

Holy Thursday Matins

The Hebrew Feast Days of Passover

The Arrest of Jesus and Preceding Events

May 2, 2013
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 (Ethaniam)
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

Copyright © Mark Kern 2004

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 15 th , 21 st None	Lamb Slain No Leaven 1st Sheaf Barley	Hoing Up of Flax
Iyar	Apr.-May				Barley Harvest Completed
Sivan	May-June	Weeks or Pentecost	6 th	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	1 st 10 th 15 th , 22 nd	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 noted¹ 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’

¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

(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 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 say² 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 then 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 explained³ 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

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 3.

³ Justin Martyr, Dialog With Trypho, 40.

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 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 say⁴ 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 identified⁵ 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 stated⁶ 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

⁴ Justin Martyr, Dialog with Tyrpho, 111.

⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter III, 5.

⁶ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies IV, x, 1-2.

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 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 continued⁷ 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

⁷ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 1-3.

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 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 spoke⁸ 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

⁸ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter VI, 12.

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.

Athanasius of Alexandria identified⁹ Pascha¹⁰ 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 continued¹¹ 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

⁹ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, III, 5.

¹⁰ Pascha means "Passover" in Greek, and Pascha is the Feast Day that the Western world calls "Easter".

¹¹ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VI, 1-3.

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’ (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 urged¹² 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”.

¹² Athanasius of Alexandria, *Festal Letters*, VI, 12.

Athanasius continued to say¹³ 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 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 reproveth, 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 reproveth 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

¹³ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIX, 1-2.

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 stated¹⁴ 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

¹⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XIV, 3-4.

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 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 reminded¹⁵ 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 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 stated¹⁶ 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 stated¹⁷ 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 song¹⁸ 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.”

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 1.

¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXIX, 3.

¹⁷ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, III, 5.

¹⁸ [The Song of Moses is used in the Orthodox Church](#) for

Chrysostom tied¹⁹ 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”.

“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!

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 1.

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 linked²⁰ 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 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

²⁰ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Festal Letters*, V, 5.

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 Josephus²¹), the

²¹ Joseph, *Antiquities of the Jews*, II, xv, 3.

Egyptians overtook the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Most maps of the Exodus place the Red Sea 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 wall²² 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 tsunami (or tidal wave). Josephus adds²³ 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 wrote²⁴, 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.

²² See also Ambrose of Milan, Exposition of the Christian Faith, II, ii, 21; Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4:20.

²³ Josephus, Antiquities, II, xvi, 3.

²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 2.

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. 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 added²⁵ 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 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

²⁵ Gregory of Nazianzen, Oration on Holy Baptism, XL, 40.

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 commented²⁶ 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.

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII.

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 stated²⁷ 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 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

²⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, Moral.

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 ²⁸	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
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

²⁸ 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.

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 carried²⁹ 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 continued³⁰ 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”.

²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XV, 7.

³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XV, 8.

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.

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 stated³¹ 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.

³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XXIII, Moral.

“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 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 added³² 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 added³³ 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.

“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

³² Gregory Nazianzen, Oration 40 on Holy Baptism, XL

³³ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter IV, 2-3.

mind; when we do not forget the poor but open our doors to all men; when we assist humble-mindedness but hate pride”.

Athanasius continued³⁴ 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 linked³⁵ 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.

“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).

³⁴ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter V, 4.

³⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter V, 5

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 stated³⁶ 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”.

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 words³⁷, “As this converts the large quantity of meal into its own quality, even so shall you convert the whole world”.

Ambrose of Milan commented³⁸ 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

³⁶ Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 260.

³⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLVI,

³⁸ Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 80.

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 continued³⁹ 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). 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 stated⁴⁰ 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’

³⁹ Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 81-83

⁴⁰ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letter XLIII.

(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.

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). 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).

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, and thus are mentioned here.

Yet there is a mystery here that not all are granted the ability to see. Ambrose of Milan stated⁴¹ 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 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 words⁴², “Since this converts the large quantity of meal into its own quality, even so shall you convert the whole world”.

Ambrose of Milan stated⁴³ 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”.

⁴¹ Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 260.

⁴² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLVI, 2.

⁴³ Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 80.

Ambrose continued to say⁴⁴ 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".

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 stated⁴⁵ 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

⁴⁴ Ambrose of Milan, Concerning Repentance I, 15, 81-83

⁴⁵ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, XLIII.

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

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-style⁴⁶ (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 stated⁴⁷ that the Levites were sanctified as First-Fruits of the nation of Israel instead of the firstborn.

"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.

⁴⁶ Refer also to the Spiritual Application of the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

⁴⁷ Ambrose of Milan, Duties of the Clergy I, 50, 259.

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 stated⁴⁸ 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 noted⁴⁹ 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 wrote⁵⁰ 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 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 say⁵¹ 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

⁴⁸ Ambrose of Milan, Decease of His Brother Saytrus II, 91.

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XIV, v. 23.

⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XLI, 3.

⁵¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XI, 4.

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 addressed⁵² 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 spoke⁵³ 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, 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

⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XIX, 7.

⁵³ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith III, 2.

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 stated⁵⁴ 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 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

⁵⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius II, 8.

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 clear⁵⁵ 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 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?

⁵⁵ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius IV, 3.

The Lord's Table

John of Damascus continued⁵⁶ 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 Irenaeus⁵⁷. 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 stated⁵⁸ 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, 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 referred⁵⁹ 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.

⁵⁶ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith IV, 13

⁵⁷ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies IV, 17, 4.

⁵⁸ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies IV, 18, 1.

⁵⁹ John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith IV, 13.

“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”.

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 Nisan⁶⁰, 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 disciples⁶¹ 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.

⁶⁰ See for example:

John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

Clement of Alexandria, Fragments Found in Greek Only in the Oxford Edition, 11.

⁶¹ Which two disciples these were are not mentioned by any of the Gospel writers.

John Chrysostom asked⁶² 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 continued⁶³ 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).

⁶² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

⁶³ 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 said⁶⁴ that Jesus took on Himself the "linen of humanity", where this was analogous to Jesus taking on human flesh.

Ambrose of Milan commented⁶⁵ 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

⁶⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XII, 1.

⁶⁵ Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, I, Introduction, 13-16.

may tread on serpents and scorpions with uninjured foot. You have redeemed the world; redeem the soul of a single sinner”.

Irenaeus linked⁶⁶ 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 stated⁶⁷ 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 linked⁶⁸ 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

⁶⁶ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxii, 1.

⁶⁷ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 8.

⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 3-4, LXXXIII, 1.

and insults God. As Paul said, “he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever” (1 Timothy 5:8).

Commenting on Jesus’ statement that the disciples were completely clean, Gregory the Great used⁶⁹ 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, noted⁷⁰ 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 stated⁷¹ 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.

⁶⁹ Gregory the Great, *Epistles*, XI, 45.

⁷⁰ Tertullian, *On Repentance*, III, I, 6.

⁷¹ Tertullian, *On Baptism*, III, ii, 12.

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, 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 continued⁷², 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 stated⁷³ 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

⁷² Tertullian, On Baptism, III, ii, 15.

⁷³ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, II, 4-5.

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 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 Magus⁷⁴, 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 gives⁷⁵ 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 spoke⁷⁶ 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”.

⁷⁴ For details on the influence of Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2002.

⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIV, Vv. 9-10.

⁷⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIV, Vv. 9-10.

“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 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, used⁷⁷ 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

⁷⁷ Athanasius of Alexandria, Personal Letters, LXI, 2.

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".

Ambrose of Milan also used⁷⁸ 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."

⁷⁸ 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 stated⁷⁹ 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 stated⁸⁰, “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

⁷⁹ Ambrose of Milan, Of the Christian Faith, III, xi, 87-89.

⁸⁰ Cyprian, Epistles, Lxii, 4.

according to the order of Melchizedek” (Psalm 110:4). Paul quoted this 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 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 stated⁸¹ 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

⁸¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XII, 3.

referred⁸² to the Lord's Supper as "the medicine of immortality". Yet it is a mystery as to how 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 leaven⁸³ 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).

⁸² Ignatius of Antioch, Ephesians 19.

⁸³ 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).

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 anymore (John 6:66). According to tradition⁸⁴, 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.

⁸⁴ Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles.

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 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 stated⁸⁵, "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 encourages⁸⁶ 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

⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, Vv. 18-21.

⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, Vv. 18-21.

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 world and in the age to come (Job 42:10-17, James 5:10:11).

Chrysostom encourages⁸⁷ 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 stated⁸⁸, “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 stated⁸⁹, “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

⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, Vv. 18-21.

⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 17.

⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, VIII, v. 15.

Gethsemane (Matthew 26:30, Mark 14:26). That hymn was probably part of the Passover Liturgy that was sung after the Passover meal.

Chrysostom stated⁹⁰ 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 out⁹¹ 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 compared⁹² 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

⁹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.

⁹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.

⁹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, IX, v. 16.

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 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 expressed⁹³ 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 added⁹⁴ 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 taught⁹⁵ 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).

⁹³ Tertullian, *Answer to Jews*, I, iii, 2.

⁹⁴ John Cassian, *Conferences* I, viii, 23.

⁹⁵ Apostolic Constitutions VI, iv, 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 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 attributed⁹⁶ 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 referred⁹⁷ 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 teaching⁹⁸ 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

⁹⁶ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, Ch. 14.

⁹⁷ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata VI, iv.

⁹⁸ Apostolic Constitutions, VI, iv, 19.

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:

- 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 Sabbath⁹⁹, 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).

⁹⁹ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 245, 101-104.

John Chrysostom commented¹⁰⁰ 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 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.

¹⁰⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XXVII, v. 15:7.

John Chrysostom commented¹⁰¹ 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 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 revered 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 commented¹⁰² 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”.

¹⁰¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXII, 11.

¹⁰² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIII, 1.

“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, 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 Father¹⁰³; 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 stated¹⁰⁴ 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 continued¹⁰⁵:

“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

¹⁰³ 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.

¹⁰⁴ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXIII, 2.

¹⁰⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXIV, 1.

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 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 conversation¹⁰⁶ 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).

¹⁰⁶ See the Section describing this later conversation for more details.

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 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 pointed¹⁰⁷ out that 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 say¹⁰⁸ 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’”.

¹⁰⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXI.

¹⁰⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

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 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 Creed¹⁰⁹ 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).

¹⁰⁹ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1994, pp. 245, 101-104.

Early Christian teaching¹¹⁰ 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 need the Law anymore, because it is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 10:16-17). John Chrysostom stated¹¹¹,

“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 commented¹¹² 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

¹¹⁰ Apostolic Constitutions VI, iv, 19-20.

¹¹¹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap 3.

¹¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 2.

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 commented¹¹³ 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 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 said¹¹⁴ 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,

¹¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

¹¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 3.

the wars, His departure; see how He calms them again by saying, ‘Peace¹¹⁵ 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 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 said¹¹⁶ 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 Himself¹¹⁷ 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 God¹¹⁸. 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

¹¹⁵ 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!”

¹¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 4.

¹¹⁷ This statement is often used by heretics to “prove” that Jesus is not equal to the Father.

¹¹⁸ 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.

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 believe¹¹⁹ 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 addressed¹²⁰ this by saying:

“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 this¹²¹. 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 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.

¹¹⁹ 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.

¹²⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXV, 4.

¹²¹ 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).

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 out¹²² 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 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

¹²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXV, 4.

cast out, wither and are thrown into the fire. This may be a reference to heretics throughout the ages¹²³ 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. 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.

¹²³ For details of a Study of heretics in the 1st Century, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2002.

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 states¹²⁴, “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 said¹²⁵, “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.

¹²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX.

¹²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, III, Moral.

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 wrote¹²⁶ 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 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 continued¹²⁷ 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

¹²⁶ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on Ephesians](#), IX.

¹²⁷ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on Ephesians](#), IX.

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 comments¹²⁸, “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 refers¹²⁹ 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’”.

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.

¹²⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, IX.

¹²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, X.

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 more¹³⁰ 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.

¹³⁰ 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 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).

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 king¹³¹ began to harass some of the Church and killed James, the brother of John with the sword (Acts 12:1-2). John Chrysostom said¹³² 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 tradition¹³³, 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 Bread¹³⁴. Herod had wanted to make sure Peter did not leave the area because of the death of James. Chrysostom remarked¹³⁵ 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 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.

¹³¹ I.e. Herod Agrippa who reigned from 41-44 AD.

¹³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

¹³³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.

¹³⁴ The Feast of Unleavened Bread was a seven day festival that includes Passover. See the earlier Section titled “The Feast of Unleavened Bread”.

¹³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

Chrysostom noted¹³⁶ 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 noted¹³⁷ that when Peter arrived at the house of Mary, he told them what happened, then left, making sure they made these things known to James¹³⁸ 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.

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 commented¹³⁹ 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,

¹³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI, Recapitulation.

¹³⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI, Recapitulation.

¹³⁸ This is James, the Lord’s brother, the Bishop of Jerusalem.

¹³⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVII, 3.

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 God¹⁴⁰.

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 means¹⁴¹ 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. 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 stated¹⁴² 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).

¹⁴⁰ See 2 Corinthians 3:17, 18, John 15:26, 1 John 5:6, Ephesians 4:3-6, John 1:32-34, Matthew 1:18.

¹⁴¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 2.

¹⁴² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXVIII, 1.

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 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 enjoyed¹⁴³ 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).

¹⁴³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 4.

“It was no slight comfort¹⁴⁴ 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 gave¹⁴⁵ 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.

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 commented¹⁴⁶ 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!

¹⁴⁴ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXVIII, 1.

¹⁴⁵ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXVIII, 3.

¹⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXIX, 1.

“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 stated¹⁴⁷ 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 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).

¹⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIX, 1.

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 stated¹⁴⁸ 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 say¹⁴⁹ 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 made¹⁵⁰ 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 stated¹⁵¹ 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.

“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 behoved the teacher to teach, not by words only, but also

¹⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXIX, 2.

¹⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXIX, 4.

¹⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXIX, 3.

¹⁵¹ John Chrysostom, [Homilies on John](#), LXXX, 1.

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 stated¹⁵² 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 Essence¹⁵³, 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).

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)

¹⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXX, 2-3.

¹⁵³ In His Essence as God, Christ has always possessed the Glory of God in its fullness, even though none should glorify Him on earth.

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 noted¹⁵⁴ 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 commented¹⁵⁵ 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 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 said¹⁵⁶ 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

¹⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXI, 2.

¹⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXI, 2.

¹⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 1.

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 to uncleanness but in holiness" (1 Thessalonians 4:7). Ambrose stated¹⁵⁷ 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

¹⁵⁷ Ambrose of Milan, Epistles, LXIII, 41-42.

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 noted¹⁵⁸ 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 away¹⁵⁹. 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).

“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 noted¹⁶⁰ 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 face¹⁶¹ mirroring the glory of the Lord’ (2 Corinthians 3:18). For 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”.

¹⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 2.

¹⁵⁹ 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.

¹⁶⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 3.

¹⁶¹ 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.

Chrysostom linked¹⁶² 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).

¹⁶² 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 noted¹⁶³ 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 appearance¹⁶⁴ only.

¹⁶³ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, p. 293.

¹⁶⁴ 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

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 stated¹⁶⁵ 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 written¹⁶⁶ in the Great Ode”.

Cyril of Alexandria pointed out¹⁶⁷ 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

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.

¹⁶⁵ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, pp. 293-295.

¹⁶⁶ 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”.

¹⁶⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 146, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp. 581-582.

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:

“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 grieved¹⁶⁸ at seeing Jerusalem involved in extreme miseries for which there was no cure”.

“You have heard¹⁶⁹ 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 noted¹⁷⁰ 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

¹⁶⁸ 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).

¹⁶⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Homily 147, Studion Publishers, 1983, pp 585-586.

¹⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homily on the Passage Matthew 26:29, and Against Marcionites and Manichaeans*, 2-4.

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”.

“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 noted¹⁷¹ 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 stated¹⁷² 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.

¹⁷¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

¹⁷² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

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 Peter because he had earlier that he would never stumble and would never deny Him (Matthew 26:33-35).

Chrysostom stated¹⁷³ 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 troops¹⁷⁴, 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 said¹⁷⁵ to them, 'I AM'. Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them.

¹⁷³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

¹⁷⁴ 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.

¹⁷⁵ 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

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 lost¹⁷⁶ none' (John 18:3-9).

John Chrysostom stated¹⁷⁷ 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".

"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 stated¹⁷⁸ 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

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).

¹⁷⁶ See also John 17:12, 1 John 2:19.

¹⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

¹⁷⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983, p. 589.

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).

Mark adds¹⁷⁹ 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 commented¹⁸⁰ 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

¹⁷⁹ 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.

¹⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

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 stated¹⁸¹ that Peter had misunderstood what the Lord had said about swords. The Lord was speaking about the impending destruction of Jerusalem, which would 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?"

"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".

"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".

¹⁸¹ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983, pp. 578-580.

Theophylact stated¹⁸² 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 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 added¹⁸³ 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 occasions¹⁸⁴, 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.

¹⁸² Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, pp. 290-292.

¹⁸³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

¹⁸⁴ 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).

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? Inasmuch as that false one, Satan, was within him, he used falsehood even in saying, ‘Hail!’”.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁸⁵ 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 say¹⁸⁶ 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

¹⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 2.

¹⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 3-4.

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 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 probes¹⁸⁷ 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

¹⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Philippians, VI.

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".

"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 talents¹⁸⁸ 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

¹⁸⁸ A talent was a measure of the weight a man could carry, and consisted of about 75 pounds.

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.

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 existed¹⁸⁹ 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"

¹⁸⁹ Weiss, *Insight into Bible Times and Customs*, pp. 24-25

The text of the Reading from Job, from the Septuagint¹⁹⁰ 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’.

“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. 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”.

“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?”

“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

¹⁹⁰ 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.

example, Eliphaz, king of the Temanites¹⁹¹, 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 Shuhites¹⁹², 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 Mineans¹⁹³, 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 countrymen¹⁹⁴, and this would explain why he was sought out by the kings of neighboring countries.

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 commented¹⁹⁵ 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 encourages¹⁹⁶ 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 age¹⁹⁷ to come (Job 42:1-17).

Gregory Nazianzen stated¹⁹⁸ that Job's entire ordeal was for the revealing of his righteousness. This was also true of Christ's ordeal at the Cross.

¹⁹¹ Teman was the Southern portion of Idumaea. See Job 42:17 LXX.

¹⁹² 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.

¹⁹³ The Mineans, or Naamathites, were part of the Kingdom of Sheba (the Sabaeans), from which the Queen of Sheba came (1 Kings 10:4). Their territory is in Yemen today. See Job 42:17 LXX.

¹⁹⁴ Keil and Delitzsch, Commentary on the Old Testament, v. 4, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1996, p. 708.

¹⁹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, XII, 3.

¹⁹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX, v. 18.

¹⁹⁷ See Good Friday Vespers for the Study on Job 42:10-1

¹⁹⁸ Gregory Nazianzen, Oration On the Great Athanasius, XXI, 18.

“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, 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 stated¹⁹⁹ 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 stated²⁰⁰ 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

¹⁹⁹ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, IV, 26.

²⁰⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXV, 5.

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 stated²⁰¹ 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 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 noted²⁰² 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 Anathoth²⁰³ 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

²⁰¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 6.

²⁰² Justin Martyr, Dialog with Tyrpho, a Jew, LXXII.

²⁰³ Anathoth was the birthplace of the Prophet Jeremiah, and was located about 3 miles NE of Jerusalem.

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 stated²⁰⁴ 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, stated²⁰⁵ 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. 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 say²⁰⁶ 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 from²⁰⁷ the tree’ (Psalm 96:10), I wait to hear what you understand thereby. I fear you may perhaps think some carpenter-king is

²⁰⁴ Ambrose, *Exposition of the Christian Faith*, IV, xii, 165-167.

²⁰⁵ Tertullian, *Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 4, 40.

²⁰⁶ Tertullian, *An Answer to the Jews*, I, vii, 10. For a similar discussion, see also: Tertullian, *Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 3, 19.

²⁰⁷ 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.

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 put²⁰⁸; 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 unicorn²⁰⁹ 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 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

²⁰⁸ That is, when they laid the Cross on Him to carry it to Golgatha.

²⁰⁹ 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”.

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 addressed²¹⁰ 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 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

²¹⁰ John Cassian, First Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, vii, 31.

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 described²¹¹ 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).

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 states²¹²:

“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

²¹¹ Gregory Nazianzen, Oration in Defense of His Flight to Pontus, II, 67-68.

²¹² Apostolic Constitutions, VI, ii, 5.

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.

APPENDIX F: Time Line of the Events of Passover

Roman		Hebrew Day	Name of Feast	Jewish Customs	Events Taking Place for Jesus and the Twelve
Day	Time				
Wednesday	0000	112 Nisan			
	0600				
	1200				
	1800				
Thursday	0000	13 Nisan	“First Day of Unleavened Bread”	Houses were searched for the presence of leaven (Exodus 12:15).	
	0600				
	1200				The Twelve Prepare the Passover (Last Supper)
	1800				The Last Supper 1800-2100; Gethsemane 2100-2400
FFriday	0000	14 Nisan	“Day of Preparation”	Preparations were made for the Feast Day following, including the slaying of the Passover Lamb at 1500.	Jesus’ “Trial” Before the Sanhedrin
	0600				Peter’s Denial; Jesus Delivered to Pilate, Crucified 0900
	1200				Jesus Died 1500
	1800				Jesus Buried 1800
Saturday	0000	15 Nisan Sabbath	“Feast of Passover” or “Passover”	The big celebration	Jesus in Hades, Having Descended into Hell
	0600				
	1200				
	1800				
Sunday	0000	116 Nisan	“The First Day of the Week”		Jesus Rose from the Dead
	0600				
	1200				
	1800				Jesus Appears to the Ten Apostles in the Upper Room
MMonday	0000	117 Nisan			
	0600				
	1200				

Holy Thursday Evening
Jesus' Trial Before the Sanhedrin and Peter's Denials
The Twelve Passion Gospels

May 2, 2013
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 tribe²¹³ 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 Days²¹⁴ 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 stated²¹⁵ 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".

²¹³ The leaders of thousands were the Patriarchs of the Tribes, and the leaders of hundreds were the Heads of Clans.

²¹⁴ For example, Ss. Athanasius & Cyril on January 18 and Ss. John Chrysostom, Basil and Gregory on January 30.

²¹⁵ Cyprian, Epistles 61:4, 39:7.

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 corresponded²¹⁶ to the teachings of Christ in the Gospels. Judgments in the Church were held on Mondays²¹⁷ to allow for peaceful settlements prior to the Lord's Supper the next Sunday. Chrysostom spoke²¹⁸ 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 out²¹⁹ 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 wrote²²⁰ 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

²¹⁶ Apostolic Constitutions, II, iv, 36; II, v, 41; II, iii, 13.

²¹⁷ Apostolic Constitutions, II, vi, 47.

²¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XVI,

²¹⁹ Cyprian, Epistles 68:3; 64:1; 54:4.

²²⁰ Basil, Letters, 244, 2.

(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 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 tradition²²¹ 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 tradition²²² 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 description²²³ 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

²²¹ *Apostolic Constitutions* II, iii, 9; II, ii, 5; II, vi, 45

²²² Theophylact, *The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Mark*, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1993, Chap. 14, p. 127.

²²³ 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.

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”.

“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 noted²²⁴ 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 waiting²²⁵, 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 referred²²⁶ 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 noted²²⁷ 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)

²²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.

²²⁵ Presumably they ate the Passover lamb while Jesus was hanging on the Cross, or just after He died (John 18:28).

²²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.

²²⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

“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)

“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 inquired²²⁸ a little further regarding just how it was that they charged Him with blasphemy. A few days earlier (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

²²⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 3.

days?” But He was speaking of the temple of His body (John 2:18-21). Chrysostom noted²²⁹ 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 stated²³⁰ that any attempt at defense was unprofitable, 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).

²²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.

²³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 2.

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 stated²³¹

“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).

²³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 3.

“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 said²³² 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 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 stated²³³ 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

²³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

²³³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

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 stated²³⁴ 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 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 said²³⁵ 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

²³⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

²³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 1.

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 slaves²³⁶ also were intemperate towards Him at that time” (Mark 14:65).

Cyril of Alexandria compared²³⁷ 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 Himself to us as a perfect pattern of longsuffering, or rather revealing the incomparability of His Godlike gentleness”.

Chrysostom also applied²³⁸ 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

²³⁶ These “officers” are servants of the High Priest, not commanders of the Roman army. They are not necessarily Hebrews.

²³⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 150, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 594.

²³⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIV, 4.

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 conversion²³⁹ 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 Spain²⁴⁰, or four years before the Council of Jerusalem. James, the son of Alphaeus, was away evangelizing Egypt according to tradition²⁴¹.

Eusebius, the 4th Century church historian, wrote²⁴² 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.

“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*²⁴³ 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.

²³⁹ For the reasoning behind this, see the discussion for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost

²⁴⁰ Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.

²⁴¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 9.

²⁴² Eusebius, *Church History*, II, i. 2-4.

²⁴³ Clement was a late 1st Century Bishop of Rome and one of the Seventy. His *Hypotyposes* (or Outlines) exists today only in scattered fragments.

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, "gives²⁴⁴ 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 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, *Justice*, 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

²⁴⁴ These works of Hegesippus are lost; most of what we know about them comes from Eusebius' quotes.

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 immediately²⁴⁵ Vespasian besieged them.”

²⁴⁵ 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 commented²⁴⁶ 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

²⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

of the Twelve, except Judas, were also from Galilee, and therefore their Galilean accent gave them away.

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 noted²⁴⁷ 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 out²⁴⁸ 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 stated²⁴⁹ 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”.

²⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

²⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 1.

²⁴⁹ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, p. 298.

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 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 saw²⁵⁰ 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.

²⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

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.

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 description²⁵¹ 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 referred²⁵² 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).

²⁵¹ Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 95-101.

²⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

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.

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.