13th Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 63:11-64:5 "The Second Coming"
6. 9th Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 61:10-62:5 "The Bridegroom Rejoices"

8th Parable from the Old Testament: 1 Kings 17:8-24 "Elijah Raises the Widow's Son"

The Parable of Elijah raising the widow's son teaches us some things about the implications of Holy Saturday. We will be raised like the widow's son, and the Kingdom of God will not be exclusively Jewish any more. The three years of drought speaks of Christ's three-year public ministry, and the one widow who gave Elijah everything she had speaks of the Church. Therefore this widow is preferred over many others, just as Christ prefers the Church over many pretenders.

The widow portrays the righteous during a drought on the earth, which is our present condition, and the rain is the Coming of Christ. She was miraculously preserved by something that foreshadows the Eucharist. Just as Elijah went to the Gentiles in Sidon, so the Church is now largely of the Gentiles.

Elijah was a descendant of the settlers of Gilead (1 Kings 17:1) who moved in during the time of the Judges (Judges 12:4-7). The first mention of him occurred during the reign of King Ahab following Ahab's marriage to Jezebel and the subsequent building of altars and a Temple to Baal, and building the Asherah on the high places. Elijah said to King Ahab that there would be neither dew nor rain for several years until he (Elijah) said so. Then Elijah left for the East side of the Jordan (1 Kings 17:1-3).

Elijah lived there for a while and was fed by ravens sent by the Lord, who brought him bread and meat in the morning and in the evening. His source of water was the brook Cherith (1 Kings 17:4-6). When the brook dried up from the lack of rain, the Lord told him to go to the town of Zarephath in Sidon on the Mediterranean coast. Sidon was the birthplace of Jezebel (1 Kings 16:31).

On entering the gate of Zarephath, he called to a widow who was gathering sticks, asking for a drink of water. As she was going to get the water, he asked her also for a piece of bread. She replied that she had no bread. All she had was a handful of flour and a little oil. She was going to prepare a last meal for her son and herself, expecting that they would starve to death afterward because of the famine[643] and drought (1 Kings 17:9-12).

[643] Plowing to plant crops was timed to take advantage of the winter rains. Beginning in late October, the first heavy rains come and loosen the soil sufficiently for plowing. Rain is intermittent throughout the winter, and ends with some heavy showers of March and April (the late rain). From April to October is the dry season

Elijah instructed her to use that last little bit to make him a little bread cake, then some for her and her son. "For thus says the Lord God of Israel: 'The bowl of flour shall not be exhausted, nor shall the jar of oil be empty, until the day that the Lord sends rain on the face of the earth'" (1 Kings 17:11-14). She did as Elijah asked and her bowl of flour lasted for several years until the famine was over. During that time, Elijah stayed in the upper room of her house (1 Kings 17:15-16).

During the time Elijah stayed there, the woman's young son died. Elijah carried the child to the upper room and laid him on his own bed. Then he raised him from the dead (1 Kings 17:24). According to tradition[644], the child was later known as the Prophet Jonah who prefigured Christ by spending three days in the belly of the sea monster (Jonah 1:17).

This account has a strong message for us: putting the things of God first has significant benefits. The widow had very little; yet by faith she gave of what she had to Elijah. Her benefits were an unlimited food supply, her son resurrected, and her testimony has been remembered as being greater than all the widows in Israel (Luke 4:25-26).

Jesus referred to these events in the life of Elijah early in His public ministry as an example of how "no prophet is accepted in his own country". In Nazareth, Jesus' home town (Luke 4:16), in the year 27 AD, He was asked to read from the Prophet Isaiah in the Synagogue. He had recently been baptized in the Jordan River by John the Baptist (Luke 3:21-22, John 1:29-34) and tempted for 40 days in the wilderness (Luke 4:1-13).

After His baptism, John records Jesus' trip to Cana of Galilee for the wedding feast (John 2:1-12), then to Capernaum before returning to Jerusalem for Passover of 27 AD (John 2:12-13). While there, Jesus cleansed the Temple (John 2:13-25), spoke with Nicodemus (John 3:1-21) and, with His disciples began baptizing many people in Judea (John 3:22-36) such that word got out that Jesus had baptized more people than John (John 4:1).

At this point He left Judea to go to Galilee in the power of the Spirit (John 4:3, Luke 4:14). On the way, He spoke with Photini, the woman at the well in Sychar (John 4:4-45). Following this, He came to Nazareth. At this time, Jesus was very highly regarded, and He "was being glorified by all" (Luke 4:15). "All bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth" (Luke 4:22). They just couldn't believe this was Joseph and Mary's son, the kid they grew up with.

When Jesus was asked to read[645] from the Prophet Isaiah, He read from Isaiah 61:1-2. There are six items included in this and most of them relate to the Feast of Trumpets[646] and thus the beginning of the Church Year. What made this reading all the more powerful is that Jesus

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and the hot summer, where clouds are infrequent and rain is rare. Without these rains, hardship or famine was a certainty, as demonstrated by Elijah (1 Kings 18:1-2). Moses linked the rains from heaven with the love of God and the obedience to His commandments (Deuteronomy 11:10-17).

[644] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, September 22.

[645] This was the prescribed reading for the day according to the Synagogue lectionary.

[646] For details of the Feast of Trumpets and the Beginning of the Church Year, see the Study for September 1st, "The Beginning of the Indiction".

stated after He read it: "Today this Scripture has been fulfilled in your ears" (Luke 4:21). Luke's account states:

> "So all bore witness to Him, and marveled at the gracious words which proceeded out of His mouth. And they said, 'Is this not Joseph's son?' He said to them, 'You will surely say this proverb to Me, 'Physician, heal yourself! Whatever we have heard done in Capernaum, do also here in Your country''. Then He said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, no prophet is accepted in his own country. But I tell you truly, many widows were in Israel in the days of Elijah, when the heaven was shut up three years and six months, and there was a great famine throughout all the land. But to none of them was Elijah sent except to Zarephath, *in the region* of Sidon, to a woman *who was* a widow. And many lepers were in Israel in the time of Elisha the prophet, and none of them were cleansed except Naaman the Syrian'. So all those in the synagogue, when they heard these things, were filled with wrath, and rose up and thrust Him out of the city. And they led Him to the brow of the hill on which their city was built that they might throw Him down over the cliff. Then passing through the midst of them, He went His way" (Luke 4:22-30).

Jesus quoted the above account about Elijah to people in the synagogue of Nazareth in response to their unbelief (Luke 4:24-26). Being confronted with their unbelief made them so angry that they tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-30). They had wanted him to do in Nazareth what He had done in Capernaum (Luke 4:23), but Jesus said, "no prophet is accepted in His own country" (Luke 4:24), and He could do few miracles there (Mark 6:1-6). The response of the people of Nain[647] was quite the opposite (Luke 7:11-16). This is a very interesting comparison. Even the Son of God can be limited in His performing of miracles depending on the faith of the people present. Why? In His mercy, He is reluctant to bring increasing judgment on them for rejecting Him.

One impact of the lesson of the Widow of Zarephath in connection with Holy Saturday is that entrance to the Kingdom of God will no longer be considered exclusively Jewish. The Widow may have been Jewish, but living in a Gentile area[648], but others from among the Gentiles nearby will be welcomed in the days following Holy Saturday.

John Chrysostom spoke[649] at length about the widow and compared her to the poor widow who gave her last two mites to the alms box at the Temple (Luke 21:2-4). By giving her last food to Elijah, she was rewarded with several years' supply of food and the resurrection of her son. This is the message of Holy Saturday. As we give of ourselves to others, like our Lord gave to us, we will be rewarded quite out of proportion to what we give.

> "What shall we say of the widow in the time of the prophet Elijah? For the risk she ran was not of poverty, but even of death and extinction, and not her own only, but her children's too. She had no expectation of receiving from others, and was resigned to dying. 'But,' one might say, 'she saw the prophet, and that made her generous'. You also see the Lord of the prophets asking for

[647] Nain was about 5 miles Southeast of His hometown of Nazareth.

[648] There was considerable intermarriage between Jews and Gentiles in Galilee, and the widow's late husband may have been a Gentile who moved the family to Zarephath, near Sidon, after Jonah was born.

[649] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XIX, v. 9.
See also John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, I, v. 7.

alms, and yet you do not become humane. Though you have coffers spewing one into another, you do not even give of your abundance".

"Was she persuaded to so great a magnanimity by the fact that a prophet came to her? This of itself deserves much admiration, that she was persuaded of his being a great and wonderful person. Why did she not say, as it would have been likely that a barbarian woman and a foreigner would have reasoned, 'If he were a prophet, he would not have begged of me. If he were a friend of God, God would not have neglected him. Granted that because of sins the Jews suffer this punishment; but why does this man suffer?'"

"But she entertained none of these thoughts; but opened her house to him, and before her house, her heart; and set before him all she had. Putting nature on one side and disregarding her children, she preferred the stranger first. Consider how great a punishment will be laid up for us, if we don't do what she did, a widow, poor, a foreigner, a barbarian, a mother of children, knowing nothing of these things which we know!"

"Just because we have strength of body, does not mean that we are manly persons. Learn that this is the measure of manliness. What could be manlier than that woman, who both against the tyranny of nature, the force of hunger, and the threat of death, stood fast? Hear how Christ proclaims her. He said, 'there were many widows in the days of Elijah, and to none of them was the prophet sent but to her'" (Luke 4:25, 26).

"Shall I say something great and startling? This woman gave more to hospitality, than our father Abraham. She 'ran' not 'to the herd', as he, (Genesis 18:7) but by that 'handful' (1 Kings 17:12) outstripped all that have been renowned for hospitality. In this was her excellence, that she set herself to do what she did. She didn't spare even her children for the sake of the stranger even though she wasn't conscious of the things to come. But we, though a heaven exists, though a hell is threatened, though (which is greater than all) God has wrought such great things for us and is made glad and rejoices over such things, yet we shrink back. Let us not do this, I beseech you; but let us 'scatter abroad', let us 'give to the poor' as we ought to give".

Cyprian of Carthage concurred[650] with John Chrysostom and added that the widow did not take away from her children, but added to them by her generosity. Conversely, those in the Church who hoard an abundant estate sin before God.

"The mother did not take away from her children what she gave to Elijah, but rather she conferred upon her children what she did kindly and piously. She did not as yet know Christ; she had not yet heard His precepts. She did not, as redeemed by His cross and passion, repay food and drink for His blood. From this it may appear how much he sins in the Church, who, preferring himself and his children to Christ, preserves his wealth, and does not share an abundant estate with the poverty of the needy".

Ambrose of Milan stated[651] that the Widow of Zarephath speaks of the mystery of Christ and the Church, and the three years of drought speaks of the three years of Christ's public

[650] Cyprian, Treatises, VIII, 17.
For similar statements, see Ambrose of Milan, On the Duties of the Clergy, II, iv, 14-15.
[651] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Widows, III, 14-15.

ministry, where He found no fruit on the fig tree. The reward for the widow foretells that of the righteous at the end of the age.

> "In this story the Lord warns me that He bids my ears attend to a mystery. What can be truer than the mystery of Christ and the Church? Not without a purpose is one preferred among many widows. Who is such a one, to whom so great a prophet, who was carried up into heaven, should be guided, especially at that time when the heaven was shut for three years and six months, when there was a great famine in the whole land? The famine was everywhere, and yet this widow did not want. What are these three years? Are they not those in which the Lord came to the earth and could not find fruit on the fig-tree, according to what is written, 'Behold, there are three years that I came seeking fruit on this fig-tree, and find none'" (Matthew 21:18-20).
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> "This is assuredly that widow of whom it was said, 'Rejoice, O barren, You *who* have not borne! Break forth into singing, and cry aloud, You *who* have not labored with child! More *are* the children of the desolate, than of her who has a husband' (Isaiah 54:1, Galatians 4:27). Well is she a widow of whom it is said, 'You shall not remember your shame and your widowhood, for I am the Lord Who make you' (Isaiah 54:4). Perhaps therefore is she a widow who has lost her Husband indeed in the suffering of His body, but in the Day of Judgment shall receive again the Son of Man, Whom she seemed to have lost".

12th Parable from the Old Testament: 2 Kings 4:8-37 "The Shunammite's Son"

The town of Shunem was located in the Plain of Jezreel about 5 miles South of Mt. Tabor and about 25 miles East of Mt. Carmel. The unnamed Shunammite woman lived along a trade route that ran from the Mediterranean Coast to the Sea of Galilee. She recognized Elisha as a man of God as he traveled back and forth along the Trade Route. She persuaded her husband to build an upper room and furnish it for Elisha to stay in as he traveled back and forth in the country (2 Kings 4:9-10). Elisha appreciated this unsolicited kindness and one day asked the woman what he could do for her (2 Kings 4:13). When she didn't ask for anything at all, Elisha's servant Gehazi suggested that what she really wanted was a son, since she was barren (2 Kings 4:14). Elisha then told her, "At this season next year, you shall embrace a son" (2 Kings 4:16).

A few years later, when the Shunammite woman's child complained of a sudden head injury, perhaps an aneurysm, his mother laid him on her lap until noon. When the child died, his mother laid him on Elisha's bed in the upper room (2 Kings 4:18-21). She then saddled a donkey and left with one of the servants to find Elisha at Mount Carmel (2 Kings 4:22-25). This was a 25-mile ride, and it probably took her two days to get there. The young man, one of the servants that accompanied her, was necessary to protect her along the journey and at night. The day that she left was not a Sabbath (2 Kings 4:23), but the day Elisha returned to Shunem was a Sabbath. According to the Mosaic Law, it was unlawful for her to travel back from Mt. Carmel on the Sabbath, because it was greater[652] than a "Sabbath Day's journey" (Acts 1:12).

[652] Rabbinic interpretation of the restriction of travel on the Sabbath was 2000 cubits, or a little more than half a mile. 2000 cubits was the distance between the Ark and the people as Israel traveled in the desert (Joshua 3:4) and also the limit of the pasturelands outside the Levitical cities (Numbers 35:4-5). Limited to 2000 cubits, they reasoned, one could be following the Lord's command, "Let every man remain in his place; let

Finding Elisha, she grabbed hold of his feet and wouldn't let go or leave (2 Kings 4:27-30). Elisha got the message and sent his servant Gehazi ahead to the woman's house to heal her son with his staff. But Gehazi was unable to do so, just like the Twelve were unable to cast out a demon because of their lack of preparation with prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:14-21). At that time, Gehazi was not a man of faith, as was shown subsequently by his greed when he lied about receiving money from Naaman (2 Kings 5).

Healing on the Sabbath

While Gehazi went on ahead, Elisha followed him to Shunem accompanied by the woman, who was probably exhausted from her trip to Mt. Carmel. After prayer Elisha laid his body on top of the dead child seven times; by doing so, he raised him from the dead (2 Kings 4:33-37). Since the child was, by that time, about 4-days dead, there was probably also some odor to his dead body, just like there was with Lazarus (John 11:39). According to Tertullian[653], it was on the Sabbath that Elisha raised the woman's son from the dead, and thus Elisha is an image of Christ's healing on the Sabbath. This was particularly noteworthy since the Mosaic Law required a 7-day period of uncleanness for touching a dead body, and forbid entirely working on the Sabbath.

Elisha thus exhibited considerably more "work" in doing this healing than Jesus ever did. But the Scribes and Pharisees never mentioned this, even though they knew the Scriptures like the back of their hand. Tertullian, in commenting[654] on this being done on the Sabbath, made distinctions of labor between human work (our jobs and employment), and God's work. Raising the son of the Shunammite woman was an example of doing the Lord's work on the Sabbath. Similarly, when the priests carried the Ark around Jericho on the Sabbath, this was God's work. Jesus endeavored to bring the observance of the Sabbath back to what He originally intended. He did not rescind the Sabbath but fulfilled it.

> "The Pharisees were in utter error concerning the Law of the Sabbath, not observing that its terms were conditional when it commanded rest from labor, making certain distinctions of labor. When it says of the Sabbath, 'In it you shall not do any work of yours' (Exodus 20:9-10), by the word *yours*[655] it restricts the prohibition to human work — which everyone performs in his own employment or business — and not to divine work. Now the work of healing or preserving is not proper to man, but to God. So again, in the Law it says, 'You shall not do any manner of work in it' (Exodus 12:16 LXX), except what is to be done for any soul, that is to say, in the matter of delivering the soul. What is God's work may be done by human agency for the salvation of the soul".
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> "God would do that which the man Christ did, for He was likewise God. Wishing, therefore, to initiate them into this meaning of the Law by the restoration of the withered hand, He asked, 'Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good, or not; to save life or to destroy it?' (Luke 6:9) In order that He might

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no man go out of his place on the seventh day" (Exodus 16:29). Thus limited, the Levites, and thus everyone else, could tend to their livestock on the Sabbath without disobeying God (Luke 13:15).

[653] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 12.

[654] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 12.

[655] Tertullian carries the term "your work" over from verse 9 into verse 10.

remind them what works the Law of the Sabbath forbade — i.e. human works — He was called 'Lord of the Sabbath'" (Mark 2:23-28).

"The Creator did not break the Sabbath, even at the time when the ark was carried around Jericho (Joshua 6:1-15). That was really God's work, which He commanded Himself, and which He had ordered for the sake of the lives of His servants, when exposed to the perils of war. He has in a certain place expressed an aversion of Sabbaths, by calling them *your Sabbaths* (Isaiah 1:13-14 LXX). He reckoned them as men's Sabbaths, not His own, because they were celebrated without the fear of God by a people full of iniquities, and loving God 'with the lip, not the heart' (Isaiah 29:13). His own Sabbaths (those, that is, which were kept according to His prescription) are in a different position; for by the same prophet, in a later passage, He declared them to be 'true and delightful, and inviolable'" (Isaiah 58:13-14, 56:4-8, 66:23-24).

"Thus Christ did not at all rescind the Sabbath; He kept the Law of the Sabbath. He gave them the relief of food when they were hungry by feeding the 5000 (Luke 9:12-17), and cured the withered hand (Matthew 12:9-14). In each case He intimated by facts, 'I came not to destroy the Law, but to fulfill it' (Matthew 5:17). He fulfilled the Law, while interpreting its condition. He exhibited in a clear light the different kinds of work, while doing what the Law exempts from the sacredness of the Sabbath. He imparts to the Sabbath itself, that which from the beginning had been consecrated by the benediction of the Father, an additional sanctity by His own beneficent action. In like manner, the prophet Elisha on the Sabbath day restored to life the dead son of the Shunammite woman (2 Kings 4:32-37). It was *proper employment* for the Sabbaths of old to do good, to save life, not to destroy it. Christ introduced nothing new[656], which did not follow the example, the gentleness and the mercy of the Creator".

When Jesus sent the Twelve and the Seventy Apostles out two by two to perform miracles in His Name, He followed the same pattern set by Elisha. Tertullian noted[657] these similarities:

"When Elisha sent his servant Gehazi to raise the Shunammite's son from death, I rather think he gave him these instructions. 'Gird up your loins, and take my staff in your hand, and go your way. If you meet any man, don't greet him; and if anyone greets you, don't answer him' (2 Kings 4:29). What is a wayside blessing but a mutual greeting as men meet? So also the Lord commands: 'Into whatever house they enter, let them say, Peace be to it' (Luke 10:5). He follows the very same example as Elisha's servant. Elisha commanded his servant the same greeting when he met the Shunammite; he was to say to her: 'Peace to your husband, peace to your child'" (2 Kings 4:26).

The Holy Women

One of the messages of this Reading about Elisha is: "He who receives a prophet in the name of a prophet shall receive a prophet's reward" (Matthew 10:41). The Shunammite woman

[656] For a more detailed Study of the Sabbath in the life of Jesus, see the Study of the Gospel lesson for the 10th Sunday of Luke in Mark Kern, The Whole Counsel of God, St. Athanasius Church Press, 1996, 1998.

[657] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 24.

brings to mind the activities of the Myrrh-Bearing Women that accompanied Jesus (Mark 15:40-41) and provided for Him out of their possessions (Luke 8:3).

There are eight women that are generally identified as the Myrrh-Bearers. Each of the four Gospels gives different aspects of the roles of these eight women at the Cross and at the tomb on Pascha morning, perhaps since the eight women arrived in different groups and at different times. The eight are:

- Mary Magdalene
- Mary Theotokos (The Virgin Mary)
- Joanna
- Salome
- Mary the wife of Cleopas (or Alphaeus)
- Susanna
- Mary of Bethany
- Martha of Bethany

Of the eight, the first five are the more prominent and outspoken. The last three, according to tradition, were also included. Five of these women were also very wealthy. The women of means were Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and Mary and Martha of Bethany.

These eight women had been together a lot during Jesus' three-year public ministry. Mary Magdalene, Joanna, Susanna and others (Luke 8:3) are described as providing for Jesus out of their possessions (that is, acting as deaconesses). These same women had faithfully followed Him from Galilee and had come up with Him to Jerusalem (Matthew 27:55, Mark 15:40-41, Luke 23:55).

Throughout the Lord's three-year earthly ministry, the Myrrh-Bearing Women stayed in the background but contributed to everyone's support with meals and provisions. After the resurrection, these women are mentioned as being prominent during the prayers and supplications in the upper room prior to Pentecost. During this time, the Virgin Mary was especially prominent. All the things that the Virgin Mary had kept and pondered in her heart (Matthew 2:19) now needed to come out in order that everyone might understand the Word of the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:18ff) and how Jesus had to be crucified.

In an Epistle attributed to Clement of Rome, Clement compared[658] the Shunammite woman very favorably to the Myrrh-Bearing Women. They both lived a holy life and contributed to the ministry of holy men out of their possessions.

> "Many holy women ministered to holy men of their substance, as the Shunammite woman ministered to Elisha; but she did not live with him, but the prophet lived in a house apart (2 Kings 4:8-11). When her son died, she wanted to throw herself at the feet of the prophet; but his attendant would not allow her, but restrained her. Elisha said to his servant: 'Let her alone, because her soul is distressed' (2 Kings 4:25-27). From these things, then, we ought to understand their manner of life. To Jesus Christ our Lord, women ministered out of their substance (Luke 8:3); but they did not live with him. But they lived in a chaste, holy and blameless manner before the Lord, and finished their course, and received the crown in our Lord God Almighty".

[658] Clement of Rome, "Two Epistles Concerning Virginity", II, 15, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

Holy Relics

The Reading about Elisha also speaks of the use of Holy Relics. Elisha sent his servant Gehazi ahead to the woman's house to heal her son with his staff, by laying the staff on the child's face. But Gehazi was unable to do so, just like the Twelve were unable to cast out a demon because of their lack of preparation with prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:19-21). Holy relics can be useful, but they are not some kind of magic wand that can be used by anyone.

John Cassian focused[659] on Elisha's use of his staff. The staff is the Cross, and it is useful against the demons that we encounter. Just as Peter's shadow (Acts 5:14-15), Paul's aprons (Acts 19:11-12) and even Elisha's bones (2 Kings 13:20-21) had power because of the effect of the Cross on their owner, so relics of the saints have power to one who believes.

> "Elisha teaches the use of a staff; as he says to Gehazi, his servant, when sending him to raise the woman's son to life. 'Take my staff and run and go and place it on the lad's face that he may live' (2 Kings 4:29). The prophet would certainly not have given it to him to take unless he had been in the habit of constantly carrying it about in his hand. The carrying of the staff spiritually teaches that they ought never to walk unarmed among so many barking dogs of faults and invisible beasts of spiritual wickedness. From this, the blessed David, in his longing to be free, says, 'Deliver not to the beasts, O Lord, the soul that trusts in You' (Psalm 74:19 LXX). But when they attack them, they ought to beat them off with the sign of the cross and drive them far away. When they rage furiously against them they should annihilate them by the constant recollection of the Lord's passion and by following the example of His life".

Cyril of Jerusalem pondered[660] how Elisha raised the dead twice. In the second case, it was due to a virtue that resides in his relics due to its close association with his righteous soul for many years.

> "I speak of Elisha, who raised the dead twice; once in his lifetime and once after his death. When alive he worked the resurrection by means of his own soul. Not only the souls of the just are honored, but also in the bodies of the just there is a power. The corpse, which was cast into the sepulcher of Elisha, when it touched the dead body of the prophet, was raised (2 Kings 13:20-21); the dead body of the prophet did the work of the soul. That which was dead and buried gave life to the dead, and though it gave life, yet it continued itself among the dead. Why? If Elisha should rise again, the work might be ascribed to his soul alone. This also shows that even though the soul is not present, a virtue resides in the body of the saints, because of the righteous soul which has for so many years dwelt in it, and used it as its servant. Let us not foolishly disbelieve, as though this thing had not happened. If handkerchiefs and aprons, coming from outside, touching the bodies of the diseased, raised up the sick (Acts 19:12), how much more should the actual body of the Prophet raise the dead?"

[659] John Cassian, Institutes of the Coenobia, I, 8.
[660] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVIII, 16.

Ambrose of Milan noted[661] that in both cases where Elisha raised the dead, it occurred after close contact with his physical body. This foreshadowed the raising of the dead after the death of Christ (Matthew 27:51-53).

> "Elijah, then, raised the dead, but he prayed — he did not command. Elisha raised one to life after laying himself upon the dead body (2 Kings 4:34-35), in accordance with its posture. And, again, the contact of Elisha's corpse gave life to the dead (2 Kings 13:20-21), that the prophet might foreshadow the coming of Him, Who, being sent in the likeness of sinful flesh, should, even after His burial, raise the dead to life" (Matthew 27:51-53).

7th Parable from the Old Testament: Zephaniah 3:8-15 "The Remnant"

Zephaniah was the great-great grandson of King Hezekiah (Zephaniah 1:1), and he prophesied in the days of the righteous King Josiah (Zephaniah 1:1), who instituted many reforms (2 Kings 23:25). Zephaniah, as a prophet and a member of the royal family, was doubtless influential in Josiah's reforms. A contemporary of Zephaniah was Jeremiah (Jeremiah 1:2) and there are many similarities in their descriptions of apostate Israel. Nahum, who prophesied the destruction of Nineveh, was also a contemporary of Zephaniah.

Zephaniah echoed the prophecy of Huldah the prophetess, who prophesied that the Babylonian Captivity would occur after the death of King Josiah, since Josiah's heart was tender toward the Lord (2 Kings 22:13-19).

After this, Zephaniah prophesied that neighboring countries will be destroyed, Philistia (including the cities of Gaza, Ashkelon, Ashdod and Ekron), Moab and Ammon. Philistia will become the pasturage for local shepherds (Zephaniah 2:5-7), which describes its land-use for the last 2000 years by the Palestinians[662]. Moab and Ammon will become an eternal salt desert (Zephaniah 2:9), which is a description[663] of their former territory Southeast of the Dead Sea.

But Zephaniah went beyond the immediate events of his days. He also wrote, "In that day, that I will search Jerusalem with a candle, and will take vengeance on the men that despise the things committed to them. But they say in their hearts, 'The Lord will not do any good, neither will he do any evil'. Their power shall be for a spoil, and their houses for utter desolation. They shall build houses, but shall not dwell in them; and they shall plant vineyards, but shall not drink the wine of them" (Zephaniah 1:12-13). This happened in c. 70 AD as the Romans searched Jerusalem after the siege. Many people had gone into hiding in the caverns, tombs and sewers to escape, hoping to emerge alive after the Romans had destroyed the city. But the Romans were so angry with the Jews that they diligently searched everywhere for remnants. Josephus wrote[664], "They were not able to lie hidden either from God or from the

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[661] Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, III, iv, 30.

[662] The Hebrew word for "Philistine" is *Pelishti*, from which comes the English word Palestinian.

[663] In the words of an early explorer of modern times, "Nothing but ruins are found here by the amazed explorer. Not an inhabited village remains, and not an Ammonite exists on the face of the earth". From Thomson, Land and Book, III, 622; quoted by Merrill Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 45.

[664] Josephus, Wars of the Jews, VI, vii, 370-373.
Josephus, Wars of the Jews, III, vii, 336.

Romans". As they had requested, "Christ's blood was on them and on their children" (Matthew 27:25).

Zephaniah also spoke of the events surrounding the Second Coming of Christ, and it is this aspect of his prophecies that is the subject for the Holy Saturday Reading. The Reading is as follows:

> Therefore wait upon Me, says the Lord, until the day when I rise up for a witness. Because My judgment *shall be* on the gatherings of the nations, to draw to Me kings, to pour out upon them all *My* fierce anger; for the whole earth shall be consumed with the fire of My jealousy. For then will I turn to the peoples a tongue for her generation, that all may call on the Name of the Lord, to serve Him under one yoke. From the boundaries of the rivers of Ethiopia will I receive My dispersed ones; they shall offer sacrifices to Me. In that day you shall not be ashamed of all your practices, wherein you have transgressed against Me. For then will I take away from you your disdainful pride, and you shall no more magnify yourself upon My holy mountain. And I will leave in you a meek and lowly people. And the remnant of Israel shall fear the Name of the Lord, and shall do no iniquity, neither shall they speak vanity; neither shall a deceitful tongue be found in their mouth. For they shall feed, and lie down, and there shall be none to terrify them.
>
> Rejoice, O daughter of Zion; cry aloud, O daughter of Jerusalem; rejoice and delight yourself with all your heart, O daughter of Jerusalem. The Lord has taken away your iniquities, He has ransomed you from the hand of your enemies. The Lord, the King of Israel, is in the midst of you; you shall not see evil any more. At that time the Lord shall say to Jerusalem, 'Be of good courage, Zion; let not your hands be slack. The Lord your God is in you; the Mighty One shall save you. He shall bring joy upon you, and shall refresh you with His love; and He shall rejoice over you with delight as in a day of feasting'. And I will gather your afflicted ones. Alas! Who has taken up a reproach against her? Behold, I *will* work in you for your sake at that time, says the Lord. And I will save her that was oppressed, and receive her that was rejected; and I will make them praised and honored in all the earth. And *their enemies* shall be ashamed at that time, when I shall deal well with you, and at the time when I shall receive you. For I will make you honored and praised among all the nations of the earth, when I turn back your captivity before you, says the Lord (Zephaniah 3:8-20).

The Holy Saturday Reading from Zephaniah begins at the Second Coming of Christ with the wrath of God against His enemies (Zephaniah 3:8, Revelation 19:11-21). Peter wrote that, the Word of God created the heavens and the earth out of water; then, they were destroyed by water during the Flood of Noah. The same Word now preserves the heavens and earth, being reserved for fire on Judgment Day (2 Peter 3:5-7). The other Minor Prophets speak of this also. Micah wrote of the Lord's return; the mountains will melt under Him like wax before a fire (Micah 1:4, 7). Zephaniah wrote "all the earth will be devoured in the fire of His jealousy and zeal" (Zephaniah 1:18, 3:8). Nahum, speaking of Nineveh, wrote that the mountains quake and the hills dissolve as His wrath is poured out like fire (Nahum 1:5-6).

Paul refers to the saints "being saved, yet so as through fire", where "the day of the Lord will declare and reveal by fire each one's work of what sort it is". Gold, silver, precious stones

will survive the fire; wood, hay, straw will be burned (1 Corinthians 3:11-15). All of the above is a mystery that we are not given a lot of detailed information about. We need to trust the Grace of God in these things.

There are other references to the fire associated with the Lord's judgment at the close of this age. Daniel described the Throne of God as a flame of fire, where a river of fire came out from His Presence (Daniel 7:9-10). All men's works are to be judged by this fire (1 Corinthians 3:12-15), where the fire is an uncreated fire. The uncreated fire of God has already judged some people. Examples of this are the cities of Sodom and Gomorrah (Genesis 19:24), 250 men in Korah's rebellion (Numbers 16:35, 26:10), and the sons of Aaron, Nadab and Abihu (Leviticus 10:2). Others will be judged in the Lake of Fire at the close of this age (Revelation 20:13-15, 21:8).

Prior to this judgment, the saints are told to wait and leave judgment for the Lord at His Second Coming. Cyprian of Carthage quoted[665] Zephaniah and Revelation together in teaching about this:

> "I know, beloved brethren, that very many are eager, on account of the burden, to be quickly avenged of those who act harshly and rage against them. We must not withhold the fact that we are placed in the midst of these storms of a jarring world. Moreover, in the persecutions both of Jews, Gentiles and heretics, we may patiently wait for the day of God's vengeance, and not hurry to revenge our suffering with a whining haste. Since it is written, 'Wait upon Me, says the Lord, in the day of My rising up for a testimony; for My judgment is to the congregations of the nations, that I may take hold on the kings, and pour out on them My fury' (Zephaniah 3:8). The Lord commands us to wait, and to bear with brave patience the day of future vengeance. He also speaks in the Apocalypse, saying, 'Do not seal the words of the prophecy of this book, for the time is at hand for them that persevere in injuring to injure, and for him that is filthy to be filthy still. But he who is righteous, let him be righteous still; he who is holy, let him be holy still. Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give to every one according to his deeds' (Revelation 22:10-12). Also the martyrs, crying out and hastening with grief breaking forth to their revenge, are bidden still to wait, and to give patience for the times to be fulfilled and the martyrs to be completed. 'And when He had opened the fifth seal, I saw under the altar of God the souls of those that had been slain for the word of God, and for the testimony, which they held. And they cried with a loud voice, saying, 'How long, O Lord, holy and true, do You not judge and avenge our blood on them that dwell on the earth?' Then a white robe was given to each of them; and it was said to them that they should rest a little while longer, until the number of their fellow-servants and brethren is completed, who afterwards shall be slain after their example'" (Revelation 6:9-11).

Following this reference to the judgment of God, Zephaniah described the characteristics of what His Kingdom will be like. We have a foretaste of this in the Church.

1. All will call on the Name of the Lord (Zephaniah 3:9, Jeremiah 31:34).

[665] Cyprian, Treatises, IX, 21.

2. From all parts of the earth, people will bring sacrifices of praise (Zephaniah 3:10, Hebrews 13:15).
3. No one will feel shame for what they had done in their life (Zephaniah 3:11, Isaiah 45:17, 54:4).
4. Everyone will be humble and lowly; sin will be gone (Zephaniah 3:12-13, Isaiah 11:6-9).
5. Everyone will live in safety and security with the Lord in their midst (Zephaniah 3:13-15, Revelation 7:17)

2nd Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 60:1-16 "The Gathering of the Elect"

Part of Holy Saturday is a looking forward to the Second Coming of Christ. Isaiah's prophecy is applicable for Holy Saturday in that it addresses mostly events that will occur at the Second Coming of Christ and at the Resurrection of the dead. In these prophecies, when Isaiah speaks of "Jerusalem", he means the "New Jerusalem" (Revelation 21:1-3), and Isaiah's words are strikingly similar to those of John in Revelation. Isaiah uses the same imagery that Paul later used to refer to the gathering of the Just to Christ at His Second Coming. Finally he describes the martyrs, who had been crucified for their faith; they will glorify the New Jerusalem. In between all this, Isaiah mentioned the Magi, who visited Christ as a toddler, and their contribution to the glory of God. This Reading can be divided into three parts:

1. The Sons of the Resurrection: Isaiah 60:1-4

The Reading from Isaiah is: "Be enlightened, be enlightened, O Jerusalem, for your light is come, and the glory of the Lord is risen upon you. Behold, darkness shall cover the earth, and *there shall be* gross darkness on the nations; but the Lord shall appear upon you, and his glory shall be seen upon you. And kings shall walk in your light, and nations in your brightness. Lift up your eyes round about, and behold your children gathered; all your sons have come from far, and your daughters shall be *carried*[666] *on the hip*" (Isaiah 60:1-4 LXX).

Isaiah's words are directed toward events that will occur at the Resurrection of the dead at Christ's return. The "darkness that covers the earth" is the "strong delusion" brought on by the "lawless one" and by the "mystery of lawlessness" (2 Thessalonians 2:7-11) that precedes the Second Coming. During this period, the light of God present within the Church has been available to influence kings and nations.

Isaiah went on to describe "Jerusalem" in words that are very similar to the description of the New Jerusalem by the Apostle John. For example:

- The sun and moon will no longer be needed for light, because the Lord will be an everlasting Light (Isaiah 60:19-20, Revelation 21:23).
- Jerusalem's gates will be open continually (Isaiah 60:11, Revelation 21:25).
- The glory, honor and wealth of the Gentiles will be brought to Jerusalem (Isaiah 60:11-14, Revelation 21:24).

The "children that will be gathered" (Isaiah 60:4) are the "sons of the Resurrection" (Luke 20:36). In explaining to the Sadducees what the Resurrection of the Dead will be like, the

[666] "Carried on the hip" is the reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls text.

Lord referred to the just as being equal to the angels and sons of God (Matthew 22:30). Paul used the term "adoption as sons" to describe how we inherit the Kingdom of God (Ephesians 1:5, Galatians 4:5, Romans 8:15, 23). Paul also quoted part of this text from Isaiah in his letter to the Ephesians:

> "But all things that are exposed are made clear by the light, for whatever makes clear is light. Therefore He says, 'Awake, you who sleep; arise from the dead, and Christ will give you light' (Isaiah 60:1 paraphrase). See then that you walk circumspectly, not as fools but as wise, redeeming the time, because the days are evil (Ephesians 5:13-15).

Methodius stated[667] that the "children" are the "sons of the Resurrection" from the Church, who will be raised at the Last Day. Their "light" is a garment of light similar to what Adam and Eve had in the Garden, and this contrasts with the darkness that had covered the earth.

> "It is the Church whose children shall come to her with all speed after the resurrection, running to her from all quarters. She rejoices receiving the light, which never goes down, and clothed with the brightness of the Word as with a robe. With what other more precious or honorable ornament was it becoming that the queen should be adorned, to be led as a Bride to the Lord, when she had received a garment of light, and therefore was called by the Father? Come, then, let us go forward in our discourse, and look upon this marvelous woman as upon virgins prepared for a marriage, pure and undefiled, perfect and radiating a permanent beauty, lacking nothing of the brightness of light. Instead of a dress, clothed with light itself; and instead of precious stones, her head adorned with shining stars. Instead of the clothing, which we have, she had light; and for gold and brilliant stones, she had stars. But not stars such as those which are set in the visible heaven, but better and more resplendent, so that those may rather be considered as their images and likeness".
>
> "These promises will be fulfilled after the resurrection. The Holy Spirit does not speak of that well-known town in Judea; but truly of that heavenly city, the blessed Jerusalem. He declares this to be the assembly of the souls which God plainly promises to place first, 'above His chief joy' (Psalm 137:6), in the new dispensation, settling those who are clothed in the pure dwelling of unapproachable light. They had it not in mind to put off their wedding garment — that is, to relax their minds by wandering thoughts".

2. The Gathering of the Elect to Christ: Isaiah 60:5-9

The Reading from Isaiah is: "Then shall you see, and fear, and be amazed in your heart; for the wealth of the sea shall come round to you, and of nations and peoples. Herds of camels shall come to you, and the camels of Midian and Ephah shall cover you. All from Sheba shall come bearing gold, and shall bring frankincense, and they shall publish the salvation of the Lord. All the flocks of Kedar shall be gathered, and the rams of Nebaioth shall come; and acceptable sacrifices shall be offered on my altar, and my house of prayer shall be glorified. Who are these *that* fly as clouds, and as doves with young ones to me? The isles have waited for me; and the ships of Tarshish among the first, to bring your children from afar, and their silver and their gold

[667] Methodius, Banquet of the Ten Virgins, VIII, 5. See also Methodius, Banquet of the Ten Virgins, IV, 5.

with them. All *this is* for the sake of the holy Name of the Lord, and because the Holy One of Israel is glorified" (Isaiah 60:5-9 LXX).

The Arrival of the Magi[668]:

There are two references to the gathering of the Elect included in Isaiah's prophecy. The first refers to the arrival of the Magi from Persia to visit the toddler Jesus in Bethlehem, which occurred when He was about a year old (Matthew 2:7-11). Their gifts indicate that they knew something about why He had been born, and they had traveled about 800 miles to see Him.

The treasures the Magi gave to the baby Jesus were gold, frankincense and myrrh (Matthew 2:11). It was common for kings to present gifts to other kings when they visited, where there was often some significance to the actual gifts presented. When the Queen of Sheba visited King Solomon, she was very impressed by all he did and by his wisdom. Therefore she presented him with 120 talents (4.5 tons) of gold plus a great deal of spices and precious stones (1 Kings 10:1-10). The gold in the Magi's gifts thus represents earthly royalty visiting heavenly royalty.

Frankincense was a costly gum-resin from plants that grew in certain parts of Arabia. It was to be used only in connection with the worship of God and was customarily beaten very finely (Exodus 30:34-36, Leviticus 2:1-2, 14-16, 6:14-18). For the Magi to give frankincense to Jesus indicated they knew something about His deity and holiness.

Myrrh was made from the gum of an Arabian tree (Balsamodendron Myrrha). It was used both for Holy Oil (Exodus 30:22-33), for cosmetics (Esther 2:12) and for embalming (John 19:39). The Magi giving myrrh to Jesus indicated that they knew He was Messiah and that He planned to give His life for mankind.

Psalm 72 also includes a prophecy regarding the Magi who were to visit Jesus as an infant, "Let the kings of Tarshish and of the islands bring presents; the kings of Sheba and Seba offer gifts. Let all kings bow down before Him; all nations serve Him" (Psalm 72:10, 11).

The "ships of Tarshish" were known from the days of King Solomon, where Solomon used "the ships of Tarshish" as part of a merchant marine (1 Kings 10:22). These "ships of Tarshish" were part of commodity trading and carried refined copper, precious metals and other valuables from one port to another. King Solomon was also sought after for his wisdom by all the earth (1 Kings 10:24).

The Magi who visited Jesus as an infant brought gold from Sheba, which was on the Western side of the Arabian peninsula next to Ophir. Joseph and Mary used this gold to live on during the Flight to Egypt. According to tradition[669], the entourage of the Magi included Melchior from Persia, Gaspar from Arabia (Sheba), and Balthazar, a black man from Egypt (Seba). They came to bow down and to worship Him who was born King of the Jews (Matthew 2:2, 11).

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[668] For more details on the Magi, see Mark Kern, "The Sunday After Christmas", The Whole Counsel of God, 1996, 1998, pp. 422-425.

[669] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 25.

Isaiah had also referred to the arrival of the Magi earlier in his prophecy, and Isaiah spoke of the Magi in connection with the coming of the Holy Spirit, even though the Holy Spirit arrived 32 years after the Magi. He had said, "Thus says the Lord, 'In a favorable time I have answered you, and in a day of salvation I have helped you'" (Isaiah 49:8). The help referred to is the Lord's guidance to springs or fountains of water (Isaiah 49:10), which represents the Holy Spirit. Gentiles will be part of this: "Behold, they shall come from afar; and lo, these will come from the North and the West, and these from the land of Persia (Isaiah 49:12 LXX). The Church Fathers have interpreted this as referring to the Magi coming from Persia. In this day of salvation, the Lord will comfort His people (Isaiah 49:13) and have compassion on them (Isaiah 49:10, 13) as a nursing mother does her child (Isaiah 49:14-15). Thus we receive the Comforter (John 14:16, 26; 15:26; 16:7, Acts 9:31, Romans 8:15) with baptism and the newly baptized receive the pure milk of the Word (1 Peter 2:2).

But the wealth brought by the Magi and by the Queen of Sheba does not even compare to all the treasure in heaven that has been brought into the Church by the Gentiles over the last 20 centuries. The Lord encouraged everyone to sell all that they had in order to obtain this treasure (Mark 10:21), because it is the treasure in heaven that is of lasting value (Luke 12:33-34).

The Gathering at the Second Coming of Christ

The Apostle Paul prophesied of the gathering of the Elect at the Second Coming in these terms:

> "For this we say to you by the word of the Lord, that we who are alive *and* remain until the coming of the Lord will by no means precede those who are asleep. For the Lord Himself will descend from heaven with a shout, with the voice of an archangel, and with the trumpet of God. And the dead in Christ will rise first. Then we who are alive *and* remain shall be caught up together with them in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air. And thus we shall always be with the Lord. Therefore comfort one another with these words" (1 Thessalonians 4:15-18).

Tertullian stated[670] that Isaiah's prophecy about "flying as clouds to Me" refers to the same gathering of the Elect that Paul referred to.

> "He says that those who 'remain until the coming of Christ', along with 'the dead in Christ, shall rise first', being 'caught up in the clouds to meet the Lord in the air'. I find it was in their foresight of all this, that the heavenly intelligence gazed with admiration on 'the Jerusalem, which is above' (Galatians 4:26), and by the mouth of Isaiah, said long ago, 'Who are these that fly as clouds, and as doves with their young ones, to me?' (Isaiah 60:8 LXX) Now, as Christ has prepared for us this ascension into heaven, He must be the Christ of whom Amos spoke. 'It is He who builds His ascent up to the heavens' (Amos 9:6 LXX), even for Himself and His people.

Gregory of Nyssa applied[671] Isaiah's words to the personal characteristics of those who will be raised:

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[670] Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 5, 15.
Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 24.

[671] Gregory of Nyssa, "On Virginity", II Ascetic and Moral Works, 18.

"For virtue is a light and buoyant thing, and all who live in her way 'fly like clouds', as Isaiah says, 'and as doves with their young ones' (Isaiah 60:8). But sin is a heavy affair, 'sitting', as another of the prophets says, 'on a talent[672] of lead'" (Zechariah 5:7 LXX).

Cyril of Jerusalem mentioned[673] other words from the prophets that speak of the same events.

"Finally, my brethren rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, rejoice: for your redemption has drawn near (Philippians 4:4), and the heavenly host of the Angels is waiting for your salvation. There is now the voice of one crying in the wilderness, 'Prepare the way of the Lord' (Isaiah 40:3). The Prophet cries, 'He, that thirsts, come to the water' (Isaiah 55:1); and immediately afterwards, 'Listen to me, and you shall eat that which is good, and your soul shall delight itself in good things' (Isaiah 55:2 LXX). Within a little while you shall hear that excellent lesson which says, 'Shine, shine, O you New Jerusalem; for your light is come' (Isaiah 60:1). Of this Jerusalem the prophet has said, 'Afterwards you shall be called the city of righteousness, Zion, the faithful mother of cities (Isaiah 1:26 LXX). Because of the Law which went forth out of Zion, and the word of the Lord from Jerusalem' (Isaiah 2:3), which word has been showered on the whole world. To her Isaiah says concerning you, 'Lift up your eyes round about, and behold your children gathered together' (Isaiah 49:18 LXX). She answers, saying, 'Who are these that fly as a cloud, and as doves with their young ones to me?' (Isaiah 60:8 LXX) That is, clouds, because of their spiritual nature, and doves, from their purity".

Gregory of Nyssa applied[674] Isaiah's words to the numberless growth of the Church that will "fly to Him" at the Resurrection.

"But now, when I see you thronging here with all your families, I am reminded of the prophetic saying, which Isaiah proclaimed from afar off, addressing by anticipation the Church with her fair and numerous children. 'Who are these that fly as a cloud and as doves with their young to me?' (Isaiah 60:8 LXX) And he adds this also, 'The place is too narrow for me; give room that I may dwell' (Isaiah 49:20 LXX). The power of the Spirit made with reference to these predictions referring to the populous Church of God, which was afterwards to fill the whole world from end to end".

3. The Glory of the Lord in Zion by the Cross: Isaiah 60:11-16:

The Reading from Isaiah is: "And strangers shall build your walls, and their kings shall wait upon you: for by reason of my wrath I smote you, and by reason of mercy I loved you. And your gates shall be opened continually; they shall not be shut day nor night; to bring in to you the power of the Gentiles, and their kings as captives. For the nations and the kings, which will not serve you shall perish; and those nations shall be made utterly desolate. And the glory of

[672] A "talent" was a measure of weight, and is equivalent to about 75 pounds.
[673] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVIII, 34.

[674] Gregory of Nyssa, "On the Baptism of Christ", V Oratorical Works.

Lebanon shall come to you, with the cypress, *and the plane*[675] and the pine together, to glorify My Holy Place. And the sons of them that afflicted you, and of them that provoked you, shall come to you in fear; and you shall be called Zion, the city of the Holy One of Israel".

"Because you have become desolate and hated, and there was no helper, therefore I will make you a perpetual gladness, a joy of many generations. And you shall suck the milk of the Gentiles, and shall eat the wealth of kings; and shall know that I am the Lord that saves you and delivers you, the Holy One of Israel" (Isaiah 60:10-16 LXX).

This Reading speaks about the Kingdom of God restored in glory when the Lord returns. At this time, there will no longer be the sun for light by day or the moon by night, "but you will have the Lord for an everlasting light, and your God for your glory" (Isaiah 60:19). The same description was used by the Apostle John to describe the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:23).

The dominant theme of this Reading is that the wealth of the nations will be brought to Zion (i.e. the New Jerusalem). There is a hint of judgment also: nations not serving the Lord will perish and those nations will be utterly ruined (Isaiah 60:11-12).

Included in the wealth of the nations are three types of trees. It might help to think of this wealth as "treasure in heaven". These trees will "beautify the place of My sanctuary and make the place of My feet glorious" (Isaiah 60:13). While the Reading states that "the glory of Lebanon will come to you", notably absent are cedars of Lebanon. In Solomon's Temple, cedar wood was used extensively for the roof, walls, etc. (1 Kings 6:9-20, 36). Cyprus was used for the floors and the doors to the nave (1 Kings 6:15, 34), where the floors and walls were overlaid with gold (1 Kings 6:30, 20-22). The doors to the inner sanctuary and the doorposts for the entrance to the nave were olivewood (1 Kings 6:32-33). Yet the three trees mentioned are none of these.

The three trees, representing the wealth of the nations are also mentioned together as being among those that the Lord will cause to grow in the Arabah (Isaiah 41:19). The Arabah is the wilderness region between Israel and the Red Sea where Israel wandered for forty years. It is in this area that numerous monasteries thrived beginning in the 3rd-4th Century; and some still exist. Archaeologists have discovered[676] over 60 such monasteries just in the Arabah of which a number are still active.

The three trees Isaiah mentioned are:

1. The *te'ashshuwr*, thought to be similar to a cedar since the word means straight and erect.
2. The *tidhar*, a hard wood tree that derives from a word meaning lasting and may be a species of oak.
3. The *berowsh*, which was used for lances and may have been a kind of cypress.

These trees are the likely types of trees that would be used to make crosses to execute criminals. To be used for that purpose, the tree would have to be tall, straight and strong; but yet one would not want to use a tree like prime cedar and oak, since they are valuable for other purposes. Thus, the crosses used to execute Jesus and other Christians over the first three centuries were probably made from these three types of trees.

[675] "The plane" is the reading from the Dead Sea Scrolls.
[676] Biblical Archaeology Review, September/October 1995, pp. 28-37; July/August 1985 pp. 27-41

These three trees "glorify My Holy Place" (Isaiah 60:13) because the death and martyrdom of the saints is very precious to the Lord (Psalm 116:15). The monks living in the Arabah fit this description also since their goal has always been to die to themselves and take up their crosses in poverty, humility and prayer imitating the Apostle Paul (Mark 2:20, Luke 5:35, Acts 13:2-3, 14:23, Luke 14:26-28, 1 Corinthians 4:11, 2 Corinthians 11:27).

13th Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 63:11-64:5 "The Second Coming"

This Reading from Isaiah can be divided into three parts. Isaiah addresses first a remembrance of the days of the Exodus, when Moses and Aaron led God's people like a sheep through the wilderness. Then he contrasts this with his days, where God seems to have abandoned His people due to their idolatry. Finally, Isaiah longs for the Second Coming and the Presence of the Lord.

1. Recalling the Days of Old

The first section of the Reading from Isaiah is as follows: "And he said, Is it not my people? The children surely will not be rebellious. And He became to them deliverance out of all their affliction; not an ambassador, nor a messenger, but Himself saved them, because He loved them and spared them. He himself redeemed them, and took them up, and lifted them up all the days of old".

"But they disobeyed, and provoked His Holy Spirit: so He turned to be an enemy, He himself contended against them. Then He remembered the ancient days, *saying*, 'Where is He that brought up from the sea the shepherd of the sheep? Where is He that put his Holy Spirit in them? Who led Moses with his right hand, the arm of his glory? He forced the water *to separate* from before him, to make himself an everlasting Name. He led them through the deep, as a horse through the wilderness, and they fainted not, and as cattle through a plain. The Spirit came down from the Lord, and guided them. Thus You led Your people, to make Yourself a glorious Name" (Isaiah 63:8-14).

The section of Isaiah's prophecy just prior[677] to this Reading for Holy Saturday is used for the Feast Day of the Ascension of Christ. As the Lord's disciples stood on the Mount of Olives gazing toward heaven watching the Lord being taken up by a cloud, two angels spoke to them. "This same Jesus who was taken up from you into heaven will so come in like manner as you saw Him go into heaven" (Acts 1:9-11). In this reading from Isaiah for the Ascension, then, the Lord's return is described. He comes as a King, majestic in His apparel, marching in the greatness of His strength (Isaiah 63:1; see also Revelation 19:11, 12, 16).

The Reading for Holy Saturday begins with a response to Israel's rebellion and grieving the Holy Spirit (Isaiah 63:10), where the Holy Spirit became their enemy. During the days of the Exodus, when Moses led His people out of Egypt, the Holy Spirit led them and guided them (Isaiah 63:13-14). The imagery refers to the Lord as "His Glorious Arm" which went "at the right hand of Moses who divided the waters before them to make for Himself an everlasting Name" (Isaiah 63:12).

[677] That is, Isaiah 62:10-63:9.

These events of the Exodus were known all over the ancient world as a marvel and a wonder from all the spectacular signs, and nations began to be drawn to Israel to find out more about her God. Some examples:

- **Speaking from the Midst of Fire:** The spectacular events associated with the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai became known to the world (Deuteronomy 4:33). This included the thunder, the lightning, the earthquakes, the smoke, and a huge fire reaching to the heavens (Exodus 19:16-19, Deuteronomy 4:11). God spoke to the people from the midst of the fire (Deuteronomy 4:36), and Moses walked up the mountain right into this fire (Exodus 24:16-18). Clement of Alexandria referred[678] to this as, "The Lord's Voice, the Word, without shape, the Power of the Word, the luminous Word of the Lord, the Truth from heaven, coming to the assembly of the Church".
- **The Exodus from Egypt:** All the neighboring nations knew how the plagues and the events at the Red Sea decimated Egypt (Joshua 2:9-11). They knew how the Lord had fought for Israel against Amalek in the wilderness (Exodus 17:8-16). They knew how Israel had overrun Og and Sihon, the kings of the Amorites who were both stronger than Israel (Deuteronomy 4:38), and how the hornets had helped (Joshua 2:10, 24:12).
- **These Events Were Unique in World History:** This had never been done before; taking out a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and by wonders (Deuteronomy 4:34-37). How could any nation contend with Israel when, with them, the supernatural was normal?

Cyril of Jerusalem used[679] the illustration of Jonah (in the sea monster) and Israel descending into the sea interchangeably with Christ descending into the earth or Hades.

> "Of this, the Prophet Jonah formed the type, when he prayed out of the belly of the sea monster, and said, 'I cried in my affliction', and so on; 'out of the belly of hell' (Jonah 2:2 LXX), and yet he was in the sea monster. But though in the sea monster, he says that he is in Hades; for he was a type of Christ, who was to descend into Hades. After a few words, he says, in the person of Christ, prophesying most clearly, 'My head went down to the roots of the mountains' (Jonah 2:6 Dead Sea Scrolls); and yet he was in the belly of the sea monster. What mountains then encompass you? I know, he says, that I am a type of Him, who is to be laid in the Sepulcher hewn out of the rock. Though he was in the sea, Jonah says, 'I went down to the earth', since he was a type of Christ, who went down into the heart of the earth. Foreseeing the deeds of the Jews who persuaded the soldiers to lie, 'Say that they stole Him away' (Matthew 28:13), he says, 'By regarding lying vanities they forsook their own mercy' (Jonah 2:8). He who had mercy on them came, and was crucified, and rose again, giving His own precious blood both for Jews and Gentiles. Yet say they, 'Say that they stole Him away', having regard to lying vanities. But concerning His Resurrection, Isaiah also says, 'He who brought up from the earth the great Shepherd of the sheep' (Isaiah 63:11); he added the word, great, lest He should be thought on a level with the shepherds[680] who had gone before Him".

[678] Clement of Alexandria, Stromata VI, 3.
[679] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XIV, 20.
[680] Moses and Aaron were described as leading Israel like sheep in the wilderness (Psalm 77:20).

The ancient understanding of the abyss (Luke 8:31, Revelation 9:1, 20:3) was the ocean bottom. The waters themselves are not the abyss, but they cover the abyss. When the waters are rolled back, as at the crossing of the Red Sea, the abyss is exposed.

"You led Your people like a flock by the hand of Moses and Aaron" (Psalm 77:20). He led them like a flock to trample on the abyss as they crossed the Red Sea (Isaiah 63:11), which was five to eight miles wide where the crossing occurred. Similarly when the New Jerusalem descends out of heaven, there will no longer be any sea (Revelation 21:1), and the abyss will be exposed.

The Psalmist Asaph stated that "Your way is in the sea and Your path in the great waters; and Your footsteps are not known" (Psalm 77:19). Melito, the 2nd Century Bishop of Sardis, wrote[681] that this Psalm refers to the Lord's secret operations. Paul described this as "the mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations but now has been revealed to His saints" (Colossians 1:26, also Romans 16:25, Ephesians 1:9).

The birth of the Virgin Mary began a process of revealing this mystery to mankind. "But we speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory, which none of the rulers of this age knew; for had they known, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory. But as it is written: 'Eye has not seen nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him'" (1 Corinthians 2:7-9, Isaiah 64:4). John Chrysostom stated[682] that Isaiah's words

> "They to whom it was not told about Him shall see, and they who have not heard shall understand," (Isaiah 52:15 LXX; Romans 15:21)

refer to the same subject as "the things which eye has not seen, nor ear heard" (Isaiah 64:4).

2. Israel Abandoned by God during Isaiah's Days

The second section of the Reading from Isaiah is as follows: "Turn from heaven, and look from Your Holy Habitation and *from* Your glory. Where is Your zeal and Your strength? Where is the abundance of Your mercy and of Your compassion, that you have withheld Yourself from us? For you are our Father; for *though* Abraham knew us not, and Israel did not acknowledge us, yet do You, O Lord, our Father, deliver us: Your Name has been upon us from the beginning. Why have You caused us to err, O Lord, from Your way? A*nd* have hardened our hearts, that we should not fear you? Return for Your servants' sake, for the sake of the tribes of Your inheritance, that we may inherit a small part of Your holy mountain. We have become as at the beginning, when You did not rule over us, and Your Name was not called upon us" (Isaiah 63:15-19 LXX).

This part of Isaiah (Isaiah 63:15-64:8) is also used as one of the Readings for the Feast Day of the warrior-martyr Demetrios[683]. Isaiah asked that the Lord look down from heaven at the stirrings of the hearts of the righteous. "Abraham does not know us and Israel does not acknowledge us" (Isaiah 63:15-16 LXX). The nation had departed from the ways of the Lord and the righteous were swept away also, as was the case for Demetrios. "The Lord had hardened

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[681] Melito, Fragments, ix, from The Key.
[682] John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, VII, 6.
[683] For a Study on the Warrior-Martyr Demetrios, see http://www.stathanasius.org/site/content/biblestudy for October 26.

their hearts and they had become like those over whom the Lord had never ruled" (Isaiah 63:18-19 LXX).

Isaiah refers to the Lord as "our Father" (Isaiah 63:16), even though "Abraham does not know us and Israel does not recognize us". Those who are expected to know God don't recognize the prophet as one of them. The prophet was asking the Lord to straighten this out.

Cyril of Jerusalem noted[684] that God is called the Father of men not because He begot them Himself, but because He cares for them as adopted sons.

> God is called the Father of men in an improper sense. When in Isaiah God is addressed thus, 'You are our Father, though Abraham is ignorant of us' (Isaiah 63:16), and 'Sarah travailed not with us' (Isaiah 51:2); need we inquire further on this point? The Psalmist says, 'Let them be troubled from His countenance, the Father of the fatherless, and Judge of the widows' (Psalm 68:5 LXX, Isaiah 63:16). Is it not clear to all, that when God is called the Father of orphans who have lately lost their own fathers, He is so named not as begetting them of Himself, but as caring for them and shielding them? But whereas God is in an improper sense the Father of men, of Christ alone is He the Father by nature, not by adoption. He is the Father of men in time, but of Christ before all time, as He said, 'Now, O Father, glorify Me with Your own self, with the glory which I had with You before the world was'" (John 17:5).

Isaiah concluded, "All of us have become like one who is unclean and all our righteous deeds are like a filthy[685] rag" (Isaiah 64:6 LXX). This was the reason the Law a contained detailed requirement for blood sacrifices and this is why Moses wrote "that you may observe it" (Deuteronomy 30:12, 13, 14). One of the purposes of the Law was to identify what is sin in order that repentance and faith might be forthcoming (Romans 7:7ff).

When the Light of God (John 1:4-5) exposes sin in peoples' lives (John 1:9-11) and they reject the light because they love darkness rather than light (John 3:19-21), they open themselves up for demonic activity. Sometimes, as in the case of King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon, being given over to the demonic activity produced a gratitude for the things of God. King Nebuchadnezzar was given over to demons for seven years and lived like an animal, eating grass like a cow. Following that seven years, he repented and his kingdom was restored to him (Daniel 4:28-37). Similarly, Paul delivered one of the men of Corinth over to Satan in order that his spirit might be saved (1 Corinthians 5:1-5). The man repented and was restored to the Church (2 Corinthians 2:5-11). In other cases, however, the demonic activity only produced blasphemy against the Holy Spirit (Matthew 12:24, 31-32, Matthew 12:14, 1 Corinthians 2:8) and a continued zeal to establish one's own righteousness apart from God (Romans 10:3).

Justin Martyr, the 2nd Century theologian, in his long discussion with a learned Jew[686] of his day, applied[687] Isaiah's words to the Jews following Bar Cochba's rebellion against Rome a

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[684] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VII, 10.
[685] Literally as a menstruous cloth.
[686] Trypho described himself as a "Hebrew of Hebrews" (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 1) similar to the way Paul described himself (Philippians 3:5).
[687] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 25-26.

few years earlier in 135 AD[688] and to the subsequent leveling of Jerusalem. By analogy, Isaiah's words also apply to the people of God in any age when they abandon their Master for the things of this world.

> "'The city of Your holiness has become desolate. Zion has become as a wilderness, Jerusalem a curse. The house, our holiness, and the glory which our fathers blessed, has been burned with fire; and all our glorious things have gone to ruin' (Isaiah 64:10-11 LXX). And in addition to these misfortunes, O Lord, You have refrained Yourself, and are silent, and have humbled us very much' (Isaiah 63:15).'"
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> "And Trypho remarked, 'What is this you say? That none of us shall inherit anything on the holy mountain of God?'"
>
> "And I replied, 'I do not say so; but those who have persecuted Christ, if they do not repent, shall not inherit anything on the holy mountain. But the Gentiles, who have believed on Him, and have repented of the sins which they have committed, they shall receive the inheritance. They will inherit along with the patriarchs, the prophets, and the just men who are descended from Jacob, even though they do not keep the Sabbath, are not circumcised, and do not observe the Hebrew Feast Days. Assuredly they shall receive the holy inheritance of God. God speaks by Isaiah, 'I, the Lord God, have called You in righteousness, and will hold Your hand, and will strengthen You. I have given You for a covenant of the people, for a light of the Gentiles, to open the eyes of the blind, to bring out them that are bound from the chains, and those who sit in darkness[689] from the prison-house'" (Isaiah 42:6, 7).

3. Eye Has Not Seen the Blessings for the Righteous

The third section of the Reading from Isaiah is as follows: "If You would open the heaven, trembling will take hold upon the mountains from You, and they shall melt, as wax melts before the fire. Fire shall burn up the enemies, and Your Name shall be manifest among the adversaries. At Your presence the nations shall be troubled, whenever You shall work gloriously; trembling from You shall take hold upon the mountains. From of old we have not heard, neither have our eyes seen a God beside You, and Your works which You will perform to them that wait for mercy. These blessings shall happen to them that work righteousness, and they shall remember Your ways. Behold, You were angry and we have sinned; therefore we have erred, and we are all become as unclean, and all our righteousness as a filthy rag. We have fallen as leaves because of our iniquities; thus the wind shall carry us *away*'" (Isaiah 64:1-6 LXX).

In the above, Isaiah describes where the Church is now, awaiting the Lord's return at the Second Coming. The Lord will remember those who work righteousness and who remember His ways (Isaiah 64:5). Isaiah was very humble about his situation and concluded that "You are our Father, and we are clay, all *of us* the work of Your hands" (Isaiah 64:8 LXX).

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[688] Trypho introduced himself to Justin as having recently escaped from the war (Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 1).

[689] Compare also Christ's reading from Isaiah 49 in Luke 4:18-21.

Cyril of Jerusalem wrote[690] that the heavens veil the abode of God in order that all might not perish from curiously looking in. Even the saints have difficulty seeing mere angels, where they only reflect Him in His glory.

> "For this cause God of His great loving-kindness spread out the heaven as a veil of His proper Godhead that we should not perish. The word is not mine, but the Prophet's. 'If You shall tear open the heavens, trembling will take hold of the mountains at sight of You, and they will flow down' (Isaiah 64:1). Why do you wonder that Ezekiel fell down on seeing 'the likeness of the glory?' (Ezekiel 1:28) Daniel, at the sight of Gabriel, who was just a servant of God, immediately shuddered and fell on his face. Even though Daniel was a prophet, he dared not answer him, until the Angel transformed himself into the likeness of a son of man (Daniel 8:15-19). Now if the appearing of Gabriel caused trembling in the Prophets, had God Himself been seen as He is, would not all have perished?"

John Chrysostom compared[691] those things that "eye has not seen" to an infant in the womb. We who have been perfectly formed will behold the next life when we are delivered at the Second Coming. Those who miscarry will go from darkness into darkness.

> "Now if these things uplift those who possess them to such a pitch of joy, what do you suppose is the condition of those souls who are invited to enjoy the countless blessings in Heaven which are always securely fixed and stable? In their quantity and quality they excel present things to such an extent as never entered even the heart of man. At the present time like an infant in the womb, we dwell in this world confined in a narrow space, and unable to behold the splendor and the freedom of the world to come. But when the time of travail arrives and the present life is delivered at the Day of Judgment of all men whom it has contained, those who have been miscarried go from darkness into darkness, and from affliction into more grievous affliction. But those which are perfectly formed and have preserved the marks of the royal image will be presented to the king, and will take on themselves that service which angels and archangels minister to the God of all".

Gregory of Nyssa spoke[692] of the things that "eye has not seen" also in terms of punishment for the wicked. The "fire" and the "worm" are something beyond this present life, and were mentioned to wean us from all experience of evil in this life.

> "Those good things, which are held out in the Gospels to those who have led a godly life, are not such as can be precisely described. How is that possible with things which 'eye has not seen, neither ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man'? (Isaiah 64:4) Indeed, the sinner's life of torment presents no equivalent to any kind of pain we experience here. Even if one of the punishments in that other were to be named in terms that are well known here, the distinction is still not small. When you hear the word fire, you have been taught to think of a fire other than the fire we see, owing to something being added to that fire; for that fire is never quenched (Mark 9:43-48), whereas experience has discovered many ways of quenching this fire. There is a great difference between a fire, which can be extinguished, and one that cannot. That fire, therefore, is

[690] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, IX, 1.
[691] John Chrysostom, Exhortation to Theodore After His Fall, I, 13.
[692] Gregory of Nyssa, "The Great Catechism", Apologetic Works, IV, 40.

something other than this. If, again, a person hears the word 'worm' (Mark 9:43-48), let not his thoughts be carried to the creature here that crawls upon the ground. The addition that it 'dies not' suggests the thought of another reptile than that known here. These things are set before us as to be expected in the life that follows this, being the natural outgrowth according to the righteous judgment of God, in the life of each, of his particular disposition. It is the part of the wise not to regard the present, but that which follows after, and to lay down the foundations for that unspeakable blessedness during this short and fleeting life. By a good choice, we wean ourselves from all experience of evil, now in our lifetime here; hereafter will be our eternal recompense".

9th Parable from the Old Testament: Isaiah 61:10-62:5 "The Garment of Salvation"

This Reading from Isaiah is as follows: "They shall greatly rejoice in the Lord. Let my soul rejoice in the Lord; for He has clothed me with the robe of salvation, and the garment of joy. He has put a mitre on me as on a bridegroom, and adorned me with ornaments as a bride. As the earth puts forth her flowers, and as a garden its seed; so shall the Lord cause righteousness to spring forth, and exultation before all nations".

"For Zion's sake I will not hold my peace, and for Jerusalem's sake I will not rest, until her righteousness goes forth as light, and my salvation burns as a torch. The Gentiles shall see your righteousness, and kings your glory; one shall call you *by* a new name, which the Lord shall name. You shall be a crown of beauty in the Hand of the Lord, and a royal diadem in the Hand of your God. You shall no more be called Forsaken; and your land shall no more be called Desert. You shall be called My Pleasure, and your land Inhabited; for the Lord has taken pleasure in you, and your land shall be inhabited. As a young man lives with a virgin, so shall your sons dwell in *you*; and it shall come to pass *that* as a bridegroom will rejoice over a bride, so will the Lord rejoice over you" (Isaiah 61:10-62:5 LXX).

In this Reading, the people of God are clothed with the garment of salvation and wrapped with a robe of righteousness (Isaiah 61:10) such that Jerusalem's righteousness goes forth like brightness and her salvation like a burning torch (62:1). Other details:

- The Gentiles will see their righteousness and glory (Isaiah 62:1)
- They will be called by a new name (Isaiah 62:2)
- They will be the Lord's crown (Isaiah 62:3)
- They and the Land will be married to the Lord (Isaiah 62:4)
- Their God will rejoice over them as a bridegroom rejoices over his bride (Isaiah 62:5)

All this sounds very much like the Apostle John's vision of the end of time regarding the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:2), but major aspects are already present. We acquired the garment of salvation with our baptism, and we need to keep it separate from the things of this world. In an Epistle attributed[693] to Clement of Rome, Clement encourages us to keep the things of the Lord private, so that we don't cast pearls before swine. Our garment of righteousness has nothing in common with the wicked.

> "Let 'all those who see us acknowledge that we are a blessed seed' (Isaiah 61:9), and 'sons of the living God' (Hosea 1:10, Romans 9:26). In everything, in all our words, in purity, in humility, forasmuch as we do not copy the heathen in

[693] Clement of Rome, "2nd Epistle Concerning Virginity", VI, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 8.

anything, nor are as believers like other men, but in everything are estranged from the wicked. We 'do not cast that which is holy before dogs, nor pearls before swine' (Matthew 7:6), but with all possible self-restraint, with all discretion, with all fear of God, and with earnestness of mind we praise God. We do not serve where heathens are drinking and blaspheming in their feasts with words of impurity, because of their wickedness. Therefore we do not sing Psalms to the heathen, nor do we read to them the Scriptures, that we may not be like common singers, either those who play on the lyre, or those who sing with the voice, or like soothsayers. Many follow these practices and do these things, that they may satisfy themselves with a paltry mouthful of bread, and for the sake of a sorry cup of wine, go about 'singing the songs of the Lord in the strange land' (Psalm 137:4), doing what is not right. Do not so, my brethren; let not these deeds be done among you; but put away those who choose thus to behave themselves with infamy and disgrace".

Ignatius of Antioch stated[694] that the new Name, by which the Lord's people were to be called, was the term "Christians". Ignatius' predecessor, Evodius, the 2nd Bishop of Antioch, first coined the term Christian[695].

"Let us not, therefore, be insensible to His kindness. Were He to reward us according to our works, we should cease to be. 'If You, Lord, shall mark iniquities, O Lord, who shall stand?' (Psalm 130:3) Let us therefore prove ourselves worthy of that Name which we have received. Whoever is called by any other name besides this, he is not of God; for he has not received the prophecy, which speaks thus concerning us. 'The people shall be called by a new Name, which the Lord shall name them, and shall be a holy people' (Isaiah 62:2, 12). This was first fulfilled in Syria; for 'the disciples were called Christians at Antioch' (Acts 11:26), when Paul and Peter were laying the foundations of the Church. Lay aside, therefore, the evil, the old, the corrupt leaven, and be changed into the new leaven of grace".

Cyril of Jerusalem refers[696] to the garment of righteousness as the wedding garment that the Apostle John saw at the end times. Presently we stand outside the door waiting, and we have washed our robes in repentance. Some may come to the figurative marriage without the proper garment, but they will be separated from those who are properly clothed.

"Make ready the vessels of the soul, cleansed by unfeigned faith, for reception of the Holy Spirit. Begin at once to wash your robes in repentance, that when called to the bride-chamber you may be found clean. The Bridegroom invites all without distinction, because His grace is bounteous; and the cry of loud-voiced heralds assembles them all. But the same Bridegroom afterwards separates those who have come in to the figurative marriage. O may none of those whose names have now been enrolled hear the words, 'Friend, how did you come in here, not having a wedding garment?' (Matthew 22:12) But may you all hear, 'Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I

[694] Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Magnesians, X.

[695] Evodius (or Euodius), one of the original Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-20) was ordained Bishop of Antioch by the Apostle Peter shortly after Peter arrived in Antioch, where Peter had recently escaped from Herod (Acts 12:3-17).

[696] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, III, 2.

will set you over many things: enter you into the joy of your Lord'" (Matthew 25:21).

"Now meanwhile you stand outside the door. But God grant that you all may say, 'The King has brought me into His chamber' (Song of Solomon 1:4). Let my soul rejoice in the Lord; for He has covered me with a garment of salvation, and a robe of gladness. He has crowned me with a garland as a bridegroom' (Isaiah 61:10, Song of Solomon 3:11), and decked me with ornaments as a bride. That the soul of every one of you may be found not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing (Ephesians 5:27)! I do not mean before you have received the grace, for how could that be? It is for remission of sins that you have been called".

In his repentance, the Prodigal Son's father gave him a robe for righteousness when he returned (Luke 15:22). The Prodigal realized that he'd sinned against heaven and against his father (Luke 15:18). He sinned against heaven by joining the Temple of the Holy Spirit to harlots (1 Corinthians 6:15-20); he sinned against his father by squandering the gifts he had been given. In planning his return to his father, he made his confession to God. When he came to his father, he also made his confession to him. That his confession was genuine is indicated by his humility and sense of unworthiness, "I am no longer worthy to be called your son" (Luke 15:21), as opposed to his previous arrogance and independence, "Give me the portion of goods that falls to me" (Luke 15:12). The Prodigal's father responded with love.

John Chrysostom insisted[697] that once we put on the "garment of righteousness" at baptism, we should never take it off. What we are clothed with also affects our inner man. If we strip ourselves of this garment of righteousness, we are naked before the Lord and His angels, and subject to attack by the devil. The clothing of wealth can become thorns to tear the garment of righteousness, fire to burn it or a moth to eat it.

"Our part then is, never to put off the garment of righteousness, which also the Prophet calls, 'the garment of salvation' (Isaiah 61:10), that we may be made like God. He indeed has put on righteousness. This garment let us put on. Now the word, 'put on', plainly declares nothing else, than that we should never put it off. Listen to the Prophet, where he says, 'He clothed himself also with cursing as with his garment, and it came into his inward parts' (Psalm 109:18). And again, 'Who covers Thyself with light as with a garment' (Psalm 104:2). Again, it is usual with us to speak concerning men, such a one has 'put on' such a one. So then it is not for one day, nor for two, nor for three, but he would have us always arrayed in virtue, and never stripped of this garment. A man is not so disfigured when he is stripped of his clothing, as when he is stripped of his virtue. In the former case his fellow servants behold his nakedness, in the latter his Lord and the Angels. If ever you happen to see anyone going out naked through the public square, aren't you distressed? When then you go about stripped of this garment, what shall we say? We do not excuse those who have lost their clothes by gambling; how then, if we lose this garment, shall God pardon us? Whenever the devil sees a man stripped of his virtue, he immediately disguises and disfigures his face, and wounds him, and drives him to great distress."

[697] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIII, v. 4:24.

> "Let us strip ourselves of our riches, that we be not stripped of righteousness. The garb of wealth mars this garment. It is a robe of thorns. Thorns are of this nature; and the more closely they are wrapped around us, the more naked are we made. Lasciviousness strips us of this garment; for it is a fire, and the fire will consume this garment. Wealth is a moth; and the moth eats through all things alike, and does not spares even silken garments. All these therefore let us put off, that we may become righteous, that we may 'put on the new man' (Ephesians 4:24, 2:15, Colossians 3:10). Let us keep nothing old, nothing outward, nothing that is 'corrupt'" (Ephesians 4:25-32).

Cyril of Jerusalem connected[698] the garment of salvation to the Eucharistic Feast described in Psalm 23, where the "table prepared" is the Lord's Table, the "anointing" is the Holy Chrism, and the "cup" is the Lord's blood.

> "The blessed David shall advise you of the meaning of this, saying, 'You have prepared a table before me in the presence of them that afflict me' (Psalm 23:5 LXX). What he says, is to this effect. Before Your coming, the evil spirits prepared a table for men, polluted, defiled and full of devilish influence (1 Corinthians 10:21); but since Your coming, O Lord, You have prepared a table before me. When the man says to God, You have prepared before me a table, what does he indicate but that mystical and spiritual Table, which God has prepared for us, over against that of the evil spirits? That table had communion with devils, but this, with God. 'You have anointed my head with oil' (Psalm 23:5). With oil He anointed your head upon your forehead, for the seal which you have of God; that you may be made the engraving of God's signet (Exodus 28:36, Ecclesiaticus 45:12 LXX). 'And your cup cheers me like the best wine' (Psalm 23:5 LXX). You see that cup here spoken of, which Jesus took in His hands, and gave thanks, and said, 'This is My blood, which is shed for many for the remission of sins'" (Matthew 26:28).
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> "Therefore Solomon, also hinting at this grace, says, 'Come here, eat your bread with joy' (that is, the spiritual bread; Come here, he calls with the call to salvation and blessing), 'and drink your wine with a merry heart' (that is, the spiritual wine). 'And let oil be poured out upon your head' (you see he alludes even to the mystic Chrism); 'and let your garments be always white, for the Lord is well pleased with your works' (Ecclesiastes 9:7-8 LXX). Before you came to Baptism, your works were vanity of vanities. But now, having put off your old garments, and put on those, which are spiritually white, you must be continually robed in white. Of course we do not mean that you are always to wear white clothing. But you must be clad in the garments that are truly white and shining and spiritual that you may say with the blessed Isaiah, 'My soul shall be joyful in my God. He has clothed me with a garment of salvation, and put a robe of gladness around me'" (Isaiah 61:10).

[698] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XXII, 7-8.

APPENDIX G
SUMMARY OF THE GOSPEL OF NICODEMUS
Part II: The Descent into Hell

Three different versions of the Descent into Hell exist, one in Greek, two in Latin. Some details differ from one version to another, but this synopsis attempts to summarize what is a consensus of all three accounts. In the following, the Greek text of the Descent into Hell is summarized by chapter. Some details that are mentioned only in the two Latin texts are also included.

Chapter 14: Phineas (a priest); Haggai (a Levite) and Adas (a soldier or teacher) came from Galilee and reported to the Pharisees that Jesus was teaching His disciples in Galilee in the days following the crucifixion. They also reported seeing people long dead, including Karinus and Leucius, two sons of the righteous Simeon who held Christ as a baby (Luke 2:25-32).

Chapter 15: Nicodemus testified that this is not incredible; Elijah had done that too. Nicodemus counseled that they send soldiers to Galilee to try to find Jesus and ask His pardon for the evil they'd done to Him. This they did. They didn't find Jesus, but they did find Joseph of Arimathea who had been locked in a windowless room by the Sanhedrin for his part in the burial of Jesus, but who had disappeared. They invited Joseph to speak to them: he testified how the Lord appeared to him and had taken him out of the locked room to Arimathea.

Chapter 16: They found three priests from Galilee who witnessed the Ascension. Their testimony agreed and by the Mosaic Law, they were legally bound to accept this as factual (Deuteronomy 19:15). Joseph and Nicodemus testified that they had indeed buried Him.

Chapter 17: Joseph testified that there were others raised with Jesus, some of whom they know: Simeon and his two sons (Karinus and Leucius) who were buried in the recent past. Joseph suggested going to Arimathea to see them. Thus Annas, Caiaphas, Joseph, Nicodemus, Gamaliel and others went to Arimathea and brought Karinus and Leucius to Jerusalem.

Chapter 18: Asked to give an account of their resurrection, Karinus and Leucius separately wrote an account. In Hades, they were with all the righteous that had fallen asleep, when a great light lit up Hades. Isaiah, in Hades, testified that this is what he wrote of (Isaiah 9:1-2) that Zebulon and Naphtali would see a great light. Then John the Baptist arrived in Hades, testifying that he had been preparing the way for the Son of God (Matthew 3:3, Mark 1:4, John 1:29, Luke 3:22). John continued that he had been sent to preach similarly in Hades.

Chapter 19: Adam, the first created, then asked his son Seth to tell everyone of an angelic visit by Michael that occurred just before Adam died. Seth explained how the angel told him that 5,500 years after the Creation; the Son of God would become incarnate and would raise up Adam and all those out of him into Paradise. All the patriarchs and prophets exulted greatly.

Chapter 20: Then Satan came and said to Hades to be sure to be ready to secure Jesus when He arrived. Hades cautioned Satan that if Jesus could raise the dead with just a single word, how could he withstand Him? Satan called Hades a coward. Hades reminded Satan that Lazarus had been in Hades' bowels but had been dragged out by force like the flight of an eagle. Hades feared that if Jesus came, He might drag out all the rest from there also.

Chapter 21: As they were speaking there was a great voice like thunder: "Life up your gates O ye rulers; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting gates; and the King of Glory shall come in" (Psalm 24:7). Hades, Satan and their demons immediately went to secure the "gates of brass and bars of iron". The forefathers mocked Satan and David reminded him of his prophecy concerning what was happening here. For example, David had prophesied, "Lift up your heads, O gates, and be lifted up, O ancient doors that the King of Glory may come in! Who is the King of Glory? The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle. Lift up your heads, O gates, and lift them up, O ancient doors, that the King of Glory may come in! Who is this King of Glory? The Lord of Hosts; He is the King of Glory" (Psalm 24:7-10). These ancient doors (Hebrew: *olam*: long duration, antiquity, futurity) have very little meaning aside from the events of Holy Saturday. Again David had prophesied: "He brought them out of darkness and the shadow of death and broke their bands apart. Let them give thanks to the Lord for His loving kindness and for His wonders to the sons of men! For He has shattered gates of bronze and cut bars of iron asunder" (Psalm 107:14-16). These people David also referred to as "prisoners" and "the sons of death" (Psalm 79:11, 102:20).

Again a voice of thunder cried, "Lift up the gates". Satan answered, "Who is this King of Glory?" The angels answered, "The Lord strong and mighty, the Lord mighty in battle!" (Psalm 24:8). Immediately the gates of brass were shattered and the iron bars were broken. The King of Glory came in the form of a man and lit up all the dark places of Hades.

Chapter 22: Then the King of Glory trampled on death by His Majesty and seized Satan by the head and delivered him to His angels to be bound in Hades until His second appearing.

Chapter 23: As Hades received Satan, he criticized him saying, "Through what necessity did you have to crucify the King of Glory that He might come here and deprive us of our power? Like a fool, you didn't know what you were doing (compare 1 Corinthians 2:8). Look and see; not one of the dead has been left in here. All that you gained by the tree of knowledge you lost by the tree of the Cross. Now that I have received you, by experience you will learn how many evils I shall do to you."

Chapter 24: Then the King of Glory raised Adam and embraced him along with Eve and all the rest of the patriarchs, prophets, martyrs, forefathers and saints. As He was bringing them all out, Adam was filled with joy and said, "I thank Your Majesty, O Lord, that You have brought me up out of the lowest Hades" (Psalm 86:13). "I will extol You, O Lord; for You have lifted me up, and have not made my foes to rejoice over me. O Lord God, I cried unto You and You have healed me. O Lord, You have brought out my soul from the powers below; You have saved me from them that go down into the pit. Sing praises to the Lord, all His saints, and confess to the memory of His holiness; since there is anger in His indignation and life in His goodwill" (Psalm 30:1-6). All the prophets and saints said, "We thank You, O Christ, Savior of the world, for You have brought our life up out of destruction" (compare Psalm 103:4). As they went, they continued to say, "Blessed is He that comes in the Name of the Lord" (Psalm 118:26, compare Matthew 21:9, 23:39, Mark 11:9, Luke 13:35, 19:38, John 12:13). David sang, "Sing to the Lord a new song, for He has done wonderful things; His right hand and His holy arm have brought salvation to Himself. The Lord has made known His salvation; His righteousness has He revealed in the sight of the heathen" (Psalm 98:1-2).

Before leaving Hades, all the saints asked the Lord to leave as a sign of victory the sign of the Cross in the midst of Hades, which He did.

Chapter 25: After leaving Hades, the Lord gave all the saints to the Archangel Michael who brought them to Paradise. Meeting them there were Enoch and Elijah who had never died (Genesis 5:24, 2 Kings 2:11-13). Enoch and Elijah told them that the two of them were to remain there until the end of time. At that time, they were to be sent by God to withstand Antichrist, to be slain by him and after three days to be raised and snatched up into the clouds to meet the Lord (Revelation 11:3-12, compare 1 Thessalonians 4:17).

Chapter 26: As they arrived, they met another man who had the look of a robber and who was carrying a cross. He identified himself as the robber who was crucified with the Lord Jesus and, after rebuking his fellow robber, asked Jesus to remember him when He came in His Kingdom. Jesus had said, "Today you shall be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:39-43). At Michael's instructions he had been waiting for his brethren the saints to come also. On hearing this, the saints cried out, "Great is the Lord and great is His strength" (Psalm 147:5).

Chapter 27: Then Karinus and Leucius testified that these are the things that they saw and heard. They had been sent by Michael to proclaim the Lord's Resurrection, to be baptized in the Jordan, and to celebrate the Passover of the Resurrection for three days. They said they were unable to stay longer or speak in further detail concerning the mystery of God per Michael's instruction. Karinus gave his roll to Annas, Caiaphas and Gamaliel and Leucius gave his roll to Nicodemus and Joseph. Then they were transfigured and disappeared.

Following the disappearance of Karinus and Leucius, there was much weeping and breast beating on the part of the Sanhedrin. For forty days and nights, they lamented, expecting vengeance and destruction from God. The second Latin version closes by saying that God gave them an opportunity for repentance "but they were not found worthy to be turned to the Lord."