

The Apostle Peter
Including the Evangelist Mark, of the Seventy

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The Apostle Peter

Much is written in the Gospels about Peter's interaction with Jesus and the others of the Twelve. In this Study, we will follow Peter's life chronologically as we find it in the Gospels, and we will look at what was happening to Peter and the rest of the Twelve as illumined by the Church Fathers and by other sources. A theme in Peter's life is that the other Apostles viewed him as a leader and as a spokesman from the beginning, and this will become apparent as we consider episode after episode in his life. As the Twelve grapple to understand what Jesus was saying, Peter was usually the one at the forefront of the inquiry into what this all meant. As we follow Peter's life, both locally in Palestine and traveling around the world, we will see the development of the Early Church and its worship of God.

Peter's Early Life

Peter was born in Bethsaida, along with his brother Andrew and the Apostle Philip, of the Twelve (John 1:44). Peter and Andrew's father, Jonah (Matthew 16:17), is never mentioned during the Gospel narratives. By contrast, James and John worked the fishing business with their father, Zebedee (Matthew 4:21). Some early accounts stated¹ that Peter and Andrew were orphans, and that the fishing business, along with owning their own boat (Luke 5:3), was their livelihood. Another account states² that Peter's father Jonah was still alive, but was very old and an invalid. Poverty and hard work were something that they had grown up with from childhood.

Andrew was a follower of John the Baptist, and we may presume that his brother Peter was also, since Andrew immediately went to get Peter after finding Jesus. As followers of John, Andrew and Peter did a lot of prayer and fasting, as John taught his disciples to do (Mark 2:18-22, Luke 11:1-13). John Chrysostom stated³ that the association of some of the Twelve Apostles with John the Baptist was no small preparation for their Apostleship with Christ.

It was customary for all Jewish boys to learn a trade as part of their education, and Peter needed to work at his trade to support his family, which included his wife and possibly a young daughter at the time Jesus called him. John Chrysostom commented⁴ that the lack of background information (in the Scriptures) on the Twelve Apostles was not a big deal:

“And why, one may say, has he not told us how and in what manner the others were called; but only of Peter and Andrew, James and John, and Philip and Matthew? Because these lived such a humble way of life, more than others! There is nothing worse than the publican's business, or more ordinary than fishing. And that they were among the very ignoble is manifest from their country (i.e. Galilee). Therefore these they proclaim to us, with their ways of life, to show that we ought to believe them in the glorious parts of their histories also. Many signs and miracles are passed over by them; while the events of the cross,

¹ Pseudo-Clement, Recognitions of Clement, VII, 5

² Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 3.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIX, 2.

⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXX, 1.

which were their embarrassments in the eyes of the people of their day, they spell out in detail. The disciples' pursuits too, and their faults, and those of their Master's ancestry, who were notorious for sins (Matthew 1:3, 5-6), they discover with a clear voice. From this it is clear that they made much account of truth, and wrote nothing for favor, nor for display".

John Chrysostom noted⁵ that the locale where Peter, Andrew and Philip grew up was not exactly famous for its desire for righteousness. In fact, Jesus condemned Bethsaida as being worse than Sodom.

"Having failed to persuade them, He now laments over them; which is more than terrifying. He had exhibited both His teaching by His words, and His wonder-working power by His signs. But forasmuch as they abode in their own unbelief, He now upbraids saying, 'Woe unto you, Chorazin! Woe unto you, Bethsaida!' (Matthew 11:21)"

"Then, to show you that they are not such by nature, He states also the name of the city out of which proceeded five Apostles. For both Philip, and those two pairs of the chief Apostles, were from there. 'For if, the mighty works which were done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented in sackcloth and ashes'. And He does not add Sodom with the others for naught, but to aggravate the charge against them. For it is a very great proof of wickedness, when none are found so bad as they".

"Elsewhere He makes a comparison, condemning them by the Ninevites, and by the Queen of the South (Matthew 12:41-42). With this law of condemnation, Ezekiel too was acquainted; wherefore also he said to Jerusalem, 'You have justified your sisters in all your sins' (Ezekiel 16:51 LXX). And not even at this does He stop, but makes their fears yet more intense by saying that they should suffer things more grievous than Sodomites and Tyrians (Matthew 11:24), so as by every means to gather them in, both by bewailing, and by alarming them".

Peter, One of the Married Apostles

Prior to meeting Jesus, Peter was married and had a young daughter⁶. Another traditional account states⁷ that Peter had both a daughter and a son. Peter's wife⁸ was the daughter of Aristobulus, the brother of Barnabas. The question we might ask is how the Lord's commendation of the Twelve for leaving "wife and children" (Matthew 19:29) applied to Peter. The indication from the following is that they went with him, at least to most places. For example, after Philip was martyred in Hierapolis of Asia, his three daughters remained in that

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXVII, 6.

⁶ Jerome, Treatises Against Jovinianus, I, 26 states, "But we might say concerning Peter, that he had a mother-in-law when he believed (Matthew 8:14), and no longer had a wife, although in the "Sentences" we read of both his wife and daughter".

⁷ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 3. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁸ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, [October 27](#).

city. What the Apostles seem to have “left” was the pleasures of the flesh associated with a wife and children, and their children seem to have emulated the life of their fathers. This can be illustrated by examining the lives of some of the other married Apostles, Philip and Jude

Little is recorded in the Scriptures about the Apostle Philip. We know a little about the Deacon Philip (Acts 8:4-12, 26-40), one of the Seventy, who was sent out by the Twelve. He evangelized the Samaritans (Acts 8:4-12), prepared a reception for Matthew and Matthias in Africa by converting the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-38) and was translated to Azotus (Acts 8:39-40). The Deacon Philip was also married and had four virgin daughters (Acts 21:8-9). At the time that the Apostle Paul visited him in Caesarea, he was then the Bishop of Caesarea. The Apostle Philip was also married and had three daughters. His wife and family traveled with him on many occasions, and the following references give us a little insight into what life was like for the Apostle Philip on the road⁹.

Polycrates (130-196 AD), Bishop of Ephesus, in an Epistle¹⁰ to Victor, the Bishop of Rome, wrote regarding the daughters¹¹ of the Apostle Philip. Philip’s daughters were included in a very exclusive company of late 1st and early 2nd Century saints.

“For in Asia great luminaries have gone to their rest, who shall rise again in the day of the coming of the Lord, when He comes with glory from heaven and shall raise again all the saints. I speak of Philip, one of the twelve Apostles, who is laid to rest at Hierapolis. And his two daughters, who arrived at old age unmarried; his other daughter also, who passed her life under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and reposes at Ephesus. John, who reclined on the Lord’s bosom, and who became a priest wearing the mitre¹², and a witness and a teacher — he rests at Ephesus. Then there is Polycarp, both bishop and martyr at Smyrna; and Thraseas from Eumenia, both bishop and martyr, who rests at Smyrna. Why should I speak of Sagaris, bishop and martyr, who rests at Laodicea? Of the blessed Papirius, moreover? And of Melito the eunuch, who performed all his actions under the influence of the Holy Spirit, and lies at Sardis, awaiting the visitation from heaven, when he shall rise again from the dead?”

Sozomen, the early 5th Century Church Historian, in writing¹³ about a miracle performed by Epiphanius, the 4th Century Bishop of Cyprus, referred to earlier miracles performed by Philip’s daughters, where they raised someone from the dead:

“I desire also to relate another miracle that is attributed to Epiphanius. I have heard that a similar action has been related of Gregory, who formerly governed Neocaesarea; and I see no reason to doubt the veracity of the account; but it does not disprove the authenticity of the miracle attributed to Epiphanius. Peter, the Apostle, was not the only man who raised another from the dead; John, the evangelist, wrought a similar miracle at Ephesus; as did likewise the daughters

⁹ For more details of the life of the Apostle Philip, see Mark Kern, The Apostle Philip, Unpublished Work, 2003.

¹⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, “Polycrates, Epistle to Victor and the Roman Church”, Remains of the Second and Third Centuries, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

¹¹ See also Eusebius, Church History, III, 31.

Eusebius, Church History, V, 24.

Philip Schaff, ed., “Jerome, Lives of Illustrious Men”, II, 45, Jerome and Gennadius, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, v. 3.

¹² This refers to a turban similar to that worn by the High Priest as described in Exodus 28:36-39, 29:6.

¹³ Salaminus Hermias Sozomenus, Ecclesiastical History, VII, 27.

of Philip at Hierapolis. Similar actions have been performed in different ages by the men of God”.

Papias (60-130 AD), the Bishop of Hierapolis, whose writings today only exist in fragments, also wrote¹⁴ of this miracle by Philip’s daughters as having occurred in his day. He also noted that Philip lived in Hierapolis with his daughters at one time. Eusebius also quotes¹⁵ Papias as saying this in his Church History.

Eusebius quotes¹⁶ Clement of Alexandria as opposing the idea of a celibate clergy¹⁷. In saying this, Clement referred to Philip’s daughters as having husbands, and to at least one child of the Apostle Peter. This may mean that the Apostle Philip had more than three daughters:

“Clement indeed, whose words we have just quoted, after the above-mentioned facts gives a statement, on account of those who rejected marriage, regarding the Apostles that had wives. ‘Or will they’, says he, ‘reject even the Apostles? For Peter and Philip begot children; and Philip also gave his daughters in marriage. And Paul does not hesitate, in one of his epistles, to greet his wife¹⁸, whom he did not take about with him, that he might not be inconvenienced in his ministry’. And since we have mentioned this subject it is not improper to subjoin another account which is given by the same author and which is worth reading. In the seventh book of his Stromata¹⁹ he writes as follows: ‘They say, accordingly, that when the blessed Peter saw his own wife led out to die, he rejoiced because of her summons and her return home. And calling to her very encouragingly and comfortingly, he addressing her by name, saying, ‘Remember the Lord!’ Such was the marriage of the blessed, and their perfect disposition toward those people who were dearest to them”.

Clement added, “Thus also the apostle says, ‘that he who marries should be as though he married not’ (1 Corinthians 7:29), and deem his marriage free of inordinate affection, and inseparable from love to the Lord; to which the true husband exhorted his wife to cling on her departure out of this life to the Lord”.

Jude was another one of the married men among the Apostles²⁰, and Paul referred to this (1 Corinthians 9:5). From Paul’s remarks, the implications are that Jude’s wife accompanied him on at least some of his missionary journeys. If Jude was still unmarried at the death of his father, Joseph, and if Joseph died shortly before Jesus’ public ministry, Jude must have married just before John the Baptist began to declare Jesus as the Christ. Jude had at least one child, and at least two grandchildren, as documented by Eusebius²¹, who quoted Hegesippus.

“Vespasian, after the conquest of Jerusalem, gave orders that all that belonged to the lineage of David should be sought out, in order that none of the

¹⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, “Exposition of the Oracles of the Lord”, Fragments of Papias, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 1.

¹⁵ Eusebius, Church History, III, 39.

¹⁶ Eusebius, Church History, III, 30.

¹⁷ See also Tertullian, “To His Wife”, IV, iv, 2, Elucidation, which also refers to Clement’s comments

¹⁸ This is a reference to Philippians 4:3, which some have interpreted as a reference by Paul to his wife. There is no general agreement among the Church Fathers on whether Paul was referring to his wife here, or on whether Paul was married.

¹⁹ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, VII, 11.

²⁰ Tertullian, On Monogamy, “Elucidation number 2”, IV, vi.

²¹ Eusebius, Church History, III, 12, 19-20.

royal race might be left among the Jews; and in consequence of this a most terrible persecution again hung over the Jews”.

“But when Domitian became Emperor in 81 AD and had also commanded that the descendants of David should be slain, an ancient tradition says that some of the heretics brought accusation against the descendants of Jude (said to have been a brother of the Savior according to the flesh), on the ground that they were of the lineage of David and were related to Christ himself. Hegesippus²² relates these facts in the following words”.

“Of the family of the Lord there were still living the grandchildren of Jude, who is said to have been the Lord’s brother according to the flesh. Information was given that they belonged to the family of David, and they were brought to the Emperor Domitian by the Evocatus. For Domitian feared the coming of Christ as Herod also had feared it. And he asked them if they were descendants of David, and they confessed that they were. Then he asked them how much property they had, or how much money they owned. And both of them answered that they had only nine thousand denarii, half of which belonged to each of them; and this property did not consist of silver, but of a piece of land which contained only thirty-nine acres, and from which they raised their taxes and supported themselves by their own labor.” Then they showed their hands, exhibiting the hardness of their bodies and the callousness produced upon their hands by continuous toil as evidence of their own labor. And when they were asked concerning Christ and his kingdom, of what sort it was and where and when it was to appear, they answered that it was not a temporal nor an earthly kingdom, but a heavenly and angelic one, which would appear at the end of the world, when He should come in glory to judge the living and the dead, and to give unto every one according to his works. Upon hearing this, Domitian did not pass judgment against them, but, despising them as of no account, he let them go, and by a decree put a stop to the persecution of the Church. But when they were released they ruled the churches because they were witnesses and were also relatives of the Lord. And peace being established, they lived until the time of Trajan²³.

Peter Called as a Disciple: John 1:40-44

Peter and Andrew had been followers of John the Baptist, along with others of the Twelve and the Seventy. When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus, saying, “Behold the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36), immediately Andrew began to follow Jesus (John 1:37), but as a disciple, not as an Apostle. After this first calling, which occurred in early 27 AD, Peter along with the others (Andrew, James and John) were still part-time fishermen, but hadn’t been called to be Apostles yet. In late 27 AD, Jesus called them as Apostles, and they left everything to travel with Him full time (Matthew 4:20, 22).

Jesus’ relationship with the four Apostles developed out of their relationship to John the Baptist, where Andrew, Peter, James and John were aware of the extraordinary insight that John had regarding the things of God. John had stated that he was not the Messiah, but said, “I baptize with water, but there stands One among you whom you do not know. It is He who, coming after Me, is preferred before Me, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to loose” (John

²² Hegesippus was a 2nd Century Church Historian, but most of his writings are now lost.

²³ Trajan was Emperor from 98 to 117 AD.

1:26-27). John had also said that the Messiah would baptize them with the Holy Spirit and with fire (Luke 3:16). When John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as “the Lamb of God” (John 1:29, 36), Andrew and John realized that John the Baptist was pointing out the promised Messiah, and they got their brothers and began following Jesus (John 1:37-41). At this point, they recognized Jesus as Messiah (John 1:41).

When Jesus first called the four as disciples (John 1:42), Jesus prophesied that Andrew’s brother Peter would be called Cephas, meaning a rock or stone. Cephas is a name that comes from the Chaldean word “*kafē*” meaning rock; “*petra*” is the Greek counterpart meaning a (large) rock.

A little over a year after the four were called, following the death of John the Baptist, Jesus made His famous statement about the church and how the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it (Matthew 16:18). This was in response to Peter’s confession (Matthew 16:17) which is the “rock” that Jesus had spoken of earlier. Jesus went on to say that He will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Twelve. Whatever they bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven. And whatever they loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). The Twelve, who have established the foundation of the Church (Revelation 21:14) with Jesus Christ as the Cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20) have already begun to judge the 12 tribes of Israel and have been doing so now for almost two millennia. The Church today is responsible before God to maintain the connection with the Twelve and the Cornerstone in order that this just judgment may continue for our benefit. In doing this, the Church helps us to focus on loving the Lord our God with all our heart, soul and strength, and our neighbor as our self. And by doing that, we will obtain a good defense before the dread judgment seat of Christ as we pray in the various services.

John Chrysostom noted²⁴ that Jesus’ remarks were a prediction of Peter’s role as the leader of the Twelve Apostles. But Jesus didn’t spell out the prophecy in detail until Peter had recognized Him as God.

“‘You are Simon, the son of Jonah’ (John 1:42). And the prediction is attended with praise; but the object was not to flatter, but to foretell something future. He brings this forward through prophecy because prophecy is especially the work of God, which demons cannot imitate, though they try. For in the case of miracles there may be delusion; but exactly to foretell the future belongs to that pure Nature of God alone. If demons have ever appeared to prophesy, it was by deceiving the simpler sort; which is why their oracles are always easily detected”.

“But Peter makes no reply to these words; as yet he knew nothing clearly, but still was learning. And observe, that the prediction is not given completely. Jesus did not say, ‘I will change your name to Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church,’ but, ‘You shall be called Cephas’ (John 1:42). The former speech would have expressed too great authority and power; for Christ does not immediately declare all His power, but speaks for a while in a humbler tone. When He had given the proof of His Divinity, He puts it more authoritatively, saying, ‘Blessed are you, Simon, because My Father has revealed it to you’; and again, ‘You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My Church’ (Matthew 16:17, 18). Therefore He named him so, and James and his brother He called “sons of thunder” (Mark 3:17). Why then does He do this? To show that it was

²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIX, 2.

He who gave the old covenant, that it was He who altered names, who called Abram ‘Abraham’, and Sarai ‘Sarah’, and Jacob ‘Israel’. To many he assigned names even from their birth, as to Isaac, and Samson, and to those in Isaiah and Hosea (Isaiah 8:3; Hosea 1:4, 6, 9), and to Joshua the son of Nun” (Numbers 13:8, 16).

John Chrysostom, noting²⁵ how Andrew stayed with Jesus for a day before calling his brother, Peter, said:

“Andrew, after staying with Jesus and learning what He did, did not keep the treasure to himself, but ran quickly to his brother, to impart the good things which he had received. John, in his Gospel, has not said on what matters Christ conversed with them. It is clear that it was for this that they ‘remained with Him that day’ (John 1:38-39). Observe what Andrew said to his brother; ‘We have found the Messiah, who is, being interpreted, the Christ’ (John 1:41). You see how he showed the wisdom of the teacher who persuaded them, and their own zeal that they cared for these things from the beginning. For this word, ‘we have found’, is the expression of a soul which labors for His Presence, and looks for His coming from above, and is made overjoyed when the looked-for thing has happened, and hastens to impart to others the good news. This is part of brotherly affection, of a sincere disposition, to be eager to stretch out the hand to each other in spiritual things. Hear him besides speak with the addition of the definite article; for he does not say ‘Messiah’, but ‘The Messiah’”.

“Besides, it is not said, absolutely, “he believed,” but that “he brought him to Jesus,” so that from Him he might learn everything. For the other disciple (the Apostle John) also was with him, and contributed to this. And if John the Baptist, who was filled with the Spirit from his mother’s womb (Luke 1:15), gave them over to learn the clearer doctrine concerning this thing from Him (John 1:29,36), much more would Andrew have done this. He would not consider himself sufficient to explain everything, but to draw his brother to the very fount of light with so much zeal and joy, that the other neither deferred nor delayed at all”.

Chrysostom continued²⁶ to say that having the testimony of John the Baptist was “no small preparation” as an introduction to Jesus. “Although Andrew²⁷ was unable to produce the wealth, which he had found, or to describe his treasure in words, when he had discovered it, he led his brother to it to see for himself”.

The hymns of the Church celebrate Andrew’s calling as follows:

“Not summoned²⁸, but of your own will did you run like a hart with thirst to the Well-spring of life. And having found Him, you preached Him to all. Having drunk thereof, you drenched the parched ends of the earth with the waters of incorruption”.

Peter Called as an Apostle: Matthew 10:2-4; Mark 3:13-19; Luke 5:1-11, 6:12-16

²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIX, 1.

²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XIX, 2.

²⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XX, 1

²⁸ “Ode III for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle Andrew, the First-Called”, November 30th, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

From the calling of Peter, Andrew, James and John as full-time Apostles in late 27 AD, we can gain an insight into their motivation and dedication to Jesus. We can see their dedication about two years later, when Jesus spoke in the synagogue of Capernaum of eating His flesh and drinking His blood (John 6:51-59). Many of His disciples left²⁹ because this sounded so outrageous (John 6:60-66). But when He asked the Twelve if they were going to leave also, Peter said, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life; and we have believed, and have come to know, that you are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (John 6:68-69). By that time, the Twelve had left everything, such that they didn’t even have pocket change to pay the “Temple Tax” in mid 29 AD (Matthew 17:24-27).

When Jesus called these four as full-time Apostles, this was the conclusion of a long relationship they had with Him. James and John were Jesus’ 2nd cousins and had known Him since they were children. The same was true with Jude, Jesus’ stepbrother. They were there when John the Baptist pointed out Jesus as the One he came to announce (John 1:29-36). Many of the Twelve were with Jesus at the wedding feast at Cana, which occurred just before Passover earlier in the year 27 AD (John 2:1-11). Prior to John’s imprisonment, they had heard John’s words, as the friend of the Bridegroom, when Jesus began baptizing more disciples than John, where Jesus’ disciples actually did the baptizing (John 3:22-4:2). They had recently traveled with Jesus back and forth from Galilee and were there with the Samaritan woman by the well in Sychar (John 4:5-42). Their calling as Apostles came late in the year 27 AD, the first year of Jesus’ public ministry, which began just before Passover at Cana. Before this calling in late 27 AD, the Twelve were not full-time disciples yet. They were still working at their trade, perhaps to earn enough that they could travel with Jesus part-time. After they made their decisions to follow Jesus full-time, some of the Holy Women pitched in to help support them (Luke 8:2-3).

At the first calling (John 1:37-51), they were still part-time fishermen. After the second calling in late 27 AD, they left everything (Luke 5:11) and were soon sent out by themselves to heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse lepers and cast out demons (Luke 9:1-10). Jesus called the rest of the Twelve Apostles shortly after He called Peter, Andrew, James and John from their fishing business (Luke 6:12-16).

At the time of Jesus’ second calling of the four Apostles, John the Baptist had just been put in prison by Herod (Matthew 4:12), where John spent over a year in prison before being beheaded (Matthew 14:1-12; Mark 6:14-29; Luke 9:7-9). During John’s imprisonment, Jesus’ public ministry began to grow considerably and John even inquired about the details from prison (Matthew 11:2-6; Luke 7:18-23). John’s message, however, continued to spread due to his followers’ zeal. For example, John was imprisoned in 27 AD. Twenty six years later (in 53 AD) at the beginning of Paul’s Third Missionary Journey, Apollos came to Corinth preaching the baptism of John (Acts 18:23-28). Paul came across twelve other followers of John in Ephesus at about this same time (Acts 19:1-7). Apollos³⁰ was one of the original Seventy sent out by the Lord (Luke 10:1-24). But he had apparently gone back home to Alexandria before Pentecost when the Holy Spirit was given. He hadn’t yet heard of the Holy Spirit (along with the 12 others) in 53 AD when Paul, Aquila and Priscilla updated them. This indicates that John the Baptist’s impact was substantial in order for his message to continue 25 years after his death.

²⁹ Two of His disciples that left were the Evangelists Luke and Mark, but they both returned later. See Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles.

³⁰ Apollos would later become one of the greatest teachers in the history of the Church of Alexandria, along with the Evangelist Mark, who founded the Church of Alexandria.

And it is out of this incredible insight of John into the things of God that Jesus called the four Apostles to be fishers of men (Matthew 4:19).

John Chrysostom noted³¹ that Jesus did not begin His public ministry in earnest until John the Baptist was put in prison by Herod (Matthew 4:12-17; John 4:1). The importance of this was to defuse the criticism of the Pharisees who said that Jesus bore witness only of Himself (John 8:13). This was not true; John had borne witness to Him earlier (John 1:29, 36; 3:26-36), as well as God the Father from heaven (Matthew 3:17). While John did not perform any miracles (John 10:41), Jesus did many, thus confirming John's words (John 5:36; 10:25; 10:38). Jesus began preaching good news (i.e. Gospel), not mentioning the ax and a tree cut down (Matthew 3:9-10), the sitting (Matthew 25:31), the threshing floor and unquenchable fire (Matthew 3:12) until later.

In Luke's account, a miracle was associated with this second calling (Luke 5:5-8). In this miracle, the four Apostles had worked all night with their trammel nets³² and caught nothing. With trammel nets they had to work at night so the fish didn't see the webbing of the nets. Jesus instructed them to launch out into the deep and let down their nets. If Jesus had been a stranger to them, they wouldn't just go out into deep water and let down their nets, especially being tired after fishing all night. This instruction was also contrary to their common practice since trammel nets aren't used in the daytime or in deep water but only in shallow water. When the nets were filled to the point of breaking and the boats were filled to the point of sinking, the four Apostles were so impressed that they left everything and followed Jesus.

This is significant in terms of recent scholarship that notes the high prices and high demand for fresh fish. These four Apostles may not have been poor! They may have been uneducated, but the fishing business paid well, and the Roman government later had to institute price controls on fresh fish to prevent fishmongers from gouging people³³. The four Apostles evidently left a well-paying trade for no worldly return or benefit (Matthew 19:27). This gives us more of an appreciation for their calling and for what they did.

Fishing on the Sea of Galilee

To understand the details of Jesus' call of the four Apostles, it helps to understand fishing on the Sea of Galilee. Fishing changed very little between the 1st Century and the middle of the 20th Century³⁴. By the 1950's, synthetic fiber nets replaced cotton and linen, motors replaced oars and sails and electronic fish-finders came into use. Not surprisingly, fish hauls increased and indigenous species began to be depleted; new species were then introduced.

Types of Fish Present:

In the first century, four species of fish were common. The first is a catfish which was of no economic importance because it was "unclean." From Leviticus 11:9-12, seafood must have fins and scales to be kosher; catfish have no scales.

³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XIV

³² A trammel net has several different size mesh, such that a fish can fit through the first size mesh, but gets trapped in the smaller size mesh. See Figure 3.

³³ Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men," Bible Review, June 1999

³⁴ Mendel Nun, "Cast Your Net Upon the Waters", Biblical Archaeology Review, Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

The second species was the sardine and represented about half the yearly tonnage taken from the lake. In the story of the feeding of the 5,000 (John 6:9-10) and of the 4,000 (Matthew 15:34-38) the fish that were multiplied were sardines. The city of Magdala on the Western shore of the Sea of Galilee was the center of the sardine pickling industry in the region.

A third species of fish is the barbel, a member of the carp family. The largest of the barbels, the Long-Headed Barbel, is a nice looking fish resembling a trout that feeds on small fish and mollusks. The barbel can reach 30 inches in length and can weigh 15 pounds.

The fourth species of fish is called the musht (meaning “comb” in Arabic) and has a long dorsal fin resembling a comb. The musht feed on plankton and congregate in shoals, especially as cold weather approaches. Since the musht is the only large fish found in shoals, this has to be the species involved in several New Testament accounts. The musht can reach 18 inches in length and can weigh 5 pounds.

The musht is a flat white fish and is often prepared by frying (compare John 21:9). The skeleton consists of an easily detached backbone and relatively few small bones, thus making it easy to eat. It is generally regarded as the tastiest fish in the lake.

Fishing Methods:

Three types of nets were referred to in both New and Old Testaments. These types of nets have been used for thousands of years and require much different techniques.

The first type, a dragnet (Greek *sagaynay*), is the oldest type and is shown in Figure 1. Typical dragnets or seines were up to 1,000 feet long and 25 feet high. It was spread out by boat 100 yards or more from shore and then hauled to shore by a team of 16 men. Sinkers kept the bottom of the net down and floats kept the top on the surface. When the net reached the shore, fish were sorted and catfish thrown away. This is the type of net referred to in Matthew 13:47-50. This net couldn't be used if the shoreline were rocky or had kelp growing near the shore.

A second type of net is a cast net or bag net (Greek *amphilblestron*). See Figure 2. This type is circular, about 25 feet in diameter and has lead weights all around the outer edge. After the net is thrown and sinks to the bottom, it is either retrieved by a system of cords or by a diver. When Peter and Andrew were called (Matthew 4:18), they were using this net, perhaps catching sardines. (When Peter and Andrew left their nets, Matthew 4:20, they left the third type of net: their trammel nets.)

A third type of net is called a trammel net (Greek *diktuon*). This type of net has three layers as shown in Figure 3 and was used only at night. It was not useful during the day because the fish could see the weaving and avoid it. Modern synthetic fiber — which is invisible under water — has made trammel nets useful today in the day time. The trammel net was spread in a crescent shape roughly parallel to the shoreline. The boat that laid the net then quietly maneuvered toward shore between the net and the shore. All of a sudden the fishermen in the boat started making racket by beating the water with oars or stamping on the bottom of the boat. The frightened fish headed for deep water — right into the net and became entangled.

The trammel net was lowered and hauled up perhaps a dozen times during the night. Early in the morning the net was washed and hung up to dry and repaired — and prepared for the next night's work.

Jesus Calls the Four Apostles

Peter, Andrew, James and John had been fishing all night and had caught nothing using their trammel nets (Luke 5:1-6). James and John were at work that morning mending the trammel nets when Jesus called them (Matthew 4:20, Mark 1:18), while Peter and Andrew were finishing up with a bag net (Matthew 4:18-19, Mark 1:16-17). Common practice among fishermen on the Sea of Galilee was to work all night, then mend nets and hang them up to dry at daybreak before getting some sleep. Jesus arrived early in the morning and taught from Peter's boat for a while.

Figure 1
Use of a Dragnet or Seine

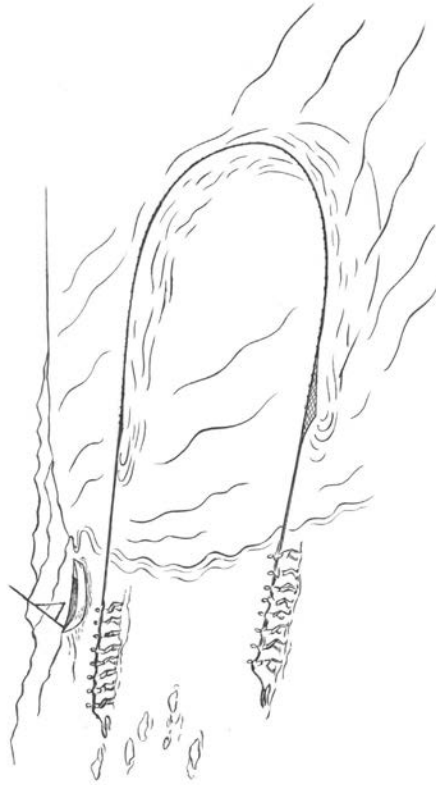
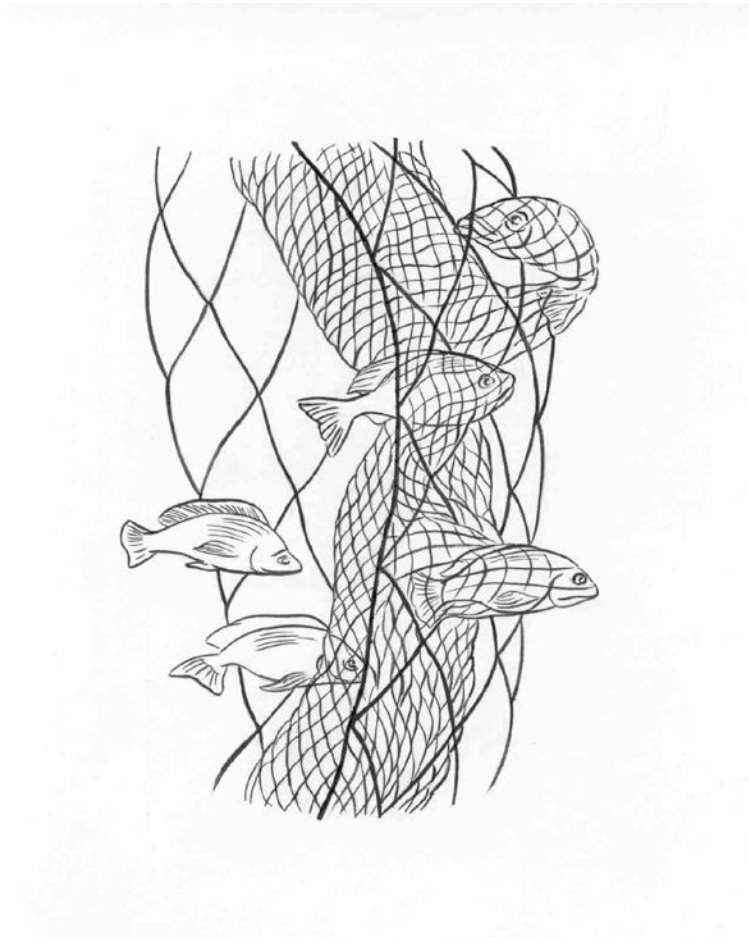


Figure 2
Use of a Cast Net



Figure 3
The Webbing of a Trammel Net



After Jesus stopped teaching, He said to Peter, “Launch out to deep water and let down the (trammel) nets”, which had already been washed and hung up to dry (Luke 5:2). Peter protested that this was pointless: the nets weren’t useful in deep water (since the fish could swim under them), or in the daytime and this would require re-washing the nets; but he did so anyway. Having done so, Peter encountered such a catch that (1) the net started to break, (2) the boat almost sank due to the weight of the catch, and (3) Peter had to call James and John over to help, and filled both boats. The Gospel account was especially remarkable because the fish can see the nets during the daytime and can easily escape entanglement.

Comparing a similar catch they encountered under similar circumstances following the Resurrection, they caught 153 large fish (John 21:1-12). These latter fish were probably the musht since they were caught near shore (100 yards out); the haul was then around 600 pounds of fish (figuring four pounds each).

Since the catch at the calling of the four Apostles was taken in deep water (Luke 5:4), it was probably a school of large barbel. The 153 fish caught after the Resurrection are referred to as “a multitude of fish” (John 21:6) and “full of large fish” (John 21:11). The quantity of fish caught at the calling of the four Apostles is referred to as “a great number of fish” (Luke 5:6). The net did not break after the Resurrection (although the catch was large enough to expect

breakage) but the net did start breaking at the calling of the four Apostles. If there were also around 150 fish caught at the calling of the four Apostles, this would represent about a ton of fish, figuring 10-15 pounds per barbel. To get a better idea of the quantity of fish, these boats were the same ones that the Twelve rowed across the Sea of Galilee during a storm (Mark 4:36-38). These boats were larger-than-average rowboats and they were used at night to lay nets that are hundreds of feet long. There was probably room for at least six adults plus space for Jesus to sleep. This means that the boat could probably carry over 1,000 pounds of fish plus two crew members. Since both boats were filled to the point of almost sinking (Luke 5:7) this represented quite a haul! Especially since a good night's catch (working all night, letting down the nets 12-15 times) was only about 200 pounds.

Peter, Andrew, James, John and the rest of the crew were understandably astonished at the size of the catch especially coming in the daytime. Peter's remark, "Depart from me, for I am a sinful man!" is reminiscent of that of Isaiah after having seen the Lord in His temple (Isaiah 6:1-7). Many times, the closer we get to the Lord, the more we realize our own sinfulness. John Chrysostom stated³⁵ regarding Peter's remark, "Nothing is so acceptable to God as to number one's self with the last. This is a first principle of all practical wisdom. For he that is humbled, and bruised in heart, will not be vainglorious, will not be wrathful, will not envy his neighbor, will not harbor any other passion". From the Lord's reply, "Do not be afraid" (Luke 5:10), there was more than just simple surprise but some fear and trembling also at the magnitude of the Lord's miracle. One might note Peter's progression over the course of this encounter from calling Jesus "Master" (Luke 5:5) to calling Him "Lord" (Luke 5:8).

John Chrysostom also stated³⁶, regarding Peter's remark, "Mark both their faith, and their obedience. For though they were in the midst of their work, when they heard His command, they delayed not, they procrastinated not, they said not, 'Let us return home, and converse with our kinsfolk', but 'They forsook all and followed', even as Elisha did to Elijah. Because such is the obedience which Christ seeks of us, that we delay not even a moment of time, though something absolutely most needful should vehemently press on us".

Jesus Heals Peter's Mother-in-Law: Matthew 8:14-15, Mark 1:29-34, Luke 4:38-41

From this account, we get an insight into Peter's immediate family. As mentioned earlier, some accounts stated³⁷ that Andrew and Peter were orphans, and that their fishing business, was a necessity for their support. Peter, his wife, Andrew, Peter's in-laws and Peter's children (if any) all lived in the same house (Mark 1:29-30). For them to invite Jesus and some of His Apostles over for a Sabbath meal, the house had to have been of a reasonable size and could not have been one of the small 10 ft. by 10 ft. houses that the poor people of Capernaum lived in. This indicates that Peter and Andrew had a good income from the fishing business. Theophylact of Ochrid stated³⁸ that it was the custom on the evening of the Sabbath for Jesus to have supper at the house of His disciples.

³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 8.

³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XIV, 3.

³⁷ Pseudo-Clement, Recognitions of Clement, VII, 5

³⁸ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 1, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

After teaching in the synagogue of Capernaum on the Sabbath, and healing a man in the synagogue who was demon-possessed (Luke 4:31-37), Jesus left for the house of Peter and Andrew accompanied also by James and John (Mark 1:29). “Now He arose from the synagogue and entered Simon’s house. But Simon’s wife’s mother was sick with a high fever, and they made request of Him concerning her. So He stood over her and rebuked the fever, and it left her. And immediately she arose and served them” (Luke 4:38-39).

At the Apostles’ request, Jesus rebuked the fever, touched the hand of Peter’s mother-in-law (Matthew 8:15), took her by the hand and lifted her up (Mark 1:31). Not only did the fever leave her immediately, but also she needed no recovery time; she immediately got up and began serving the Sabbath meal. Cyril of Alexandria stated³⁹ that what Jesus rebuked was the demons that had caused her to be sick, just as they had caused considerable grief for Job (Job 1-2).

“In Luke’s phrase that He stood over her, and rebuked the fever, and it left her (Luke 4:39), we are but compelled to say that that which was rebuked was some living thing unable to sustain the influence of Him Who rebuked it. For it is not reasonable to rebuke a thing without life, and unconscious of the rebuke. Nor is it astonishing that certain powers exist that inflict harm on the human body; nor must we think evil of the soul of those who suffer for being harmed by these beings. For neither when the Devil obtained authority to tempt Job by bodily torments, and struck him with painful ulcers, was Job found fault with, for he manfully contended and nobly endured the blow. If at any time we are tempted by bodily pains, God grant that it touch not our soul (Job 2:6). The Lord then by a rebuke heals those who are possessed”.

“He also laid His hands upon the sick one by one, and freed them from their malady (Luke 4:40-41), so demonstrating that the holy flesh, which He had made His own, and endowed with godlike power, possessed the active presence of the might of the Word. He intended us thereby to learn that though the Only-begotten Word of God became like us, yet even so is He none the less God, and able easily, even by His own flesh, to accomplish all things. Nor is there any reason for great wonder at this; but consider how fire, when placed in a brazen vessel, communicates to the vessel the power of producing the effects of heat. So the all-powerful Word of God also, having joined by a real union the living and intelligent temple taken from the holy Virgin, endowed it with the power of actively exerting His own godlike might.

“He might as God have said, ‘Put away the disease, arise’, but He adopted a different course of action. For, as a proof that His own flesh possessed the power of healing, as being the flesh of God, He touched her hand, and the fever left her”.

Later that evening, after sunset, the whole city of Capernaum was gathered together at the door of Peter’s house. “They brought to Him all those who were sick with various diseases; and He laid His hands on every one of them and healed them. And demons also came out of many, crying out and saying, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of God!’ And He, rebuking *them*, did not allow them to speak, for they knew that He was the Christ” (Luke 4:32-34). All this was a rather spectacular event for the four Apostles and the others to witness.

John Chrysostom commented⁴⁰ on this, noting that the miracle produced instant health that required no time for recuperation. Similarly, when He calmed the sea, He exhibited complete command of the physical world such that when the winds stopped, the sea was

³⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 12, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

⁴⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXVII, 1-2.

perfectly calm and no time was required for the waves to cease swelling. As a result of the healing of Peter's mother-in-law, even the multitudes grew in their faith. We note particularly Peter's unselfishness in asking for healing of his mother-in-law, not at the synagogue, but after the teaching was done. Chrysostom linked this healing to Christ bearing our sicknesses of soul, since He came as the Lamb of God to bear (Greek *airo*, carry, lift) the sin of the world.

"Jesus used to visit His disciples, as He had done for Matthew when He had called him (Matthew 9:9-13, Mark 2:13-17), so honoring them and making them more zealous. But note Peter's reverence towards Him. Even though he had his wife's mother at home lying ill, and very sick of a fever, he did not draw Him into his house, but waited first for the teaching to be finished, then for all the others to be healed (Matthew 8:1-13). And then when He had come in, then he besought Him. Thus from the beginning was he instructed to prefer the things of all others to his own".

"Jesus not only quenched the fever, but also gave her back perfect health, displaying His power by the manner of healing. For you know that even after a fever departs, the patients need much time to return to their former health. But in this case all took place at once".

"And not in this case only, but also in calming the sea (Mark 4:39). There He did not quiet the winds and the storm only, but He also stopped the swelling of the waves; and this also was a strange thing. For even if the wind should cease, the waves continue to swell for a long time. But with Christ it was not so, but all at once it was ended; and so it befell this woman also. To declare this, the evangelist said, 'She arose and ministered unto Him' (Matthew 8:15); which was a sign both of Christ's power, and of the disposition of the woman, which she showed towards Christ".

"Do you see that even the multitude was growing in faith? For even when the time pressed they could not endure to depart, nor did they account it unseasonable to bring their sick to Him in the evening" (Matthew 8:16).

Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁴¹ that these miracles were lessons for the Apostles, instructing them regarding Who it was that was present. While Jesus had a human body, He was still God and did the works of His Father.

"When His flesh suffered, the Word was not external to it; and therefore the passion is said to be His. And when He divinely did His Father's works, the flesh was not external to Him, but in the body itself did the Lord do them. Hence He said, '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 10:38). And thus when there was need to raise Peter's mother-in-law, who was sick of a fever, He stretched forth His hand humanly, but He stopped the illness divinely (Mark 1:29-34). And in the case of the man blind from the birth (John 9:1-11), human was the spit which He gave forth from the flesh, but divinely did He open the eyes through the clay. And in the case of Lazarus (John 11:1-46), He gave forth a human voice as man; but divinely, as God, did He raise Lazarus from the dead. These things were so done, because He had a body, not in appearance, but in truth".

⁴¹ Athanasius, Four Discourses Against the Arians, III, 32.

Jesus Heals a Woman with Flow of Blood; Peter's Reaction: Luke 8:45-46

In this encounter, Peter and the Twelve learned a little about holy relics. Peter's perception of Jesus' power was challenged by the woman who touched the hem of Jesus' garment. The woman with a hemorrhage exhibited a little faith – she came to Jesus convinced He could help. She also had her faith tested a little. From the healing of her hemorrhage, we have an example of the use of physical objects for spiritual purposes. Jesus taught that one thing sanctifies another. The text states that power went out from Him (Luke 8:46) via a touch of the hem of His garment. The Master sanctified the garment and the garment sanctified the hem. Jesus had criticized the scribes and Pharisees for saying that whoever swears by the Temple, it is nothing; but whoever swears by the gold of the Temple, he is obliged to perform it. He pointed out, “Which is greater, the gold or the Temple that sanctified it?” (Matthew 23:16-17). Thus, one thing sanctifies another. This is also the case with icons, holy water, holy oil and many instances of relics of the saints.

We in the West are unaccustomed to dealing with holy relics. Yet a man was raised from the dead by touching the bones of Elisha (In 2 Kings 13:20-21). This was completely unintentional; no faith at all existed on the part of the burial crew. The relics of Elisha had been sanctified by the power behind the life of Elisha. Similarly during the two years that Paul was in Ephesus on his Third Missionary Journey, handkerchiefs and aprons that touched Paul's body were used to heal diseases and cast out evil spirits (Acts 19:12). Again, one thing sanctified another.

When Jesus stopped and said to the woman, “Who touched Me?” (Luke 8:45-46), she was petrified. She had made the Teacher unclean⁴² and He had caught her doing so! But the Son of God cannot be made unclean unless He so permits (as He did on the Cross – 2 Corinthians 5:21). Therefore, uncleanness touching the Clean One became clean also. After she fell at His feet and confessed, He said, “Be of good cheer, your faith has made you well!”

After Jesus said, “Who touched Me?”, Peter and the other Apostles rebuked Jesus saying, “Master, the multitudes throng and press You, and You say, ‘Who touched Me?’” Theophylact stated⁴³ that the Apostles didn't understand what Jesus was asking. He was really asking, “Who touched Me in faith?” Some people have ears to hear what He is saying, while others don't. Similarly, some people touch with faith, while others draw near while their heart is far away.

Cyril of Alexandria pointed out⁴⁴ that the woman did not approach Jesus boldly since she was ashamed of her affliction and considered herself unclean. Under the Law, her affliction was considered a “great uncleanness”. According to the Mosaic Law, she was unclean for the entire twelve years of her flow of blood (Leviticus 15:25). Likewise, anyone touching her bed or anything she sat on was also unclean (Leviticus 15:26-27), as was anyone touching her (Leviticus 15:7). Being unclean, she was equivalent to a leper and couldn't participate in the worship or sacrifices of Israel.

⁴² From Leviticus 15:1-7, anyone with a bodily discharge was unclean, and so was anyone who touched them.

⁴³ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, Chapter 8:45-48, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

⁴⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 45, Studion Publishers, 1983.
Also John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 2.

Since by touching Jesus, she would make Him unclean also, this may be why she touched only the hem of His garment (Luke 8:44), as if that would make a difference to the Pharisees.

Peter at the Healing of Jairus' Daughter: Matthew 9:23-26; Mark 5:35-43; Luke 8:49-56

In this episode, Peter and the Apostles learned some things about Jesus' methods from Jesus' raising of the daughter of Jairus, the ruler of the synagogue in Capernaum, from the dead. Just before this, Jairus and the elders of the synagogue had witnessed Jesus cast an unclean spirit out of a man in their synagogue, and they noted that He taught with authority, and not as the Scribes (Mark 1:21-27). This gave Jairus the boldness to ask Jesus' help for his daughter. But Jesus also used this occasion to give the Twelve the last lesson in the series before they got to do it by themselves. Right after raising Jairus' daughter, Jesus sent the Twelve out two-by-two to heal the sick and raise the dead with no help from Him.

To understand the context, we need to understand the synagogue. The traditions of the synagogue, go back to Moses (Acts 15:21). As an institution, the synagogue probably originated with Ezra and the return from captivity in Babylon (see Ezra 7:9-10). There was a formal service at the synagogue on the Sabbath, but it wasn't the same as at the Temple in Jerusalem since no animal sacrifice was done at the synagogues. Focus was on the reading – probably by chanting – of the Scriptures, where certain parts of the Scriptures were required to be read at certain times of the year. [For example Exodus 12:24-27]. The music was probably a cappella since the “instruments of David” were only used at the Temple in Jerusalem (1 Chronicles 23:5, 1 Chronicles 25:1-7, 2 Chronicles 29:25-28).

Synagogues were located throughout the world wherever there was a Jewish community of at least ten men⁴⁵ who were willing to give themselves to Divine things. While some cities had many synagogues, Capernaum had just the one⁴⁶ that was built by the righteous centurion (Luke 7:1-5). On Paul's missionary journeys, it was his common practice to stop at the synagogue on the Sabbath. Some synagogues received him, while others didn't (compare Berea to Thessalonica in Acts 17:1-13).

The ruler of the synagogue had a role similar to pastors in churches today. He conducted the public worship, appointed who should read the Scriptures and prayers, selected someone to preach (if he didn't preach himself), and supervised care of the building and property. Most synagogues also had elders and attendants. The elders formed a council for judgment in civil and religious matters and the attendant had the care of the scrolls as well as the job of executing the punishment of scourging and teaching the children to read.

Later on after Pentecost, many priests became obedient to the Faith (Acts 6:7) and so did some synagogue rulers such as Crispus (Acts 18:8) and Sosthenes (Acts 18:17) in Corinth.

When Jesus arrived at the synagogue ruler's house, He was greeted by the tumult of the weeping and wailing of the mourners (Mark 5:38). Jesus' response was to tell them all that the child was not dead, but sleeping. And they all ridiculed Him (Luke 8:52-53). Jesus said the same thing later on regarding Lazarus (John 11:11). Chrysostom commented⁴⁷, “He is teaching

⁴⁵ Alfred Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1995, p. 232.

⁴⁶ The text states, referring to the centurion, “He loves our nation, and has built us the synagogue” (Luke 7:5 Greek).

⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 3.

us not to fear death; for it is no longer death, but has henceforth become a sleep. Since He, Himself was to die, He uses the persons of others to prepare His disciples beforehand to be of good courage and to bear the end meekly. Since in truth, when He had come, death was from that time forward a sleep”. This was not so apparent, however, until after Christ’s Resurrection.

We note that Jesus did not rebuke the mourners or criticize them for ridiculing Him. Chrysostom said that the flute players and the noisy wailers (Matthew 9:23) and the tumult (Mark 5:38) served a useful purpose. All this testified that the child was for sure dead and they even ridiculed Jesus for stating otherwise. Thus the wailers served as proof that the miracle occurred; but they were declared unworthy to witness the event. Cyril of Alexandria stated⁴⁸ that Jesus purposely said that the girl was not dead, but sleeping, so that the wailers would confirm, by their actions, that she was in fact dead. This is why He put them all out of the house and brought only Jairus, his wife, plus Peter, James and John into the room when He raised the child (Luke 8:51). To illustrate that Peter was paying attention, we note that he used the same method when he raised Tabitha (Acts 9:39-41).

Theophylact stated⁴⁹ that the reason Jesus chose only Peter, James and John to go into the child’s room with her parents was that they were the leaders of the Apostles, and because He knew that they were able to keep silent concerning the miracle. The Lord did not want to reveal Himself to many before it was time, perhaps because of the spite of the Jewish leaders, who would become inflamed with envy, and thus liable to judgment.

Chrysostom went on⁵⁰ to apply this demonstration to life in his day, and Peter understood the same thing. Why, Chrysostom asked, do people mourn and weep at the funeral of a Christian? Doing so testifies that the Resurrection is a fable, and that the deceased is gone and has no hope. By doing so, “How will you be able to persuade the Greek that you believe otherwise?”

“If indeed he departed a sinner, his wickedness has stopped; for certainly, had God known that he was being converted, He would not have snatched him away before his repentance. But if he ended his life righteous, he now possesses all good in safety. From this, it is clear that your tears are not of kindly affection, but of unreasoning passion. For if you loved the departed, you should rejoice and be glad that he is delivered from the present waves”.

According to tradition⁵¹, Claudia Procula, the wife of Pontius Pilate and a granddaughter of Augustus Caesar, was also a good friend of Fulvia, the wife of Jairus, the Synagogue Ruler. She and Pilate’s young son were present at Jairus’ house when Jesus raised Jairus’ 12-year old daughter from the dead (Mark 5:41-43), and Pilate’s son was healed of lameness at the same time. She had tried to influence her husband in favor of Christ, but to no avail. Pilate had been concentrating on his political career, desiring a higher position in Egypt. This event thus had the additional effect of giving Pilate absolutely no excuse for caving in to the mob on Good Friday.

⁴⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 46, Studion Publishers, 1983.

⁴⁹ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, Chapter 8:49-56, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXI, 4-6.

⁵¹ Catherine van Dyke, tr., “The Letters of Pontius Pilate and Claudia Procula”, Relics of Repentance, 1st Edition, Issana Press, Lincoln, NE 68503, 1990.

After Pilate was banished to Gaul, where he committed suicide⁵², Claudia Procula returned to Jerusalem to be part of the Church.

Jesus Sends the Twelve Out Two By Two: Matthew 10:5-23, Mark 6:7-13, Luke 9:1-6

Understanding the role of the Twelve Apostles is crucial to understanding the Church. Their names are on the foundations of the gates of the New Jerusalem (Revelation 21:10-14) and they will sit on twelve thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel (Matthew 19:22-30). But yet, they did not just fall out of the sky on Pentecost ready to evangelize the earth. And the Holy Spirit at Pentecost was not just a magic elixir that enabled them to do anything. Rather, they had some struggles of their own that they needed to go through. And the Lord spent time with them to train them in what they should do. The Holy Spirit then enabled them to do what they did.

Jesus' three-year public ministry was a whirlwind of activity and teaching, but the Twelve probably didn't appreciate it for what it truly was until later. Christ's mission went beyond the Cross and He planned that His followers would some day do as He did. The sending out of the Twelve, and later the Seventy (Luke 10:1-20), was a practical hands-on lesson where the Twelve would do by themselves what they had just seen the Master do. In just two years from their being sent out for this training program, Jesus would be sending the Twelve out to evangelize the earth. But at this point they're still struggling to figure out who He is! There were four major events that happened a few days before He sent the Twelve out:

1. Jesus and His disciples rowed across the Sea of Galilee to the Eastern shore, probably in one of the fishing boats. On the way a storm arose and Jesus calmed the storm. The Twelve commented: "Who can this be, that even the winds and the sea obey Him?" (Mark 4:41)
2. Arriving on the Eastern shore, they met the exceedingly fierce Gadarene demoniacs, who lived in the tombs, broke their chains and cried out day and night after cutting themselves with stones. Jesus healed these poor guys (Mark 5:1-20); then they rowed right back to Capernaum.
3. Upon their arrival back in Capernaum, Jesus raised Jairus' daughter from the dead (Mark 5:35-43).
4. On the way to Jairus' house, a woman touched the hem of Jesus' garment and was instantly healed of a flow of blood (or hemorrhage).

Following these four events, Jesus sent the Twelve out two-by-two to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8). The methods that they used were the same that they later used on their various missionary journeys. That is, they took no provisions for their journey, no money, no bag, just the clothes on their back. Here, they were instructed not to go to the Gentiles or the Samaritans, just to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matthew 10:5-6, 9-10). Later they remembered this, and they were reluctant to evangelize the Gentiles until Peter's vision of the sheet (Acts 10:9-16). As they went, they were completely dependent on hospitality provided by the people they found worthy. On the other hand, those

⁵² After Pentecost, Pilate was recalled to Rome to face charges regarding his unjust trial of Jesus, plus a massacre of some Samaritans. He was unable to refute the charges and was banished to Gaul. See note 1, p. 110, Eusebius, Church History, II, vii, in Philip Schaff, Post Nicene Fathers, Second Series, Volume 1. His wife, St. Procula Claudia, joined the Myrrh-Bearing women, after Pilate's death, in their service to the Early Church, and she is commemorated on October 27. See Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 27.

who refused to receive them found themselves worse off than the people of Sodom and Gomorrah (Matthew 10:15). And this is an incredible statement, and it places the Twelve in an absolutely unique perspective.

John Chrysostom stated⁵³ that by practicing in Palestine in a sort of training-school, Jesus prepared the Apostles for their conflicts with the world. He made the exercises even more serious than the actual conflicts because it was easier to deal with the Samaritans and the Gentiles than it was with the Jews. He sent them on the harder task first, indicating his guardian care of the Jews, and stopping their mouths, and preparing the way for the teaching of the Apostles, that people might not later blame them for “entering in to uncircumcised men” (Acts 11:3). He called the Jews “lost,” not “stray” sheep, in every way contriving how to excuse them for their persecution of the Apostles. He made the Apostles physicians of bodies, dispensing to them afterwards the cure of the soul, which is the principal thing. They had not yet been given the Holy Spirit; the Twelve did all this by Jesus’ command and by His authority.

“Jesus first set⁵⁴ His disciples above suspicion by their traveling in poverty; secondly, He freed them from all care, so that they might give all their leisure to the Word; and thirdly, He taught them His own power. Of this He spoke to them afterwards, ‘When I sent you out barefoot⁵⁵ and without provisions, did you lack anything?’” (Luke 22:35)

“Earlier He had advised them not to take thought so much as for the next day, never mind for a missionary journey. For He was about to send them out as teachers to the whole world. Therefore of men He made them as angels (so to speak); releasing them from all worldly care, so that they should be possessed with one care alone, that of their teaching. Or rather even from this He released them, saying, ‘Take no thought how or what ye shall speak’” (Matthew 10:19).

“Wherever they went⁵⁶, He not only required them to seek out worthy persons, but advised them not to go from house to house. By doing this, they would neither bother him that was receiving them, nor get the reputation of gluttony and self-indulgence. He made them honorable by doing this also, and those that received them were the gainers, both in honor, and in advantage”.

“And note, when He had stripped them of everything, He gave them everything, by allowing them to stay in the houses of those who became disciples. For thus both they were freed from anxiety, and they would convince the others that they came only for their salvation. They did this first by bringing in nothing with them, then by requiring no more of them than necessities, and lastly, by not staying at everybody’s house⁵⁷ without distinction”.

⁵³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 4-5.

⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 7.

See also Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 47, Studion Publishers, 1983.

⁵⁵ Matthew and Luke (Matthew 10:10, Luke 9:3) state that Jesus sent the Twelve out barefoot and with no staff, while Mark (Mark 6:8-9) states that He allowed them to take sandals and a staff. Theophylact suggested that Jesus first told them to go barefoot and without a staff, but later allowed them to wear sandals and to take a staff, thus condescending to their weakness because of the harshness of the journey. Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 6:12-13, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 8.

⁵⁷ If they moved around from house to house, there would be competition among those that received them to put on bigger and bigger spreads – which would promote gluttony, which the Twelve wanted to avoid.

“Not by the signs only did He desire them to appear illustrious, but even before the signs, by their own virtue. For nothing so much characterizes strictness of life, as to be free from superfluities, and so far as may be, from wants. This even the false apostles knew. Wherefore Paul also said, ‘That wherein they glory, they may be found even as we’” (2 Corinthians 11:12).

When both the Twelve and the Seventy entered a house to stay at, Jesus said to “let your peace come upon that household” (Matthew 10:13, Luke 10:5). If the household was worthy, or if a son of peace was there, their peace would rest upon that household. If not, their peace would return to them and it would be more tolerable on Judgment Day for Sodom than for that house or that city. This “peace” was incorporated⁵⁸ into the Liturgy in the 1st Century, where the presiding presbyter or bishop would say, “Peace be to all”. The people would respond, “And to your spirit!” This is an Apostolic blessing and, in similar fashion, it will be more tolerable on Judgment Day for Sodom than for that Church that rejects the Apostolic blessing.

Mark adds a detail to the methods of the Twelve in healing the sick. They anointed them with olive oil (Mark 6:13). James, the Lord’s brother, mentions this also as being part of the practices of the Church, where the elders of the Church do the healing in the same fashion as the Twelve. Theophylact, commenting⁵⁹ on the use of olive oil, stated”

“In addition to being a help in labors, the fuel of light, and the cause of gladness, oil also means the mercy of God and the grace of the Holy Spirit. For thereby we are freed from labors and receive light, joy and spiritual gladness”.

Chrysostom also stated⁶⁰ that there is no comparison between the Apostles and those that followed them. We are not even comparable to their shadows. If we dwell on the display of miracles that we don’t have, and that they did, we could end up divided into many parties like the Corinthians; this is the reason why extensive miracles are not performed today. Chrysostom, who performed a few miracles, stated this to contrast the extensive miracles performed by the Twelve.

The miracles⁶¹, such as the Apostles did, are what we seek after: the lepers cleansed, the demons driven out, and the dead raised. This is a great indication of our high birth, and of our love, that we should believe that God did all this. And in fact this was one of the reasons why God made miracles to cease. If, when miracles are not performed, people plume themselves on the word of wisdom, or on show of piety, and grow vainglorious, are puffed up, are separated one from another; if miracles also took place, how could we avoid catastrophe? And that what I say is not mere conjecture, the Corinthians bear witness, who from this cause were divided into many parties. Do not therefore seek signs, but instead seek the health of the soul.

“Let virtue then⁶² be our study, for abundant are her riches, and great the wonder done in her. But if you want to work miracles, get rid of transgressions, and you have accomplished it. For sin is a great demon, and if you exterminate

⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 9.

⁵⁹ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 6:12-13, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

⁶⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 10.

⁶¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 11.

⁶² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 11.

this, you have done a greater thing than they who drive out ten thousand demons. Listen to Paul, who prefers virtue to miracles. ‘But desire earnestly the best gifts: and yet show I unto you a more excellent way’ (1 Corinthians 12:31). And when he declared this ‘way’, he spoke not of raising the dead, not of cleansing lepers, but in place of all these he set love. Listen also to Christ, saying, ‘Do not rejoice that the demons obey you, but rather rejoice that your names are written in Heaven’ (Luke 10:20). And again before this, ‘Many will say to Me in that Day, have we not prophesied in Your name, and cast out demons, and done many wonders; and then I will declare to them, I never knew you’ (Matthew 7:22-23). And when He was about to be crucified, He called His disciples, and said to them, ‘By this shall all men know that you are my disciples’, not ‘if ye cast out demons’, but ‘if ye have love for one another’ (John 13:35). And again, ‘By this shall all men know that You (the Father) have sent Me’; not ‘if these men raise the dead’, but, ‘if they are one’ (John 17:21). For, as to miracles, they have often injured the person, who had the power, by lifting him up to pride and vainglory in some way”.

Chrysostom stated⁶³ that Jesus’ instructions implied that the Twelve Apostles entered a town with a certain presence about them. They attracted veneration, and did not enter as wanderers and beggars, but appeared much more venerable than those who received them. Jesus signified this by saying, “the workman is worthy of his hire” (Matthew 10:10), and by His commanding them to inquire, who was worthy, and there to remain.

“Jesus signified His unspeakable power when He sent them out exhibiting the gentleness of sheep, and this, though they were to go to ‘wolves’; and not simply to wolves, but ‘into the midst of wolves’. And He bid them have not only the gentleness of sheep, but also the harmlessness of the dove”.

“Let us then be ashamed, who do the contrary, who set like wolves upon our enemies. For so long as we are sheep, we conquer; though ten thousand wolves prowl around, we overcome and prevail. But if we become wolves, we are beaten, for the help of our Shepherd departs from us. For He doesn’t feed wolves, but sheep; and He forsakes you, and retires, for you don’t allow His might to be shown”.

Christ also told His Apostles to be wise as serpents. But what manner of wisdom is this? Chrysostom spoke of the serpent as an animal that will give up everything, even its body, that it may save its head⁶⁴. In our case, the “head” is the Faith, and the “body” is our life. The Faith must be preserved, even if we lose our life. By doing so, we will recover everything with so much the more splendor.

An example of the Twelve behaving as harmless as doves came as the Sanhedrin dragged them in and charged them, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this Name?” The Twelve replied with great meekness, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:28-29). Again, acting with the wisdom of the serpent, Peter and John said, “Whether it is right in the sight of God to listen to you more than to God, you judge” (Acts 4:19).

⁶³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIII, 1.

⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXIII, 3.

Peter Walks on Water: Matthew 14:28-33, Mark 6:45-52, John 6:15-21

Peter's great love for Christ was illustrated by his walking on the water of the stormy Sea of Galilee. This occurred just after the feeding of the 5000, where the men of the 5000, when they had seen the sign Jesus did, said, "This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world" (John 6:14, Deuteronomy 18:15-19). To avoid being taken by force to be made king, Jesus dismissed the crowd and went to the nearby mountain to pray (Matthew 14:22-23). Jesus sent the Twelve on ahead back to Capernaum in the boat (Matthew 14:22, Mark 6:45, John 6:17) at about sundown.

When Matthew said Jesus made His disciples get into the boat (Matthew 14:22) he was undoubtedly referring to the Twelve since that's who He came there with. As Jesus went up a mountain nearby (there are mountains all around the area), to pray, the disciples began rowing across the Sea of Galilee. At the fourth watch⁶⁵ of the night (Matthew 14:25), the Twelve had rowed about 3-4 miles (John 6:19) and were rowing into a severe head wind (Matthew 14:24, John 6:18). Since the distance from Capernaum to the spot near Bethsaida, where Jesus fed the 5000, is less than 3 miles by boat, the wind had evidently blown them off course, where the Sea of Galilee is well known for sudden and severe storms. The boat was one of their fishing boats and, with twelve people in it, was fully loaded. If they started about nightfall (John 6:17) and were still rowing 6 to 9 hours later without making much headway, they were tired, probably bailing water as fast as they could, and were generally in desperate straits.

While they were straining at the oars, Jesus came walking on the water (Matthew 14:25-26) and would have continued past them (Mark 6:48). The Twelve thought they were seeing a ghost (Greek *phantasma* meaning spectre or phantom) and cried out in fear (Matthew 14:26). Instead of continuing on, Jesus stopped and said, "Be of good cheer! It is I; do not be afraid" (Matthew 14:27). Peter responded by challenging the "phantom": "If it is You, command me to come to You on the water" (Matthew 14:28). Peter did not ask Jesus to request this, but to command this! The Lord said, "Come!" and Peter began to walk on the water. But when he saw that the wind was very forceful as he went up and down on top of the "roller-coaster" of the churning swells, he began to sink and cried out to the Lord to save him (Matthew 14:30). Peter was a good swimmer⁶⁶; this was necessary as part of his livelihood in retrieving some of the nets he used as a fisherman. However, swimming in deep water during hurricane-force winds is another matter.

Jesus immediately caught Peter and chastised him (Matthew 14:31) for doubting, for the heart of the Twelve were hardened and they had not understood about the loaves that fed the 5000 (Mark 6:52). After Jesus caught Peter, they both walked on the water back to the boat. When they got into the boat, the wind ceased immediately (Matthew 14:32) and they found themselves immediately at land where they were going (John 6:21).

Cyril of Jerusalem stated⁶⁷ that Peter recovered his faith after Jesus reproved him for doubting, and then began to walk on the water again as he and Jesus walked back to the boat.

"If we keep this faith we shall be free from condemnation, and shall be adorned with all kinds of virtues. For so great is the strength of faith, as even to

⁶⁵ The 4th Watch was between 3 AM and 6 AM.

⁶⁶ In John 21:7, Peter was naked as he worked, most likely diving down to retrieve nets.

⁶⁷ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, V, 7.

buoy men up in walking on the sea. Peter was a man like ourselves. But when Jesus said, ‘Come’, he believed, and walked upon the waters, and found his faith safer upon the waters than on ground; and his heavy body was upheld by the buoyancy of his faith. He had safe footing as long as he believed; as his faith gradually relaxed, his body also was drawn down with it. And when He saw his distress, Jesus said, ‘O you of little faith, why did you doubt?’ (Matthew 14:31) And being nerved again by Him who grasped his hand, he recovered his faith, and led by the hand of the Master, he resumed the same walking upon the waters. For the Gospel indirectly mentioned this, saying, ‘When they got into the boat’ (Matthew 14:32). For it says not that Peter swam across and went up, but gives us to understand that, after returning the same distance that he went to meet Jesus, he went up again into the boat”.

This was the second time that Jesus exhibited mastery over the wind and the waves. The first time occurred just a few months previous as Jesus and the Twelve crossed the Sea of Galilee to heal the Gadarene demoniacs (Matthew 8:23-27). On that occasion, the Twelve responded by marveling, “Who can this be that even the winds and the sea obey Him?” This time their reaction was to worship Him saying, “Truly You are the Son of God!” (Matthew 14:33).

John Chrysostom stated⁶⁸ that Peter leaped forward to walk on the water out of love for Christ, but also displaying faith. Peter rejoiced not so much in walking on the water, but in coming to Christ. If Christ had said, “No” to Peter’s request to walk on the water, Peter may have contradicted Him again. Once Peter got out on the water, he began to get dizzy from the surf and the wind, and became afraid. After he had prevailed over the greater (the waves), he began to suffer from the lesser (the wind), for such a thing is human nature; often doing greater things, it exposes itself in the lesser. Following this adventure, the Twelve did not approach Him as before, dragging Him into their houses, and seeking a touch of His hand, and directions from Him in words. But in a far higher strain, and with more self-denial, and with more abundant faith did they relate to Him.

John Chrysostom also pointed out⁶⁹ that Jesus did not show Himself walking on the sea to the multitudes because the miracle was too great to suit their infirmity. Sometimes the greatest miracles are done very privately.

Ambrose stated⁷⁰ that it is the Lord’s will that His disciples should possess great powers, but that there is no power of man that is exercised in these things.

“It is the will of the Lord that His disciples should possess great powers; it is His will that the same things which He did when on earth should be done in His Name by His servants. For He said, ‘You shall do greater things than these’ (John 14:12). He gave them power to raise the dead. And whereas He could Himself have restored to Saul the use of his sight, He nevertheless sent him to His disciple Ananias, that, by his blessing, Saul’s eyes might be restored. He commanded Peter to walk with Himself on the sea, and because he faltered He blamed him for lessening the grace given him, by the weakness of his faith. He Who Himself was the light of the world granted to His disciples to be the light of the world through

⁶⁸ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, L, 2.

⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, XLIII, 1.

⁷⁰ Ambrose, *Two Books Concerning Repentance*, VIII, 34.

grace. And because He purposed to descend from heaven and to ascend there again, He took up Elijah into heaven to restore him again to earth at the time which should please Him. And being baptized with the Holy Spirit and with fire, He foreshadowed the Sacrament of Baptism at the hands of John”.

“He gave all gifts to His disciples, of whom He said, ‘In My Name they shall cast out demons; they shall speak with new tongues; they shall take up serpents; and if they shall drink anything deadly, it shall by no means hurt them; they shall lay hands on the sick, and they shall recover’ (Mark 16:17-18). So, then, He gave them all things, but there is no power of man exercised in these things, in which the grace of the divine gift operates”.

Peter States that He Will Never Leave: John 6:60-71

Jesus was about to tell His disciples something very difficult, yet very profound, and this will be illustrated by the commitment of the Twelve to Christ, where others were not able to make that commitment. Shortly after sending the Twelve out two-by-two and feeding the 5000, Jesus taught in Jairus’ Synagogue in Capernaum about the Eucharist – eating His body and blood. To most, this sounded cannibalistic and few people understood what He said, and even some of the Seventy walked with Him no more because of this. According to Hippolytus⁷¹, the Evangelists Mark and Luke were among these. Their absence was temporary, however, and when Jesus sent out the Seventy two-by-two about 6 months later, Mark and Luke were back. Jesus had said:

“‘This is the bread which comes down from heaven, that one may eat of it and not die. 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’. The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’ Then Jesus said to them, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. 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 feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever’. These things He said in the synagogue as He taught in Capernaum (John 6:50-59).

“Therefore many of His disciples, when they heard this, said, ‘This is a hard saying; who can understand it?’ From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more. Then Jesus said to the Twelve, ‘Do you also want to go away?’ But Simon Peter answered Him, ‘Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. Also we have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’” (John 6:60, 66-69).

Peter’s words, “Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life”, indicate some significant recognition on the part of the Twelve. Jesus had just fed the 5000 and walked on the water. The Twelve were so blown away by this that His saying something difficult wasn’t

⁷¹ Hippolytus, *On the Seventy Apostles*, 14-15.

going to turn them off. They have already left everything (Matthew 19:27-30) to follow Jesus, and their commitment to this course is steadfast.

It was just after this that Jesus asked the Twelve, “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matthew 16:13) And Peter responded, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). We will consider Peter’s response in a following section, but the significant point in this context is that the recognition of Christ by the Twelve is over the issue of the Eucharist. They may not have understood much – who can understand the Mysteries of God? – but they were beginning to understand Who He is, and they know that He has the words of eternal life.

John Chrysostom stated⁷² that there was already a deep affection of the Twelve for their Master, even though they were struggling to understand what He was teaching.

“It was not the words that caused offense, but the heedlessness, and sloth, and wrong-mindedness of the hearers. For even had He not spoken, they would have been offended, and would still have been anxious about bodily food, ever nailed to earth. Besides, the Twelve heard at the same time as the others, yet they declared a contrary opinion, saying, ‘To whom shall we go?’ (John 6:68) This was an expression indicating much affection, for it shows that their Teacher was more precious to them than anything, than father or mother, or any possessions. If they withdrew from Him, they had nowhere to flee. For the Jews listened carnally, and with human reasoning, but the disciples spiritually, and committing all to faith. Wherefore Christ told them, ‘The words which I have spoken unto you are spirit’ (John 6:63); that is, ‘do not suppose that the teaching of My words is subject to the rule of material consequences, or to the necessity of created things. Things spiritual are not of this nature, nor endure to submit to the laws of earth’”.

While there was this great affection of the Twelve for their Master, Judas was an exception even at this early time. In his reply to Jesus, Peter said, “‘We have come to believe and know that You are the Christ, the Son of the living God’. Jesus answered them, ‘Did I not choose you, the Twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ He spoke of Judas Iscariot, *the son* of Simon, for it was he who would betray Him, being one of the Twelve” (John 6:69-71). Jesus had said in this same context, regarding Judas, “‘But there are some of you who do not believe’. For Jesus knew from the beginning who they were who did not believe, and who would betray Him” (John 6:64).

Chrysostom noted⁷³ that Jesus did not expose Judas at this time. When Judas persisted in his unbelief, Jesus made His point a little stronger, saying, “One of you is a devil” (John 6:70). Jesus had not yet rebuked Peter, “Get behind Me, Satan” (Matthew 16:23) for trying to impede Him from going to the Cross. But the Twelve were not aware of Judas’ treachery. Even at the Last Supper, when Jesus announced that one of them would betray Him, they all looked at one another and asked, “Lord, is it I?” (Matthew 26:22) As the keeper of the money box for the poor (John 13:29), Judas seemed like he was doing good.

“But why did He say, ‘I have chosen you Twelve, and one of you is a devil?’ It was to show that His teaching was entirely free from flattery. When the

⁷² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XLVII, 3.

⁷³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XLVII, 4.

others had left Him and the Twelve alone remained, and confessed by Peter that He was the Christ, He led them away from any suspicion that He would flatter them. For God is not prone to make men good by compulsion and force, neither is His election and choice compulsory on those who are called, but persuasive. And that you may learn that the calling compels not, consider that many of these who have been called have come to perdition, so that it is clear that it lies in our own will also to be saved, or to perish". As examples, we might consider Judas and the rich young synagogue ruler (Luke 18:18-23).

Cyprian, speaking of Peter's words, "Lord, to whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life" (John 6:68), stated⁷⁴ that Peter spoke for the Church. The Church is not divided, but is centered around its bishop, just as the Twelve were centered around Christ.

"Peter, on whom the Church was to be built, speaks here on teaching in the name of the Church, that although a rebellious and arrogant multitude of those who will not hear and obey may depart, yet the Church does not depart from Christ. And they are the Church, who are a people united to the priest, and the flock which adheres to its pastor. From this, we ought to know that the bishop is in the Church, and the Church in the bishop. And if anyone is not with the bishop, that he is not in the Church. Those, who creep in, may flatter themselves in vain, not having peace with God's priests, and may think that they communicate secretly with some. The Church, which is Catholic and one, is not cut nor divided, but is indeed connected and bound together by the cement of priests who cohere with one another".

Peter Needs an Explanation for the Parable of Cleanliness: Matthew 15:10-20, Mark 7:1-23

After Jesus fed the 5000, He made His disciples get into one of the boats and cross over to the other side of the Sea of Galilee, where they came to the land of Gennesaret⁷⁵. The men of that place recognized Him and brought everyone who was sick from the whole surrounding region, that they might only touch the hem of His garment. As many as did so were healed.

While He was there, the Scribes and Pharisees, who were from Jerusalem⁷⁶, came to Jesus and asked a question: Why do His disciples transgress the traditions of the elders by not washing their hands⁷⁷ before eating? (Mark 7:1-5) Jesus replied with a question for them: Why do they transgress the Commandment of God by their tradition? He said, "God commanded, saying, 'Honor your father and your mother' (Deuteronomy 5:16); and, 'He who curses father or mother, let him be put to death'" (Exodus 21:17). But their traditions were very strict with

⁷⁴ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistles, LXVIII, 8.

⁷⁵ Gennesaret is the name for both the Sea of Galilee and for a town on the Western shore. The ancient Canaanite name was Chinnereth (Deuteronomy 3:17, Joshua 19:35), and Gennesaret became common use about the time of the Maccabees. The location of the town of Gennesaret was about where the city of Tiberias stood, where Herod Antipas may have demolished part of Gennesaret to build the city of Tiberias, named after Tiberias Caesar. See Merrill F. Unger, Unger's Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967.

⁷⁶ John Chrysostom noted that the Scribes and Pharisees did not all live in Jerusalem, but were scattered throughout Israel. These were some of them that lived in Gennesaret. John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LI, 1.

⁷⁷ Chrysostom noted, "If the Apostles despised even their own necessary food, when they were fasting, how were they to hold these things worth much consideration? This often happened unintentionally, for instance, when they ate in the wilderness, when they plucked the ears of grain (Matthew 12:1), and is now put forward as a charge by these Scribes, who are always transgressing in the great things, and making much account of the superfluous".

things devoted⁷⁸ to God or “*corban*” (Mark 7:11). Anything devoted to God could not be used for any other purpose. By devoting large amounts of their wealth to God, they accrued a lot of prestige. If their aged parents asked them for a sheep or a calf for food, they would say that it was “*corban*”, but they would never actually offer it as a sacrifice. John Chrysostom stated⁷⁹, “On the one hand they did not bring them to God, on the other, they defrauded their parents under the name of the offering. They both insulted their parents for God’s sake, and God for their parents’ sake. These who ought not even live, from the punishment given in the Law, how can they find fault with the disciples?”. Jesus said, “Thus you no longer let a man do anything for his father or his mother, making the Word of God of no effect through your tradition which you have handed down” (Mark 7:12-13). Jesus then quoted from Isaiah, ‘This people honors Me with *their* lips, but their heart is far from Me. And in vain they worship Me, teaching *as* doctrines the commandments of men’ (Mark 7:6-7, Isaiah 29:13).

These events proved to be a prelude to a major event in the life of the Church that occurred over a decade later. Then, Peter had a vision of a sheet lowered from heaven with various unclean creatures in the sheet, and he was told to kill and eat (Acts 10:9-16). The message of the vision was a welcoming of the Gentile Christians as equal partakers of the Kingdom of God. Here as a prelude, Jesus taught that it was rather irrelevant what went into one’s mouth, including non-kosher food; what really mattered was what came out of one’s mouth.

Chrysostom noted⁸⁰ how Jesus answered their charge. He didn’t do it in a way that they could bring Him in on charges, and He didn’t say anything against the Sanhedrin directly. Yet He masterfully rebuked them for twofold sin: disobeying God, and doing so for the sake of men.

“Observe how Jesus answers their charge. When it is His will to set aside any of the things enjoined by the Law, He does it in the form of an apology. For by no means does He proceed to transgress it, nor does He say, ‘The Law is nothing’; for surely He would have made them more audacious. But first He clean cuts away their boldness, bringing forward the far heavier charge, and directing it at them. Neither does He say, ‘My disciples do well in transgressing the Law’, lest He should give them a hold on Him. Nor does He does He bad-mouth them for stalking Him over the Law, lest He should confirm the Law; nor, on the other hand, does He blame the elders, as lawless and unholy men. For they would have shunned Him as a reviler; but all these things He abandons, and proceeds another way. And He seems to be rebuking the persons themselves who had come to Him, but He is actually reprehending those that enacted these laws. Nowhere does He make mention of the elders, but by His charge against the Scribes, He putts them down also. He signifies that their sin is twofold, first in disobeying God, next in doing so on men’s account”.

“When they heard this, they made no reply, neither did they say, ‘What are You saying? He had utterly stopped their mouths, not by refuting them only, but also by publishing their craftiness. He exposed what was done by them in secret,

⁷⁸ The term “Corban” is a Hebrew word meaning offering. “And the Lord spoke to Aaron: ‘Here, I Myself have also given you charge of My heave offerings, all the holy gifts of the children of Israel; I have given them as a portion to you and your sons, as an ordinance forever. This shall be yours of the most holy things *reserved* from the fire: every offering (*corban*) of theirs, every grain offering and every sin offering and every trespass offering which they render to Me, *shall be* most holy for you and your sons” (Numbers 18:8-9).

⁷⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LI, 2.

⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LI, 2, 3.

and revealed the secrets of their mind; their mouths were stopped, and so they went away”.

Jesus then called the whole multitude to Himself and said, “Hear Me, everyone, and understand: There is nothing that enters a man from outside which can defile him; but the things which come out of him, those are the things that defile a man. If anyone has ears to hear, let him hear!” (Mark 7:14-16) After Jesus had entered a house away from the crowd, His disciples came to Him and told Him that the Pharisees were not pleased when they heard Jesus’ parable. Jesus answered, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted. Let them alone. They are blind leaders of the blind. And if the blind leads the blind, both will fall into a ditch” (Matthew 15:13-14).

Peter, always inquiring, then asked Jesus to explain the Parable. So Jesus said, “Are you also still without understanding? Do you not yet understand that whatever enters the mouth goes into the stomach and is eliminated? But those things which proceed out of the mouth come from the heart, and they defile a man. For out of the heart proceed evil thoughts, murders, adulteries, fornication, thefts, false witness, blasphemies. These are *the things* which defile a man, but to eat with unwashed hands does not defile a man” (Matthew 15:16-20).

John Chrysostom stated⁸¹ that the Twelve did not dare say so, but they were offended also. What Jesus was saying, but not in so many words, was the same thing He said to Peter in the vision of the sheet lowered down from heaven, full of unclean creatures (Acts 10:9-16). Kosher versus non-kosher food was not the issue for defilement, but instead what comes out of one’s mouth. As a result, Peter was rebuked. Peter did not rebuke Jesus saying “Why have You spoken contrary to the Law?” That is, why have You deleted the Kosher food laws? (Leviticus 11, Deuteronomy 14) Instead Peter asked a question as if what Jesus had said were obscure. But what Jesus said was not obscure, and therefore Peter was rebuked.

Theophylact noted⁸² that Jesus had said, “Every plant which My heavenly Father has not planted will be uprooted” (Matthew 15:13). It is not the Mosaic Law that will be uprooted, because that is a planting of God, but the Judaic ordinances and traditions will go.

“It is the Judaic ordinances and the traditions of the elders that He says will be uprooted, not the commandments of the Law, as the Manichaen heretics believe. The Law is a plant of God, so it has not been rooted up. Its root, that is, the hidden Spirit, remains, but its leaves, namely the visible letter, have fallen. For we no longer understand the Law according to the letter, but according to the Spirit”.

We sometimes overlook how we appear to God. If we are defiled because of what comes out of our mouth, it is like we have dung on our hands. Chrysostom used⁸³ these terms to illustrate our appearance before God.

“Let us learn then what are the things that defile the man; let us learn, and let us flee them. For even in the Church we see such a custom prevailing among the people in general, and men giving diligence to come in clean garments, and to

⁸¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LI, 4.

⁸² Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew, Chapter 15:13-14, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

⁸³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LI, 5.

have their hands washed. But how to present a clean soul to God, they make no account”.

“For tell me, if you had dung on your hands, would you venture to pray? By no means! And yet this would not be harmful; but praying with an unclean heart is ruin. How then are you reverent in the outward things, but in the inward things negligent? What then? Should not we pray? We should indeed, but not while defiled, and having upon us the mire of that sort”.

“What then, if I have been overtaken? Cleanse yourself! How, and in what way? Weep, groan, give alms, apologize to him that you’ve hurt, reconcile him to yourself, wipe clean your tongue, lest you provoke God more grievously. For if someone had filled his hands with dung, and then grabbed hold of your feet, entreating you, far from hearing him, you would rather kick him away with your foot. How then dare you in such a way draw near to God? Since in truth the tongue is the hand of them that pray, and by it we lay hold of the knees of God. Don’t defile it therefore, lest to you also He say, ‘Though you make many prayers, I will not listen’ (Isaiah 1:15). And ‘in the power of the tongue are death and life’ (Proverbs 18:21); and, ‘By your words you shall be justified, and by your words you shall be condemned’” (Matthew 12:37).

Christ’s Deity, Church Built on That: Matthew 16:13-19; Mark 8:27-30; Luke 9:18-20

The setting for Peter’s Confession took place in Caesarea Philippi (Matthew 16:13), which was Northwest of Galilee, and which was a largely Gentile town. The date was mid 29 AD or almost a year before the Crucifixion. The Twelve had been sent out two by two by the Lord about 6 months earlier (Matthew 10:5-23) to heal the sick, cleanse lepers, cast out demons and raise the dead. In six days, the Lord planned to reveal Himself (Matthew 17:1) for Who He really was in Glory on the Mountain of Transfiguration.

The Lord had just warned His disciples to beware of the teaching of the Pharisees and Sadducees (Matthew 16:12). The Pharisees as a group came together during the Maccabaeen period as a group of Scribes bent on upholding the Mosaic Law, especially regarding uncleanness. They were supported in this by the vast majority of the people. The Sadducees, on the other hand, represented the priests and their families (Acts 5:17) and had strong differences of opinion from the Pharisees (Acts 23:1-9). One thing they did agree on was the rejection of Jesus as Messiah.

In Caesarea Philippi, Jesus had retreated somewhat from the Pharisees and Sadducees after a confrontation with them (Matthew 16:1-4). There in Caesarea Philippi, He asked His disciples a question: “Who do men say that I, the Son of Man, am?” (Matthew 16:13). In a few days, He was going to show them Who He really is (i.e. at the Transfiguration); but first He asked their opinion. John Chrysostom pointed out⁸⁴ that they were in a region where they could more freely speak their mind without criticism from the Jewish leaders. And Jesus did not ask who the Jewish leaders said that He is, but who people in general said He is.

The disciples responded: “Some say John the Baptist, some Elijah, and others Jeremiah or one of the prophets”. Each of these answers had some reasoning behind it. Herod had thought that Jesus was a resurrected John the Baptist (Matthew 14:1-2) and that this was the

⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 1.

source of His power. Elijah had been promised to come just prior to “the coming of the great and terrible day of the Lord” (Malachi 4:5). Jeremiah had been taken into Egypt with some of the leaders of Israel just prior to the Babylonian captivity (Jeremiah 43:1-7, 44:1) and was martyred there. Legend had it that Jeremiah concealed the Ark of the Covenant (which had fallen into disuse) before going to Egypt. Since the disciples were looking for the Kingdom of God in Glory, all these speculations about Jesus had some logic behind them.

Peter, however, answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:16). 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 revealed that He saw (and heard) Nathanael praying under the fig tree (John 1:48-50). The Twelve had admitted this also (Spring 29 AD) after Jesus walked on the water and 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 Gadarene demoniacs admitted it (Matthew 8:29). Peter had also declared this a few days earlier (John 6:69). But yet Peter was called blessed for his confession whereas Nathanael and the Twelve weren’t.

Peter’s confession is 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 out⁸⁵ 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. For 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. As Jesus told Nicodemus, he who believes this “will not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

The Rock for Building the Church

Following Peter’s confession, Jesus referred to him as a Rock and said, “On this rock I will build My Church and the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it” (Matthew 16:18). This was not the first time Jesus had called Peter a rock. Over two years earlier, after John the Baptist had pointed out Jesus as the Lamb of God (John 1:29,36) and when Andrew brought Peter to Jesus, Jesus said, “You are Simon, the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas, which is translated, a rock” (John 1:42). The Greek word *petra*, often translated “Peter”, means a large rock. Cephas comes from the Chaldean word *kafe*, also meaning rock. Peter seems to be referred to more often in later years by the name the Lord gave him (Peter or Cephas) than by the name his parents gave him (Simon or Simeon).

⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

Chrysostom pointed out⁸⁶ that the Father had also referred to Jeremiah in similar terms as Jesus did Peter. He called Jeremiah a fortified city, a pillar of iron and a wall of bronze in his fight against the kings, princes, and priests of Judah (Jeremiah 1:18-19). Yet Jeremiah had to deal with only one nation; Peter took on the whole world⁸⁷.

Much disagreement has developed in later centuries over whether “the rock” referred to Peter’s person or Peter’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. In Peter’s person, he was the acknowledged leader of the Twelve. In his confession, he is the cornerstone of the Faith. The gates of Hades has not prevailed against Peter’s confession; but it has prevailed against his person at times. For example, Peter denied the Lord three times (Matthew 26:69-75) in what was described as Satan sifting Peter like wheat (Luke 22:31). Peter also played hypocrite in Antioch and had to be corrected by Paul (Galatians 2:11-14).

John Chrysostom referred⁸⁸ 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 Sapphira (Acts 5:1-9), and whose shadow healed sick people (Acts 5:15). But yet, at the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD, after Peter, Paul and Barnabas had spoken (Acts 15:7-12), James, the Lord’s brother and Bishop of Jerusalem, rendered the decision of the council (Acts 15:19).

Tertullian referred⁸⁹ to Peter’s confession as something that everyone needs to do, and as something that the demons try to persuade us to postpone.

“Remember that the Lord left here to Peter and through him to the Church, the keys of the kingdom of heaven, which everyone, who has been put to the question, and also made confession, will carry with him. But the devil stoutly affirms that we must confess there, to persuade us that we must deny here. If I confess here, I shall send ahead of me fine documents; I shall carry with me excellent keys, i.e. the fear of them who kill the body only, but do nothing against the soul. I shall stand with credit in heavenly places”.

Ambrose of Milan asked⁹⁰ how it is possible that the Son of God could both command and entreat during His three-year public ministry. As God He commands; as man He entreats.

“Our adversaries may inquire, ‘How can the Father and the Son be One, if the Son at one time commands, and at another entreats?’ When He commands He is not alone, so also in the hour of prayer He is not weak. He is not alone, for whatever things the Father does, the same things the Son does also, in like manner. He is not weak, for though in the flesh He suffered weakness for our sins yet that was the chastisement of our peace upon Him, not lack of sovereign Power in Himself”.

⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 3.

⁸⁷ We will see later the implications of this statement. Peter traveled extensively during his life, covering much of the world.

⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

⁸⁹ Tertullian, Scorpiace, II, viii, 10.

⁹⁰ Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, IV, v, 57-62.

“After His Manhood He entreats, and in virtue of His Godhead He commands. Consider, then, the manner of His entreaty and the occasions of His commanding. He entreats, when He is shown to us as on the eve of suffering (Luke 22:32); He commands, when Peter expressed faith to believe that He was the Son of God” (Matthew 16:18).

“How, then, does the Son see the Father? A horse sees a painting, which naturally it is unable to imitate. A child sees the work of a grown man, but he cannot reproduce it; certainly not thus does the Son see the Father”.

“By virtue of a common hidden power of the same nature which He has with the Father, the Son can both see and act in an invisible manner, and by the fullness of His Godhead execute every decree of His Will. The Son does nothing, save what He has seen the Father doing, since He wills nothing that is against His Father’s Will. Which truly is the proof not of weakness but of unity”.

John Cassian stated⁹¹ that the Father, Son and Holy Spirit were all involved in Peter’s confession. Those who do not confess what Peter did are outside the walls of the Church.

“You have the testimony of the Holy Spirit and of the Son who was present and of God the Father. The Son commended; the Father was present; the Holy Spirit revealed. The utterance of the Apostle thus gives the testimony of the entire Godhead; for this utterance must necessarily have the authority of Him, from whose prompting it proceeds. If then flesh and blood did not reveal this to Peter or inspire him, you (Nestorius) must at last see who inspires you. If the Spirit of God taught him who confessed that Christ was God, you can see how you are taught by the spirit of the devil if you deny it”.

“‘And I say unto you, that you are Peter and upon this rock I will build My Church’. Do you see how the saying of Peter is the faith of the Church? He then must be outside the Church, who does not hold the faith of the Church. ‘And to you I will give the keys of the kingdom of heaven’. This faith deserved heaven; this faith received the keys of the heavenly kingdom. See what awaits you. You cannot enter the gate to which this key belongs, if you have denied the faith of this key. ‘And the gates of hell shall not prevail against you’. The gates of hell are the belief or rather the misbelief of heretics. For as widely as hell is separated from heaven, so widely is he, who denies the Faith, separated from him who confessed that Christ is God”.

Hilary of Poitiers noted⁹² that Peter confessed Christ as Son of God not in title only, but in nature, and that this was one of the mysteries of the Faith.

“A belief that the Son of God is Son in name only and not in nature, is not the faith of the Gospels and of the Apostles. If this was a mere title, to which adoption is His only claim; if He was not the Son in virtue of having proceeded forth from God, why was it that Peter confessed to Him, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the living God?’ Peter is praised not merely for his tribute of adoration, but for his recognition of the mysterious truth; for confessing not Christ only, but Christ the Son of God”.

⁹¹ John Cassian, *On the Incarnation of the Lord, Against Nestorius*, III, 13-14.

⁹² Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, VI, 36.

Peter Rebuked for Denying the Cross: Matthew 16:21-23, Mark 8:31-38

In the preceding section, the Lord asked His disciples a question, “Who do men say that I am”? They answered that some said He was John the Baptist; others said He was Elijah; others said He was one of the prophets. Then He pressed them for an answer, “But who do you say that I am?” (Mark 8:27-29). Peter then answered, “You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God” (Matthew 16:13-16). Hearing this, Jesus first told them not to tell anyone of their conclusion; then He began to teach them that He must suffer many things, be rejected by the elders, chief priests and scribes, be killed and rise again after three days (Mark 8:30-31).

Following Peter’s confession, when Jesus called Peter blessed, He also had to rebuke Peter (Matthew 16:33). Peter had rebuked Jesus for saying that He must suffer and be crucified (Matthew 16:31-32). In rebuking Peter, Jesus stated, “Get behind Me, Satan! For you are not mindful of the things of God, but of the things of men”! (Matthew 16:23) How quickly we can go from hearing from God to hearing from Satan! Sometimes it is difficult to comprehend that the Cross in our lives represents the things of God.

John Chrysostom stated⁹³ that Peter spoke from human and earthly reasoning, accounting it disgraceful for the Lord to suffer. For Christ not to suffer was the Devil’s viewpoint on dignity and honor, not the Lord’s viewpoint. Similarly when Jesus washed His disciples’ feet, Peter objected at the lack of dignity shown by the Lord (John 13:5-9). Jesus refocused Peter’s perception by saying, “If I do not wash you, you have no part with Me”. The Lord’s message was that the Cross in our lives means that we need to be willing to suffer for His Name’s sake and to be willing to serve one another.

When Jesus spoke of taking up His cross, this was not the first time He did so. Jesus spoke to people throughout His public ministry of taking up their cross, where the subject under discussion here occurred in the summer of 29 AD. For example, Table 1 records four distinct occasions where He said this. To us this is an interesting observation, but to people at the time who didn’t know Jesus was going to be crucified, it must have been a bit mysterious for Jesus to speak to them of taking up their cross. The cross, was just a means of execution, like an electric chair today. Would it make sense if someone today spoke of taking up his electric chair?

Table 1
Occasions When Jesus Spoke of Taking Up Our Cross

Occasion	Date	Time Before the Cross	Reference
At the Sending Out of the Twelve Two by Two	Fall AD 28	18 months	Matthew 10:38
A Week Before the Transfiguration	Summer AD 29	9 months	Matthew 16:24, Mark 8:34, Luke 9:23
Traveling to Jerusalem for Crucifixion: On Counting the Costs of Discipleship	Winter AD 29	3 months	Luke 14:27
Advice to the Rich Young Ruler	Spring AD 30	A few weeks	Mark 10:21

⁹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 6.

It turns out that the cross is more than just a piece of wood and it has grown to stand for more than just a means of execution. From 1 Corinthians 1:18, there is a Word (*logos*) of the Cross, where the Word (*logos*) is the same as the Word that became flesh (John 1:14). This Word is the power of God to those who are being saved. On the other hand, the Cross is foolishness to those who are perishing.

For Jesus, the Cross was His glorification. “The hour has come that the Son of man should be glorified” (John 12:23). He then talked about a grain of wheat falling into the ground in order to produce much grain (John 12:24). Similarly, He said, “He who loves his life will lose it and he who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life” (John 12:25, Mark 8:35). His conclusion was that “for this purpose, I came to this hour” (John 12:27).

After rebuking Peter for not being mindful of the things of God, Jesus said to His disciples, “If anyone desires to come after Me, let him deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me. For whoever desires to save his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life for My sake will find it” (Matthew 16:24-25).

What it means to deny oneself? John Chrysostom compared⁹⁴ that to denying someone else, “What then is it to deny another? He that is denying another, should he see him either beaten, or bound, or led to execution, or whatever he may suffer, does not stand by him, does not help him, is not moved, feels nothing for him, as being once for all alienated from him. In such a way then, He will have us disregard our own body, so that whether men scourge or banish or burn or whatever they do, let him have nothing to do with himself. And let him so feel as though another were suffering it all”.

The way this often happens is our body screams back at us, “Feed me!” Or we have strong cravings for certain kinds of entertainment. To deny ourselves these pleasures invites criticism and ridicule and persecution from friends and family. Yet this persecution does not affect our soul; it only affects the mortal that will eventually put on immortality (1 Corinthians 15:53). By doing this, we begin to learn to follow the lead of the Holy Spirit and not the cares of our body. Learning this may not come easy and it may not come quickly, but it is a beginning.

The Cross is the ultimate act of the love of God for man (John 3:14-16). As we show love in humility to fellow members of the body of Christ, we take up our crosses also. And just as Jesus was highly exalted because He took up His Cross (Philippians 2:5-9), so we shall be also. Our crosses are not our enemies; they are for our benefit and our glory.

The Cross has the effect of transforming us. The workings of this is one of the mysteries of the ages that was hidden prior to Christ’s crucifixion. Had the rulers of this age (Satan and his legions) known this, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:7-9).

John Chrysostom stated⁹⁵ that Jesus rebuked Peter because Peter had denied the purpose of His coming as a man.

“Jesus had often been seized and escaped, but His Deity would have been suspected by many if it continued. Therefore for the most part, He rather orders

⁹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LV, 2.

⁹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXI, 1-2.

matters after the manner of a man. Since He desired people to believe that He was God, so also He desired people to believe that, being God, He bore human flesh. Therefore even after the Resurrection, He said to the disciple, “Handle Me and see, for a spirit has not flesh and bones” (Luke 24:39). Therefore He also rebuked Peter when he said, ‘Be it far from You, this shall not happen to you’ (Matthew 16:22). So much was this matter an object of care to Him”.

“For this is no small part of the doctrines of the Church; it is the chief point of the salvation wrought for us. For it was thus that the bonds of death were loosed, sin taken away, and the curse abolished, and ten thousand blessings introduced into our life. And therefore He especially desired that the Dispensation should be believed, as having been the root and fountain of innumerable good to us”.

Peter at the Transfiguration: Matt. 17:1-8; 2 Peter 1:16-18; Mark 9:1-8; Luke 9:28-36

The Transfiguration took place in mid-late summer 29 AD somewhat prior to the Feast of Tabernacles⁹⁶. Prior to the events of the Transfiguration, Jesus had stated that some of His disciples would not taste death until they had seen the Son of Man coming in His kingdom (Matthew 16:28, Mark 9:1, Luke 9:27). Peter, James and John had this experience on the mountain of Transfiguration. There has been some disagreement as to whether this mountain was Mt. Tabor or Mt. Herman⁹⁷. Mt. Tabor is the traditional site of the Transfiguration, but some point out that Tabor is not really a high mountain as the text says (Matthew 17:1), being only 1900 feet whereas Mt. Herman is quite a bit higher (9200 ft.). Also Mt. Herman is much closer to where Jesus was teaching at that time (Caesarea Philippi, Matthew 16:13). Both Tabor and Herman are associated with the Lord’s Right Hand and the Light of His Countenance (Psalm 89:11-15).

As Jesus was transfigured, He took on an appearance similar to what He had when others saw Him after His Ascension. For example, the same Apostle John, who witnessed the Transfiguration, later saw the Lord in a vision on the Island of Patmos. The Lord’s appearance then, as at the Transfiguration, was an extraordinary brightness (Revelation 1:9, 16). He did not change His nature; and He did not abandon His human body for awhile. He was merely revealed as He really is and His disciples’ eyes were opened. His human body remained intact, but “As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered and His robe became white and like lightning” (Luke 9:29). “His face shone like the sun and His clothes became white as the light” (Matthew 17:2). The emphasis seems to be a case of not just brightness, but extraordinary brightness like lightning.

The angels at the tomb are also described as having clothing like lightning (Luke 24:4), and the Lord’s appearance at the Second Coming will be “as the lightning that flashes out of one part under heaven and shines to the other part under heaven, so also the Son of Man will be in His Day” (Luke 17:24). All these references to “lightning” are translations of the Greek word *astrapto* and its derivatives. Cyril of Alexandria noted⁹⁸ this:

⁹⁶ Compare Peter’s confession in Matthew 16:23-19 with that in John 6:67-69 to harmonize Matthew with John, then note John 7:2.

⁹⁷ Mt. Tabor is Southwest of the Sea of Galilee while Mt. Herman is Northeast of the Sea of Galilee.

⁹⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

“He was transformed to so surpassing and godlike a brightness that His garments even glittered with rays of fire, and seemed to flash like lightning”.

The Lord had mentioned a few months earlier that all the righteous would also appear this way in the resurrection: “Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the Kingdom of their Father” (Matthew 13:43, see also Daniel 12:3). The Transfiguration was then a demonstration of what that would be like.

According to some of the Church Fathers, Adam and Eve were clothed in light prior to the Fall. Their appearance may have been similar to that of the righteous shining forth as the sun after the resurrection. This would make sense: after they disobeyed God and the lights went out, then they noticed that they were naked!

This light is something God possesses, not something He takes on. For example, when the New Jerusalem comes, “The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the Glory of God illumined it. The Lamb is its light” (Revelation 21:23).

The Servants and the Master

As He was transfigured, Moses and Elijah appeared also in glory, talking with Jesus of His exodus (i.e. His crucifixion) which He was about to accomplish in Jerusalem (Luke 9:31) at Passover (March-April) the following year. Since Jesus is the culmination of the Law and the Prophets, it is significant that Moses, the Law-giver, and Elijah, representing the Prophets, appeared with Him. The Lord had said earlier (Matthew 5:17-19), “Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For till heaven and earth pass away (that is, the Kingdom comes in glory as we get a glimpse at the Transfiguration), one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one portion of a Hebrew letter will by no means pass from the Law till all is fulfilled.”

John Chrysostom asked⁹⁹ why Christ would bring forward Moses and Elijah. He then responded with four reasons.

1. He brought the leaders of His choir so that His disciples might see the difference between the servants and the Lord, and so that Peter might be rightly commended (Matthew 16:17) for confessing Him to be the Son of God.
2. He intended to expose the blasphemy of the Jewish leaders who had been saying that Jesus was not from God because He did not keep the Sabbath (Matthew 12:2, John 9:16). He brought forward Moses, because he gave the Law that the Jews quoted, and would not have overlooked the Law being trampled on. He brought forward Elijah, who was zealous for the glory of God. Were any man an adversary of God and falsely made himself equal to the Father, Elijah was not the person to stand by and listen to him”.
3. He informed them that He has power over both death and life and is Ruler of both above and beneath (i.e. heaven and Hades). For this reason, He brought forward both him that died (i.e. Moses, Deuteronomy 34:5-6) and him that didn't (i.e. Elijah 2 Kings 2:11)”.

⁹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 3.

4. In discussing His Crucifixion, He showed them the glory of the Cross to console Peter and the others in their dread of the Crucifixion and to raise up their minds.

Cyril of Alexandria added¹⁰⁰ to this saying that “the standing of Moses and Elijah before Him and their talking with one another was a sort of representation, excellently displaying our Lord Jesus Christ as having the Law and the Prophets for His bodyguard. He is the Lord of the Law and the Prophets as foreshown in them by those things, which in mutual agreement they proclaimed. For the words of the Prophets are not at variance with the teachings of the Law”.

Ambrose added¹⁰¹ that Peter was not fooled regarding who was who. “Peter, when he saw Moses and Elijah on the mountain, with the Son of God, was not deceived as to their nature and glory. For he inquired, not of them, but of Christ what he ought to do”.

Constructing Tabernacles

When the Lord was transfigured, Peter’s first reaction was to make three tabernacles: one each for Jesus, Moses and Elijah. This is not just a inane gesture; Peter had some understanding of what was happening that we might easily miss. First of all, to have recognized Moses and Elijah at all required some knowledge. Tertullian stated¹⁰² that Peter had to have been “in the Spirit” just to have recognized Moses and Elijah. Secondly, the Transfiguration occurred just before the Old Testament Feast of Tabernacles which foretold the establishment of the Kingdom of God in Glory (compare Haggai 2:1-9). Six days earlier, Jesus had said to His disciples, “Assuredly, I say to you that there are some standing here who will not taste death till they see the Kingdom of God present with power” (Mark 9:1, Matthew 16:28). When they saw the Lord transfigured, then they knew what it meant.

Rabbinic expectation in the First Century was that the Feast of Tabernacles prophesied of the establishment of the Kingdom of God on earth. Harvest was complete; grapes had been picked and crushed to make wine. (Compare Isaiah 63:3-6, Revelation 14:19, 19:15) It was a time when “God will bless you in all your produce and in all the work of your hands, so that you shall be altogether joyful (Deuteronomy 16:13-15). During the Feast of Tabernacles, all Israelis were to dwell in tents, booths or tabernacles to remind them that they dwelt in tents, booths or tabernacles for 40 years in the desert (Leviticus 23:42-43). King Solomon chose this occasion (i.e. the Feast of Tabernacles) to bring the Ark of the Covenant to its permanent resting place in the Holy of Holies of his newly constructed temple (1 Kings 8; 2 Chronicles 5).

A few weeks later, at the Feast of Tabernacles, on the last day (i.e. the eighth day), the Great Day of the Feast of Tabernacles Jesus stood up and said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his being will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet *given*, because Jesus was not yet glorified” (John 7:37-39). Thus Jesus, Himself, proclaimed the Feast of Tabernacles as describing a time when the Kingdom of God has arrived in all its fullness and everyone has the indwelling of the Holy Spirit (Jeremiah 31:31-34).

¹⁰⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

¹⁰¹ Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, I, xiii, 81-83.

¹⁰² Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, IV, 22.

Peter, like everyone else in Israel, was desiring to obey the Mosaic Law and asked the Lord if he should make three tabernacles, one for Jesus, one for Moses and one for Elijah. But Peter's thinking had gotten out of focus; he forgot that the tabernacles are for the servants and not for the Master. His state of mind is described as not very clear. "He did not know what to say for they were greatly afraid" (Mark 9:6, Luke 9:33). John Chrysostom commented¹⁰³,

"What are you saying, Peter? Didn't you a little while ago distinguish Him from the servants, that is, calling Him 'the Christ, the Son of the Living God' (Matthew 16:16)? Are you again numbering Him with the servants? Do you see how exceedingly imperfect they were before the Crucifixion? For although the Father had revealed it to him, yet he did not always retain the revelation".

Chrysostom continued¹⁰⁴ to say that after Peter suggested making three tabernacles, God the Father showed a tabernacle not made with hands, light unspeakable and a voice.

"Why then did not the cloud likewise receive Christ alone, but all of them together? If it had received Christ alone, He would have been thought to have Himself uttered the voice. Wherefore also the evangelist, making sure this same point, said that the voice was from the cloud, that is, from God".

The Father Speaks

While Peter was still speaking, "behold a bright cloud overshadowed them; and suddenly a voice came out of the cloud, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in Whom I am well pleased. Listen to Him'" (Matthew 17:5). Peter, James and John were very fearful as they entered the cloud (Luke 9:34, Matthew 17:6); but after the Father spoke, they found themselves alone with Jesus (Luke 9:36, Mark 9:8). Jesus then instructed them to "Tell the vision to no one until the Son of Man is risen from the dead" (Matthew 17:9).

Ambrose stated¹⁰⁵ that Peter "was corrected by the sovereign voice of God the Father. The Apostle was not dull to understand the rebuke; he fell on his face, brought low by the Father's voice, but he was raised up by the Son. The purpose of that vision, which signified that Christ and His servants were not equal, suggested a mystery. It should be made plain to us that the Law and the Prophets, in agreement with the Gospel, revealed as eternal, the Son of God Whom they had heralded".

John Chrysostom pointed out¹⁰⁶ a number of places where God is associated with clouds. In each of these cases, it is the Son of God that is associated with the clouds. For example:

- "Clouds and thick darkness surround Him; righteousness and justice are the foundation of His throne" (Psalm 97:2).
- "Behold the Lord is riding on a swift cloud, and is about to come to Egypt" (Isaiah 19:1).
- "He lays the beams of His upper chambers in the waters; He makes the clouds His chariot; He walks upon the wings of the wind; He makes the winds His angels, flaming fire His ministers" (Psalm 104:3-4, Hebrews 1:6-7).
- "He was taken up and a cloud received Him out of their sight" (Acts 1:9).

¹⁰³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 4.

¹⁰⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 5.

¹⁰⁵ Ambrose, Exposition of the Christian Faith, I, xiii, 81-83.

¹⁰⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 5.

- “I kept looking in the night visions, and behold, with the clouds of heaven, one like a Son of Man was coming, and He came up to the Ancient of Days and was presented before Him. And to Him was given dominion, glory and a kingdom” (Daniel 7:13, 14).

The same thing occurred when the Son of God spoke to Moses on Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law. “And the Lord said to Moses, ‘Behold I shall come to you in a thick cloud, in order that the people may hear when I speak with you, and may also believe in you forever’” (Exodus 19:9). “Then it came about on the third day, when it was morning, that there was thundering and lightning flashes and a thick cloud upon the mountain, and a very loud trumpet sound, so that all the people that were in the camp trembled” (Exodus 19:16). “When the sound of the trumpet grew louder and louder, Moses spoke and God answered him with thunder” (Exodus 19:19).

In all the above references, it is not often easy to distinguish whether the reference refers to the Father, the Son or the Trinity. However, the Son’s role in dealing with man is clarified by Hebrews: “To the Son, He (the Father) says, ‘Your Throne, O God, is forever and ever’ (Hebrews 1:8, Psalm 45:6). And, ‘You, Lord, in the beginning laid the foundation of the earth, and the heavens are the work of Your hands’ (Hebrews 1:10, Psalm 102:25). And, ‘Sit at My Right Hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool’” (Hebrews 1:13, Psalm 110:1). If the Son created the heavens and the earth, it is quite reasonable that many of these lesser activities such as riding a swift cloud to Egypt, making clouds His chariot, etc., refer to the Son’s activities also. After the Incarnation, the Son no longer needed a cloud to make His Presence visible to man. But the Father did.

John Chrysostom also noted¹⁰⁷ that the Father spoke from a bright cloud (Matthew 17:5) and not from a dark cloud. The dark clouds at Mt. Sinai at the giving of the Law (Exodus 19:19-20) and in delivering David in battle (Psalm 18:6-13) spoke of His threatening. At the Transfiguration, it was a bright cloud because His desire was not to alarm but to teach.

The Father’s voice from heaven occurred on two other occasions also. At Jesus’ baptism by John the Baptist, the Father said the same things He did at the Transfiguration: “This is My beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased” (Matthew 3:17). At that time, the entire Trinity was apparent as the Father spoke concerning the Son and the Spirit descended like a dove (Matthew 3:16).

Another occasion occurred at the beginning of Holy Week. Jesus was approaching the hour of His Crucifixion and said, “Now My soul is troubled, and what shall I say? ‘Father save Me from this hour?’ But for this purpose I came to this hour. Father glorify Your Name” (John 12:27). “Then a voice came from heaven saying, ‘I have both glorified it and will glorify it again’” (John 12:28). Some people thought it had thundered; others thought an angel had spoken to Him. Jesus simply said that the Father’s voice came for their sake (John 12:29-30).

Cyril of Alexandria noted¹⁰⁸ that when the Father spoke at the Transfiguration, Jesus was found alone.

“Moses was there and does the Father command the Holy Apostles to hear him? Had it been His will that they should follow the commandments of Moses, I suppose He would have said, ‘Obey Moses; keep the Law’. But this is not what

¹⁰⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVI, 5.

¹⁰⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 51, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

God the Father here said; but in the presence of Moses and Elijah, He commands them rather to hear Him.”

“For He also is the end of the Law and the Prophets, for which reason He cried aloud to the multitudes: ‘If you believed Moses, you would believe Me, for he wrote about Me. But if you do not believe his writings, how will you believe My words?’ (John 5:46-47). But as they persevered even to the end in despising the commandment given by the most wise Moses, and in rejecting the word of the holy Prophets, they have justly been alienated and expelled from those blessings that were promised to their fathers”.

Peter wrote his second Epistle just prior to his own death by crucifixion (2 Peter 1:14-15), and he referred to his exodus using the same words Moses and Elijah used about Jesus at the Transfiguration. [Exodus is a Greek word that was taken directly into English with the same meaning.] Peter had recently returned to Rome because of a vision from the Lord to return to Rome, where he would suffer and be martyred. Emperor Nero imprisoned Peter because of the spectacular way he debunked the magician and illusionist Simon Magus. Peter had run into Simon Magus earlier (about 32 AD) in conjunction with Deacon Philip’s evangelism (Acts 8:9-13, 18-23). Simon Magus had become good friends with Nero and had been proclaiming himself to be the Christ in Rome, supporting his claims with his magic and illusions (see Acts 8:9-11). Peter’s debunking of the illusions resulted in Simon’s death from a fall as he claimed to be ascending back to his father in heaven. Simon Magus had so impressed Emperor Claudius, that the emperor had erected a statue of Simon with the words inscribed, “To Simon, the Holy God”.

Perhaps making an allusion to the “cleverly devised fables” (2 Peter 1:16) spread by Simon Magus, Peter stated that this was not his method. He was an eyewitness of the Lord’s majesty on the Mountain of Transfiguration. And Peter recalled how he heard God the Father speaking to Jesus from the cloud, “This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!” (2 Peter 1:17, 18; Matthew 17:5). Peter’s method was simply to proclaim to everyone what he saw and heard.

Referring also to the Feast of Tabernacles, Peter stated that he was currently living in the tent that was his body (2 Peter 1:13-14). While he is in this tent, he will stir up the people to whom he is writing to be diligent to make sure of their calling and their choice (2 Peter 1:10) in the face of false teachers bringing in destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1). Following his exodus (2 Peter 1:15), there will be his entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11).

Leo the Great stated¹⁰⁹ that the “foremost object of the Transfiguration was to remove the offense of the cross from the disciples’ heart, and to prevent the Apostles’ faith from being disturbed by the humiliation of His voluntary Passion by revealing to them the excellence of His hidden dignity.

Peter concluded his 2nd Epistle by linking of three things: the Transfiguration, the Prophetic Word confirmed, and a light that shines in a dark place (2 Peter 1:19). The dark place is the world and the Transfiguration illustrates the focus of the Prophets: God becoming incarnate. Jesus is referred to on several occasions as the morning star or day star - one that is so

¹⁰⁹ Leo the Great, Sermons, LI, 3.

bright that it can be seen in the daytime (Revelation 2:28, 22:16). John of Kronstadt comments¹¹⁰ on this:

“It shines even in the darkness of sin, but sinful human darkness, or rather, the men living in the darkness of sin, do not understand it, ‘comprehend it not’ (John 1:5). They do not guess that the light which is in their souls is from Christ and think that it is their own natural light, that they themselves, by means of their natural intellect, their own sagacity and judgment, have attained to a certain truth, have accomplished certain work. They do not think that it is only by the light of Christ that they see every light (Psalm 36:9), the light of every noble science, of every noble art and of everything.”

Peter Helps Jesus Pay Temple Tax: Matt. 17:24-27

The “Temple Tax”, literally “double drachma” (Matthew 17:24) was prescribed in the Mosaic Law as a half-shekel “ransom” for each individual as a contribution toward the service of the tent of meeting. This “Tax” originated when the Lord chose the Levites instead of the firstborn from every family. Because there were slightly fewer Levites than firstborn, the firstborn were asked to contribute a “Tax” to make up for the difference (Numbers 3:43-50). Later it became the custom for everyone to make this contribution annually. Everyone, rich or poor, who was at least twenty years old was required to make this contribution to make atonement for themselves (Exodus 30:11-16). In 1st Century Israel¹¹¹, every town and community levied its own taxes annually for the maintenance of the synagogue, elementary schools, public baths, the support of the poor, the maintenance of public roads, city walls and gates, and other requirements. Jewish authorities distributed this burden both easily and kindly, as opposed to the taxation burden imposed by the Romans and enforced by the tax collectors. The “drachma” referred to as the “Temple Tax” was the equivalent of a denarius¹¹² and also the equivalent of a half-shekel.

The request for the “Temple Tax” came following the Transfiguration. Jesus returned to Capernaum, where those who received the *temple* tax came to Peter and said, ‘Does your Teacher pay the *temple* tax?’ He said, ‘Yes’. And when he had come into the house, Jesus anticipated him, saying, ‘What do you think, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take customs or taxes, from their sons or from strangers?’ Peter said to Him, ‘From strangers’. Jesus said to him, ‘Then the sons are free. Nevertheless, lest we offend them, go to the sea, cast in a hook, and take the fish that comes up first. And when you have opened its mouth, you will find a piece of money; take that and give it to them for Me and you’” (Matthew 17:24-27).

There are different opinions on what kind of fish might have had a shekel coin in its mouth. Gower stated¹¹³ that the fish involved was the tilapa, also called the *musht*¹¹⁴ today. Tilapa carry their eggs and later the young fish in their mouths. Even when they go in search of food for themselves, the young still return to the protection of the mother’s mouth. When the mother fish wishes to keep them out, she will pick up an object (a bright one, preferably) and

¹¹⁰ John of Kronstadt, *My Life in Christ*.

¹¹¹ Alfred Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 52, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, 1994.

¹¹² Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, Moody Press, p. 176, Chicago, 1998.

¹¹³ Ralph Gower, *The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times*, Moody Press, p. 131, Chicago, 1998.

¹¹⁴ *Musht* is Arabic for “comb”, referring to the large dorsal fin of the tilapa.

keep it in her mouth to prevent their return. In this case, Gower suggested that the fish has picked up a shekel coin.

The musht is a flat white fish and is often prepared by frying (compare John 21:9). The skeleton consists of an easily detached backbone and relatively few small bones, thus making it easy to eat. Since it is one of the tastiest fish in the lake, it has been called “St. Peter’s fish” from this account. However, Peter caught the fish with a baited hook; musht eat plankton and wouldn’t respond to bait. Mendel Nun therefore suggested¹¹⁵ that Peter must have caught a barbel, which is a trout-like fish that would respond to a baited hook. Local traditions, he said, later applied the name “St. Peter’s fish” to the more popular eating fish. Nun doesn’t mention what a barbel would be doing with a coin in its mouth. This miracle was so great that it would be a small extra feature if it was a musht that responded to Peter’s hook.

John Chrysostom stated¹¹⁶ that the people that receive the temple tax asked Jesus because He was a firstborn son and they asked Peter because he seemed to be the leader of the disciples. Peter was reluctant to speak to Jesus about this, so Jesus anticipated the subject and brought it up. Jesus’ response can be summed up as, “I am indeed free from paying tribute. For if the kings of the earth take it not of their sons, but of their subjects; much more ought I to be freed from this demand, since I am Son, not of an earthly king, but of the King of Heaven, and am myself a King”. By “strangers”, Chrysostom said Jesus meant those not born among them.

“Jesus neither declined the tribute, nor simply commanded to pay it, but having first proved Himself not liable to it, then He gives it: the one to save the people, the other, those around Him, from offense. For He gives it not at all as a debt, but as doing the best for their weakness”.

“In doing this, He signified Himself to be God of all, and the sea also to be under His rule. For He had indeed signified this already, by His commanding this same Peter to walk on the waves. But He now again signifies the same thing, though in another way, yet so as to cause great amazement. For it was not a small thing to foretell that the first who should come in his way out of those depths would be the fish that would pay the tribute. Having cast forth His commandment like a net to bring up the one fish that bore the piece of money was a divine and unutterable power. He made even the sea bear gifts, and showed its subjection to Him, as it made payment in His behalf to them that are demanding it”.

“The Evangelist Mark, Peter’s follower, did not include this incident, because it indicated the great honor paid to Peter. Peter’s denial (Mark 14:66-72) he wrote about along with the other Gospel writers, but the things that make Peter illustrious he passed over in silence, his master, Peter, perhaps entreating him not to mention the great things about himself. And Jesus used the phrase, ‘for Me and you’ (Matthew 17:27), because Peter too was a firstborn child. Now as you are amazed at Christ’s power, so I bid you admire also Peter’s faith, that to a thing beyond possibility he gave ear. For indeed it was very far beyond possibility by nature. In demonstrating his faith, He joined himself to Christ in the payment of the tribute”.

We might note that neither Jesus nor Peter could pay the “Temple Tax” from pocket change. They had none! Peter and the Twelve had left everything to follow Jesus (Luke 5:11),

¹¹⁵ Mendel Nun, “Cast Your Net Upon the Waters”, *Biblical Archaeology Review*, Nov./Dec. 1993, pp. 46-56.

¹¹⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, LVIII, 1-2.

and all their support for the three years of Jesus' public ministry came from the service of the Holy Women (Luke 8:1-3).

Immediately following Peter's payment of the "Temple tax", the rest of the Twelve came to Jesus to question Him about the honor Jesus just gave to Peter. They asked, "Who then is greatest in the kingdom of heaven?" Then Jesus called a little child to Him, set him in the midst of them, and said, "Assuredly, I say to you, unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven. Therefore whoever humbles himself as this little child is the greatest in the kingdom of heaven" (Matthew 18:1-4). According to tradition¹¹⁷ this little child was Ignatius of Antioch, later the 3rd Bishop of Antioch. Ignatius later referred to himself as "Theophorus" (literally, *God-bearer*) to recall how he was carried in Jesus' arms as a small child (Mark 9:36).

A little later, James and John, along with their mother Salome (Matthew 20:20) asked Jesus to grant that they might sit on His right and left in His Glory. This caused another dispute among the Twelve, to which Jesus replied: "You know that those who are considered rulers over the Gentiles lord it over them, and their great ones exercise authority over them. Yet it shall not be so among you; but whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant (Greek: *diakonos*). And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served (*diakoneo*) but to serve (*diakoneo*) and to give His life a ransom for many" (Mark 10:42-45).

Ambrose of Milan took this one step farther¹¹⁸ and applied it as part of the duties of the clergy in the Church. Like the Levites who had no earthly inheritance, but whose inheritance was God (Numbers 18:21-32, Deuteronomy 10:9, 18:1), so the clergy should be of a mind to despise riches and no longer to be bound by earthly desires.

Theophylact stated¹¹⁹ that Jesus directed Peter to pay the "Temple Tax" in order that the Jewish leaders might not be offended into thinking that Jesus despised the Law. He did not pay because He owed the tax, but He made allowances for their weakness.

"From this we learn that we should not cause offense to anyone over things that do not harm us; but when we might be harmed by some action, then neither should we be concerned about those who unreasonably take offense".

Clarification of Peter's Role in Binding and Loosing: Matthew 18:15-20

A few weeks earlier, prior to the Transfiguration, and in response to Peter's confession (Matthew 16:17) which is the "rock" that Jesus had spoken of, Jesus stated that He will give the keys of the Kingdom of Heaven to the Twelve. Whatever they bind on earth shall be, having been bound in heaven. And whatever they loose on earth shall be, having been loosed in heaven (Matthew 16:19). He repeated this again in the upper room after the Resurrection with regard to forgiveness of sins (John 20:23).

¹¹⁷ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 20.

¹¹⁸ Ambrose, Three Books on the Duties of the Clergy, I, L, 255.

¹¹⁹ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Matthew, Chapter 17:27, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

The context of this “binding and loosing” is the inner workings of the Church. A few weeks after the Transfiguration, the Lord elaborated on this, again in the context of the Church, where two or three are gathered together in His Name (Matthew 18:20). There He gave instructions regarding one brother sinning against another: First speak to him alone; if he won’t listen, take one or two others that by the mouths of two or three witnesses every word may be established. The two or three witnesses comes from Mosaic Law regarding capital punishment (Deuteronomy 17:6); evidence from two or three witnesses represented confirmation (Deuteronomy 19:15). This principle of two witnesses was also used at Jesus’ trial, but the testimonies of the false witnesses were inconsistent and didn’t agree (Mark 14:56-59).

In the Church, if the two or three witnesses establish a brother’s sin and he doesn’t repent, the Lord said to take the matter to the Church for judgment. If he refuses to hear the Church, “let him be to you like a heathen and a tax collector. Assuredly I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven” (Matthew 18:17-18). As in the Mosaic Law, an issue of capital punishment is involved. “Do not fear those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. But rather fear Him who is able to destroy both soul and body in hell” (Matthew 10:28).

Thus it is difficult to overstate the importance of the Church. Ignatius of Antioch stated¹²⁰,

“All are to respect the deacons as Jesus Christ and the bishop as a copy of the Father and the presbyters as the council of God and the band of the Apostles. For apart from these, no group can be called a Church”.

John Chrysostom explained¹²¹ that Christ is reaching out here to someone within the Church whose soul is clouded by the passion of his sin. This is a very critical situation because one cannot partake of the Lord’s Table and the table of demons (1 Corinthians 10:21). Rejecting this help brings on capital punishment, and the angels record our response to the two or three witnesses.

“In the Sermon on the Mount, Jesus advised bringing together him who caused the pain and him who was offended, and saying, ‘Be reconciled to your brother’ (Matthew 5:24). At another time, He commanded him that had been wronged to forgive his neighbor, ‘Forgive us our debts, as we forgive our debtors’ (Matthew 6:12). But here He is devising another mode. For He does not call upon him that caused the pain, but him that was offended. Because the one who had done the wrong would not easily come, out of shame and confusion of face, He draws the other to him in such way as to correct what had been done”.

“Do you see how He seeks the good of not only him that has been offended, but also of him that caused the pain? For the injured person is the one who is taken captive by his passion; he is the one that is diseased, and weak, and infirm. Therefore He often sends the one who was offended to this one, now alone, and now with others; and if he continue in his sin, even with the Church”.

“With respect to those that are outside the Church, He said no such thing, but instead, ‘If any one strike you on your right cheek, turn to him the other also’ (Matthew 5:39); but not so here. For what does Paul mean saying, ‘What have I to do to judge them that are outside?’ (1 Corinthians 5:12) But the brethren

¹²⁰ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Trallians*, 3:1.

¹²¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, LX, 1-2.

within, he commands both to tell of their brothers' faults, and to cut them off, if they are not obedient. He sets three over him for teachers and judges, to teach him the things that are done at the time of his drunkenness".

"Who, for instance, was wiser than David? Yet for all that, when he had sinned, he didn't see it, his lust keeping all his reasoning powers in subjection, like some smoke filling his soul. Therefore he stood in need of a lantern from the prophet, and of words calling to his mind what he had done. Therefore here also Christ brings these to him that had sinned, to reason with him about the things he had done".

"He has set over him a first, and a second, and a third court, so that though he should neglect to hear the first, he may yield to the second; and even if he should reject that, he may fear the third. And though he should make no account of this, he may be dismayed at the vengeance to come, and at the sentence and judgment to proceed from God".

Peter Asks About the Limits of Forgiveness: Matthew 18:21-35

Immediately after Jesus spoke of this action within the Church, Peter came to Jesus and asked about what the limits were regarding forgiving his brother. The setting was Autumn of 29 AD, where Jesus knew He would be crucified the following Spring. In a few weeks, He would send the Seventy out two by two to heal the sick and cast out demons (Luke 10:1-24) just as He had sent the Twelve. In preparing His disciples for their role at the following Pentecost, Jesus focused on things the Church will need to know. When 3,000 people were added next Pentecost (Acts 2:41), living in close quarters with all things in common (Acts 4:32-37), there would be occasions when a brother sins against a brother, and forgiveness would need to be addressed!

Peter asked, "Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me, and I forgive him? Up to seven times?" Jesus said to him, "I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven" (Matthew 18:21-22). John Chrysostom stated¹²² that the Lord was not setting a limit here, but instructing His disciples to forgive an infinite number of times and perpetually and forever.

To illustrate the point, Jesus made an analogy where indebtedness equated to sin. One slave owed the king 10,000 talents¹²³, which amounts to 63 million denarii, (where one denarius was a day's wage for a laborer). This was a debt that was impossible to pay off through just daily labor (unless one had 4,000 members of an extended family each working 50 years to do it). Chrysostom compared¹²⁴ our forgiveness for our brother to the Lord's forgiveness for us in terms of a drop of water as compared to an endless sea.

The slave did not want to be sold along with his wife and kids so he prostrated himself and begged only for time. The king was moved with compassion and (1) completely freed him from slavery and (2) forgave him the entire debt.

¹²² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXI, 1.

¹²³ 1 talent = 75 lb of silver, 84 denari = 1 lb of silver. 10,000 talents represents almost 400 Tons of silver.

¹²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXI, 1.

Chrysostom noted¹²⁵ that the king exhibited “surpassing benevolence”. The slave asked only for a delay in the time of payment, but He gave more than he asked: remission and forgiveness of the entire debt.

“For it had been the King’s will to give it even from the first, but He desired that the gift extend to others also. The King was ‘moved with compassion’ at the slave’s entreaty and did not want him to go away uncrowned. He wished the slave, himself, to contribute something in order that he might not be covered with shame at having incurred such deep debt. By being schooled in his own calamities, the King wished that he might be more indulgent to his fellow slaves”.

“Up to this point then, the slave was good and acceptable: For he confessed, and promised to pay the debt, and fell down before Him, and entreated, and condemned his own sins, and knew the greatness of the debt. But the sequel is unworthy of his former deeds”.

For us, the analogy is that we are slaves of sin – if we allow it. Jesus said, “Whoever commits sin is a slave of sin. And a slave does not stay in the house forever; only a son does” (John 8:32-36). Peter wrote, “By whom a person is overcome, by that he is brought into bondage (2 Peter 2:19). If we are overcome by any of the things important to this world (e.g. sports, gossip, passions, etc.), we need to beg the King to free us from our debt that we might have true freedom.

The slave who was forgiven and freed, turned right around and demanded payment from a fellow slave who owed him 100 denarii (about 100 days’ wages). The fellow slave prostrated himself and begged for time using the same words the first slave used in addressing the King. But the first slave did not have compassion, but seized his fellow slave by the throat (Matthew 18:28) and had him thrown in debtors’ prison. Chrysostom commented¹²⁶ that the slave

“did not regard even the words by which he had been saved, for he himself on saying this was delivered from ten thousand talents. He did not recognize so much as the harbor by which he escaped shipwreck. The gesture of supplication did not remind him of his Master’s kindness, but he put away from him all these things out of covetousness and cruelty and revenge. He was more fierce than any wild beast, seizing his fellow slave by the throat”.

When the King found out what happened, he reneged on his pardon and delivered the first slave over to the torturers until all was paid. And following the revocation of the slave’s pardon, there would appear to be no sunset clause¹²⁷ on his slavery. Chrysostom noted¹²⁸,

“When the first slave owed 10,000 talents, his Master did not call him wicked, nor reproach him but showed mercy on him. When he became harsh to his fellow slave, then He said, ‘O you wicked slave’”.

¹²⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXI, 3-4.

¹²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXI, 4.

¹²⁷ Slavery in Israel for Hebrews could be terminated at any time by redemption from a family member, and was automatically terminated during the Year of Remission (every 7 years). For more details on Slavery, see the Study for the 4th Sunday After Pentecost in Mark Kern, The Whole Counsel of God, St. Athanasius Press, 2004.

¹²⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXI, 4.

For us, the analogy is that refusal to forgive others brings the Lord's judgment down on our own heads. Chrysostom stated¹²⁹ it this way,

“Let us listen, the covetous, for even to us the word is spoken. Let us listen also, the merciless and the cruel, for not to others are we cruel, but to ourselves. When then you think about being revengeful, consider that against yourself are you revengeful, not against another; that you are collecting up your own sins, not your neighbor's. For as to you, whatever you may do to a man, you do as a man and in this present life. But God not so; more mightily will He take vengeance on you, and with the vengeance hereafter.”

“For if we are willing, no one shall be able to injure us, but even our enemies shall benefit us in the greatest degree. And why do I speak of men? For what can be more wicked than the devil? Yet nevertheless, even now we have a great opportunity of approving ourselves; and Job showed it. But if the devil has become a cause of crowns, why are you afraid of a man as an enemy?”.

To say this in another way, the Lord said that with the same standard or measure we use, it will be measured back to us, whether judging, condemning or forgiving (Luke 6:37-38; compare also Luke 19:22-24). Therefore it behooves us to be merciful and forgiving always since we are essentially doing so to ourselves.

The Reward for Leaving Everything: Matthew 19:27-30; Mark 10:28-31; Luke 18:28-30

A few weeks after Peter asked about the limits of forgiveness, a man came to Jesus asking, “Good Teacher, what good thing shall I do that I may have eternal life?” After some discussion, Jesus said, “If you want to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven; and come, follow Me”. But the man couldn't do that, because he had “great possessions”. Jesus was inviting the man, who was a synagogue ruler (Luke 18:18), to join the Twelve and the Seventy, he turned his back on Him.

This situation was set in the context of the decisiveness of the Twelve, who had, in fact, left everything (Luke 5:11). Peter was concerned about this. The man with great possessions got to live his life in comfort, while he and the Twelve didn't even have pocket change for a meal, and were completely dependant on the Myrrh-Bearing Women for support (Luke 8:1-3). In contrast to this, Jerome stated¹³⁰, “The apostles traveled throughout the world without either money in their purses, or staves in their hands, or shoes on their feet (Matthew 10:9-10). And yet they could speak of themselves as ‘having nothing and yet possessing all things’” (2 Corinthians 6:10).

In response to the synagogue ruler being allowed to live his life in comfort, “Peter answered and said to Him, ‘See, we have left all and followed You. Therefore what shall we have?’ So Jesus said to them, ‘Assuredly I say to you, that in the regeneration, when the Son of Man sits on the throne of His glory, you who have followed Me will also sit on twelve thrones, judging the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My Name's sake, shall receive a hundredfold, and inherit eternal life. But many *who are* first will be last, and the last first’” (Matthew 19:27-30).

¹²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXI, 4-5.

¹³⁰ Jerome, Letters, CXXIII, 15.

The significance of the role of the Twelve Apostles is brought out by this question that the Twelve asked Jesus. There are two ways (at least) of looking at this.

1. As Chrysostom said¹³¹, they will be witnesses in judgment against those of their generation who did not follow Christ similar to the men of Nineveh and the Queen of the South (Matthew 12:41-42). Christ alone is the one that shall sit and judge the nations, but honor and glory unspeakable for the Twelve did He intimate by the thrones.
2. They have established the foundation of the Church (Revelation 21:14) with Jesus Christ as the cornerstone (Ephesians 2:20; 1 Corinthians 3:10-17). Thus they have been judging the Twelve Tribes of the Israel of God now for almost two millennia through those righteous men that they established.

Another aspect of the question the Twelve asked Jesus was suggested¹³² by the Monk Lev Gillet (20th Century): “When one hears a word spoken by Christ and takes some kind of risk to obey the word (the Twelve left their jobs!), one will obtain results quite out of proportion to anything he could have hoped for”.

One might also inquire in more detail regarding what they left. Besides leaving their jobs – and some had well-paying jobs – they also left their families, including wives and children. Of the Twelve, Peter, Jude, Philip and Simon the Zealot were married and the first three of these had children at the time that they were called as Apostles. While they “left” their families, they did not abandon them. They left behind the things of this world, including worldly goods and worldly pleasures. We see the results of their divestiture of all worldly goods in the Early Church, where everyone sold what he had and laid it at the Apostles’ feet. This does not mean that the Twelve suddenly became rich men. The Twelve had already done the same, and the Twelve oversaw the distribution of resources to meet needs.

We see the results of the Apostles’ leaving their families in the descriptions of their missionary journeys. Peter, the Lord’s brothers (Jude and Justus), and the other Apostles (Philip and some of the Seventy) brought their wives¹³³ along with them on their missionary journeys (1 Corinthians 9:5). This had a significant impact on their children. The three daughters of the Apostle Philip (of the Twelve) were later referred to as some of the most significant luminaries¹³⁴ of Asia Minor, where they were even credited¹³⁵ with raising the dead. Two of the grandsons of the Apostle Jude were the pillars of the Church¹³⁶ in their day. And Luke tells us that the four virgin daughters of the Apostle Philip (of the Seventy) were prophetesses when the Apostle Paul stayed with him (Acts 21:8-9).

¹³¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXIV, 2.

¹³² A Monk of the Eastern Church, The Year of Grace of the Lord, St Vladimir’s Seminary Press, Crestwood, NY, 1992, p. 16.

¹³³ This verse (1 Corinthians 9:5) is often translated in a way that it loses some of its meaning. What Paul said was, “Do we have no right to take along a sister, a wife?” Having left the pleasures of this life behind, they lived with their wives as brother and sister, not as husband and wife. See Jerome, Treatises Against Jovinianus, I, 26.

¹³⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, “Polycrates, Epistle to Victor and the Roman Church”, Remains of the Second and Third Centuries, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

¹³⁵ Salaminius Hermias Sozomenus, Ecclesiastical History, VII, 27.

¹³⁶ Eusebius, Church History, III, 12, 19-20.

Regarding the benefits of emptying oneself of great accumulations of possessions, John Chrysostom stated¹³⁷,

“How is it possible for him, that is sunk in a lust of wealth, to recover himself? Only if he begins to empty himself of his possessions, and cut off what are superfluous. For so shall he both advance further, and shall run on his course more easily afterwards”.

“Do not then seek all at once, but gently, and by little and little, ascend this ladder, that leads you up to Heaven. For like those in fevers having a sensitive stomach, when they eat something, so far from satisfying themselves, they just make it worse. So also the covetous, when they accumulate their wealth, having this wicked lust, they rather inflame it. For nothing so stops it as to refrain for a time from the lust of gain, like a weak stomach is stayed by abstinence”.

“But by what means will it be done? If you consider, that while rich, you will never cease thirsting and pining with the lust of more; but being freed from your possessions, you will be able to restrain this disease. Do not then encompass yourself with more, lest you follow after things unattainable, and be incurable, and be more miserable than all, being thus frantic”.

“For answer me, who is the most tormented? He that longs after costly meats and drinks, and is not able to enjoy them as he will, or him that had not such a desire? It is quite clear, him that desires, but cannot obtain what he desires. For this is so painful, to desire and not to enjoy, to thirst and not to drink, that Christ, desiring to describe hell to us, described it in this way, and introduced the rich man thus tormented (Luke 16:24). For longing for a drop of water, and not enjoying it, this was his punishment. So then he that despises wealth quiets the desire, but he that desires to be rich inflames it more”.

James and John Ask for Honor: Matthew 20:20-28, Mark 10:35-45

Just after Jesus had outlined the Rewards for the Twelve for having left everything for the Kingdom of God, Jesus’ stepsister, Salome, boldly asked if her two sons might sit at His right and left hand in His future Kingdom (Matthew 20:20-21). The occasion was just before Palm Sunday (Matthew 21:1-11), and there was an expectation that Jesus might do something spectacular. Since they were near Jerusalem, they thought that the Kingdom of God would appear immediately (Luke 19:11, Acts 1:6). And Salome was asking for a leading position for her sons.

Salome was the mother of James and John; she was about the same age as Jesus’ mother, and was also a very close confidant of the Mary. Along with Mary Magdalene, Joanna and Susanna (Luke 8:3), who were quite wealthy, Salome helped contribute to Jesus’ public ministry from the profits of her husband Zebedee’s fishing business. She was also among the Myrrh-Bearing Women at the Cross and at the Tomb (Mark 15:40, 16:1).

John Chrysostom¹³⁸ and Theophylact¹³⁹ both stated that James and John were embarrassed to ask Jesus this themselves, so they got their mother to ask first. They all thought

¹³⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXIII, 3.

¹³⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 2.

¹³⁹ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Mark, Chapter 10:35-39, Chrysostom Press, House Springs MO, 1997.

that Christ's Kingdom was an earthly kingdom, like that of David (Mark 11:10), and they were looking for honor and position in that kingdom, just as the Gentiles of their day did. Since Salome and John were close¹⁴⁰ to Jesus, this may not have seemed to them as an unreasonable request.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁴¹ that there was more to their request than might appear at the surface. James and John were not asking for anything spiritual. For they prefaced their request with, "Teacher, we want You to do for us whatever we ask!" (Mark 10:35) They were under the influence of a human passion to come to Him in this manner, privately and apart from the disciples. For they went ahead so that it might not be observable to the others, and so said what they wished. For it was their desire because they heard, "You shall sit on twelve thrones, to have the first place of these twelve seats". That they had an advantage over the others, they knew, but they were afraid of Peter taking the first spot, since Peter had been called "blessed" (Matthew 16:17).

Jesus asked first whether they were able to drink the cup that He was about to drink. Even though they had no clue what He was talking about, they said that they were able. Jesus prophesied that they would indeed drink His cup, and be baptized with His baptism, but sitting at His right and left was not His to give. In drinking their cups, James was later given a sham of a trial, complete with hired false witnesses, and then beheaded (Acts 12:2). John was beaten, tortured and stoned many times, baptized in his own blood each time.

Commenting on the change in John's behavior after Pentecost, Chrysostom pointed out¹⁴²,

"Hear how this same John everywhere gives up the first place to Peter, both in addressing the people (Acts 2:14-36), and in working miracles (Acts 3). He does not conceal Peter's good deeds, but relates both the confession, which he openly made when all were silent (John 1:42), and his entering into the tomb (John 20:2-9). And he puts the Apostle before himself".

"For arrogance is like this: so far from adding to us any improvement in our life, it subtracts even what we have. On the contrary, humility, so far from subtracting from what we have, adds to us also what we have not".

John Chrysostom pointed out¹⁴³ that mutual submission – all waiting upon one another – makes for a much happier, more pleasant life than a forced domination by one individual including fear and apprehension. What then if someone does not choose to submit to us? Chrysostom advised to continue to submit to him, not simply yielding, but really submitting. "Entertain this feeling towards all, as if all were your masters. For you will soon have all as your slaves. This is 'subjecting yourselves one to another in the fear of Christ' (Ephesians 5:21) in order that we may subdue all the passions, be servants of God and preserve the love we owe to one another". In this context, he is referring to brethren within the Church, and he is not addressing special problems that arise when heretics are involved.

¹⁴⁰ John was very close to Jesus also and later referred to himself as the disciple whom Jesus loved (John 13:23-25, 21:20).

¹⁴¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 2.

¹⁴² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXV, 4,6.

¹⁴³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XIX.

Peter's Reaction to Jesus' Curse of the Fig Tree: Mark 11:12-14, 20-26; Matthew 21:20-22

Following Jesus' entry into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, He went immediately to the Temple to drive out the money changers. As He returned to Jerusalem from Bethany the next morning, He was hungry and looked for some figs on a fig tree. Many fig trees have two crops; one in the Spring and another in the Fall. This occurred in the early Spring when it was likely that there might be some unripe figs present, but "it was not yet the season for figs" (Mark 11:13). Finding nothing but leaves, the Lord said, "Let no one eat fruit from you ever again" (Mark 11:14). The next day as they passed the same fig tree, they saw it withered up from the roots. Peter was stunned, and remarked, "Rabbi, look! The fig tree that You cursed has withered away!" (Mark 11:20-21).

John Chrysostom addressed¹⁴⁴ why Jesus cursed the fig tree for being fruitless when figs were not yet in season. At this point, Jesus had healed multitudes, but He had punished no one. And now He was going to be crucified in a few days. He cursed the fig tree to demonstrate that He also has power to take vengeance.

"He needed to show His disciples demonstrative proof of His power to take vengeance also, that both the disciples might learn that, although He was able to blast them that crucified Him, of His own will He submitted, and did not".

"He went to the fig tree, not so much for hunger, but for His disciples' sake, who indeed marveled exceedingly, although many greater miracles had been done. But this was strange, now for the first time He showed forth His power to take vengeance. Wherefore not in just any plant, but in a tree that has more sap than most planted things did He work the miracle, so that the miracle appeared greater".

"And that you might learn, that for their sakes this was done, that He might train them to feel confidence, hear what He said afterwards. 'Assuredly, I say to you, if you have faith and do not doubt, you will not only do what was done to the fig tree, but also if you say to this mountain, 'Be removed and be cast into the sea,' it will be done. And whatever things you ask in prayer, believing, you will receive'" (Matthew 21:21-22).

"Do you see that all is done for their sake, so that they might not be afraid and tremble at plots against them? Wherefore He said this a second time also (Matthew 24:32, Mark 13:28), to make them cleave to prayer and faith. For not this only shall you do, but also shall remove mountains; and many more things shall you do, being confident in faith and prayer".

In this discussion aimed at increasing His disciples' faith, Jesus continued with a statement that we might consider totally irrelevant: "And when you stand praying, if you have anything against anyone, forgive him, that your Father in heaven may also forgive you your trespasses. But if you do not forgive, neither will your Father in heaven forgive your trespasses" (Mark 11:25-26).

We might ask: "What does forgiving one another have to do with increasing one's faith? Too often, we look at faith as separate from works. Yet James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19), stated that faith is made perfect by works, one is justified (under some conditions) by works, and faith without works is dead (James 2:22, 25, 26).

¹⁴⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVII, 1-2.

Included in “works” are such good deeds as serving our Lord and King even when we’re tired, and forgiving our fellow slaves (Luke 17:7-10). We show our faith by our works (James 2:18). Therefore works such as these increase our faith, and our faith is made alive and perfect by demonstrating it in a tangible way to others.

In contrast to faith is doubt in one’s heart (Mark 11:23). James said, “He who doubts is like a wave of the sea driven and tossed by the wind. For let not that man suppose that he will receive anything from the Lord; he is a double-minded man (literally two-souled); unstable in all his ways (James 1:6-8). Paul spoke similarly to the Ephesians, that they should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting (Ephesians 4:14).

Commenting on the disciples’ faith, Chrysostom stated¹⁴⁵ that the disciples “were in a very imperfect state by comparison before the cross (i.e. compared to after Pentecost). Certain saints after them, far inferior to them are said actually to have removed mountains when necessity called for it.” For example: Gregory of Neocaesarea¹⁴⁶, the Wonder Worker, who is remembered on November 17th, and Mark the Ascetic, whose teacher was Chrysostom and who is remembered on March 5th.

Peter’s Question About the Parable of the Household Manager: Luke 12:41-48

There are three parables that are related, but which were given at different times, as listed in Table 2. The Parable of the Household Manager (Luke 12:35-48) is a longer version of the Parable of the Ten Virgins who went out to meet their friend, the bridegroom (Matthew 25:1-13). The parable recorded by Luke was given in late 29 AD, while the Parable of the Ten Virgins, recorded by Matthew, was given during Holy Week a few days before the Crucifixion in early Spring, 30 AD. In Luke’s account, Peter asked Jesus whether this parable applied to the Apostles only or whether it applied to everyone. The answer is that some parts apply to everyone, but there are prominent aspects that apply especially to those in positions of leadership and teaching. Jesus’ explanation of the Parable of the Household Manager is very similar to His Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler (Matthew 24:45-51) that He used as an introduction to the

Table 2
Parables Related to the Household Manager

Parable	Reference	Given When
Household Manager	Luke 12:35-48	Late 29 AD
Servant Made Ruler	Matthew 24:45-51	Tuesday, Holy Week, 30 AD
Ten Virgins	Matthew 25:1-13	Tuesday, Holy Week, 30 AD

¹⁴⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LVII, 4.

¹⁴⁶ He is sometimes called Gregory Thaumaturgus, where “Thaumaturgus” means “wonder-worker”.

Parable of the Ten Virgins. The Parable of the Household Manager from Luke is also used for Feast Days commemorating the death of a martyred priest, where the theme is that of being faithful to their flock even unto death. Luke's account reads:

"Let your waist be girded and your lamps burning; and you yourselves be like men who wait for their master, when he will return from the wedding, that when he comes and knocks they may open to him immediately. Blessed are those servants whom the master, when he comes, will find watching. Assuredly, I say to you that he will gird himself and have them sit down to eat, and will come and serve them. And if he should come in the second watch, or come in the third watch¹⁴⁷, and find them so, blessed are those servants. But know this, that if the master of the house had known what hour the thief would come, he would have watched and not allowed his house to be broken into. Therefore you also be ready, for the Son of Man is coming at an hour you do not expect."

"Then Peter said to Him, 'Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?' And the Lord said, 'Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion of food in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes. Truly, I say to you that he will make him ruler over all that he has. But if that servant says in his heart, 'My master is delaying his coming,' and begins to beat the male and female servants, and to eat and drink and be drunk, the master of that servant will come on a day when he is not looking for him, and at an hour when he is not aware, and will cut him in two and appoint him his portion with the unbelievers. And that servant who knew his master's will, and did not prepare himself or do according to his will, shall be beaten with many stripes. But he who did not know, yet committed things deserving of stripes, shall be beaten with few. For everyone to whom much is given, from him much will be required; and to whom much has been committed, of him they will ask the more'" (Luke 12:35-48).

1st Century Marriage Customs

To understand both parables, it helps to understand the marriage customs of the day. In 1st Century Judea, there were normally three stages in matrimonial procedures. First came the engagement, when the respective fathers of the bride and groom made a formal settlement. This was followed by the betrothal, a ceremony held in the home of the bride's parents, when mutual promises were made by the contracting parties before witnesses and presents were given by the bridegroom to his betrothed.

"The man and the woman were bound¹⁴⁸ to one another by the betrothal ceremony, though they were not yet actually man and wife. In fact, so binding was the betrothal that if the man died during the period that it lasted, the woman was regarded as a widow. The canceling of a betrothal was not permitted; if, however, such a thing took place, it was parallel to divorce". Jesus was conceived by the Holy Spirit (Luke 1:35) when Mary was betrothed to Joseph, but before they were married. When Joseph discovered this, he began private divorce proceedings (Matthew 1:18-19, Luke 1:27), until the Lord told him otherwise.

¹⁴⁷ The second watch was from 9:00 PM to Midnight, and the third watch was from Midnight to 3:00 AM.

¹⁴⁸ W. O. E. Oeserterley, The Gospel Parables in the Light of their Jewish Background (S.P.C.K.), 1936, p.134.

About a year after the betrothal, there was the marriage, when the bridegroom, accompanied by his friends went to get the bride from her father's house¹⁴⁹. He brought her back in procession to his own home for a weeklong marriage feast, where singers and musicians often led this procession. The bride was wearing a veil at this time. At some point, the veil was taken off and laid on the bridegroom's shoulder, and the declaration was made, "The government shall be upon his shoulders" (Isaiah 9:6). At *this* occasion, the ten virgins in Matthew's account are pictured as going to meet them, though whether as official bridesmaids, servants of the bridegroom, or children of friends and neighbors we have no way of knowing. It was this weeklong marriage celebration that was the setting for Jesus' first miracle when the wine ran out (John 2:1-11). In Luke's account, the servants are waiting for the bridegroom to arrive at his house with his bride to begin the week-long feast.

To be included in the wedding feast, one had to be present in the right place at the right time. If the ceremony wasn't perfectly punctual, one may have had to wait a while. For a weeklong celebration, there wasn't the hurry we have today where the bride and groom are anxious to leave. As the virgins waited in Matthew's account, they kept an oil-burning lamp. It was customary to leave an oil-burning lamp lit all night long in one's bedchamber but with the wick turned down to generate a dim light. While the virgins waited, they turned the wicks down. When they heard the procession coming, they all trimmed their lamps up bright. It was then that the five foolish virgins realized they didn't have enough oil to make it to the bridegroom's house -- and had to go buy more. With no oil or coming late, either way they became indistinguishable from party crashers, and were left out. In Luke's account, the Master expected his servants to have everything ready for him when he arrived. If that were not the case because of neglect on the part of the servants, the Master would be embarrassed in front of hundreds of people, and he might get very angry.

Context: The Second Coming

The subject of both parables is the Lord's Second Coming. The wise will always be ready; and when the Bridegroom comes it will be too late to prepare. Jesus emphatically stressed the certainty of the suddenness of the Second Coming, and the necessity for disciples to be ready for it. From the Lesson of the Fig Tree¹⁵⁰, the righteous may know the season, but they will not know the day and hour. The Parable of the Ten Virgins is complementary to the Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler (Matthew 24:45-51), which immediately precedes it. The Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler seems to focus on the leadership while the Parable of the Ten Virgins seems to have all disciples in view without any distinction in responsibilities. It gives a further picture of the predicament in which disciples will find themselves at the Second Coming if they have failed to prepare themselves for it.

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

What differentiates the foolish from the wise is precisely the failure of the foolish to face the possibility that the bridegroom, their returning Lord and King, may come earlier than they

¹⁴⁹ Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1987, p. 66.

¹⁵⁰ See the Study for Monday Evening of Holy Week.

expect. And that in any case the coming will be so sudden that there will be no opportunity for making good any deficiencies.

In the Parable of the Ten Virgins, those who had spare oil in their flasks necessary for this purpose could not render last minute assistance to those who had come without it. Saving grace is a personal possession and is not transferable. When the final day of salvation comes, none can deliver his brother. Each man is in this respect the arbiter of his own destiny. This truth is underlined in the reply of the wise, when they are asked to share their spare supplies with the foolish. ‘Never! There will certainly not be enough for you and us’. This uncompromising refusal is followed by the semi-ironical injunction *go rather to them that sell and buy for yourselves*. As it is now after midnight it is not surprising that the purchase could not be made in time.

In the Parable of the Household Manager, the Master expected his servant to have things ready at his return. They had ample time to do so. To waste this time in riotous behavior (Luke 12:45) and embarrass the Master in front of his guests is sure to bring immediate punishment. Twice the Lord stated that the punishment for this individual was to be cut in half (Matthew 24:51, Luke 12:46). John Chrysostom wrote¹⁵¹ that the servant was one who was overcome by the love of carnal pleasure. Basil the Great suggested¹⁵² that the “cutting in half” of the ungodly on Judgment Day refers to the eternal alienation of the soul from the Spirit.

“Thus in hell there is no one who confesses, no one in death who remembers God, because the help of the Spirit (1 Corinthians 12:3, Matthew 16:17) is no longer available”.

We Are Stewards of Our Own Gifts

The Parables of the Household Manager (Luke 12:35-48) and the Servant-Made-Ruler (Matthew 24:45-51) shows that those who have been placed by their Lord in positions of special responsibility, the leaders and teachers of the Church, must be continuously and faithfully occupied with their work. When He returns they will be found rendering service to their Lord by feeding the members of His household. On the other hand, should they ‘trade upon’ the apparent delay in their Lord's return, bully those committed to their charge, and make the satisfaction of their own appetites their primary concern, their ultimate fate will be no better than that of the hypocritical Pharisees.

The word *diksotomeo* is often translated “punish” or “cut in half” (Matthew 24:51, Luke 12:46). It derives its meaning from the dismemberment or cutting in two of someone condemned to death. The next time one is tempted to be lax on the lesson or slip-shod with the homily, he might want to remember this parable and also to reflect upon the words of James. “Let not many of you become teachers, my brethren, for you know that we who teach shall be judged with greater strictness” (James 3:1). This is not an occasional consideration but is to be a constant concern; therefore, the basic warning is repeated: “The master of that servant will come on a day when he does not expect him and at an hour he does not know” (Matthew 24:50).

John Chrysostom stated¹⁵³ that the servant-made-ruler was one who was overcome by the love of carnal pleasure. The giving food in due season applies to every aspect of stewardship,

¹⁵¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 3-5, LXXVIII, 1.

¹⁵² Basil, On the Holy Spirit, XL.

¹⁵³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVII, 3-5, LXXVIII, 1.

including money, speech, power, etc. Everything was given to us by the Lord and was intended for the benefit of our fellow man. There is no difference between those possessions that we call “our own” and the alms given by the Church to the poor. All were given by the Lord to allow us to give in due season and all require our stewardship.

“But these things are spoken not of money only, but also of speech, and of power, and of gifts, and of every stewardship, we might be entrusted with. He requires both wisdom and fidelity of the servant; for sin arises from foolishness also. He calls him faithful because he has pilfered nothing, neither misspent his Lord’s goods without aim or fruit. He calls him wise because he knew how to dispense the things given him according as was fit”.

“And let us that have money listen to these things. For not to teachers only does He discourse, but also to the rich. For both are entrusted with riches; those that teach with the more necessary wealth, the rich with what is inferior. Let us hear the honor of him that approves himself. ‘For verily I say unto you, He will set him over all His goods’ (Matthew 24:47). What can be equal to this honor? What manner of speech will be able to set forth the dignity, the blessedness, when the King of Heaven, He that possesses all things, is about to set a man over ‘all His goods?’”.

“For you too are steward of your own possessions as much as he who dispenses the alms of the church. He has no right to squander the things given by you for the maintenance of the poor. Even so neither may you squander your own. For though you have received all you possess as an inheritance from your earthly father, even thus all are God’s. You desire that what you have given to the Church should be carefully dispensed. Don’t you think that God will require His own of us with greater strictness? For this end, He left these things in your hand, in order ‘to give them their food in due season’ (Psalm 104:27). But what does He mean, ‘in due season?’ To the needy, to the hungry! For as you gave to your fellow servant to dispense, so does the Lord want you to spend these things on what is needful. Therefore though He was able to take them away from you, He left them, that you might have opportunity to show forth virtue and to make our love for one another more fervent. But this He speaks, hinting at the insolent and the covetous, and indicating that the charge will be heavy, when they beat them whom they were commanded to feed” (Matthew 24:49, Luke 12:45).

“But He seems to be here hinting also at those that live in luxury, since for luxury too there is laid up a great punishment. ‘For He eats and drinks with the drunken, pointing at gluttony’ (Matthew 24:49). It was not for this purpose that you received, that you should spend it on luxury, but that you should lay it out on alms. What! Are they not your own things, which you have? No! With the goods of the poor have you been entrusted, though you acquired them by honest labor, or through an inheritance from your father. Could not God have taken away these things from you? But He does not do this, to give you power to be liberal to the poor”.

“For do not suppose these things to be your own. He lent them to you, that you might be able to approve yourself. For if you had lent money to someone, that he might go and be able to do business, would you say the money you lent was his? To you also has God lent, that you might do business for Heaven. Do not make the exceeding greatness of His love to man a cause of ingratitude”.

When the five wise virgins said to the five foolish virgins, ‘Go to those that sell, and buy for yourselves’ (Matthew 25:9), Chrysostom interpreted¹⁵⁴ the ‘sellers’ as the poor.

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

Cyril of Alexandria probed¹⁵⁵ Peter’s question, “Does this apply to us?”, and its implications for the development of the Church. Christ’s teaching, that Peter asked about, applies especially to the “Teachers” of the Church, who were the Apostles at that time, and are now represented by the Bishops of the Church. These are the household managers who oversee the feeding of the people in the Church. As they prove themselves faithful in a few things, they will be rewarded appropriately. Heretic bishops on the other hand, like Arius, who serve themselves and hate their flock, will be punished severely.

“Simply to hear is common to all men, but the habit of penetrating deep into profitable thoughts is found only with those who are truly wise. Let us imitate the blessed Peter, who, when he had heard Christ say something for their benefit, prayed that it might be explained to him, because he had not yet clearly understood it. For he said, ‘Lord, do You speak this parable only to us, or to all people?’ What then was it, which troubled the wise disciple?”

“There are some commandments, which befit those who have attained to apostolic dignities, or possess a more than ordinary knowledge. And that this is true, we may see from what the blessed Paul wrote, ‘I have given you milk to drink, and not meat; for you were not yet strong enough, nor could you bear it’ (1 Corinthians 3:2). For solid food belongs to them that are full grown, who by reason of perfection have the senses of the heart exercised for the discerning of good and evil (Hebrews 5:14). For just as very heavy burdens can be carried by persons of a very powerful frame, to which men of weaker stature are unequal, so those of a vigorous mind may be expected to fulfill the weightier commands among those which become the saints. The blessed Peter, therefore, considering the force of what Christ had said, rightly asked, which of the two was meant: all believers, or only them”.

“And what is our Lord’s reply? He makes use of a clear and very evident example. He shows that the commandment especially belongs to those who occupy the rank of teachers. For ‘who then is that faithful and wise household manager, whom *his* master will make ruler over his household, to give *them their* portion of food in due season?’ (Luke 12:42) How useful this is for the benefit of those, who have been called to the apostleship, to the office, that is of teacher¹⁵⁶. The Savior has ordained as household managers, so to speak, over his servants -- that is, over those who have been won by faith to the acknowledgment of His glory -- men who are well instructed in the sacred doctrines. For it is not fitting to address everyone in instruction upon all points; for it is written, ‘With knowledge learn the souls of your flock’ (Proverbs 27:23). For very different is the way in which we establish a new disciple, using simple teaching, in which there is

¹⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXVIII, 2.

¹⁵⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 93, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

¹⁵⁶ Cyril uses the term “teacher” to refer to Apostles and Bishops.

nothing profound nor difficult to understand. By contrast is the way in which we instruct those who are more confirmed in mind, and able to understand what is the height and depth of the definitions of the supreme Godhead. Solid meat belongs to them that are full-grown” (Hebrews 5:14).

“Very blessed are those who, wisely in due season, and according to their need, divide to his fellow servants their portion, that is, their food. For he shall be counted worthy of greater things, and shall receive a suitable recompense for his fidelity. For He will set him over all that he has. And this, the Savior has elsewhere taught us, ‘O good and faithful servant, you have been faithful over few things, I will set you over many things; enter into the joy of your Lord’” (Matthew 25:21).

“But if he neglect the duty of being diligent and faithful, despises watchfulness in these things as superfluous, lets his mind grow intoxicated with worldly cares, drags by force and oppresses those who are subject to him, and does not give them their portion, he shall be in utter wretchedness. And his portion too, shall be with the unbelievers. For whosoever has done wrong to the glory of Christ, or ventured to think slightly of the flock entrusted to his charge, differs in no respect from those who don’t know Him. All such persons will justly be counted among those who have no love for Him. For Christ once said to the blessed Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me? Feed My sheep; feed My lambs (John 21:15-16). If, therefore, he who feeds His flock loves it, then of course he that neglects it, and leaves the flock that has been entrusted to him without oversight, hates it. And if he hates it, he will be punished, and be liable to the condemnation pronounced upon the unbelievers, as being convicted by the facts of being negligent. Such was he who received the talent to trade with in things spiritual, and did not do so. He brought that which had been given him without increase, saying, ‘Lord, I knew that you are a hard man, that you reap where you have not sown, and gather where you have not scattered; and I was afraid, and hid the talent. Lo! You have what is yours (Matthew 25:24-25). But those who had received the two talents or the five talents, and labored and loved service, were honored with glorious dignities (Matthew 25:21, 23). To be negligent in discharging the duties of your ministry is dangerous, or rather, brings upon you perdition; but to perform with unwearying zeal earns for us life and glory. And this means to speak to our fellow servants correctly and without error the things, which relate to God, and whatsoever is able to benefit them in attaining both to the knowledge and the ability to walk uprightly. And the blessed Peter also writes to certain persons, ‘Feed the flock of God which is among you, that when the Chief Shepherd shall appear, you may receive your reward’ (I Peter 5:2-4). And knowing that slothfulness is the door of perdition, Paul said, ‘Woe is me, if I do not preach the Gospel’” (1 Corinthians 9:16).

“Very severe, therefore, is the condemnation of those who teach. And this Paul shows us, saying, ‘Let there not be many teachers among you my brethren, knowing that we shall receive the greater condemnation’ (James 3:1). For abundant is the bestowal of spiritual gifts upon those who are the chiefs of the people; for so the wise Paul wrote to the blessed Timothy, ‘The Lord shall give you wisdom in everything (2 Timothy 2:7). And, ‘Despise not the gift that is in you, which was given you by the laying on of my hands’ (2 Timothy 1:6). From such as these then, the Savior of all, in that He has given them much, requires

much in return. And what are the virtues He requires? Constancy in the faith, correctness in teaching, well grounded in hope, unwavering in patience, invincible in spiritual strength, cheerful and brave in every more excellent achievement! Thus we may be examples to others of the evangelic life”.

Watchfulness¹⁵⁷

The Parable of the Household Manager (Luke 12:35-48), the Parable of the Servant-Made-Ruler (Matthew 24:45-51) and the Parable of the Ten Virgins (Matthew 25:1-13) all have themes of watchfulness also. The Apostle Peter seems to have learned this lesson well, and he also encourages a state of readiness in his epistles¹⁵⁸:

“The Day of the Lord will come as a thief in the night, in which the heavens will pass away with a great noise, and the elements will melt with fervent heat; both the earth and the works that are in it will be burned up. Therefore, since all these things will be dissolved, what manner of persons ought you to be in holy conduct and godliness, looking for and hastening the coming of the Day of God? Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless (2 Peter 3:10, 11, 14).

Watchfulness was compared to having our waist girded and our lamp burning (Luke 12:35). In the 1st Century, people wore long flowing robes. If one were to take time off and relax, a worker would unfasten the belt around his waist. But going back to work, he would put the belt back on so that his clothes didn’t hinder his work. Similarly, an oil lamp would be left burning all night while everyone slept, but the wick would be trimmed down to give a dim light, and also burn less oil. But when one was awake, the lamp would be trimmed bright. This was the problem faced by the five foolish virgins when the bridegroom came: they didn’t have enough oil to allow the lamp to burn brightly (Matthew 25:1-13).

Cyril of Alexandria interpreted¹⁵⁹ the girding of the loins as “the readiness of the mind to labor industriously in everything praiseworthy. For such as apply themselves to bodily labors, and are engaged in strenuous toil, have their loins girt”.

“The lamp represents the wakefulness of the mind and intellectual cheerfulness. And we say that the human mind is awake when it repels any tendency to slumber off into that carelessness which often is the means of bringing it into subjection to every kind of wickedness. Being sunk in stupor, the heavenly light within it is liable to be endangered from a violent and impetuous blast of wind”.

At the Exodus from Egypt, the nation of Israel was commanded that as they ate the Passover meal, they were to eat “with their loins girded, their sandals on their feet and their staff in their hand” (Exodus 12:11). Normally one ate with his belt off, his sandals by the door and his staff outside. The Passover, however, was a state of watchfulness because the gods of Egypt were to be judged that night (Exodus 12:12).

¹⁵⁷ In the Orthodox Lectionary, watchfulness is also a major theme for the Feast Days of those individuals known as “unmercenary healers”. For more detailed study on this topic, see “The Unmercenary Healers” in the section Special Feast Days of Mark Kern, *The Whole Counsel of God*, St. Athanasius Press, 2004.

¹⁵⁸ See also 1 Peter 1:13-16, 1 Peter 5:8.

¹⁵⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Homily 92, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

The Parable of the Household Manager (Luke 12:35-48) refers to the Lord coming at the second or third watch (9 PM to 3 AM). Why would the Lord omit the mention of the first watch in this parable? This requires a little insight. Cyril comments¹⁶⁰ on that as follows:

“Observe, I pray, the breadth of the divine gentleness, and the bountifulness of His mildness towards us. For He knows our frame and the readiness with which man’s mind wanders into sin. He knows that the power of fleshly lust tyrannizes over us, and that the distractions of this, against our will, drag us on by force, leading the mind into all that is not good. But in that He is good, He does not leave us to despair, but on the contrary, pities us, and has given us repentance as the medicine of salvation. For this reason, He says, that whether He come in the second watch, or whether He come in the third watch, and find them so doing, blessed are they. Now the meaning of this, you will certainly wish to understand clearly. Men divide the night into three or four watches. For the sentinels on city walls, who watch the motions of the enemy, after being on guard three or four hours, deliver over the watch and guard to others. So with us there are three ages: the first, that in which we are still children; the second, in which we are young men; and the third, that in which we come to old age. Now the first of these, in which we are still children, is not called to account by God, but is deemed worthy of pardon, because of the foolishness of the mind, and the weakness of the understanding. But the second and the third, the periods of manhood and old age, owe to God obedience and piety of life, according to His good pleasure. Whoever, therefore, is found watching, and well girt, whether he is a young man, or one who has arrived at old age, blessed shall he be. For he shall be counted worthy of attaining to Christ’s promises.

Peter’s Curiosity About the Future: Mark 13:3-13, Matthew 24:3-14, Luke 21:7-19

On Tuesday of Holy Week, as Jesus left the Temple heading for the Mount of Olives, Peter, James, John and Andrew asked Him some questions.

“Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, ‘Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings *are here!*’ And Jesus answered and said to him, ‘Do you see these great buildings? Not *one* stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down’”.

“Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, ‘Tell us, when will these things be? And what *will be* the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?’” (Mark 13:1-4)

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

The Twelve were looking for Jesus to bring in the Kingdom of God in glory, and they still asked Him about this just prior to the Ascension (Acts 1:6). Their question about the sign of His Coming indicates confusion on their part between the destruction of Jerusalem and the Second Coming of Christ. When Jesus referred to the destruction of Jerusalem (in 70 AD and

¹⁶⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 92, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

again in 135 AD), where one stone was not left upon another¹⁶¹, His disciples thought He was referring to establishing the Kingdom of God in glory. They had no concept at that time that the end of the age would come in a few years with the destruction of Jerusalem or that His Second Coming to bring in the Kingdom of God in glory wouldn't occur for thousands of years. Thus there was a major gap in understanding here that needed to be overcome. Once they understood this, they ordered their missionary journeys accordingly, and the Jewish Christians left Jerusalem before the destruction occurred in c. 70 AD.

Cyril of Alexandria stated¹⁶² that when His disciples asked, "When will these things be?" (Luke 21:7, Matthew 24:3, Mark 13:4), Jesus answered their immediate questions first (Luke 21:8-11, Matthew 24:4-8, Mark 13:4-8), and then went back to speak of the destruction of Jerusalem (Luke 21:12-33, Matthew 24:9-35, Mark 13:9-23). As He spoke, He compared and contrasted the immediate events with the more distant events of the Second Advent (Luke 21:25-28, Matthew 24:27-31, Mark 13:24-27). In answering their immediate questions, Jesus stated some general warnings that may apply both to the destruction of Jerusalem and to His Second Advent.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁶³ that Jesus first directed His disciples' attention to some things that they needed to understand before they would be ready to understand either the destruction of Jerusalem or the Second Advent. In doing so, He spoke of things that they would need to be mindful of prior to the destruction of Jerusalem.

"Jesus answered nothing directly to their question, but first spoke of those other things that are urgent, and which it was needful for them to learn first. For neither concerning Jerusalem immediately, nor of His own Second Advent, did He speak, but touching the ills that were to meet them at the doors. Wherefore also He makes them earnest in their exertions, by saying, 'Take heed that no man deceive you; for many¹⁶⁴ shall come in My Name, saying, I am Christ'".

"Afterwards, He roused them to listen to these things; and made them energetic, and prepared them to be watchful. Having spoken first of the false Christs, then He spoke of the ills of Jerusalem, assuring them ever by the things already past, foolish and contentious though they were, of those which were yet to come".

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

The first three signs are described as "the beginning of birth pangs" (Matthew 23:8). These should not be taken as signals of an imminent end; the disciples should guard against

¹⁶¹ Emperor Hadrian, in c. 135 AD, had the city Jerusalem and the Temple dug up from the foundations, which didn't leave one stone upon another.

¹⁶² Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 139, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

¹⁶³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 1.

¹⁶⁴ One individual who was very prominent in claiming to be "The Christ" was Simon Magus (Acts 8:9-24). For details of his life, the spread of his heresies, and his followers (which included four of the Seventy), see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St. Athanasius Press, 2002.

being misled at this point (Matthew 23:4). The end is not yet (Matthew 23:6). However, these are the beginnings of the great new thing, which God will bring forth.

False Prophets and False Messiahs: Matthew 23:5

The Jews having rejected Christ were particularly prone to look for false deliverers. This became especially intense as problems with Rome increased. Christians should avoid their folly. Eusebius, Justin, Origen, Josephus, and others, tell of the deception and delusion among the Jews. Josephus stated, “Now as for the affairs¹⁶⁵ of the Jews, they grew worse and worse continually, for the country was filled with robbers and *impostors*, who deluded the multitude. Yet Felix did catch and put to death many of those impostors every day, together with the robbers”.

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

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

Jesus spoke at a time of relative peace in the Roman Empire; the next few decades were to bring trouble with several Roman emperors toppling from the throne and special trouble for the Jews. When Jesus said this, He and the disciples were sitting on the Mount of Olives looking over Jerusalem (Matthew 23:3). John Chrysostom stated¹⁶⁶ that the immediate reference here is not to the wars of the world over the centuries, but to wars in Jerusalem. Even the more distant skirmishes against the Jews tended to come home to Judea and Jerusalem.

Josephus stated¹⁶⁷ that there were uprisings against them in Alexandria, where 50,000 were slain. In Caesarea¹⁶⁸ a battle between Syrians and Jews brought death to about 20,000 Jews. The fight between Jews and Syrians divided many villages and towns into armed camps. Constant rumors of wars kept the Jewish people in an unsettled state. Josephus mentions¹⁶⁹ how Caligula, the Roman Emperor, made orders that his statue be placed in the Temple of Jerusalem. Because the Jews refused to allow this, they lived in constant fear that the Emperor might send an army into Palestine. Some Jews lived in such fear that they dared not even plow and seed the ground.

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

Some of these predicted events can be found in the New Testament; there are more detailed accounts in outside sources. Agabus prophesied of a great famine that took a heavy toll in Judea.

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

¹⁶⁵ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, II, iv, 1-3, II, xii, 1-6, II, xiii, 1-7.

¹⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Matthew*, LXXV, 1.

¹⁶⁷ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, II, xviii, 7-8.

¹⁶⁸ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, III, ii, 1-3.

¹⁶⁹ Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, II, x, 1.

On February 5, 63 AD, the famous earthquake that damaged the city of Pompeii took place. At this same time other quakes were recorded in Samos, Chios, Miletus, Laodocia, Heirapolos, Campania, Colosse, Rome and Judea. In speaking of all these preliminary events which might disturb the disciples, Chrysostom points out¹⁷⁰ that these so called "natural" disasters are to be understood quite differently.

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

Jesus warned His disciples that these events were merely general tendencies characterizing the final generation, and not signs of the destruction. Without the warning they might have been confused. For more discussion of the prophecies of the destruction of Jerusalem and how this relates to the Second Coming of Christ, see the Study for Holy Monday Evening¹⁷¹.

Peter Helps Prepare the Passover Meal: Matthew 26:2-20, Mark 14:12-16, Luke 22:7-13

On Thursday of Holy Week; that is, on the 13th of Nisan¹⁷², Jesus’ disciples came to Him to ask Him where He would like to eat the Passover. 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 Nisan¹⁷³. This is also the same place where the 120 were gathered at Pentecost (Acts 1:13). It was necessary for the Lord to find a place to eat the

¹⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXV, 1.

¹⁷¹ Mark Kern, The Whole Counsel of God, St. Athanasius Press, Goleta CA 2004, p. 1015.

¹⁷² See for example:

John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

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

¹⁷³ This was the evening following Christ’s Resurrection. Christ rose from the dead on Sunday, the 16th of Nisan, the 1st day of the week (John 20:1). Since the day began at sundown (and not midnight, as we are accustomed to), this evening in the upper room was the beginning of the 17th of Nisan.

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 disciples¹⁷⁴ 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.

John Chrysostom asked¹⁷⁵ why Jesus would send Peter and John to some unknown person. 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 to.

“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; He could have done the same with them that crucified Him, if it had been His will to avoid suffering? And what He did about the donkey on Palm Sunday (Luke 19:30-34), this He did here also. For 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). The Master says, 'I will keep the Passover at your house'. But I marvel not at this only, that he received Him, but that expecting to bring upon himself such hostility, he despised the enmity of the multitude”.

Chrysostom continued¹⁷⁶ that all this was necessary because His disciples really didn't yet know Who Jesus was:

“Because they knew Him not, He gave them a sign, like the prophet touching Saul (1 Samuel 10:1-12). 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, 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. And at the same time to show to themselves, and to him that was receiving Him, and to all the Jews, that voluntarily does He come to His passion. And 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”.

¹⁷⁴ Which two disciples these were are not mentioned by any of the Gospel writers.

¹⁷⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

¹⁷⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXI, 1.

Cyril of Alexandria commented¹⁷⁷ on Jesus' words, "With *fervent* desire I have desired to eat this Passover with you before I suffer; for I say to you, I will no longer eat of it until it is fulfilled in the kingdom of God" (Luke 22:15-16). The time of fulfillment is now during the age of the Church.

"Christ uttered a profound and mysterious truth, and He Himself revealed to us the meaning. It is His custom to give the name of 'the Kingdom of Heaven' to justification by faith, to the cleansing that is by Holy Baptism, and the participation of the Holy Spirit, and to the offering of spiritual service, now rendered possible by the entering in of the gospel laws. These things are the means of our being made partakers of the promises, and of our reigning together with Christ. Therefore, He said, 'I will no more draw near unto such a Pascha as this', one namely that consisted in the typical eating – for a lamb of the flock was slain to be the type of the true Lamb – until it is fulfilled in the Kingdom of God. That is, until the time has appeared in which the Kingdom of Heaven is preached. For this is fulfilled in us, who honor the worship that is superior to the Law, even the true Pascha".

Jesus Washed Peter's Feet: John 13:3-17

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).

The Mystery of the Foot Washing

Just as Jesus said that Peter and the rest of the Apostles didn't understand what He was doing, so the illustration of the foot washing serves as an illustration of the mystery of the inner working of the Church in humility. Ambrose of Milan commented¹⁷⁸ on this mystery. Just as the Lord emptied Himself to become man, so He put off His clothes to do the work of a slave that He may clothe us with His mercy. In His humility, He wrapped Himself with a towel for our sakes, that by imitating His humility, He may wrap us with His gift of immortality. The water that Christ uses to wash His disciples' feet, then, is the water of the message of the dew from heaven. By imitating Him, we wash away our own pollution.

¹⁷⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Homily 141, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

¹⁷⁸ Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit*, I, Introduction, 13-16.

“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 know not 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”.

In speaking of His humbling of Himself to wash His disciples’ feet, Cyril of Jerusalem said¹⁷⁹ that Jesus took on Himself the “linen of humanity”, where this was analogous to Jesus taking on human flesh.

Irenaeus linked¹⁸⁰ 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 did by Himself ‘wash away the filth of the daughters of Zion’ (Isaiah 4:4), when He washed the disciples’ feet with His own hands. For this is the result: the human race inherits God. In the beginning, by means of our first parents, we were all brought into bondage, by being made subject to death. So at last, 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. For He who washed the feet of the disciples sanctified the entire body, and rendered it clean”.

Peter’s Initial Refusal to be Washed

Peter at first refused to allow Jesus to wash His feet, feeling that the Master should be served, 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, 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” (John 13:10).

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. Judas didn’t measure up to this in his love for the brethren, and therefore was unclean.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁸¹ that Jesus washed Judas’ feet first and Peter’s feet among the last. Peter, in turn, was vehement in his refusal to let Jesus wash his feet and equally vehement

¹⁷⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XII, 1.

¹⁸⁰ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, IV, xxii, 1.

in his acquiescence. Both came out of Peter's love and respect for the Master, which was lacking in Judas. Jesus said that Peter and the others might not understand what He had just done for them, but they would understand later. This understanding came following the Ascension and Pentecost, where they saw the Master seated at the Right Hand of the Father, and they had the Holy Spirit to teach them all things (John 14:26).

But how are the Twelve called "clean" (except for Judas), when sin still had the mastery, the handwriting of the curse still remained (Colossians 2:14), and the victim had not yet been offered? They are not clean as being delivered from their sins yet, but they are "clean through the word that I have spoken unto you" (John 15:3). Chrysostom stated¹⁸² it like this:

"In this way you are so far clean; you have received the light, you have been freed from Jewish error. For the Prophet also said, 'Wash, make yourself clean, put away the wickedness from your souls' (Isaiah 1:16, LXX); so that such a one is washed and is clean. Since then these men had cast away all wickedness from their souls, and had accompanied Him with a pure mind, therefore He said according to the word of Isaiah, 'he that is washed is clean already'".

Jesus concluded the mystery of the foot-washing by acknowledging that He is God, and then saying, "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" (John 13:15-16). That is, if the Master can do this, so can we. But what does He mean when He said "as I have done to you"? John Chrysostom stated¹⁸³ that Christ was referring to using the same zeal as He did.

"Thus schoolmasters write the letters for children very beautifully, that they may come to imitate them though in an inferior manner. Where now are they who spit on their fellow-servants? Where now are they who demand honors? Christ washed the feet of the traitor, the sacrilegious, the thief, and that close to the time of the betrayal; and incurable as he was, He made him a partaker of His table. For by nature He was Lord and we servants, yet even this He refused not at this time to do".

Chrysostom linked¹⁸⁴ a knowledge of God and a 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 and 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).

Commenting on Jesus' statement that the disciples were completely clean, Gregory the Great used¹⁸⁵ 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.

¹⁸¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXX, 2.

¹⁸² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXX, 2.

¹⁸³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXI, 1.

¹⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXII, 3-4, LXXXIII, 1.

¹⁸⁵ Gregory the Great, Epistles, XI, 45.

“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. And so 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, since, 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 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 avails more in our absolution than the shadow of the truth. 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? For 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”.

Chrysostom spoke¹⁸⁶ 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.

Peter Asked John to Ask Jesus Who Would Betray Him: John 13:24-27

One of Peter’s characteristics was a boldness and an inquisitiveness to ask Jesus about the things of God. We have seen this so far time and again, where it is Peter, and often only Peter who inquires about why something is so. But here, Peter asks John to ask Jesus a question, which speaks a lot of Peter and John’s relationship, and also about the relationship of John to Jesus. Immediately after washing His disciples’ feet,

“Jesus said, ‘Most assuredly, I say to you, one of you will betray Me’. Then the disciples looked at one another, perplexed about whom He spoke. Now there was leaning on Jesus’ bosom one of His disciples, whom Jesus loved. Simon Peter therefore motioned to him to ask who it was of whom He spoke. Then, leaning back on Jesus’ breast, he said to Him, ‘Lord, who is it?’ Jesus answered, ‘It is he to whom I shall give a piece of bread when I have dipped it’. And having dipped the bread, He gave it to Judas Iscariot, the son of Simon. Now after the piece of bread, Satan entered him. Then Jesus said to him, ‘What you do, do quickly’. But no one at the table knew for what reason He said this to him. For some thought, because Judas had the money box, that Jesus had said to him, ‘Buy those things we need for the feast’, or that he should give something to the poor. Having received the piece of bread, he then went out immediately. And it was night” (John 13:21-30).

¹⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XIV, Vv. 9-10.

The setting was the Last Supper, and the Twelve were reclining at table. Formal meals were usually taken in a reclining position¹⁸⁷, not in a sitting position, on a couch-like seat. Those eating leaned their left arm on a cushion and had their head toward the table, with their feet angled away from the table. In this way, the woman who washed Jesus feet with her tears and wiped them with her hair did not need to get near the table (Luke 7:36-50). Those thus reclining on their side were close enough that if John were next to Jesus and if he were to roll over onto his back, he would be close enough to Jesus to lay his head onto Jesus' chest.

In the center of the table was a pot of stew, or several of them, that everyone dipped bread into. This Jesus did as he dipped the bread and gave it to Judas, which was something that the host customarily did for a favored guest.

John Chrysostom stated¹⁸⁸ that the Twelve were "troubled" when Jesus stated that "one of you will betray Me", wondering if Jesus was referring to something that they would do shortly. Peter, their leader, who had just been rebuked over the foot-washing, was afraid of further rebuke, and beckoned to John to ask Jesus who the traitor was.

In his Gospel, John referred to himself very humbly as "the disciple whom Jesus loved". John was the youngest of the Twelve, and was Jesus' second cousin. He was close enough to Jesus to serve as Jesus' next of kin, since Jesus committed the care of His mother to John at the Cross (John 19:25-27). Such a role was reserved for the next oldest son. But since Jesus had no natural brothers, just stepbrothers (Matthew 13:55), John served as Jesus' brother. James (Galatians 1:19) and Joseph, called Barsabas and Justus (Acts 1:23-26, 15:22-33), were others of the Lord's stepbrothers mentioned in the Scriptures. John seems to have been very much at ease with Jesus, both here, in the courtyard of the high priest (John 18:15-16) and at the foot of the Cross (John 19:26).

We might note the difference in reaction to Jesus' words "one of you will betray Me", between the Eleven on the one hand and Judas on the other. This was the first time that Jesus convicted Judas, even though He didn't do it by name. Judas shared the bread from the Master's hand, and the rebuke was calculated to put him to shame, but to no effect. At this final rebuke, Satan entered into Judas. John Chrysostom said¹⁸⁹ of this

"As long as he belonged to the band of disciples Satan dared not spring upon him, but attacked him from outside; but when Christ exposed him and separated him, then he sprang upon him without fear. It was not fitting to keep within the band of the Apostles such a character, who so long had remained incorrigible. Therefore He cast him out, and then Satan seized him when cut off".

"How could it be that he was neither softened nor shamed; but rendered yet more shameless, when he 'went out'? The 'do quickly', is not the expression of one commanding, nor advising, but of one reproaching, and showing him that He desired to correct him; but since he was incorrigible, He let him go".

Peter's Denial Foretold: Matthew 26:31-35, Mark 14:27-31, Luke 22:31-38, John 13:36-38

¹⁸⁷ For further details, see Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 246-249.

¹⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXII, 1.

¹⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXII, 2-3.

A few weeks prior to this event, James and John had asked Jesus if they could sit at His Right and Left Hand in His Kingdom, which they expected to materialize soon. This set off some jockeying for position and resentment about who would be the greatest when this happened. See page 48 of this study for details. Cyril of Alexandria stated¹⁹⁰ that Jesus announced Peter's denial in advance specifically to address their lack of humility, and to encourage them to be more humble.

“Jesus delivered them from the guilt of ambition by putting away from them the striving after objects such as this, and persuading them to escape from the lust of preeminence as from a pitfall of the devil. For He said, ‘He who is great among you, let him be as the youngest, and he who governs as he that serves’ (Mark 9:33-37). And He taught them further that the season of honor is not so much this present time as that which is to be at the coming of His Kingdom”.

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, for no material gain or benefit. 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 67 AD.

John Chrysostom commented¹⁹¹ 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 indeed to teach him even by the first words, but when he continued in his vehemence, He did not indeed throw or force him into the denial, but left him alone, that he might learn his own weakness”.

“Christ taught him humility, and proved that human nature by itself is nothing. But, since great love made him open to be corrected, 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. And 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, he uttered the words of denial three times, that he might learn that he did not so love as he was loved. And yet, to one who had so fallen, He said again, ‘Do you love Me more than these?’ (John 21:15) So that the denial was caused not by the cooling of his love,

¹⁹⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Homily 144, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

¹⁹¹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXIII, 1.

but from his having been stripped of aid from above. He accepts then Peter's love, but cuts off the spirit of contradiction engendered by it. For if you love, you ought to obey Him whom you love. Do you know what a thing it is to contradict God? But since you will not learn in this way that everything that I say shall come to pass, you shall learn it in the denial".

Cyril of Alexandria stated¹⁹² that Peter erred from what was right. When Jesus foretold what would happen to Peter, he should have asked for strength, or that he be rescued immediately from harm, rather than boast of his steadfastness.

"Peter, in the ardor of his zeal, made profession of steadfastness and endurance to the last extremity, saying that he would manfully resist the terrors of death, and count nothing of bonds; but in doing so, he erred from what was right. When Jesus told him that he would prove weak, he ought not to have contradicted Him, loudly protesting the contrary. For the truth could not lie. Rather he ought to have asked strength of Him, that either he might not suffer this, or be rescued immediately from harm. Being fervent in spirit, and warm in his love toward Christ, and of unrestrainable zeal in rightly performing those duties which become a disciple in his attendance upon his Master, he declared that he will endure to the last extremity. But he was rebuked for foolishly speaking against what was foreknown, and for his unreasonable haste in contradicting Jesus' words".

Chrysostom stated¹⁹³ that Jesus said these things to Peter and the Twelve in order to comfort them in their despondency at His saying that He was about to be crucified.

"Why then, when He was asked by Peter, 'Where are You going,' (John 13:36) did He not say directly, 'I go to the Father, but you cannot come now'? Why did He put in a circuit of so many words, placing together questions and answers? With good reason He told not this to the Jews; but why not to these? He had indeed said both to these and to the Jews, that He came forth from God, and was going to God; now He said the same thing more clearly than before. Besides, to the Jews He did not speak so clearly; for had He said, 'You cannot come to the Father but by Me', they would have considered it boasting. But by concealing this, He threw them into perplexity. But why did He speak thus both to the disciples and to Peter? He knew his great forwardness, and that he would press on the more and trouble Him; in order therefore to lead him away, He hides the matter.

By Peter's rebuke He cast out much of their despondency; and dreading lest they should be addressed in the same way, they were the more restrained. 'I am the Way' is the proof of the, 'No man comes to the Father but by Me'; and, 'the Truth, and the Life' (John 14:6), and that these things shall surely be. Now His being 'the Way', they both understood and allowed, but the rest they knew not. They did not venture to say what they knew not. Still they gained great consolation from His being 'the Way'".

Peter Falls Asleep in Gethsemane: Matthew 26:36-45; Mark 14:32-42; Luke 22:39-46

¹⁹² Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke*, Homily 144, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

¹⁹³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXIII, 2.

While the eleven Apostles were falling asleep, Jesus was in agony praying. As Jesus prayed in the Garden of Gethsemane, Luke records a detail of the event that is omitted by the other Gospel writers.

“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 noted¹⁹⁴ 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 appearance¹⁹⁵ only.

¹⁹⁴ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, p. 293.

See also John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

¹⁹⁵ 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, Unpublished Work, 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 were real. This false and blasphemous heresy is contrary to the very doctrine of the Incarnation and the salvation of man. It has been condemned by the Church whenever it has arisen: in the Gnostics of the apostolic era, in the Manichees a few centuries later, in the Bogomils of the later Byzantine era, and in the Theosophists and spiritualists of the nineteenth century.

Since Christ was truly both God and man, He had two wills. The struggle in the Garden was Christ's human will submitting itself to His Divine will, where both His human and His Divine will agreed that He would pursue His mission for the salvation of man. Theophylact stated¹⁹⁶ 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. For 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”.

Cyril of Alexandria pointed out¹⁹⁷ the depth of the riches both of the wisdom and the knowledge of God. Noting that Jesus was grieved in the Garden, Cyril asked why He seemed to be afraid of death. Cyril concluded that it was not death that Christ feared; it was the consequences of Israel's rebellion against God that He was grieved at, because He foresaw the utter destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. Through pity for Israel He would have put off the necessity to suffer; but as it was not possible for Him to avoid the passion, He submitted to it also, because God the Father so willed it with Him. Cyril's words are:

“For what reason, O Lord, were You also terrified at death? Did You draw back from suffering after being seized with fear? And yet did not 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)? You are by nature Life, and the cause of life. How, therefore, are You grieved, and sorrowful, even unto death? For plainly You knew, in that You are God by nature, and know whatever is about to happen. You knew that you would spoil hell; that You would deliver those that are therein from bonds that had endured for many ages; that You would turn unto 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).

“For what reason, therefore, are You grieved? Yes, He says, rightly am I found thus in anguish. 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, and the cord of My inheritance, will be the portion of foxes (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

¹⁹⁶ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, pp. 293-295.

¹⁹⁷ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 146, Studion Publishers, Inc. 1983.

vineyard with its rich grapes henceforth will be a desert land, a place dried up, and without water. For I will command the clouds that they rain no rain upon 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). And 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 as, 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).

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 noted¹⁹⁸ 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.

The Disciples Can’t Stay Awake: Matthew 26:40-46

When Jesus and His disciples went to the Garden of Gethsemane, it was already late. We can see this from the sequence of events that occurred. 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.

John Chrysostom noted¹⁹⁹ 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. And 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). 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

¹⁹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homily on the Passage Matthew 26:29, and Against Marcionists and Manichaeans, 2-4.

¹⁹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

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).

John Chrysostom noted²⁰⁰ that Jesus seemed to criticize Peter the most, even though the others of the Eleven slept also. His intent was to remind Peter of the words that he had spoken in boastfulness.

“Not without reason does He criticize Peter most, although the others also had slept; this was to make him feel the effects of his own words. Then because the others also said the same thing, for when Peter had said, ‘Though I must die with You, I will not deny You; likewise also said all the disciples’ (Matthew 26:35). He addresses Himself to all, convicting their weakness. For they who are desiring to die with Him, were not then able so much as to sorrow with Him wakefully, but sleep overcame them”.

“When Jesus came and said to Peter, ‘What, could you not watch one hour with Me?’ (Matthew 26:40) All were sleeping, and He rebuked Peter, hinting at him, in what He spoke. And the words, ‘with Me’, are not employed without reason; it is as though He had said, ‘You could not watch with Me one hour, and will you lay down your life for Me?’ And what follows also, intimates this same thing. ‘Watch and pray not to enter into temptation’ (Matthew 26:41). See how He is again instructing them not to be arrogant, but contrite in mind, and to be humble, and to refer all to God”.

“And at one time He addressed Himself to Peter, at another to all in common. To Peter He had said, ‘Simon, Simon, Satan had desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat; but I have prayed for you’ (Luke 22:31). To all in common, He said, ‘Pray that you enter not into temptation’ (Matthew 26:41), plucking up their self-will, and making them earnest-minded. Then, that He might not seem to make His language altogether condemnatory, He said, ‘The spirit indeed is ready, but the flesh is weak’ (Matthew 26:41). For even though you do desire to despise death, yet you will not be able, until God stretches forth His hand, for the fleshly mind draws one down”.

Peter Tries to Defend Jesus: John 18:10-11

When the detachment of troops arrived with Judas, the Eleven were still asleep. Jesus met them first, where the first encounter was as follows:

“Then Judas, having received a detachment of troops²⁰¹, 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 said²⁰² to them, ‘I AM’. And Judas, who betrayed Him, also stood with them. Now when He said to them, ‘I AM’, they drew back and fell to the ground. Then He asked them again, ‘Whom are you seeking?’ And they said, ‘Jesus of

²⁰⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

²⁰¹ 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.

²⁰² This expression is usually translated, “I am *He*”, but the word “*He*” is not present in the Greek, but was inserted by the translators in order to make better sense of the English. By saying “I AM”, Jesus was calling Himself by the same Name that He gave to Moses at the Burning Bush when Moses asked the then Pre-Incarnate Christ what to call Him. He said then, “I AM has sent Me to you” (Exodus 3:14).

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 lost²⁰³ none' (John 18:3-9).

After this, Judas came forward to identify Jesus with an embrace. "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).

John Chrysostom stated²⁰⁴ 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? For that 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? For he too stood with them, and he knew Him no more than they did, but he fell backward with them. And 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".

Then Peter, waking up and having a sword, drew it and struck the high priest's servant, and cut off his right ear, where 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'. And He touched his ear and healed him" (Luke 22:51). Matthew finishes up by saying, "But Jesus said to him, 'Put your sword in its place, for all who take the sword will perish by the sword. Or do you think that I cannot now pray to My Father, and He will provide Me with more than twelve legions of angels? How then could the Scriptures be fulfilled, that it must happen thus?' In that hour Jesus said to the multitudes, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I sat daily with you, teaching in the temple, and you did not seize Me'. But all this was done that the Scriptures of the prophets might be fulfilled. Then all the disciples forsook Him and fled" (Matthew 26:52-56). Luke adds, "But this is your hour, and the power of darkness" (Luke 22:53).

Mark adds²⁰⁵ 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).

²⁰³ See also John 17:12, 1 John 2:19.

²⁰⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

²⁰⁵ 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 the web site www.oqa.org for April 25th.

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).

One might ask why there were swords around at all. At the time that Jesus said this, they were eating the Passover meal, where the main course was roasted lamb. John Chrysostom stated²⁰⁶ that the swords may have been there as carving knives for the lamb. For the disciples to take these “swords” to the Garden to defend Jesus was akin to taking carving knives to go against the state-of-the-art weapons that the soldiers carried.

“But why were the swords there? They had just come from the Supper, and from the table. It was likely that there should be swords because of the lamb, and that the disciples, hearing that certain were coming against Him, took them for defense, as meaning to fight in behalf of their Master, which was their only thought”.

John Chrysostom commented²⁰⁷ 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 about 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 bidden not to have a scrip, 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. And besides, they were not as yet perfect or complete. But if you desire to see Peter endued with heavenly wisdom, you shall after this behold him wounded (Acts 5:40), and bearing it meekly, suffering ten thousand dreadful things, and not moved to anger. But Jesus here also works a miracle, both showing that we ought to do good to those who do evil to us (Matthew 5:44-45), and revealing His own power. He therefore restored the servant’s ear, and said to Peter, ‘All they that take the sword shall perish by the sword’ (Matthew 26:52). The Evangelist John adds the name of the servant (Malchus), because the thing done was very great, not only because He healed him, but because He healed one who had come against Him, and who shortly after would strike Him with the fist (John 19:3). He also halted the war which was likely to have been kindled from this circumstance against the disciples. For this cause the Evangelist John included the name, Malchus, so that the men of that time might search and inquire diligently whether these things had

²⁰⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIV, 1.

²⁰⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

really come to pass. And 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 stated²⁰⁸ 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 scrip and shoes, did you lack anything?’ And they said, ‘No’. For the Savior sent the holy apostles 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. And on their journey He directed them not to occupy themselves with things that concern the body. But rather without baggage and unencumbered, and resting all their hope of sustenance on Him, they were to traverse the land. And this they also 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 scrip 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 scrip and purse? What was the cause of so sudden a change? What need had the holy apostles of purse and scrip?”

“The Lord’s words in appearance had reference to them, but in reality applied to the person of every Jew; for they it was whom Christ addressed. For He did not say that the holy apostles must get purse and scrip, but that whosoever hath 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 save himself, he might do so. But any one 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. For henceforth 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. For war shall befall them with such unendurable impetuosity, that nothing shall be able to stand against it”.

“And in foretelling these things, the Lord was speaking of what was about to happen to Israel. 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 ridiculed their speech, and says, ‘It is enough’. Really! Two swords are enough to bear the brunt of the war about to come upon them, where it turned out that many thousands of sword were of no avail”.

²⁰⁸ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of St. Luke, Homily 145, Studion Publishers, Inc., 1983.

Theophylact stated²⁰⁹ 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 added²¹⁰ 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? No other than 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)

²⁰⁹ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Holy Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, pp. 290-292.

²¹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXIII, 1.

Peter Denies Christ at the Crucifixion: Matthew 26:69-75, 26:33-35; Mark 14:29-31, 14:53-72; Luke 22:34, 54-62; John 13:36-38, 18:15-27

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).

Jesus' "trial" before the Sanhedrin was held in the roof area of Annas' house, and 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. And Peter stood with them and warmed himself" (John 18:18). 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.

The doorkeeper, who let Peter in said to him, "You are not also *one* of this Man's disciples, are you?" 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 commented²¹¹ on Peter's first denial as follows. John was already inside, and at least some of the people present knew that Peter was a follower of Jesus.

²¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 2.

“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 can not 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 said not, ‘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, ‘Are not you also’, is said on this account, that John was within, 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 crew. Nor did this even bring him to his senses, till Jesus gave him the bitter look”.

As they continued to warm themselves from the fire, Peter went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed the first time (Mark 14:68), indicating that it was just before daybreak. Someone said, “This *fellow* also was with Jesus of Nazareth” (Matthew 26:71). According to Mark, it was the same servant girl as before (Mark 14:69), but the other Gospel writers do not identify the one who spoke. This time Peter denied with an oath saying, “I do not know the Man!” (Matthew 26:72)

About an hour later (Luke 22:59), “one of the servants of the high priest, a relative of Malchus (John 18:10), whose ear Peter cut off (Luke 22:49-51), said, “Did I not see you in the garden with Him?” (John 18:26) This was an eyewitness of the events in the Garden of Gethsemane, when Jesus was arrested. He also said to Peter, “Surely you are *one* of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows *it*.” (Mark 14:70).

One aspect of being a Nazarene was a distinctive accent. Galileans spoke the same Aramaic dialect (of Hebrew) as Judeans, but they were easily identified by a different pronunciation of the Hebrew gutturals. This would be equivalent to the differences in pronunciation one might find between people who live in Boston, Atlanta and Los Angeles. All of the Twelve, except Judas, were also from Galilee, and therefore their Galilean accent gave them away.

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’. And 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 noted²¹² 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

²¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXIII, 3.

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 out²¹³ 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.

“But Mark said that when he had once denied, then first the cock crew, but when he denied Him for the third time, then the cock crew for the second time. For he declares more particularly the weakness of the disciple, and that he was utterly dead with fear; having learned these things of his master 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 stated²¹⁴ 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”.

John Chrysostom stated²¹⁵ Peter was very distressed at the Last Supper, along with the others of the Twelve. At first, he wondered if he would be the traitor. Then Jesus told him that he would deny Him three times. Then the Twelve began to dispute over who was the greatest. Jesus checked him by leaving him to struggle on his own. After the Resurrection, Peter was a different person by virtue of his struggle.

“For in proof that this passion was grievous in Peter, he was not content with his former words, contradicting both prophet and Christ (Zechariah 13:7, Matthew 26:31). But also after these things when Christ had said unto him, ‘Truly I say to you, that this night, before the cock crow, you shall deny Me three times’, he replied, ‘Though I should die with You, I will not deny You in any way’ (Matthew 26:34-35). And Luke signifies moreover, that the more Christ warned him, so much the more did Peter oppose Him” (Luke 22:31-34).

“What do these things mean, Peter? When He was saying, ‘One of you shall betray Me’ (Matthew 26:21), you feared lest you should be the traitor, and constrained the John to ask, although conscious to yourself of no such treason. But now, when He is plainly crying out, and saying, ‘All shall be offended’, are you contradicting it, and not once only, but twice?” (Matthew 26:31-35)

“How did this come to Peter? From much love. I mean, after he was delivered from that distressing fear about the betrayal, and knew the traitor, he then spoke confidently, and lifted himself up over the rest, saying, ‘Though all men shall be offended, yet I will not be offended’ (Matthew 26:33). And in some

²¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXV, 1.

²¹⁴ Theophylact, The Explanation of the Gospel According to St. Luke, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 1997, Chap. 22, p. 298.

²¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXXII, 3-4.

degree too his conduct sprung from jealousy, for at supper they reasoned ‘which of them is the greater’ (Luke 22:24-30), to such a degree did this passion trouble them. Therefore Jesus checked him, not compelling him to the denial, God forbid! but leaving him destitute of His help, and convicting his human nature”.

“See at any rate after these things how he was subdued. For after the resurrection, when he had said, ‘And what shall this man do?’ (John 21:21), and was silenced, he ventured no more to contradict as here, but held his peace. Again, towards the Ascension, when he heard, ‘It is not for you to know times or seasons’ (Acts 1:7), again he holds his peace, and does not contradict. After these things, on the housetop, and by the sheet, when he heard a voice saying to him, ‘What God had cleansed, don’t you call common’ (Acts 10:9-17), even though he did not know for the time what the saying could be, he is quiet, and strives not”.

“Hence we learn a great doctrine, that a man’s willingness is not sufficient, unless he receive the aid from above; and that again we shall gain nothing by the aid from above, if there is not a willingness. And both these things do Judas and Peter show; for Judas, though he had received much help, was profited nothing, because he was not willing, neither contributed his part. But Peter, though he was ready in mind, because he received no assistance, fell. For indeed of these two things is virtue’s web woven”.

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. And 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 saw²¹⁶ 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 out²¹⁷ 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.

²¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

²¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

“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. For (the Twelve earlier) confessed not such a sonship 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. As Jesus told Nicodemus, he who believes this “will not perish but have everlasting life” (John 3:16).

Much disagreement has developed in later centuries over whether “the rock” referred to Simon’s person or Simon’s confession. The Orthodox Church has always maintained that “the rock” is Peter’s confession and that this confession is a cornerstone to the faith. The Gates of Hades has not prevailed against Simon’s confession; but it has prevailed against his person when he denied the Lord three times.

The Sifting of Peter

Prior to predicting that Peter would deny Him three times, Jesus stated, “Simon, Simon! Indeed, Satan has asked for you, that he may sift *you* as wheat. But I have prayed for you, that your faith should not fail; and when you have returned to *Me*, strengthen your brethren” (Luke 22:31-32).

What does Jesus mean by “sifting”? This is a reference to the harvesting of wheat, and Jesus also spoke of this in the Parable of the Wheat and the Tares. In this parable, the tares have been interpreted as representing the heretics that rise up within the Church, and the parable was given as instruction as to how to deal with them.

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 description²¹⁸ 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.

²¹⁸ Ralph Gower, The New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, Moody Press, Chicago, 1998, pp. 95-101.

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.

John Chrysostom referred²¹⁹ 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 Sapphira (Acts 5:1-9), and whose shadow healed sick people (Acts 5:15).

Satan realized the role that Peter was being prepared for in the Early Church, and therefore demanded permission to sift him much as he had demanded permission to sift Job (Job 1:8-12, 2:3-6). Part of Peter’s sifting was 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).

John Chrysostom stated²²⁰ that Peter’s denial arose from his being forsaken by God temporarily, in order to teach him about his need for faith. Following their sin, Peter and David repented properly, but Judas and Esau didn’t.

“Hear of the repentance of Peter after his denial. For the Evangelist in relating to us the things concerning him, says, ‘And he went out and wept bitterly’ (Matthew 26:75). Therefore even such a sin was forgiven him, because he repented as he ought. Although the Victim had not yet been offered, nor had The Sacrifice as yet been made, nor was sin as yet-taken away, it still had the rule and sovereignty”.

“This denial arose not so much from sloth, as from His being forsaken of God, who was teaching him to know the measures of man and not to contradict the sayings of the Master, nor to be more high-minded than the rest. He needed to know that nothing can be done without God, and that ‘Except the Lord build the house, they labor in vain who build it’ (Psalm 127:1). Therefore Christ said to him alone, ‘Satan desired to sift you as wheat’, and I allowed it not, ‘that your faith may not fail’ (Luke 22:31, 32). For since it was likely that he would be high-minded, being conscious to himself that he loved Christ more than they all, therefore “he wept bitterly”; and he did other things after his weeping, of the same character. For what did he do? After this he exposed himself to dangers innumerable, and by many means showed his manliness and courage”.

“Judas also repented, but in an evil way; for he hanged himself. Esau too repented; or rather, he did not repent; for his tears were not tears of repentance, but rather of pride and wrath. And what followed proved this (Genesis 33:4). The blessed David repented, thus saying, ‘Every night will I wash my bed: I will water my conch with my tears’ (Psalm 6:6). And the sin which had been committed long ago, after so many years, after so many generations he bewailed, as if it had recently occurred”.

²¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LIV, 2.

²²⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXXI, 4.

Hilary of Poitiers noted²²¹ that if Peter was affected so much as to deny the Lord three times, the other Apostles (except for John) were affected more so.

After Christ had said that they should all be offended in Him, but promised that He would go before them into Galilee, Peter protested that though all the rest should be offended, he would remain faithful and not be offended. But the Lord knowing by His Divine Nature what should come to pass, answered that Peter would deny Him three times. From Peter's example, we know how the others were offended, since even he lapsed into so great peril to his faith by the triple denial.

Ambrose of Milan stated²²² that Peter's denial was a model for us regarding the weakness of the flesh without the help of God. Peter was a strong man of God, yet in his human weakness, he denied Christ. Peter's tears of repentance are analogous to those of David for the sins of his sons Absalom and Amnon.

"Peter, though full of faith and devotion, yet not yet conscious of our common weakness, had presumptuously said to the Lord, 'I will lay down my life for Your sake' (Mark 14:31). He fell into the trial of his presumption before the cock crowed three times. That trial was a lesson for our salvation, that we might learn not to understate the weakness of the flesh, lest understating it we should be tempted. If Peter was tempted, who can presume? Who can maintain that he cannot be tempted? And without doubt for our sakes Peter was tempted, so that, the proving of the temptation took place in a stronger person. In him we might learn how to resist temptations; although tried by care for our lives, we might overcome the sting of the temptation with tears of patience".

"David, who had not wept for the innocent infant (2 Samuel 12:15-23), wept for Absalom, the parricide (2 Samuel 18:33-19:4), when he was dead. When he was wailing and mourning, he said, 'O my son Absalom, my son Absalom! Would that I had died instead of you!' (2 Samuel 18:33). But not only did he weep for Absalom, the parricide, but also for Amnon, the incestuous (2 Samuel 13:32-37). The wicked is wept over, not the innocent. What is the reason? He wept for those who were dead, but did not think that he ought to weep for the dead infant; for he thought that they were lost to him, but hoped that the latter would rise again".

Leo the Great stated²²³ that Peter's example proved how much Christ's Passion benefited us. At the time of his own passion, Peter was able to imitate the Master in courage.

"Christ's humiliation conferred much upon all the faithful, and the most blessed Apostle Peter was the first to prove this. After the fierce blast of threatening cruelty had dismayed him, he quickly changed, and was restored to vigor. The suddenly shaken member returned to the firmness of the Head. The Lord, therefore, 'looked back upon Peter' (Luke 22:61), and amid the calumnies of priests, the falsehoods of witnesses, the injuries of those that scourged and spat upon Him (Matthew 26:59-68, Luke 22:66-71), met His dismayed disciple with those eyes wherewith He had foreseen his dismay. The gaze of the Truth entered into him, on whose heart correction must be wrought, as if the Lord's voice were

²²¹ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, X, 37.

²²² Ambrose of Milan, On the Decease of His Brother Saytrus, II, 27-28.

²²³ Leo the Great, Sermons, LIV, 5.

making itself heard there, and saying, ‘Where are you going, Peter? Turn to Me, put your trust in Me, follow Me. This is the Peter of My Passion; the hour of your suffering is not yet come. Why do you fear what you, too, shall overcome? Don’t let the weakness, in which I share, confound you. I was fearful for you; be confident of Me’”.

Peter Runs to the Tomb: Luke 24:12; John 20:1-10

The Embalming of Jesus

At the site of the tomb, Joseph and Nicodemus, along with their servants performed the embalming of Jesus’ body. The Holy Women watched this from a distance, so that they knew where to come on the day after the Sabbath. The embalming of Jesus’ body was described as follows:

“So he came and took the body of Jesus. And Nicodemus, who at first came to Jesus by night (John 3:1-21), also came, bringing a mixture of myrrh and aloes, about a hundred pounds. Then they took the body of Jesus, and bound it in strips of linen with the spices, as the custom of the Jews is to bury” (John 19:38-40).

This is the same type of burial as was given to Lazarus when he died – that is, Jesus and Lazarus were wrapped with strips of linen to form a mummy-like sarcophagus. This was the type of burial that only rich people could afford. By contrast, the son of the widow of Nain was being carried in an open coffin (Luke 7:14) to a pauper’s grave, when Jesus spoke to him. When Jesus spoke to him, “Young man, I say to you, arise”, he sat up and began to speak immediately (Luke 7:15). There was no need to “unbind him” as was necessary for Lazarus when he was raised (John 11:44).

Modern studies have been done²²⁴ regarding the burial practices for the wealthy that were common in Jewish society in the 1st Century.

“The body was covered in spices and in paste and these were tied to the body by layers of white roller bandage. The paste hardened and impregnated the bandages until a hard preservative mold or cocoon was formed about the body. A cap was put on the head, and often the jaw was held in position by a bandage under the chin”.

Mary Magdalene Reports to the Apostles; Peter Runs to the Tomb

This details of the embalming become important later at the Resurrection. Mary Magdalene was present at the tomb early, when it was still dark. She did not stick around with the other women, but ran immediately to tell the Apostles (John 20:1-2). When Peter and John came running to the tomb at the urging of Mary Magdalene (John 20:2-3), the first thing that they saw was that the “mummy” was empty and undisturbed; Jesus had risen right through the burial wrappings! This was evidence of the Resurrection, since the body could not have gotten out of the sarcophagus without cutting the wrappings. Orthodox iconography is helpful to us in depicting the scene at the tomb with an empty sarcophagus.

“Then Simon Peter came, following John, and went into the tomb; and he saw the linen cloths lying *there*, and the handkerchief that had been around His head, not lying with the linen cloths, but folded together in a place by itself. Then

²²⁴ Gower, New Manners and Customs of Bible Times, pp. 72-74

the other disciple, who came to the tomb first, went in also; and he saw and believed. For as yet they did not know the Scripture, that He must rise again from the dead” (John 20:6-9).

One might question exactly what the Apostle John meant when he said that he and Peter, “saw and believed”? Did they believe in the Resurrection from seeing the burial clothes, or did they merely believe the report of the women that the tomb was empty? Augustin stated²²⁵ that it was the report of the women that Peter and John believed when they examined the empty sepulchre. John Chrysostom, however, stated²²⁶ that it was the Resurrection that Peter and John believed, but only after they had examined the site very carefully. Chrysostom noted, in John’s account, that John admitted his own superficial examination and was convinced by Peter’s more careful analysis.

“Mary didn’t know as yet anything clearly concerning the Resurrection, but thought there had been a removal of the body, and told this to the disciples. And John didn’t deprive Mary of such praise, and thought it was good that they should have learned these things first from the one who had spent the night in watching. When she came and said these things, they drew near with great eagerness to the sepulcher, and saw the linen clothes lying there, which was a sign of the Resurrection. For neither, if any person had removed the body, would they, before doing so have stripped it. Nor if any had stolen it, would they have taken the trouble to remove the napkin, and roll it up, and lay it in a place by itself. They would have taken the body as it was. On this account John tells us by anticipation that it was buried with much myrrh, which glues linen to the body as firmly as lead. In order that when you hear that the napkins lay apart, you may not endure those who say that He was stolen. For a thief would not have been so foolish as to spend so much trouble on a superfluous matter. For why should he undo the clothes? And how could he have escaped detection if he had done so? He would probably have spent much time in so doing, and be found out by delaying and loitering. But why do the clothes lie apart, while the napkin was wrapped together by itself? That you may learn that it was not the action of men in confusion or haste, the placing some in one place, some in another, and the wrapping them together. From this they believed in the Resurrection. On this account Christ afterwards appeared to them, when they were convinced by what they had seen. Observe here again the absence of boastfulness in the Evangelist, how he witnesses to the exactness of Peter’s search. For he himself having gotten there before Peter, and having seen the linen clothes, didn’t inquire farther, but withdrew. But that fervent one, passing farther in, looked at everything carefully, and saw somewhat more, and then John too was summoned to the sight”.

Chrysostom continued²²⁷ to say that the myrrh was very difficult to remove once a person was embalmed.

“And what does it mean that the napkins that were stuck on with the myrrh; for Peter saw these lying. For if they had wanted to steal, they would not have stolen the body naked, not because of dishonoring it only, but in order not to delay and lose time in stripping it, and not to give the guards opportunity to awake

²²⁵ Augustin of Hippo, Tractates on the Gospel of John, CXX, 9.

²²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXV, 4.

²²⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XC, 2.

and seize them. Especially when it was myrrh, a drug that adheres so to the body, and cleaves to the clothes; it was not easy to take the clothes off the body, but those that did this needed much time, so that from this again, the tale of the theft is improbable”.

Mary Magdalene didn't understand the proof of the Resurrection from the evidence of the burial clothes. When Peter and John departed in astonishment, understanding what the evidence of the burial clothes meant, Mary stayed behind grieving. In her “passionate sorrow”, she received something that Peter and John didn't. Chrysostom described²²⁸ this as follows:

“Full of feeling somehow is the female sex, and more inclined to pity. I say this, lest you should wonder how it could be that Mary wept bitterly at the tomb, while Peter was in no way so affected. For, ‘The disciples went away unto their own home’ (John 20:10); but she stood shedding tears. Hers was a feeble nature, and she didn't know accurately the account of the Resurrection; whereas they having seen the linen clothes and believed, departed to their own homes in astonishment. And why didn't they go immediately to Galilee, as had been commanded them before the Passion? (Matthew 26:32, 28:7, 10, 16) They waited for the others, and besides they were yet at the height of their amazement. Peter and John then went their way, but Mary stood at the place, for even the sight of the tomb tended to comfort her. At any rate, you see her, the more to ease her grief, stooping down, and desiring to behold the place where the body lay (John 20:11-12). And she received no small reward for this her great zeal. For what the disciples didn't see, Mary saw first: Angels sitting, the one at the feet, the other at the head, in white; even the clothing was full of radiance and joy. Since her mind was not sufficiently elevated to accept the Resurrection from the proof of the napkins, something more takes place, she beholds something more. The angels in shining garments, raised her from her passionate sorrow, and comforted her. But they said nothing to her concerning the Resurrection, she was gently led forward in this doctrine”.

Jesus' Appears to Peter After the Resurrection: Mark 16:7, Luke 24:13-43, John 20:19-29

When the Holy Women met the angels at the Tomb, the angels had a message especially for Peter. One of the angels said, “Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you” (Mark 16:6-7).

Later that day, as Luke and Cleopas were traveling on the road to Emmaus, they met the risen Christ as they walked, but didn't recognize Him. At the end of the day, at dinner, they finally recognized Him as He served them the Eucharist as He had a few days earlier at the Last Supper (Luke 22:19-20). Then Jesus vanished! So Luke and Cleopas “rose up that very hour and returned to Jerusalem, and found the eleven and those *who were* with them gathered together, saying, ‘The Lord is risen indeed, and has appeared to Simon!’ (Luke 24:33-34).

²²⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVI, 1.

We are not told exactly²²⁹ when Jesus appeared to Peter, but it was sometime between early morning when the women met the angels, and mid afternoon when Luke and Cleopas set out for Emmaus. Since Emmaus is about 7 miles from Jerusalem, it took about 3 hours to make the trip, especially considering that Cleopas was an old man at the time.

Mary Magdalene had been the first to see the Risen Christ (Mark 16:9, John 20:11-17), followed by the other women on their way home from the Tomb (Matthew 28:9-10). Peter was the third to see the Risen Christ followed by the Ten Apostles (minus Judas and Thomas) in the upper room that evening (Mark 16:14, Luke 24:36-43, John 20:19-20). Note that when John said that the encounter after a night's fishing was "The third time Jesus showed Himself to His disciples" (John 21:14), he means the third time He showed Himself to them together.

The circumstances surrounding Jesus' Resurrection was totally unexpected. Although He told His disciples He would rise from the dead, His words had gone in one ear and out the other. They admitted that He was the Son of God, but they still thought of Him as a man. They hadn't considered it possible for a man to pass right through the burial wrappings, or for a man to pass right through solid walls.

John Chrysostom stated²³⁰ that there was a reason why Jesus showed Himself to just a few people at a time initially. The point was to increase their faith and to teach them to trust one another. He appeared to Peter that first day both to strengthen him as the leader of the Apostles and to comfort him lest he despair after his denial.

"Why didn't He appear to everyone at the same time? That He might first sow the seeds of faith. For he that saw Him first and was fully assured, told it to the rest. Their report, coming first, placed the hearer in expectation of this great wonder, and made way before for the faith of sight. Therefore neither did He appear to all together, nor in the beginning to many, but to one alone first, and him the leader of the whole company and the most faithful, since there was great need of a most faithful soul to be first to receive this sight. For those who saw him after others had seen him, and heard it from them, had in their testimony what contributed in no small degree to their own faith and tended to prepare their mind beforehand. But he who was first counted worthy to see Him (i.e. Peter), had need of great faith, not to be confounded by a sight so contrary to expectation. Therefore he appeared to Peter first. For he that first confessed Him to be Christ (Matthew 16:16) was also counted worthy first to behold His resurrection. And not on this account alone does He appear to him first, but also because he had denied Him. He needed to comfort him and to signify that he need not despair, that He granted him this sight before the rest and that He first entrusted His sheep to him. Therefore also He appeared to the women first. Because this sex was made inferior, therefore both in His birth and in His resurrection this first tastes of His grace".

"But after Peter, He appears also to each at intervals, and at one time to fewer, at another to more, hereby making them witnesses and teachers of each other, and rendering His Apostles trustworthy in all that they said".

²²⁹ It is possible that Jesus could have appeared to Peter as Luke and Cleopas were walking back to Jerusalem.

²³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXVIII, 5.

Jesus Revealed at Sea of Galilee: John 21:2-14

On the evening following Jesus' Resurrection, He appeared to the Eleven minus Thomas. A week later, He appeared to them again, Thomas being included this time (John 20:19-29). Following these appearances, the Eleven left for Galilee and Jesus appeared to them after a night of fishing, where this was the third time He appeared to the Eleven together (John 21:14).

There were a number of the Twelve Apostles who were fishermen by trade. This included James and John the sons of Zebedee, Thomas, Nathanael, Peter and Andrew, plus others (John 21:2). Peter and Andrew had their own boat, and ran one business. Zebedee, ran another fishing business, and there were a number of hired servants who helped with the day-to-day tasks (Mark 1:19-20). Most of the fish caught were taken to the city of Magdala for salting (pickling) to preserve freshness, but some fish were sold fresh locally. Fish was a major part of the diet of 1st Century Palestine, and fresh fish commanded a very good price. Recent studies²³¹ of the operations of the 1st Century fishing industry indicate that the owner of a fishing business had a good income, equivalent to upper middle class today.

Once in Galilee, Peter decided to go fishing, and a number of the others went with him. That night they caught nothing. Early in the morning, when it was impractical to use their nets, because the fish could see the webbing of the nets and avoid getting caught, Jesus told them to cast the net on the right side of the boat. Doing so, they encountered a huge catch, similar to the time when Jesus first called them as Apostles (Luke 5:1-11). Up to this point, they hadn't recognized Jesus. But at the miracle of the catch, John recognized Him and said to Peter, "It is the Lord!" Peter put his clothes on and dove into the water to swim to shore. When he got to shore, Jesus already had a charcoal fire going with fish and bread on it (John 21:1-9).

Why did they not recognize Jesus? When the resurrected Christ appeared to the Apostles in the upper room, He pointed out to them specifically that He was not just spirit but that He retained flesh and bones in His resurrected state (Luke 24:38-39). There was probably something different about His appearance. The Apostles didn't dare ask the risen Jesus who He was when He appeared to them in Galilee (John 21:12). Mary Magdalene didn't recognize Him at the tomb until He prompted her (John 20:11-17). And Luke and Cleopas didn't recognize Him along the road to Emmaus; finally they recognized Him when He served them the Eucharist after dinner (Luke 24:13-31). There was undoubtedly something different when the corruptible put on incorruption and the mortal put on immortality. It was changed (1 Corinthians 15:52-54)! But 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

²³¹ For more details about the 1st Century fishing industry see Jerome Murphy-O'Connor, "Fishers of Fish, Fishers of Men", Bible Review, June 1999, pp. 22-27, 48.

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).

John Chrysostom noted²³² that Jesus' manner was different with His disciples after the Resurrection. Before the Resurrection, He was with them constantly; after the Resurrection, He only appeared to them once in a while. In doing this, He was teaching them to depend on Him in a different manner. His disciples, in turn, regarded Him with great fear and reverence.

"Jesus did not remain with them continually, as before. He appeared, for instance, in the evening, and disappeared; then after eight days once again, and again disappeared; then after these things by the sea. But what did He "show"? From this it is clear that He was not seen unless He condescended, because His body was incorruptible, and of unmixed purity. But why has the writer mentioned the place? To show that He had now taken away the greater part of their fear, so that they now ventured forth from their dwelling, and went about everywhere. For they were no longer shut up at home, but had gone into Galilee, avoiding the danger from the Jews. Simon, therefore, came to fish. For since He was neither with them continually, nor was the Spirit yet given, nor had they at that time been entrusted with anything".

"Having then nothing to do, they went to their fishing. And the other disciples followed, because they were bound to one another, and at the same time desired to go fishing also. As they were laboring and weary, Jesus presented Himself before them, but did not at once reveal Himself".

"When Peter and John recognized Him, they again exhibited their distinct peculiarities. The one was more fervent, the other more lofty; the one more keen, the other more clear-sighted. On this account John first recognized Jesus, Peter first came to Him. For no ordinary signs were they which had taken place. First, that so many fish were caught; then, that the net did not break; then, that before they landed, the coals had been found, and fish laid thereon, and bread. For He no longer made things out of existing matter, as through a certain dispensation, like He did before the Crucifixion. When Peter knew Him, he threw down everything, both fish and nets, and girded himself. Do you see his respect and love? They were only a hundred yards off; but not even so could Peter wait to go to Him in the boat, but reached the shore by swimming".

"With silence and great fear and reverence, they sat down giving heed to Him. 'For they knew that it was the Lord'. And therefore they did not ask Him, 'Who are You?' (John 21:12) But seeing that His form was altered, and awesome, they were greatly amazed, and desired to ask somewhat concerning it. But fear, and their knowledge that He was not some other, but the Same, checked

²³² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVII, 1.

the inquiry, and they only ate what He created for them with a greater exertion of power than before. For here He no more looked to heaven, nor performed those human acts, showing that those which He did were done by way of condescension”.

“And He asked them ‘to bring of the fish’, to show that what they saw was no illusion. Here it did not say that He ate with them, but Luke said that He did; for ‘He was eating together with them’ (Acts 10:41). But the, ‘how’, it is not ours to say; for these things came to pass in too strange a manner, not as though His nature now needed food, but from an act of condescension, in proof of the Resurrection”.

Peter Commissioned to Feed the Sheep: John 21:15-17

Following Jesus’ revelation of Himself at the Sea of Galilee, after they had eaten, Jesus spoke to Peter about love and about feeding His sheep:

“So when they had eaten breakfast, Jesus said to Simon Peter, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You’. He said to him, ‘Feed My lambs’. He said to him again a second time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ He said to Him, ‘Yes, Lord; You know that I love You’. He said to him, ‘Tend My sheep’. He said to him the third time, ‘Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me?’ Peter was grieved because He said to him the third time, ‘Do you love Me?’ And he said to Him, ‘Lord, You know all things; You know that I love You’. Jesus said to him, ‘Feed My sheep. Most assuredly, I say to you, when you were younger, you girded yourself and walked where you wished; but when you are old, you will stretch out your hands, and another will gird you and carry you where you do not wish’. This He spoke, signifying by what death he would glorify God. And when He had spoken this, He said to him, ‘Follow Me’ (John 21:15-19).

Peter was grieved that the Lord asked him this question a third time (John 21:17). He remembered how he denied he even knew Jesus three times in the courtyard of the high priest (John 18:13-27). He knew that he was forgiven, and it was painful for him to even remember his sin. But the Lord had a larger purpose here. Earlier Peter had overstated his love, saying that he would never stumble because of his Lord. He even proclaimed that he would die with his Lord before he ever denied Him (Matthew 26:33-35). Chrysostom stated²³³,

“For on this account Peter was troubled, ‘lest I think I love and don’t, as before when I thought and stated that I loved Him a great deal, yet I was convicted at last’. But Jesus asked him the third time to show at what price He sets the care of His own sheep, and that this especially is a sign of love towards Him. The Lord did not say this to Peter as distrusting him, but as greatly trusting him. The Lord wished besides to point out a proof of love towards Him and to instruct us in what manner especially we ought to love Him”.

In asking Peter three times whether he loved Him, Chrysostom summarized²³⁴ this by saying,

²³³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVIII, 1.

²³⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVIII, 1.

“There are indeed many other things which are able to give us boldness towards God and to show us bright and approved. But that which most of all brings good will from on high is tender care for our neighbor”. This was why the Lord singled Peter out to ask him this and not John or one of the others. He stated that Peter was the “mouth of the disciples, the leader of the band”; that is, as the first among equals. “If you love Me, preside over your brethren. And the warm love which you always showed and in which you rejoiced, show it now. And the life which you said you would lay down for Me, now give for My sheep”.

John Chrysostom pointed²³⁵ out that Jesus, in His conversation with Peter, was connecting all His previous teaching together, including keeping His Commandments and loving one’s neighbor.

“Jesus had 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’ (Matthew 22:37-40). If therefore loving God is to love one’s neighbor, this is what He’s saying to Peter. ‘If you love Me’, He said, ‘O Peter, feed My sheep’ (John 21:16, 17). But since loving one’s neighbor works a keeping of the Commandments; with reason does He then say, ‘On these hang all the Law and the Prophets’” (Matthew 22:40).

Our Lord had rebuked the leaders of Israel for being unfaithful shepherds of the flock and lax in their stewardship over the Household of God. So he turned to the leaders of the New Israel in the parable of the faithful and unfaithful servants (Matthew 24:45-51). He showed that those who have been placed by their Lord in positions of special responsibility, the leaders and teachers of the Church, must be so continuously and faithfully occupied with their work. When He returns they will be found rendering service to their Lord by feeding the members of His household. On the other hand, should they take advantage of the apparent delay in their Lord’s return, bully those committed to their charge, and make the satisfaction of their own appetites their primary concern, their ultimate fate will be no better than that of the hypocritical Pharisees.

John Chrysostom went on to say²³⁶ that Peter’s experience in his denial was a learning process that would teach him to trust in the Master to a fuller extent, and also to have mercy on his fellow Christians who were 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 indeed to teach him even by the first words, but when he continued in his vehemence, He did not force him into the denial, but left him alone, that he might learn his own weakness”.

“Christ taught him humility, and proved that human nature by itself is nothing. But, since great love made him open for contradiction, He now sobers him, that he might not later be subject to this, when he should have received the stewardship of the world; but remembering what he had suffered, he might know himself. And 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 love as much as he was loved by God. And yet, to one who had so fallen, He said again, ‘Do you love Me

²³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXXI.

²³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXIII, 1.

more than these?’ (John 21:15) So that 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. For if you love, you ought to obey Him whom you love. Do you know what a thing it is to contradict God? But since Peter did not learn in this way that everything that Christ said shall come to pass, he had to learn it in the denial”.

John Chrysostom pointed out²³⁷ that the shepherd within the Christian Priesthood has a far more difficult assignment than the shepherd of cattle. It requires a person of extraordinary stature. The enemies of the flock are much fiercer, and they continue to come after him even if he abandons his flock.

“Christ’s words to Peter were, ‘Peter, do you love Me more than these?’ Yet He might have said to him, ‘If you love Me practice fasting, sleeping on the ground, and prolonged vigils, defend the wronged, be as a father to orphans, and supply the place of a husband to their mother’. But as a matter of fact, setting aside all these things, what does He say? ‘Tend my sheep’. For those things might easily be performed by many even of those who are under authority, women as well as men. But when one is required to preside over the Church, and to be entrusted with the care of so many souls, the majority of men must retire before the magnitude of the task. And we must bring forward those who surpass all others, and soar as much above them in excellence of spirit as Saul overtopped the whole Hebrew nation in bodily stature (1 Samuel 9:2); or rather far more”.

“He who has lost sheep, either through wolves, or robbers, or any other disaster, might obtain some indulgence from the owner of the flock. But he who has human beings entrusted to him incurs a penalty in the first place for the loss of the sheep, which goes beyond material things and touches his own life. And in the second place he has to carry on a far greater and more difficult contest. For ‘we wrestle not against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this world, against spiritual wickedness in high places’ (Ephesians 6:12). Do you see the terrible multitude of enemies, and their fierce squadrons, not steel clad, but endued with a nature which is of itself an equivalent for a complete suit of armor”.

“Moreover, in the case of the shepherd of irrational creatures, those who wish to destroy the flock, when they see the guardian take to flight, cease making war upon him, and are content with the seizure of the cattle. But in this case, even should they capture the whole flock, they do not leave the shepherd alone, but attack him all the more, and grow bolder, ceasing not until they have either overthrown him, or have themselves been vanquished”.

Jerome stated²³⁸ that Peter was chosen as the leader of the Apostles because he was older than most of the Apostles. Christ did not wish to create strife by having a younger man set over his elders.

“But you say, the Church was founded upon Peter (Matthew 16:18); although elsewhere the same is attributed to all the Apostles (Matthew 18:15-20, John 20:22-23). And they all receive the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and the strength of the Church depends upon them all alike, yet one among the twelve is

²³⁷ John Chrysostom, Concerning the Christian Priesthood, II, 2.

²³⁸ Jerome, Treatises Against Jovinianus, I, 26.

chosen so that when a head has been appointed, there may be no occasion for schism. But why was not John chosen, who was a virgin? Deference was paid to age, because Peter was the elder; one who was a youth, could not be set over men of advanced age. And a good master who had said to them, 'Peace I leave with you, my peace I give unto you', and, 'He that is the greater among you, let him be the least of all', would not cause envy against the youth whom he had loved. We may be sure that John was then a boy because ecclesiastical history most clearly proves that he lived to the reign of Trajan, that is, he fell asleep in the 68th year²³⁹ after our Lord's passion".

Peter's Love for John

After Jesus spoke to Peter about feeding His sheep, "Then Peter, turning around, saw the disciple whom Jesus loved following, who also had leaned on His breast at the supper, and said, 'Lord, who is the one who betrays You?' Peter, seeing him, said to Jesus, 'But Lord, what about this man?' Jesus said to him, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you? You follow Me. Then this saying went out among the brethren that this disciple would not die. Yet Jesus did not say to him that he would not die, but, 'If I will that he remain till I come, what is that to you?' This is the disciple who testifies of these things, and wrote these things; and we know that his testimony is true. And there are also many other things that Jesus did, which if they were written one by one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that would be written. Amen" (John 21:20-25).

John Chrysostom wrote²⁴⁰ that this indicated Peter's love for John as well as the Lord's love for John.

"When therefore Christ had foretold great things to Peter, committed the world to him, spoke beforehand of his martyrdom, and testified that his love was greater than that of the others, Peter desired to have John also share with him, and said, 'But Lord, what about this man?' In other words, shall he (i.e. John) not come the same way with us? At another time Peter was not being able himself to ask Jesus a question about who would betray Him, and he put John forward (John 13:24-25). So here, desiring to make John a return and supposing that John would desire to ask about the matters pertaining to himself, but had not courage, he himself undertook the questioning. Jesus spoke from strong affection, but also by His words taught us not to be impatient, or curious beyond what seems good to Him. For because Peter was always hot and springing forward to inquiries such as this, to cut short his warmth and to teach him not to inquire farther, He said this".

Peter and John continued to be very close after this for the next two decades. After Pentecost, we see them together going up to the Temple for 9th Hour Prayer, and healing the man who was born lame (Acts 3:1-10). Peter and John together were bold in testifying before the family of the high priest and the Sadducees (Acts 4:5-13, 5:17). After the Apostles were arrested, the boldness of Peter and John encouraged the other Apostles to be bold also (Acts 5:29). When the Samaritans received the Word of God from Deacon Philip, the Apostles at Jerusalem sent Peter and John to them that they might receive the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:5-17).

²³⁹ Jerome, "Lives of Illustrious Men", Chapter 9, *Nicene and Post Nicene Fathers*, 2nd Series, v. 3.

²⁴⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, LXXIII, 1.

However, Peter began traveling more frequently, even taking his wife with him (1 Corinthians 9:5). Since John had been assigned to the care of the Virgin Mary, he remained behind in Jerusalem more frequently, such as when Peter “went through all parts of the country and came down to the saints who dwelt in Lydda” (Acts 9:32). When Herod (Agrippa) killed James, the brother of John, with the sword in 44 AD and tried to kill Peter also, Peter escaped (Acts 12:1-17) and slowly made his way to Antioch and out of Herod’s jurisdiction (Galatians 2:11). Peter and John were together again briefly for the Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD (Acts 15:1-29). After that, Peter began his four major missionary journeys to Asia Minor, Europe, Africa and Britain and he saw John infrequently during the rest of his life. One time of reunion for all the Apostles was the occasion of the funeral for the Virgin Mary in c. 55 AD.

Peter Leads the Twelve After Pentecost: Acts 1:15-26

In the days following the Ascension, but before Pentecost, Peter is obviously the leader of the group. John Chrysostom stated²⁴¹ that Peter “stood up” as having been entrusted by Christ as the shepherd of the small flock in Jerusalem. The proceedings, in the selection of Matthias to replace Judas, demonstrate that Christ was invisibly present. Peter does not lord it over anyone, even the women, but acts in a conciliar fashion. Peter does not heap scorn on Judas, but simply states that he got his due reward. The real blame lay with those who named the “Field of Blood”.

“‘And in those days, Peter stood up in the midst of the disciples, and spoke’ (Acts 1:15). Peter did this, both as being ardent, and as having been trusted by Christ with the flock; having precedence in honor, he always began the discourse. ‘Men and brethren’, he said, ‘this Scripture had to be fulfilled, which the Holy Spirit spoke before’ (Acts 1:16). Why did he not ask Christ to give him someone in place of Judas? It is better as it is. For in the first place, they were engaged in other things. Secondly, regarding Christ’s presence with them, the greatest proof that could be given that Christ was present was this; as He had chosen when He was among them, so He did now being absent. Now this was no small matter for their consolation. But observe how Peter does everything with the common consent; not by trying to pull rank. And he does not speak thus without a meaning. But observe how he consoles them concerning what had passed. In fact, what had happened had caused them no small consternation.

See the dignity of the Church, the angelic condition! No distinction there, ‘neither male nor female’ (Galatians 3:28). I would that the Churches were such now! None there had his mind full of some worldly matter, none was anxiously thinking about household concerns. Such are the advantage of afflictions!

Peter always comforts them by the prophecies. So does Christ on all occasions. In the very same way, he shows here that no strange thing had happened, but what had already been foretold. Do you see that this book describes the government of the Holy Spirit?

Here again mark the philosophical temper of Peter, how he does not mention Judas with scorn, but simply states the fact. He does not even say, ‘who betrayed Him’, but does what he can to transfer the guilt to others; nor does he censure severely even these others. Furthermore, he relates what had been the case with Judas, and shows that this man had already received his due. ‘He was

²⁴¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, III, 1.

numbered with us, and obtained part of this ministry. Now this man acquired a field out of the reward of iniquity' (Acts 1:17-18). He gives his discourse a moral turn, and covertly mentions the cause of the wickedness, because it carried reproof with it. 'And falling headlong, he burst open in the middle'. He does well to expand not upon the sin, but upon the punishment. 'And all his intestines gushed out'. This brought them consolation. 'And it was known to all the dwellers at Jerusalem; insomuch as that field is called in their proper tongue *Akel Dama*, that is to say, the field of blood' (Acts 1:19). Now the Jews gave it this Name, not on this account, but because of Judas. Here, however, Peter makes it to have this reference, and when he brings forward the adversaries as witnesses, both by the fact that they named it, and by saying, 'in their proper tongue', this is what he means".

The "Field of Blood", named so by the Jewish leaders over Judas' grisly death, prophesied their own grisly death at the hands of the Romans in c. 70 AD. At that time, the dead were piled up, even inside the Temple, and no burial was allowed²⁴². John Chrysostom stated²⁴³:

"He also dwells upon the circumstances respecting Judas, showing that the reward of the treachery was made itself the herald of the punishment. He 'acquired a field out of the reward of the iniquity' (Acts 1:18). Observe the divine economy in the event. For there are many iniquities, but never was anything more iniquitous than this. Now not only to those who were present did Judas' treachery become known, but to all thereafter, so that without meaning or knowing what they were doing, they gave it a Name; just as Caiaphas had prophesied unconsciously (John 11:49-51). God compelled them to call the field in Hebrew 'Akel Dama' (Matthew 26:24). This declared the evils, which were to come upon the Jews. Peter shows the prophecy to have been so far in part fulfilled, which says, 'It would have been good for that man if he had not been born' (Matthew 26:24). We may apply this same to the Jews likewise. If he who was their guide in doing this and suffering the consequences, much more they. Thus far however Peter says nothing of this. Then, showing that the term, 'Akel Dama', might well be applied to Judas' fate, he introduces the prophet, saying, 'Let his habitation be desolate' (Psalm 69:25). For what can be worse desolation than to become a place of burial? And the field may well be called *his*. For he who cast down the price (Matthew 27:5), although others were the buyers, has a right to be himself reckoned owner of a great desolation. This desolation was the prelude to that of the Jews, as will appear on looking closely into the facts. For indeed they destroyed themselves by famine, and killed many and the city became a burial-place of strangers and of soldiers. As to the dead in Jerusalem during the siege, they would not even let them be buried, for in fact they were not deemed worthy of sepulture".

Matthias, the Oldest of the Twelve Apostles

During the ten days between Christ's Ascension and Pentecost, the 120 disciples devoted themselves to fasting and prayer (Acts 1:14-15) in the Upper Room where Christ had eaten the Passover meal with His disciples (Acts 1:13, Mark 14:14-16). Peter stood up at that time, and declared that they needed to replace Judas. Peter's reasoning was that Judas had obtained a part

²⁴² Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, V, i, 3.

²⁴³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, III, 1.

in this ministry. Quoting the Psalms, Peter said, “Let his dwelling place be desolate, and let no one live in it” (Psalm 69:25) and “Let another take his bishopric” (Psalm 109:8).

As candidates, Peter stated that they should be limited to the “men who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us. One of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (Acts 1:21-22). The rest of the disciples proposed two candidates: Matthias and Joseph Barsabas called Justus. Then they “prayed and said, ‘You, O Lord, who know the hearts of all, show which of these two You have chosen to take part in this ministry and Apostleship from which Judas by transgression fell, that he might go to his own place’. And they cast their lots, and the lot fell on Matthias. And he was numbered with the eleven Apostles” (Acts 1:24-25).

Matthias’ age and maturity were probably a factor in his being proposed, along with Joseph Barsabas. Joseph Barsabas, also called Judah (Acts 15:22) and Justus (Acts 1:23), was Jesus’ older stepbrother, and was a prophet and one of the leading men among the Jerusalem Church in 48 AD at the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22, 32). Both men were among the oldest and most mature of the Seventy.

Matthias had been a student of the elder Simeon thirty some years earlier and would have been very familiar with Simeon’s teaching and his hopes and dreams, which included “waiting for the Consolation of Israel” (Luke 2:25), meaning the Advent of the Messiah. As a student of Simeon, Matthias would have been at least 20 years older than Jesus. He also knew that “It had been revealed to Simeon by the Holy Spirit that he should not see death before he had seen the Lord’s Christ” (Luke 2:26). When the Holy Spirit was upon Simeon, and he spoke so eloquently prophesying about Jesus, Matthias was probably also present, since students usually accompanied their teachers. This was such a dramatic event that Matthias knew that Jesus was the Messiah from the time He was a baby. Matthias was certainly aware of the Flight into Egypt, which occurred when Jesus was about one year old. And in addition to his teacher, Simeon, Matthias was also waiting for Jesus’ advent to the world. Other sources state²⁴⁴ that during the 30 years that Jesus was growing up, Matthias led a God-pleasing life, following strictly the path outlined in the commandments of God.

Matthias’ Selection to Replace Judas

When he was proposed as a replacement for Judas, he certainly fit the requirements as given by Peter. Matthias and Joseph had both been around long before the baptism of John, even from the time Jesus was born. When Jesus began his public ministry, Matthias, who remembered the things his teacher Simeon had said about Jesus thirty years earlier (Luke 2:27-35), was immediately receptive and was chosen as one of the Seventy.

The selection of Matthias over Joseph was “by lot” (Acts 1:26). This was much more than just a roll of dice or a draw of straws. First they prayed that the Lord, “who knows the hearts of all, would show which of these two You have chosen” (Acts 1:24). Then they cast the lots. This procedure was similar to what the High Priest did with the Urim and Thummim, which he carried against his chest every time he went into the Holy Place (Numbers 27:21,

²⁴⁴ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, p. 233.

Exodus 28:30, Ezra 2:63). Just as the High Priest customarily used the Urim and Thummim (literally lights and truth) to discern the Lord's Will, so did the Apostles²⁴⁵.

John Chrysostom pointed out²⁴⁶ that Judas had obtained a "lot" in his ministry as an Apostle (Acts 1:17). When the Twelve cast "lots" (same word) to replace Judas, this was part of God's grace and election.

"On this account it behooves to propose another; to be a witness in his place. 'For he was numbered with us and obtained his lot of this ministry' (Acts 1:17). He calls it everywhere 'lot', showing that the whole is from God's grace and election, and reminding them of the old times, inasmuch as God chose him into His own lot or portion, as of old He took the Levites".

The words used to describe Matthias' role are significant. Quoting a Psalm of David (Psalm 109:8), Peter stated that Matthias was taking Judas' office of Bishop (Greek: *episkopen*). Tertullian noted²⁴⁷ that the sole authority that the Apostles had for selecting Matthias to replace Judas came from their interpretation of this Psalm.

"Having, on the authority of a prophecy, which occurs in a Psalm of David, they chose Matthias by lot as the twelfth, into the place of Judas. They obtained the promised power of the Holy Spirit for the gift of miracles and of utterance. And after first bearing witness to the faith in Jesus Christ throughout Judea, and founding churches there, they next went forth into the world and preached the same doctrine of the same faith to the nations".

John Chrysostom noted²⁴⁸ that Matthias' election was done before the Giving of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and that it was divinely ordered. Chrysostom likened the bringing forward teachers and priests for ministry in the Church in his day to be a similar circumstance to the selection of Matthias:

"The office of a Teacher and that of a Priest is of great dignity, and to bring forward one that is worthy requires a divine election. So it was of old, and so it is now, when we make a choice without human passion, not looking to any temporal consideration, swayed neither by friendship, nor enmity. For though we are not partakers of so great a measure of the Spirit as they, yet a good purpose is sufficient to draw unto us the election of God. For the Apostles, when they elected Matthias, had not yet received the Holy Spirit, but having committed the matter to prayer, they chose him into the number of the Apostles. They did not look to human friendships. And so now too it ought to be with us. In this way Timothy also was chosen. When Paul ordained him, as he himself says in his Epistle, 'Neglect not the gift that is in you' (1 Timothy 4:14). Therefore to elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, he reminds him by whom

²⁴⁵ James, the Lord's brother, who was appointed the first Bishop of Jerusalem by the Lord (Eusebius, Church History, II, 1; John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXVIII, 5), may have also taken the Urim and Thummin before the Lord to discern the Lord's will. As a priest, James was permitted to enter the Holy of Holies, and did so regularly to ask his stepbrother (Jesus) to spare His people Israel in spite of the stream of atrocities they were committing against the Christians (Acts 7:54-60, 12:1-3, 22:27-31). Thus choosing Matthias by lot was considered a means of seeking the Will of God in this matter. Unbelievers, at that time, also cast lots to determine the will of their gods (Jonah 1:7).

²⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, III, 1.

²⁴⁷ Tertullian, The Prescription Against Heretics, II, i, 20

²⁴⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, V, 1

he was chosen and ordained, as if he had said, ‘God has chosen you. He gave you your commission; you were not made by human vote. Do not therefore abuse or bring into disgrace the appointment of God’. When again he speaks of a charge, which implies something burdensome, he adds, ‘This charge I commit to you, son Timothy’ (1 Timothy 1:18). He charges him as his own son, as like a father. The ‘committing’, however, implies that it is to be diligently kept, and that it is not our own. For we did not obtain it for ourselves, but God conferred it upon us; and not it only, but also ‘faith and a good conscience’ (1 Timothy 1:19). What He has given us then, let us keep”.

Chrysostom continued²⁴⁹ to say that Peter avoided a situation where everyone might contend for the one place among the ranks of the Twelve. He asked the others to put forward candidates²⁵⁰ based on length of service as a witness. Peter did not make the election himself, but introduced the subject as spoken of by prophecy.

“And his bishopric let another take; that is, his office, his priesthood. So that this, he says, is not my counsel, but His who has foretold these things. He brings the Prophet as a witness. ‘Of these men which have accompanied us’ (Acts 1:21), he makes it their business too, in order that the matter might not become an object of strife, and they might not fall into contention about it. For if the Apostles themselves once contended about this (Mark 9:33-37, 10:35-37), much more might others do it later. Peter defers the decision to the whole body, thereby both making the elected objects of reverence and himself keeping clear of provoking anger with regard to the rest. For such occasions often give rise to great evils”.

“Once it was clear that someone must be appointed, and he brought the prophet as witness, the question was from among what persons should he be selected? To say that the worthy must present themselves would have been to insult the others (as being unworthy); but now he refers the matter to length of time. He said not simply, ‘These who have accompanied us’, but, ‘all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us. Beginning from the baptism of John unto that same day that He was taken up from us, one must be ordained to be a witness with us of His Resurrection’ (Acts 1:22). Thus Peter did not make the election himself. He introduced the proposition to that effect, at the same time pointing out that this was not his own, but from old time by prophecy; so that he acted as expositor, not as preceptor”.

Observe, they were an hundred and twenty, and Peter asked for one person out of the whole body with good right, as having been put in charge of them. For to him had Christ said, ‘And when you have returned to Me, strengthen your brethren’ (Luke 22:32).

Chrysostom also stated²⁵¹ that the primary purpose of the selection of Matthias was as a witness of the Resurrection. As a witness, Matthias needed to be intimately familiar with Who it was that rose. He didn’t need to be a witness of the miracles, etc., since they were done openly;

²⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Commentaries on Acts, III, 1

²⁵⁰ We might note that the Twelve followed the same procedure in selecting the first seven “deacons”. The people select the candidates, and the Twelve ordain them by prayer and the laying on of hands (Acts 6:3).

²⁵¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, III, 1.

but the Resurrection occurred secretly. Matthias completed the order of the Twelve Apostles, but Joseph Barsabas was not annoyed, since he knew that the decision was of the Holy Spirit.

“Observe how desirous he is that they should be eyewitnesses. It is true indeed that the Spirit would shortly come; and yet great care is shown with regard to this circumstance. ‘Of these men, which have accompanied us, all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us’ (Acts 1:21). He shows that they had dwelt with Christ, not simply been present as disciples. In fact, from the very beginning there were many that followed Him. Observe, for instance, how this applied to the Apostle Andrew, ‘One of the two which heard John speak, and followed Jesus, was Andrew, Simon Peter’s brother’ (John 1:40).

“He didn’t say that the candidates needed to be a witness of the rest of his actions, but a witness of the Resurrection alone. That witness, who was able to declare that He Who ate and drank, and was crucified, the same rose again, had a better right to be believed. Wherefore it was needed that he should be a witness, not only of the time preceding this event, nor only of what followed it, and of the miracles; the thing required was the Resurrection. The other matters were open and acknowledged, but the resurrection took place in secret, and was clear to these only. And they do not say, ‘Angels have told us’; but ‘We have seen’. For this was most needful at that time; that they should be men having a right to be believed, because they had seen”.

“Again, it is not without reason that he puts Matthias last; he would show, that frequently he that is honorable among men²⁵², is inferior before God. They said not, ‘Choose’, but, ‘Show the chosen one’; knowing that all things were foreordained of God. They gave them their lots, for they did not yet consider themselves to be worthy to be informed by some sign. And besides, if in the case of Jonah, where neither prayer was made, nor men of worth were the agents, the casting of lots revealed so much, because it was done with a right intention, (Jonah 1:7); much more the case here. Thus, did Matthias, the designated, fill up the company, and complete the order. But the other candidate was not annoyed; for the apostolic writers would not have concealed that or any other failings of their own, seeing they have told of the failings of the very chief Apostles, that on other occasions they had indignation (Matthew 20:24; 26:8), and this not once only, but again and again”.

Augustine stated²⁵³ that Matthias’ selection was a victory for Matthias: “The holy Matthias received the bishopric of that lost Apostle. Let no one be so dull, no one so faithless, as to dispute this. Matthias won for himself a victory, not a wrong, in that he carried off the spoils of the traitor from the victory of the Lord Christ” (i.e. from the Lord’s victory at the Cross).

The Role of James, the Lord’s Brother

While Peter was the leader at this point, he did not continue in that position in Jerusalem. He and the other Apostles ordained James, the Lord’s brother, as Bishop of Jerusalem at the

²⁵² Joseph Barsabas was Jesus’ stepbrother, and also has distant cousin, and probably bore a physical resemblance to Jesus. He was also a leading man in Jerusalem and a prophet at the time of the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:22, 32). There could easily have been some popular bias toward Joseph.

²⁵³ Augustine, *The Letters of Petilian, the Donatist*, II, viii, 17.

direction of the Holy Spirit during the first year of the Church. Eusebius, the 4th Century Church historian, describes²⁵⁴ the situation as follows:

“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*²⁵⁵ writes thus: ‘For they say that Peter and James and John, after the Ascension of our Savior, as if also preferred by our Lord, strove not after honor, but chose James the Just bishop of Jerusalem’.

At the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD, James, the Lord’s brother, is clearly the authority figure in Jerusalem. After everyone had spoken, James answered saying, “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God” (Acts 15:13, 19). Then it pleased the Apostles and elders with the whole Church to send chosen men: Joseph (Barsabas), i.e. James’ older brother, and Silas with a letter to the Gentile Churches documenting the decision of the Council.

We see James in this position much earlier also. Paul’s conversion was about 34 AD²⁵⁶. 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 (Acts 12:2). Herod martyred James, the brother of John, in 44 AD, right after James’ return from Spain, or four years before the Council of Jerusalem. James, the son of Alphaeus, was away evangelizing Egypt according to tradition²⁵⁷.

In the order of Christ’s appearances to His followers after the Resurrection, he appeared to 500 brethren at once, then, He appeared to James, His stepbrother (1 Corinthians 15:6-7). Tradition holds that it was at this time that Jesus appointed James as Bishop of Jerusalem²⁵⁸. James also wrote a Liturgy for the Early Church worship²⁵⁹. The copy of the Liturgy of St. James that exists today probably includes a few changes made later and is quite long. In the 4th Century, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom shortened this Liturgy down to what is still used today in the Eastern Church. The fact that James’ liturgy is so long illustrates the statement in the Scripture that they continued in prayer.

Eusebius states²⁶⁰ that James “alone was permitted to enter into the Holy Place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments like the priests²⁶¹ (Compare Exodus 28:39-43, Leviticus 16:4, Ezekiel

²⁵⁴ Eusebius, *Church History*, II, 1.

²⁵⁵ Clement was a late 1st Century Bishop of Rome and one of the Seventy. His *Hypotyposes* (or Outlines) exists today only in scattered fragments.

²⁵⁶ For the reasoning behind this, see the Study for Galatians 1:11-19, the 20th Sunday after Pentecost.

²⁵⁷ Nikolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 9.

²⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXVIII, 5.

Eusebius, *Church History*, II, 1.

²⁵⁹ “The Liturgy of James, the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord”, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 7, p. 537.

²⁶⁰ Eusebius, *Church History*, II, 1.

²⁶¹ While James was a descendent of Aaron, and was qualified to be a priest, he was not welcomed into that order by the Sadducees, who were the families of the priests in the 1st Century.

44:15-19). And he was in the habit of entering alone into the Temple, and was frequently found upon 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”.

Peter Preaches at Pentecost: Acts 2:1-41

At the time of Pentecost, 30 AD, the Twelve had learned a number of key lessons from the Master (summarized below) from the events of the last three years, and they were now about to put these lessons to good use. They had seen that the things of this world to which others devote all their attention are almost irrelevant! On the other hand, they have a great deal of responsibility in their work for the people of God. All this took on a greater dimension at Pentecost. From the lessons that Christ had given to them, the Twelve had left the things of this world behind and they were ready to tell others about the benefit of so doing.

Event	Lesson	Reference
Unlimited Fish	Daily Food is not an Issue	Luke 5:1-11
Flow of Blood	Health is not an Issue	Luke 8:45-46
Jairus' Daughter	Death is not an Issue	Luke 8:49-56
Twelve Sent Two-by-Two	Health is not an Issue	Matthew 10:5-23
Peter Walks on Water	The Elements Obey Christ	Matthew 14:28-33
The Transfiguration	Christ is God	Matthew 17:1-8
Paying the Temple Tax	Money is not an Issue	Matthew 17:24-27
Binding and Loosing	The Twelve Have Responsibility	Matthew 18:15-20
Limits of Forgiveness	Forgive Everyone Always	Matthew 18:21-35
The Cursed Fig Tree	Christ Will Take Vengeance	Mark 11:12-26
Jesus Washed Peter's Feet	Humility is Required	John 13:3-17

The Significance of Pentecost

Pentecost, also called the Feast of Weeks, was one of the three major festivals in the Old Testament along with Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles. Every Jewish man was instructed to appear before the Lord on these three festivals every year to bring their tithes and offerings (Exodus 23:15-17). “Pentecost” is of Greek derivation meaning “fiftieth” since it was the fiftieth day after the Day of Firstfruits (16th of Nisan) where a sheaf of the new barley harvest was brought in as a wave offering (Leviticus 23:15-16). In 30 AD, the 16th of Nisan was a Sunday, the first day of the week when the Lord rose from the dead as the “firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep” (1 Corinthians 15:20). Pentecost was then the fiftieth day after the Resurrection.

The Feast of Weeks is referred to by other names in the Scripture. On one occasion, it is referred to as the “feast of the harvest of the firstfruits of your labors” (Exodus 23:16); on another, as “the firstfruits of the wheat harvest” (Exodus 34:22); and on another as “the day of the firstfruits” (Numbers 28:26). It is not, however, to be confused with the Day of Firstfruits that occurred seven weeks earlier. On that day, which was not a Sabbath, a barley sheaf was brought as a wave offering. On this day, which is a Sabbath, two loaves made from the wheat harvest just completed were brought as a wave offering. In one case, the barley sheaf is the firstfruits of the barley crop; in the other, the two loaves are the firstfruits of the wheat crop.

The historic event associated with Pentecost in Jewish tradition is the day of the giving of the Mosaic Law on Mt. Sinai. Whereas Israel left Egypt on the 15th of Nisan, the 1st month, they arrived at Mt. Sinai on the 1st day of Sivan, the third month (Exodus 19:1). After a few days of preparation, Christ spoke to them the words of the Law from the midst of the fire on top of Mt. Sinai (Exodus 20:1-17). Under the Hebrew calendar, Pentecost could fall on the 5th, 6th or 7th of Sivan depending on whether the first two months (Nisan and Iyyar) had 29 or 30 days. The length of the month varied depending on when the new moon was observed.

But there was also an agricultural event involved. On Pentecost the two loaves made from the just-completed wheat harvest (Exodus 34:22) were offered as a wave offering. These loaves were baked with leaven in somebody's household, not at the Temple, as was the case with the showbread (1 Chronicles 9:31, 32). Thus, these loaves are different from the unleavened bread eaten during the Passover festival. The meaning of these two loaves is that both Jews and Gentiles are to be partakers of the New Covenant. They are not the elite, or even of a special tribe (the tribe of Levi), but can be "uneducated men" (Acts 4:13). Since leaven represents sin (1 Corinthians 5:6-8), this New Covenant is a treasure in earthenware vessels (2 Corinthians 4:7). The treasure of the New Covenant is the Holy Spirit, Who was poured out on:

- The 120 at Pentecost, 30 AD (Acts 2:1-12)
- An extended group of disciples (Acts 4:31)
- The Samaritans responding to Deacon Philip (Acts 8:14-17)
- Cornelius and the Gentiles in Caesarea (Acts 10:44-46)
- Twelve of John the Baptist's disciples (Acts 19:1-7).

Illustrating the significance of Pentecost are several Old Testament Readings prescribed for the Feast of Pentecost. These Old Testament Readings are sometimes called "parables", in that they give us a glimpse into the significance of the greater event taking place.

Moses' Seventy Elders (Numbers 11:16-29):

The Lord had directed Moses to gather seventy elders to help him "bear the burden of the people". These Seventy were gathered around the Tabernacle when the Lord came down in the cloud. The Lord then took of the Spirit that was upon Moses and placed the same Spirit upon the Seventy. As this occurred, the Seventy prophesied, although they never did so again.

The Spirit Poured out on All Flesh (Joel 2:23-32):

Joel prophesied concerning the coming of the Day of the Lord (Joel 2:1) where the earth will be judged with fire (Joel 2:3) using the imagery of an army of locusts (Joel 2:4-11, 25). He called on the people to repent (Joel 2:12-13) and perhaps the Lord will delay His judgment (Joel 2:14).

Yet the righteous have nothing to fear (Joel 2:21-22); they will have plenty to eat, they will praise the Lord and they will never be put to shame (Joel 2:26). The Lord will pour out His Spirit on all flesh, even on the male and female servants (Joel 2:28-29). The old men will dream dreams and the young men will see visions (Joel 2:28). Whoever calls on the Name of the Lord will be delivered (Joel 2:32).

A New Heart and Spirit for God's People (Ezekiel 36:23-27):

Ezekiel spoke at a time when Israel had profaned the Lord's Name among the Gentiles wherever they went (Ezekiel 36:22). The Lord, Ezekiel said, was going to vindicate His Holy Name when He gathers His people from all nations and brings them into their own land (Ezekiel 36:23-24). We have a foretaste of this now in the Church. Having done this, the Lord gave His people a new heart and put a new Spirit within them, removing the heart of stone and replacing it with a heart of flesh (Ezekiel 36:26). With the Lord's Spirit within them, they will be clean (Ezekiel 36:25) and will walk in His statutes and observe His ordinances (Ezekiel 36:27).

The 120 Gather in the Upper Room

The Day of Pentecost occurred, in the year 30 AD, on a Sunday, the first day of the week. Thus there were back-to-back Sabbaths; the weekly Sabbath followed by the Feast of Pentecost, which was also a Sabbath.

Gathered together at this time were the Twelve, most of the Seventy, the Women plus others totaling about 120 (Acts 1:15). They had been meeting in the upper room where the Twelve had eaten the Passover and Last Supper (Mark 14:15, Acts 1:13). Continuing in prayer and supplication, they were all with one accord in one place (Acts 1:14, 2:1).

Thus, the people we know were involved in the filling of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost were:

- The Twelve Apostles
- The Seventy Apostles
- The Eight Myrrh-Bearing Women

This leaves about 30 others unaccounted for. Included among the unnamed 30 were:

- Joseph of Arimathea
- Nicodemus
- Simon the Leper
- Lazarus
- Simon of Cyrene and his sons Rufus and Alexander
- Zaccheus

All of these 120 people (Acts 1:15) were filled with the Holy Spirit. And all 120 received languages as of fire that were distributed and sat on each one of them. We don't normally think of the Virgin Mary as receiving this gift of languages, but she was there also.

The Effect of the Giving of the Holy Spirit

The pouring out of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost was something special. The Reading for Pentecost Sunday Matins (John 20:19-23) describes Jesus breathing on His disciples and saying, "Receive the Holy Spirit". He then also gave them the authority to forgive sins. This occurred on the evening of the day He rose from the dead. The Twelve had just begun to believe He was raised; they needed the Holy Spirit to sort everything out. As Gregory of Nazianzus said²⁶², "He measured Himself out to them according to their capacity to receive Him". In the 50 days leading up to Pentecost, the Spirit Himself began teaching the disciples.

²⁶² Gregory of Nazianzen, Fifth Theological Oration, XXXI, 26.

John Chrysostom noted that Jesus' breathing on His disciples in the upper room (John 20:22) was not the same as the coming of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. Otherwise He would not have needed to come. Chrysostom suggests²⁶³ that the breathing on them in the upper room was to prepare them for the main event.

Suddenly there came a sound from heaven like a rushing mighty wind and it filled the whole house where they were sitting (Acts 2:2). The sound was not just a wind blowing horizontally, but "from heaven". This calls to mind the pillar of cloud by day and pillar of fire by night that led Israel in the wilderness (Exodus 13:21-22). This is also reminiscent of the "strong East wind" that the Lord sent to divide the Red Sea for Moses (Exodus 14:21). It is perhaps no coincidence that the words for wind and spirit are the same in Hebrew (*ruach*) and Greek (*pneuma*).

Jerusalem was crowded for the two day Sabbath, where no work could be done, and the sound of this "wind" created a curiosity among the multitude of devout Jews in town for the feast (Acts 2:6). Sabbath Laws also restricted travel so all these people were required to be in the locale where they were staying. The sound of the wind was localized to the house where the 120 were staying such that the multitude could easily pinpoint the source of the sound. Those present had come from 15 different countries, in addition to Judea, where 15 different languages were spoken. Many of these people stayed for about a year until the persecution following the martyrdom of Stephen scattered them back to where they came from.

Peter Speaks to the Multitude

For 120 people to fit into the upper room indicates that the house was fairly large and well built. Access to upper rooms of houses or the roofs in general was by an outside staircase and also by a staircase from an inner courtyard. There was a railing around the edge of the first story roof, required by Law, such that people using the roof or the upper room wouldn't accidentally fall off (Deuteronomy 22:8). The edge of the first story roof, just behind the railing presented an ideal spot for Peter to address a large gathering of people, the other eleven standing with him shoulder-to-shoulder (Acts 2:14). Cyril of Jerusalem described²⁶⁴ this scene as follows:

"For in the power of the Holy Spirit, by the will of Father and Son, Peter stood with the Eleven, and lifted up his voice. According to the text, 'Lift up your voice with strength, you that bring good tidings to Jerusalem' (Isaiah 40:9), Peter captured in the spiritual net of his words, about three thousand souls. So great was the grace which worked in all the Apostles together, that, out of the Jews, those crucifiers of Christ, this great number believed, and were baptized in the Name of Christ, and continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and in the prayers".

John Chrysostom stated²⁶⁵ that they expressed themselves through one common voice, and Peter was the mouth of all. The Eleven stood by as witnesses as Peter 'lifted up his voice' (Acts 2:14). That is, he spoke with great confidence, that they might perceive the grace of the Spirit. He who had not endured the questioning of a poor girl (John 18:17), now in the midst of the people, all breathing murder, discourses with such confidence, that this very thing becomes an unquestionable proof of the Resurrection.

²⁶³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXXXVI, 5.

²⁶⁴ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 21.

²⁶⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, IV.

When the multitude was attracted to the house by the sound of the “wind,” they were confused. Cyril of Jerusalem wrote²⁶⁶ that this was a second confusion in the same vein as that first evil one at Babel (Genesis 11:1-9). For in that confusion of tongues there was division of purpose because their thought was at enmity with God. But here, minds were restored and united, because the object of interest was Godly. The confusion occurred because they recognized all or most as Galileans, but heard them speaking the language of their home country (Acts 2:6-7). The recognition as Galileans was easy: Galileans had a characteristic accent due to the way they pronounced (or mispronounced) some of the gutturals of the Hebrew alphabet (Mark 14:70). But for several thousand people (Acts 2:41) to hear 120 other people speak in 15 different languages (Acts 2:9-10) all at the same time presents a question of logistics. If we describe the “gift” in terms of the statements of Rufinus²⁶⁷ and Cyril²⁶⁸, one person could have spoken while 3,000 different people heard the Word in 15 different languages. If this were the case, the “gift” would not be with the speaking but would be with the hearing. Since it was the 120 that received the Gift of Languages, there were likely multiple speakers.

So how did the speaking in tongues work? There was a miraculous aspect to it. They spoke so that others heard in their own languages, and they understood the languages others were speaking. Paul stated to the Corinthians that he spoke in languages (tongues) more than all of them (2 Corinthians 14:18). This was necessary for him. From the fifteen different languages mentioned in Acts 2:9-10, Paul evangelized people speaking seven of them on his various missionary journeys: i.e. people in Judea, Cappadocia, Pontus, Asia, Phrygia, Pamphylia and Rome as well as Crete where he left Titus (Titus 1:5). Thus Paul needed the Gift of Languages in order to do what he did. In the 1st Century, the major use of the Gift of Tongues among the Apostles was for evangelism.

The text states that when the sound from heaven came, “There appeared to them distributed languages²⁶⁹ (tongues), as of fire, and one sat upon each of them” (Acts 2:3). Thus, the Holy Women and the Virgin Mary, as well as the Seventy received this gift also. Later on the same thing happened to Cornelius and the Gentiles (Acts 10:44-46).

John Chrysostom pointed out that this occurred at the third hour or 9:00 a.m. This meant that it was broad daylight and the “fire” still stood out strongly in the sunlight, and at a distance so all 3,000 could see it.

John Chrysostom stated²⁷⁰ the significance of this: “Just as fire kindles as many flames as it will, so here the largeness of the Spirit was shown, in that each one received a fountain of the Spirit. As He Himself had foretold, those who believe in Him, should have ‘a well of water springing up into everlasting life’” (John 4:14).

²⁶⁶ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 17.

²⁶⁷ Rufinus of Aquileia, A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, 2, Schaff and Wace, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series v.3. Rufinus stated, “After Pentecost, they were enabled to speak a variety of different languages such that they found no nation strange to them and no foreign speech beyond their comprehension”.

²⁶⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 17.

²⁶⁹ The Greek word that is usually translated “tongue” (glossa) means both the fleshly member of the human mouth and a language as being controlled by the human tongue.

²⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, IV.

As the multitude was both amazed and perplexed (Acts 2:12) and wondered what this meant, others mocked the 120 saying that they were drunk with new wine (Acts 2:13). Part of the Old Testament Pentecost liturgy was a new grain offering from the wheat harvest. Two loaves of bread were offered with some animal sacrifices and some recently fermented wine, called “new wine” (Leviticus 23:15-18). Thus, the mockers used the illustrations from the Pentecost liturgy to describe the 120: they appeared to the mockers to be drunk with some of the “new wine.”

John Chrysostom stated²⁷¹, “Observe how it is always like as; and rightly so, that you may have no gross sensible notions of the Spirit. Also, as of a rushing, mighty wind; therefore it was not a wind. For when the Spirit was to be made known to John (the Baptist), then it came upon the head of Christ in the form of a dove. But now, when a whole multitude was to be converted, it is like as of fire. And it sat upon each of them. This means that it remained and rested upon them. For the sitting is significant of continuance and being settled”.

If the languages rested on each of the 120 like as of fire, there was something visibly different, perhaps like the haloes or glowing spheres around the heads of the saints that are used in iconography. This may have been similar to Moses’ face glowing after he spoke to God (Exodus 34:32-35, 2 Corinthians 3:13). And they each began to speak with other languages as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:4). The multitude heard the sound of the “wind;” they saw the glow of the “fire” that sat upon each of the 120; and they heard them speaking in their own languages the wonderful works of God (Acts 2:11). The multitude was both amazed and confused at the same time (Acts 2:6-7). When Peter spoke to the crowd of 3,000 people, he quoted Joel 2:28-29 (one of the Old Testament Readings for Pentecost) to describe what was happening: “I will pour My Spirit on all mankind. Your sons and daughters will prophesy”.

This speaking in languages may have appeared similar to the prophecy experienced by Moses’ Seventy elders. That this prophesying was unusual behavior and quite noticeable can be seen from two of the seventy elders who were not at the tent of meeting. They began to prophesy in the camp such that Joshua suggested that Moses restrain them. Moses replied, “Would that all the Lord’s people were prophets, that the Lord would put His Spirit upon them!” (Numbers 11:26-29).

King Saul experienced this “prophesying” on two separate occasions. The first time occurred just after the Prophet Samuel anointed him king. He met a group of prophets and “the Spirit of God came upon him mightily so that he prophesied among them. When all who knew him previously saw that he prophesied now with the prophets, the people said to one another, ‘What has happened to the son of Kish? Is Saul also among the prophets?’” At this time God changed Saul’s heart (1 Samuel 10:1-11).

The second time occurred while Saul was hunting down David to kill him. It was reported to Saul that David was with the Prophet Samuel at Ramah. Saul sent messengers three times to arrest David and bring him back. Each time the messengers came to Ramah, they began to prophesy along with the prophets who had Samuel presiding over them. And they returned to Saul empty-handed. Finally Saul, himself, went to Ramah and he, too, prophesied all day long, prostrating himself and stripped to his loincloth (1 Samuel 19:18-24).

²⁷¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, IV.

In other cases, the Apostle John was “in the Spirit” on the Lord’s Day (i.e. Sunday) when he received a vision (Revelation 1:10). Again, when he was “in the Spirit,” he was taken to heaven to see future things (Revelation 4:1, 2). Peter was in a trance while he was praying and saw heaven opened (Acts 10:10). Similarly, Paul was praying in the Temple in Jerusalem when he was in a trance and saw Christ speaking to him (Acts 22:17-18).

From one of the Old Testament Readings for Pentecost, the Prophet Joel had predicted this, “And it will come about after this that I will pour out My Spirit on all mankind. And your sons and daughters will prophesy; your old men will dream dreams; your young men will see visions. And even on the male and female servants I will pour out My Spirit in those days” (Joel 2:28-29). We note that the text from Joel says that they will prophesy, dream and see visions but not speak in languages. Yet Peter quoted Joel to describe what was happening (Acts 2:14-21). Thus the “prophesying” and the “speaking in languages” must refer to something very similar. This does not mean that the Gift of Languages and the Gift of Prophecy is the same thing. However, since “the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy” (Revelation 19:10), the speaking in languages at Pentecost telling of “the wonderful works of God” (Acts 2:11) can be called prophecy. For more discussions on Prophecy and its implications and uses, see the discussion for the Feast Day of Elijah, July 20th.

Cyril of Jerusalem wrote²⁷² that receiving the Gift of Languages represented vast knowledge. Included in this wisdom they received was the Gift of Prophecy to understand all mysteries and knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:2).

“What teacher can be found so great as to teach men all at once things which they have not learned? So many years they spend learning grammar and other acts to speak only Greek well; yet all do not speak this equally well. The Rhetorician perhaps succeeds in speaking well; and the Grammarian sometimes not well and the skillful Grammarian is still ignorant of the subjects of philosophy. But the Holy Spirit taught them many languages at once, languages, which in all their life they never knew. This is in truth vast wisdom; this is power divine. What a contrast! Their long ignorance in time past to their sudden, complete and varied and unaccustomed exercise of these languages!”

The crowd of 3,000 was justifiably both amazed and perplexed at the same time wondering what was happening. This was a most unusual behavior and circumstances of events.

Peter’s reaction to the mockers on Pentecost was to confront them. They (the Apostles) couldn’t have gotten drunk because it was only 9:00 AM, i.e. the third hour. Peter further stated to them (Acts 2:17-36):

- They all knew Jesus of Nazareth that miracles, wonders and signs testified of him.
- By God’s foreknowledge, He was lawlessly crucified.
- God raised Him up, since death couldn’t hold Him.
- We (the 120) were all witnesses of this.
- Now that Jesus is exalted to the Right Hand of God, we have received from the Father the promise of the Holy Spirit.
- God has made this Jesus, whom you crucified, both Lord and Christ.

²⁷² Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVII, 16.

Hearing this, they were cut to the heart and asked what they should do. Peter said, “Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the Name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. 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 2:38-39). Three thousand souls were then added to their numbers.

John Chrysostom points out the tone of Peter’s address as being one of gentleness and humility. He calls them “men of Judea” (Acts 2:14), “men of Israel” (Acts 2:22), “men and brothers” (Acts 2:29), “all the house of Israel” (Acts 2:36), and concludes with “the promise is to you and your children” (Acts 2:39). This is extremely gracious language considering that he was speaking to the people from the mob that crucified Christ.

The Life of the Church Following Pentecost

Since the 3,000 new converts at Pentecost were from all over the world (Acts 2:8-10), and many were in Jerusalem just for Pentecost, many had no job, income or livelihood if they stayed. For the 120, or perhaps the 500 (1 Corinthians 15:6) to find food and lodging for this many people was a major task. Fortunately, the Holy Women had already been doing that for three years on a smaller scale.

As a result “all who believed were together and had all things common, and sold their possessions and goods and divided them among all, as anyone had need” (Acts 2:44-45). This characteristic of early Christian communities will come up again later when we look at the monastic communities that were started by the Evangelist Mark in Egypt. This living situation is similar to the lifestyle of the Twelve Apostles, who had left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, wife, children and lands for Christ’s Name sake (Matthew 19:29). That is, they had left behind material things and the pleasures of life, meaning that they were living a de facto monastic life.

Shortly after converting the 3000, as a result of Peter and John healing a 40-year old man who was born lame (Acts 3:1-2, 4:22), 5,000 more men believed (Acts 4:4). This 5,000 most likely represents residents of Jerusalem and vicinity since this occurred after the feast days and at the 9th hour of prayer (3:00 p.m.). Referring to both the 3,000 and the 5,000, “the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all, who were possessors of lands or houses, sold them, and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles’ feet. And they distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:32, 34).

Two examples of this are given: that of Barnabas and Ananias. Barnabas was the uncle of John Mark (Colossians 4:10) whose house was the meeting place for some of the Christians when Peter was imprisoned in 44 AD (Acts 12:12). He was a Levite born on Cyprus (Acts 4:36) and, according to tradition, his family owned property in Jerusalem around the Garden of Gethsemane²⁷³. Barnabas sold his portion and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles’ feet (Acts 4:37).

²⁷³ See the web sites www.oqa.org and www.goarch.org for June 11th.

Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a similar piece of property, but kept back part of the proceeds, and laid the rest at the Apostles' feet as if it were everything. Because they lied to the Holy Spirit, they collapsed and died when confronted by Peter over their sin. In this incident, we note Peter's words to the effect that Ananias was not forced to give over all the money and that it was OK to withhold part of it. The problem was that he pretended it was all the proceeds (Acts 5:1-11).

This serves to illustrate the spirit of the church following Pentecost. Everyone contributed what he could to the monastic-like community. Ananias served to illustrate this by being a notable exception.

"And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles' doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer" (Acts 2:42). They "continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart" (Acts 2:46). The "breaking of bread" refers to the first use of the Lord's Supper as part of the worship of the Church, and it was at the "breaking of bread" that Christ was known to the Apostles Luke and Cleopas (Luke 24:30-31).

Listed below are some of the characteristics of the Church following Pentecost. John Cassian commented²⁷⁴ on these characteristics as follows:

1. **Penitence.** Many of the first 3000 people added to the Church had been part of the mob that crucified Christ (Acts 2:36). Peter followed the lead of John the Baptist (Matthew 3:2) and Jesus (Mark 2:17, Luke 13:1-5) in calling for repentance (Acts 2:38).
2. **Love for the Brethren.** "By the affection of love is the weight of our sins overwhelmed, for 'love covers a multitude of sins'" (James 5:20).
3. **Almsgiving.** "By the fruits of almsgiving a remedy is provided for our wounds, because 'As water extinguishes fire, so does almsgiving extinguish sin'" (Ecclesiasticus 3:30).
4. **Tears and Confession of Sins.** "By the shedding of tears is gained the washing away of offenses, for 'Every night I will wash my bed; I will water my couch with tears' (Psalm 6:6). Finally to show that they are not shed in vain, he adds, 'Depart from me all you that work iniquity, for the Lord has heard the voice of my weeping'" (Psalm 6:8).
5. **Healing of Diseases and Care for the Poor.** "Sometimes the pardon of our sins is obtained by the intercession of the saints, for 'if a man knows his brother to sin a sin not unto death, he asks, and He will give to him his life, for him that sins not unto death' (1 John 5:16). And again, 'Is any sick among you? Let him send for the Elders of the Church and they shall pray over him, anointing him with oil in the Name of the Lord. And the prayer of the Faith shall save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up, and if he has committed sins, they shall be forgiven him' (James 5:14-15). Sometimes too, by the virtue of compassion and faith, the stains of sin are removed, according to this passage, 'By compassion and faith sins are purged away'" (Proverbs 15:27 LXX).

Development of the Liturgy of the Church

To understand what worship was like in the Early Church following Pentecost, 30 AD, one must understand what the worship of Israel was like. In Appendix A, we have traced the development of the liturgy used in the Old Testament from the times of the Patriarchs to the 1st Century, and given examples of parts of the Old Testament liturgy from the Scriptures. In the

²⁷⁴ John Cassian, Conferences, III, xx, 8.

following, we will examine how the liturgy of the Church made a seamless transition from the Old Testament liturgy to what the Early Church used in Jerusalem, as illustrated in the Liturgy of St. James. The Evangelist Mark, who was present in the Early Church in Jerusalem, wrote a similar Liturgy²⁷⁵ for the use of the Church in Alexandria that he founded. Many off-hand references to the liturgical life in the New Testament will make more sense once we understand the Old Testament context. Terms like “9th Hour Prayer” and “continual prayer”, for example, have specific meanings in an Old Testament context.

After Pentecost: A Life of Fasting and Prayer

James wrote his Liturgy in the years following Pentecost, and we must understand that he put together this Liturgy for the Jerusalem Church²⁷⁶. The copy of the Liturgy of St. James that exists today probably includes some changes made later but it still represents a worship service that is quite long. In the 4th Century, Basil the Great and John Chrysostom shortened this liturgy down to what is still used today in the Orthodox Church (about 1½ hours). The fact that James’ liturgy is so long illustrates the statement in the Scripture that they continued in prayer (Acts 1:14, 6:4; Colossians 4:2; Luke 18:1). If they were all living a monastic-like life, a long Liturgy is understandable.

John Chrysostom stated²⁷⁷ that all this implies a life of fasting and prayer; that is, a “hard life” with the rigors of fasting and denial of personal pleasure. We might note also at this point, that they did not disturb the Temple liturgy; they were part of it. That is, the worship of the Early Church was very Jewish in character. This will become more obvious when we look at the monasteries in Egypt that were started by the Evangelist Mark. Chrysostom stated:

“This was an angelic commonwealth, not to call anything of theirs their own. The root of evils was cut out. By what they did, they showed what they had heard: ‘Save yourselves from this perverse generation’ (Acts 2:40). They continued daily with one accord in the temple; that is, since they had become three thousand, they took them abroad now. The boldness imparted by the Spirit being great, daily they went up as to a sacred place, as frequently we find Peter and John doing this. For at present they disturbed none of the Jewish observances. Observe the increase of piety! They cast away their riches, and rejoiced, and had great gladness, for greater were the riches they received without labor. None reproached, none envied, none grudged; no pride, no contempt was there. No knavery, no villainy then; such is the effect of fear of affliction! No talk of ‘mine’ and ‘yours’ then. Hence gladness waited at their table; no one seemed to eat of his own, or of another’s. Neither did they consider their brethren’s property foreign to themselves; it was the property of a Master, as was their own; all was the brethren’s”.

“The poor man knew no shame; the rich, no haughtiness. This is gladness! The latter deemed himself the obliged and fortunate party; the others felt themselves as honored herein, and closely were they bound together.”

“Two things there were which might deject them; their abstinent living and the loss of their property. Yet on both accounts, they rejoiced. For who cannot love men of this character as common fathers? They conceived no malice toward each other; they committed all to the grace of God. There was no fear,

²⁷⁵ For more information, see Mark Kern, *The Evangelist Mark*, Unpublished Work, 2004.

²⁷⁶ “The Liturgy of James, the Holy Apostle and Brother of the Lord”, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 7, p. 537.

²⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, VII.

even though they had taken their position in the midst of dangers (John 20:19). By singleness (Acts 2:46), however, he denotes their entire virtue, far surpassing their contempt of riches, their abstinence, and their perseverance in prayer. For this also they offered pure praise to God. But observe also here how they immediately obtain their reward; that is, they had favor with all the people (Acts 2:47). They were engaging and highly beloved”.

Two leaders by example in this regard were James, the Lord’s brother, and his step-mother, the Virgin Mary. Both had lived their entire life in fasting and prayer, and they continued in that way of life. Except now they had more visibility: James as Bishop of Jerusalem and Mary as the Queen Mother (where her Son was revered as King of Kings).

The Apostles Participate in the Worship at the Temple

In the days following Pentecost, the Apostles virtually lived at the Temple, continuing daily with one accord in the Temple (Acts 2:46-47) and on Solomon’s porch (Acts 3:11-12). This was a very important period for them, since they were in the process of sorting out, with the help of the Holy Spirit, all the prophetic references to the work of Christ in the light of the Old Testament liturgy. There were Scripture Readings prescribed for every day from the Old Testament lectionary, just as there are today in the lectionary of the Orthodox Church, and these undoubtedly formed the basis for their daily teaching. This was so important that the Twelve didn’t think it was right to abandon this, even to do good works, and consecrated seven deacons for the good works (Acts 6:2-3). The martyrdom of Stephen occurred one year after Pentecost; this allowed them to cover one liturgical year before everyone was scattered (Acts 8:4).

At the Temple, and at most of the synagogues throughout the region, there was a prayer service at various times during the day, called the “Hours of Prayer”. These “hours of prayer” were observed by devout Jews in the 1st Century and were also followed by the 1st Century Church. At present in the Orthodox Church, the “Hours of Prayer” are as follows; there may have been some differences in the 1st Century.

- “First Hour” or 6:00 AM
- “Third Hour” or 9:00 AM
- “Sixth Hour” or 12:00 noon
- “Ninth Hour” or 3:00 PM
- “Vespers” or sundown
- “Compline” or about bedtime
- “Midnight” or sometime during the night

For example, it was on the way to Ninth Hour prayers that Peter and John healed the man who was lame from birth (Acts 3:1-10). It was at a private Ninth Hour prayer, accompanied by fasting, that the Gentile Cornelius of Caesarea received his vision (Acts 10:1-4, 30-33). Cornelius was generous with alms and prayed to God “always”, meaning that he carefully observed the Hours of Prayer. While Cornelius’ messengers were seeking Peter in Joppa, Peter was observing Sixth Hour prayers on the housetop where he was staying. During these Sixth Hour prayers, Peter received the vision of the sheet coming down from heaven, which was a vision about the Gentiles.

On Paul’s missionary journeys, he observed the Hours of Prayer also. In Philippi, where there was no synagogue, some people met outdoors by the riverside to observe the Hours of

Prayer on the Sabbath (Acts 16:13). Paul joined them, and when they went to prayer on successive days, a slave girl soothsayer annoyed them and disrupted the (liturgical) prayers. Paul cast the demon out of the slave girl, and was thrown in prison for disrupting the local economy (Acts 16:16-24). At subsequent stops on his 2nd Missionary Journey, at Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth, Paul stopped at the local synagogue first for prayer at the hours, and had discussions with the people in the synagogue following the Hours of Prayer. In each place, Paul did not disrupt the prayers; but it was the discussions about what the prayers meant and Who they were directed to that caused all the disagreement.

The Mosaic Law had commanded, “These words which I command you today shall be in your heart. You shall teach them diligently to your children, and shall talk of them when you sit in your house, when you walk by the way, when you lie down, and when you rise up” (Deuteronomy 6:6-7). These commandments in the Law were the foundation of the discussions that followed the Hours of Prayer at the synagogues, and Hebrew tradition has many volumes of the writings that come from these discussions of the Law, analyzing all the corollaries and implications of the Law, but excluding Christ.

The Prayers of the Hours can be called a continual prayer from the analogy to the continual burnt offering, which was offered twice per day. The Lord addressed this also, saying that “men always ought to pray and not lose heart” (Luke 18:1). He then followed that statement with the parable of the widow versus the unjust judge where she got her justice by her continual pleading. This meant that she kept coming back, not that she camped on the judge’s doorstep 24/7. Other examples of the Prayers of the Hours or continual prayer from Paul’s writings are:

- Praying always with all prayer and supplication (Ephesians 6:18)
- Always in every prayer of mine making request for you (Philippians 1:4)
- Praying always for you (Colossians 1:3)
- We do not cease to pray for you (Colossians 1:9)
- Continue earnestly in prayer being vigilant (Colossians 4:2)
- Night and day praying exceedingly (1 Thessalonians 3:10)
- Pray without ceasing (1 Thessalonians 5:17)
- A widow continues in prayer and supplication night and day (1 Timothy 5:5)
- Without ceasing, I remember you in my prayers night and day (2 Timothy 1:3).

One beneficial aspect of this kind of regular prayer is that we open up and bare our soul to the Lord. Jerome in commenting²⁷⁸ on Psalm 5:8 said,

“Solomon says, ‘Trust in the Lord with all your heart and do not lean upon your own understanding. In all your ways acknowledge Him and He shall direct your paths’ (Proverbs 3:5, 6). Understand what He says: that we must not trust in our wisdom, but in the Lord alone, by Whom the steps of a man are directed. Lastly, we are bidden to show Him our ways and make them known, for they are not made straight by our own labor, but by His assistance and mercy. And so it is written, ‘make My way right before Your Face’ (Psalm 5:8 LXX), so that what is right to Him may also seem right to me. Solomon says the same, ‘Commit your works unto the Lord and your thoughts shall be established’ (Proverbs 16:3). Our thoughts are then established when we commit all we do to the Lord, our helper,

²⁷⁸ Jerome, *Dialog Against the Pelagians*, III, 8.

resting it, as it were, upon the firm and solid rock, and attribute everything to Him”.

The result is described as follows: “For it is You Who bless the righteous man, O Lord; You surround him with favor as with a shield” (Psalm 5:12). The underlying suggestion in all this is that righteousness is far more important than wealth and that poverty is no big deal.

To the Levitical priests; (i.e. the Sadducees), the teaching of the Twelve in the Temple in Jerusalem about the meaning of all the prayers was a constant irritant. The Apostles followed the Old Testament lectionary and attended all the services at the Temple, as the Sadducees did themselves, but the Apostles attached an entirely different meaning to it. The Apostles taught that all the Scripture references pointed to the fulfillment of the work of Christ and not just to Jewish supremacy in the eyes of God as His chosen people. This greatly disturbed the Sadducees (Acts 4:1-2) and they had the Apostles arrested. The interesting thing to note here is that the Apostles were arrested for what they taught about Jesus, not for how they worshipped at the Hours of Prayer. The worship of the Church had made a seamless transition from Old Testament to New Testament, based solely on a new understanding of what it all meant in the light of the Law and the Prophets.

John Chrysostom stated²⁷⁹, “For think what a good practice this would be, to discourse only on the divine Laws continually”. Athanasius of Alexandria wrote²⁸⁰ of those who meditate on the words of the Lord as being grounded in faith, rejoicing in hope, and fervent in spirit. By examining themselves, and conforming their hearts to the Lord, they inherit the divine promise; namely, ‘The Lord shall fight for you’ (Exodus 14:14).

Peter Performs Miracles: Acts 3:1-11, 5:14-16, 9:32-43

The time period during which the Church in Jerusalem was at peace can be defined by the date for the stoning of Stephen. According to tradition²⁸¹, Stephen was stoned exactly one year to the day after Pentecost. During this time, a great deal of activity took place in the Early Church. While the Scripture records just the stoning of Stephen one year after Pentecost, in actuality, two hundred others were also stoned to death that same day²⁸², including deacon Nicanor (Acts 6:5). Thus, people had to leave town to escape a major bloodbath organized by the Jewish leaders. It is interesting to take a close look at the attitude of the Apostles during this 1st year of the Church to see what brought on the response from the Jewish leaders.

We can see what the attitude of Peter and John was to those who didn’t believe during this time. Peter and John were in harmony, and they reached out to everyone, but they continued in prayer at the Temple using the Hours of Prayer. When a lame man asked for money, they had no money to give him, since everyone contributed everything he had to the common cause. Since no one had brought the lame man to the Apostles in order that Peter’s shadow might fall on him (Acts 5:14-15), this suggests that the lame man may have been a relative of the Sadducees.

²⁷⁹ John Chrysostom, On the Statutes VI, 18.

²⁸⁰ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters XI, 6.

²⁸¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

²⁸² Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 28.

Very humbly, they healed him, but away from the crowd. Once healed, the lame man, out of gratitude, caused quite a stir. John Chrysostom stated²⁸³:

“When Peter and John went up together into the temple, observe how they continued in prayer, where they prayed together at the Temple at the Ninth Hour. The lame man was in the act of being carried at that instant, whom they laid daily at the gate just when people went into the temple. They carried him there in order that he might receive alms from those entering into the temple”.

“And how was it, you may ask, that they did not present him to Christ? Perhaps they were certain unbelieving men that haunted the temple, as in fact neither did they present him to the Apostles, when they saw them entering, after having done such great miracles. Instead, the lame man asked to receive alms (Acts 3:3). Their bearing marked them as certain devout and righteous men in the sense of observing the Law. Peter spoke while John was silent, but Peter spoke for him also, ‘Silver and gold I don’t have’ (Acts 3:6). He does not say, I have none now, but absolutely, I have none”.

“Notice how unassuming Peter is, how he made no display even to the lame man, but took him by the hand. And the mouth and the hand did everything. Such sort of persons were the Jews; lame, and if the right thing was to ask for health, they asked for money, groveling on the ground. For this it was that they used the temple — to get money. What then does Peter do? He did not despise him; he did not look about for some rich subject. He did not say that if the miracle is not done to some great person, nothing great is done. He did not look for some honor from him, nor did he heal him in the presence of people; for the man was at the entrance, not where the multitude was inside. But Peter sought no such object; nor upon entering did he proclaim the matter. It was Peter’s bearing that attracted the lame man to ask for alms from him. And the wonder is, that he believed so readily. For those who are set free from diseases of long standing, hardly believe their own eyesight when it happens”.

“Once healed, he remained with the Apostles, giving thanks to God, walking, and leaping, and praising God (Acts 3:8). Observe how restless he is in the eagerness of his delight, at the same time shutting the mouths of the Jews. Also, observe that he leaped; this was to prevent the suspicion of hypocrisy; for after all, this was beyond the possibility of deception. For previously he was totally unable to walk, even when hunger pressed. He would not have chosen to share with his bearers²⁸⁴ the proceeds of his begging, if he had been able to manage for himself. But the man was grateful after his recovery. And thus his faith is shown, both by his thankfulness, and by the recent event”.

During this first year of the Church, we have a glimpse of the work of the Twelve before the Apostles began their missionary journeys abroad. Some characteristics of this time are listed below. The Apostles had turned Jerusalem upside down.

- The Twelve were all with one accord in Solomon’s Porch at the Temple (Acts 5:12).
- The people esteemed them very highly (Acts 5:13).
- None of the rest, meaning the priests (or Sadducees) and Pharisees, dared to join them (Acts 5:13).

²⁸³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, VIII.

²⁸⁴ The lame man probably paid the people who carried him to the Temple out of the proceeds of his begging.

- A little later this changed and many of the priests were obedient to the faith (Acts 6:7).
- By the time of the Council in Jerusalem, 48 AD or about 18 years later, some of the sect of the Pharisees had believed also (Acts 15:5).
- Multitudes of men and women were increasingly added to the Lord (Acts 5:14).
- People laid the sick on beds in the streets so that Peter's shadow might fall on them²⁸⁵ and heal them (Acts 5:15).
- Multitudes gathered from surrounding cities to bring in the sick and demon possessed to be healed (Acts 5:16).

Peter and the Apostles Before High Priest: Acts 4:5-22, 5:27-33

In this first year of the Church, several encounters between the Apostles and the religious leaders occurred. In each case, either Peter or John is quoted as being the spokesman for the Apostles. On Pentecost, Peter was described, "standing with the Eleven" (Acts 2:14) in his message to the people who were confused by the events taking place. When Peter and John healed the lame man, the man held onto both Peter and John, but Peter was the one who spoke to the people about what had happened (Acts 3:1-12). When Peter and John were arrested for this, it was Peter who spoke in their defense (Acts 4:1-8). When the Twelve were arrested and put in prison, an angel let them out during the night. Summoned before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the account reads that Peter *and the other Apostles answered* and said, "We ought to obey God rather than men" (Acts 5:17-29).

The Twelve Answer the Accusations

Few details are given in Acts regarding the exact accusations that were brought against the Apostles, or who of the Twelve answered these accusations. Clement²⁸⁶ records examples of the response of several of the Twelve Apostles in answering the accusations. We might note how the Twelve answer the accusations by quoting from the Law and the Prophets. Andrew responded to the party of the Sadducees, who deny the resurrection of the dead, and who were in a rage. One of them cried out from among the people, saying that those greatly err, who think that the dead ever arise.

"Andrew, answering, declared that it is not an error, but the surest matter of faith, that the dead rise, in accordance with the teaching of Him of whom Moses foretold that He should come: the true Prophet. 'Or if,' says he, 'you do not think that this is He whom Moses foretold, let this first be inquired into, so that when this is clearly proved to be He, there may be no further doubt concerning the things which He taught'".

James Zebedee responded²⁸⁷ to a certain Samaritan²⁸⁸, speaking against the people and against God, and asserting that neither do the dead rise, nor is the worship of God to be maintained in Jerusalem, but instead on Mount Gerizim²⁸⁹. The Samaritan added also that Jesus

²⁸⁵ That is, they could stay hidden if they wanted; they didn't have to be openly associated with the Apostles.

²⁸⁶ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 56.

²⁸⁷ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 57.

²⁸⁸ The Jewish leaders accused Jesus of being a Samaritan magician doing great works by the power of Baalzebub, the prince of the demons (John 8:48, Luke 11:15). That is, they were comparing Him to the Heresiarch Simon Magus. For details see Mark Kern, *Simon Magus the Heresiarch*, St Athanasius Press, 2002.

²⁸⁹ This Samaritan opinion derived from Moses' command for the blessing of the people from Mt. Gerizim (Deuteronomy 27:11-13). The Samaritans conveniently ignored the Lord's other instructions to Moses, such as the instruction for worship centered in Jerusalem. "You shall seek the place where the Lord your

was not He whom Moses foretold as a Prophet to come into the world (Deuteronomy 18:15). Against him and another who supported him in what he said, James and John, the sons of Zebedee, vigorously debated. At this time they did not have a command to enter into Samaritan cities, nor to bring the word of preaching to them (Matthew 10:5). Yet to confine the Samaritan discourse lest it should hurt the faith of others, they replied so prudently and so powerfully, that they put them to perpetual silence.

“James made an oration concerning the resurrection of the dead that was well received by all the people. While John showed that if they abandoned the error of Mount Gerizim, they would come to know that Jesus was indeed He who, according to the prophecy of Moses, was expected to come. Indeed, as Moses wrought signs and miracles, so also did Jesus. And there is no doubt that the likeness of the signs proves Him to be that prophet of whom he said that He should come, ‘like himself’”.

Philip responded²⁹⁰ to one of the scribes, shouting from the midst of the people, who said, ‘The signs and miracles which your Jesus wrought, he wrought not as a prophet, but as a magician’.

“Philip eagerly encountered him, showing that by this argument he accused Moses also. For when Moses wrought signs and miracles in Egypt, in like manner as Jesus also did in Judea, it cannot be doubted that what was said of Jesus might as well be said of Moses”.

Clement continues²⁹¹ with examples of the response of Nathanael, James the son of Alphaeus and Jude. “A certain Pharisee, hearing the above, chided Philip because he put Jesus on a level with Moses.

“Bartholomew (i.e. Nathanael) boldly declared that we do not only say that Jesus was equal to Moses, but that He was greater than he, because Moses was indeed a prophet, as Jesus was also, but that Moses was not the Christ, as Jesus was. And therefore He is doubtless greater who is both a prophet and the Christ, than he who is only a prophet”.

“After him James the son of Alphaeus gave an address to the people to show that we are not to believe on Jesus just on the ground that the prophets foretold concerning Him. But rather that we are to believe the prophets, that they were really prophets, because the Christ bears testimony to them. For it is the presence and coming of Christ that shows that they are truly prophets: for testimony must be born by the superior to his inferiors, not by the inferiors to their superior”.

“After him Lebbaeus (i.e. Jude, Matthew 10:3) began vehemently to charge it upon the people that they did not believe in Jesus, who had done them so much good by teaching them the things that are of God, by comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, relieving the poor. Yet for all these benefits their return had been hatred and death”.

God chooses, out of all your tribes, to put His name for His dwelling place; and there you shall go” (Deuteronomy 12:5).

²⁹⁰ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 58.

²⁹¹ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 59.

Simon the Zealot responded²⁹² to one of the disciples of John the Baptist, who asserted that John was the Christ, and not Jesus, inasmuch as Jesus Himself declared that John was greater than all men and all prophets. ‘If, then,’ said he, ‘he is greater than all, he must be held to be greater than Moses, and greater than Jesus himself. And if he is the greatest of all, then he must be the Christ.’

“To this Simon the Zealot, answering, asserted that John was indeed greater than all the prophets, and all who are born of women, yet he is not greater than the Son of Man. Accordingly Jesus is also the Christ, whereas John is only a prophet. And there is as much difference between him and Jesus, as between the forerunner and Him whose forerunner he is; or as between Him who gives the Law, and him who keeps the Law.

Matthias, who was substituted as an Apostle in the place of Judas, responded²⁹³ after Simon the Zealot spoke, exhorting the people that they should not regard Jesus with hatred, nor speak evil of Him.

“For it were far more proper, even for one who might be in ignorance or in doubt concerning Jesus, to love Him than to hate Him. For God has affixed a reward to love, a penalty to hatred. ‘For the very fact,’ said he, ‘that He assumed a Jewish body, and was born among the Jews, how has not this incited us all to love Him?’”

Thomas responded²⁹⁴ to Caiaphas, who attempted to impugn the doctrine of Jesus. He claimed that Jesus spoke vain things, for He said that the poor are blessed; and promised earthly rewards; and placed the chief gift in an earthly inheritance; and promised that those who maintain righteousness shall be satisfied with meat and drink; and many things of this sort.

“Thomas, in reply, proved that his accusation is frivolous. He showed that the prophets, in whom Caiaphas believes, taught the same things that Jesus taught and much more, but did not show in what manner these things are to be, or how they are to be understood. Whereas Jesus pointed out how they are to be taken”.

The Sanhedrin Marvels at the Wisdom of the Uneducated Fishermen

The Jewish rulers, elders and Scribes described the fishermen-turned-Apostles as uneducated and untrained men (Acts 4:13). This group of Jewish leaders included Annas and Caiaphas (Acts 4:6), where the priests and the high priest were from among the Sadducees, who did not believe in a bodily resurrection (Luke 20:27). “Uneducated and untrained” does not mean unintelligent, but only refers to formal training in the Mosaic Law, philosophy and oratory. As a result, these Sadducees marveled at the boldness of Peter and John, who had no training in oratory, but who were very eloquent in proclaiming the Resurrection of Christ (Acts 4:13).

In doing so, Peter quoted from the same prophecy that Jesus had quoted from a few months earlier:

“If we this day are judged for a good deed *done* to a helpless man, by what means he has been made well, let it be known to you all, and to all the people of Israel, that by the name of Jesus Christ of Nazareth, whom you crucified, whom

²⁹² Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 60.

²⁹³ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 59.

²⁹⁴ Pseudo-Clement, *Recognitions of Clement*, I, 61.

God raised from the dead, by Him this man stands here before you whole. This is the 'stone, which was rejected by you builders, which has become the chief cornerstone' (Psalm 118:22-23). Nor is there salvation in any other, for there is no other name under heaven given among men by which we must be saved" (Acts 4:9-12).

When Jesus had quoted the same thing to the Chief Priests, the Scribes and the Elders, it was following the Parable of the Wicked Vineyard Tenants (Luke 20:9-16). He concluded the Parable by saying that the vineyard, which they understood (correctly) to be the Kingdom of God on earth, would be given to others (meaning Gentiles). Their reaction was, "May it never be!" (Luke 20:16). The Twelve didn't mention the part about the Kingdom of God being given to others, since their understanding on these matters was still developing.

Jesus had concluded the parable by saying, "Whoever falls on this stone will be broken, but on whomever it falls, it will grind him to powder" (Matthew 21:44). Isaiah explained the falling and being broken as Israel stumbling over the stone (Isaiah 8:14-15; quoted in 1 Peter 2:8). Chrysostom said²⁹⁵ this stumbling includes being offended by the stone. If, due to the hardness of our heart, we stumble over what Christ says, we will be broken not Him. Christ will prevail!

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

John Chrysostom noted²⁹⁶ a major change in the demeanor of the Apostles into one of fearlessness. This was also reflected in their new followers. They believed even though they saw the Apostles arrested. The Jewish leaders tried to intimidate the Apostles into submission, and they were amazed at their wisdom and boldness.

"The Apostles had become a pattern to the rest, that they should no longer crave each other's support out of fear. Regarding the five thousand who believed (Acts 4:4), did they see the Apostles honored? Did they not see them put in bonds? Why did they then believe? Peter's sermon had laid the seed deep into them, and had taken a hold upon their understanding. Therefore their enemies were incensed, that they did not fear them, that they made no account of their present troubles²⁹⁷. For, the Apostles say, if He that was crucified affects such great things, and makes the lame to walk, we have no need to fear these men either. This again is God's ordering. For those who now believed were more numerous than before (i.e. the 3000). Therefore in their presence they bound the Apostles, to make the new believers more fearful. But the reverse took place".

"And they examined them not before the people, but privately, that the hearers may not profit by their boldness. The rulers, elders, and scribes, including Annas the High Priest, Caiaphas, John, and Alexander²⁹⁸, and as many as were of

²⁹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXVIII, 2.

²⁹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, X.

²⁹⁷ A few weeks earlier, Jesus' arrest meant crucifixion. This had to have been on their mind.

²⁹⁸ According to Josephus, Antiquities, XVIII, viii, 1, Alexander was the Governor of the Jews in Alexandria.

the kindred of the High Priest, gathered together at Jerusalem (Acts 4:5-6). For now along with the other evils of the times, the Law was no longer observed. They asked, ‘By what power, or by what Name, have you done this?’ (Acts 4:7). And yet they knew it well; for it was because they preached through Jesus the Resurrection that they arrested them. They expected the numbers present at the Council would make them recant. Christ had said, ‘When they deliver you up unto the synagogues, take no thought how or what thing you shall speak; for it is the Spirit of your Father which speaks in you’ (Luke 12:11, 14).

“As Peter spoke, note his Christian wisdom, how full of confidence it is. He didn’t utter a word of insult, but spoke with respect. He takes them in hand valiantly; he exposes them, saying that it is for a work of kindness they are calling them to account (Acts 4:9). It is as if he had said, ‘In all fairness we ought to have been crowned for this deed, and proclaimed benefactors. But we are even put on trial for a good deed done to a helpless man. Not a rich man, not a powerful man, not a noble man!’ It is a most forcible way of presenting the case; and he shows that they are piercing their own selves. Christ had told the disciples, ‘What you hear in the ear, preach upon the housetops’ (Matthew 10:27). Do not think, he said, that we conceal the events, or the nature of His death. This was He, ‘Whom you crucified, Whom God raised from the dead, even by Him does this man stand before you whole’” (Acts 4:10).

Changes in the Perception of the Sanhedrin

As the Apostles were teaching in the Temple²⁹⁹, the High Priest and the Sadducees rose up and arrested them in front of everyone in the Temple³⁰⁰, and imprisoned them, but an angel let them out. This caused a great deal of consternation on the part of the Sadducees. These events are summarized as follows, from Acts 5:

- The High Priest and Sadducees hauled the Apostles into prison publicly (Acts 5:17)
- An angel let them out and told them to go teach in the Temple (Acts 5:19)
- Meanwhile, the High Priest chairing the Sanhedrin told the officers to bring the Apostles before the Council (Acts 5:21)
- The officers found the prison still secure, sealed just like the tomb had been sealed³⁰¹, but no one inside. The guards didn’t realize anyone was gone (Acts 5:22)
- This left the Sanhedrin wondering at what would happen if it was proclaimed that the Apostles walked through the walls of a secure prison -- a very embarrassing situation for the Sanhedrin (Acts 5:24)
- Then someone came and told the Sanhedrin that the Apostles were teaching in the Temple openly (Acts 5:25)

²⁹⁹ The arrest must have occurred in the Temple, since that was where the Twelve were together. After the angel let them out of prison, the first thing the High Priest asked them was, “Did we not strictly command you not to teach in this Name?” (Acts 5:28).

³⁰⁰ We note that the Temple continues to be the center of activity, both for worship, discussion, teaching, and arrests.

³⁰¹ The issue of the “seals” comes up three times. (1) When Christ rose from the dead, He rose right through the burial wrappings (John 19:39-40) and the walls of the tomb, leaving the seals of the tomb intact. (2) Here the Apostles escape from the prison, leaving the seals on the prison door intact, and the soldiers outside unaware that they were gone. (3) When Herod arrested Peter, intending to kill him after the Passover, Peter escaped without disturbing the seals and without the knowledge of the guards.

- So the High Priest sent an entourage to the Apostles to ask them nicely to come, so that the people wouldn't stone the officers from the High Priest for countermanding an obvious act of God (Acts 5:26)
- When the Apostles testified boldly, the Sanhedrin was furious (literally cut to the heart) and wanted to kill them (Acts 5:33)
- Then Gamaliel, the most respected rabbi, persuaded the Sanhedrin to leave them alone (Acts 5:35-39)
- So the Sanhedrin scourged them according to the custom for Law-breakers and let them go (Acts 5:40)
- And the Apostles went right back to the Temple to teach (Acts 5:42).

John Chrysostom commented³⁰² on this to say that the Sanhedrin was not acting logically, but emotionally, and seemed to have no clue at all about what was happening in front of them. This is especially appalling in the light of the Study on Holy Saturday³⁰³, where they spoke to witnesses, who had recently risen from the dead, and who spoke of the Resurrection of Christ.

“A twofold security this was; as was the case at the Sepulcher, where there was both the seal and the men to watch. See how they fought against God! Did it occur to them whether this was of man's doing that happened to them? Who led them out when the doors were shut? How did they come out with the keepers standing before the door? Truly (the Sadducees) must be mad or drunken to talk like this. Here are men whom neither prison, nor bonds, nor closed doors have been able to keep in, and yet they expect to overpower them. Such is their childish folly!”

Later when they brought the Apostles to the Sanhedrin, they feared the multitude (Acts 5:26). Chrysostom continued³⁰⁴,

“Why? How had the multitude helped the Apostles? When they ought to have feared God Who was continually delivering them like winged creatures out of their power; instead of that, ‘they feared the multitude!’ The Apostles might have said: ‘Who are you that you countermand God?’ But what do the Apostles say? With much mildness they make answer, ‘We ought to obey God rather than man’ (Acts 5:29).

Chrysostom noted³⁰⁵ that the Sanhedrin thought that the Apostles were blood-thirsty and bent on revenge for Jesus' crucifixion. “You have filled Jerusalem with your teaching and intend to bring this Man's blood on us” (Acts 5:28). But yet the Apostles did not answer with defiance (Acts 5:29), even with the whole city backing them (Acts 5:26) and being endowed with such great Grace at Pentecost. Instead they pleaded with them that they, too, might obtain forgiveness (Acts 5:31). The Apostles were not angered; they pitied these men, and wept over them, and noted in what way they might free them from their error and wrath. They were not contentious for glory; but they repeated again the same story, the Cross, the Resurrection. Hearing this “they were furious and plotted to kill the Apostles” (Acts 5:33).

³⁰² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XIII.

³⁰³ Mark Kern, The Whole Counsel of God, St. Athanasius Press, 2004, p. 1506.

³⁰⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XIII.

³⁰⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XIII.

“You hear the Apostles speak of the forgiveness of sins, O wretched man, and that God does not demand punishment, and do you wish to slay the messenger? What wickedness was this! The Sanhedrin ought either to have convicted them of lying, or if they could not do that, to have believed. But if they did not choose to believe, yet they ought not to slay them. For what was there that deserved death? Such was their intoxication; they did not even see what had taken place. Observe, how the Apostles, when they made mention of the crime, add the mention of forgiveness. They showed, that while what had been done was worthy of death that which was given was offered to them as to benefactors! In what other way could anyone have persuaded them?”

Later on, when Stephen got into a dispute with the Freedmen (Acts 6:9), he testified also before the Sanhedrin. Only this time, Gamaliel could not hold their rage back. [Gamaliel later became a Christian, perhaps because of these things]. In all this there is a major conflict between light and darkness. Some people whose deeds are evil love darkness more than light (John 3:19). Since a great deal of light was present, the reaction of darkness was that much stronger. All of the Twelve Apostles encountered this all their lives. And it is something we encounter also as we walk in the Light as children of light.

John Chrysostom stated³⁰⁶ that the miracles performed by the Apostles were a proof of the Resurrection, since not everyone would have believed the Resurrection even if they had seen it. But seeing His followers performing greater works than He did Himself is irrefutable.

“Well did Christ say, ‘If you have faith you shall say unto this mountain, Remove, and it shall remove’ (Matthew 17:20); and again, ‘He that believes on Me, the works that I do shall he do also, and greater works than these shall he do’ (John 14:12). What does He mean by ‘greater’? The ones that the disciples are seen doing after this. For even the shadow of Peter raised a dead man³⁰⁷; and so the power of Christ was the more proclaimed. Since it was not so wonderful that He while alive should work miracles, as that when He was dead others should be enabled to work in His Name greater than He wrought. This was an indisputable proof of the Resurrection, since not everyone would have believed the Resurrection even if they had seen it. For men might have said that it was an appearance³⁰⁸. But one who saw that by His Name alone greater miracles were wrought than when He conversed with men, one could not disbelieve unless he were truly senseless”.

Chrysostom also noted³⁰⁹ a change in the attitude of the Jewish leaders compared to their attitude when they arrested Christ. Then they acted out of pride and vainglory; now they are defensive and want to avoid being thought of as murderers.

“At first the Jewish leaders did everything for the sake of man’s glory, but now another motive was added; that they should not be thought guilty of murder, as they said, ‘Do you wish to bring this man’s blood on us?’ (Acts 5:28) They

³⁰⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LXIII, 3.

³⁰⁷ The Scriptural account only mentions that Peter’s shadow healed people (Acts 5:15). Perhaps Chrysostom knew of events that are not recorded in the Scripture.

³⁰⁸ This was, in fact, one of the major heresies in the 1st Century taught by Simon Magus and his followers. Simon claimed that it was he, not Jesus, on the Cross, but only in appearance, not reality. For more information, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2002.

³⁰⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, X.

were persuaded that He was raised, and received this proof of it; they expected that their role in Christ's death could be overshadowed by their new machinations! What can match the folly of this! Such is the nature of wickedness; it has no eyes for anything, but on all occasions it is thrown into perturbation. Finding themselves overwhelmed, they felt like persons who have been outwitted, as is the case with people who have been made a sport of in some matter. The Pharisees themselves also believed in a resurrection: a cold and childish doctrine, indeed, but still they held it. Was this not sufficient to induce them to treat the Apostles with respect?"

"Already they had a bad reputation by reason of what they had done to Christ; so that they were rather increasing their own condemnation. In the case of Christ, however, they took Him at midnight; they immediately led him away, and made no delay, being exceedingly in fear of the multitude. Whereas in the case of the Apostles, they were bold. They didn't take them to Pilate, being ashamed and blushing at the thought of the former affair, lest they should also be taken to task for that".

"For not only the Apostles' words; but their bearing showed; that they should stand there so intrepidly to be tried in a cause like this, and with a death threat hanging over them! Not only by their words, but by their gesture also, they showed the boldness with which they confronted the people".

Peter Speaks to Ananias and Sapphira: Acts 5:1-11

When the Church started after Pentecost, many people gave up all their goods to feed the hungry converts. The first 3000 (Acts 2:38-41) were mostly pilgrims who had come from remote areas of the Empire (Acts 2:8-11), and who had no job or livelihood if they stayed in Jerusalem. As a result, "all who believed were together, and had all things in common, and sold their possessions and goods, and divided them among all, as anyone had need" (Acts 2:44, 45).

Referring to both the 3,000 and the 5,000, "the multitude of those who believed were of one heart and one soul; neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked; for all, who were possessors of lands or houses, sold them and brought the proceeds of the things that were sold, and laid them at the Apostles' feet. And they distributed to each as anyone had need" (Acts 4:32, 34).

Two examples of this are given: that of Barnabas and Ananias. Barnabas was the uncle of John Mark (Colossians 4:10) whose house was the meeting place for some of the Christians when Peter was imprisoned in 44 AD (Acts 12:12). He was a Levite born on Cyprus (Acts 4:36) and, according to tradition³¹⁰, his family owned property in Jerusalem around the Garden of Gethsemane. Barnabas sold his portion and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet (Acts 4:37).

Ananias and his wife Sapphira sold a similar piece of property, but kept back part of the proceeds, and laid the rest at the Apostles' feet as if it were everything. Because they lied to the Holy Spirit, they collapsed and died when confronted by Peter over their sin. In this incident, we note Peter's words to the effect that Ananias was not forced to give over any of the money and

³¹⁰ According to the web site www.goarch.org for June 11, the property was a field.

that it was OK to withhold part of it. The problem was that he pretended it was all the proceeds (Acts 5:1-11).

This serves to illustrate the spirit of the Church following Pentecost. Everyone contributed what he could. Ananias served to illustrate this by being a notable exception. “And they continued steadfastly in the Apostles’ doctrine and fellowship in the breaking of bread and in prayer” (Acts 2:42). They “continued daily with one accord in the Temple, and breaking bread from house to house, they ate their food with gladness and simplicity of heart” (Acts 2:46). The “breaking of bread” refers to the first use of the Lord’s Supper as part of the worship of the Church.

John Chrysostom commented that this kind of love as being the strongest thing there is, and it the mother of all good things.

“If love were truly observed³¹¹, 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.”

“Therefore³¹² Paul says that the love which we are speaking of is the mother of all good things, and he prefers it to miracles and all other gifts. For 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 require not to see 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 ourselves 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). So that this sign is greater surely than all signs, in that the disciple is recognized by it. For 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”.

John Chrysostom compared³¹³ the sin of Ananias and Sapphira to that of Achan during the Conquest. Just as Achan was stoned to death, so Ananias perished. The problem was a violation of the sacredness of things given³¹⁴ to the Lord. The entire city of Jericho was devoted to the Lord for destruction, but Achan stole from the Lord. Ananias’ money was also devoted to the Lord, but Ananias stole from it. Both were examples of covetousness that had implications to the whole people of God if left unchecked.

“Perhaps some one will say that Peter dealt very harshly with Ananias and Sapphira. If for gathering sticks a man is to be stoned (Numbers 15:32-36), much rather ought he for sacrilege; for Ananias’ money had become sacred. Do you see that this is the charge brought against Ananias, that having made the money

³¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXII, 11.

³¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXII, 14.

³¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XII.

³¹⁴ The term for the sacred things devoted to the Lord for destruction was “anathema”. In order to be used, they had to be purified either by passing through the fire (i.e. melted down), or by passing through the water (i.e. cleansed by holy water). Achan stole them before purification.

sacred, he afterwards hid it? ‘Could you not’, said Peter, ‘after selling your land, use the proceeds as your own?’ (Acts 5:3-4) See how at the very beginning, the devil made his attack; in the very midst of such signs and wonders, how this man was hardened! Something of the same kind had happened during the Conquest. Achan, the son of Carmi, coveted the devoted thing; observe what vengeance ensues upon the sin (Joshua 7:10-26). Sacrilege, beloved, is a most grievous crime, insulting, and full of contempt. We neither obliged you to sell, the Apostle says, nor to give your money when you had sold; of your own free choice you did it. Why have you then stolen from the sacred treasury? Why has Satan filled your heart? Even though Satan did the thing, the man was guilty of it for admitting the influence of the devil, and being filled with it!

You will say, they ought to have corrected him. But he would not have received correction; for a person that has seen such things as he had seen, and is none the better, would certainly be none the better for anything else that could be done. The matter was not one to be simply passed over; like gangrene, it must be cut out, that it might not infect the rest of the body. As it is, both the man himself is benefited in that he is not left to advance further in wickedness, and the rest, in that they are made more earnest. Otherwise the contrary would have ensued”.

The Epistle Reading for the Fathers of the Church in July and in October comes from Titus 3:8-15. Referring to this Reading, John Chrysostom pointed out³¹⁵ that Paul seemed more concerned for Titus and his fellow bishops on Crete that they maintain good works than for the poor who would be the recipient of their kindness. The issue is the integrity of the giver³¹⁶, not the relief of the poor. If others maintained the poor, this would be of no benefit to the bishops because they would remain unfruitful. To illustrate this, Chrysostom used the example³¹⁷ of Ananias and Sapphira:

“At the beginning also, when men sold all their possessions and laid the money at the Apostles’ feet (Acts 4:37), the Apostles were more concerned for the givers than for those who received their alms. For if their concern had only been that the poor might by any means be relieved, they would not have judged so severely the sin of Ananias and Sapphira when they kept back part of their money” (Acts 5:1-11).

John Chrysostom contrasted³¹⁸ Peter’s dealing with Ananias and Sapphira and Paul’s delivering of several Apostolic workers over to Satan that they might learn not to blaspheme (1 Timothy 1:20). The point for the apostolic workers was delivering them over to more of the same things that they were adhering to, in order that they might see the error of their ways. Similarly, those who are ungrateful for the things of God are given over to uncleanness and lust (Romans 1:24), like the Prodigal Son, in order that they might “come to themselves” (Luke 15:17) and realize what they’ve done. Satan, who is subject to the commands of the Apostles, was made to chastise in order that the disgrace might be greater. On the other hand, Paul punished the Jewish false prophet Bar-Jesus (Acts 13:6-12) and Peter punished Ananias

³¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Titus, VI, vv. 14-15.

³¹⁶ Similarly it was forbidden to bring the hire of a harlot or the wages of a dog (Sodomite) into the House of the Lord, even to maintain the poor. The problem was the integrity of the giver.

³¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Titus, VI, Moral

³¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, V, v. 20.

themselves because both were unbelievers. Chrysostom also applied this delivery over to Satan to people of his day who approach the holy Mysteries unworthy and infrequently.

“Satan, as an executioner, though he is laden with numberless crimes, is made the corrector of others. But why did Paul use Satan and not punish them himself, as he did Bar-Jesus, and as Peter did Ananias, instead of delivering them to Satan? It was not that the Apostolic workers might be punished, but that they might be instructed. For that Paul had the power appears from other passages, here he said, ‘What do you want? Shall I come to you with a rod?’ (1 Corinthians 4:21) And again, ‘Lest I should use sharpness, according to the authority which the Lord has given me, for edification, and not for destruction’ (2 Corinthians 13:10). Why did Paul then call upon Satan to punish the Apostolic workers? That the disgrace might be greater, as the severity and the punishment was more striking. They themselves chastised those who did not yet believe (i.e. Bar-Jesus and Ananias); but those who left the Faith (i.e. the Apostolic workers), they delivered to Satan”.

“Why then did Peter punish Ananias? While he was tempting the Holy Spirit, he was still an unbeliever. That the unbelieving therefore might learn that they could not escape, they themselves inflicted punishment upon them. But those who had learned this, yet afterwards left the Faith, like the apostolic workers, they delivered to Satan. This showed that they cared for them; and as many as were lifted up in arrogance were delivered to Satan. For as kings, with their own hands, slay their enemies, but deliver their subjects to executioners for punishment, so it is in this case. And these acts were done to show the authority committed to the Apostles. Nor was it a slight power, to be able thus to subject the devil to their commands. For this shows that he served and obeyed them even against his will, and this was no small proof of the power of grace. So also the Lord delivered Judas to Satan. For immediately after Jesus gave Judas the piece of bread, Satan entered into him (John 13:27). Or this may be said; those whom they wished to amend (i.e. the Apostolic workers), they did not punish themselves; they reserved their punishments for those who were incorrigible (i.e. Bar-Jesus and Ananias). Job also was delivered to Satan, but not for his sins, but for fuller proof of his worth”.

“Many such instances of this still occur. For since the Priests cannot know who are sinners, and who are unworthy partakers of the holy Mysteries, God often in this way delivers them to Satan. For when diseases, and attacks, and sorrows, and calamities, and the like occur, it is on this account that they are inflicted. Paul demonstrates this, ‘For this cause many are weak and sickly among you, and many sleep’ (1 Corinthians 11:30). One might say, ‘But how?’ When we approach the holy Mysteries but once a year, this is indeed the evil. You determine the worthiness of your approach, not by the purity of your minds, but by the interval of time. You think it is a proper caution not to communicate often; not considering that partaking unworthily sears you. It is not bad to receive often, but to receive unworthily, though but once in a whole life. But we are so miserably foolish, that, though we commit numberless offenses in the course of a year, we are not anxious to be absolved from them. We are satisfied, that we do not boldly insult the Body of Christ often, but we don’t remember that those who crucified Christ crucified Him only once. Is the offense then the less, because it is committed only once? Judas betrayed his Master only once. Did that exempt him

from punishment? Why is time considered a factor in this matter? Let our time of coming be when our conscience is pure”.

Cyril of Jerusalem compared³¹⁹ the dishonesty of Ananias and Sapphira to that of Gehazi, the servant of Elisha. Both Peter and Elisha had insight into things that were happening that was far beyond the wisdom of this world.

“Peter was not with Ananias and Sapphira when they sold their possessions, but he was present by the Spirit. There was no accuser; there was no witness; how did he know what had happened? The unlettered Peter, through the grace of the Spirit, learned what not even the wise men of the Greeks had known. The same thing happened with Elisha. For when he had freely healed the leprosy of Naaman, Gehazi received the reward, the reward of another’s achievement; and he took the money from Naaman, and hid it in a dark place (2 Kings 5:24). But the darkness is not hidden from the Saints. And when he came, Elisha asked him; and like Peter, when he said, ‘Tell me whether you sold the land for so much?’ (Acts 5:8), he also enquires, not in ignorance, but in sorrow, ‘Where have you come from, Gehazi?’ From darkness you have come, and to darkness you shall go; you have sold the cure of the leper, and the leprosy is your heritage. I have fulfilled the bidding³²⁰ of Him who said to me, ‘Freely you have received, freely give’ (Matthew 10:8); but you have sold this grace; receive now the condition of the sale. What did Elisha say to him? ‘Did not my heart go with you?’ (2 Kings 5:26) I was here shut in by the body, but the spirit which has been given to me by God saw even the things far off, and showed me plainly what was doing elsewhere. Do you see how the Holy Spirit not only rids of ignorance, but invests with knowledge? Do you see you how He enlightens men’s souls?”

Organizational Changes Needed During the First Year of the Church

During that first year of the Church, some changes in the organizational structure of the Church had to be made. These changes began with the departure of some of the Myrrh-Bearing Women, and the subsequent breakdown in service to the Greek-speaking widows. Seven “deacons” were chosen to oversee to service to the multitude of new believers, thus replacing the Myrrh-Bearing Women in this function. Another major change occurred at the stoning of the Archdeacon Stephen, which occurred one year, to the day, after Pentecost³²¹.

The Departure of Some of the Myrrh-Bearing Women

The eight Myrrh-Bearing Women, who had financed Jesus’ 3-year public ministry (Luke 8:2-3), had also been instrumental in helping with the daily distribution of food. At first, when everyone had everything in common, people sold their possessions, brought the proceeds of the things that were sold and laid them at the Apostles’ feet. And they (the Apostles) distributed to each as anyone had need (Acts 4:34-35, 2:44-45). Over the next year or so, some of the Holy Women undoubtedly had a hand in the distribution since that was what they did during the Lord’s 3-year public ministry. The organizational change was described as follows:

³¹⁹ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XVI, 17.

³²⁰ Cyril equates the role of Elisha to be similar to that of the Twelve Apostles, in they were sent out two-by-two to heal the sick and raise the dead.

³²¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

“The Twelve summoned the multitude of the disciples and said: ‘It is not desirable that we should leave the Word of God and serve tables. Therefore, brethren, seek out from among you seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business; but we will give ourselves continually to prayer and to the ministry³²² of the Word’” (Acts 6:2-4).

At this point, it is instructive to look closely at the Scriptures to see both what it says and what it doesn’t say. If the issue was for the Twelve to leave the Word of God and serve tables, this implies that they weren’t serving tables at that time. They were busy teaching the people daily on Solomon’s porch (Acts 3:11, 4:1-3, 5:12, 20-21) and in every house (Acts 5:42). But it also says that the Twelve “distributed to each as anyone had need” (Acts 4:35) of the proceeds of the things that were sold. This seems to make a compelling case for the distribution to have been delegated to someone, and the Holy Women stand out as the most likely probability. Regarding delegation, John Chrysostom mentioned that the Twelve “had been taught by Moses’ example (Numbers 11:14-17, Exodus 18:14-27) not to undertake the management³²³ of everything by themselves”.

The events that brought on the organizational changes were the departure of some of the eight Myrrh-Bearing Women to other parts of the world. Three of these women left Jerusalem prior to the martyrdom of Stephen, and another left shortly thereafter. These women are listed below, followed by a short description of the events that led to their leaving town:

- Mary Magdalene
- The Virgin Mary
- Joanna
- Salome
- Mary, the wife of Alphaeus (or Cleopas)
- Susanna
- Mary of Bethany
- Martha of Bethany

Mary Magdalene:

Shortly after Pentecost, Mary Magdalene was led by a strong desire to expose those who unjustly condemned Christ. Traveling to Rome, she asked to present her case before Tiberias Caesar³²⁴. That Tiberias Caesar would actually listen to her suggests that she was a Roman citizen and had the right to appeal to Caesar (Acts 22:25-29, 25:7-12), and that she was a woman of means.

Appearing before Tiberias Caesar, she presented him with a red egg and announced “Christ is risen!” She told Tiberias the whole story of Pilate’s unjust trial, the release of a murderer and insurrectionist³²⁵ in His place and of the cowering of Pilate to the plotting of the Jewish leaders (Acts 3:13-15, Matthew 27:15-24). Tiberias also heard that Pilate had massacred some Samaritans unjustly and summoned him to Rome to answer for his actions. By the time

³²² By the “ministry of the Word” in the Temple, the Apostles were going over the daily Scripture Readings, teaching about what it really meant in the light of the work of Christ.

³²³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XIV.

³²⁴ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 22.

³²⁵ All the Roman Emperors wanted strong leaders on the Eastern part of the Empire, who would maintain order and stay loyal to Rome. Pilate’s release of a notorious insurrectionist was no what the Emperor wanted to hear.

Pilate arrived in Rome, Tiberias had died and Caius Caligula was Emperor. Pilate was unable to defend himself and was banished to Gaul where he committed suicide³²⁶. Pilate's wife, Claudia Procula, came to believe in Christ and lived an ascetic life along with others of the Holy Women³²⁷. She had sent word to her husband during Jesus' trial to "have nothing to do with that Just Man, for I have suffered many things today in a dream because of Him" (Matthew 27:19).

Mary Magdalene was renowned in the Early Church for her evangelistic efforts, both in Rome and later in Ephesus working with the Apostle John, and was referred to³²⁸ as "Equal to the Apostles".

Mary and Martha of Bethany:

At the time that Jesus raised their brother Lazarus from the dead (John 11:38-46), the Jewish leaders began plotting to kill Lazarus as well as Jesus "because on account of him, many of the Jews went away and believed in Jesus" (John 12:10-11). If Mary, Martha and Lazarus were wealthy and prominent citizens of Bethany, Lazarus presented a much greater difficulty to the Jewish leaders than the son of the poor widow of Nain (Luke 7:11-16) or a child like Jairus' daughter (Luke 8:42-56). Being wealthy, Lazarus was also very influential.

Sometime after Pentecost, the Jews followed through with their plot to kill Lazarus. They put Lazarus, his two sisters and one Maximinus in a leaking boat with no oars, rudder, food or water and set them adrift at sea in the Mediterranean. From this point two different traditions have developed, perhaps due to the (mistaken) identification in Western tradition of Mary of Bethany (Lazarus' sister) with Mary Magdalene.

In one account, the boat landed on Cyprus. Lazarus was later ordained Bishop of Kition³²⁹ (or Larnaka) and died peacefully about 60 AD.

In the other account, the boat landed on the southeast shore of Gaul. Lazarus, Mary and Martha proceeded to evangelize the whole area. Lazarus was ordained Bishop of Marseilles and was martyred under Domitian (reign 81-96 AD). Mary, in this account, evangelized Provence and spent the last 30 years of her life in strict fasting and prayer in a cave in the Alps³³⁰. Martha is remembered primarily for evangelizing Tarascon in France³³¹. In trying to reconcile the two accounts, it may be that the Lazarus in Gaul was really Simon the leper, who was Lazarus' friend³³² (or relative) and at whose house Mary of Bethany anointed Jesus with costly fragrant oil (Matthew 26:6-7, John 11:1-2).

Mary, the Wife of Cleopas:

This Mary was the mother of two of the Twelve Apostles, James and Matthew, the sons of Alphaeus or Cleopas. Her husband was the brother of Joseph, the Virgin Mary's husband; thus she was the Virgin Mary's sister-in-Law (John 19:25). Since Joseph died at the age of 111

³²⁶ Eusebius, *Church History*, II, vii.

³²⁷ Nikolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 27.

³²⁸ Nikolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 22.

³²⁹ Nikolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 17.

³³⁰ Thurston and Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, July 22.

³³¹ Thurston and Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, July 29.

³³² Nikolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 13.

Thurston and Attwater, *Butler's Lives of the Saints*, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, January 27.

years just before Jesus' public ministry, Cleopas was probably quite old when the risen Lord appeared to him and Luke on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-18). Tradition is silent regarding Cleopas after Pentecost, indicating that he probably died shortly thereafter, leaving Mary a widow.

Spanish tradition indicates that Mary, the wife of Cleopas, accompanied James, the son of Zebedee (Her niece Salome's son) to Spain. She was buried with great honor at Compostela³³³ in Spain after she died. James, the son of Zebedee, returned to Jerusalem in 44 AD and was martyred by Herod to please the Jews (Acts 12:1-3). Some accounts state that James' body was returned to Spain (where he had been working) for burial³³⁴ with great honor.

The Initial Work of the First Seven Deacons

The first seven deacons are not called "deacons" in the Scripture. But the Greek word *diakonos* (from which the word "deacon" comes) is used to describe their activities. For example, the widows were "neglected in the daily deaconing", i.e. *diakonia* (Acts 6:1). The Twelve did not think it desirable that they should "leave the Word and deacon, i.e. *diakonein*, tables" (Acts 6:2). Instead the Twelve gave themselves "continually to prayer and to the deaconing, i.e. *diakonia*, of the Word (Acts 6:4).

Later on as the Church developed, the office of deacon as distinct from that of a presbyter (or priest) and bishop came into being. In this context, a deacon has a defined liturgical role, assisting at the Altar, in a way that these first seven aren't mentioned as functioning. So they are not necessarily deacons in the sense that we know deacons today. Chrysostom stated that their designation was neither deacon nor presbyter³³⁵. However, in Orthodox ordinations, a presbyter is first ordained as a deacon, then as a presbyter. And a true bishop still considers himself as a deacon at heart. (Compare 2 Timothy 4:5, Titus 1:7, Colossians 1:23, 25).

According to tradition, all seven of these men had been members of the Seventy³³⁶ Apostles that Jesus sent out two by two in late 29 AD (Luke 10:1-20). Chrysostom pointed out that they were not chosen by lot -- although that could have been done -- but the Apostles wanted the testimony of the people. The fixing of the number, and the ordaining them, and the setting them for this kind of business rested with the Apostles. But the choice of the men they left to the people, just as God left it to Moses to choose elders from those he knew (Numbers 11:16).

Chrysostom also pointed out³³⁷ that these men needed a great deal of wisdom in discernment.

"This business was not simply handed over to them without further ceremony, but the Apostles prayed over them, that power might be given to them. But observe, I pray you, if there were need of seven men for this, great in proportion must have been the sums of money that flowed in, great in proportion also the number of widows. So then, the prayers were not made in an off-hand

³³³ There is a great deal of Spanish literature associated with Compostela. See, for example, the Spanish references cited in Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, January 27.

³³⁴ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30.

³³⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XIV.

³³⁶ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 28, December 27.

³³⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XIV.

way, but with much deliberate attention; and this office, as well as preaching, was thus brought to good effect”.

It is interesting to note that the complaint against the Hebrews by the Greek widows that they were neglected in the daily “deaconing” resulted in the ordaining of seven men with Greek names to oversee the entire daily “deaconing”. These men were probably Greek speaking Jews except for Nicholas who may have been a Gentile proselyte (Acts 6:5). The Greek widows were also Greek speaking Jews; their being left out was not intentional, but it was rectified rather dramatically³³⁸. Care and attention for the poor was a very high priority in the early Church (Galatians 2:10).

The Scattering of the Church at the Stoning of Stephen

At this time, “the Word of God spread and the number of the disciples multiplied greatly in Jerusalem, and a great many of the priests were obedient to the Faith” (Acts 6:7). These priests were Levitical priests who ceased serving under the Old Covenant priesthood, becoming obedient to the direction of the Holy Spirit in the Church. This does not imply that they automatically became presbyters (or priests) in the church, although some may have done so. This is referred to in Hebrews: “We have an altar from which those who serve the Tabernacle (i.e. Old Covenant) have no right to eat” (Hebrews 13:10). Chrysostom made it a point to say³³⁹ that even the High Priest under the Old Covenant was not permitted to partake of the Lord’s Supper.

Following his ordination, “Stephen, full of faith and power, did great wonders and signs among the people” (Acts 6:8). Philip did so also. “The multitudes (in Samaria) with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice, came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed” (Acts 8:6-7). Thus the seven “deacons” did more than just serve tables.

The seven “deacons” had originally been numbered with the Seventy (Luke 10:1-20). When the Lord sent them out as part of the Seventy, the seven “deacons” performed similar miracles to what Stephen and Philip did here. Upon their return from being sent out with the Seventy, they were restrained. Now they were re-commissioned to do it again by the ordination of the Twelve. In their mission with the Seventy, they were not limited to the lost sheep of the house of Israel as were the Twelve (Matthew 10:5-6). A similar situation occurred with Philip and Stephen. Philip evangelized the Samaritans and Stephen ran into a dispute with the Synagogue of the Freedmen (Acts 6:9).

The term “Freedmen” is of Latin origin and refers to Jews who had been taken captive by Pompey (mid 1st Century BC) and later set free. Philo, the early 1st Century Jewish philosopher, stated that they built a synagogue in Jerusalem, at their own expense, which they frequented when they were in Jerusalem³⁴⁰. This synagogue became a home away from home for Greek speaking and Latin speaking Jews.

³³⁸ They could have been democratic about the distribution, and put 4 Hebrews and 3 Greeks in charge. Instead they put 7 Greeks in charge.

³³⁹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Hebrews*, XXXIII, 3.

³⁴⁰ See the reference to “Libertines” in Merrill F. Unger, *Unger’s Bible Dictionary*, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 660.

Some people from the synagogue of the Freedmen (that is, some from Cyrene, Alexandria, Cilicia and Asia) got into a dispute with Stephen. Yet they were not able to resist the wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke. Since the Apostle Paul was from Cilicia (Acts 22:3), and since he was prominent in Stephen's death (Acts 7:58), he may have been one of Stephen's antagonists in this dispute. According to tradition, Paul and Stephen were kinsmen³⁴¹.

Unable to refute Stephen, they stirred up the people, the elders and the scribes, set up false witnesses, seized Stephen and brought him to the Council; i.e. the Sanhedrin (Acts 6:11-13). Stephen gave a very eloquent defense (Acts 6, 7) during which "all who sat in the council, looking steadfast at him, saw his face³⁴² as the face of an angel" (Acts 6:15). In other words, his face glowed, as did Moses' face after Moses spoke with the Lord (Exodus 34:34-35). In the midst of this unjust trial, Stephen concluded his defense by referring to the council, itself, as stiff-necked and uncircumcised in heart and ears (Deuteronomy 10:16). They resisted the Holy Spirit, murdered the prophets and the Messiah just like their fathers did. They received the Law by the direction of angels, but (as this Council attests) they haven't kept it (Acts 7:51-53).

As they gnashed their teeth at him, he had a vision of Jesus standing at the Right Hand of God. "'Look!' he said, 'I see the heavens opened and the Son of Man standing at the Right Hand of God!'" Then they cried out with a loud voice, stopped their ears, and ran at him with one accord. And they cast him out of the city and stoned him" (Acts 7:56-58).

According to tradition, the Virgin Mary witnessed Stephen's martyrdom, standing at a distance with her nephew, the Apostle John, and she prayed for Stephen as he was being stoned. This occurred exactly a year after Pentecost³⁴³ and Gamaliel took Stephen's body secretly (Acts 8:2) and buried him in his own ground³⁴⁴, similar to the way Joseph of Arimathea and Nicodemus did with the body of Jesus (John 19:38-42).

The death of Stephen began a major bloodbath in Jerusalem. Nicanor, another of the seven "deacons" was martyred that same day also, along with 200 others in short succession³⁴⁵. According to tradition, Nicodemus died at this time also as he and others were lamenting the death of Stephen, Nicanor and the others. The "great lamentation" (Acts 8:2) over the death of Stephen encompassed more than just Stephen. Gamaliel buried Nicodemus in the same crypt as Stephen, and was later buried there himself³⁴⁶.

"Now Saul (Paul) was consenting to Stephen's death. At that time a great persecution arose against the church, which was at Jerusalem; and they were scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except for the Apostles. As for Saul, he made havoc of the church entering every house and dragging off men and women, committing them to prison" (Acts 8:1, 3). In Paul's testimony nearly 30 years later, he admitted that he forced them to blaspheme (Acts 26:11). This persecution lasted for about three years, or until 34 AD when Paul was converted

³⁴¹ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

³⁴² This information probably came from Gamaliel, who later became a Christian.

³⁴³ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

³⁴⁴ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 2.

³⁴⁵ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 28.

³⁴⁶ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, August 2.

on the road to Damascus. With Paul not leading the attack against the Christians, “the Churches throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and were edified” (Acts 9:31).

The Twelve Cast Lots

The last mention of the Twelve as being together in Jerusalem is at the ordination of the seven “deacons” (Acts 6:1-7). At the martyrdom of Stephen and the others, which occurred one year after Pentecost³⁴⁷, the saints “were all scattered throughout the regions of Judea and Samaria, except the Apostles” (Acts 8:1). It is significant that Luke doesn’t refer to the Twelve here and subsequently, since some of them had already left for missions abroad.

To determine who went where, the Twelve divided up the world into different regions, and then cast lots as to who went to which region³⁴⁸. For example, Thomas’ lot was India and the Far East; John’s lot was Ephesus and Asia Minor; Andrew’s lot was Russia plus other areas and Matthew’s lot was Africa.

The Virgin Mary was said to have requested one lot also in the preaching of the Gospel. Her lot came to be Iberia (Georgia in Southern Russia), but she never went there herself. Instead Nina, called “Equal to the Apostles” and “The Enlightener of Georgia” went there with the Virgin Mary’s blessing.

Peter and John Sent to Samaria Regarding Philip’s Converts: Acts 8:4-25

Following the stoning of Stephen, there were major clashes between Light and Darkness in Samaria as well. This clash had been developing even before the Crucifixion, where the Light was being proclaimed from Sychar, where the whole town had turned to the Lord because of Photini, the woman at the well in Sychar. At the same time, the Heresiarch Simon Magus began spreading his false teaching seven miles away in Samaria after the death of John the Baptist. At the scattering of the Apostles, when Deacon Philip went to Samaria, the Light that had started spreading from Sychar by Photini and the men of the city began to clash with the Darkness that was being spread by Simon Magus. Deacon Philip was instrumental in bringing this clash into focus.

Preparation of Samaria by Photini

To see why the Samaritans were suddenly so receptive to listening to Deacon Philip, we need to back up a few years to look at the conversion of Photini, the woman at the well in Sychar. Sychar was about seven miles from Samaria, where Deacon Philip began preaching to Samaritans. Photini was a very vocal and outgoing person, and she was known in the Early Church as “Equal to the Apostles” for her evangelism in Carthage and in Rome. We can see these abilities at work in her in c. 27 AD, when Jesus met her at the well. Single-handedly, she brought the entire town of Sychar out to hear Jesus, where other Samaritan towns refused to hear Him at all because He was a Jew (Luke 9:51-53).

She met Jesus as He was traveling North from Judea to Galilee, passing through Samaria. The time was May (John 4:35) of 27 AD, and Jesus and the Twelve were now baptizing more

³⁴⁷ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

³⁴⁸ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 6, October 9, November 30.

disciples than John the Baptist (John 4:1-2). They arrived in Sychar³⁴⁹ about noon (the 6th hour) and Jesus' disciples including the women (Luke 8:3, who were later called the Myrrh-Bearing Women), went into the city to buy food. Jesus, being wearied from the journey, asked Photini for a drink.

Photini was surprised that a Jew would even speak to her. Jesus elevated the conversations by suggesting Photini ask Him for living water (meaning the Holy Spirit). Photini initially confused Jesus' reference to living water with running water.

Jesus then went one step farther by asking Photini to call her husband. When she admitted that she had no husband, Jesus proceeded to tell her that He knew all about her promiscuous lifestyle. She then tried to deflect Jesus' ability to look right through her by referring to the differences between Samaritans and Jews symbolized by the location of their temples³⁵⁰. Jesus cut right through that argument by saying that while salvation is of the Jews, true worship of God is in spirit and truth and is geographic independent.

The lights were turning on inside Photini by now and she mentioned that the Samaritans also are waiting for the Messiah who "will tell us all things" (John 4:25). Jesus said, "I AM is the one speaking to you" (John 4:26). The name "I AM" is referred to in Hebrew tradition as THE NAME or Yahweh, and is the Name God gave for Himself in speaking with Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Modern Jews do not even pronounce the Name of God but simply refer to Him as "Ha Shem" which means THE NAME. What Jesus was saying to Photini is that He is not only the Messiah (or the Anointed One) but He is also God Incarnate.

Just then, the disciples came with some food and Photini left her water pot and ran into the city. Jesus stood watching Photini go from house to house in Sychar telling everyone to come, see and meet the Messiah. Since Sychar was built on a hillside, this was easy for Jesus to see.

Meanwhile the disciples urged Jesus to have something to eat. Jesus just kept watching Photini go from house to house and said that, "I have food that you don't know about" (John 4:32, compare Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus' food was doing the Will of His Father. And as they were talking, He pointed to the people of Sychar coming down the hill to talk to Him and said that the fields were already white for harvest even though harvest time was still four months away.

Jesus said that He was sending His disciples to reap this harvest even though they did not sow or labor to bring this harvest to maturity (John 4:38). Others had labored and the disciples had entered into their labors (John 4:38) in order that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together (John 4:36).

Many of the Samaritans believed just because of Photini's word of testimony (John 4:39). Many more believed when they heard Him themselves. But Photini certainly was persuasive to get them all to come and listen! From this viewpoint, she was very influential even though her personal life was a mess.

³⁴⁹ Sychar is either Shechem or a village around Shechem

³⁵⁰ Mt. Gerazim was visible in the distance while Mt. Zion was in Jerusalem

We can also presume that Photini and the entire town of Sychar did not all of a sudden quiet down after this. She probably spread the word around the whole area. When Deacon Philip (Acts 8:5-6) began preaching 7-8 years later in the city of Samaria (about 7 miles from Sychar), Photini and the people of Sychar had already prepared the people there to receive him. And again the Apostles reaped a harvest that they did not sow or bring to maturity.

This often happens with us also, where the Word goes out and doesn't return to Him empty (Isaiah 55:8-12, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11). Sometimes we have an impact on people by our words and example quite out of proportion to what we think.

The Spiritual Climate in Samaria Due to Simon Magus

At the same time that Photini was spreading the word around Samaria about Christ, there was a counter influence going on. We will pick up on this theme a little later also to see how the Church dealt with the heresies of Simon Magus. Simon was expanding his heresy, and he was very influential throughout all of Samaria. The Scripture describes Simon's influence as follows:

“But there was a certain man called Simon, who previously practiced sorcery in the city and astonished the people of Samaria, claiming that he was someone great, to whom they all gave heed, from the least to the greatest, saying, ‘This man is the great power of God’. And they heeded him because he had astonished them with his sorcery for a long time” (Acts 8:9-11).

Justin Martyr, born in 114 AD in Flavia Neapolis, a city of Samaria (the modern Nablous) addressed the Emperor and the Roman Senate regarding³⁵¹ the influence held by Simon Magus and his followers, and how they were called ‘Christians’, but were not persecuted as the true Christians were:

“After Christ's ascension into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were gods; and they were not only not persecuted by you, but even deemed worthy of honors. There was a Samaritan, Simon, a native of the village called Gitto, who in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him. He was considered a god, and as a god was honored by you with a statue, which statue was erected on the river Tiber, between the two bridges, and bore this inscription, in the language of Rome: ‘Simoni Deo Sancto’, ‘To Simon the holy God’. And almost all the Samaritans, and a few even of other nations, worship him, and acknowledge him as the first God; and a woman, Helena, who went about with him at that time, and had formerly been a prostitute, they say is the first idea generated by him”.

Justin continued to say³⁵² that the Samaritans not only trusted Simon, but believed that he was a god above all power, and authority, and might.

“And I have mentioned these things, taking nothing whatever into consideration, except the speaking of the truth, and refusing to be coerced by any one, even though I should be forthwith torn in pieces by you. For I gave no thought to any of my people, that is, the Samaritans, when I had a communication in writing with Caesar. I stated that they were wrong in trusting to the magician

³⁵¹ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, XXVI, LVI.

³⁵² Justin Martyr, *Dialogue with Trypho*, CXX

Simon of their own nation, who, they say, is god above all power, and authority, and might”.

The 4th Century Church historian, Eusebius, also wrote³⁵³ of the influence that Simon Magus had in the 1st Century:

“Simon was at that time so celebrated, and had acquired, by his jugglery, such influence over those who were deceived by him, that he was thought to be the great power of God. But at this time, being amazed at the wonderful deeds wrought by Philip through the divine power, he pretended faith in Christ, even going so far as to receive baptism. And what is surprising, those who follow his most impure heresy do the same thing even to this day. For they, after the manner of their forefather, slipping into the Church, like a pestilential and leprous disease greatly afflict those into whom they are able to infuse the deadly and terrible poison concealed in themselves. The most of these have been expelled as soon as they have been caught in their wickedness, as Simon himself, when detected by Peter, received the merited punishment”.

That Simon was well known is evident, even during the three years of Jesus’ public ministry. Since Simon began his move for power following the death of John the Baptist, he was performing his phony “miracles” in Samaria at the same time that Jesus was performing His real miracles in Judea and Galilee. But yet, Jesus and the Twelve never came into contact with Simon, even though Jesus traveled through Samaria (John 4:3-43, Luke 17:11-19). Their contact with the Samaritans seems to have been limited to the poor and the sick. When Jesus sent the Twelve out two-by-two to heal the sick, cleanse the lepers, raise the dead and cast out demons, He instructed them not to go to Samaria, but to go only to the lost sheep of the house of Israel (Matthew 10:5-8). He thus postponed conflict with Simon until after they had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. This was probably a wise decision, since the Apostles needed the prayer and fasting (Matthew 17:21), that they adhered to after Pentecost, to deal with the strong demonic influence of Simon. When He sent the Seventy out two-by-two “before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go” (Luke 10:1), they went to Tyre and Sidon in Phoenicia and to cities in Northern Galilee (Luke 10:13), but we have no record of their contact with Samaritans.

About a year before Jesus was crucified, the Jewish leaders got very angry with Him over all the things He was saying. He claimed to be the Source of living water during a solemn occasion of the Feast of Tabernacles (John 7:37-39). He claimed to be the Light of the world (John 8:12). He also claimed to be God, Who had come down from heaven (John 8:23-30, 3:13, 6:51-58). Simon had also been saying that he was God who had come down from heaven. When the Jewish leaders were debating with Jesus, they said to Him, “Do we not say rightly that You are a Samaritan and have a demon?” (John 8:48) What they were implying was that they thought that Jesus was just another follower of Simon Magus, who had recently been exalting himself a few miles away in Samaria.

About a year earlier, the Pharisees had accused Jesus of casting out demons by Beelzebub, the ruler of the demons (Matthew 12:24). Simon, using his magic arts, did many miraculous signs. The Pharisees may have recognized Simon’s power as coming from Satan, and therefore they accused Jesus as being linked to Simon.

³⁵³ Eusebius, Church History, II, i.

Peter and John Are Sent to Samaria to Help Philip

As the Church was scattered, Deacon Philip went to Samaria (Acts 8:5) to preach in Simon Magus' hometown.

“Then Philip went down to the city of Samaria and preached Christ to them. And the multitudes with one accord heeded the things spoken by Philip, hearing and seeing the miracles, which he did. For unclean spirits, crying with a loud voice came out of many who were possessed; and many who were paralyzed and lame were healed. And there was great joy in that city” (Acts 8:5-8).

If Simon Magus had been performing miracles in Samaria for years, what did Philip do that made a difference? The answer is love and compassion. All of Simon Magus' “miracles” due to his sorcery focused on exalting Simon. Some examples are dishes flying through the air to serve him at his house; statues moving their heads to greet him as he walked by; his flying through the air from one mountain to another. Philip's miracles focused on helping the poor, the sick and the less fortunate. Plus, Philip did things that Simon didn't do and couldn't do if he tried. Even Simon was amazed at Philip's miracles, and he recognized “the finger of God” in them just as Jannes and Jambres recognized it in the days of Moses (Exodus 7:11-13, 8:19; 2 Timothy 3:8).

Simon himself realized that Philip was doing things that he couldn't do, so he pretended to believe and was baptized (Acts 8:13). When Peter arrived and the Samaritans received the gift of the Holy Spirit (i.e. speaking in tongues), Simon even tried to purchase this from Peter (Acts 8:19-20).

When word of Philip's success reached James and the Elders in Jerusalem, they saw that Philip was working in an area that had been under a major satanic influence, and they realized he might need some help. So Peter and John were sent by Bishop James to check it out (Acts 8:14). Perhaps they were concerned that some of Simon Magus' heresies might come to be incorporated into the Church.

We might note at this point how the Apostles worked together, with each having certain responsibilities. When Philip preached in Samaria, he also cast out unclean spirits and healed many who were paralyzed and lame (Acts 8:6-8). All who believed, both men and women, were baptized. Even Simon Magus agreed³⁵⁴ to be baptized (Acts 8:12-13). When Peter and John arrived, they prayed for the new converts that they might receive the Holy Spirit, which hadn't occurred yet. Then they laid hands on them and the new converts received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17). This produced what has been called the “Samaritan Pentecost”. From this, we can see that there is an authority that has been given to the Twelve, which the Seventy and the first Deacons don't possess yet.

John Chrysostom stated³⁵⁵ that the Samaritan converts had received from Philip only the Spirit of remission of sins. From Peter they received the Spirit of miracles, which is what Simon

³⁵⁴ The text states, “Then Simon himself also believed” (Acts 8:13). This does not mean that Simon began doing the Lord's will, since the next thing we see him do is attempt to purchase the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:17-18). Simon's “belief” is similar to that of the demons who “believe” – and tremble (James 2:19). Like the demons, Simon recognized a superior power, but had no works to demonstrate what his “belief” consisted of.

³⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XVIII.

wanted to be able to give. Simon continued³⁵⁶ with Philip as a hypocrite in order that he might imitate Philip's lifestyle, but without Philip's Faith. Chrysostom stated:

"If great signs had been done, how then had they not received the Spirit? They had received the Spirit of remission of sins; but the Spirit of miracles they had not received. 'As yet He had fallen upon none of them. They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit' (Acts 8:16-17). For, to show that this was the case, and that it was the Spirit of miracles that they had not received, observe how, having seen the result, Simon came and asked for this".

"Why hadn't these received the Holy Spirit when they were baptized? Either because

1. Philip kept this honor for the Apostles; or because
2. He didn't have this gift to impart; or because
3. He was one of the Seven.

But observe, those new converts didn't go out healing. It was Providentially ordered that the Apostles should go out and that the new converts should be lacking, because of the Holy Spirit. For they had received power to work miracles, but not to impart the Spirit to others; this was the prerogative of the Apostles. Observe how they sent the chief ones; not any others, but Peter and John".

"After Simon was baptized, he continued with Philip, not for faith's sake, but in order that he might become such as Philip. But why did they not correct him instantly? They were content with his condemning himself. For this too belonged to their work of teaching. When he didn't have the power to resist, he played the hypocrite, just as did Pharaoh's magicians who said, 'This is the finger of God' (Exodus 8:19). And indeed that he might not be driven away again, therefore he 'continued with Philip', and did not part from him".

"It took great power to give the Holy Spirit. For it is not all one, to obtain remission of sins, and to receive such a power. By degrees, those receive the gift. It was a twofold sign: both the giving to the new converts, and the not giving to Simon. Whereas Simon ought to have asked to receive the Holy Spirit; because he didn't care for this, he asked power to give It to others. And yet the new converts didn't receive this power to give; but Simon wished to be more illustrious than Philip!"

Chrysostom also noted³⁵⁷ the exalted pride in Simon; that because of his embarrassment in Samaria, both in being out-classed by Deacon Philip and in being thoroughly debunked by the Apostle Peter in a debate (covered in the next chapter), he eventually left for Rome³⁵⁸. Peter and John, on the other hand, spoke to other Samaritan villages on the way home to negate Simon's influence throughout Samaria.

³⁵⁶ Simon had done the same thing years earlier as a follower of John the Baptist. After John's death, Simon had even murdered a fellow follower of John in order to take over as the leader of a group of John's disciples. For details, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

³⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XVIII.

³⁵⁸ For details of Simon's progress in getting to Rome, and his influence in Rome later with the Emperor, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

“Simon was not just overcome by the miracles, but also that his thoughts were revealed. Therefore he now took himself a long way off, to Rome, thinking the Apostles would not soon come there”.

“And they, when they had testified, and preached the word of the Lord, they returned to Jerusalem’ (Acts 8:25). ‘Testified’ because of him (Simon), that they may not be deceived; that from then on, they may be safe. Why do they go there, where the tyranny of Simon was so strong, where those most bent upon killing them lived? Just as generals do in wars, they occupy that part of the scene of war, which is most distressed. Observe them again, how they do not of set purpose come to Samaria, but driven by the stress of persecution, just as it was in the case of Christ. Observe also how when the Apostles go there, it is to men now believers, no longer Samaritans. When the Apostles, which were at Jerusalem heard this, they sent them Peter and John to rid them of magic. In preaching to other Samaritan villages on the way home, observe how actively employed even their journeys were, how they do nothing without a purpose”.

After this, Philip traveled toward Gaza when he came across the Ethiopian eunuch (Acts 8:26-27). In opening up the Scriptures to the eunuch, Philip prepared the Ethiopians to receive Matthew and Matthias who would go there soon. Then, Philip was bodily translated to Azotus (Acts 8:40); he finally settled in Caesarea. When Paul came through Caesarea in 57 AD, he stayed with Philip, who by then had four virgin daughters who were prophetesses (Acts 21:8-9). Philip was the Bishop of Caesarea by then and later became Bishop of Tralles in Lydia.

Of the other four deacons, Timon was ordained Bishop of Bostra in the Arabian Desert (near where Paul went after his conversion; see Galatians 1:17). Deacon Prochorus was ordained Bishop of Nicomedia in Bithynia but didn’t stay there long. For 20-30 years, he accompanied the Apostle John much as Luke accompanied Paul. There still exist some of Prochorus’ writings that chronicle the events of the life of John, just as Luke’s writings chronicle the life of Paul. Prochorus also served as John’s scribe, writing down the visions recorded in Revelation and the text of John’s Gospel as John dictated it.

Deacon Parmenas died shortly after Stephen but details are scarce as to whether it was martyrdom or natural causes. The last of the seven deacons, Nicolas, fell into the heresy of Simon Magus³⁵⁹ and formed a sect of his own. This Nicolas is not to be confused with Nicolas of Myra who was one of the bishops at the Council of Nicea and is popularly known as St. Nick or Santa Claus. Ex-deacon Nicolas is referred to in Revelation 2:6, 15 as the leader of a Gnostic sect that encouraged idolatry and fornication and which was causing trouble for the churches in Ephesus and Pergamos.

The Apostle Peter’s Debate with Simon Magus

Between 31 AD (the stoning of Stephen) and 44 AD (the beheading of James), there are three events at which the Scriptures record Peter’s presence.

1. Peter and John’s visit to Samaria to confirm the work of the Deacon Philip. At this occasion, Peter condemned Simon Magus for trying to purchase the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:14-25).

³⁵⁹ See Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

2. Paul's visit with Peter and James the Lord's brother for 15 days in 37 AD (Acts 9:26-31, 22:17-21; Galatians 1:18-19).
3. Peter's visit to Lydda and Joppa and to Cornelius in Caesarea (Acts 9:32-10:48).

According to traditional sources³⁶⁰, Paul visited Peter in Jerusalem just after Peter's dealings with Simon Magus in Caesarea and in Antioch. This was before the Church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch (Acts 11:22), but after the men from Cyprus and Cyrene began preaching to the Gentiles in Antioch. One of the men from Cyprus that was involved in Antioch was Peter's father-in-law, Aristobulus.

During these times, Peter did a great deal of traveling back and forth from Jerusalem to various places in Palestine. During this period, Zacchaeus, the former tax collector (Luke 19:2), and later Bishop of Caesarea in Samaria, wrote³⁶¹ to James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, requesting help in combating Simon Magus. Simon had been subverting many people in Samaria, asserting that he was the Christ, and the great power of the high God (Acts 8:9-10), which he alone knew, and which is superior to the Creator of the world. At the same time Simon showed many miracles that made some doubt the Faith and that made others fall away from the Faith. Bishop James then sent Peter to Samaria, but somehow Simon knew of Peter's arrival without anyone telling him, and he took the initiative and challenged³⁶² Peter to a public debate.

The noteworthy aspect of this debate is the expose of the inner working of the mind of heretics. The foundation of their teaching is based on lies. So what happens when they get cornered in one of their lies? It is no big deal to create another lie to get out of the difficulty. Paul mentioned this when he said, "But evil men and impostors will grow worse and worse, deceiving and being deceived" (2 Timothy 3:13). As examples, Paul mentioned Jannes and Jambres, the magicians who opposed Moses in Egypt (2 Timothy 3:8). Jannes and Jambres, like Simon Magus, were trained in the black arts in Egypt and were very skillful in what they did.

Clement of Rome records this debate³⁶³ in his "Recognitions", where the theme of the "Recognitions" is the story of how Clement was separated from his parents and brothers, and the dramatic way in which they were reunited during the missionary travels of the Apostle Peter. In this debate, the learned Simon Magus was pitted against the Apostle Peter, who had little formal education (Acts 4:13). The subject of the debate concerned some of Simon's teaching, and took place in Caesarea (Acts 10:1-8, 12:19) after Simon's baptism, but before he left Samaria for Antioch and Rome. In the following paragraphs the debate has been summarized, including some of the major points and some of the people present. This debate is an interesting expose of

³⁶⁰ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 11.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

³⁶¹ Clement, "Recognitions", I, 72, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶² Clement, "Recognitions", I, 74, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶³ According to Johannes Quasten, Patrology, Volume 1, p. 61, the only complete copy of the "Recognitions" that is extant today is the translation into Latin that was done by Rufinus in the 4th Century. Jerome wrote a Preface to the "Recognitions", also in the 4th Century, where he referenced two different Greek versions that existed in his day. Both Rufinus and Jerome attributed the original document to Clement, Bishop of Rome in the late 1st Century. Other early Christian tradition also refers to this debate, such as Roberts and Donaldson, "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles", VI, ii, 7-8, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 7.

Simon's lies and heresies, and it illustrates the wisdom that the Apostles received from the Holy Spirit at Pentecost. As Peter kept cornering Simon in one lie after another, Simon cleverly changed the subject and moved on, presenting a very slippery target.

Before the debate began, two former disciples of Simon, twin brothers named Niceta and Aquila, who had been converted to the Faith by Zacchaeus, advised³⁶⁴ Peter regarding Simon's skills and methods, and about his wickedness. They felt that Simon might overmatch Peter. They told Peter of something they learned before their conversion. Simon had told Niceta and Aquila that he had made a boy out of air³⁶⁵ and claimed that this was a much nobler work than God the Creator, when He made a man from the earth (Genesis 2:7). Because he had done a work that was far more difficult, Simon claimed to be greater than God the Creator. What Simon had actually done was create illusions. First he murdered a boy, and then he used the boy's body as part of his system of illusions to make it appear that the boy was alive. So that no one could catch him in this trick, he claimed that he sent the boy back to the air. Niceta and Aquila advised Peter of this, and this bit of information would become a key facet toward the end of the three-day debate.

As the debate began, there were many supporters of Simon attending. Peter began³⁶⁶ the debate by addressing the people present, saying: "Peace be to all of you who are prepared to give your right hands to truth, and to walk in His paths of righteousness". Peter then defined what righteousness is. Simon refused Peter's concept of peace³⁶⁷, preferring the peace that comes when "two fight with each other; then there will be peace when one has been defeated and has fallen". Peter countered by saying that truth should be sought for with quietness and order. Simon quoted³⁶⁸ Christ's words, "I did not come to bring peace but a sword" (Matthew 10:34). Peter reminded Simon that Christ also said, "Blessed are the peacemakers" (Matthew 5:9). Since Simon had been a follower of John the Baptist, it is not surprising that he knew what Christ had said. The Gospel of Matthew in Hebrew had also been in circulation for a while also; those with the means could have had a scribe copy it.

Simon was bothered by Peter's continually returning to the subject of peace. Peter responded³⁶⁹ by saying, "Why are you afraid of hearing frequently of peace? Do you not know that peace is the perfection of Law? For wars and disputes spring from sins; and where there is no sin, there is peace of soul; but where there is peace, truth is found in disputations, righteousness in works."

Peter then challenged Simon to define who is his god. Simon began³⁷⁰ by stating that the Scriptures say that there are many gods and quoted from the Scriptures to show this. Peter responded³⁷¹, "There are indeed many gods, but they are subject to the God of the Jews, to whom no one is equal. 'The Lord your God is the God of gods, and the Lord of lords, the great God' (Deuteronomy 10:17). Thus, although there are many that are called gods, yet He who is the

³⁶⁴ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 5-6, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶⁵ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 13-15, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶⁶ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 16-19, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶⁷ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 23-24, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶⁸ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 26-27, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁶⁹ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 36, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷⁰ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 39, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷¹ Clement, "Recognitions", II, 41-44, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

God of the Jews is alone called the God of gods. Simon replied³⁷² that he would refute Peter from the words of Christ. Jesus said, ‘No one knows the Son, but the Father; neither does anyone know the Father, but the Son, and he to whom the Son has been pleased to reveal Him’ (Matthew 11:27). Thus, therefore, even your Jesus confesses that there is another God, incomprehensible and unknown to all.

Then Peter said³⁷³, “You do not perceive that you are making statements in opposition to yourself. For if our Jesus also knows Him whom you call the unknown God, then you do not know Him alone, as you claim. If our Jesus knows Him, then Moses also could not himself be ignorant of Him. For he was a prophet; and he who prophesied of the Son must have known the Father. But the Father couldn’t be revealed to you, because you don’t believe in the Son, and the Father is known to no one except him to whom the Son is pleased to reveal Him”.

Simon then changed the subject and replied³⁷⁴ that this other god that he knows is a power of immense and ineffable light, whose greatness may be held to be incomprehensible, of which power even the maker of the world is ignorant, and Moses the lawgiver, and Jesus your Master are also ignorant of him. Peter replied that it is madness to assert that there is a god greater than the God of all, who no one but Simon has been able to know. Simon replied, “This power of which I speak is incomprehensible and more excellent than even the Creator. How could that Creator’s Law teach me that which the Creator Himself did not know, since neither did the Law itself know it, that it might teach it?”

Then Peter said³⁷⁵: “This is amazing that you have been able to learn more from the Law than the Law was able to know or to teach. Yet you have used proofs from the Law of those things which you are pleased to say, when you declare that neither the Law, nor He who gave the Law knows those things of which you speak! But what is more amazing is that you should be standing here now with us all, enclosed by the limits of this small courtyard” (i.e. as opposed to being enthroned in heaven!). Then Simon, seeing Peter and all the people laughing, said, “Do you laugh, Peter, while so great and lofty matters are under discussion?” Then said Peter: “Don’t get mad, Simon, for we are doing no more than keeping our promise; for we are listening carefully as we hear you propound your unutterable things”.

Simon then tried to gain some respect in the face of the laughter by speaking of his concept of a supreme all-powerful god. But Peter pointed out logical inconsistencies in Simon’s arguments and concluded that people who read the Law without the instruction of masters tend to conceive absurdities such as these. Simon then changed the subject again and began³⁷⁶ to speak of all the visions he has had of heavenly places, and how all these things have been revealed to him. Peter replied that people, who are beginning to be possessed with a demon, or to be disturbed in their minds, begin with similar visions. To debunk Simon’s exalted claims, Peter challenged him, “If you can, declare the thoughts of the heart of any one of us, who is not pre-engaged in your favor, we shall perhaps be able to believe you, that you are able to know those things that are above the heavens”. Simon dodged this direct challenge again and then postponed the discussion until the next day and abruptly left with about 1000 of his followers.

³⁷² Clement, “Recognitions”, II, 47, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷³ Clement, “Recognitions”, II, 48, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷⁴ Clement, “Recognitions”, II, 49-51, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷⁵ Clement, “Recognitions”, II, 52, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷⁶ Clement, “Recognitions”, II, 61-65, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

As the second day of the debate dawned³⁷⁷, Simon sensed the crowd had turned in Peter's favor. Peter explained that the people are merely seeking the Truth, but that Simon is a seducer and doesn't speak the truth. Simon said, "Don't detain me with long speeches; just come through on your promise of yesterday. You said that you could show that the Law teaches concerning the immensity of the eternal light. Since then you are able to show it from the Law, leave off other matters and set about this."

Peter expressed concern that he would just be throwing pearls before swine (Matthew 7:6), since Simon appeared³⁷⁸ to be convicted and wishing to escape politely from the contest. Simon then re-directed the debate away from a discussion of that boundless light toward the question, "Where does evil come from?" Peter began by saying that Simon had framed his question unskillfully. Instead of asking "If God has created all things, where does evil come from?" you should have asked:

1. Whether there is evil? Not everyone admits this.
2. What is evil? A substance, an accident, or an act?
3. To whom is evil; toward God, angels, or men? And from whom is it? From God, or from nothing? Has it always been, or did it have its beginning in time?

Simon replied, "Oh you most unskillful and unlearned, is there any man who does not confess that there is evil in this life?" Peter replied, "The whole Hebrew nation denies its existence!"

Simon said³⁷⁹: "I don't know whether I know where evil comes from; for every one, according as it is decreed to him by fate, either does, or understands, or suffers." Then Peter said: "See, my brethren, into what absurdities Simon has fallen! Before my coming, he was teaching that men have it in their power to be wise and to do what they will, but now, driven into a corner by the force of my arguments, he denies that man has any power either of perceiving or of acting. I know why you have spoken thus. You wished to avoid inquiry, lest you should be openly confuted. And therefore you say that man does not have the power to perceive or to discern anything. But if this had really been your opinion, you would not surely, before my coming, have professed yourself before the people to be a teacher".

Simon then began to be contentious³⁸⁰ about everything Peter said in order to generate confusion and avoid being overcome by Peter's arguments. This animosity continued for the rest of the day, where Simon changed his views on several matters, including a denying that evil exists and an accepting of fate³⁸¹. After a few more contentious arguments, Simon closed the debate for the day and left with only a few of his associates. All the rest stayed to listen to Peter. Peter, in turn, healed everyone who was sick or demon possessed, and they departed rejoicing for having obtained the doctrine of the true God.

Simon began³⁸² the next day's discussion by challenging Peter on the immortality of the soul. Peter laid a foundation for his teaching by first speaking on the righteousness and justice of God. Simon said: 'Many well-doers perish miserably, and again many evil-doers finish long

³⁷⁷ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 12-14, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷⁸ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 15-20, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁷⁹ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 22, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁸⁰ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 21-22, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁸¹ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 21-22, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁸² Clement, "Recognitions", III, 39-42, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

lives in happiness', and because of this, he rejected any notion of a Judgment Day. Peter replied that justice convinces us that there will, in fact, be a Judgment Day. For if God is just, it is a necessary consequence. Simon replied that Peter was trying to 'persuade many to embrace his religion, and to submit to the restraint of pleasure, in hope of future good things. This didn't prove that the soul was immortal'.

Peter then used the theme of the immortality of the soul as a pretext for getting at Simon's implements of black magic in order to expose them. Remembering what Niceta and Aquila had told him about the "boy made of air", Peter pretended³⁸³ to be angry at Simon's blasphemy, and Simon used Peter's appearance of anger as an excuse to end the debate. Peter then said, 'I am able to prove to you in a single sentence that the soul is immortal. I shall ask you with respect to a point, which all know; answer me, and I shall prove to you in one sentence that the soul is immortal. Simon replied, 'Ask me then'. Peter asked, 'Which of the two can better persuade an incredulous man: seeing or hearing?' Simon replied, 'Seeing!' Then Peter said, 'Why then do you wish to learn from me by words, what is proved to you by sight?' Then Simon, 'I don't know what you mean'. Peter said, 'If you do not know, go now to your house, and entering the inner bed-chamber you will see an image placed, containing the figure of a murdered boy clothed in purple; ask him, and he will inform you either by hearing or seeing. For what need is there to hear from him if the soul is immortal, when you see it standing before you? For if it were not a being, it could not be seen. But if you do not know what image I speak of, let us go immediately to your house, with ten other men, of those who are here present.'

Hearing this, Simon turned pale³⁸⁴. If he denied it, he was afraid that his house would be searched or that Peter would expose him more openly, and that all would learn the secrets of his heart and the secrets of his magic. Therefore Simon, in pretense, mouthed words of repentance in front of the crowd, and asked to become Peter's disciple. Peter addressed the crowd, 'You see, brethren, Simon is seeking repentance; in a little while you shall see him returning again to his infidelity. For, thinking that I am a prophet for disclosing his wickedness, which he supposed to be secret and hidden, he has promised that he will repent. But I spoke not by a prophetic spirit what I said. I learned what things he did in secret from some, who once were his associates in his works, but have now been converted to our Faith. Therefore I spoke what I knew, not what I foreknew'.

When Simon heard this³⁸⁵, he began to attack Peter with blasphemies, reproaches and curses. In his tirade, he admitted a pretense of repentance in order to learn Peter's secret of foreknowledge. Launching into a speech intended to create a riot to force Peter to leave, Simon claimed,

1. He was born of a virgin.
2. He has flown through the air, from mountain to mountain, borne by angels.
3. He was made one body with fire.
4. He has made statues move.
5. He had made stones to become bread.
6. These prove that he is the eternal Son of God.
7. The One who sent you (i.e. Christ) is a magician who couldn't deliver Himself from the Cross.

³⁸³ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 43-44, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 8.

³⁸⁴ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 45, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 8.

³⁸⁵ Clement, "Recognitions", III, 46-49, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 8.

Peter stood his ground, unmoved, and the crowds, in indignation, violently picked Simon up and threw him out of the courtyard where the debate was held.

Peter then addressed³⁸⁶ the crowd saying that we should bear with wicked men patiently, knowing that God Himself bears patiently with them right up until Judgment Day. From this viewpoint, Simon should be mourned, since he has become a choice vessel for the evil one. Peter gave a benediction and instructed everyone to meet again the next day.

As the next day dawned³⁸⁷, a disciple of Simon came to Peter begging forgiveness. The day before, Simon had the man help him dump in the ocean some of the implements used in his black magic, before everyone found out just what Simon really did. Simon then wanted him to leave his wife and young children and follow him to Rome; there Simon promised to please the people so much, that he should be reckoned a god³⁸⁸, and publicly gifted with divine honors. Simon promised to make the man very wealthy. But the man had bad feet and couldn't comply even if he wanted to. As Peter spoke to the crowds that day, he had the man himself testify to everyone about what Simon had done.

The Founding of the Church in Antioch

Immediately after the death of Stephen in c. 31 AD, everyone was scattered by the bloodbath organized by the Jewish leaders, where Deacon Stephen, Deacon Nicanor and 200 others³⁸⁹ were stoned in short succession (Acts 7:59-8:4). The Seventy, the Twelve and others began preaching to Jews only at first. When James and the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had received the Word of God – sown perhaps by Photina, reaped by Philip – they sent Peter and John to lay hands on them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. Today we call this chrismation.

Meanwhile, beginning shortly after 31 AD, men from Cyprus and Cyrene who were also scattered at the death of Stephen, began preaching to the Greek speaking Gentiles in Antioch also. Over the span of a few years, a great number had believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21). From the Scriptures, the men we know who were from (the island of) Cyprus and Cyrene (in Northern Africa) were:

NAME	FROM	LATER BISHOP OF	NOTES
Simon	Cyrene	?	Carried Jesus' cross, Mark 15:21
Rufus	Cyrene	Thebes	Son of Simon, Mark 15:21
Alexander	Cyrene	heretic	Son of Simon, Mark 15:21
Lucius	Cyrene	Laodicea	Acts 13:1
Aristobulus	Cyprus	Britain	Barnabas' brother; Peter's father-in-law, Romans 16:10
Barnabas	Cyprus	Cyprus	Acts 12-15

All of the above, except Alexander, were members of the original Seventy and were referred to, in the early church, as the “lesser apostles” as opposed to the Twelve who were

³⁸⁶ Clement, “Recognitions”, III, 49-50, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 8.

³⁸⁷ Clement, “Recognitions”, III, 63-64, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 8.

³⁸⁸ As we'll see later, Simon accomplished these goals he set for himself.

³⁸⁹ Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

called the “great apostles.” The name Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21) is a Greek name that is equivalent to the Hebrew name “Simeon.” Simeon, called Niger (or black) in Acts 13:1, may be the same person (as being a black man coming from North Africa).

Of the six people listed above, four of the first five may have been involved in starting the church in Antioch. John Chrysostom noted³⁹⁰ that when the text states, “the hand of the Lord was with them” (Acts 11:21), this means that the men from Cyprus and Cyrene performed miracles, further suggesting that the Seventy were involved. Barnabas was not, but when the news of the great number of people, including Gentiles, turning to the Lord reached the Church in Jerusalem, James and the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate. Since Barnabas was still in Jerusalem when Peter returned from his confrontation with Simon Magus (and his subsequent missionary journeys), Barnabas must have been sent to Antioch sometime after 37 AD, but before 44 AD. More on this later.

Peter Follows Simon to Antioch

Peter resolved³⁹¹ to follow Simon to Rome to prevent the Romans from being swallowed up with his evil. But first, Peter ordained Zacchaeus, the former tax collector (Luke 19:1-10), as Bishop of the Church in Caesarea. Then Peter stayed with them for three months to confirm them in the Faith.

Peter Heads North Stopping at Each City

After Simon Magus left Caesarea³⁹², he began to speak evil about Peter, lying to people everywhere he went. This was documented in a letter from the brethren that had gone ahead detailing the crimes of Simon. “But in those days a letter was received from the brethren stating that Simon has been going from city to city deceiving multitudes, and everywhere maligning Peter, so that, when he should come, no one might afford him a hearing. For Simon asserted that Peter was a magician, a godless man, injurious, cunning, ignorant, and professing impossible things. For he asserts that the dead shall rise again, which is impossible. But if any one attempts to confute him, his attendants cut them off using secret snares. Wherefore, I also when I had triumphed over him, fled for fear of his snares, lest he should destroy me by incantations, or achieve my death by plots”.

Peter first went to Tripoli³⁹³ accompanied by Clement, Niceta, Aquila and twelve others, stopping at Ptolemais, Tyre, Sidon and Beirut. According to tradition³⁹⁴, Peter consecrated a Bishop to oversee the Church in both Sidon and Beirut before leaving. Peter then went to Byblus and Tripoli, moving North up the Mediterranean coast. In Tripoli, Peter stayed with a learned man named Maro or Marcon, and a huge crowd thronged around Peter at Maro’s house. Peter spoke to them in Maro’s garden, healing some, and casting demons out of others. Speaking at

³⁹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

³⁹¹ Clement, “Recognitions”, III, 65, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁹² Clement, “Recognitions”, III, 73, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁹³ Modern Tripoli in Northern Lebanon.

³⁹⁴ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 10.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

length, Peter explained how sin was the cause of mankind's suffering and the origin of idolatry and the means by which demons can get power over men. While the Gospel is the solution to men's problems, the Lord has allowed pretenders, using magic, to come forward beginning with Ham, the son of Noah, and Mizraim, Ham's son, the father of the Egyptians, from whom Simon learned his art. Peter encouraged the crowd to withdraw from the pollution of Simon's teachings and to be joined to Christ. Before leaving Tripoli, Peter consecrated Maro as Bishop for the faithful there, according to the above traditional source.

When Simon Magus heard³⁹⁵ that Peter had arrived in Tripoli, he left for Syria during the night. Leaving Tripoli, Peter and company moved³⁹⁶ up the coast to Ortosias (or Orthosia) and Antharadus, accompanied by large crowds. While there, they took a side trip to the small island of Aradus to see an architectural marvel. While there, they met a grief-stricken woman begging alms. She had been a noble woman with three sons, was married to a relative of Caesar in Rome, but her husband's brother tried to begin an affair with her. To avoid setting brother against brother over her, she pretended to have a vision for her twin sons' education, and left for Athens. On the way, she was shipwrecked and assumed her twin sons had drowned. In fact, pirates captured the twins, changed their names to Niceta and Aquila, and sold them as slaves to a kind woman, who adopted them and educated them. Her husband, Clement's father, not hearing from his wife, left Clement in the care of a relative, and went to search for his wife and sons, and never returned. Thus Clement, who didn't know Niceta and Aquila were his brothers, was reunited with his mother in a very emotional and dramatic reunion. Clement's mother, along with a woman who had cared for her for many years, was baptized and joined the entourage. Niceta and Aquila, who had gone ahead to Laodicea³⁹⁷ to prepare lodging, were similarly overjoyed to see their mother again when everyone arrived.

Peter Stops in Laodicea of Syria

Leaving Aradus, Peter went to Balanaea, Paltos, Gavalla, and finally to Laodicea. In Laodicea, a poor old man³⁹⁸ happened to observe Peter, Clement, Niceta and Aquila as they met in a private place for prayer. When they finished, he inquired for a long time about why they do this, since he was convinced that the alignment of the stars and fate determine how everyone's life will proceed. As evidence for this³⁹⁹, he gave an example from his own life. His wife's horoscope indicated that she would be an adulteress, fall in love with her slave, and end her days in foreign travel and in water. This happened, he said, and she perished in a shipwreck. Peter asked how he knew that this happened. The old man said that his brother told him the whole story. The brother said that he had been unwilling to engage in incest from the advances of the old man's wife, and that she had pretended to have a vision and had left for Athens with their twin sons. Clement and his brothers began to weep openly when they heard this, perceiving that the old man was their father, but Peter restrained them.

Bringing the old man before the entire crowd⁴⁰⁰, Peter recounted his life, and challenged his notion that his horoscope told the truth. When Peter introduced his three sons to him, the old man, named Faustinianus, passed out and had to be revived by Peter. Further, Peter told him that

³⁹⁵ Clement, "Recognitions", IV, 1-37, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁹⁶ Clement, "Recognitions", VII, 1-29, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁹⁷ This Laodicea is about 55 miles South of Antioch, and is not the same city as the one in Asia Minor near Colossae (Colossians 2:1, 4:13-16).

³⁹⁸ Clement, "Recognitions", VIII, 1-62; IX, 1-31, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

³⁹⁹ Clement, "Recognitions", IX, 32-33, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰⁰ Clement, "Recognitions", IX, 34-37, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

his wife, Matthidia, was the chaste one who had left to escape his brother's incest, and had just recently been reunited with the three boys in Antharadus. Matthidia, hearing of this recognition rushed into the middle of the crowd in breathless haste, saying, 'Where is my husband, my Lord Faustinianus?' As they embraced with a flood of tears, Peter dispersed the crowd to give them some privacy.

The next day⁴⁰¹, the three boys wanted to instruct their father immediately in the ways of the Lord. But Peter cautioned them in this regard, and in this, we see a difference between 1st Century evangelism and 20th Century evangelism. 'You should permit him to live for a year according to his own judgment; and during that time let him travel with us, and while we are instructing others he may hear with simplicity. And as he hears, if he has any right purpose of acknowledging the truth, he will himself request that he may take up the Faith; or if he does not please to take it, he may remain a friend. For those who do not take it up heartily, when they begin to find it unbearable, not only cast off that which they had taken up, but by way of excuse for their weakness, they begin to speak evil of the Way'. So Faustinianus sat and listened⁴⁰² while his sons taught the crowds regarding the errors of the history of the pagan gods, and how God has been long-suffering with them even when they say that there is no evil and no Judgment.

At dinner that evening⁴⁰³, two great friends of Faustinianus, Appion and Anubion, who had lodged with Simon Magus in Antioch, arrived. Faustinianus asked Peter's permission to go greet them and ask them if they would consent to speak the next day with his son, Clement. Peter gave his permission; but when Faustinianus returned, his sons and his wife were horrified that his face appeared to be that of Simon, and not his own. They recognized his voice, but not his face. As they were speaking, one of their company returned from Antioch to report that Simon had been doing many signs in Antioch, stirring up hatred against Peter, such that the people in Antioch wanted to kill Peter.

Simon had done this⁴⁰⁴ to escape from the Roman authorities, which had been ordered to hunt down and destroy sorcerers throughout the Empire. Once Faustinianus had been killed in his place, Simon would be free to move about as before. To combat Simon's trick, Peter first asked Cornelius⁴⁰⁵ the Centurion (Acts 10:22-48) to send out rumors that he was about to come to Antioch on official business to hunt for Simon. Hearing rumors of this, Simon left for Judea. Peter then asked Faustinianus to do one thing, after which he would restore his face. He asked him to travel to Antioch and address the multitudes as if he were Simon, making public confession for wrongdoing, and telling the people to invite Peter to come and speak to them the words of Life. This Faustinianus did, and his face was restored that evening. According to tradition⁴⁰⁶, Peter consecrated a Bishop for the people of Laodicea before leaving for Antioch.

⁴⁰¹ Clement, "Recognitions", X, 1, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰² Clement, "Recognitions", X, 2-51, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰³ Clement, "Recognitions", X, 52-54, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰⁴ Clement, "Recognitions", X, 55-67, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰⁵ As a Centurion, Cornelius was one of the Roman authorities that would be expected to enforce the Emperor's decree against sorcers.

⁴⁰⁶ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 11.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Peter Arrives in Antioch

The people of Antioch responded⁴⁰⁷ very kindly to the words of Faustinianus and greatly desired Peter to come. When he arrived, the people of Antioch met him with all the sick, the lame and the paralyzed lining the streets (Acts 5:15). Peter addressed them by saying, ‘Do not suppose that you can recover your health from me, but through Him who, coming down from heaven, has shown to those who believe in Him a perfect medicine for body and soul’. And all were healed! More than 10,000 men were baptized and consecrated within seven days. There was such an outpouring of grace on the people that Theophilus, the governor of Antioch (Luke 1:3, Acts 1:1), consecrated the great palace of his house under the name of a Church for people to come to hear Peter speak. Thus, Luke reported that in Antioch, “And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:24).

Meanwhile⁴⁰⁸ the restored Faustinianus fell down at Peter’s feet requesting that he be baptized also, and be received at the Lord’s Table. Peter presented Faustinianus to his sons and said, ‘As God has restored your sons to you, their father, so also your sons restored their father to God’. Proclaiming a fast, Peter baptized Faustinianus the next Lord’s Day⁴⁰⁹, and related the whole adventure of Faustinianus seeking his sons to all the people. The whole city received him as an angel, and paid him no less honor than they did to the Apostle.

While in Antioch, Peter consecrated as Bishops: Marcian for Syracuse in Sicily and Pancratius for Taormina, also in Sicily. While in Antioch, there is no record of Peter consecrating a Bishop for Antioch, which is noteworthy. Peter’s father-in-law, Aristobulus and the other men from Cyprus and Cyrene had evidently been doing a very good job in that role.

Peter Continues His Missionary Journeys

Leaving Antioch, Peter traveled⁴¹⁰ North to Tyana of Cappadocia, and from there to Ancyra of Galatia, where he raised a man from the dead and also built a Church. After catechising and baptizing them, he appointed a Bishop for them and left for Sinope of Pontus. In Sinope, he met his brother, Andrew, who had been there for a while, and together they taught the people of Sinope. Leaving Andrew there, Peter traveled to Amastris, in the middle of the province of Pontus. Later he traveled to Gangra of Paphlagonia, Claudiopoli of Pontus, Bithynia, and Nicomedia; stopping in Nicea, he paused for a while. All these Churches had been started by his brother Andrew, and Peter made it his task to visit each one and confirm them in the Faith. Intending to return to Jerusalem for the Feast of Passover, he turned back, passing through Pessinus of Galatia, Cappadocia, and Syria. After visiting Antioch again, he went on to Jerusalem for Passover.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁴⁰⁷ Clement, “Recognitions”, X, 68-71, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰⁸ Clement, “Recognitions”, X, 72, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁴⁰⁹ The “Lord’s Day” refers to Sunday, the first day of the week. Sunday had come to replace the Sabbath as the time for the Church to meet by the end of the 1st Century (Revelation 1:10). There is a hint in the Scripture that this development had occurred much earlier also (Acts 20:7).

⁴¹⁰ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 11.

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Peter Met With Paul in Jerusalem c. 37 AD: Galatians 1:18

At this point, we will backtrack a few years to follow what was happening with the Apostle Paul, and how he related to the Apostle Peter. To understand what Paul's meeting with Peter in c. 37 AD was about and to see when it occurred, we need to understand the dates of Paul's conversion and his later activities.

Paul's Birth to 34 AD

Paul was born in Tarsus of Cilicia probably about 2 AD and was a Pharisee along with his father (Acts 23:3, 23:6). His father was a Roman citizen, and thus Paul was also (Acts 22:27-28). As was customary, all Jewish boys learned a trade as part of their education. Paul's trade was tent making (Acts 18:1-3); this would prove very helpful later on (Acts 20:32-35, 1 Corinthians 9:6-12). Paul continued his education in Jerusalem under Gamaliel, the most respected Rabbi of that day (Acts 22:3, 5:34). This higher education usually began about age 13 for Jewish boys where some type of formal education usually began at age 6. Paul was an excellent student and advanced beyond many of his contemporaries, being "exceedingly zealous for the traditions of his fathers" (Galatians 1:14). In the late 20's AD, it is possible that Paul was among the other Pharisees, who came to be baptized by John the Baptist. John refused to baptize the Pharisees (Luke 7:30) and called them a brood of vipers (Matthew 3:7).

In 30 AD, when the Holy Spirit came at Pentecost, Paul began to persecute the Church. Paul may have been a junior member of the Sanhedrin by this time; he mentioned that he cast his vote in favor of putting some Christians to death (Acts 26:10). In 31 AD (one year to the day after Pentecost), Paul was present at the stoning of Stephen (Acts 22:19-20, Acts 7:59-8:3).

For the next three years, Paul "persecuted the Way to the death, binding and delivering into prisons both men and women" (Acts 22:4). He "punished them often in every synagogue and compelled them to blaspheme; and being exceedingly enraged against them, he persecuted them even to foreign cities" (Acts 26:11).

Paul's Conversion

Armed with letters from the high priest to the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:1-2), Paul headed North to seek out Christians that had scattered because of his persecution (Acts 8:4). On the road to Damascus, Paul met the Lord and was struck blind (Acts 9:3-8). In that encounter, the Lord told Paul to go into the city of Damascus where he would be told what to do. The Lord also told Paul that He would send him to the Gentiles that they also might have an inheritance among the faithful (Acts 26:16-18). This was something that the Pharisees in Jerusalem didn't want to hear.

Meanwhile in Damascus, Ananias also had a vision (Acts 9:10-12). Ananias was one of the original Seventy and was one of the people Paul came to Damascus looking for, and Ananias knew it (Acts 9:13-14). The Lord told Ananias that Paul was coming and that:

- Paul had been told that a man named Ananias would lay hands on him to restore his sight (Acts 9:12).
- Paul would evangelize the Gentiles and proclaim Christ to kings and to Israel (Acts 9:15).
- The Lord would show Paul how much he needed to suffer for the Lord's Name's sake (Acts 9:16).

Ananias went right away to the house on the street called Straight where Paul was staying and laid hands on him, restored his sight, and baptized him. Located at this address today is the Patriarchate of the Church of Antioch.

Referring to the 1st Church Council in Jerusalem in 48 AD, Paul stated that his conversion had occurred 14 years earlier (Galatians 1:23-2:3, Acts 15:1-6), or 34 AD.

34 AD to 37 AD

Paul spent some days with the disciples of Damascus after his baptism (Acts 9:19-20). Undoubtedly, Ananias and Paul talked about their visions: that Paul was a chosen vessel to evangelize the Gentiles and would suffer a lot. Paul stated that he did not immediately confer with flesh and blood (Galatians 1:16), but he went to Arabia for a while (Galatians 1:17). The implication is that he spent the greater part of three years (34-37 AD) in Arabia (Galatians 1:18).

To a Jew in the 1st Century “Arabia” did not necessarily mean the entire Arabian Peninsula. Josephus wrote that Arabia could be seen to the East from a tower in Jerusalem. The residents of Palestine generally referred to this area as Arabia.

The politics of this area was somewhat in turmoil at the time of Paul’s conversion, according to modern studies⁴¹¹ of the politics of that region. Just as the Nabatean King Aretas was expecting a reaction from Rome for his attacks against Galilee, Paul [a Jew, a Pharisee, and the son of a Pharisee] went to Arabia.

“Although Herod the Great’s mother came from an eminent Nabatean family, he later fought the Nabateans in a war that he won only after suffering heavy losses. The Nabateans, in return, enthusiastically provided auxiliary troops to aid the Roman governor of Syria in brutally suppressing the Jewish revolt that followed Herod’s death” (about 4 BC).

“In order to calm the tensions between the two peoples, one of Herod’s sons (Herod Antipas) married the daughter of the Nabatean king (Aretas IV). However, in about 23 AD he divorced her in order to marry Herodias, the wife of his half-brother Philip. (John the Baptist criticized this marriage, as reported both by Josephus and the Gospels, with the result that John was imprisoned and then beheaded (Matthew 14:3-12; Mark 6:17-29; Luke 4:19-20). Using a disputed border as an excuse, the Nabatean king attacked Galilee to avenge the insult to his daughter”.

“The Nabatean king knew from experience that Rome had little patience with warlike actions between the client kings who guarded the eastern frontier of the empire. He thus had every reason to feel anxious not only about Jewish reaction, but about Roman reactions to his attack on Galilee. The Roman emperor was perfectly capable to reacting quickly and decisively. All he had to do was to give an order to the governor of Syria, who had four legions at his disposition”.

Prior to leaving for Arabia, Paul had begun to preach Christ in the synagogues of Damascus (Acts 9:20). Those who heard him were amazed since they knew that Paul tried to destroy Christians in Jerusalem, and had come to Damascus to do the same (Acts 9:21-22). After his return to Damascus from Arabia, the amazement and consternation turned into a murder plot against Paul. The Jews hatched the plot (Acts 9:24) and got the governor of Damascus under

⁴¹¹ Jerome Murphy-O’Connor, “What Was Paul Doing in Arabia?” Bible Review, October 1994.

King Aretas to go along (2 Corinthians 11:32). With a garrison of soldiers guarding the city looking for Paul, the Christians let Paul down in a basket through a window in the city wall (Acts 9:25, 2 Corinthians 11:32-33) and he escaped, heading for Jerusalem.

37 AD to 45 AD

Arriving in Jerusalem, Paul met with Peter and James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:18-19). This was his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion and he only stayed 15 days. At first, the disciples in Jerusalem were afraid of him and didn't believe he was a disciple. But Barnabas, who had also studied under Gamaliel⁴¹², took Paul in, introduced him to the Apostles, and declared to them concerning Paul's conversion (Acts 9:26-27). When Paul spoke boldly in the Name of Jesus and disputed with the Greek-speaking Jews (i.e. the same ones that had killed Stephen), the Jews hatched a murder plot (Acts 9:29). This is why he only stayed 15 days in Jerusalem. When the brethren in Jerusalem found out about the murder plot, they hustled Paul down to Caesarea and off to his hometown of Tarsus (Acts 9:30). With Paul out of the way and no longer organizing the persecution of the Church, Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace and multiplied considerably (Acts 9:31). This peace lasted until about 44 AD when Herod Agrippa killed James, the son of Zebedee, and tried to kill Peter also (Acts 12:1ff) because it pleased the Jews.

Before leaving Jerusalem, Paul had another vision from the Lord, which confirmed the one he had at his conversion (Acts 22:17-21) three years earlier. In this vision, which occurred while Paul was praying in the Temple, the Lord warned him to get out of Jerusalem quickly because:

- They will not receive your testimony in Jerusalem
- The Lord would send him far from there to the Gentiles

Paul spent the next 8 years in Tarsus (37 AD to 45 AD). During this time Paul had at least one vision, this one greater than all the others. This vision occurred in 41 AD (14 years before the writing of 2 Corinthians in 55 AD). In this vision Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard things that he couldn't even speak about (2 Corinthians 12:2-4). This vision prepared Paul for his role as an Apostle since the churches on earth are modeled after the Assembly of the Saints in heaven just as the Tabernacle in the wilderness was modeled after the Tabernacle in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 20; 26:30, Acts 7:44, Hebrews 8:5).

There was considerable preparation and training that Paul went through prior to his being sent out as an Apostle. He didn't have the opportunity to follow Jesus for three years like the Twelve and the Seventy. However, the Lord did speak to him personally and specifically in directing him what to do. When he said in Galatians, "I did not immediately confer with flesh and blood" (Galatians 1:16) following his conversion, he is not putting down the Twelve, nor is he saying one shouldn't confer with one's elders. He is simply referring to the visions he had to have that were necessary for him to catch up to the other Apostles to be able to do what he did.

There was other foundational work that Paul had to do while he was in Tarsus that we don't notice until later. A number of the members of Paul's immediate family either came to know the Lord; or if they already did, the breach between them and Paul had to be repaired. Stephen, one of the first seven deacons was a kinsman of Paul⁴¹³ and therefore some repair work

⁴¹² Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

⁴¹³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

on family relationships was necessary. Others of Paul's kinsmen, also members of the Seventy (as was Stephen), that are mentioned in the Scriptures, are Herodion⁴¹⁴ (Romans 16:11), Andronicus⁴¹⁵ (Romans 16:7), and Lucius, Jason and Sosipater (Romans 16:21).

Barnabas is Sent to the Church in Antioch

About this time, news of what was happening in Antioch came to the ears of the Church in Jerusalem. Since Peter had been to Antioch briefly as he was chasing Simon Magus, Peter may have been the one who brought the news to Jerusalem about what was happening in Antioch. Peter himself was not available to go back to Antioch because he was needed in so many other places, and John couldn't go because he had the responsibility for the care of the Virgin Mary. John couldn't leave for an extended period of time, especially since Antioch was farther away from home. Bishop James had sent John with Peter to Samaria regarding Deacon Philip's converts (Acts 8:14-17) just after the Church was scattered by the stoning of Stephen. But it was only 35 miles to Samaria (a two-day trip for the Apostle John); on the other hand, it was 315 miles to Antioch, meaning that John would be gone for a long time. Since the rest of the Twelve were away on their separate missionary journeys, James sent Barnabas to Antioch. Luke describes this as follows.

“Now those who were scattered after the persecution that arose over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, preaching the word to no one but the Jews only. But some of them were men from Cyprus and Cyrene, who, when they had come to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists, preaching the Lord Jesus. And the hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number believed and turned to the Lord. Then news of these things came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent out Barnabas to go as far as Antioch. When he came and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:19-24).

Since Peter had been to Antioch and had seen what was happening – that is, that the Gentiles were not being circumcised – there was a delicate situation developing in Antioch. If the Apostles sent someone to Antioch who insisted on circumcising the tens of thousands of Gentile Christians, there could be some major dissention regarding why they were doing this. Aristobulus, Peter's father-in-law and the other founders of the Church didn't insist on this! The Christians in Antioch were bound to ask, “Why the change”? Barnabas, called “Son of Encouragement” by the Apostles (Acts 4:36), was the man for the job in Antioch, who could encourage them to remain faithful to the Lord until these questions got settled.

The Scripture does not say how long Barnabas was in Antioch before he went to Tarsus to get Paul (Acts 11:25). Tarsus was about 115 miles Northwest of Antioch, so we can assume that Barnabas stayed in Antioch until the situation stabilized and he accomplished the mission that Bishop James had sent him to do. There may have been an interval of several years.

⁴¹⁴ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8.

⁴¹⁵ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, May 17.

Peter Raises Aeneas and Tabitha: Acts 9:32-43

After the conversion of Paul in c. 34 AD, and his subsequent visit to Jerusalem in c. 37 AD (Acts 9:1-31), “the churches throughout all Judea, Galilee, and Samaria had peace and were edified” (Acts 9:31). At this time, Peter began what would be the trademark of his life for the next 30 years: namely a constant pattern of missionary journeys, visiting Churches all over the Empire. He was not far from home at this time: Lydda, Joppa, Caesarea, and the Plain of Sharon. Later on Peter traveled farther from home: Asia Minor, Italy, Egypt, Africa, even Britain, never staying too long in one place.

The date of Peter’s visit to Lydda and Joppa is sometime shortly after Paul’s visit to Jerusalem in c. 37 AD. As Peter traveled around, he came to Lydda and healed the paralytic Aeneas, telling him to take up his bed and walk, just like the Lord had told the paralytic by the pool of Bethesda (John 5:1-9). Lydda is at the Southern end of the 50-mile long Plain of Sharon. Aeneas may have been well known, because people from considerable distances came to see Peter and turned to the Lord (Acts 9:35). Since the Plain of Sharon is located in Samaria, many of these new converts may have been Gentiles, thus setting up the “Gentile Pentecost” of Acts 10 in Caesarea at the Northern end of the Plain of Sharon.

John Chrysostom noted⁴¹⁶ similarities between Aeneas and the Paralytic that Jesus healed. Peter did not wait for an expression of faith on the part of Aeneas just as the Lord had done with the Paralytic. And the results were similar; the miracle served as an exhortation to many (John 5:35). ‘All who dwelt at Lydda and Sharon turned to the Lord’ (Acts 9:35). Referring to the case of Aeneas, Chrysostom stated⁴¹⁷,

“At that time they had given no proofs of their power, so that Aeneas could not reasonably have been required to show his faith, and neither in the case of the lame man did they demand it (Acts 3:6). As Christ, in the beginning of His miracles, did not demand faith, so neither did these. For in Jerusalem, as was reasonable, the faith of the people was first shown when ‘they brought out their sick into the streets, that as Peter passed by, his shadow at least might fall upon some of them’ (Acts 5:15). For many miracles had been done in Jerusalem; but this is the first that occurs in Lydda. For of the miracles, some were done for the purpose of drawing others to faith; some for the comfort of those that already believed”.

While Peter was in Lydda after healing Aeneas, Tabitha died in Joppa, which is nearby. The disciples in Joppa therefore sent two men to get Peter. When Peter arrived, he again imitated His Master in raising Tabitha as he had in healing Aeneas. Peter remembered how the Lord had raised Jairus’ daughter: first He had everybody leave the room except Jairus, his wife and Peter, James and John. With the tumult, commotion and ridicule outside, Jesus taught Peter to seek the Lord in the quietness of prayer (Mark 5:37-42). In Joppa, Peter did the same thing (Acts 9:40-41) after putting all the weeping widows out of the room.

Peter stayed quite a while in Joppa (Acts 9:43) as a result of the large number of converts from the healing of Aeneas and the raising of Tabitha (9:36-42).

⁴¹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXII.

⁴¹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXI.

Another prominent resident of Lydda around this time was Joseph of Arimathea. After he and Nicodemus, both members of the Sanhedrin, performed the burial service for Jesus, they became persona-non-grata in Jerusalem and had to leave town. Joseph settled in Lydda and helped start the church there before going to Gaul and Britain. Later bishops of Lydda were Amplias and Zenas who worked with the Apostle Paul (Romans 16:8; Titus 3:13) and who were two of the original members of the Seventy (Luke 10:1-17). Nicodemus, an older man, had died while mourning the death of Stephen a few years earlier.

Regarding Tabitha, besides comparing her to Jairus' daughter, Chrysostom notes the faith of the disciples in Joppa. Why did they wait until she was dead? Why wasn't Peter solicited earlier? So right-minded were they, they did not think it proper to trouble the disciples about such matters and to take them away from the preaching.

Chrysostom went off⁴¹⁸ on a bit of a tangent in commenting on this. He began with how inappropriate the tears were in Joppa. But yet widows, such as these, are able by their prayers, to rescue many from hell.

“If the Emperor were to send and invite some one of us to the palace, would it be right, I ask, to weep and mourn? Angels are present, commissioned from heaven, sent from the King Himself to call their fellow servant (Tabitha); and, do you weep? Do you not know what a mystery it is that is taking place, how awesome, and worthy of hymns and praise? Like the spectacle of the Emperor, as he comes in state to take possession of the city, is the soul having left the body and departing in company with angels! Think what the soul must then be! In what amazement, what wonder, what delight! Why do you mourn?”

On the other hand, given “a man who has lost all the labor of a whole life: not one day has he lived for himself, but only to self-indulgence, to debauchery, to covetousness, to sin, to the devil. Shall we not bewail this man? Shall we not try to snatch him from his perils? For it is, yes, it is possible, if we will, to mitigate his punishment, if we make continual prayers for him; if for him we give alms. Has he no alms-deeds of his own to exhibit? Let him have at least those of his kindred, which are done for him. The more sins he has to answer for, the greater need he has of alms; not only for this reason, but because the alms have not the same virtue now, but far less. For it is not all the same to have done it himself, and to have another do it for him. Even this pertains to the mercy of God: widows (like the widows in Joppa) standing around and weeping know how to rescue, not indeed from the present death, but from that which is to come. Many have profited even by the alms done by others on their behalf.

John Chrysostom noted⁴¹⁹ that Peter traveled around like the commander of an army inspecting the ranks. When there was work to do, Peter did it. When all was calm, however, Peter demanded no greater honor than the others.

“As Peter passed throughout all quarters, he came down also to the saints which dwelt at Lydda (Acts 9:32). Like the commander of an army, he went about inspecting the ranks, noting what part was in good order, and what needed his presence. Notice how on all occasions he goes about as foremost. When an Apostle was to be chosen, he was the foremost (Acts 1:15). When the Jews were

⁴¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXII.

⁴¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXI.

to be told, that these were ‘not drunken’ (Acts 2:15), when the lame man was to be healed (Acts 3:4-12), when harangues were to be made (Acts 4:8), he is before the rest. When the rulers were to be spoken to (Acts 4:19), he was the man; in dealing with Ananias, it was he (Acts 5:3-10). When healings were wrought by the shadow (Acts 5:15), still it was he. And look: where there was danger (Acts 5:29), he was the man, and where good management was needed, it was he (Acts 6:2-3). But where all is calm, there they act all in common, and he demands no greater honor than the others. When there was a need to work miracles, he starts forward, and here again he is the man to do the work.

Ambrose noted⁴²⁰ a connection between the weeping of the widows of Joppa and the raising of Tabitha. Weeping, especially over our sins, is very beneficial.

“It pleases Christ that many should entreat for one. In the Gospel, moved by the tears of the widow of Nain, because many were weeping for her, He raised her son (Luke 7:11-13). He heard Peter more quickly when He raised Dorcas, because the poor were mourning over the death of the woman (Acts 9:39). He also forgave Peter, for he wept bitterly (Matthew 26:75). And if you weep bitterly Christ will look upon you and your guilt shall leave you, for the application of pain does away with the enjoyment of the wickedness and the delight of the sin. And so, while mourning over our past sins, we shut the door against fresh ones, and from the condemnation of our guilt there arises, as it were, training in innocence”.

“Let, then, nothing call you away from penitence, for this you have in common with the saints, and would that you copied such sorrowing for sin as that of the saints. David, as it were, ‘ate ashes for bread, and mingled his drink with weeping’ (Psalm 102:9). He therefore now rejoices the more because he wept the more: ‘My eyes ran down’, he said, ‘with rivers of water’” (Psalm 119:136).

Peter’s Vision for the Gentiles: Acts 10

In the 1st Century, there wasn’t the distinction between Christianity and Judaism that there is today. Christians were still considered a branch of Judaism, and Churches were sometimes referred to as “synagogues”, even as late as the early 2nd Century⁴²¹. When Jerusalem was destroyed in c. 70 AD and again in c. 135 AD after Bar Cochba’s revolt, Christianity emerged as separate and distinct from Judaism.

In the early 1st Century, the saints were wrestling with the change in the Law that occurred as a result of the Passion of Christ. As Paul stated it, “For the priesthood being changed, of necessity there is also a change of the Law” (Hebrews 7:12). Peter’s vision was a major part of the Lord’s instruction in these matters.

James in Jerusalem Taught the Mosaic Law

In Jerusalem, Jews and Christians alike observed the Mosaic Law, right up to the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD. This was intentional, and James, the Lord’s brother, the Bishop of Jerusalem, directed it. His point was to show, in every minor detail, that his

⁴²⁰ Ambrose, *Two Books Concerning Repentance*, II, x, 92-93.

⁴²¹ Justin Martyr, *Dialog with Trypho*, Chapter 64.

stepbrother, Jesus, was foretold by everything in the Law and the Prophets. And James was very powerful in proclaiming this.

For example, in 57 AD, when Paul returned from his third missionary journey, he immediately went to meet with Bishop James in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18). There were a great number of Jewish believers in Jerusalem who were all zealous to keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:20). They had been informed (probably by the Sanhedrin, which opposed James), that Paul taught Jews abroad that they didn't have to follow the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:21, 28-31). To prove to them that this was untrue, James and the Jerusalem presbyters instructed Paul to follow the Nazarite Laws (which Paul had been doing) together with four other men in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 21:22-25, Numbers 6:1-21). That way everyone would see that Paul, himself, kept the Mosaic Law and that the rumors were untrue. This was almost 10 years after the Council in Jerusalem, where James and the Elders in Jerusalem decreed that the Gentiles did not have to observe the Mosaic Law and be circumcised (Acts 15:5-21). James and the Elders in Jerusalem had even drafted a letter to be read to all the Gentile Churches stating this plainly and emphatically (Acts 15:22-33).

Eusebius quoted⁴²² an earlier writer, Hegesippus, in describing the work and character of James, the Lord's brother:

“But Hegesippus⁴²³, who lived immediately after the Apostles, gives 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; and he drank no wine nor strong drink, nor did he eat flesh⁴²⁴. No razor came upon his head; he did not anoint himself with oil, and he did not use the public bath. He alone was permitted to enter into the holy place; for he wore not woolen but linen garments. And he was in the habit of entering alone into the temple, and was frequently found upon his knees begging forgiveness for the people, so that 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, *Bulwark of the people* and *Justice*, in accordance with what the prophets declare concerning him.”

Eusebius continued to say⁴²⁵ that as many as believed (among the Jews) did so on account of James, the Lord's brother. It was the conversion of many of the Pharisees by James that brought on the Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD (Acts 15:5) to settle the question regarding whether the Gentiles had to keep the details of the Mosaic Law, as they were keeping it in Jerusalem. This conversion rate led to James' martyrdom in c. 62 AD, when the (unbelieving) Scribes and Pharisees came to James, entreating him as they would a king, trying to stem the flow of people becoming Christians from their ranks.

“Therefore when many even of the rulers believed (Acts 15:5), there was a commotion among the Jews and Scribes and Pharisees, who said that there was

⁴²² Eusebius, *Church History*, II, 23.

⁴²³ These works of Hegesippus are lost; most of what we know about them comes from Eusebius' quotes.

⁴²⁴ That is, he lived an Orthodox fast his whole life, along with the other Apostles.

⁴²⁵ Eusebius, *Church History*, II, 23.

danger that the whole people would be looking for Jesus as the Christ. Coming therefore in a body to James they said, ‘We entreat you, restrain the people; for they are gone astray in regard to Jesus, as if he were the Christ. We entreat you to persuade all that have come to the feast of the Passover concerning Jesus; for we all have confidence in you. For 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. For the whole people, and all of us also, have confidence in you. Stand therefore upon the pinnacle⁴²⁶ of the temple (Matthew 4:5), that from that high position you may be clearly seen, and that all the people may readily hear your words. For all the tribes, with the Gentiles also, are come together on account of the Passover.’ The Scribes and Pharisees therefore placed James upon the pinnacle of the temple, and 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.’ And he answered with a loud voice, ‘Why do ye 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 upon the clouds of heaven’ (Matthew 26:64, Mark 14:62). And 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. But let us go up and throw him down, in order that they may be afraid to believe him.’ And they cried out, saying, ‘Oh! 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). 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 and knelt down and said, ‘I entreat You, Lord God our Father, forgive them, for they don’t know what they’re doing’ (Luke 23:34). And while they were thus stoning him one of the priests of the sons of Rechab, the son of the Rechabites, who are mentioned by Jeremiah the prophet, (Jeremiah 35) cried out, saying, ‘Stop; what are you doing? The Just One prays for you.’ And one of them, who was a fuller, took the club with which he beat out clothes and struck the Just Man on the head. And thus he suffered martyrdom. And they buried him on the spot, by the temple, and his monument still remains by the Temple. He became a true witness, both to Jews and Greeks, that Jesus is the Christ. And immediately Vespasian besieged them.”

“These things are related at length by Hegesippus, who is in agreement with Clement. James was so admirable a man and so celebrated among all for his justice, that the more sensible even of the Jews were of the opinion that this was the cause of the siege of Jerusalem, which happened to them immediately after his martyrdom for no other reason than their daring act against him. Josephus, at least, has not hesitated to testify⁴²⁷ this in his writings, where he says, ‘These things happened to the Jews to avenge James the Just, who was a brother of Jesus,

⁴²⁶ The “pinnacle” of the Temple was its roof, which was about six stories above the courtyard. From the “pinnacle”, one could address a very large crowd.

⁴²⁷ This quote from Josephus is not in our copies of his *Antiquities* today. However Origin also quotes Josephus with the same statement in *Contra Celsum* I, 47. The prevailing opinion is that earlier copies of Josephus contained this statement but later copies (after the 4th Century) deleted it.

that is called the Christ. For the Jews slew him, although he was a most just man’.

The Mosaic Law: Gentiles Were Supposed to be the Focus

While Moses had spelled out that Israel was God’s chosen people, Israel was not supposed to be self-centered, as was the case in the 1st Century due to Jewish nationalism. Living under the thumb of the Roman army, there was a fervor among many Jews to throw off the dominion of Rome. After all, they were God’s chosen people, and they had the example of the righteous Maccabees of the previous century as an example.

Speaking to the Twelve, the Lord had said, “You are the light of the world. A city that is set on a hill cannot be hidden. Nor do they light a lamp and put it under a basket, but on a lamp-stand, and it gives light to all who are in the house (Matthew 5:14-15). While the above was spoken to the Twelve and to the Church, it also applies to Israel in the Old Testament. Israel was also to be the light of the world and the city set on a hill. There are several different aspects of this:

As Seen in The Mosaic Law

1. Wisdom and Understanding: Keeping all aspects of the Law will illustrate wisdom and understanding to all people of the earth (Deuteronomy 4:6). This was demonstrated during the visit of the Queen of Sheba to King Solomon (1 Kings 10:1-4).
2. Righteousness: People will see the righteousness of God and seek to imitate Israel (Deuteronomy 4:8). Righteousness and justice are the foundation of the Throne of God (Psalm 89:14, 97:2).
3. The Spread of the Gospel: Just as the Twelve Apostles and their successors took the message of the Gospel to the entire world (Matthew 28:18-20, Mark 16:15-20), so Israel was supposed to do by example. While Jonah traveled to Nineveh, most of the prophets stayed home. But all the visitors to Israel were to be treated as if they were native-born (Leviticus 19:34), and this was a tremendous witness to the love of God for the world.

As Seen by Spectacular Signs and Wonders

1. Speaking from the Midst of Fire: The spectacular events associated with the giving of the Law at Mt. Sinai became known to the world (Deuteronomy 4:33). This included the thunder, the lightning, the earthquakes, the smoke, and a huge fire reaching to the heavens (Exodus 19:16-19, Deuteronomy 4:11). God spoke to the people from the midst of the fire (Deuteronomy 4:36), and Moses walked up the mountain right into this fire (Exodus 24:16-18). Clement of Alexandria⁴²⁸ refers to this as, “The Lord’s Voice, the Word, without shape, the Power of the Word, the luminous Word of the Lord, the Truth from heaven, coming to the assembly of the Church”.
2. The Exodus from Egypt: All the neighboring nations knew how the plagues and the Red Sea decimated Egypt (Joshua 2:9-11), which was a world superpower at the time. 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).
3. These Events Were Unique in World History: This had never been done before; taking out a nation from within another nation by trials, by signs and by wonders

⁴²⁸ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata VI, 4.

(Deuteronomy 4:34-37). How could any nation contend with Israel when with them the supernatural was normal? The natural inclination of all the nations would be to inquire into details of the God who did all these things.

Instead of being a light to the Gentiles, throughout much of her history, Israel did the opposite. Ezekiel spoke at a time when Israel had profaned the Lord's Name among the Gentiles wherever they went (Ezekiel 36:22). The Lord, Ezekiel said, was going to vindicate His Holy Name when He gathered His people from all nations and brought them into their own land (Ezekiel 36:23-24). This was still true in the 1st Century, and Paul stated that the Name of God was blasphemed among the Gentiles because of Jewish hypocrisy (Romans 2:24) and that a true Jew is one who is so inwardly (Romans 2:29).

The Mosaic Law commanded Israel to show love to the Gentiles. Remembering that they were once strangers in Egypt, there was to be no discrimination, just as there is to be no discrimination between Jews and Gentiles in the Church (Ephesians 2:13-18). Clement of Alexandria stated⁴²⁹, "What is found in another is to be regarded as a deposit of God, and we are not to bear malice to an enemy. 'The command of the Lord being a fountain of life truly, 'causes to turn away from the snare of death' (Proverbs 14:27). Does it not command us 'to love strangers not only as friends and relatives, but as ourselves, both in body and soul?' (Leviticus 19:33-34). Accordingly it is expressly said, 'You shall not abhor an Egyptian, for you were a sojourner in Egypt' (Deuteronomy 23:7); designating by the term Egyptian either one of that race, or anyone in the world".

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 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).

No wonder, at age 33, on the day after Palm Sunday, Jesus drove the moneychangers, etc., out of the Temple. Quoting Isaiah, He said, "My house shall be called a house of prayer for all nations (Isaiah 56:7). But you have made it a den of thieves" (Mark 11:17). He had done this same thing three years earlier, just as He began His public ministry. In describing this, the Apostle John stated that the disciples then remembered that it was written, "Zeal for Your house has consumed Me" (John 2:13-17, Psalm 69:9).

As the light of the world, Israel was commanded to lend generously to the Gentiles, but not to borrow from them. "For the Lord your God will bless you just as He promised you; you shall lend to many nations, but you shall not borrow; you shall reign over many nations, but they shall not reign over you" (Deuteronomy 15:6). Lending to other nations was good, because it encouraged the other nations to be dependent on and in imitation of Israel. The converse was not good because it encouraged Israel to imitate foreign nations and go after foreign gods.

⁴²⁹ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata II, 18.

The problem, however, was the lack of a heart for God in Israel. No one can understand the things of God unless the Holy Spirit reveals it to him (1 Corinthians 12:3, 2:10-13). Without the Holy Spirit, there is a veil over one's mind and the mysteries of God are incomprehensible (2 Corinthians 3:13-16). This was true in Moses' day and in Paul's day (Romans 11:8). One might wonder why the Lord did not grant Israel a heart to know, eyes to see and ears to hear. Ephraim the Syrian stated⁴³⁰ that the reason for this, and the reason Moses was taken away from them, was so that the evil within them would show itself. They did not want a God who could hear and see and find fault. Every day they enjoyed the manna, water from the Rock, clothes that didn't wear out, and security from their enemies. All Israel lacked in the wilderness was blatant paganism.

“And so we have briefly demonstrated that when the mind is intent on a certain thing, but it meets with some contradiction, it forcibly manipulates it to open the door to whatever it wants”.

By way of contrast, it was the Gentiles that did have a heart, eyes and ears. Speaking of Christ, David said, “You shall make Me head of the Gentiles. A people whom I knew not served Me; at the hearing of the ear, they obeyed Me” (Psalm 18:43-44).

Isaiah saw visions of the times when “My Servant” (meaning Christ) will “establish justice in the earth” (Isaiah 42:1, 4). Israel will be appointed “as a covenant to the people, as a light to the Gentiles” (Isaiah 42:6), “to open blind eyes, to bring prisoners from the dungeon and those who dwell in darkness from the prison” (Isaiah 42:7). Israel will be redeemed and called by the Lord's name (Isaiah 43:1) and their offspring gathered from the ends of the earth (Isaiah 43:5-7). Those gathered are referred to as the Lord's “witnesses” (Isaiah 43:10, 12) and they “will declare My praise” (Isaiah 43:21). There was no strange god among them, and they know that “even from eternity I AM” (Isaiah 43:12). Jesus quoted this part of Isaiah's writing as He began His public ministry (Luke 4:18-19), but the people in His hometown reacted by trying to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-30). To a large extent, Isaiah's words have been fulfilled with the Coming of Christ and the sending of the Twelve Apostles to evangelize the Gentiles.

The age in which we are living has been called “the times of the Gentiles”, and the Lord said that Jerusalem will be trampled by the Gentiles until this age is fulfilled (Luke 21:24). By “trampled”, He is speaking of a lack of holiness and devotion to God, which has been characteristic of Jerusalem for the last 2000 years. Paul stated, “For I do not desire, brethren, that you should be ignorant of this mystery, lest you should be wise in your own opinion, that blindness in part has happened to Israel until the fullness of the Gentiles has come in” (Romans 11:25).

At the time of Paul's vision (Acts 10), however, Israel was still locked in its focus on Jewish nationalism. The leaders of the infant Church had difficulty seeing beyond this, and the Lord had to lead them by the hand to become again the light of the world in reaching out to the Gentiles. For them to hear Paul calling the Gentiles in Galatia “the Israel of God” (Galatians 6:16) would have been too much for them at this time.

Jews in a Gentile Culture

There was a difficulty, in the 1st Century, for Jews living in a Gentile culture. In cities distant from Jerusalem, it was especially difficult to follow the Mosaic Law dietary rules. How

⁴³⁰ Ephraim the Syrian, Homily on Our Lord, 43:4.

could one find kosher meat when some of the meat sold in the marketplace had even been offered to idols? And one may not know which was which! It was enough to turn some Jews into vegetarians. They wanted to imitate the leaders in Jerusalem, but they had to be practical also.

For Jews coming into the Church, it was hard to accept Gentile customs. Paul addressed this in Romans 14. He said that while there may be nothing unclean (i.e. nothing non-kosher) of itself; yet to him who considers it unclean, to him it is unclean (Romans 14:14). The Gentile believers needed to show love for the Jewish believers rather than destroy with their food the one for whom Christ died (Romans 14:15). On the other hand, the Jew who held onto the old dietary rituals may not be as strong in the Faith as someone who realizes the proper place of food. But still, others were not to pass judgment on him. For it is to his own Master (the Lord Jesus) that he stands or falls (Romans 14:4, 10). The Lord had said that it's not what goes into a man's mouth that defiles a man (makes him unclean) but what comes out of his mouth (Matthew 15:11).

Outside Jerusalem, there were Gentiles who had assumed a leading role in Judaism, even though they were limited as to how much they could participate. One of these was Cornelius, who was referred to as:

1. A devout man, who feared God with his whole household (Acts 10:2).
2. One who gave alms generously to the people.
3. One who prayed to God always, meaning that he used the Hours of Prayer⁴³¹.

The Lord Speaks to Peter About the Gentiles

With the above as a background, we can look at Peter's vision of the sheet that was let down from heaven. In the late 30's AD, while Peter was staying in Joppa at the house of Simon the tanner, Cornelius, a Gentile and a Centurion, but also a devout Jewish convert, had a vision in Caesarea, about 30 miles North on the Mediterranean Coast. In his vision, the Lord commended Cornelius that "Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial⁴³² before God" (Acts 10:4). Then He told Cornelius to send for Peter in Joppa, and Peter "will tell you what you must do" (Acts 10:6). Cornelius then sent two servants and a devout soldier to Joppa to get Peter.

The next day, as the three men went on their journey and drew near Joppa, Peter went up on the housetop to pray at about the sixth hour, and also had a vision.

"Then Peter became very hungry and wanted to eat; but while they prepared lunch, he fell into a trance and saw heaven opened and an object like a great sheet bound at the four corners, descending to him and let down to the earth. In it were all kinds of four-footed animals of the earth, wild beasts, creeping things, and birds of the air. And a voice came to him, 'Rise, Peter; kill and eat'. But Peter said, 'Not so, Lord! For I have never eaten anything common or unclean'. And a voice *spoke* to him again the second time, 'What God has cleansed you must not call common'. This was done three times. And the object was taken up into heaven again" (Acts 10:10-16).

⁴³¹ For a discussion on the significance of the "Hours of Prayer", see Appendix A.

⁴³² While this had evidently been going on for years, Cornelius was just now commended for it. How many of our prayers are like this?

Peter's vision was connected to Cornelius' vision! The unclean animals on the sheet that Peter saw represent the Gentiles, whom the Jews considered unclean. The Lord's message was preparing Peter and ultimately, the Church, to accept the Gentiles as equal partakers with the Jews of the things of God.

John Chrysostom stated⁴³³ that the linen sheet represents the earth, and the wild beasts are the Gentiles. The command, "Kill and eat", denotes that Peter must go to the Gentiles. Because the vision occurred three times means that Peter must baptize the Gentiles, since baptism involved a three-times immersion in the Name of the Father, Son and Holy Spirit. The vision also implied that the Gentiles, considered "unclean" by the Jews, are partakers of heaven, since that's where the sheet came from and returned to. Chrysostom also stated:

"Observe with whom the beginning of the Gentiles is made — with 'a devout man', and one proved to be worthy by his works. For if the Jews were still offended, and if the vision came to a discriminating Jew, what would not have been the consequence!"

"Probably Peter was on his knees when he saw the vision. To me it seems that this also denotes the Gospel (or, "the Preaching"). That the thing taking place was of God, the circumstances made evident; namely, both that he sees it descending from above, and that he is in a trance. That the voice comes from heaven, and Peter's thrice confessing that the creatures there were unclean, and its coming from there, and being drawn back there; all this is a mighty token of the cleanness imparted to the Gentiles. But why is this done? For the sake of those later, to whom he is about to relate it. For to Peter it had been said, 'Go not into the way of the Gentiles'" (Matthew 10:5).

We can see how Peter's vision is connected to the Gentiles by looking at the next event. While Peter was wondering what this vision had meant, the three men were knocking at the gate to Simon the tanner's house, asking whether Peter was staying there. While they were asking, the Spirit said to Peter, "Behold, three men are seeking you. Arise therefore, go down and go with them, doubting nothing; for I have sent them" (Acts 10:19-20). Peter invited them in, saw to it that they had lodging for the night, and set off with them the next day, accompanied by some of the brethren from Joppa.

When they got to Caesarea, Cornelius met them and wanted to worship Peter out of his deep respect for the things of God and from the Lord's command, "Peter will tell you what you must do" (Acts 10:6). Peter prevented him, and remarked,

"You know how unlawful it is for a Jewish man to keep company with⁴³⁴ or go to one of another nation. But God has shown me that I should not call any man common or unclean. Therefore I came without objection as soon as I was sent for" (Acts 10:28-29).

Cornelius told Peter of his own vision, concluding, "Now therefore, we are all present before God, to hear all the things commanded you by God" (Acts 10:33). Peter then spoke, "In truth I perceive that God shows no partiality. But in every nation whoever fears Him and works righteousness is accepted by Him" (Acts 10:35). Peter continued to outline the Passion of Christ,

⁴³³ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, XXII.

⁴³⁴ The "unlawfulness" of this relationship with Gentiles was part of the "commandments of man" that Jesus criticized the Jewish leaders for (John 18:28, Matthew 15:9).

beginning with the baptism of John the Baptist, and leading to Christ's command to evangelize the earth (Matthew 28:19). Peter was certainly aware that the rest of the Twelve (except for he and John) had already left town to do this. But he probably hadn't heard much back from them regarding what they encountered along the way.

While Peter was still speaking, everyone was astonished by what has come to be called "the Gentile Pentecost".

"While Peter was still speaking these words, the Holy Spirit fell upon all those who heard the word. And those of the circumcision who believed were astonished, as many as came with Peter, because the gift of the Holy Spirit had been poured out on the Gentiles also. For they heard them speak with tongues and magnify God. Then Peter answered, Can anyone forbid water, that these should not be baptized who have received the Holy Spirit just as we *have*?" And he commanded them to be baptized in the name of the Lord. Then they asked him to stay a few days" (Acts 10:44-48).

The above events were similar to what happened to Deacon Philip's converts after the Apostle Peter arrived⁴³⁵. There, Philip baptized the new converts first, and then they received the Gift of the Holy Spirit from Peter. Here the order is reversed! The Gentiles received the Gift of the Holy Spirit directly from God, and then they were baptized. As mentioned earlier, John Chrysostom stated⁴³⁶ that the Samaritan converts had received from Philip only the Spirit of remission of sins, whereas from Peter they received the Spirit of miracles. The Gentiles in Caesarea, on the other hand, were already devout Jews, who were diligent in fasting, prayer, and alms giving. When Peter recognized what had happened, he immediately had the Gentiles baptized in order to give them the same grace as everyone else.

Peter and John Sent to Samaria Regarding Philip's Converts: Acts 8:4-25

Irenaeus stated⁴³⁷ that Peter recognized that the Gentiles in Caesarea already knew the same God that he did, but he perceived that they were unaware of the work of Christ. Therefore Peter baptized them for the remission of sins, which comes through baptism.

"From Peter's words, which he addressed in Caesarea to Cornelius the centurion, and those Gentiles with him, we can understand what the Apostles used to preach, the nature of their preaching, and their idea with regard to God. For this Cornelius was, 'a devout man, and one who feared God with all his house, giving much alms to the people, and praying to God always'" (Acts 10:1-2).

"But when Peter saw the vision, in which the voice from heaven said to him, 'What God has cleansed, you must not call common' (Acts 10:15), this happened to teach him that the God who had, through the Law, distinguished between clean and unclean, was He who had purified the Gentiles through the blood of His Son".

"He thus clearly indicates, that He whom Cornelius had previously feared as God, of whom he had heard through the Law and the Prophets, for whose sake also he used to give alms, is, in truth, God. The knowledge of the Son was, however, lacking to him. Therefore Peter spoke to them about Christ".

⁴³⁵ For a discussion of this, see the section: "Peter and John Sent to Samaria Regarding Philip's Converts", page 142.

⁴³⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XVIII.

⁴³⁷ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, xii, 7.

“It is evident from Peter’s words that he knew the God who was already known to the Gentiles. But he also bore witness to them that Jesus Christ was the Son of God, the Judge of the living and the dead, into whom he commanded them to be baptized for the remission of sins. And not this alone, but he witnessed that Jesus was Himself the Son of God, who also, having been anointed with the Holy Spirit, is called Jesus Christ. And He is the same being that was born of Mary, as the testimony of Peter implies”.

Ambrose of Milan noted⁴³⁸ that Peter was fasting when he received his revelation about the Gentiles. Similarly with Moses and Daniel; for fasting and alms do away with sins.

“And what is the intention of the Scripture which teaches us that Peter fasted, and that the revelation concerning the baptism of Gentiles was made to him when fasting and praying (Acts 10:9-16), except to show that the Saints themselves advance when they fast. Finally, Moses received the Law when he was fasting (Exodus 34:28); and so Peter, when fasting, was taught the grace of the New Testament. Daniel too, by virtue of his fast, stopped the mouths of the lions (Daniel 6:10-23) and saw the events of future times (Daniel 10). And what safety can there be for us unless we wash away our sins by fasting, since Scripture says that fasting and alms do away with sin?” (Tobit 12:8-9 LXX)

Paul’s Influence on Peter Regarding the Gentiles

Peter’s vision of the sheet full of unclean animals was not the first hint that God was directing the Early Church to embrace the Gentiles. In c. 37 AD, three years after his conversion on the road to Damascus, Paul went to Jerusalem (Galatians 1:18-19) to visit Peter and James the Lord’s brother. This was his first visit to Jerusalem after his conversion and he only stayed 15 days. At one point during these fifteen days, Paul was praying in the Temple, and was in a trance. He saw the Lord at that time, and He said to Paul, “Make haste and get out of Jerusalem quickly, for they will not receive your testimony concerning Me”. “Depart, for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles” (Acts 22:18, 21). This vision was almost a repeat of the one that Ananias had had regarding Paul at Paul’s conversion, showing that it was the Lord’s will for Paul to go to the Gentiles (Acts 9:15-16).

Before Paul left for Tarsus, Paul spoke to Peter about his vision and about Ananias’ vision and its implications. However, none of the brethren in Jerusalem knew what to do about these visions yet, since the Lord had not made it clear to them what they were supposed to do about the Gentiles. The answer regarding what they were to do about the Gentiles came from Antioch.

The Developments in Antioch Press the Question

The developments in Antioch were instrumental in bringing the case for the Gentiles to center stage. Barnabas may have been chosen to go initially because his brother Aristobulus was involved, but his role in Antioch was pivotal. Just as Gentiles were not circumcised in Antioch, so Paul and Barnabas did not circumcise them on their First Missionary Journey. By the time Paul and Barnabas returned in c. 48 AD, the issue over circumcision had become the hottest issue of the day, and Paul sought to go the Jerusalem to settle it once and for all (Galatians 2:2).

⁴³⁸ Ambrose of Milan, Letters, Epistle 63, 16-17.

Barnabas had been in Jerusalem in 37 AD when Paul had his vision in the Temple about the Gentiles. Paul's vision preceded Peter's vision of the sheet (Acts 10:9-17) that led to the baptism of Cornelius and Barnabas was undoubtedly aware of what Paul's vision meant for Antioch when he saw the grace of God there.

“When Barnabas came (to Antioch) and had seen the grace of God, he was glad, and encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:23-24).

John Chrysostom speculated⁴³⁹ on why Barnabas was sent to Antioch, whereas Peter and John were sent to Samaria following Deacon Philip's evangelism (Acts 8:14). Chrysostom felt that it was because of the Jews in Jerusalem that they sent Barnabas. That is, the Jews in Jerusalem didn't want to make it obvious that they were evangelizing Gentiles, so they didn't send the “pillars” (Galatians 2:9), but instead sent one of the “lesser Apostles.” We might note the attitude of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who were very zealous for the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:20-21).

When Barnabas got to Antioch and saw the grace of God among the Gentiles (Acts 11:23), he encouraged them. The fruits of the Church in Antioch under Barnabas were noted by John Chrysostom as a very important development: the alms for the Jerusalem Church (Acts 11:29-30). Chrysostom said⁴⁴⁰ this had more benefit for Antioch than for Jerusalem: “There is no sin which alms cannot cleanse; none which alms cannot quench. All sin is beneath this; it is a medicine adopted for every wound.” On this, Paul and James concurred (Galatians 2:10). Solomon wrote, “The ransom of a man's soul is his own wealth” (Proverbs 13:8 LXX). The Lord said, “If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and then come follow me” (Matthew 19:21). Chrysostom continued:

“But alms may be done not only by money, but by acts. For example: one may kindly stand by a person to help and defend him; one may reach to him a helping hand. The service rendered by acts has often done more good even than money. Is it, do you think, small alms to a lost, castaway soul possessed by a burning fever to be able to rid it of its disease? For example, do you see one possessed by love of money? Pity the man. Quench his fire. What if he will not be persuaded? Do your part and do not be remiss. Have you seen him in bonds? For wealth is indeed bonds (Matthew 25:35ff). Go to him; visit him; console him; try to release him from his bonds. If he refuses, he shall bear the blame himself. Have you seen him naked and a stranger? For he is indeed naked and a stranger to heaven. Bring him to your own inn; clothe him with the garment of virtue; give him the city which is in heaven”.

In considering the spread of the Early Church, one might think about how terrible the persecutions were. However, as Chrysostom put it⁴⁴¹:

“The persecution turned out to be no light benefit, as ‘to those who love God all things work together for good’ (Romans 8:28). If they had made it their express study how best to establish the Church, they would have done nothing else but this; they would have dispersed the teachers. When Stephen was slain,

⁴³⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

⁴⁴⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

⁴⁴¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

when Paul was twice in danger, when the Apostles were scourged, then the Gentiles received the word, and also the Samaritans. Paul declared: 'It was necessary that the Word of God should be spoken to you (the Jews) first; but since you reject it and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles' (Acts 13:46). It is no small part of providential management for Paul to be there. In this way that Voice of the Gospel, that Trumpet of Heaven is not shut up in Jerusalem. Truly this is the reason why it was there they were appointed to be called Christians, because Paul spent so long a time in Antioch!"

Peter Defends His Vision for the Gentiles: Acts 11:1-8

When the Apostles and brethren, who were in Judea, heard that the Gentiles had also received the word of God, Peter had some explaining to do. The date was the early 40's AD, just prior to the famine in the days of Claudius (Acts 11:28), which occurred in c. 44 AD. Paul had been converted at this time and was now living in Tarsus (Acts 9:26-30). Three years after Paul's conversion, or c. 37 AD, he had come to Jerusalem to see Peter and James (Acts 9:26-30, Galatians 1:18-19). At that time, he had a vision in the Temple where the Lord told him that He was planning on sending Paul to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21). Due to the murder plots against Paul, he could only stay in Jerusalem for 15 days, after which the disciples hustled him out of town for his own safety (Acts 9:28-30).

At this point, no one had acted on Paul's vision of c. 37 AD about going to the Gentiles. No one knew what to do about it, but a number of people remembered that he had had the vision. Just before the famine of 44 AD, when Barnabas saw the Grace of God coming to the Hellenists in Antioch, Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Saul (Acts 11:23-26) who had had the vision for the Gentiles. Thus at this time, both Paul and Peter had had visions for the Gentiles, but Peter was called on the carpet to explain his vision first.

As the brethren in Jerusalem heard about what Peter did in Caesarea with Cornelius, their first reaction was, "You went in to uncircumcised men and ate with them!" (Acts 11:3) Peter's explanation was very good, however. First he explained his vision of the unclean animals coming down out of heaven. Then he connected it to the visit of an angel to the house of Cornelius, telling him to send for Peter, where Cornelius' messengers arrived just as Peter's vision ended. Peter concluded by describing his visit to Cornelius, where the Holy Spirit came on the Gentiles just as He had come on them on the Day of Pentecost. "If therefore God gave them the same gift as *He gave us* when we believed on the Lord Jesus Christ, who was I that I should countermand God?" (Acts 11:5-17) When the brethren in Jerusalem heard these things they became silent; and they glorified God, saying, 'Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life' (Acts 11:18). From our viewpoint, this is so obviously the will of God, that we sometimes find it hard to empathize with their difficulty in understanding this.

This was a big step! This indicated that the leaders in the Jerusalem Church had recognized the validity of Peter and Cornelius' visions and they understood that the Gentiles were equal partakers with the Jews of the life in the Church. The conflict that would come next (Acts 15), after Paul's First Missionary Journey to the Gentiles, was whether equal partakers meant that the Gentiles had to keep the details of the Mosaic Law as the Jews did in Jerusalem.

We note that in all Peter's dealings with Cornelius, he was very cautious. This was new! Peter knew that he would have to do some serious explaining when "those of the circumcision" found out he actually went in to eat with uncircumcised men (Acts 11:1-3). The Pharisees⁴⁴² were supported by the vast majority of the people in a strict view on uncleanness. This was so strong that Peter later fell back into old habits and had to be corrected by Paul in Antioch (Galatians 2:12) when he ate with the Jews only.

Irenaeus stated⁴⁴³ that Peter spoke to Cornelius with great hesitation, and only because God had shown him that he should not call any man unclean. Peter would not have come at all unless he had been commanded.

Irenaeus also stated⁴⁴⁴ that the Apostles, who were with James⁴⁴⁵ in Jerusalem, allowed the Gentiles to act freely, yielding us up to the Spirit of God. But they themselves, while knowing the same God, continued in the ancient observances of the Mosaic Law. Even Peter feared lest he might incur the reproof of James, because he had eaten with the Gentiles, even though he had done so because of the vision and of the Spirit, who had rested upon them. Yet, when certain persons came from James, Peter withdrew himself and did not eat with the Gentiles in Antioch. And Paul said that Barnabas did the same thing. Thus the Apostles, whom the Lord made witnesses of every action and of every doctrine, scrupulously acted according to the dispensation of the Mosaic Law.

John Chrysostom spoke at length⁴⁴⁶ about this. Peter and the Jewish brethren disliked the acceptance of the Gentiles as equals. The issue among the Jewish brethren was not preaching to the Gentiles, but Peter's eating with the Gentiles. This had not been an issue with the Samaritans in Joppa. In defending his actions, Peter used a masterfully logical presentation to show that everything proceeded from the Holy Spirit. Chrysostom noted that the controversy was started not by the Apostles, but by the 'circumcision'. The entire doing was of God that the Apostles might take the lead in reaching out to the Gentiles all over the world.

"Observe God's providential management! God did not allow Peter's speech to be finished (Acts 10:44), or the baptism to take place upon a command of Peter (Acts 10:47-48). But when He had made it evident how admirable the state of mind of the Gentiles was, and a beginning was made of the work of teaching, and they had believed that assuredly baptism is the remission of sins, then the Spirit came upon them. Now this is done by God's so disposing it to provide for Peter a mighty ground of justification. And it is not simply that the Spirit came upon them, but, 'they spoke with tongues' (Acts 10:44-46), which was the thing that astonished⁴⁴⁷ those who had come together. They disliked the matter; wherefore it is that the whole was of God. As for Peter, it may almost be said, that he is present only to be taught with them the lesson, that they must take

⁴⁴² The Pharisees as a group came together during the Maccabean period as a group of Scribes bent on upholding the Mosaic Law. One of their driving points was to avoid approaching God in uncleanness. The vast majority of the people supported them in this.

⁴⁴³ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, xii, 15.

⁴⁴⁴ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, xii, 15.

⁴⁴⁵ This is James, the Lord's brother (Galatians 1:19, Acts 15:13-22), who was Bishop of Jerusalem from the beginning to his martyrdom in c. 62 AD.

⁴⁴⁶ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Acts*, XXIV.

⁴⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, in *Homilies on John*, IX, 2, stated that their astonishment showed that they could never have expected so incredible a thing.

the Gentiles in hand, and that they themselves are the persons by whom this must be done”.

“After such great things, ‘they of the circumcision contended’ (Acts 11:2), not the Apostles; this means, they took great offense. And notice what they allege. They do not say to Peter, ‘Why did you preach?’, but ‘Why did you eat with them?’ (Acts 11:3) But Peter, not stopping to notice this frigid objection takes his stand on that great argument, ‘If they had the Spirit Himself given them, how could one refuse to give them the baptism?’”

“But why, in the case of the Samaritans⁴⁴⁸ did this not happen, but on the contrary, neither before their baptism nor after it, was there any controversy? There they took no offense, and as soon as they heard of it, they sent the Apostles for this very purpose? (Acts 8:14). It was not the sending of Peter to the Gentiles in Caesarea that they complained of, for they knew that it was of Divine Grace. What they said was, ‘Why did you eat with them?’ Besides, the difference was not so great for Samaritans as it was for Gentiles”.

“Moreover, it was so managed, as part of the Divine plan, that Peter was accused in this way on purpose that they may learn. Observe Peter’s freedom from all elation and vainglory. He repeated the matter from the beginning, and expounded it in order to them. The vision of itself was enough to have persuaded Peter, but a Voice was added. Peter did his part, and even protested to the Lord about how he never had eaten anything unclean. He said this with reference to their comment, ‘You went in and ate with them!’ But the Voice answered me again from heaven, ‘What God has cleansed, don’t you call unclean’” (Acts 10:15).

“Observe how Peter justified himself by logic, and did not use his authority as a teacher. For the more mildly he expresses himself, the more tractable he makes them. Part of his defense was the three men that stood at the house, who sent for him from Caesarea. The Spirit told him to go with them, doubting nothing (Acts 11:11, 12). Notice that it is the Spirit who enacts the laws!”

“Peter leaned heavily on the brethren for witnesses! ‘These six men, (three from Joppa and three from Caesarea) entered into the Cornelius’s house; and he showed them how he had seen an angel in his house’ (Acts 11:13, 14). Peter did not mention to the brethren in Jerusalem the words spoken by the Angel to Cornelius, ‘Your prayers and your alms have come up for a memorial before God’ (Acts 10:4, 31), that he may not disgust them. Instead he said, ‘He shall tell you words, whereby you and all your house shall be saved’ (Acts 10:6, 10:32, 11:14). Also Peter said nothing of the man’s fitness”.

“Peter concluded his argument by saying that the Gentiles received the Holy Spirit just as the Apostles in Jerusalem had on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:4-8). And not content with this, he reminds them also of the words of the Lord. ‘Then I remembered the word of the Lord, how He said, John indeed baptized with water; but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit’” (Acts 11:16).

“Peter does not say, ‘I ordered them to be baptized’, but ‘Forasmuch then as God gave them the same gift as He did to us, who believed on the Lord Jesus

⁴⁴⁸ The Samaritans kept the Mosaic Law according to the five books of Moses very strictly, which included circumcision. Other ancient people also practiced circumcision, but not according to the Mosaic Law, including Edomites, Moabites, Ammonites, Ethiopians, some American Indians and Egyptian priests.

Christ; who was I that I should countermand God?’ (Acts 11:17). He shows that he had himself done nothing; for the very thing, which we have obtained, those men also received. ‘When they heard these things, they held their peace, and glorified God, saying, Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance unto life’ (Acts 11:18). Do you see that it all came of Peter’s discourse, by his admirably skillful way of relating the facts? They glorified God that He had given repentance both to themselves at Pentecost and the Gentiles recently. They were humbled by Peter’s words. Hence was the door of faith opened to the Gentiles”.

Reconciliation of Jews and Gentiles

Peter and Paul’s visions for the Gentiles were watershed events that took many years to resolve. Complicating the situation was Jewish nationalism, which focused on the Jews as God’s chosen people, and implied to them that God would see things as they did. In the 1st Century, the “Christians” were generally considered a sect within Judaism. This perception changed somewhat with the destruction of Jerusalem in 70 AD, and again with the leveling of Jerusalem at Bar Cochba’s rebellion in c. 135 AD. At the same time that all these events were going on in the Holy Land, the Twelve Apostles and the Seventy Apostles were taking the Word⁴⁴⁹ to Gentiles all over the world.

In explaining what the Lord meant by Peter’s and Paul’s visions, Paul wrote that Christ has broken down the middle wall of separation between Jews and Gentiles (Ephesians 2:13-18). His imagery refers to the Temple in Jerusalem, where there was a “Court of the Gentiles”, which is as close as Gentiles could approach God. Jews, on the other hand, could enter the “Inner Court”, if they had purified themselves. In Herod’s Temple (construction began in 19 BC), the courtyards were more elaborate than previous ones and had several courts. The outermost was called the “Court of the Gentiles” and this was the closest unclean individuals could come. Inside the “Court of the Gentiles” was “the Court of the Women”, and innermost was “the Court of the Israelites”. There was the outer wall (of the Court of the Gentiles), the middle wall (separating the Outer Court from the Inner Court), and the inner wall of the Temple itself.

Separation of Gentile from Jew was necessary because the Gentiles did not keep the Mosaic Law, and approaching a Holy God in uncleanness would prove fatal to them.

John Chrysostom wrote⁴⁵⁰ of the middle wall as being a hedge that turned into enmity because of disobedience. The Law was given as a hedge of security and an enclosure, but it became a middle wall, no longer establishing them in security, but cutting the Gentiles off from God. Christ became a Jew by circumcision (Luke 2:21); but by becoming accursed by hanging on the Tree (Galatians 3:13, Deuteronomy 21:23), He became like a Gentile outside the Law. Through Christ, both Jew and Gentile now have access to God that is greater than that of the High Priest under the Old Covenant.

⁴⁴⁹ For details on the missionary journeys of the Twelve Apostles, see the Studies on the lives of each of the Twelve.

⁴⁵⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, V, vv. 13-15. Chrysostom quotes the Scriptures as follows: “I made a hedge around it, and dug a trench, and planted a choice vine (Isaiah 5:2 LXX). “Why have you broken its hedges, so that all who pass that way may pick its fruit?” (Psalm 80:2). “I will take away its hedge and it will be for spoil. I will pull down its walls and it will be left to be trampled down” (Isaiah 5:5 LXX).

Therefore, Gentiles are no longer strangers (Greek: *xenos* = foreigner) and foreigners (Greek: *paroikos* = one dwelling near) but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God (Ephesians 2:19). This is built on the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, Jesus being the chief cornerstone that links together the walls and the foundation⁴⁵¹. And the building grows into a Holy Temple in the Lord (Ephesians 2:21) for a dwelling place of God in the Spirit. Chrysostom stated⁴⁵², “This is the purpose of the reconciling: that each of us severally are a Temple and all of us together are a Temple”.

This was a mystery, which had been hidden in God from the beginning of the ages (Ephesians 3:9). And as this mystery unfolds, the Church reveals the manifold wisdom of God to the principalities and powers (two ranks of angels) in the heavenly places (3:10). Paul was extremely appreciative of the gift of the Grace of God given to him that he should be able to preach among the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of this mystery (Ephesians 3:7-8). And we can be likewise appreciative that we can participate also.

This mystery is Christ in us (Jew and Gentile), the hope of glory; and this had been hidden from ages and from generations (Colossians 1:26-27). The mystery involved gathering together in one, all things in Christ, which means the Church (Ephesians 1:9). This mystery had been kept secret since the world began (Romans 16:25), and had the rulers of this age known it, they would not have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:7-8). This mystery will finally be finished at the end of time when the Lord returns; and it is the prophets who have given us glimpses of it (Revelation 10:7).

Paul compared the Grace given to the Gentiles to a wild olive branch that was grafted in to the root and richness of a cultivated olive tree, where some of its natural branches were broken off (Romans 11:16-25).

For Paul to speak about Gentiles receiving the Faith rubbed Jews of his day the wrong way. Jews felt that they were the exclusive recipients of the oracles of God. When Paul presented his testimony before the High Priest and the Jewish leaders from Jerusalem following his Third Missionary Journey, they listened patiently until he came to the part about taking the Word of God to the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-22). Then they created a riot and tried to kill Paul (Acts 22:22-23, 23:12-24). It took 470 Roman soldiers to thwart their violence.

Gentiles Chosen to Make Jews Jealous

In spite of all this arrogance on the part of the Jews, God still showed His mercy to His chosen people. In an effort to draw His people back to Him, God used the Gentiles to provoke Israel to jealousy (Romans 10:19-11:27) that they might realize what they lost. Fifteen centuries earlier, Moses had predicted that this would happen after Israel turned apostate.

“They have provoked Me to jealousy by *what* is not God; they have moved Me to anger by their foolish idols. But I will provoke them to jealousy by *those who are* not a nation; I will move them to anger by a foolish nation” (Deuteronomy 32:21).

Moses made a play-on-words between the not-gods that Israel pursued and the not-people that would make them jealous. Instead of Israel, the Gentiles (Christians, that is) “will be called,

⁴⁵¹ See Ephesians 2:20, Psalm 118:22, Matthew 21:42, Luke 20:17, 1 Peter 2:7-8.

⁴⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VI, v. 22.

‘The holy people, the redeemed of the Lord’” (Isaiah 62:12). These Gentiles are the multitude of nations whose father is Abraham (Genesis 17:4-6), because they do as Abraham did (John 8:39-41, Romans 4:16). These Gentiles did not seek this honor; but through Paul and the other Apostles (Acts 18:6), they became the Israel of God (Gal. 6:16). John Chrysostom stated⁴⁵³:

“And so the Jews ought, from Moses, to have been able to distinguish the preachers, from the very fact of their seeing their inferiors, those of the Gentiles, in greater honor. And this was a mark of such intense honor, that it should gall them, and lead them to jealousy, and to recollection of the prophecy of Moses. For it was not the greatness of the honor alone that was enough to make them jealous, but the fact that a nation had come to enjoy these things which was of so little account that it could hardly be considered a nation at all. See how by every means God had given, from of old, indications and clear signs of these times, in order to remove their blindness. For it was not in one little corner in which the thing was done, but in every quarter of the globe. And they saw the Gentiles in the enjoyment of countless blessings now, who had formerly been objects of their contempt”.

Peter Imprisoned, Escapes: Acts 12:3-19

Just before Passover, 44 AD, Herod began to persecute the Church, killing James (Zebedee) with the sword (Acts 12:1). He also arrested Peter since he saw it pleased the Jews; but an angel let Peter out of prison at night (Acts 12:3, 7). The setting was about the time of the famine during the days of Claudius (Acts 11:28). Herod Agrippa, who reigned from 41-44 AD, began to harass some of the Church and killed James, the brother of John with the sword (Acts 12:1-2). John Chrysostom said⁴⁵⁴ that Herod picked James out “at random and without selection”. James had just returned to Judea from evangelism in Spain⁴⁵⁵ and was very outspoken and prominent. This is the James that Jesus called one of the “Sons of Thunder” (Mark 3:17, Luke 9:54).

Having killed James, Herod saw that it pleased the Jewish leaders, so he imprisoned Peter also, intending to do the same after the Days of Unleavened Bread (a seven day festival that includes Passover). Herod had wanted to make sure Peter did not leave the area because of the death of James, so he had Peter imprisoned, where the guards forfeited their own life if Peter escaped. Chrysostom remarked⁴⁵⁶ 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.

One notices here the unjustifiable hatred of Peter by both Herod and the Jewish leaders. For what 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 earlier: “For which of those (good) works do you try to stone me?” (John 10:32) They answered

⁴⁵³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XVIII, v. 19.

⁴⁵⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

⁴⁵⁵ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 30. According to tradition, James’ body was returned to Spain and buried there with great honor.

⁴⁵⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

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 does it please the Jewish leaders so to see James and Peter dead? (Acts 12:3, 4). Their lust for blood was out of control, and they hated them without a cause just like they did the Lord.

In the account, Peter was bound with two chains, placed between two soldiers, and guarded by four tetrads (a squad of four soldiers) until after Passover. At the same time, the Church offered prayer to God constantly for him. The night before Herod intended to bring Peter out, an angel stood by him in prison, and lit up the prison (Acts 12:4-7). 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. Then Peter realized this was real and not a vision (Acts 12:9-11). The next morning, there was no small disturbance among the soldiers about what had become of Peter. The wax seals were still on the prison door, meaning no one had gone in or out. When Herod came looking for Peter, and didn’t find him, he examined the guards and then executed them. Peter, meanwhile, left for Caesarea (Acts 12:19), and eventually settled in Antioch.

Chrysostom noted⁴⁵⁷ 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”. The Lord did it this way to show that the Apostles are still human beings, but that they have Divine help.

“Why then did God not allow Peter to fall into the hands of Herod, and then deliver him? Because that would have brought people into astonishment, whereas this was credible. If God had delivered Peter dramatically from Herod, the Apostles would not even have been thought human beings. But in the case of Stephen, He showed them his face as if it had been the face of an angel. All this was not done by craftiness; for one that is in haste and wishes to break out of prison, is not so particular as to take his sandals and belt. The angel said to him, ‘Put on your cloak, and follow me’. And he went out, and followed him and did not know whether it was real, but thought he saw a vision”.

“When the angel departed, then Peter understood. But why is this so, and why is Peter not aware of the things taking place, although he had already experienced a similar deliverance when all the Apostles were released? (Acts 5:19-22) The Lord would have the pleasure come to him all at once, and that he should first be at liberty, and then be aware of what had happened. The circumstance also of the chains having fallen off from his hands, is a strong argument of his not having fled”.

“Observe how Peter does not immediately withdraw, but first brings the good tidings to his friends. Note how even Rhoda, the servant-girl, is very pious. Everyone shook their heads incredulously and said to her, ‘You are mad’. But she constantly affirmed that it was so. But Peter continued knocking; and when they had opened the door, and saw him, they were astonished” (Acts 12:14-16).

After the angel left him, Peter stopped by at the house of Mary, the mother of John Mark, where everyone had been praying for him. There he told them that he was okay, but that he was

⁴⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

leaving town, and that they should be sure to tell James, the Bishop of Jerusalem (Acts 12:17). [This is James, the Lord's brother, the Bishop of Jerusalem.] From there Peter made his way first to Caesarea and eventually to Antioch.

Chrysostom also noted⁴⁵⁸ that when Peter arrived at the house of Mary, he told them what happened, then left, making sure they made these things known to James 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.

When Peter first knocked on the door of the home of Mary, the mother of John Mark, Rhoda reported that Peter was there, but everyone else thought that the person was Peter's angel. Their understanding was that two angels accompany every person, a good angel and a bad one, and that these angels can take on the characteristics of the person they are assigned to. As we obey the Lord and keep His Commandments, they guard and protect us. When we reject the Lord, we allow the demons to have their way. Of this, John Cassian stated⁴⁵⁹:

“For Holy Scripture bears witness that two angels, a good and a bad one, cling to each one of us. Of the good ones the Savior says: ‘Do not despise one of these little ones; for I say unto you that their angels in heaven do always behold the face of your Father which is in heaven’ (Matthew 18:10); and ‘the angel of the Lord shall encamp round about them that fear Him, and deliver them’ (Psalm 34:7). Moreover this also which is said of Peter, that ‘it is his angel’ (Acts 12:15). But of both sorts the book of the Shepherd⁴⁶⁰ teaches us very fully. But if we consider him who attacked the blessed Job, we shall clearly learn that it was he who always plotted against him but never could entice him to sin. Therefore he asked for power from the Lord (Job 1:12, 2:3-6), as he was beaten not by Job's virtue but by the Lord's protection, which always shielded him. Of Judas also it is said, ‘And let the devil stand at his right hand’” (Psalm 109:6 LXX).

Chrysostom also noted⁴⁶¹ the power of the prayers of the Church that resulted in Peter's release. The Apostles sought the prayers of the Church for their work wherever they went.

“Hear the prophet saying, ‘Do the shepherds feed themselves?’ (Ezekiel 34:2 LXX) Paul constantly sought these prayers. Do you hear that Peter was delivered from prison, when fervent prayer was made for him? (Acts 12:5) I truly believe that your prayer will have great effect, offered with so great unanimity. For it belongs to men of high estimation, to beseech God to be merciful to others. For if Job rising up early made so many offerings for his children in the flesh (Job 1:5), how much more ought we to do this for our spiritual children?”

“For that one should entreat for many, is exceedingly bold, and requires much confidence; but that many having met together should offer supplication for

⁴⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

⁴⁵⁹ John Cassian, 2nd Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, viii, 17.

⁴⁶⁰ Hermas, “The Shepherd”, in Sparks, ed., The Apostolic Fathers, Thomas Nelson, Nashville, 1978. Hermas was one of the original Seventy and his book, “The Shepherd”, was very highly regarded in the Early Church. When the Canon of the Scriptures was agreed upon in the 4th Century, inclusion was limited to the writings of first generation Apostles.

⁴⁶¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Thessalonians, IV.

one, is nothing burdensome. For He says, ‘Where two or three are gathered together in My Name, I am there in the midst of them’ (Matthew 18:20). For that which a man, praying by himself, is not able to receive, that he shall receive praying with a multitude. Why? Because the common consent has much power”.

The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary, whom he was caring for (John 19:25-27), left Jerusalem at this time also due to the persecution. Since John’s lot in the evangelization of the world was Asia Minor, they sailed for Ephesus. There they stayed until the death of Herod (Acts 12:20-23). To put this in context, the Apostle Andrew had already been to Ephesus briefly, but the Apostle Paul would not arrive until 52 AD, at the end of his Second Missionary Journey. Since Herod died not too long after he killed James, John and the Virgin Mary most likely stayed in Ephesus less than two years. As was her custom, the Virgin Mary spent her time in prayer, fasting and meditation on the Scriptures.

Chrysostom also noted⁴⁶² that there had been a change in how the Jewish leaders orchestrated the persecution of Christians. The Apostles, on the other hand, were not only free from distress over this, but they were very humble about it.

“The Jewish leaders, as a consequence of Gamaliel’s advice (Acts 5:33-40), abstained from blood shedding and did not even invent accusations; by means of others they accomplished the same results. The counsel of Gamaliel above all was their condemnation, for the preaching was shown to be no longer a thing of men”.

“Notice Peter sleeping in prison, and not in distress or fear! That same night, after which he was to be brought out, he slept, having cast all upon God. The guards were asleep with him, and therefore perceived nothing of what was happening. The light shined in order that Peter might see as well as hear, and not imagine it all to be a vision. The angel also struck him because he was sleeping so deeply”. He told Peter to rise quickly not to hurry him, but to persuade him not to delay.

“After the angel led Peter out to the street, when there was no longer any hindrance, then the Angel departed. For Peter would not have gone along, there being so many hindrances. “And when he came to himself, it was indeed an amazement”.

“Notice how free from vainglory Peter is! He did not say, ‘Make known these things to people everywhere’, but, ‘to the brethren’. And 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 (Acts 5:20). But this the Angel didn’t say; on the contrary, by silently removing him and bringing him out by night, he gave him free permission to withdraw. This was done that we may learn that many things are providentially brought about after the manner of men, so that he should not again fall into danger”.

“The Lord honored them, that by the ministry of His Angels he rescues them. This was not so in the case of Paul because the jailer was to be converted, whereas here, it was only that the Apostle should be released” (Acts 16:24-34).

Following Peter’s escape, Herod himself examined the jail cell where Peter was held. When the guards inside, who were chained to Peter, woke up the next morning, not only did they

⁴⁶² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVI.

find Peter gone, but the chains holding him were still locked securely. There were no holes in the walls and the several gates leading out of the inner prison were still locked also. Since the guards were responsible with their lives if a prisoner escaped, they would not have stayed around if they had intentionally let him go. This had truly been a “Mission Impossible” escape, and Herod knew that God had mocked him just as He had mocked his grandfather during the slaughter of the 14,000 children at Bethlehem. To save face, he executed the guards. Chrysostom spoke⁴⁶³ in defense of the soldiers and showed how their death was due to Herod’s wickedness.

“Some persons are at a loss how to explain why God should quietly look on while the soldiers are put to death on account of Peter. Yet it was possible for Him, after delivering Peter, to rescue them also. But it was not Peter that put them into Herod’s hands. For the thing that most annoyed Herod was being mocked. Just as in the case of his grandfather when he was deceived by the wise men (Matthew 2:16), Herod was cut to the heart and made to look ridiculous. After questioning the soldiers, he ordered them to be led away to execution (Acts 12:19). And yet he had heard from them, both that the chains had been left, and that he had taken his sandals, and that until that night he was with them. But what did they conceal? If they knew that Peter was gone, and that they would be executed for his escape, why did they not flee themselves also? Herod ought to have marveled, ought to have been astonished at this. The consequence is, by the death of these soldiers, everything is made clear to all: both Herod’s wickedness is exposed, and the wonder of God is shown”.

“For if the Angel had brought out the soldiers, along with Peter, it would have been thought a case of flight. The soldiers suffered unjustly! We could say the same for James; why didn’t God rescue him? There was no small stir among the soldiers (Acts 12:18) because they perceived nothing of what had happened to Peter. In their defense, the chains were still there, and the keepers inside; and the prison was shut, nowhere was a wall broken through. Everything told the same story: the man had been carried off. Why does Herod condemn them? Had they wished to let him off, they would have done it earlier, and they would have gone out with him. Peter couldn’t have bribed them, since he didn’t even have money to give to a poor man (Acts 3:6). And then neither had the chains been broken, nor were they opened. Herod ought to have seen that the thing was of God, and not the work of man”.

About 12 years earlier, the High Priest and the Sadducees had publicly arrested the Twelve Apostles and put them in perhaps the same prison. An angel let them out at night and told them to continue teaching in the Temple. When the Temple officers came to bring them out for trial, they were stunned that the prison was secure, the guards were still outside, but the prison was empty (Acts 5:17-26). In that case, the Sadducees did not order the execution of the guards, but instead feared that the people would stone them for trampling on the obvious works of God. Chrysostom stated⁴⁶⁴:

“Now if the Jews, murderous as they were in their designs against the Apostles, entertained not a thought of executing the guards, much more should Herod have done, who did everything to please those Jews. For this unrighteous sentence vengeance quickly overtook Herod”.

⁴⁶³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXVII.

⁴⁶⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, VIII.

Herod Agrippa met his end a short time later in a very gruesome fashion. Luke records a brief summary of Herod's death:

"Now Herod had been very angry with the people of Tyre and Sidon; but they came to him with one accord, and having made Blastus, the king's personal aide, their friend, they asked for peace, because their country was supplied with food by the king's *country*. So on a set day Herod, arrayed in royal apparel, sat on his throne and gave an oration to them. And the people kept shouting, 'The voice of a god and not of a man!' Then immediately an angel of the Lord struck him, because he did not give glory to God. And he was eaten by worms and died" (Acts 12:20-23).

Josephus gives⁴⁶⁵ more details regarding Herod's death. Herod seems to have been rather clueless about spiritual things. Although he was in intense pain for five days, with many people mourning and lamenting for him in sackcloth, he did not see fit to repent, or to be aware that he had ever done anything wrong!

"Now, when Agrippa had reigned three years over all Judea, he came to the city Caesarea, and there he exhibited shows in honor of Caesar. And a great multitude came together of the principal persons and such as were of dignity through his province. On the second day of the shows, Herod put on a garment made wholly of silver and of a texture truly wonderful, and came into the theatre early in the morning. At that time of day, the silver of his garment was illuminated by the reflection of the sun's rays, and shone out after a surprising manner, and was so resplendent as to spread a horror over those that looked intently upon him. His flatterers cried out, one from one place, and another from another (though not for his good), that he was a god. They added, 'Be merciful to us; for although we have before revered you only as a man, yet from now on, we shall own you as superior to mortal nature'".

"Upon this the king did neither rebuke them, nor reject their impious flattery. But, as he looked up, he saw an owl sitting on a rope over his head, and immediately understood that this bird was the messenger of bad news, as it had once been the messenger of good news to him; and he fell into the deepest sorrow. A severe pain also arose in his belly, and began in a most violent manner".

"He therefore looked upon his friends, and said, 'I, whom you call a god, am commanded now to depart this life. While Providence thus reproves the lying words you just now said to me; and I, who was by you called immortal, am immediately to be hurried away by death. But I am bound to accept what Providence allots as it pleases God; for we have by no means lived a bad life, but in a splendid and happy manner'".

"When he said this, his pain became violent. Accordingly he was carried into the palace; and the rumor went abroad everywhere, that he would certainly die in a little time. But the multitude sat in sackcloth, with their wives and children, after the law of their country, and besought God for the king's recovery. All places were also full of mourning and lamentation. Now the king rested in a high chamber, and as he saw them below lying prostrate on the ground, he could not refrain from weeping. And when he had been quite worn out by the pain in

⁴⁶⁵ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, XIX, vii, 2, 343-349.

his belly for five days, he departed this life, being 54 years of age, and in the seventh year of his reign”.

Peter Leaves Antioch for Rome

After Peter was released from prison by the angel (Acts 12:1-17), he headed North toward Antioch, taking the Evangelist Mark with him. This was sometime between 42 and 44 AD⁴⁶⁶. Eventually they made their way to Rome.

Jerome refers⁴⁶⁷ to Peter’s arrival in Rome in the second year of the reign of Claudius or 42 AD. Jerome also stated that Peter was crucified head-downward in the fourteenth year of Nero, or 67 AD. Thus Jerome concluded that Peter was involved as “Bishop” of Rome for 25 years. Peter was only in Rome for a small fraction of these 25 years, as we will see later. But if he arrived in Rome in 42 AD, he had to have returned to Judea shortly afterward to meet James Zebedee returning from Spain. This seems unlikely. Most probably, Peter went to Rome shortly after the beheading of James (Acts 12:2) and took the Evangelist Mark with him.

Edessa in Persia was a great center of Christian influence in the 1st Century. From the archives of the Edessa historians, they recorded⁴⁶⁸ Peter departing from Antioch to go to Rome in the 3rd year of Emperor Claudius, and remaining in Rome for 25 years.

“In the third year of Claudius Caesar, Simon Cephas departed from Antioch to go to Rome. And as he passed on he preached in the diverse countries the word of our Lord. And, when he had nearly arrived there, many had heard of and went out to meet him, and the whole Church received him with great joy. And some of the princes of the city, wearers of the imperial headbands, came to him, that they might see him and hear his word”.

“Peter served there in the rank of the Superintendence of Rulers twenty-five years. And after these years Nero Caesar seized him and shut him up in prison. And he knew that he would crucify him; so he called Ananus (Clement), the deacon, and made him bishop in his stead in Rome”.

The First Christians in Rome

Where did the first Christians in Rome come from? At Pentecost, 30 AD, when the Holy Spirit was given to the Church, there had been visitors in Jerusalem from Rome, both Jews and Gentile converts (Acts 2:10). Many of these visitors stayed and made up part of the 3000 that were added to the Church as a result of Peter’s preaching (Acts 2:41). One year later, at the stoning of Stephen, the Church was scattered due to the bloodbath in Jerusalem (Acts 8:4). While the Scripture records just the stoning of Stephen one year after Pentecost, in actuality, two hundred others were also stoned⁴⁶⁹ that same day, including deacon Nicanor (Acts 6:5). Thus, people were leaving town to avoid a major bloodbath organized by the Jewish leaders. Those who had come to Jerusalem from Rome, and stayed after Pentecost, may have returned to Rome at this time.

⁴⁶⁶ Unger gives the date of Herod’s death as 44 AD. See Merrill Unger, Unger’s Dible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 486.

⁴⁶⁷ Jerome, “Lives of Illustrious Men”, II, 1, Jerome and Gennadius, Post-Nicene Fathers, Second Series, v. 3.

⁴⁶⁸ “The Teaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome”, Ancient Syriac Documents, in Memoirs of Edessa, The Ante Nicene Fathers, Volume 8.

⁴⁶⁹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 28.

Things were so stressful that Nicodemus, who had defended Jesus before fellow members of the Sanhedrin (John 7:50-52), died as he was mourning the death of Stephen, and he was buried in Gamaliel's tomb. Nicodemus was an old man at the time, and he had also helped Joseph of Arimathea with the burial rite of Jesus (John 19:38-42).

Meanwhile, Mary Magdalene, who was quite wealthy, had traveled on her own to Rome in the early 30's AD to appear before Tiberias Caesar and tell him the whole story of Pilate's unjust trial of Jesus, his release of a murderer-insurrectionist and his cowering to the Jewish leaders. As a result of this, Pilate was summoned to Rome, was unable to defend his actions and was banished to Gaul where he later committed suicide. Mary Magdalene stayed in Rome as a pioneer for the Church, for a long time working as an evangelist, and the Apostle Paul acknowledged her help in c. 55 AD (Romans 16:6). She later moved to Ephesus in the 60's AD to work with the Apostle John. For her work in Rome and Ephesus, Mary was referred to in the Early Church as "Equal to the Apostles". In traveling to Rome and Ephesus, she would have had to liquidate all her wealth along with the others after Pentecost (Acts 4:34-37).

After Peter arrived in Rome, Mary stayed to continue helping the Church. When Paul wrote to the Romans in c. 55 AD, he also addressed 18 members of the Seventy Apostles (Romans 16:3-23), who had been sent to Rome by Peter and Paul to aid in the work Mary started. Mary Magdalene came to be called "Equal to the Apostles" for her role in the young church, primarily in Rome and later in Ephesus with the Apostle John.

Thus when Peter and the Evangelist Mark arrived in Rome, there were a number of believers already there, first organized by Mary Magdalene. There was a core group who were familiar with the Apostles, and who had received the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, and who had lived in the Church in Jerusalem for a while, where everyone had all things in common

The Early Missionary Work of the Evangelist Mark

The Evangelist Mark developed a close relationship with the Apostle Peter in the days following Pentecost, and he followed Peter similar to the way the Evangelist Luke followed the Apostle Paul, and the Apostle Prochorus, of the Seventy and of the first seven deacons (Acts 6:3), followed the Apostle John. There are numerous references documenting the Evangelist Mark as being a disciple⁴⁷⁰ and "spokesman" for the Apostle Peter. Just as with Luke and Prochorus, everywhere Peter went, the Evangelist Mark went also. This formed a foundation for the drafting of Mark's Gospel, since he used the words from Peter's preaching as the basis for his text.

One of the first places that the Apostle Peter sent the Evangelist Mark after their arrival in Rome was to the city of Aquilea (near Venice). Mark's excursion to Aquilea became significant hundreds of years later, after the Islamic Conquest of Egypt, when his relics were moved away from Alexandria to prevent desecration; they were moved to Aquilea.

⁴⁷⁰ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, I, 1.

Clement of Alexandria, "Comments on the First Epistle of Peter", Fragments of Clemens Alexandrinus, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2.

Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 5.

After spending a short time in Aquilea, the Apostle Peter ordained the Evangelist Mark as Bishop, and sent him go to Alexandria in Egypt. According to tradition, he stopped at his hometown of Pentapolis and cities nearby first. From the Prologue⁴⁷¹ of Ochrid:

“Mark was chosen by the Apostle Peter to be a bishop and was sent to Egypt to preach. Egypt was oppressed by the thick darkness of paganism, idolatry, divination and malice. With the help of God, the Evangelist Mark succeeded in sowing the seed of the knowledge of God in Libya, Ammonicia and Pentapolis. From Pentapolis, he went to Alexandria where the Spirit of God led him”.

At some time in the late 40's AD, Emperor Claudius had expelled all the Jews from Rome. Because of this, the Apostle Paul ran into the Apostle Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla in Corinth (Acts 18:1-3), where Paul, Aquila and Priscilla worked together for a number of years after this. This edict by the Emperor, expelling the Jews, may have been the occasion for Peter sending the Evangelist Mark to Egypt.

Mark Finds the Church in Alexandria

It is difficult to date the exact year that the Apostle Peter sent Mark to Egypt to preach the Gospel. One account quotes⁴⁷² Eutychius, patriarch of Alexandria, as saying this occurred in the 9th year of the Emperor Claudius, or 49 AD. However, this may have occurred earlier than 49 AD. The Jewish philosopher Philo visited some of the monasteries that the Evangelist Mark established, and wrote⁴⁷³ a short article expressing his admiration for these communities. If Philo died in 50 AD⁴⁷⁴, after reporting a great number of monasteries in the neighborhood of Alexandria, it may have taken Mark more than a year to get these monasteries started.

Jerome stated⁴⁷⁵ that Peter left for Rome in the 2nd year of Claudius, or 42 AD. Others state that Peter left Jerusalem in the year of Herod Agrippa's death, which was the year 44 AD. Sometime during this interval 42 AD to 49 AD, the Evangelist Mark went to Rome at the direction of the Apostle Peter, where the people of Rome encouraged him to write his Gospel, before he was sent to Egypt.

There are numerous references, a few included here⁴⁷⁶, documenting the sending of the Evangelist Mark to Alexandria by the Apostle Peter to raise up the Church there, since he was a disciple⁴⁷⁷ and “spokesman” for Peter. For more details on the life of the Evangelist Mark, see Mark Kern, The Evangelist Mark, St. Athanasius Press, 2005.

⁴⁷¹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 25.

⁴⁷² Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 247. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1906, v. 8, (April) pp. 403-416.

⁴⁷³ C. D. Yonge, tr., “On the Contemplative Life”, The Works of Philo, Updated Edition Database, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, II:10 to IV:39.

⁴⁷⁴ Cross and Livingstone, Oxford Dictionary of the Christian Church, Oxford University Press, 1978, p. 1083.

⁴⁷⁵ Jerome, “Lives of Illustrious Men”, Chapter 1, Jerome and Gennadius, Nicene and Post-Nicene Fathers, Volume 3.

⁴⁷⁶ Gregory the Great, Book of Pastoral Rule, V, 1.

Gregory the Great, Epistles, Book VI, 60.

⁴⁷⁷ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, III, I, 1.

Clement of Alexandria, “Comments on the First Epistle of Peter”, Fragments of Clemens Alexandrinus, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 2.

Barnabas Goes to Tarsus to Bring Paul to Antioch

After Paul had spent about 8 years in Tarsus, Barnabas arrived in c. 45 AD looking for him (Acts 11:25). When Barnabas found Paul in Tarsus, he brought Him to Antioch (Acts 11:26). Along with the others, Paul and Barnabas taught at the Church in Antioch for a year before they were sent off on their First Missionary Journey. During this one year period, Agabus, a prophet and one of the Seventy, predicted that there would be a great famine. During the famine, Barnabas and Paul hand-carried alms from Antioch to the church in Jerusalem (Acts 11:27-30).

John Chrysostom stated⁴⁷⁸ that there was a great friendship and love between Peter and Paul, and one should not misinterpret the incident where Paul resisted Peter in Antioch.

“See what great friends he was with Peter; on Peter’s account he left his home, and stayed with him. This I frequently repeat, and desire you to remember, that no one may conceive a suspicion of him, when he hears what Paul seems to have spoken against Peter. Paul says, ‘I resisted Peter’ (Galatians 2:11), but these words do not imply enmity and contention. For he honored and loved Peter more than everyone and he took this journey for his sake only, not for any of the others”.

Paul’s Role at Antioch

One might ask why Paul got involved at Antioch in the first place. If men from Cyrene and Cyprus founded the Church, why did Barnabas go to Tarsus to get Paul (Acts 11:25) rather than go back to Jerusalem to get others of the leading men there? The answer is that Barnabas recognized the Grace of God in Antioch, where circumcision was not required, and “encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:23-24).

Barnabas was one of the brothers in Jerusalem who had welcomed Paul after his conversion, when Paul came to Jerusalem to see Peter (Acts 9:26-27). Both Paul and Barnabas had been educated by Gamaliel in their youth (Acts 22:3) and had known each other a long time.

But there was another reason also. Just before Paul was sent to Tarsus, he had a vision in the Temple in Jerusalem, where the Lord told him that He was going to send him to the Gentiles. This vision occurred before Peter’s vision of the sheet (Acts 10:9-17) that led to the baptism of Cornelius. Therefore Paul and the Jerusalem brethren didn’t know what to do about the vision at the time. But when Barnabas saw the grace of God in Antioch, he went to get the guy who had had the vision about the Gentiles eight years earlier. And together, Barnabas and Paul spent a year teaching a great many people in Antioch. Following this, the Church sent Barnabas and Paul out on what has come to be known as Paul’s First Missionary Journey.

At the time that Barnabas went to get Paul, the Church in Antioch was huge. There were 10,000 people baptized in just the short time that the Apostle Peter was there after chasing Simon

Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 4, 5.

⁴⁷⁸ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 1.

Magus. This means that there was a great need for leaders and teachers to equip the saints in Antioch, and Barnabas couldn't look back to Jerusalem for help due to the issue of circumcision. Peter and John weren't available and the rest of the Twelve were gone. Some of the Seventy were still around, but the Church in Jerusalem needed help also. The Church in Antioch presented a unique situation, where Barnabas recognized that "help" from Jerusalem in the form of someone eager to impose circumcision on the saints in Antioch was really no help at all. In his wisdom, Barnabas recognized that he needed some help that didn't have strings attached, and he wisely chose Paul.

Peter's Missionary Journeys Before the Council in Jerusalem

After Peter escaped from Herod after the beheading of James Zebedee (Acts 12:1-17), "he departed and went to another place". Heading North, he stopped again in Antioch. Aristobulus, Peter's father-in-law who had helped to found the Church in Antioch, moved on to Rome, and Paul addressed Peter's father-in-law by name (Romans 16:10) when he wrote his letter to the Romans in c. 55 AD.

In 62 AD when Paul was still under house-arrest in Rome, Aristobulus was no longer in Rome (Colossians 4:7-18). According to tradition, Aristobulus went to Britain⁴⁷⁹ as Bishop in the late 50's AD, and he may have traveled there with the Apostle Peter (his son-in-law). Following is a traditional account⁴⁸⁰ of Aristobulus' patient endurance:

"In Britain there was a wild people, pagan and wicked, and Aristobulus endured among them unmentionable torments, misfortunes and malice. They smote him without mercy, dragged him through the streets, mocked him and jeered at him. But in the end this holy man came to success by the power of the grace of God. He enlightened the people, baptized them in the Name of Christ the Lord, built churches, ordained priests and deacons and finally died there in peace".

In addition to being the Apostle of Britain, Spanish tradition speaks⁴⁸¹ of Aristobulus later being Bishop to the Celts in Britannia (modern Mondonedo) in NW Spain. This is not far from Britain; Peter and Aristobulus could easily have visited there while Peter was in Britain. Oral tradition states that he was martyred in Wales.

If Aristobulus had been a pillar for the Church in Antioch, and now he was leaving, Antioch needed a Bishop. At this time, Peter consecrated⁴⁸² Evodius (or Euodus), another member of the Seventy, as Bishop of Antioch. Evodius was the one who coined the term

⁴⁷⁹ Hippolytus, On the Seventy, 29.

⁴⁸⁰ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, March 16, October 31.

⁴⁸¹ See www.geocities.com/albioncelt/ari.

⁴⁸² Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 12.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

“Christians” in Antioch (Acts 11:26). According to tradition⁴⁸³, Evodius wrote a work on the Virgin Mary in which he described how she was taken to the Temple at age three and stayed there for eleven years. He described her betrothal to aged Joseph for safekeeping at age 15 and her giving birth to Christ that same year. Evodius wrote other works, “The Lighthouse” and “The Star”, but both these works were destroyed during a time of persecution of Christians. Evodius served as Bishop of Antioch for 27 years and was martyred in c. 66 AD during one of Emperor Vespasian’s visits to Antioch.

After leaving Antioch, Peter went to Synnada, a city of Phrygia and from there to Nicomedia, where he consecrated Prochorus, one of the Seventy, as Bishop. Prochorus didn’t stay long in Nicomedia; soon he left to follow the Apostle John, after the death of the Virgin Mary in c. 55 AD, very much like Luke followed the Apostle Paul.

After leaving Nicomedia, Peter went to Ilium, a city near the Hellespont⁴⁸⁴, and consecrated Cornelius the Centurion as Bishop for that area. Returning to Jerusalem, Peter had a vision from the Lord, saying, “Arise, Peter and go the West. The time has come for it to be enlightened by your preaching. I shall remain with you forever”.

Peter at the Council of Jerusalem: Acts 15:7-14

The Council at Jerusalem in c. 48 AD came as a result of Paul’s First Missionary Journey, with Barnabas, to Southern Galatia in c. 47-48 AD (Acts 14:1-23). In Iconium, Lystra and Derbe, Paul and Barnabas ran into violent disagreements with the Jews living there. In Lystra, Paul was stoned and left for dead (Acts 14:19); in Iconium, they escaped just before they were stoned (Acts 14:5-6). After appointing elders for these Galatian Churches, Paul and Barnabas returned to Antioch of Syria (Acts 14:23).

When Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their First Missionary Journey, they did not require the Gentile converts to be circumcised in the cities that they visited. When they returned to Antioch, “certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, ‘Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved’. Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the Apostles and elders, about this question” (Acts 15:1-2).

At this point in the history of the Church, everything had been very Jewish, and all the Gentiles in Judea were still being circumcised. Where did Paul and Barnabas get the direction from the Lord that circumcision was not necessary? This undoubtedly came from Paul’s visions from the Lord, where he had had three major visions regarding his work with the Gentiles prior to departing on his First Missionary Journey with Barnabas. These three visions were

- At His Conversion c. 34 AD: The Lord also told Paul that He would send him to the Gentiles that they also might have an inheritance among the faithful (Acts 26:16-18, 9:15-16).

⁴⁸³ See www.oqa.org and www.goarch.org for September 7.

⁴⁸⁴ The Hellespont is the ancient name for the Dardanelles, which is the narrow strait between the Aegean Sea and the Sea of Marmara in Northwest Turkey.

- At the Temple in Jerusalem c. 37 AD: The Lord told Paul that not only will He send him far away to the Gentiles, but also that the Jews in Jerusalem will not receive his testimony (Acts 22:17-21, 9:26-29)
- In Tarsus Seeing the Third Heaven c. 41 AD: Fourteen years before writing 2 Corinthians, Paul was caught up into Paradise and heard things that he couldn't speak about. This vision probably included seeing some Gentiles in Paradise that the Jews in Jerusalem wouldn't have expected to see there.

These visions prepared Paul for his role as an apostle since the Churches on earth are modeled after the Assembly of the Saints in heaven just as the Tabernacle in the wilderness was modeled after the Tabernacle in heaven (Exodus 25:9, 20; 26:30, Acts 7:44, Hebrews 8:5).

Did the Church in Antioch Practice Circumcision?

A question we might ask is whether the Church in Antioch required everyone to be circumcised. The answer would appear to be “No”!

The Church in Antioch was founded shortly after the stoning of Stephen (c. 31 AD) by men from Cyprus and Cyrene who were also scattered at the death of Stephen, and began preaching to the Greek speaking Gentiles in Antioch. Over the span of a few years, a great number had believed and turned to the Lord (Acts 11:21). From the Scriptures and from tradition, the men we know who were from (the island of) Cyprus and Cyrene (in Northern Africa) were:

Name	From	Notes
Simon	Cyrene	Carried Jesus' cross-Mark 15:21
Rufus	Cyrene	Son of Simon-Mark 15:21
Alexander	Cyrene	Son of Simon-Mark 15:21
Lucius	Cyrene	Acts 13:1
Evangelist Mark	Cyrene	From tradition ⁴⁸⁵
Aristobulus	Cyprus	Barnabas' brother; Peter's father-in-law-Romans 16:10
Barnabas	Cyprus	Acts 12-15

All of the above, except Alexander, were members of the original Seventy. The name Simon of Cyrene (Mark 15:21) is a Greek name that is equivalent to the Hebrew name “Simeon”. Simeon, called Niger (or black, Acts 13:1), may be the same person (as being a black man coming from North Africa). We might note that the Evangelist Mark was the only one of the Gospel writers that reported Simon of Cyrene, by name, as being the person who helped carry Jesus' cross.

Of the seven people listed above, all of the first six may have been involved in starting the Church in Antioch. John Chrysostom noted⁴⁸⁶ that when the text states, “the hand of the Lord was with them” (Acts 11:21), this means that the men from Cyprus and Cyrene performed miracles, further suggesting that the Seventy were involved. Barnabas was not, but when the

⁴⁸⁵ For details, see www.goarch.org, the Greek Orthodox Archdiocese website for April 25th.

⁴⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

news of the great number of people (including Gentiles) turning to the Lord reached the Church in Jerusalem, James and the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate. Barnabas may have been chosen to go because his brother Aristobulus was involved. Chrysostom also noted⁴⁸⁷ that Barnabas recognized the Grace of God in Antioch, as opposed to the diligence of men. This was not just a good evangelistic effort by the founders of the Church in Antioch, but truly an outpouring of God.

Chrysostom also speculated⁴⁸⁸ on why Barnabas was sent to Antioch, whereas Peter and John were sent to Samaria following Deacon Philip's evangelism (Acts 8:14). Chrysostom felt that it was because of the Jews in Jerusalem that they sent Barnabas. That is, the Jews in Jerusalem weren't interested in evangelizing Gentiles, so they didn't send the "pillars" (Galatians 2:9), but instead sent one of the Seventy. The Lord turned this around however. When Peter escaped from prison (Acts 12:6-11), he "departed and went to another place" (Acts 12:17). According to tradition, he slowly made his way North and ended up in Antioch with Paul (Galatians 2:11-15). Thus the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Barnabas, but the Lord sent Peter also a little later.

When Paul and Barnabas were sent out on their First Missionary Journey by the Church in Antioch (Acts 13:1-3), they did not require the Gentile converts to be circumcised in the cities that they visited. In c. 48 AD, Paul and Barnabas returned to report to the brethren at their home Church in Antioch regarding the results of their First Missionary Journey.

When they returned to Antioch, "certain men came down from Judea and taught the brethren, 'Unless you are circumcised according to the custom of Moses, you cannot be saved'. Therefore, when Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas and certain others of them should go up to Jerusalem, to the Apostles and elders, about this question" (Acts 15:1-2). This was a big issue, and it was part of Paul's "Gospel" (Galatians 2:2). Obviously he had thought this issue through, and he had discussed it with the elders at Antioch who had sent him out. Paul and Barnabas were in agreement with the elders at Antioch that circumcision was not necessary for the Gentiles.

The men who came down from Judea to teach the brethren in Antioch about circumcision were, in effect, saying that the brethren in Antioch needed to be circumcised in order to be saved. This implies that the brethren in Antioch had not been circumcised or had not all been circumcised. Paul referred to this issue in his Epistle to the Galatians, "And I went up (to Jerusalem) by revelation and communicated to them that Gospel which I preach among the Gentiles, but privately to those who were of reputation. Lest by any means I might run, or had run, in vain" (Galatians 2:2).

If the issue all of a sudden was circumcision, this implies that Cornelius and the Samaritans converted by Deacon Philip had all been circumcised. Cornelius was a convert to Judaism, and was devout in all his dealings (Acts 10:1-6). To be in good standing with the Jews in his synagogue, Cornelius had to have been circumcised long before he had his vision. The Samaritans, similar to the Jews, practiced circumcision. There was therefore no need for any of these to be newly circumcised. However, when Paul and Barnabas went into Galatia, the Jews

⁴⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

⁴⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

rejected them and they went directly to the Gentiles, many of whom had not been circumcised. They didn't insist that the Gentiles do so either, as had been their custom at Antioch.

For those who wanted to know about whether circumcision was necessary, the Lord Himself had already given some direction in this matter during His three-year ministry. Some of the Seventy, that He chose to send ahead of Him to heal the sick (Luke 10:1-7), were uncircumcised. One of these was the Apostle Titus, who James did not require to be circumcised to attend the Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD (Galatians 2:3). We also note that the Seventy did not eat kosher food (according to Leviticus 11) as they went their way from city to city (Luke 10:8).

Paul's Role at Antioch

One might ask why Paul got involved at Antioch in the first place. If men from Cyrene and Cyprus founded the Church, why did Barnabas go to Tarsus to get Paul (Acts 11:25) rather than go back to Jerusalem to get others of the leading men there? The answer is that Barnabas recognized the Grace of God in Antioch, where circumcision was not required, and "encouraged them all that with purpose of heart they should continue with the Lord. And a great many people were added to the Lord" (Acts 11:23-24).

Barnabas went to get Paul in c. 45 AD. Eight years earlier, in c. 37 AD (Acts 9:31), James and the Jerusalem brethren had sent Paul to Tarsus (his home town, Acts 22:3) to get him away from murder plots in Jerusalem (Acts 9:29-30). Barnabas was one of the brothers in Jerusalem who had welcomed Paul after his conversion (Acts 9:26-27). Both Paul and Barnabas had been educated by Gamaliel in their youth (Acts 22:3) and had known each other a long time.

But there was another reason also. Just before Paul was sent to Tarsus in c. 37 AD, he had a vision in the Temple where the Lord told him that He was going to send him to the Gentiles. This vision occurred before Peter's vision of the sheet (Acts 10:9-17) that led to the baptism of Cornelius. Therefore Paul and the Jerusalem brethren probably didn't know what to do about the vision at the time. But when Barnabas saw the grace of God in Antioch, he went to get the guy who had had the vision about the Gentiles eight years earlier. And together, Barnabas and Paul spent a year teaching a great many people in Antioch. Following this, the Church sent Barnabas and Paul out on what has come to be known as Paul's First Missionary Journey.

Alms from Antioch to Jerusalem

Shortly after Paul arrived in Antioch, prophets came down from Jerusalem to Antioch. "Then one of them, named Agabus, stood up and showed by the Spirit that there was going to be a great famine throughout all the world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. The disciples, each according to his ability, determined to send relief to the brethren dwelling in Judea. This they also did, and sent it to the elders by the hands of Barnabas and Paul" (Acts 11:27-30).

John Chrysostom noted that this was a very important development in Antioch: the alms for the Jerusalem Church. This had more benefit for Antioch than for Jerusalem. Even though many of the brethren in Jerusalem considered the Gentiles in Antioch as unclean, second-class believers, especially since they weren't circumcised, yet the brethren in Antioch still made major sacrifices to help the brethren in Judea.

The famine itself was one of many warnings to the Jewish leaders regarding their persecution of the Christians. These warnings grew more frequent and more severe as the “Judgment Day” of the destruction of Jerusalem (c. 70 AD) approached. As might be expected, the famine affected the poor most severely. Because of the persecution of the Church in Jerusalem by the Jewish leaders, the Church was poverty-stricken and the famine was all the worse for them. Common practice was the raiding of the houses of Christians, dragging them off to jail, and confiscating all their property. The alms from Antioch were a much-needed blessing.

When Paul met James in Jerusalem at the Council in c. 48 AD, alms were a major point of their concurrence (Galatians 2:10). Solomon had written, “The ransom of a man’s soul is his own wealth” (Proverbs 13:8 LXX). And the Lord said, “If you want to be perfect, go sell what you have and give to the poor, and come follow me” (Matthew 19:21). Chrysostom summarized⁴⁸⁹ this by saying:

“There is no sin which alms cannot cleanse; none which alms cannot quench. All sin is beneath this; it is a medicine adopted for every wound.”

“But alms may be done not only by money, but by acts. For example: one may kindly stand by a person to help and defend him; one may reach to him a helping hand. The service rendered by acts has often done more good even than money. Is it small alms to a lost, castaway soul possessed by a burning fever to be able to rid it of its disease? For example, do you see one possessed by love of money? Pity the man. Quench his fire. What if he will not be persuaded? Do your part and do not be negligent. Have you seen him in bonds? For wealth are indeed bonds (Matthew 25:35ff). Go to him; visit him; console him; try to release him from his bonds. If he refuses, he shall bear the blame himself. Have you seen him naked and a stranger? He is indeed naked and a stranger to heaven. Bring him to your own inn; clothe him with the garment of virtue; give him the city, which is in heaven”.

Discussions at the Council of Jerusalem

The Council of Jerusalem in c. 48 AD was a watershed event and the Church Councils in later years were modeled on how the Apostles conducted this Council. The emphasis of the Council was consensus and obtaining what later came to be referred to as “The Mind of the Church”. That is, what is the consensus of all Christians in every age and in every place? To help focus on this, the Council had a moderator, Bishop James, who summarized the collective statements of all the attendees, saying, “Therefore I judge!” (Acts 15:19)

At the Council, “Some of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed, rose up, saying, ‘It is necessary to circumcise them, and to command them to keep the Law of Moses’” (Acts 15:5). After there had been much dispute, Peter rose up and spoke. In saying what he did, Peter was speaking from his experience with Cornelius and from his experience in Antioch, where he had been residing for several years by this time. Peter said the following:

1. God chose that the Gentiles should hear and believe, just like us, making no distinction between them and us. That is, the same outpouring of the Holy Spirit as occurred at Pentecost came on these Gentiles.
2. Why do you test God by putting a yoke on them which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear?

⁴⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXV.

3. Peter then gave the floor to Paul and Barnabas, who declared the miracles and wonders that God had worked among the Gentiles.
4. This testimony of what God had done reduced everyone to silence.

James⁴⁹⁰ then summarized the consensus of the Council, first quoting from the Scriptures, in words that “pleased the Apostles and elders with the whole Church” (Acts 15:22). James stated:

1. The Prophets stated that the Lord would rebuild the fallen tabernacle of David so that all the Gentiles might seek the Lord (Amos 9:11-12).
2. We should not trouble the Gentiles with circumcision.
3. There are some necessary things that the Gentiles should pay attention to in order that they might grow in the Lord.

Everyone was reduced to silence because of the obvious Hand of God, both at the Church in Antioch and at the Churches Paul and Barnabas founded in Galatia. If there was anyone at the Council who had a problem with uncircumcised Gentiles, he could say nothing, except what would be perceived as countermanding God. This silence did not continue once the Council was over, however! Paul wrote to the Churches in Galatia a few years later to help them deal with “false brethren” (Galatians 2:4) who continued to insist that the Galatians needed to be circumcised (Galatians 6:12). Paul was hounded the rest of his life by these “false brethren” (2 Corinthians 11:26). We might note an important similarity between this Council and later Councils. There was usually a pattern of heretical opinion that continued following most of the major Councils of the Church. There were always a few who said they concurred with the decrees of the Faith established by the Councils, but then afterward continued to teach the contrary. This means that the heretics demonstrated their basic dishonesty.

Resolution of the Council of Jerusalem

The decision of the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD was a ratification of Paul’s Gospel. To be sure that everyone understood clearly what the decision had been, the Apostles, elders and brethren in Jerusalem drafted a letter to be read to the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia to this effect. In addition, the Jerusalem brethren sent two of their leading men to Antioch to personally convey the decision of the Council (Acts 15:22). One of the leading men was Joseph, also called Barsabas, Justus and Judas (Acts 1:23, 15:22), who was Jesus’ older stepbrother⁴⁹¹. It was this Joseph who had been put forward as a candidate to replace Judas Iscariot 18 years earlier (Acts 1:23-26). The other leading man was Silas, who later accompanied Paul on his Second Missionary Journey, and whom Paul left in Corinth as its first Bishop⁴⁹². Both Joseph and Silas were prophets in the Church in Jerusalem (Acts 15:32). Thus the brethren in Jerusalem sent a very powerful ratification of Paul’s Gospel, and they wanted the whole world to know, and to know very clearly!

⁴⁹⁰ This is James, the Lord’s brother, who had been ordained Bishop of Jerusalem by Peter, James (Zebedee) and John shortly after the Resurrection. James was the youngest son of Joseph, and therefore Jesus’ stepbrother. See Eusebius, Church History, II, 1. The appearance of the risen Christ specifically to this James (1 Corinthians 15:7) was probably for this purpose.

⁴⁹¹ James and Joseph Barsabas were Jesus’ stepbrothers, but also His second cousins, since the Virgin Mary and her husband Joseph were cousins. James and Joseph Barsabas most likely bore a physical resemblance to Jesus. So the result of the Council was that one of Jesus’ brothers drafted the letter and another of His brothers hand-carried it to Antioch! It’s hard to imagine how James could have been more emphatic in ratifying Paul’s Gospel!

⁴⁹² Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 30.

The letter that the Church in Jerusalem drafted began by saying that some people had come from the Church in Jerusalem saying that the Gentiles must be circumcised and keep the Mosaic Law, but that the leaders in the Church in Jerusalem gave no such commandment. Since it was “some of the sect of the Pharisees, who believed” that had been defending circumcision at the Council, it may have been some of these who went to Antioch. But they seem to have been satisfied by the decision of the Council (Acts 15:22). Those who continued to push circumcision after the decision of the Council may have been renegade Jews, such as the Ebionite followers of Simon Magus⁴⁹³, the arch heretic. The full text of the letter drafted by the Church in Jerusalem is:

The apostles, the elders, and the brethren, to the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria, and Cilicia:

“Greetings! Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, unsettling your souls, saying, ‘*You must* be circumcised and keep the Law’ -- to whom we gave no *such* commandment -- it seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the Name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas (i.e. Joseph Barsabas) and Silas, who will also report the same things by word of mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: That you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell” (Acts 15:23-29).

One can summarize the letter from the Church in Jerusalem as cautioning the Gentiles to abstain from these necessary things:

- Things polluted by idols
- Things containing blood, such as things strangled.
- Sexual immortality

This was for their own benefit since:

- Someone eating meat offered to idols is a partaker of the altar of the idols (1 Corinthians 10:18ff).
- One needs to discern the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26-30). Eating and drinking blood can lead to a lack of discernment.
- Sexual immortality joins Christ to the harlot (1 Corinthians 6:15-20)

While the Church in Jerusalem applied this to the Gentiles, no such relaxation is recorded as applying to Jewish believers. In 57 AD when Paul returned from his Third Missionary Journey (or shortly after writing the Epistle to the Romans in 55 AD), he immediately went to meet with Bishop James in Jerusalem (Acts 21:18). There were a great number of Jewish believers in Jerusalem who were all zealous to keep the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:20) and they had been informed (probably by the Sanhedrin, definitely not by James), that Paul taught Jews abroad that they didn’t have to follow the Mosaic Law (Acts 21:21, 28-31). To prove to them

⁴⁹³ For details of the history of Simon Magus, see Mark Kern, Simon Magus the Heresiarch, Unpublished Work, 2002.

that this was untrue, James and the Jerusalem presbyters instructed Paul to follow the Nazarite Laws (which Paul had been doing) together with four other men in the Jerusalem Church (Acts 21:22-25, Numbers 6:1-21). That way everyone would see that Paul, himself, kept the Mosaic Law and that the rumors were untrue.

John Chrysostom had some significant insight⁴⁹⁴ into the situation addressed by the Council in Jerusalem. James was the authority figure in Jerusalem, and he presided at the Council. In his judgment of the matter, he not only got everyone to agree, but he ratified Paul's Gospel, and also satisfied the Pharisees that were present. In respecting the viewpoint of the Pharisees, James did not go into a harsh criticism, even though the letter presented a veiled indictment of their viewpoint. One problem was that there was no specific teaching in the Law regarding the present case, and Jesus did not teach any specifics in that regard either. Thus James was filling the role of the Levitical Judges (Deuteronomy 1:16-17, 17: 8-12), as established by the Law, in rightly dividing the Word for specific cases.

“This (James) was bishop and therefore he speaks last. Here is fulfilled that saying, ‘In the mouth of two or three witnesses shall every word be established’ (Deuteronomy 17:6; Matthew 18:16). But observe the discretion he shows also, in making his argument good from the prophets, both new and old. For he had no experiences of his own to declare, as Peter had and Paul! He wisely ordered that the active part was assigned to Peter, Paul and Barnabas as not intended to be resident in Jerusalem. James, who performs the part of teacher, is not responsible for what has been done by Paul and Barnabas, but he is not divided from them in opinion”.

“The authority of James as Bishop is apparent. “Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God, but that we write to them to abstain from things polluted by idols, *from* sexual immorality, *from* things strangled, and *from* blood. For Moses has had throughout many generations those who preach him in every city, being read in the synagogues every Sabbath” (Acts 15:19-21). Since they had heard of the Law, with good reason he enjoins these things from the Law that he may not seem to make it of no authority. Yet observe how he does not let them be told these things from the Law, but from himself, saying, ‘We have judged’. Then the decree is made. Also observe, the more to authenticate the decree, they sent men of their own, that there may be no room for regarding Paul and his company with suspicion”.

“Notice also how the Epistle from Jerusalem does not go into harsh condemnation of those brethren that they indicted in their Epistle. James said, ‘Since we have heard that some who went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying that *you must* be circumcised and keep the Law — to whom we gave no *such* commandment’ (Acts 15:24). Sufficient was this charge against those men, and worthy of the Apostles’ moderation, that they said nothing beyond this. Then to show that they do not act despotically, that all are agreed in this, with deliberation they write, ‘It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send men of ours whom we have chosen’ (Acts 15:25). All was done that it might not look like criticism of Paul and Barnabas”.

“They agreed to lay upon the Gentiles ‘no greater burden’ (Acts 15:10, 19); again they call the Law a burden. James apologized even for these injunctions, except for these necessary things: meats offered to idols, blood, and

⁴⁹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXXIII.

fornication (Acts 15: 29). For these things the New Testament did not prohibit; we nowhere find that Christ discoursed about these matters; but these things they took from the Law”.

“Observe, how James kept order, and brought Peter and Paul in after the Pharisees had spoken. The question was not that the Gentiles couldn’t be received upon believing, but that it must be with the Law. Peter pleaded well on this point; but since this very thing above all others troubled the Pharisees, therefore James rules on this as Bishop. And observe, that which needed to be enacted as a rule, that it is not necessary to keep the Law, Peter introduced. But the milder part, the truth which was received of old, this James said, and dwelt upon that aspect about which nothing was written⁴⁹⁵, in order that having soothed their minds by that which was acknowledged, he may introduce this likewise. ‘Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God’ (Acts 15:19). That is, do not subvert them; for if God called them, and these observances subvert them, we fight against God”.

Christians were still considered a branch of Judaism at this time. The Lord had said to Photina, the Samaritan woman, that the day was coming when people will worship the Father neither on Mt. Gerizim in Samaria nor on Mt. Zion in Jerusalem (John 4:21). Salvation is of the Jews (John 4:22), and this is what Bishop James was teaching in Jerusalem using the illustrations of the Mosaic Law rituals. But the Father was also seeking true worshippers who would worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:23-24). Many in Jerusalem were resisting James on this count – which led to his martyrdom in c. 62 AD. Paul said, “The way into the Holy of Holies was not yet made manifest while the first tabernacle (in Jerusalem) was still standing” (Hebrews 9:8). With the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem in 70 AD, people had no alternative but to worship the Father in spirit and truth at some location outside Jerusalem (John 4:24). Thus, Jewish Christians worldwide were forced into a significant re-appraisal of the situation in the late 1st Century.

In places abroad, where there were significant numbers of both Jews and Gentiles in the same Church, the Jewish Christians had some difficulties. If the Jews tried to adhere to the Mosaic Law practices while their Gentile brothers didn’t, Paul noted that their faith could be weakened by the “liberty” of their Gentile brothers (1 Corinthians 8:9). Paul cautioned those Gentiles who did evangelistic work among the pagans to be aware of who was watching them and who they were influencing. One of the onlookers may be a Jewish brother who was trying to come to grips with the Faith, and who might stumble seeing him eat in a pagan temple.

“Food does not commend us to God; for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse. But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to those who are weak. For if anyone sees you who have knowledge eating in an idol’s temple, will not the conscience of him who is weak be emboldened to eat those things offered to idols? And because of your knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died? But when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ. Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble” (1 Corinthians 8:8-13).

⁴⁹⁵ That is, there was nothing clearly written in the Old Testament regarding whether Gentiles need to keep the Mosaic Law when they live away from Jerusalem.

John Chrysostom noted⁴⁹⁶ that James did not write the same injunctions to the Jews as he did to the Gentiles because the Jews already had this from the Mosaic Law.

“Then why did James not write the same injunctions to Jews also? Moses already speaks to them! Where it did no harm, he permitted the Jews to hear Moses in regard to these matters, while leading away from Moses those of the Gentiles. See what wisdom! He seems to honor Moses, and to set him up as the authority for his own people, and by this very thing he leads away the Gentiles from him! ‘Being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day!’ Then why do they not learn what is to be learned from him, for instance? Through the perversity of these men! He shows that even the Jews need observe no more than these necessary things. Thus he made an end of the whole matter; while he seems to preserve the Law by adopting these rules from it, he unbinds it by taking only these. There was a design of Providence in the disputation also, that after the disputation the doctrine might be firmer”.

Chrysostom also noted⁴⁹⁷ that the way James handled the situation became a model for how later Church Councils handled the various heretics that arose then. He indicted the Pharisees for what they did, subverting the souls of the faithful, but he treated them with respect in order that they might be led to repent. James did not condescend to the Gentiles, but treated them as equals. All these “offenses” were good for the Church in that they showed the quality of the people involved.

“Observe how they said nothing harsher against those men (who were advocating circumcision in Antioch), but look to one thing only, namely, to undo the mischief, which had been done. For this would make even the movers of the faction there to confess that they were wrong. They do not say, ‘The seducers, the pestilent fellows, or such’. Though where need is, Paul does this, as when he said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud’ (Acts 13:10); but here, the point being carried, there was no need. And observe, they did not say that certain from us ordered you to keep the Law, but, ‘troubled you with words, subverting your souls’ (Acts 15:24). This was very proper; none of the other speakers had so spoken of the things done by those men”.

“James added that ‘It seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us’ (Acts 15:28). Why did he put it this way? Why did they add, ‘And to us’, when it was sufficed to say, ‘To the Holy Spirit?’ He said, ‘To the Holy Spirit’, that they may not think it to be of man. He said, ‘To us’, that the Gentiles may be taught that James and the elders themselves admit the Gentiles, even though they remain in circumcision. This shows that it is not by way of condescension that they speak, neither because they spared them, nor as considering them weak, but the contrary. For great was the reverence of the Gentiles for the teachers in Jerusalem. They are always calling it a burden, for the Law was a superfluous burden⁴⁹⁸”.

“Let us not then be offended on account of the heretics. For look, here at the very outset of the preaching, how many offenses there were! I speak not of those, which arose from outsiders; for these were nothing: but of the offenses,

⁴⁹⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXXIII.

⁴⁹⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, XXXIII.

⁴⁹⁸ That is, due to the advanced state of the Faith in Antioch, the faithful in Antioch did not need to listen to prohibitory mandates. In Jerusalem, where Christ had been crucified and the Church was being persecuted, it was a different story!

which were within. For instance, first Ananias (Acts 5:1-10), then the ‘murmuring’ (Acts 6:1), then Simon the sorcerer (Acts 8:9-23); afterwards they that accused Peter on account of Cornelius (Acts 11:3), next the famine (Acts 11:27-30), lastly this very thing, the chief of the evils. For it is impossible, when any good thing has taken place, that some evil should not also subsist along with it! Let us then not be disturbed, if some are offended, but let us thank God even for this, because it makes us more approved. For not tribulations only, but even temptations also render us more illustrious. A man is no such great lover of the truth, only for holding to it when there is none to lead him astray from it; to hold fast to the truth when many are drawing him away, this makes the proved man”.

Following the Council in Jerusalem, Joseph Barsabas returned to Jerusalem, while Silas chose to travel with Paul on Paul’s Second Missionary Journey. Barnabas chose to return to Cyprus, his home country, while Paul and Silas returned to those Churches that Paul and Barnabas established on their First Missionary Journey. At each of these Churches, they delivered the decrees from Jerusalem; the result was:

“And as they went through the cities, they delivered to them the decrees to keep, which were determined by the Apostles and elders at Jerusalem. So the Churches were strengthened in the Faith, and increased in number daily” (Acts 16:4-5).

Later on Paul’s Second Missionary Journey, he and Silas traveled to Macedonia, stopping at Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea, Athens and Corinth before returning to Antioch. Paul stayed in Corinth for a year and a half (Acts 18:11) and ordained Silas as the first Bishop of Corinth⁴⁹⁹ when he left.

John Chrysostom pointed out⁵⁰⁰ that Paul went up to Jerusalem 14 years after his conversion to meet with the Apostles privately lest he had run in vain (Galatians 2:2). He waited this long out of a desire to reconcile the contentious, not out of doubt over his Gospel. Many people thought that Peter and John preached a different Gospel, so he had to resolve this.

“Paul did this privately, for his object was not to learn or reform anything, but to cut off the grounds of those who would deceive. Everyone at Jerusalem would be offended if the Law was transgressed, or if the use of circumcision forbidden. As James said, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law. But they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children or to walk according to the customs’ (Acts 21:20-21). Since then they were offended, he did not condescend to come forward publicly and declare what his preaching was, but he conferred privately with those who were of reputation before Barnabas and Titus. The Apostles might then credibly testify to Paul’s accusers, that they found no discrepancy in his preaching, but confirmed it”.

“Who were the false brethren? (Galatians 2:4) If the Apostles permitted circumcision at Jerusalem, why are those who imposed it elsewhere to be called

⁴⁹⁹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 30. One can also see this in the text, since Paul and Silas entered Corinth together (Acts 18:5), but Paul didn’t leave with Silas (Acts 18:18-23).

⁵⁰⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2.

false brethren? First; because there is a difference between commanding an act to be done, and allowing it after it is done. He who imposes an act, does it with zeal as necessary, and of primary importance. But he who, without himself commanding it, allows another to do it, who wishes, yields not from a sense of its being necessary but in order to serve some purpose. We have a similar instance, in Paul's command to husbands and wives to come together again. He said, 'But this I say by way of permission, not of commandment' (1 Corinthians 7:5). For this was not a judgment authoritatively given but an indulgence to their self-control".

"And so here, the Apostles made this concession, not as vindicating the Law, but as condescending to the infirmities of Judaism. Had they been vindicating the Law, they would not have preached to the Jews in one way, and to the Gentiles in another. Had the observance been necessary for unbelievers, then it would have been necessary for all the faithful. But by their decision not to harass the Gentiles on this point, they showed that they permitted it by way of condescension to the Jews. The purpose of the false brethren was to cast them out of grace, and put them under the yoke of slavery again. This is the first difference, and a very wide one. The second is, that the Apostles so acted in Judea, where the Law was in force, but the false brethren acted everywhere, for all the Galatians were influenced by them. Their intention was not to build up, but entirely to pull down the Gospel, and the thing was permitted by the Apostles on one ground and zealously practiced by the false brethren on another".

"Paul pointed out their hostility by calling them spies (Galatians 2:4); for the sole object of a spy is to obtain for himself devastation and destruction, by becoming acquainted with his adversary's position. And this is what those did, who wished to bring the disciples back to their old servitude. From this it appears how very contrary their purpose was to that of the Apostles".

Paul Challenged Peter Regarding Hypocrisy in Antioch: Galatians 2:6-15

Paul's confrontation with the Apostle Peter probably occurred⁵⁰¹ in c. 49 AD, just following the Council in Jerusalem, during the time that Paul, Barnabas and Silas taught and preached in Antioch (Acts 15:35-36). Prior to the Council in Jerusalem, Peter had already completed his Second Missionary Journey into Cappadocia and Galatia, and there was an early distinction between Peter and Paul's mission field. In this regard, Paul said to the Galatians,

"They saw that the gospel for the uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the gospel* for the circumcised *was* to Peter -- for He who worked effectively in Peter for the Apostleship to the circumcised also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:7-8).

Peter spent most of his life after Pentecost traveling from place to place. Beginning with Peter's Third Missionary Journey in c. 53 AD, he began going to places with fewer and fewer Jewish settlers. Thus Paul's statement about Peter's Gospel for the circumcised only fits Peter's Journeys prior to the Council in Jerusalem.

⁵⁰¹ The other alternative is that it occurred in c. 52 AD, just after Paul's Second Missionary Journey, when Paul gave a report of his work to the Church in Antioch (Acts 18:22-23).

In addition, Paul mentioned that Barnabas was present at this confrontation also (Galatians 2:13). Following the Council in Jerusalem, within a few months, Barnabas had left for Cyprus with John Mark while Paul left for Galatia with Silas (Acts 15:36-41). Since Barnabas didn't return to Antioch for a long time, the only time when Paul, Peter and Barnabas could have been together in Antioch is shortly after the Council of Jerusalem in c. 49 AD.

The confrontation occurred when Peter came to Antioch after the Council of Jerusalem, and ate freely with the Gentiles (Galatians 2:12). This implies that he ate at the same table as the Gentiles. But a little later, when "certain men came from James", that is when certain men came from Bishop James in Jerusalem, Peter withdrew to eat with them, since they were used to keeping all the details of the Mosaic Law. Paul stated that Peter "feared those who were of the circumcision", and that "the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite with him, including Barnabas" (Galatians 2:12). By "withdrawing" to eat with the Jewish brethren, the implication is that the Jewish brethren considered the Gentiles "unclean". This violated Peter's vision from the Lord, where the Lord told him, "What God has cleansed, you must not call unclean" (Acts 10:15).

John Chrysostom noted⁵⁰² that Paul was under attack at this time by the deceivers that he called "false brethren" (Galatians 2:4). These deceivers pitted the words of Peter, James and John against those of Paul, saying that circumcision must be practiced among the Gentiles as it was in Jerusalem, even though this was contrary to the agreement of the Council of Jerusalem the year before.

"At that time, Paul then saw the whole Galatian people in a state of excitement, a flame kindled against their Church, and the edifice shaken and tottering, ready to fall. He was filled with the mixed feelings of righteous anger along with despondency, which he has expressed in the words, 'I could wish to be present with you now, and to change my tone' (Galatians 4:20). He wrote the Epistle as an answer to these charges. This is his aim from the very commencement, for the underminers of his reputation had said that the others were disciples of Christ but this man of the 'Apostles'. Therefore he begins thus, 'Paul, an Apostle not from men, neither through man' (Galatians 1:1). For, these deceivers had said that Paul was the last of all the Apostles and was taught by them, for Peter, James, and John, were both first called, and held a primacy among the disciples, and had also received their doctrines from Christ Himself. It was therefore fitting to obey them rather than Paul; and Peter, James, and John did not forbid circumcision or the observance of the Law. By this and similar language and by their disapproval of Paul, and exalting the honor of the other Apostles, though not spoken for the sake of praising them, but for deceiving the Galatians, they induced them to adhere to the Law. Since they degraded Paul's doctrine, saying it came from men, while that of Peter came from Christ, Paul addressed himself to this point, declaring himself an Apostle 'not from men, neither through man'".

Paul was very strong in writing to the Galatians, saying that by going back to the details of the Law and to circumcision, they would be estranged from Christ.

"Stand fast therefore in the liberty by which Christ has made us free, and do not be entangled again with a yoke of bondage. Indeed I, Paul, say to you that

⁵⁰² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 1, vv. 1-3.

if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing. And I testify again to every man who becomes circumcised that he is a debtor to keep the whole Law. You have become estranged from Christ, you who *attempt to* be justified by Law; you have fallen from grace. For we through the Spirit eagerly wait for the hope of righteousness by faith. For in Christ Jesus neither circumcision nor uncircumcision avails anything, but faith working through love” (Galatians 5:1-6).

Circumcision and the Law were a National Identity for the Jews

It is important to understand why circumcision was so important to the Jews in Jerusalem. This was a time of the occupation of Judea by the Romans, and consequently a strong nationalistic spirit pervaded local politics. Among the Dead Sea Scrolls, the “copper scrolls”, written on copper sheets, described huge collections of gold hidden away to finance a rebellion against Rome. This nationalistic spirit ramped up to a peak in c. 66 AD and ended with the destruction of Jerusalem in c. 70 AD.

Circumcision was how Jews identified themselves as unique. This went back to God’s covenant with Abraham, where circumcision was the outward sign of the covenant. Everyone who left Egypt had to be circumcised (Joshua 5:4-6), but the people did not continue the practice in the wilderness, and they had to be re-circumcised prior to the Conquest (Joshua 5:2-9). Circumcision applied even to servants and slaves in order to participate in the worship of God. There was supposed to be one Law for both the native-born and the stranger (Exodus 12:43-49). By the 1st Century, however, the Jews in Jerusalem weren’t interested at all in the how things applied to the Gentiles. Their main concern was the image of themselves as the people of God, and circumcision was central to this image.

We can see how strongly the Jews in Jerusalem felt about circumcision from the incident with Trophimus. Trophimus was one of the Seventy Apostles that Jesus sent out two-by-two to heal the sick ahead of Him (Luke 10:1-20). But he was a Gentile from Ephesus, and he was uncircumcised (Acts 20:4, 21:29). When Paul came to Jerusalem following his 3rd Missionary Journey, some Jews noticed that Trophimus was in town, and they assumed that Paul brought Trophimus into the Temple. This started a riot where Paul had to be rescued by 470 Roman soldiers (Acts 23:23). They were willing to listen to Paul, speaking in the Hebrew language, but not to anything he had to say about the Gentiles (Acts 22:21-24).

It was traditional for the Jews to observe the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem or wherever they went. The Apostles decided at the Council of Jerusalem that it was also OK for the Gentiles to refrain from keeping the Mosaic Law. But there was a strong commitment for the Jews to observe the Mosaic Law wherever they lived. We can see this about 10 years after the Council in Jerusalem, in c. 58 AD, after Paul returned from his Third Missionary Journey, when he met with Bishop James and the elders in Jerusalem. They told Paul,

“You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they are all zealous for the Law; but they have been informed about you that you teach all the Jews who are among the Gentiles to forsake Moses, saying that they ought not to circumcise *their* children nor to walk according to the customs. What then? The assembly must certainly meet, for they will hear that you have come. Therefore do what we tell you: We have four men who have taken a vow. Take them and be purified with them, and pay their expenses so that

they may shave *their* heads, and that all may know that those things of which they were informed concerning you are nothing, but *that* you yourself also walk orderly and keep the Law. But concerning the Gentiles who believe, we have written *and* decided that they should observe no such thing, except that they should keep themselves from *things* offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality” (Acts 21:20-25).

Paul was accustomed to taking a Nazirite vow⁵⁰³ from time to time, and toward the end of his Second Missionary Journey, he did so (Acts 18:18). Again, Paul took another Nazirite vow along with the four others in Jerusalem (Acts 21:23-24), and this was probably something that he was already in the process of doing. James and the elders suggested that he do so along with the four others in order that Paul might be more conspicuous in his keeping of the Law. Paul would not keep a Nazirite vow continuously, since that would bar him from participating in the mysteries of the Lord’s Table. This indicates that Paul, as a Jew, did keep the Mosaic Law, at least most of the time, although he may have been very discreet about it.

When Paul went up from Antioch for the Council in Jerusalem, Titus was with him. But Titus, a Gentile, did not require circumcision by the brethren in Jerusalem (Galatians 2:3). Titus had been one of the original Seventy (Luke 10:1-20), and the Lord had not required him to be circumcised either. Tertullian stated⁵⁰⁴ that it was the “false brethren” (Galatians 2:4) who were the driving force behind circumcision, which was the only aspect of the Mosaic Law that they insisted on. He noted that Timothy, who was half Jewish, did get circumcised later on Paul’s 2nd Missionary Journey (Acts 16:1-4) as a concession to the weak faith of some of the Jews.

“Paul gives us an insight into his reason for acting in a clean contrary way, showing us why he did that which he would neither have done nor shown to us, if that had not happened which induced him to act as he did. But then I want you to tell us whether they would have yielded to the subjection that was demanded, if these false brethren had not crept in to spy out their liberty? I apprehend not. They therefore gave way, in a partial concession, because there were persons whose weak faith required consideration. For their rudimentary belief, which was still in suspense about the observance of the Law, deserved this concessive treatment, when even the Apostle himself had some suspicion that he might have run, and be still running, in vain. Accordingly, the false brethren who were the spies of their Christian liberty must be thwarted in their efforts to bring it under the yoke of their own Judaism. Paul needed to (1) discover whether his labor had been in vain, (2) obtain the right hands of fellowship from those who preceded him in the apostolate, and (3) establish the office of preaching to the Gentiles, according to their arrangement with him. He therefore made some concession, as was necessary, for a time; and this was the reason why he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3-4), and the Nazirites introduced into the temple (Acts 21:23-27). This may also be inferred from the Apostle’s statements, how ‘to the Jews I became as a Jew, that I might win Jews; to those *who are* under the Law,

⁵⁰³ The purpose of the Nazirite vow (Numbers 6) was the separation of the individual to do the Lord’s will in a special manner. The term of the vow could be for just a few months, or it could be for the rest of a person’s life. Men or women who made the Nazirite vow did not cut their hair during the term of their vow nor did they consume any products of the grapevine. Two notable people who kept the Nazirite vow their entire life were Samson (Judges 13:5) and John the Baptist (Luke 1:15).

⁵⁰⁴ Tertullian, Five Books Against Marcion, II, v, 3.

as under the Law, that I might win those *who are* under the Law' (1 Corinthians 9:19-20). Similarly here with respect to those who came in secretly”.

Dietary Practices of the Apostles

Like most of the Twelve Apostles, Paul lived a life of fasting and prayer following his conversion (2 Corinthians 6:5). The Lord had said that His followers, the friends of the Bridegroom, would begin to fast after His departure (Mark 2:19-20). He also showed them that there was a mystery connected with fasting, and that this was necessary for certain miraculous signs to take place (Matthew 17:21). The life of fasting and prayer was not a total abstinence from food or water, but a severe restriction on what was consumed, similar to an Orthodox fast today. There are degrees to an Orthodox fast today, where the strictest form is a total abstinence from meat, fish, dairy products, wine and oil. The Apostle Thomas observed this kind of fast for over 30 years on his missionary journeys to India by eating just bread with a little salt and water⁵⁰⁵. The Apostle Matthew did the same, but added a few vegetables, nuts and seeds⁵⁰⁶. Today, in a strict Orthodox fast, it is traditional to eat just one uncooked meal per day following the above guidelines. Like some of the monks in Egypt, who lived in the monasteries started by the Evangelist Mark, the Apostles may have gone several days between meals. If Paul were following this kind of lifestyle, everything he ate would be kosher according to Leviticus 11, and it wouldn't be obvious whether or not he was keeping all the details of the Mosaic Law. Peter may very well have eaten like this also.

Paul addressed this situation of Jewish and Gentile Christians living by different lifestyles in Corinth. Some meat sold in public meat markets was left over from sacrifices in pagan temples. Jewish tradition prohibited Jews from eating this, and the letter to the Gentiles from James advised the Gentiles to refrain from things polluted by idols (Acts 15:20). The problem was how would one know where the meat came from? Paul advised a twofold answer. First, don't do an inquisition to find out where it came from; just eat it without asking questions for conscience' sake (1 Corinthians 10:25-27). However, secondly, if someone points out that the meat had been offered to idols, don't eat it for the sake of the one who pointed it out, and for the sake of weak Jewish brethren who may be observing (1 Corinthians 10:28-32). The idols themselves are nothing (1 Corinthians 8:4), but if we sin against a weak brother by causing him to sin, we will be judged for that (1 Corinthians 8:7-13).

The behavior of the Jewish visitors in Antioch was a problem because the Council in Jerusalem had just ruled on this matter, and their behavior was implying that the Gentiles were now unclean. Paul was bothered that Peter, Barnabas and the other Jewish brothers were not straightforward about the truth of the gospel (Galatians 2:14). Paul said to Peter,

“If you, being a Jew, live in the manner of Gentiles and not as the Jews, why do you compel Gentiles to live as Jews? We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles, knowing that a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ, even we have believed in Christ Jesus, that we might be justified by faith in Christ and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified” (Galatians 2:14-16).

⁵⁰⁵ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “Acts of the Holy Apostle Thomas, When He Came Into India”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8

⁵⁰⁶ Clement of Alexandria, The Instructor, II, 1.

The Subterfuge in Antioch

Many of the Christians in Jerusalem considered Paul as a second-class Apostle, where the “real” Apostles were numbered among the Twelve. This was part of their weakness: they weren’t able to understand spiritual things as well as others. As a result, they were reluctant to take what Paul said as seriously as what Peter, James and John said.

John Chrysostom stated⁵⁰⁷, and Jerome agreed⁵⁰⁸, that there was a subterfuge going on when Paul rebuked Peter in Antioch. To paraphrase Chrysostom’s argument, the issue was the oneness in Christ of the Jews and the Gentiles. Paul’s dilemma was that (1) if he had openly criticized the Jews from Jerusalem directly, they would have spurned it with indignation because they had little regard for Paul. But on the other hand, (2) if he had blamed Peter for observing the Law, these Jews would have censured Paul for his boldness towards their Teacher. So instead, Paul arraigned Peter on behalf of Peter’s Gentile disciples in Antioch and facilitated thereby the reception of what he had to say. “If you, being a Jew, live as do the Gentiles⁵⁰⁹, and not as do the Jews” almost amounts to an explicit exhortation for the Gentiles to imitate their Teacher. Peter, hearing this, joined in the pretense, as if he had erred, that the Jews from Jerusalem might be corrected by means of the rebuke administered to him. When they saw their Teacher silent under rebuke, they were unable to despise or resist Paul’s sentence.

“Why did Peter ‘fear those of the Circumcision’ (Galatians 2:11)? How could Peter, who at the beginning in Jerusalem did not fear the Jews, after a long time and in a foreign city, fear those Jews who had been converted? Paul therefore does not imply this against Peter. But to remove any doubt on this point, we must unfold the reason for these expressions”.

“The Apostles permitted circumcision at Jerusalem, an abrupt severance from the Law not being practicable. But when they came to Antioch, they no longer continued this observance, but lived indiscriminately with the believing Gentiles, which thing Peter also was doing at that time⁵¹⁰. But when some came from Jerusalem, who had heard the doctrine he delivered there, Peter no longer lived with the Gentiles, fearing to perplex the believing Jews. He had two objects secretly in view: (1) to avoid offending those Jews, and (2) to give Paul a reasonable pretext for rebuking him. For having allowed circumcision when preaching at Jerusalem had he changed his course at Antioch, his conduct would have appeared to those Jews to proceed from fear of Paul, and his disciples would have condemned his lack of backbone. And this would have created no small offense”.

“Wherefore Paul rebukes, and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the disciples may more readily come over. Without

⁵⁰⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2, vv. 11-17.

⁵⁰⁸ Jerome had maintained that the scene in which St. Paul rebukes St. Peter for inconsistent compliances with Judaism, was a merely feigned dispute, arranged between the two Apostles in order to make the truth clear to the members of the Church. Augustin of Hippo disagreed, and through a series of miscommunications, created a major 10-year rift with Jerome. Jerome later backed down from his opinion, “silenced rather than convinced”, so that heretics would not see them as divided. See Jerome, Principle Works, Prolegomena, 3, 5.

⁵⁰⁹ This also implies that there was a distinct and accepted difference in the lifestyles of the Jews and the Gentiles. The Jews followed the Mosaic Law and the Gentiles didn’t.

⁵¹⁰ When Jesus sent the Seventy out ahead of Him on their mission to heal the sick (Luke 10:1, 9), He instructed them to “eat such things as are set before you” (Luke 10:8). This was a prelude to the acceptance of the Gentiles and the obsolescence of the details of the Mosaic Law.

this occurrence Paul's exhortation would have had little effect on Peter's Jewish disciples. Had Peter disputed Paul's sentence, he might justly have been blamed for upsetting the plan, but now that the one reproves and the other keeps silence, the Jewish party are filled with serious alarm. And this is why Paul used Peter so severely. Observe too Paul's careful choice of expressions in his letter to the Galatians, whereby he points out to the discerning, that he uses them in pursuance of the plan, and not from anger".

"His words are, 'When Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned'; that is, not by me but by others; had Paul himself condemned him, he would not have shrunk from saying so. And the words, 'I resisted him to the face', imply a subterfuge, for had their discussion been real, they would not have rebuked each other in the presence of the disciples, for it would have been a great stumbling block to them. But now this apparent contest was much to their advantage; as Paul had yielded to the Apostles at Jerusalem, so in turn they yield to him at Antioch".

"The cause of censure is this: Peter ate with the Gentiles, but when the Jews came from James, he drew back and separated himself, fearing them that were of the Circumcision. His cause of fear was not his own danger, but their defection, for if he feared not in the beginning, much less would he do so then. As Paul himself says to the Galatians, 'I am afraid for you, lest I have labored for you in vain' (Galatians 4:11), and again, 'But I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted' (2 Corinthians 11:3). This was not the fear of death, but the fear lest their disciples should perish, agitated to their inmost soul".

Chrysostom continued⁵¹¹ that Paul generalized as he went on, and included himself in the phrase, "We *who are* Jews by nature, and not sinners of the Gentiles" (Galatians 2:15). That is, we, who are not proselytes, but educated from early youth in the Law, have relinquished our habitual mode of life, and have taken up the Faith, which is in Christ. Paul was cautious here; he didn't say that the Jews had abandoned the Law as evil. Instead he noted that the Jews admitted "a man is not justified by the works of the Law but by faith in Jesus Christ, that we might be justified by the faith of Christ and not by the works of the Law; for by the works of the Law no flesh shall be justified" (Galatians 2:16).

"If it was necessary for us to keep the entire Law, and we have abandoned it for Christ's sake, Christ has brought us into sin and we shall be judged. But this is an absurdity! And Peter was one of the first witnesses to this in his vision (Acts 10:9-16, 44-48). Paul's object is not therefore to correct Peter, but his words were required to be addressed to him, though it was pointed at the Jewish disciples, and also at others who labor under the same error with them. For though few were then being circumcised, yet, by the strict observance of the details of the Mosaic Law with the Jews, they equally exclude themselves from grace".

"If we have put on Christ, we have become a member of Christ, and have been enrolled in the heavenly city; we don't need to continue to grovel in the Law. How is it possible for us to obtain the kingdom otherwise? Paul stated that the observance of the Law overthrows the Gospel in that the righteousness, which is by faith, is little by little shut out. This is what these Judaizers were implying?

⁵¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2, vv. 14-17.

They would make Christ, who is to us the Author of righteousness, the Author of sin”.

The Law is still useful to us, however, and we ask the Lord for help in understanding the Law in the Great Doxology at the beginning of every Liturgy:

Blessed are You, O Lord, teach me Your commandments.

Blessed are You O Sovereign Lord, let me understand Your commandments.

Blessed are You, O Holy One, enlighten me with Your commandments.

Chrysostom also said⁵¹² that the decrees of the Council of Jerusalem were directed toward, “the brethren who are of the Gentiles in Antioch, Syria and Cilicia” (Acts 15:23), not to the Jews in Jerusalem. He stated also that this was “in condescension to the Jewish believers, which condescension Paul had no need of when preaching to the Gentiles. In fact, Paul kept the Mosaic Law in Jerusalem.

“That this Epistle breathes an indignant spirit is obvious to everyone, even on the first perusal. Some of Paul’s comments that illustrate his indignation are:

1. ‘O foolish Galatians’ (Galatians 3:1).
2. ‘Let no man bother me’ (Galatians 6:17).
3. ‘Indeed I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ will profit you nothing’ (Galatians 5:2).
4. ‘You have become estranged from Christ, you who are justified by Law; you have fallen from Grace’” (Galatians 5:4).

“Some of the Jews (i.e. Ebionites) who believed, being held down by the pre-occupation of Judaism, and at the same time intoxicated by vain-glory and desirous of obtaining for themselves the dignity of teachers, came to the Galatians. They taught them that the observance of circumcision, Sabbaths and new moons was necessary, and that Paul, in abolishing these things was not to be tolerated. For, they said, Peter and James and John, the chiefs of the Apostles and the companions of Christ, did not forbid them (i.e. in Jerusalem).”

“But these deceivers, by withholding the causes both of Paul’s condescension and that of his brethren misled the simpler Galatians, saying that Paul was not to be tolerated; he appeared but yesterday while Peter and his colleagues were from the first. Paul was single, but they were many, and pillars of the church. They accused Paul too of hypocrisy, saying that the very man who forbids circumcision observes the rite elsewhere; and he preaches one way to you and another way to others”.

In his letter to the Galatians, Paul addressed the reason why the Ebionites insisted that the Gentiles be circumcised (Galatians 6:12), even though James and the Apostles in Jerusalem had already written to all the Gentile churches that this wasn’t necessary (Acts 15:13-29). There was still a strong influence worldwide of the Pharisees in Jerusalem who insisted on it (Acts 21:20-25). Paul said that they (the Judaizers in Galatia) do this “only that they may not suffer persecution for the Cross of Christ” (Galatians 6:12). Much of the persecution Paul experienced came at the hands of the Jewish leaders or was instigated by them, and the Ebionites joined them. Thus the Judaizers Paul wrote about chose to offend God rather than men, and just to avoid taking up their cross.

⁵¹² John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap. 1, vv. 1-3.

John Chrysostom commented⁵¹³ that the way this happened is that the Jewish Christians abroad “were reviled by the Jews in Jerusalem for deserting the customs of their fathers” (i.e. the Mosaic Law). “They desire, says Paul, to injure you that they may not have this charged against them, but vindicate themselves by means of your flesh”. Chrysostom added that there was an element of vainglory involved also, for Paul stated that they did this in order “that they may boast in your flesh” (Galatians 6:13).

Gregory the Great stated⁵¹⁴ that those, who love themselves more than their Master, often suppress the truth when it makes them look bad. Everyone fails in duty sometime; but he who loves the truth more than himself does not wish to be spared against the truth. For Peter willingly accepted Paul’s rebuke (Galatians 2:11-15), and David humbly listened to the reproof from his subject Nathan the prophet (2 Samuel 12:7-14). Good rulers believe the word of sincerity from their subjects to be the homage of humility.

Peter’s First Missionary Journey to the West

Before the Council of Jerusalem, Peter had traveled to some largely Gentile areas in Galatia and Syria. He had also been to Rome, where he proof-read Mark’s Gospel, before sending Mark to Egypt. Following the Council, he began⁵¹⁵ his travels farther to the West, stopping first in Antioch, where he met the Apostle Paul prior to Paul’s Second Missionary Journey. Together they consecrated as Bishops four members of the Seventy.

Apostle	Scripture Reference	Bishop of City
Urbanus	Romans 16:9	Tarsus ⁵¹⁶ ,
Epaphroditus	Philippians 2:25, 4:18	Laucas on the Adriatic ⁵¹⁷
Apelles	Romans 16:10	Smyrna ⁵¹⁸
Phygellus ⁵¹⁹	2 Timothy 1:15	Ephesus

After he left Antioch, Peter went to Macedonia, where he and Paul consecrated four others from the Seventy as Bishops. We note that Peter and Paul consecrated Silas as Bishop of

⁵¹³ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chap. 6, vv. 12-13.

⁵¹⁴ Gregory the Great, Book of Pastoral Rule, II, 8.

⁵¹⁵ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 12.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵¹⁶ Urbanus was later Bishop of Macedonia. See Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 31.

⁵¹⁷ Epaphroditus was later Bishop of Colophon in Pamphylia from Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 8, March 30. He also served as Bishop of Andriace (or Hadriacus) from Demetrius of Rostov, “The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints”, January 4, tr. By Fr.Thomas Marretta, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2002.

⁵¹⁸ Apelles or Apellius was the brother of Polycarp, the famous Bishop of Smyrna according to Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 12.. He was later Bishop of Heraklion in Thrace according to Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 31.

⁵¹⁹ Phygellus became a follower of Simon Magus and Paul wrote to Timothy to beware of him as an apostate (2 Timothy 1:15). See also Hippolytus, On the Seventy, 25.

Corinth before Paul went to Corinth. After doing this, Peter went to Corinth, as Paul mentioned in his letter to the Corinthians.

Peter's Visit to Corinth: 1 Corinthians 1:12

Paul founded the Church in Corinth about 51 AD toward the end of his Second Missionary Journey and stayed there a year and a half (Acts 18:11). Silas was traveling with Paul at the time along with Luke, Timothy and Andronicus, where all but Paul were of the original Seventy. Luke was left behind⁵²⁰ to oversee the Macedonian Churches. Silas was left behind⁵²¹ in Corinth as the Bishop of Corinth.

Apostle	Scripture Reference	Bishop of City
Olympas	Romans 16:15	Philippi ⁵²²
Jason	Acts 17:5-9, Romans 16:21	Tarsus ⁵²³
Silas	Acts 15:22 - 18:18	Corinth ⁵²⁴
Herodion	Romans 16:11	Patras ⁵²⁵ in SW Greece

Understanding Paul's Letters to Corinth

Before Paul arrived in Corinth for an extended stay again in late 55 AD, he wrote four letters to Corinth -- two of which are lost -- and paid the Church one brief visit. To understand what Paul wrote in the two letters that we have, one needs to understand the sequence of Paul's four letters. This information can be gleaned by carefully reading the two letters we have. All four letters were written in c. 55 AD, and the theme of the four letters is as follows:

Letter	Status	Theme
1	Lost	Morality and Church Discipline (1 Corinthians 5:9-11)
2	"1 Corinthians"	Communion with God versus Darkness
3	Lost	"Sorrowful Letter" (2 Corinthians 2:4, 7:8)
4	"2 Corinthians"	Reconciliation

The sequence went like this:

1. From Ephesus on his 3rd Missionary Journey, Paul wrote a letter to Corinth regarding morality and church discipline. This letter has been lost over the centuries.

⁵²⁰ Note switch in tenses from "we" to "they" and back to "we" in Acts 16:16, 17:1, 20:6.

⁵²¹ Note that we never hear from Silas again traveling with Paul after he arrived in Corinth (Acts 18:5).

⁵²² Olympas was martyred in Rome along with Peter and Paul in c. 67 AD. He may never have had an opportunity to serve as Bishop of Philippi. See Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, November 10.

⁵²³ Jason later left Tarsus and founded the Church on the Island of Corfu in the Aegean Sea along with the Apostle Sosipater. See Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 28.

⁵²⁴ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 30.

⁵²⁵ Demetrius of Rostov, "The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints", January 4, tr. By Fr. Thomas Marretta, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2002 agrees that Herodion started at Patras. According to Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8, November 10, he also served as Bishop of Neoparthia. According to Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, he served as Bishop of Tarsus also.

2. While still in Ephesus, Paul wrote a 2nd letter (which we know as 1 Corinthians) to address negative reports such as a man having his father's wife (1 Corinthians 5:1), schisms (1 Corinthians 1:12), heresy (1 Corinthians 15:12), etc.
3. Learning of further immorality in Corinth, Paul traveled there (from Ephesus). Timothy had been sent ahead and may have carried the 2nd letter. This visit is referred to as the "sorrowful visit" (2 Corinthians 2:1). Later, Paul stated that his upcoming visit would be his third visit (2 Corinthians 13:1). From the accounts in Acts, his upcoming visit would be only the second visit to Corinth, thus demanding another brief visit.
4. Returning to Ephesus, probably with Timothy, Paul wrote a 3rd letter, a "sorrowful letter". This 3rd letter was delivered by Titus and received by the Corinthians with fear and trembling (2 Corinthians 7:13-15). This letter has also been lost.
5. Before Titus returned, Paul left Ephesus for Macedonia en route to Corinth. In Macedonia, he met Titus who was returning from Corinth. Paul was greatly encouraged by Titus to hear that Corinth had obeyed his instructions. From Macedonia, he then wrote a fourth letter (which we know as 2 Corinthians) defending his apostleship and aiming for reconciliation of all the factions. The man who had his father's wife had by then repented and Paul urged them to forgive him and receive him back (2 Corinthians 2:5-11).

We get a glimpse of how Paul first came to Corinth: "Not in persuasive words but in demonstration of power" (1 Corinthians 2:4-5). These demonstrations of power are described as: "God worked unusual miracles by the hands of Paul, so that even handkerchiefs or aprons were brought from his body to the sick, and the diseases left them and the evil spirits went out from them" (Acts 19:11-12)

Paul's demonstrations of power were so prevalent that a cottage industry developed among some itinerant Jewish exorcists. They began exorcising evil spirits by "the Jesus whom Paul preaches". This worked for a while; eventually they ran into one demon that answered, "Jesus I know, and Paul I know, but who are you?" The demon-possessed man then "leaped on them, overpowered them, and prevailed against them, so that they fled out of that house naked and wounded". When word of this got out, "fear fell on them all, and the Name of the Lord Jesus was magnified" (Acts 19:13-17).

The above two accounts occurred in Ephesus on Paul's 3rd Missionary Journey; we can assume something similar occurred in Corinth a few years earlier when he started the Church there. Thus, when Paul wrote concerning the man who had his father's wife, and Paul instructed them to deliver the man over to Satan (1 Corinthians 5:5) for the destruction of his flesh (in order that his spirit might be saved on Judgment Day), this was not taken lightly. This was Apostolic discipline and was taken seriously.

The Need for Discipline in Corinth

Paul began his 4th letter to Corinth with the words: "Now He who establishes us with you in Christ and has anointed us is God, who also has sealed us and gives us the Spirit in our hearts as a down payment" (2 Corinthians 1:21,22). John Chrysostom commented⁵²⁶ as follows:

"From the past, He establishes the future. For it is He that establishes us in Christ; i.e. who does not allow us to be shaken from the faith which is in Christ. He that anointed us and gave us the Spirit in our hearts, how shall He not give us the future things?"

⁵²⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Corinthians, III, 4.

“For if He gave the principles and the foundations, and the root and the fount, (i.e. the true knowledge of Him, the partaking of the Spirit), how shall He not give the things that come of these. If for the sake of these gifts, those are given, much more will He supply the rest. And if to such as were enemies He gave these gifts, much more when now made friends will He ‘freely give’ to them the rest. Wherefore He said not simply ‘the Spirit’, but named the down payment that from this you might have a good hope of the whole as well. For if He did not purpose to give the whole, He would never have chosen to give the down payment and to waste it without object or result.”

“And what is “anointed”, and “sealed”? He gave us the Spirit, making us at once prophets and priests and kings; for in old times these three sorts were anointed. But we have now not one of these dignities, but all three preeminently. For we are both to enjoy a kingdom and are made priests by offering our bodies for a sacrifice (Romans 12:1), and together with this we are constituted prophets too: for what things ‘eye has not seen, nor ear heard,’ (1 Corinthians 2:9) these have been revealed unto us”.

With all this given to us, it would be truly tragic if it were all wasted because we fell into sin and decadence. Consider Judas Iscariot: He was sent out with the rest of the Twelve to heal the sick, cast out demons, and raise the dead (Matthew 10:1-23). But yet he was also incorrigible as a thief (John 12:6), wasted his gifts and was replaced by Matthias (Acts 1:16-26). Paul knew all about this firsthand, being a Pharisee, and was involved in the decision to use Judas’ 30 pieces of silver to buy the potter’s field after Judas hanged himself (Matthew 27:3-10).

Paul knew he couldn’t let the situation continue downhill in Corinth. He knew that the “Judases” in Corinth would create another truly tragic situation if he didn’t act quickly and strongly. Therefore he tried to get them to listen to the Holy Spirit speaking to their hearts. We note how Paul didn’t lord it over the Corinthians but tried to encourage them as much as possible to work things out themselves by hearing the Lord speak to them (2 Corinthians 1:21-2:4). Paul could have marched in there and really kicked some butt; but he didn’t. That would make Paul the head of the Church, not Christ. Note also Paul’s love for Corinth and his agony over having to correct them.

We note the words Paul used to describe the Church in Corinth: God has

- Established us (2 Corinthians 1:21)
- Anointed us (2 Corinthians 1:21)
- Sealed us (2 Corinthians 1:22)
- Given us the Spirit as a down payment (2 Corinthians 1:22)

One can think of this as a first installment on eternal life. The best is yet to come, but there is an urgent need of getting ourselves ready.

The Church today has a great need for godly bishops who are able to do for their churches today what Paul did for Corinth. For this reason, all Orthodox Churches pray for their bishops in every service.

Peter and Apollos Visit Corinth

In the interval from 52 to 55 AD, Apollos and the Apostle Peter visited Corinth. Apollos was one of the original Seventy, but he must have been back home in Alexandria at the time of

Pentecost. He knew only the baptism of John in 53 AD when he came to Ephesus (Acts 18:24-28). Aquila and Priscilla, the overseers Paul left in Ephesus (Acts 18:18-19), knew Apollos, since they had also been members of the Seventy. They straightened Apollos out and also wrote to the Churches in Achaia, (i.e. Athens and Corinth) to receive Apollos when he arrived (Acts 18:27). Apollos proceeded to help out by vigorously refuting the Jews publicly showing from the Scriptures that Jesus is the Christ (Acts 18:28). Paul said that he and Apollos are one (1 Corinthians 3:8); that is, of one mind in the work of establishing the Churches.

The same can be said for the relationship between Paul and Peter. Peter visited Corinth in the early 50's AD on his way to Rome. He obviously made a big impression in Corinth since there were factions that had developed by 55 AD (1 Corinthians 1:12) centered on Paul, Apollos, Peter and Christ!!

Impact of Peter's Visit to Corinth

Paul had heard what was going on in Corinth from those of the household of Chloe (1 Corinthians 1:11) and from Stephanas, Fortunatus⁵²⁷ and Achaicus (1 Corinthians 16:15-17) who had come to see him in Ephesus, where he was when he wrote this letter. The spiritual climate in Corinth was not good. Besides division (1 Corinthians 1:12) and heresy (1 Corinthians 15:12), sexual immorality beyond that of the Gentiles was being tolerated (1 Corinthians 5:1ff). Small wonder then that other problems existed.

Paul began his 2nd letter (i.e. 1 Corinthians) by addressing just one of these problems: a divided Church. The Corinthian Church was divided into factions based on the personalities of some evangelists who had been there: Paul, Apollos and Peter. Apollos and Peter hadn't been there long, but both were very gifted speakers (Acts 18:28, Acts 2:14ff). Paul was not as gifted a speaker as Apollos and Peter (2 Corinthians 10:10), but he had a quiet strength and was known for performing many miracles (Acts 19:11-12). Thus, one can see how personality cults could develop around these three men – even though the three men did not seek that.

The antidote to personality cults and the antidote to a divided church, which are two huge problems today, begin with the Cross (1 Corinthians 1:17-18). Paul spoke of The Word of the Cross and how it is foolishness to those who are perishing but the Power of God to those who are being saved. The Word of the Cross or taking up one's cross to follow Christ is such an important aspect of Orthodoxy that aspects of it are the featured topic on five separate occasions in the Orthodox lectionary:

The Visits of Peter and Apollos to Corinth did not, by itself, cause the divisions in the Church. Such would have been generated anyway due to the problems present in the Church. What their visits did was to expose the problems for what they were, and allow for an opportunity for correction.

⁵²⁷ Fortunatus and Achaicus were added to the ranks of the Seventy after some of the original members either died or apostatized, and they are commemorated with the Seventy.

The Problem in Corinth: Lack of Love

The context in which Paul wrote to Corinth was a Church where self-centeredness was prevalent. Paul said that at the love feast⁵²⁸ that accompanied the Lord's Supper, "each one takes his own supper ahead of others, and one is hungry and another is drunk" (1 Corinthians 11:21). During the worship, many spoke in tongues, just edifying themselves (1 Corinthians 14:4); Paul encouraged them to seek to edify the Church instead of just themselves (1 Corinthians 14:12).

Paul had earlier said, "Let no one seek his own good, but each one the others' good" (1 Corinthians 10:24). Here Paul repeats that aspect of love: "love does not seek its own way" (1 Corinthians 13:5). John Chrysostom added⁵²⁹,

"For your own profit lies in the profit of your neighbor, and his in yours. This is as if one had his own gold buried in the house of his neighbor. Should he refuse to go and there look for it and dig it up, he will never see it. So likewise, he that will not seek his own profit in the advantage of his neighbor will not attain the crowns due to this".

The factions in the Church in Corinth undoubtedly caused many disagreements because of their lack of love for each other. Thus Paul added to the characteristics of love by saying that love "is not provoked and does not even think evil" (1 Corinthians 13:5). If one did not even suspect or think anything amiss in one's brothers, the disagreements and factions would not occur.

Paul also said that love "does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth" (1 Corinthians 13:6). Paul amplified on this a few months later when he wrote to the Romans, "Rejoice with those who rejoice and weep with those who weep. Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion. Repay no one evil for evil. Have regard for good things in the sight of all men. If it is possible, as much as depends on you, live peaceably with all men" (Romans 12:15-18).

Paul concluded this characterization of what is love by saying that love "bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things and never fails" (1 Corinthians 13:7, 8). As an example of this, Chrysostom pointed⁵³⁰ to King David in his dealing with his rebellious son Absalom:

"For what could be more intolerable than to see a son rising up against him, aiming for usurping the throne and thirsting for his father's blood? Yet this did that blessed one (David) endure such that he could not bear to throw out one bitter expression against the parricide. But even when he left all the rest to his captains, he gave a strong injunction respecting the safety of Absalom (2 Samuel 15-18). For strong was the foundation of his love".

Peter's Arrival in Rome

⁵²⁸ In the 1st Century, Churches imitated the original Lord's Supper, and served it with a meal. Because of problems such as occurred at Corinth, this was later changed so that people might be better able to discern the Lord's body and blood.

⁵²⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXIII, 3.

⁵³⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXIII, 4.

The Apostle Peter arrived in Rome in the early 40's AD and went back and forth between Rome and other places around the Empire the rest of his life. Just prior to his arrival in the early 50's, he stopped in Sicily to visit Pancratius, whom he had sent as Bishop for Taormina. He also consecrated one Maximus as Bishop before leaving for Rome.

After his arrival in Rome, Peter began preaching the true God in public squares and private homes, bringing many to the Christian Faith and delivering them from the deception of idolatry. The Evangelist Mark accompanied Peter during this time and wrote his Gospel based on Peter's preaching. Peter approved Mark's Gospel, and authorized it for the public Reading in the Churches. Peter then consecrated Mark as Bishop and sent him to Egypt.

A description of Peter's arrival in Rome is recorded⁵³¹ in the history archives of Edessa, the Persian city, where extensive Christian activity occurred in the 1st Century. Peter's address was a very powerful summary of the Faith

“When Peter arrived in Rome, many had heard of him and went out to meet him, and the whole Church received him with great joy. And some of the princes of the city, wearers of the imperial headbands, came to him, that they might see him and hear his word. When the whole city was gathered together about him, he stood up to speak to them, and to show them the preaching of his doctrine, of what sort it was. He began to speak to them thus: ‘Men, people of Rome, saints of all Italy, listen to what I say to you. Today I am proclaiming Jesus the Son of God, who came down from heaven, and became man, and was with us as one of ourselves, and wrought marvelous mighty-works and signs and wonders before us, and before all the Jews that are in the land of Palestine. And you yourselves also heard of those things, which He did, because people came to Him from other countries on account of the fame of His healing and the report of the marvelous help He gave. Whoever drew near to Him was healed by His word. Because He was God, at the same time that He healed, He also forgave sins. For His healing, which was open to view, bore witness of His hidden forgiveness, that it was real and trustworthy”.

“The prophets announced this Jesus in their mysterious sayings, as they were looking forward to see Him and to hear His word. He was with His Father from eternity; the glorious Son, who was His Only Begotten, is to be glorified, together with His Father, and His divine Spirit, and the terrible power of His dominion. He was crucified of His own will by the hands of sinners, and was taken up to His Father, even as my companions and I watched. And He is about to come again, in His own glory and that of His holy angels, even as we heard Him tell us. For we cannot say anything, which He did not tell us, neither do we write in the book of His Gospel anything, which He Himself did not say to us. This word is spoken in order that the mouth of liars may be shut in the Day, when men shall give an account of idle words at the place of judgment”.

“Moreover, because we were fishermen, and not skilled in books, therefore He also told us, ‘I will send you the Holy Spirit, the Paraclete, in order that He may teach you what you don't know’; for it is by His gift that we speak those things which you hear. And, further, by it we bring aid to the sick, and healing to the diseased; that by the hearing of His word and by the aid of His

⁵³¹ “The Teaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome”, Ancient Syriac Documents, in *Memoirs of Edessa, The Ante Nicene Fathers*, Volume 8.

power you may believe in Christ, that He is God, the Son of God. We do this in order that you may worship Him and His Father, and glorify His divine Spirit. In the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Spirit, were we commanded to baptize those who believe, that they may live forever. Flee therefore from the words of the wisdom of this world, in which there is no profit, and draw near to those, which are true and faithful, and acceptable before God. His reward also is laid up in store. Now, too, the light has dawned on the creation, and the world has obtained the eyes of the mind, that every man may understand that it is not fit to worship creatures instead of the Creator. Everything, which is a creature, is made to be a worshipper of its Maker, and is not to be worshipped like its Creator. But this One who came to us is God, the Son of God, in His own nature. He mingled His Godhead with our manhood, in order that He might renew our manhood by the aid of His Godhead. For He is Himself the God of truth; He is Himself from before all worlds and creatures; He is Himself the true Son, and the glorious fruit of the exalted Father”.

“You see the wonderful works, which accompany and follow these words. It has not been long since He ascended to His Father, and see how His Gospel has winged its flight through the whole creation. You saw the sun become darkened at His death; you yourselves are witnesses⁵³². The earth, moreover, quaked when He was slain, and the veil was torn at His death. And concerning these things the governor Pilate also was witness. He himself sent and made them known to Caesar, and these things, and more than these, were read before him, and before the princes of your city. On this account Caesar was angry against Pilate because he had unjustly listened to the persuasion of the Jews; and for this reason he took away from him the authority which he had given to him. And this same thing was published and known in all the dominion of the Romans. What Pilate saw and made known to Caesar and to your honorable senate, the same do I preach and declare, as do my fellow Apostles. And you know that Pilate could not have written to the imperial government of that which did not take place and which he had not seen with his own eyes; but that which did take place and was actually done — this it was that he wrote and made known. Moreover, the guards of the sepulcher also were witnesses of those things, which took place there; they became as dead men. When those guards were questioned before Pilate, they confessed before him how large a bribe the chief-priests of the Jews had given them, so that they might say that we His disciples had stolen the corpse of Christ. You have heard many things; if you are not willing to be persuaded by those things, which you have heard, at least be persuaded by the mighty-works, which you see, which are done by His Name”.

When Peter arrived in Rome, there were many Christians already there. Mary Magdalene, who was quite wealthy, was one of the first to arrive in Rome. She came to be called “Equal to the Apostles” for her role in the young church, primarily in Rome and later in Ephesus after 62 AD with the Apostle John. Following Pentecost 30 AD, she traveled to Rome to appear before Tiberias Caesar and tell him the whole story of Pilate’s unjust trial of Jesus, his release of a murderer and insurrectionist and his cowering to the Jewish leaders. As a result of this, Pilate was summoned to Rome, was unable to defend his actions and was banished to Gaul

⁵³² That is, when the sun was darkened at the Crucifixion (Luke 23:44-45), it was darkened all over the world, including at Rome.

where he committed suicide. Mary Magdalene stayed in Rome for a long time working as an evangelist before moving to Ephesus in the 60's AD to work with the Apostle John. Thus Mary was a pioneer for the Early Church in Rome. In doing this, she had to liquidate all her wealth as did many others after Pentecost (Acts 4:34-37).

After Peter arrived in Rome, Mary stayed to continue helping the Church, and Paul addressed her by Name in his Epistle (Romans 16:5). In that Epistle, which Paul wrote in c. 55 AD, he also addressed 18 members of the original Seventy Apostles (Romans 16:3-23), who had been sent to Rome by Peter and Paul to aid in the work Mary started.

Other Christians that had arrived in Rome were some of the Christians who were scattered by the persecution that arose over the stoning of Stephen (Acts 8:4) in 31 AD. Some of the visitors to Jerusalem at Pentecost 30 AD, when Peter converted 3000 people (Acts 2:41), had come from Rome (Acts 2:10). We can presume that they returned to Rome when everyone was scattered.

Peter arrived in Rome during the reign of Emperor Claudius. Prior to his arrival in Rome, Claudius had arrested Simon Magus during the roundup of sorcerers throughout the Empire. Simon turned his arrest into an opportunity to delude Claudius and the Senate. A traditional account⁵³³ of Simon's arrest is:

“Simon was brought to Rome to receive punishment for his deeds. But having benighted the minds of many with his sorcerous art, he so deluded them, that not only was he able to forego punishment, but he even began to be venerated as a deity. This forerunner of Antichrist so astounded even Emperor Claudius himself that Claudius ordered a statue of the magician cast and set up between the two bridges over the Tiber River. On it he placed the following inscription: ‘To Simon, the holy god’”.

Justin Martyr and Irenaeus wrote of how twisted Simon was in proclaiming himself as god and contending with the Apostles. Irenaeus stated⁵³⁴:

“He, then, not putting faith in God at all, set himself eagerly to contend against the Apostles, in order that he himself might seem to be a wonderful being. He applied himself with still greater zeal to the study of the whole magic art, that he might the better bewilder and overpower multitudes of men. Such was his procedure in the reign of Claudius Caesar, by whom also he was honored with a statue on account of his magical power. Many, then, glorified this man, as if he were a god; and he taught that it was himself who appeared among the Jews as the Son, but descended in Samaria as the Father while he came to other nations in the character of the Holy Spirit. He represented himself, in a word, as being the loftiest of all powers, that is, the Being who is the Father over all, and he allowed himself to be called by whatsoever title men were pleased to address him”.

⁵³³ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 12.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrate Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵³⁴ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, I, xxiii, 1. See also Justin Martyr, First Apology, XXVI.

Simon Magus was thus a major influence against the Church in the 1st Century, and his influence continued into the 5th Century through his followers. He was not just a minor character that appeared once (Acts 8:9-25) in a small backwater of the Empire, but he was among the Roman pantheon of gods. Even in Samaria before he achieved all this influence, and before Peter and John first went to Samaria, all the Samaritans, from the least to the greatest, were saying, “This man is the great power of God” (Acts 8:10). It was probably because he was this influential that Luke included the mention of him trying to purchase the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:18-24).

The Political Intrigue and Corruption in Rome

In order to understand Simon’s influence in Rome, one needs to understand the political intrigue that had developed there and the perversion of the emperors themselves. Simon had come to Rome in the early 40’s AD, when Claudius was emperor, and stayed there, except for one year until he died in 67 AD during the reign of Emperor Nero.

In the center of the political intrigue⁵³⁵ was Nero’s mother, Agrippina the Younger, who was the great-granddaughter of the Emperor Augustus. She gave birth to Nero in 37 AD, but Nero’s father died when Nero was a child. In 39 AD, Agrippina was banished from Rome by Emperor Caligula for her part in a conspiracy, but she returned in 41 AD when her uncle Claudius became emperor. She then married a wealthy senator and became known as the richest and most beautiful woman in Rome.

In 49 AD, Claudius’ wife was executed, and Agrippina married her uncle Claudius. This presented quite a contrast: the richest and most beautiful woman in Rome married to a man who was lame and who stuttered so badly that he was hidden from public view as a child. Claudius adopted Nero as his eldest son. In 53 AD, Nero married Claudius’ daughter, Octavia.

In 54 AD, Claudius died and Nero became emperor at the age of 17. Many historians believe that Agrippina poisoned her husband so that Nero could become emperor. At first, Nero permitted two advisors to direct state affairs, where Agrippina had a major influence in directing state affairs through her son. In 59 AD, Nero had his mother murdered and began to assume his own power in state affairs. Shortly after Nero began directing affairs for himself, Paul arrived in Rome as a result of his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:11-12).

In 62 AD, Nero divorced Octavia, and then had her killed. Shortly after, he married Poppaea Sabina, the wife of a Roman military officer, but had her killed also a few years later. At about this time also, Paul was acquitted, and left Rome to visit Spain (Romans 15:22-28), Crete (Titus 1:5), Nicopolis (Titus 3:12), etc. In 64 AD, after Paul left Rome, Nero burned to the ground a large part of Rome in order to make room for his new palace, called “The Golden House”. He blamed the Christians for the fire, and thus started the first major persecution of the Christians by the Roman government.

Following the fire, Nero had many senators and aristocrats executed also because they questioned his actions. A plan to overthrow Nero in 65 AD failed, and many more aristocrats were killed. In the late 60’s, Nero’s military commanders revolted, in reaction to Nero’s cruelty and wild suspicions, and drove him from power.

⁵³⁵ “Nero”, “Claudius”, “Agrippina”, The World Book Encyclopedia, World Book, Inc., Chicago, 1987.

The Church Historian, Eusebius stated⁵³⁶:

“To describe the greatness of Nero’s depravity does not lie within the plan of the present work. As there are many indeed that have recorded his history in most accurate narratives, every one may at his pleasure learn from them the coarseness of the man’s extraordinary madness. After he had accomplished the destruction of so many myriads without any reason, he ran into such blood-guiltiness that he did not spare even his nearest relatives and dearest friends. He destroyed his mother and his brothers and his wife, with very many others of his own family as he would private and public enemies”.

The Church Historian, Severus, referred⁵³⁷ to the beginning of Nero’s persecution of the Christians after the fire. To make his point of the Christians being the cause of the fire, Nero even illumined his garden at night with the burning bodies of crucified Christians.

“In the meantime, the number of the Christians being now very large, it happened that Rome was destroyed by fire, while Nero was stationed at Antium. But the opinion of all cast the odium of causing the fire upon the emperor, and he was believed in this way to have sought for the glory of building a new city. And in fact, Nero could not escape from the charge that the fire had been caused by his orders. He therefore turned the accusation against the Christians, and the cruelest tortures were accordingly inflicted upon the innocent. Many were crucified or slain by fire, and not a few were set apart for this purpose, that, when the day came to a close, they should be consumed to serve for light during the night. In this way, cruelty began to be manifested against the Christians. Afterwards, too, laws were enacted, which prohibited their religion; and edicts were openly set forth proclaiming it unlawful to be a Christian.

Justin Martyr, in his defense of Christianity to the Emperor Antoninus⁵³⁸, wrote about how the followers of Simon Magus are mistaken for Christians by those who don’t know Christians well. This was due to the influence and perversions of Simon, and how Simon was so revered in Rome that his statue was erected along the river Tiber. This statue was still there in the mid 2nd Century when Justin Martyr wrote his First Apology.

“After Christ’s ascension⁵³⁹ into heaven the devils put forward certain men who said that they themselves were gods; these men were even deemed worthy of honors by you. There was a Samaritan, Simon, who in the reign of Claudius Caesar, and in your royal city of Rome, did mighty acts of magic, by virtue of the art of the devils operating in him. He was considered a god, and as a god was honored by you with a statue, which statue was erected on the river Tiber, between the two bridges, and bore this inscription, in the language of Rome: ‘To Simon the holy God’. And a man, Menander, also a Samaritan, of the town Capparetaea, a disciple of Simon, and inspired by devils, we know to have deceived many by his magical art while he was in Antioch. He persuaded those

⁵³⁶ Eusebius, Church History, II, 25.

⁵³⁷ Philip Schaff, “The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus”, II, 28-29, Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series, v. 11.

⁵³⁸ Antoninus was Emperor from 138-161 AD.

⁵³⁹ Justin Martyr, First Apology, XXVI. Justin’s account was also quoted by Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VI, 14.

who adhered to him that they should never die, and even now there are some living who hold this opinion of his”.

“Wherefore we pray⁵⁴⁰ that the sacred senate may be arbiters of this our memorial. If anyone were entangled by that man’s doctrines, he may learn the truth, and so be able to escape error. And as for the statue, if you please, destroy it”.

⁵⁴⁰ Justin Martyr, First Apology, LVI.

Peter's Running Battle against Simon Magus in Rome

As Peter preached⁵⁴¹ the true God both in public squares and private homes, bringing many to the Christian Faith, Simon Magus saw this and just could not remain silent and conceal his malice toward Peter. He began to consider how to put Peter's preaching to shame, since Peter's preaching was cutting into his own glory. Shamelessly, he declared his opposition to Peter in the midst of the city. Simon began to delude the people, inducing strange fantasies in them. He conjured up specters, which appeared to precede and follow him, which people took to be the souls of the dead. He likewise brought forward people who had been "raised from the dead", who worshipped him as a god. He healed the lame, giving them the ability to walk and leap about. Yet none of this was real, but rather an illusion, like those done by the mythical Proteus⁵⁴², who was said to be able to adopt various disguises. Sometimes Simon appeared with two faces, then he transformed himself into a goat, a snake, a bird, or made himself appear like fire. He took upon himself any form for the delusion of the gullible. Whenever he came into contact with the Apostle Peter, all Peter had to do was look at these illusions and the illusions vanished.

When Peter learned that Simon, calling himself "The Christ", was working great miracles for large groups of people, he went to Simon's house and found a great crowd at the gate, which hindered him from entering. Peter asked them, "Why do you hinder me from going in to see the sorcerer?" Some in the crowd replied, "He is not a sorcerer, but a mighty god; and he has set at his gates his own guards, who know the thoughts of men". Then they pointed out a black dog lying at the gate and said, "This dog slays anyone who thinks wrong of Simon!" Peter replied, "I speak the truth about Simon; he is from the devil". Then going up to the dog, Peter said, "Go tell Simon that Peter, the Apostle of Christ, wants to come in and speak to him". The dog then went and, using human language, conveyed this message to Simon. The crowd was awestruck; but Simon sent the dog back to Peter to say, "Let Peter enter".

Simon began using his sorcery, with everyone watching, in front of Peter, but Peter performed even greater miracles to a virtual standoff. This standoff reached a climax shortly thereafter as recorded by the Church historian Hegesippus⁵⁴³.

"There was in Rome a certain noble lady of the imperial dynasty, whose young son had died. The mother wept and lamented inconsolably over his death, and those who pitied her remembered the men who had appeared lately in Rome – Peter and Simon Magus – and how they were able to raise the dead. One person summoned Peter from Simon's house and another summoned Simon. As many prominent people, along with the common folk, arrived for the funeral, Peter said to Simon Magus, who was venerated by the people for his powers, 'Whichever of

⁵⁴¹ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 13-14. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵⁴² Proteus was a mythical Greek sea god that could assume different forms.

⁵⁴³ As described in Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 14-15. The writings of Hegesippus (approximately 100 to 180 AD) survive today just in fragments.

us will raise this dead child, his teaching must be acknowledged as the true one'. The people who were listening voiced their approval of Peter's statement".

"Simon, trusting in his sorcery, addressed the multitude saying, 'If I raise up the dead child, will you slay Peter?' The mob cried out, 'We will burn him alive before your eyes!'"

"Simon approached the bier of the dead child and, using his sorcery, made it seem like the dead boy was moving his head. The crowd began to cry out that the boy was alive and that he had risen from the dead. They turned to the Apostle Peter to set him on fire, but Peter motioned with his hand to call for silence. When quiet was restored, Peter said, 'If this child is really alive, let him get up and speak and walk. Until you see this, be assured that Simon is deceiving you with his sorcery'. Simon paced around the bier for a long time invoking the power of the demons, but to no avail. Then he tried to flee in shame, but the people restrained him".

"At this point, Peter withdrew a little and lifted up his eyes and hands to heaven in prayer. 'O Lord Jesus Christ, who commanded us to raise the dead by Your Name, I entreat You to restore this child to life, that everyone here may know that You are the true God, and that there is none other than You, Who live and reign with the Father and the Holy Spirit. Amen!' After praying, Peter called to the dead boy, saying, 'Arise child! My Lord Jesus Christ heals you and raises you from the dead!' Then the dead boy opened his eyes, got up from the bier and began to walk and speak".

Some additional details are recorded⁵⁴⁴ in the history archives of Edessa, the Persian city, where extensive Christian activity occurred in the 1st Century. After people heard Peter speak, others summoned Simon Magus just as a funeral procession was passing by.

"Simon reluctantly drew near to the dead person; and they set down the bier before him. He looked to the right hand and to the left, and gazed up into heaven, saying many words: some of them he uttered aloud, and some of them secretly and not aloud. And he delayed a long while, and nothing took place, and nothing was done, and the dead person was lying upon his bier".

"Finally Peter boldly approached the dead man, and cried aloud before all the assembly which was standing there. In the name of Jesus Christ, whom the Jews crucified at Jerusalem, and whom we preach, rise up. And as soon as the word of Peter was spoken the dead man came to life and rose up from the bier".

"And all the people saw and marveled; and they said to Peter, 'Christ, whom you preach, is true'. And many cried out, 'Let Simon the sorcerer and deceiver be stoned'. But Simon, because every one was running to see the dead man that came to life, escaped from them from one street to another and from house to house, and did not fall into their hands on that day".

"But the whole city took hold of Peter, and they received him gladly and affectionately. He did not cease from doing signs and wonders in the name of Christ; and many believed in him, including many of the Jews and of the pagans. And, when there was great rejoicing at his teaching, he built Churches there, in Rome and in the cities round about, and in all the villages of the people of Italy".

⁵⁴⁴ "The Teaching of Simon Cephas in the City of Rome", Ancient Syriac Documents, in *Memoirs of Edessa, The Ante Nicene Fathers*, Volume 8.

Marcellus the Roman, who at first was a disciple of Simon Magus, amplified⁵⁴⁵ this account of Hegesippus; Marcellus was later enlightened and baptized by the Apostle Peter.

“The child, falling at Peter’s feet, cried out, ‘I saw the Lord Jesus, Who commanded His angels to return me, at your entreaty, to my widowed mother!’ Then the whole crowd began to exclaim, ‘There is One God, and none other than He Whom Peter confesses!’ Hearing this, Simon fled, giving his head the disguise of a dog’s head through the power of the demons. But the people apprehended him anyway. Some wanted to stone him, while others wanted to burn him alive. But Peter opposed this saying, ‘Our Lord and Master ordered us not to render evil for evil; let him go wherever he wishes. The impotence of his sorcery is sufficient shame, abuse and chastisement for him’”.

“When he was released, Simon came to my house, supposing that I knew nothing of what happened. Simon chained an immense dog to the door of my house and told me, ‘Watch and see if Peter will come to you as is his custom!’ An hour later, Peter came, loosed the dog, saying to it, ‘Go and tell Simon Magus to cease deluding with demonic power the people for whom Christ died’”. The dog went and, like a man, transmitted Peter’s words to Simon”.

““When I heard this, I rushed to meet Peter and received him with honor into my house. But I drove out Simon and the dog’. The dog immediately jumped on Simon and dragged him to the ground. Peter, seeing this from the window, forbid the dog, in the Name of Christ, to touch Simon’s body. The dog proceeded to viciously attack Simon, tearing off all his clothing, but not touching his body, leaving Simon completely naked. Seeing this, the people mocked and punched Simon and drove him out of the city along with the dog”.

“In his shame and humiliation, Simon did not show himself in Rome for a full year. By that time, which is in 55 AD, Claudius’ successor Nero, an ungodly ruler, heard certain evil people praise the wicked sorcerer. Nero then sought out Simon, grew to love him, and became his fast friend”.

Peter’s Final Missionary Journeys

Because Simon became friends with Nero, Peter had to leave town. This was in the mid 50’s, and Peter spent⁵⁴⁶ the next decade traveling to various places before returning to Rome. While Peter was traveling all over the Empire, Paul wrote his Epistle to the Romans, which arrived after Peter had left Rome. We notice this in Paul’s Epistle, where he never addressed Peter as being in Rome. On the other hand, from Table 3, there were 18 members of the Seventy in Rome when Paul wrote his Epistle. Thus Peter set the Church on firm footing before he left.

“Having converted and baptized many, and having set the Church on firm footing, Peter consecrated Linus, of the Seventy, as Bishop of Rome and left for Tarraco, Spain. There he consecrated Epiphrodit⁵⁴⁷ as Bishop, and left for

⁵⁴⁵ Marcellus the Roman, Epistle to the Martyrs Nerion and Archillius, as quoted in Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 15-17.

⁵⁴⁶ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 18-20. This is a translation from the following:

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Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrate Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵⁴⁷ This Epiphrodit⁵⁴⁷ was not the same person as the member of the Seventy of the same name.

Table 3
Members of the Seventy in Rome in c. 55 AD

Apostle of the Seventy	Scripture Reference	Later Bishop of
Aquila, with Priscilla	Acts 18:2-3, 18:18-26 ⁵⁴⁸	Ephesus ⁵⁴⁹ with Timothy
Epaenetus	Romans 16:5	Carthage ⁵⁵⁰
Mary Magdalene ⁵⁵¹	Romans 16:6	Worked with John in Ephesus
Andronicus with Junia	Romans 16:7	Pannonia ⁵⁵²
Amplias	Romans 16:8	Odyssus ⁵⁵³
Urbanus	Romans 16:9	Macedonia ⁵⁵⁴
Stachys	Romans 16:9	Byzantium
Apelles	Romans 16:10	Smyrna ⁵⁵⁵
Household ⁵⁵⁶ of Aristobulus	Romans 16:10	Aristobulus went to Britain
Herodion	Romans 16:11	Patras ⁵⁵⁷
Narcissus	Romans 16:11	Athens ⁵⁵⁸
Rufus	Romans 16:13, Mark 15:21	Thebes ⁵⁵⁹ in Greece
Asyncritus	Romans 16:14	Hyrkania in Asia
Phlegon	Romans 16:14	Marathon in Thrace
Hermas	Romans 16:14	Philippi ⁵⁶⁰
Patrobas	Romans 16:14	Puteoli ⁵⁶¹
Hermes	Romans 16:14	Dalmatia ⁵⁶²
Philologus, with Julia	Romans 16:15	Synope ⁵⁶³
Olympas	Romans 16:15	Philippi ⁵⁶⁴

⁵⁴⁸ Also Romans 16:3-5, 1 Corinthians 16:19, 2 Timothy 4:19

⁵⁴⁹ According to Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 14. Demetrius of Rostov, "The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints", January 4, tr. By Fr. Thomas Marretta, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2002 stated that Aquila was later Bishop of Heraclea.

⁵⁵⁰ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 30.

⁵⁵¹ Mary Magdalene wasn't of the Seventy, but she was regarded as "Equal to the Apostles".

⁵⁵² Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, May 17.

⁵⁵³ According to Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, 21. According to Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 31, Amplias was later Bishop of Lydda in Palestine (also called Diospolis).

⁵⁵⁴ Urbanus and Stachys: Urbanus was later Bishop of Macedonia. See Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 31. Stachys built a Church in Argyropolis.

⁵⁵⁵ Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, 28. According to Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 31, he was later Bishop of Heraklion of Thrace.

⁵⁵⁶ Since Aristobulus was Peter's father-in-law, the "household of Aristobulus" was Peter's in-laws. Aristobulus himself had already been sent as an Apostle to Britain.

⁵⁵⁷ Demetrius of Rostov, "The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints", January 4, tr. By Fr. Thomas Marretta, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2002 agrees that Herodion started at Patras. According to Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8, November 10, he also served as Bishop of Neoparthia. According to Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, he served as Bishop of Tarsus also. Herodian was a kinsman of the Apostle Paul.

⁵⁵⁸ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 31.

⁵⁵⁹ Rufus, Asyncritus and Phlegon: Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8.

⁵⁶⁰ Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, 38. Hermas and Hermes are sometimes confused due to the similarity of their names, and the city, where he was Bishop is sometimes spelled Philippopolis.

⁵⁶¹ Demetrius of Rostov, "The Great Collection of the Lives of the Saints", January 4, tr. By Fr. Thomas Marretta, Chrysostom Press, House Springs, MO, 2002. According to Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, November 5, he was later Bishop of Neapolis (or Naples).

⁵⁶² Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, 36. Hermas and Hermes are sometimes confused due to the similarity of their names.

⁵⁶³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, November 5.

Sermium, another city in Spain. He consecrated Epenetus, of the Seventy, as Bishop there, and left for Carthage, in North Africa, where he consecrated Crescens, of the Seventy, as Bishop”.

“Reaching Egypt, Peter met the Evangelist Mark in Alexandria. While there, he consecrated Rufus, of the Seventy, as Bishop for Thebes⁵⁶⁵. While he was still in Egypt, he was translated to Jerusalem for the funeral of the Virgin Mary”.

“Returning to Egypt after the funeral of the Virgin Mary, he traveled throughout Africa, including going all the way up the Nile River to the place near Thebes (Egypt) where Jesus, Joseph, Mary and James stayed when Jesus was a toddler on the Flight to Egypt (Matthew 2:13-23). After this, he returned to Rome briefly, going on to Milan and Photice, in Northern Italy, where he ordained Priests and Bishops”.

“Leaving Italy, he traveled to Britain, the Western-most outpost of the Empire, and stayed there for a long time, bringing many to the Faith. While in Britain in the mid 60’s AD, Peter had a vision of an angel, who said to him, ‘O Peter, Apostle of Christ! The time for your departure from this life has come. You need to go to Rome, where you will endure crucifixion, and receive a fitting reward from Christ the Lord’. He remained in Britain for a few days, making the Churches steadfast in the Faith, and ordaining Bishops, Priests and Deacons. Then he set out for Rome and his final encounter with Simon Magus”.

When Peter arrived in Rome, he consecrated Clement, who was related to Nero, as Bishop. Many years earlier, Peter had helped Clement reunite with his twin brothers and his father and mother, and Clement had subsequently returned to Rome. Clement did not wish to be Bishop, but he obeyed his teacher, and dutifully did what Peter asked. Many noble and prominent men and women in Rome were enlightened by the faith of Clement. This included some of the women in Nero’s household, who accepted the Faith and resolved to lead a life of chastity rather than submit to the lust of the Emperor”.

Peter’s Return to Jerusalem for the Funeral of the Virgin Mary

During the time when Peter and the Evangelist Mark were touring the Churches in Egypt, the Virgin Mary was growing old in Bethlehem in c. 55 AD. As Mary reached her mid 70’s, she was feeling the effects of old age. And it was then that the Archangel Gabriel appeared to her to tell her that her departure was imminent⁵⁶⁶, and would occur in three days.

Shortly after Gabriel left, the Apostle John was translated from wherever he was at the time. This was similar to the way the Deacon Philip was translated from the desert road between Jerusalem and Gaza to Azotus (Acts 8:26, 39-40), and as Habakkuk the prophet carried food to Daniel, who was in the lions’ den, and quickly returned to Judea⁵⁶⁷. There is some disagreement among the Church Fathers as to whether John was in Ephesus or in some region of Judea. They

⁵⁶⁴ Olympas was martyred with Peter and Paul and may never have gotten to serve in Philippi.

⁵⁶⁵ That is, Thebes in Greece. See Nickolai Velimirovic, *Prologue From Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, April 8.

⁵⁶⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, “The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary”, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8. Roberts and Donaldson, “The Passing of Mary”, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

⁵⁶⁷ Lancelot C. L. Brenton, “Bel and the Dragon 1:33-39”, *The Septuagint with Apocrypha*, Hendrickson, Peabody MA, 1990

contend that John did not leave the Virgin Mary alone during her lifetime, unless it was just briefly in the care of her stepson, James, the Lord's brother.

After John arrived⁵⁶⁸, "the rest of the Twelve arrived also from whatever part of the world where they were then preaching the Gospel. Peter came from Egypt with the Evangelist Mark, Paul from Tiberia⁵⁶⁹, Thomas from Western India, James from Jerusalem. Andrew, Peter's brother, Philip, Luke came also with Simon the Zealot, and Jude, who had fallen asleep, but were raised by the Holy Spirit out of their tombs. To them the Holy Spirit said, 'Do not think that it is now the resurrection. But on this account you have risen out of your tombs, that you may go to give greeting to the honor and wonder-working of the mother of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ, because the day of her departure is at hand, of her going up into the heavens'.

Nathaniel (i.e. Bartholomew) said⁵⁷⁰, "I was in the Thebais (possibly Thebes, in Upper Egypt) proclaiming the Word, and behold the Holy Spirit said to me, 'The mother of your Lord is taking her departure; go, then, to greet her in Bethlehem'. And, behold, a cloud of light snatched me up, and brought me to you". And Matthew also answered⁵⁷¹ and said, "I glorify God, because when I was in a boat, overtaken by a storm, the sea raging with its waves, suddenly a cloud of light overshadowing the storm. The storm changed to a calm, and I was snatched up, and set me down beside you". And the Evangelist Mark likewise coming around, coming from Alexandria, stated⁵⁷², "And when I was finishing the canon of the third day in the city of Alexandria, just as I was praying, the Holy Spirit snatched me up, and brought me to you". Peter stated that about dawn, he heard a voice through the Holy Spirit saying, "The mother of your Lord is to depart, as the time is at hand. Go to Bethlehem and greet her". And behold, a cloud of light snatched me up. And I saw the other Apostles coming to me on the clouds, and a voice saying to me, "Everyone go to Bethlehem".

All of the Twelve arrived together except Thomas. They stood and went in, and greeted the queen mother with the following words: 'Hail, Mary, full of grace! The Lord be with you' (Luke 1:28). And she eagerly rose quickly, and bowed herself, and kissed them, and gave thanks to God. And Peter answered and said to the Apostles, 'Let us each, according to what the Holy Spirit announced and commanded us, give full information to the mother of our Lord'. And those who had come likewise agreed to give an account of how they had come. So each of the Twelve gave Mary an account of where they were when they were summoned".

"Then the blessed Mary said to her brethren: 'What is this, that you have all come to Jerusalem?' Peter, answering, said to her: 'We had need to ask this of you. Certainly, as I think, none of us knows why we have come here today so quickly. All declared plainly the place where they had been that day. And they all wondered that they were there when they heard these things. The blessed Mary said to them: 'I asked my Son, before He endured the passion, that He and you should be at my death; and He granted me this gift. So that you may know that my departure will be tomorrow'".

⁵⁶⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., "The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form", *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁵⁶⁹ Roberts and Donaldson, "The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

⁵⁷⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, "The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

⁵⁷¹ Roberts and Donaldson, "The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

⁵⁷² Roberts and Donaldson, "The Book of John Concerning the Falling Asleep of Mary", *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v.8.

“After Mary’s death the next day, the Apostles with great honor laid the body in a tomb on the Mount of Olives, then Thomas was suddenly brought to the Mount of Olives, like the others had been brought earlier. He saw Mary’s body going up to heaven, and began to call out to her. Then the belt with which the Apostles had encircled her body was thrown down from heaven to the blessed Thomas. And taking it, and giving thanks to God, he came again into the Valley of Jehoshaphat, finding all the Apostles and a great crowd there. Then Thomas said, ‘Where have you laid her body?’ And they pointed out the sepulcher with their finger. And he said, ‘The body is not there’. But they didn’t believe him. Then they went to the sepulcher, which was a new one hollowed out in the rock, and took away the stone; but they did not find the body, and did not know what to say. Then Thomas told them how he was singing mass in India — he still had on his sacerdotal robes. He, not knowing the word of God, had been brought to the Mount of Olives, and saw the body of the blessed Mary going up into heaven, and prayed her to give him a blessing. She heard his prayer, and threw him her belt, which she had about her. And the Apostles seeing the belt which they had put about her, glorified God, on account of the benediction which the blessed Mary had given him, and because he had seen her body going up into heaven. Then Thomas gave them his benediction, and said, ‘Behold how good and how pleasant it is for brethren to dwell together in unity!’”

“And the same cloud⁵⁷³ by which they had been brought carried them back each to his own place. And so also the Apostles quickly returned to where they had at first been, to preach to the people of God”.

Simon Magus’ Last Dealings with the Apostle Peter in Rome

Toward the end⁵⁷⁴ of Nero’s reign, about 67 AD, Simon had a major confrontation with the Apostles Peter and Paul. This would be the 4th time that the Apostle Peter was in Rome. The Church Historian Eusebius summarized⁵⁷⁵ the need for this as follows.

“Because Christianity was becoming so widespread, Satan used Simon Magus to try to seize Rome for himself. Aided by his deceitful arts, Simon led many of the inhabitants of Rome astray, and thus brought them into his own power. Justin in his First Apology⁵⁷⁶, which he addressed to Antoninus (emperor 138-161 AD) in behalf of the Christians, states this. Irenaeus also agrees with him in the first book of his work, *Against Heresies*⁵⁷⁷, where he gives an account of the man and of his profane and impure teaching. We have understood that Simon was the author of all heresy from his time down to the present⁵⁷⁸. Modest men even refrain to utter with the lips those matters, which they keep secret, on account of their excessive baseness and lewdness. This most abominable sect

⁵⁷³ Roberts and Donaldson, ed., “The Passing of Mary, First Latin Form”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁵⁷⁴ One source states that the attempt of Simon to ascend back to his father in heaven – which resulted in his death – took place early in Nero’s reign before Paul arrived in Rome. The other sources all state that Paul was present, which places the time in the mid 60’s. These other sources are: Eusebius, Arnobius, Cyril of Jerusalem, Severus, as well as The Constitutions of the Holy Apostles and The Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul. We are following the pattern here of the vast majority of the accounts of the death of Simon.

⁵⁷⁵ Eusebius, *Church History*, II, 13-14.

⁵⁷⁶ Justin Martyr, *First Apology*, XXVI.

⁵⁷⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, I, xxiii.

⁵⁷⁸ Eusebius wrote in the 4th Century.

makes a sport of those miserable females that are literally overwhelmed with all kinds of vices”.

“The evil power, who hates all that is good and plots against the salvation of men, constituted Simon at that time the father and author of such wickedness, as a mighty antagonist of the great, inspired Apostles of our Savior. But neither the conspiracy of Simon nor that of any of the others who arose at that period could accomplish anything in those Apostolic times. For everything was conquered and subdued by the splendors of the truth and by the divine word itself which had begun to shine from heaven upon men, and which was then flourishing upon earth, and dwelling in the Apostles themselves. Coming to the city of Rome, Simon was in a short time so successful in his undertaking that those who dwelt there honored him as a God by the erection of a statue. But this did not last long. Immediately, during the reign of Claudius, the all-good and gracious Providence led Peter to Rome against this great corrupter of life. He, like a noble commander of God, carried the costly merchandise of the light of the understanding from the East to those who dwelt in the West, proclaiming the light itself, and preaching the kingdom of heaven”.

While many of the Church Fathers and Church historians give an account of Simon’s encounter with Peter and Paul in Rome, we are given the most details of this encounter from one of the New Testament Apocryphal works⁵⁷⁹. Following this account, we will look at accounts of these same events from other sources.

“After Paul appealed to Caesar (Acts 25:8-12) and headed for Rome, the Jews in Rome heard that he was coming. Informing Emperor Nero that Paul was a magician and that he was coming to Rome to destroy them as he had destroyed their brethren in Judea, they persuaded Nero, with many gifts, to ban Paul from Rome. Christians in Rome sent word to Paul warning him of this and Paul landed at Syracuse⁵⁸⁰ on Sicily instead (Acts 28:12). The Jews in Puteoli beheaded the shipmaster, who resembled Paul in appearance, and then sent his head to Caesar. Nero then rejoiced that the enemy of the Jews was dead”.

“When Paul arrived in Rome in c. 60 AD, great fear fell upon the Jewish leaders. When they met, the Jewish leaders, allied with Simon, tried to pit Paul against Peter, saying that while Paul was a Hebrew of Hebrews (Philippians 3:5), Peter was bringing in new teachings to the Gentiles⁵⁸¹. Similarly, they tried to pit the Jewish Christians against the Gentile Christians, and an angry mob of both Jewish and Gentile Christians met Paul outside the door of his house the next day. Paul spoke to them saying that they ought not to make attacks upon each other, but that they should rather give heed to this, that God had fulfilled His promises which He swore to Abraham our father, that in his seed he should inherit all the (Gentile) nations (Genesis 12:3, 17:5). For God is not a respecter of persons. As many as have sinned in the Law shall be judged according to the Law, and as many as have sinned without the Law shall perish without the Law (Romans 2:11-12). But we, brethren, ought to thank God that, according to His mercy, He has

⁵⁷⁹ Roberts and Donaldson, “Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul”, *Apocrypha of the New Testament*, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁵⁸⁰ While this is the same route that Paul took as he was being led to Rome as a result of his appeal to Caesar (Acts 25:8-12), the circumstances appear different from those described in Acts 28. This account probably represents Paul’s return to Rome in c. 67 AD after his release from house arrest (Acts 28:30).

chosen us to be a holy people to Himself. We ought to boast only in this, whether Jews or Greeks, that we are all one in the belief of His Name (Ephesians 2:11-22). And Paul having thus spoken, the Jewish and the Gentile Christians were reconciled”.

“As a result of Peter’s preaching in Rome, Nero’s wife, Octavia (also called Libia), and Agrippina⁵⁸², the wife of Agrippa the Prefect, felt that they could no longer live with their husbands because of their idolatry⁵⁸³. Others were no longer willing to return to the army or to serve in the palace. Simon Magus used this occasion to say many evil things about Peter, saying that he was a wizard and a cheat. And they believed Simon, wondering at his miracles; for he made a brazen serpent move itself, and stone statues to laugh and move themselves, and himself to run and suddenly to be raised into the air”.

“This reached the ears of Nero, and Simon was summoned to appear before the Emperor. Using his magic, Simon changed himself both in face and stature into different forms, and was in frenzy, having the devil as his servant. When Nero saw this, he supposed Simon to be truly the Son of God”.

“Prior to Paul’s arrival, Simon had “proved” to Nero that he was not a magician. Simon had said to Nero, ‘Order me to be beheaded in a dark place, and there to be left slain; and if I do not rise on the third day, know that I am a magician; but if I rise again, know that I am the Son of God’. And Nero having ordered this, in the dark, by his magic art Simon managed that a ram should be beheaded. For the ram appeared to be Simon until he was beheaded. And when he had been beheaded in the dark, he that had beheaded him, taking the head, found it to be that of a ram; but he would not say anything to the emperor, lest he should scourge him, having ordered this to be done in secret. Thereafter, accordingly Simon said that he had risen on the third day, because he took away the head of the ram and the limbs — but the blood had been there congealed. And on the third day he showed himself to Nero, and said, ‘Order that my blood, that has been poured out, be wiped away; for behold, having been beheaded as I promised, I have risen again on the third day’. Thus Nero had developed a liking for Simon”.

“Speaking to Nero, Simon said, ‘O good emperor: I am the Son of God come down from heaven. Until now I have endured Peter only calling himself an Apostle; but now he has doubled the evil. For Paul also teaches the same things, and having his mind turned against me, is said to preach along with him. If you do not plan their destruction, it is very plain that your kingdom cannot stand. Then Nero, filled with concern, ordered to bring Peter and Paul speedily before him”.

“Before Nero, Simon began attacking Peter and Paul. Nero replied to Simon that they were from a race of men that teach us to love every man. Why then was he persecuting them? Simon replied that they had turned all Judea away from believing that Simon was the Christ. Peter injected that Simon had been deceiving many people about who was the Christ. If Nero wished to know the truth about what happened to the Christ, he could read the letter written by

⁵⁸¹ We note that this is exactly the opposite of what Peter and Paul had agreed on. Peter was responsible for the Jews and Paul for the Gentiles. Apparently they didn’t like what Peter said to them.

⁵⁸² This Agrippina may not be the same person as Nero’s mother.

⁵⁸³ Later, in 62 AD, Nero divorced Octavia, and then had her killed.

Pontius Pilate to Claudius. Nero ordered that this letter be brought and read publicly. In the letter, Pilate documented the deceit of the Jewish leaders in plotting the death of an innocent man (the Christ), and after He rose from the dead, they bribed the soldiers to continue their lies. Pilate warned Claudius against trusting anything the Jewish leaders say”.

“Turning to Peter, Nero asked Peter if all the things stated by Pilate were true. Peter replied that they were, and that Simon is full of lies and deceit. Simon replied that he wonders that the Emperor would consider trusting the words of a poor, uneducated fisherman. To prove who he is, Simon promised to send his angels against Peter. Peter scoffed at Simon’s angels”.

“To demonstrate that Simon was not a god, Peter challenged Simon to disclose what Peter was thinking, for God can search the hidden things of the heart. As a test of this, Peter asked Nero to have a barley loaf brought to Peter secretly; Nero ordered this to be done. Peter blessed the loaf, broke it and then stuffed the two halves up his sleeves”.

“Simon then turned the challenge around and demanded that Peter disclose what he was thinking. Peter replied that he would do this by deeds and not just by words. Simon said, ‘No one knows the thoughts of men, but God alone. Is not, therefore, Peter lying?’ Peter said, ‘You say that you are the Son of God; tell what I have in my mind; disclose, if you can, what I have just done in secret!’”

“Then Simon, enraged that he was not able to tell the secret of the Apostle, cried out, saying, ‘Let great dogs come forth, and eat him up before Caesar’. And suddenly there appeared great dogs, and rushed at Peter. But Peter, stretching forth his hands to pray, showed to the dogs the loaf, which he had blessed; when the dogs saw the blessed bread, they disappeared. Then Peter said to Nero, ‘Behold, I have shown you that I knew what Simon was thinking of, not by words, but by deeds. For he, having promised that he would bring angels against me, has brought dogs, in order that he might show that he had not God-like but dog-like angels’”.

“And Peter said to Simon, ‘Certainly you pretend to be a god; why, then, don’t you reveal the thoughts of every man?’ Nero said, ‘And now, why do you delay, and not show yourself to be a god, in order that these men may be punished?’ Simon changed the subject again and said, ‘Give orders to build for me a lofty tower of wood, and I will go up upon it, call my angels, and order them to take me, in the sight of all, to my father in heaven. And these men, not being able to do this, will be put to shame as uneducated men’”.

“And Nero said to Peter, ‘From this will appear how much power either he or your God has’. Peter said, ‘O most mighty emperor, if you were willing, you might perceive that he is full of demons’. Nero was unwilling to perceive that Simon was dodging all the tough questions and said to Peter, ‘Why do you talk in circles? Tomorrow will prove you’”.

Simon Tries to Return to “His Father in Heaven”

In the face of Peter and Paul’s constant debunking of his tricks, Simon wanted to get away from the contest. He claimed that he would ascend back to his father in heaven; but in trying to do so, the events led to his death. Continuing⁵⁸⁴ with the above account:

“Simon said, ‘Listen, O Caesar Nero, that you may know that these men are liars, and that I have been sent from the heavens, tomorrow I will go up into the heavens, that I may make those who believe in me blessed, and show my wrath upon those who have denied me’. Peter and Paul said, ‘You are called by the devil and hasten to punishment’. Simon said, ‘Caesar Nero, listen to me. Separate these madmen from you, in order that when I go into heaven to my father, I may be very merciful to you. Nero said, ‘And when shall we prove this, that you go away into heaven? Simon said, ‘Order a lofty tower to be made of wood, and of great beams, that I may go up upon it, and that my angels may find me in the air; for they cannot come to me upon earth among the sinners’. Nero said, ‘I will see whether you will fulfill what you say’. Then Nero ordered a lofty tower to be made in the Campus Martins, and all the people and the dignities to be present at the spectacle”.

“And on the following day, all the multitude having come together, Nero ordered Peter and Paul to be present. Simon said, ‘In order that you may know, O emperor, that these are deceivers, as soon as I ascend into heaven, I will send my angels to you, and will make you come to me’”.

Simon then addressed⁵⁸⁵ the Roman people wrathfully from the top of the tower, saying, “Romans, since you have remained in your ignorance and abandoned me to follow Peter, I am leaving you. I will no longer protect this city, but will command my angels to take me up in their arms as you watch. I will ascend to my father in heaven, from which I shall send down upon you great punishments for not having heeded my words and believed in my deeds.”

Having said this, he clapped his hands together and launched himself into the air; borne up by demons, he flew through the air, soaring aloft.

As Simon lifted off, he was dressed in fine clothes and crowned with laurels to better give himself the appearance of a god. Some details⁵⁸⁶ of the reaction to this are:

“When Nero saw him flying, he said to Peter, ‘This Simon is true; but you and Paul are deceivers’. Peter replied, ‘Immediately shall you know that we are the true Disciples of Christ; but that he is not Christ, but a magician, and a malefactor’. Nero said, ‘Do you still persist? Behold, you see him going up into heaven’. Then Peter, looking steadfastly at Paul, said, ‘Paul, look up and see’.

⁵⁸⁴ Roberts and Donaldson, “Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁵⁸⁵ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 17. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵⁸⁶ Roberts and Donaldson, “Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

And Paul, having looked up, full of tears, and seeing Simon flying, said, 'Peter, finish what you have begun; for already our Lord Jesus Christ is calling us'. And Nero hearing them smiled a little, and said, 'These men see themselves beaten already, and are gone mad'. Peter said, 'Now you shall know that we are not mad'. Paul said to Peter, 'Do it at once'".

"And Peter, looking steadfastly against Simon, said, 'I command you, angels of Satan who are carrying him into the air to deceive the hearts of the unbelievers, by the God that created all things, and by Jesus Christ, whom on the third day He raised from the dead, no longer from this hour to keep him up, but to let him go'. And immediately, he fell into a place called Sacra Via, that is, Holy Way, and was divided into four parts, having perished by an evil fate".

The crowd that was watching began⁵⁸⁷ to exclaim, "Great is the God preached by Peter! There is truly no other God than He!" From an elevated location, Peter then began to teach the people to acknowledge the true God. By his discourse, he converted many to the Christian Faith.

There are many accounts of Simon's death as a result of his encounter with Peter and Paul. All agree that Simon died while trying to ascend to his father in heaven, but the manner of his actual death differs.

In Arnobius' description⁵⁸⁸ of Simon's attempt to ascend to heaven, Arnobius refers to some man-made device that carried Simon aloft, where there were flames associated with the man-made device. It is possible that Simon used hot air balloon techniques for his flying. Arnobius implies that Simon might have committed suicide after this embarrassing incident.

"In Rome herself, the mistress of the world, where men are busied with the practices introduced by king Numa⁵⁸⁹, and the superstitious observances of antiquity, they have nevertheless hastened to give up their fathers' mode of life, and attach themselves to Christian truth. For they had seen the chariot of Simon Magus, and his fiery car, blown into pieces by the mouth of Peter, and vanish when Christ was named. They had seen him trusting in false gods, and abandoned by them in their terror, borne down headlong by his own weight, lying prostrate with his legs broken. And then, when he had been carried to Brunda, worn out with anguish and shame, again cast himself down from the roof of a very lofty house".

Other early Christian tradition also refers⁵⁹⁰ to Simon's fall as he was trying to ascend to heaven. In this account, Peter's prayer was to restrain the demons that carried Simon, to let him fall, but not to allow him to be killed by his injuries.

"Now when Simon was in Rome, he mightily disturbed the Church, and subverted many, and brought them over to himself, and astonished the Gentiles

⁵⁸⁷ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 17.

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⁵⁸⁸ Roberts and Donaldson, "The Seven Books of Arnobius Against the Heathen", II, 12, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 6.

⁵⁸⁹ That is, Numa Pompilius, the legendary second king of Rome, 715-675 BC.

⁵⁹⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, "Constitutions of the Holy Apostles", VI, ii, 9, Ante-Nicean Fathers, v. 7.

with his skill in magic. Once, in the middle of the day, he went into their theater, and commanded the people that they should bring Peter also by force into the theater, and promised he would fly in the air. And when all the people were in suspense at this, Peter prayed by himself. And indeed Simon was carried up into the air by demons, and did fly on high in the air, saying that he was returning into heaven, and that he would supply them with good things from there. As the people made acclamations to him, as to a god, Peter stretched out his hands to heaven, and sought God through the Lord Jesus to throw down this pestilent fellow, to dash him against the ground, and bruise him, but not to kill him. Fixing his eyes on Simon, Peter said to him, 'If I be a man of God, and a real Apostle of Jesus Christ, I command the wicked powers, by whom Simon the magician is carried, to let go their hold, that he may be exposed to the laughter of those that have been seduced by him'. When Peter had said these words, Simon was deprived of his powers, and fell down headlong with a great noise, and was violently dashed against the ground, and had his hip and anklebones broken. And the people cried out, saying, 'There is only one God, whom Peter rightly preaches'. And many left him; but some that were worthy of perdition continued in his wicked doctrine. And after this manner the most atheistic heresy of the Simonians was first established in Rome".

Another early traditional account also states⁵⁹¹ that Simon did not die immediately, but experienced great suffering for about a day before dying.

"The fallen sorcerer, although his body was broken, yet in accordance with God's providence, remained alive long enough (1) to realize the impotence of the demons and his own lack of power, (2) to be filled with shame and (3) to understand the power of the Almighty God. As he lay on the ground, his limbs shattered, he experienced intense suffering. The next day, he vomited out his impure soul in pain, surrendering it to the hands of the demons, to be dragged down to their father, Satan, in hell".

John Cassian stated⁵⁹² that the encounter with Simon in Rome was such an ordeal for the Apostle Peter that he fasted the day before in accordance with the Lord's teaching, "This kind does not go out except by prayer and fasting" (Matthew 17:21).

"Some people in some countries of the West think that fasting should be allowed on the Sabbath, because they say that on this day the Apostle Peter fasted before his encounter with Simon. But from this it is quite clear that he did this not in accordance with a canonical rule, but rather through the needs of his impending struggle. For the same purpose, Peter seems to have imposed on his disciples not a general but a special fast, which he certainly would not have done if he had known that it was to be observed by canonical rule. Similarly he would surely have been ready to appoint it even on Sunday, if the occasion of his struggle had fallen upon it. But no canonical rule of fasting would have been made general

⁵⁹¹ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 18.

This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Synodal Press, Moscow, 1908, v. 10, (June) pp. 631-651.

Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵⁹² John Cassian, The Institutes of the Coenobia, III, 10.

from this, because it was no general observance that led to it, but a matter of necessity, which forced it to be observed on a single occasion”.

Cyril of Jerusalem also referred⁵⁹³ to Simon’s claim to deity in Rome, and the statue that honored him as such. Cyril also mentioned that Simon’s death resulted from his attempt to ascend to heaven, which was thwarted by Peter and Paul.

“As the delusion was extending, Peter and Paul, chief rulers of the Church, arrived and set the error right. And when the supposed god Simon wished to show himself off, they subsequently showed him as a corpse. Simon promised to rise aloft to heaven, and came riding in a demons’ chariot on the air. But the servants of God fell on their knees, and having shown that agreement of which Jesus spoke, that if two of you shall agree concerning anything that they shall ask, it shall be done for them (Matthew 18:19). They launched the weapon of their concord in prayer against Magus, and struck him down to the earth”.

“And marvelous though it was, yet no marvel. These brought the supposed god down from the sky to earth, thence to be taken down to the regions below the earth. In this man first the serpent of wickedness appeared; but when one head had been cut off, the root of wickedness was found again with many heads in his followers”.

The Church Historian, Severus, also referred⁵⁹⁴ to the encounter of Peter and Paul with Simon Magus in Rome, which resulted in the death of Simon.

“At that time, our divine religion had obtained a wide prevalence in the city. Peter was there executing the office of bishop, and Paul, too, after he had been brought to Rome, on appealing to Caesar from the unjust judgment of the governor (Acts 25:8-12, 28:19). Multitudes then came together to hear Paul (Acts 28:30-31), and these, influenced by the truth, which they were given to know, and by the miracles of the Apostles, which they then so frequently performed, turned to the worship of God. After that the well-known and celebrated encounter of Peter and Paul with Simon took place. After he had flown up into the air by his magical arts, he was supported by two demons (with the view of proving that he was a god). The demons were put to flight by the prayers of the Apostles, and he fell to the earth in the sight of all the people, and was dashed to pieces”.

Hippolytus gives a different account⁵⁹⁵ of Simon’s death. In his account, Simon told his disciples to bury him alive, saying that he would rise on the third day, but never did. Since Hippolytus doesn’t mention Simon’s attempt to ascend to heaven, the “burial” could be connected with Simon’s injuries after his fall to give Simon a chance to escape and save face.

“This Simon, deceiving many in Samaria by his sorcery, was reproved by the Apostles, and was laid under a curse, as it has been written in the Acts (Acts 8:20-23). But he afterwards solemnly rejected the faith, and attempted this practice of sorcery. And journeying as far as Rome, he fell in with the Apostles. Peter offered repeated opposition to him since he was deceiving many by his sorcery. At last, when conviction was imminent, he stated that, if he were buried alive, he would rise the third day. And accordingly, having ordered a trench to be

⁵⁹³ Cyril of Jerusalem, *Catechetical Lectures*, VI, 14-15.

⁵⁹⁴ Philip Schaff, “The Sacred History of Sulpitius Severus”, II, 28-29, *Post-Nicene Fathers Second Series*, v. 11.

⁵⁹⁵ Hippolytus, *The Refutation of All Heresies*, VI, 15.

dug by his disciples, he directed himself to be interred there. They executed the injunction given; whereas he remained in that grave until this day, for he was not the Christ. This constitutes the legendary system advanced by Simon, and from this Valentinus derived a starting-point for his own doctrine”.

Nero’s Reaction to Simon’s Death: the Martyrdom of Peter and Paul

Nero was angry with Peter and Paul for their part in the death of his friend Simon. He ordered⁵⁹⁶ Peter to die by crucifixion, and Paul, since he was a Roman citizen, to be beheaded.

“Then Nero ordered Peter and Paul to be put in irons, and the body of Simon to be carefully kept three days, thinking that he would rise on the third day. To whom Peter said, ‘He will no longer rise, since he is truly dead, being condemned to everlasting punishment’. And Nero said to him, ‘Who commanded you to do such a dreadful deed?’ Peter said, ‘His blasphemy against my Lord Jesus Christ has brought him into this gulf of destruction’. Nero said, ‘I will destroy you by an evil death’. Peter said, ‘This is not in your power, even if it should seem good to you to destroy us; but it is necessary that what our Master promised to us should be fulfilled’”.

“Then Nero, having summoned Agrippa, said to him, ‘It is necessary that men introducing mischievous religious observances should die. Therefore I order them to take iron clubs, and to be killed in the sea-fight’⁵⁹⁷. Agrippa said, ‘Most sacred emperor, what you have ordered is not fitting for these men, since Paul seems innocent beside Peter’. Nero said, ‘By what fate, then, shall they die?’ Agrippa answered and said, ‘As seems to me, Paul’s head should be cut off, and Peter should be raised on a cross as the cause of the murder’. Nero said, ‘You have most excellently judged’. Then both Peter and Paul were led away from the presence of Nero. And Paul was beheaded on the Ostesian road”.

Ambrose of Milan mentioned⁵⁹⁸ that there was a short gap between the death of Simon Magus and the arrest and martyrdom of Peter. Peter could have escaped, but he was told by Christ not to do so.

“After Peter had overcome Simon, in sowing the doctrine of God among the people, and in teaching chastity, he stirred up the minds of the Gentiles. When the Christians begged Peter to withdraw himself for a little while, although he desired to suffer, yet was he moved at the sight of the people praying. They asked him to save himself for the instruction and strengthening of his people. At night he began to leave town. Seeing Christ coming to meet him at the gate, and entering the city, he said, ‘Lord, where are You going?’ Christ answered, ‘I am coming to be crucified again’. Peter understood the divine answer to refer to his own cross, for Christ could not be crucified a second time, for He had put off the

⁵⁹⁶ Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, p. 18.

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Holy Apostles Convent, tr., The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Archimandrite Matthew Lagges, 5th Ed., 1979, Volume VI, pp. 428-439.

⁵⁹⁷ The sea-fights were a favorite spectacle of the Roman emperors, where the combatants were persons condemned to death.

⁵⁹⁸ Ambrose of Milan, Sermon against Auxentius on the Giving Up of the Basilicas, 13.

flesh by the passion of the death which He had undergone. ‘In that He died, He died to sin once, but in that He lives, He lives to God’ (). So Peter understood that Christ was to be crucified again in the person of His servant. Therefore he willingly returned; and when the Christians questioned him, he told them the reason. Peter was immediately seized, and glorified the Lord Jesus by his cross.”

There are further details⁵⁹⁹ of the beheading of the Apostle Paul associated with a one-eyed woman named Perpetua:

“As Paul was being led away to be beheaded by three soldiers, who were brothers, a God-fearing one-eyed woman named Perpetua wept for him as he was being dragged along. When Paul saw her, he asked her to give him her handkerchief, saying that he would return it to her. Knowing that Paul was about to be beheaded, Perpetua asked the soldiers to bind Paul’s eyes with the handkerchief when they behead him. After Paul was beheaded, someone gave the woman her handkerchief back, and her eye was restored as she was carrying it”.

“When the woman saw the three soldiers about three hours later, she noted that she had recovered her sight from the handkerchief, and that she had asked the Lord that she might be considered worthy to become His slave as Paul was. The soldiers exclaimed with one voice that they might be His slaves also”.

“Perpetua later mentioned, in the Emperor’s palace, that both she and the three soldiers had believed in Christ. Nero, filled with rage, executed the three soldiers and had Perpetua locked in irons in prison. While in prison, Perpetua met Potentiana, the sister of Nero’s wife. Potentiana had desired to become a Christian, but didn’t know what to do. She had informed her sister and the wives of some of the Senators about what she had heard about Christianity, and the other women then left the palace and refused to have anything to do with their husbands’ idolatry. Perpetua informed Potentiana of what she knew of the Faith”.

After a few days, Nero tortured Perpetua a great deal, and finally killed her by tying a large stone to her neck and throwing her off a cliff. Potentiana was also tortured a great deal and finally burned alive”.

As Peter was being crucified⁶⁰⁰, the crowd of bystanders reviled Nero and wanted to kill him. But Peter restrained them and told them of earlier events where the Lord told him that this would happen. Angels also appeared to receive Peter’s body.

“And Peter, having come to the cross, said, ‘Since my Lord Jesus Christ, who came down from heaven upon the earth, was raised upon the cross upright, and He has called me to heaven, my cross ought to be fixed head downward, so as to direct my feet towards heaven. I am not worthy to be crucified like my Lord. Then, having reversed the cross, they nailed his feet up”.

“And the multitude was assembled reviling Caesar, and wishing to kill him. But Peter, hanging on the cross, restrained them saying, ‘A few days ago, being exhorted by the brethren to leave, I was going away. And my Lord Jesus Christ met me, and having adored Him, I said, Lord, where are You going? And He said to me, I am going to Rome to be crucified. And I said to Him, Lord,

⁵⁹⁹ The Story of Perpetua; part of Roberts and Donaldson, “Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

⁶⁰⁰ Roberts and Donaldson, “Acts of the Holy Apostles Peter and Paul”, Apocrypha of the New Testament, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

weren't You crucified once for all? And the Lord answered and said, I saw you fleeing from death, and I wish to be crucified instead of you. And I said, Lord, I'm going; I will fulfill Your command. And He said to me, Fear not, for I am with you. On this account, then, children do not hinder my going; for already my feet are going on the road to heaven. Do not grieve, therefore, but rather rejoice with me, for today I receive the fruit of my labors". And thus speaking, he said, "I thank You, Good Shepherd, that the sheep which You have entrusted to me, sympathize with me. I ask, then, that with me they may have a part in Your kingdom". And having thus spoken, he gave up the Spirit".

"And immediately there appeared men glorious and strange in appearance. And they said, 'We are here on account of the holy and chief Apostles from Jerusalem'. And they, along with Marcellus, an illustrious man, who left Simon and had believed in Peter's words, took up his body secretly, and put it under the terebinth near the place for the exhibition of sea-fights in the place called the Vatican".

"And the men, who had said that they came from Jerusalem, said to the people, 'Rejoice, and be exceeding glad, because you have been deemed worthy to have great champions. And know that Nero himself, after not many days, will be utterly destroyed, and his kingdom shall be given to another'. And after these things the people revolted against him. And when he knew of it, he fled into desert places; through hunger and cold he gave up the spirit and his body became food for the wild beasts".

"And some devout men of the regions of the East wished to carry off the relics of the saints, and immediately there was a great earthquake in the city; and those that dwelt in the city having become aware of it, ran and seized the men, but they fled. But the Romans took the relics, put them in a place three miles from the city, and there they were guarded a year and seven months, until they had built the place in which they intended to put them. And after these things, all having assembled with glory and singing of praise, they put them in the place built for them. And the consummation of the holy glorious Apostles Peter and Paul was on the 29th of the month of June".

When Peter and Paul were executed, a number of others were also beheaded with them. Included in these were Herodian and Olympas, of the Seventy, who had come to Rome with the Apostle Peter. Clement was also taken with them, but he was released since he was a kinsman of the Emperor. After the death of Peter and Paul on June 29th, Clement begged for the body of Peter, and helped give him a decent burial, along with Herodian and Olympas.

Bishops of Rome in the 1st Century

Peter:

Summarized in Table 4 are the bishops of Rome and Antioch. Note that Peter is regarded as the 1st bishop of both, beginning at different times. Today, both the Roman Catholic Church and the Antiochian Orthodox Church have lists of their bishops (or patriarchs) going back to the Apostle Peter. Some modern Catholic scholars have claimed that Peter was resident in Rome for 25 years as Bishop of Rome. However, Butler, the Catholic historian, downplays⁶⁰¹ this. Due to

⁶⁰¹ Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990, June 29, p. 667.

Peter's constant missionary journeys, Peter didn't spend a lot of time in Rome during that time. He was in Rome four times:

- (1) In the early 40's when he sent the Evangelist Mark to Alexandria,
- (2) A short time again in the late 40's prior to the Council of Jerusalem
- (3) In the early 50's where he had his first encounter with Simon Magus in Rome
- (4) In the mid 60's, where he had his last encounter with Simon Magus, leading to his martyrdom.

Linus:

Peter ordained one of the original Seventy, Linus, before he left Rome following his encounter with Simon Magus in about 54 AD. Linus was still in Rome when Paul wrote 2 Timothy (about 66 AD or just before Paul's death, see 2 Timothy 4:21). Linus was martyred right after Paul wrote 2 Timothy.

Clement:

One of the original Seventy, Clement worked with the Apostle Paul for a while (Philippians 4:3). During his time as Bishop of Rome, Clement commissioned seven scribes to record summaries of the lives of all the saints being martyred so that future generations wouldn't forget. The modern collection of Clement's work is called⁶⁰² Butler's Lives of the Saints. These summaries began to appear in some of the Church services very early, arranged according to calendar date. This tradition still exists today and different heroes of the Faith are remembered in the prayers of the Church every day of the calendar year. A great deal of literature is also connected to Clement.

As an old man, Clement was banished from Rome under Trajan and sent to work in the quarries near Sardis, East of Ephesus, along with other Christians. Clement performed many miracles in Sardis, raised up 75 Churches and was proclaimed Bishop of Sardis. He was martyred by having an anchor tied around his neck and being thrown into the Black Sea.

TABLE 4
Bishops of Rome and Antioch

ANTIOCH	ROME
Peter c.42	Peter c. 45
Euodius c.45-64	Linus c.54-66
Ignatius c. 64-107	Clement c.66-99

Peter and Paul in Retrospect

Peter Went to the Jews, Paul to the Gentiles

The Apostle Paul made a point of the fact that he was sent to the Gentiles while Peter was sent to the Jews (Galatians 2:7-10). The Church Fathers generally agree that Peter and Paul divided up the work according to this rule, but there are some clarifications that need to be made.

⁶⁰² Thurston and Attwater, Butler's Lives of the Saints, Christian Classics, Westminster, MD, 1990.

Jesus had told the Apostles to evangelize the Gentiles, but those who stayed behind in Jerusalem, i.e. Peter and John, didn't begin to do that on a major scale until well after the death of James Zebedee in c. 44 AD (Acts 12:1-2). After that they were driven away from Jerusalem, and began to evangelize the Gentiles along with Paul.

Prior to that, beginning with the scattering of the Church in 31 AD at the death of Stephen (Acts 8:4), the rest of the Twelve and some of the Seventy had left Jerusalem for their missionary journeys. However there was a hole in the operation in Asia Minor; this area was the lot that the Apostle John had drawn before Pentecost, 30 AD, but none of the Twelve could spend much time there. This is where Paul spent a large part of his time on his missionary journeys.

Meanwhile, Paul sought ratification of his teaching by the Apostles in Jerusalem due to his desire for unity in the Church. As he went to the Gentiles, he still had a soft spot in his heart for his fellow countrymen, and he persuaded the Gentiles by appealing to the Jews first. However, because of his background in Judaism, the Jewish leaders considered him a traitor, and they would not accept anything he said.

Some people misinterpret Paul's words of criticism to Peter, and this has been the case throughout the history of the Church. Some of the major heretics in the history of the Church used Paul's statements to justify their own actions. In the following, we will take up each of these aspects of Paul's interaction with Peter.

Jesus' Instructions for the Twelve Regarding the Gentiles

In the Scriptures, we find an apparent contradiction in Jesus' instructions to the Twelve regarding the Gentiles. In some places, He told them not to go to the Gentiles, and in other places, He told them to evangelize the earth. When He sent them out two-by-two, He told them not to go to the Gentiles or even to the Samaritans (Matthew 10:5-8). And He seemed to reinforce this command when He healed the Canaanite woman's daughter. There He told the woman that He was sent just to the lost sheep of the House of Israel (Matthew 15:21-28).

On the other hand, just prior to the Ascension, He told the Twelve and the Seventy, "Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations" (Matthew 28:19), and "Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature" (Mark 16:15). The result was "they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with *them* and confirming the word through the accompanying signs" (Mark 16:20). Luke adds that this evangelism was to begin in Jerusalem, then proceed abroad, and Luke repeated this in his account of the Ascension. "Repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations, beginning at Jerusalem" (Luke 24:47, Acts 1:8).

During His three-year ministry, Jesus gave many hints that at least some of the Jews would find themselves left out of the Kingdom of God. He said, "There will be weeping and

gnashing of teeth, when you see Abraham and Isaac and Jacob and all the prophets in the kingdom of God, and yourselves thrust out. They will come from the East and the West, from the North and the South, and sit down in the kingdom of God. And indeed there are last who will be first, and there are first who will be last” (Luke 13:28-30). In this same context, He stated, “Tax collectors and harlots enter the kingdom of God before you” (Matthew 21:31). To illustrate His point, He gave the parable of the wicked vineyard tenants, which concluded, “Therefore I say to you, the kingdom of God will be taken from you and given to a nation bearing the fruits of it” (Matthew 21:31-43). He also gave the same message with the parable of the wedding feast, where the invited guests were not worthy, and the Master sent His servants out onto the highways to bring in foreigners (Matthew 22:1-10).

In the late 40’s AD, after the Council of Jerusalem, Paul reached an “agreement” with the Apostles in Jerusalem that they would go to the “Circumcised”, i.e. the Jews, and he would go to the Gentiles. As Paul stated it, “The Gospel for the Uncircumcised had been committed to me, as *the Gospel* for the Circumcised *was* to Peter” (Galatians 2:7-10). Later Paul referred to himself as an “Apostle to the Gentiles” (Romans 11:13).

Paul had been commissioned by the Lord Himself to go to the Gentiles. This word from God came first at Paul’s conversion (Acts 26:14-18). The word was confirmed by the revelation to Ananias, one of the Seventy, as the blinded Paul was being led to the house of Judas on the street called “Straight” in Damascus (Acts 9:11-17). Three years later, Paul came to Jerusalem, where he had another vision of how the Lord would send him to the Gentiles (Acts 9:26-29, 22:17-21).

Yet Paul’s heart still went out to the Jewish people. Like Moses (Exodus 32:32), Paul volunteered to be accursed from God for the sake of his fellow countrymen (Romans 9:3). Thus he spoke of provoking them to jealousy by his ministry to the Gentiles, in hopes that some of them might be saved (Romans 11:13-15).

However, the ministries of both Paul and Peter do not line up strictly according to their “agreement”. Paul, the “Apostle to the Gentiles”, after he had agreed with Peter on dividing up the work, still stopped first at the synagogue at every city he entered (Acts 16:12-15, 17:1, 17:10, 18:1-5, 18:19, 19:8). And his major theological epistle was the Epistle to the Hebrews, which he wrote pseudo anonymously. By contrast, Peter, the “Apostle to the Circumcision”, traveled to Rome, Asia Minor⁶⁰³, Spain, Carthage, Egypt, and Britain. Their actions seem almost the exact opposite of their “agreement”.

⁶⁰³ Asia Minor included Galatia, Ephesus, Colossae and Laodicea, where Paul raised up Churches.

To further complicate the situation, the Twelve had cast lots in the first year after Pentecost to divide up the world into regions⁶⁰⁴ where each of the Twelve had one lot, as shown⁶⁰⁵ in Table 5. Some of the Twelve worked together and helped out in the territory of others of the Twelve at times; Table 4 is a rough outline of their mission work.

Most of the Twelve had already left for their mission territory before Paul was converted. During the first year of the Church, Matthew had finished writing his Gospel in Hebrew⁶⁰⁶, and the Twelve had finished drafting⁶⁰⁷ what was later called “The Apostles’ Creed”. The Creed was a common statement of the Faith that they and their successors could use as a metric, since they realized that they might never see each other again.

From Table 5, Paul’s Missionary Journeys were in the territory assigned to the Apostles John and Andrew. Andrew started working in his territory quite early, before Paul’s conversion, but John didn’t get much chance to do anything in his territory until after the death of the Virgin Mary in c. 55 AD. John had to stay home and care for the Virgin Mary, per Christ’s command (John 19:25-27); this was necessary since she was under constant threat of death by the Jewish leaders toward the end of her life.

Ratification of Paul’s Teaching

The first order of business for Paul was to synchronize with the work of the Twelve, who had a 14-year head start on him. Asia Minor, where Paul spent a lot of time, however, was largely virgin territory, since John hadn’t gotten started there yet. Paul stated, “When James, Cephas, and John, who seemed to be pillars, perceived the grace that had been given to me, they gave to Barnabas and me the right hand of fellowship, that we should go to the Gentiles and they to the Circumcised. They desired only that we should remember the poor, the very thing, which I also was eager to do” (Galatians 2:9-10).

Does this mean that the Twelve only spoke to Jews, and Paul only spoke to Gentiles? This can’t be the case, since Paul wrote to mixed congregations of Jews and Gentiles (1 Corinthians 10:28-33), and specifically evangelized Jews as well as Gentiles (1 Corinthians 9:19-21, Acts 13:46, 17:1-6). From Table 5, most of the Twelve went to primarily Gentile areas on their missionary journeys. From studies of records⁶⁰⁸ from their journeys, they did not encounter a great deal of Jews where they went.

⁶⁰⁴ Nikolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 6, October 9, November 30.

⁶⁰⁵ For more details on the missionary journeys of the Twelve Apostles, see the individual Studies on each of the Twelve.

⁶⁰⁶ For details of Matthew’s draft of his Gospel in Hebrew, see the separate study on the life of Matthew.

⁶⁰⁷ Rufinus, A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, v. 3.

⁶⁰⁸ For details, see the separate studies of the lives of each of the Twelve Apostles.

Table 5
Lots Drawn by the Twelve Apostles

Apostle	Lot Drawn to be Responsible for
Andrew	Greece, Bithynia, North of Black Sea
James son of Alphaeus	Egypt
James son of Zebedee	Spain, Carthage, Cyrene
John	Ephesus, Asia Minor
Jude (Thaddaeus)	Syria, Mesopotamia, Persia
Matthew son of Alphaeus	Ethiopia and Central Africa
Matthias, replacement for Judas	Judea
Nathanael or Bartholomew	Armenia and Caspian Sea
Peter (Simon)	Italy and Rome
Philip	Gaul and Britain
Simon the Zealot	Pontus and Eastern Half of Black Sea
Thomas	Parthia and India
Paul	Asia Minor and Greece, Cyprus and Crete

John Chrysostom commented⁶⁰⁹ on this situation to say that the first issue for Paul was to have his doctrine ratified by the whole Church. Keeping the unity of the Spirit among the Churches in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3) was an important item for Paul.

“Paul said that when the Apostles in Jerusalem were assured by the facts themselves, ‘They gave to Barnabas and me the right hands of fellowship’. Observe how he gradually proves that both Christ and the Apostles ratified his doctrine. For grace would neither have been implanted, nor been operating in him, had not his preaching been approved by Christ. When Paul compared himself with the other Apostles, he mentioned Peter alone. When he called them as witnesses, he named the three together, ‘Cephas, James, John’, adding, ‘who were reputed to be pillars’. The expression ‘who were reputed’ does not impugn them, but adopts the estimate of others, and implies that these great and distinguished men bore witness that his preaching was ratified by Christ. Here is incontrovertible proof of their concord. This shows that his and their doctrine was interchangeable, and that both approved the same thing, that they should so preach to the Jews, and he to the Gentiles”.

When Paul spoke of the “Gospel for the Circumcision” for Peter and the “Gospel for the Uncircumcision” for himself (Galatians 2:7), he was not referring to the rite of circumcision, but simply to the Jewish nation as “The Circumcision”, and Gentiles as “The Uncircumcision”.

⁶⁰⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2.

Remembering the Poor of Jerusalem

The second issue for Paul was to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10). This was not just any of the poor anywhere, but specifically the poor in Jerusalem. The Christians in Judea were living under a horrible persecution; the Apostles in Jerusalem asked Paul to remember their hardship as he went about among the Gentiles. John Chrysostom commented⁶¹⁰ on this as follows:

“Paul’s meaning is that in our preaching we divided the world between us; I took the Gentiles and they the Jews, according to the Divine decree. But to the sustenance of the poor among the Jews I also contributed my share, which, had there been any dissension between us, they would not have accepted”.

“Who were these poor persons that Paul referred to? Many of the believing Jews in Palestine had been deprived of all their goods, and scattered over the world, as he mentions in the Epistle to the Hebrews, ‘For you took joyfully the spoiling of your possessions’ (Hebrews 10:34). And in writing to the Thessalonians, he extols their fortitude, ‘You became imitators of the Churches of God which are in Judea, for you also suffered the same thing of your own countrymen, as they did of the Jews’ (1 Thessalonians 2:14). And he shows throughout that those Greeks who believed were not under persecution from the rest, as the believing Jews were suffering from their own kindred; for there is no nation of a temper so cruel as the Jews. Therefore Paul exercised much zeal that the Jewish Christians in Judea should meet with much attention (Romans 15:25-27, 1 Corinthians 16:1-3). Paul not only collected money for them, but himself brought it, as he says, ‘But now I go to Jerusalem ministering to the saints’ (Romans 15:25), for they were without the necessities of life. Here he showed that having resolved to assist them, he had undertaken it and would not abandon it”.

There are two things that we should notice here: (1) the agreement between Paul and the Apostles in Jerusalem was at the time of the Council in Jerusalem, or c. 48 AD. The rest of the Twelve had long since left Jerusalem for far-away places among the Gentiles. And (2) this agreement does not imply that the Apostles in Jerusalem did not later go to the Gentiles themselves. In fact, Peter later went all over the world, and John went to Ephesus and vicinity, the same place where Paul had worked earlier.

Paul’s Zeal for Unity in the Church

John Chrysostom stated⁶¹¹ that Paul, in his boldness, sought agreement with the Apostles in Jerusalem out of his zeal for the truth of the Gospel. If the pressure from many of the brethren in Jerusalem was to continue with circumcision, this didn’t affect Paul’s Gospel or impart anything to him, but he sought agreement with the other Apostles to head off disputes and to insure a common Gospel worldwide.

“In the Epistle to the Galatians he takes the other Apostles with him, not as standing in need of them, but saying that by himself, he was sufficient. ‘For they who were of repute imparted nothing to me’ (Galatians 2:6); nevertheless, even so I seek agreement with them. ‘For they gave to me’, said he, ‘their right hands’ (Galatians 2:9). If the credibility of Paul always had to depend on others

⁶¹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2.

⁶¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXIX, 1.

and to be confirmed by testimony from others, the disciples would have received infinite injury. He wouldn't have been able to do anything! It is not to exalt himself that he did this, but fearing for the Gospel. Therefore he said, making himself equal, 'Whether it be I or they, so we preach'; that is, we preach a common Gospel".

The Apostles Were Driven Away by the Jews

The way John Chrysostom explained⁶¹² it, the Apostles went first to the Jews; and when they had stayed a long time in Jerusalem, and had been driven away by them, they were scattered abroad to the Gentiles. This is what Paul meant by Peter's "Apostleship to the Circumcision".

"We would say, that both before the crucifixion, and after the crucifixion, they addressed themselves to the Jews first. For before the crucifixion, He said to them, 'Go to the lost sheep of the house of Israel' (Matthew 10:5-6). After the crucifixion, He even commanded them to address themselves to the Jews. For though He said, 'Make disciples of all nations' (Matthew 28:19), yet when on the point of ascending into Heaven, He declared that unto the Jews first they were to address themselves. For, 'You shall receive power after the Holy Spirit has come upon you, and you shall be witnesses for Me both in Jerusalem, and in all Judea, and unto the uttermost part of the earth (Acts 1:8). Paul confirmed this saying, 'He that worked effectively in Peter to the Apostleship of the Circumcision, was mighty in me also toward the Gentiles'" (Galatians 2:8).

"And you see here His bounty; 'As many as you shall find, invite to the marriage' (Matthew 22:9). Before this, they addressed themselves both to Jews and Greeks, staying for the most part in Judea. But since the Jews continued to lay plots against them, hear Paul interpreting this parable, and saying, 'It was necessary that the word of God should first have been spoken to you, but since you judge yourselves unworthy, we turn to the Gentiles (Acts 13:46). Therefore Christ also said, 'The wedding is ready, but they which were invited were not worthy'" (Matthew 22:8).

"Since they were not worthy, He said, go into the highways, and as many as you shall find, bring in; both the common sort, and the outcasts (Matthew 22:10). For because He had said in every way, 'The harlots and publicans shall inherit heaven' (Matthew 21:31); and, 'The first shall be last, and the last first' (Luke 13:30); He shows that justly do these things come to pass. This more than anything stung the Jews, and goaded them more grievously than their overthrow by the Romans in 70 AD, to see those from the Gentiles brought into their privileges, and into far greater than theirs".

Paul Persuaded the Gentiles by Means of the Jews

Using the example of Paul's work in Antioch of Pisidia, John Chrysostom described⁶¹³ Paul's work with the Gentiles. He persuaded the Gentiles through the Jews, this being most conducive to their belief. He did not neglect the Jews either, that the Jews might not seem to be severed from the Gentiles.

"On many occasions we find Paul to have convinced men simply by force of teaching. In Antioch of Pisidia, after speaking to the Jews in the synagogue, 'the whole city was gathered together' (Acts 13:44). A very great a thing is this!

⁶¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, LXIX, 1-2.

⁶¹³ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXVII.

That the Apostles might not think that they did it all by their own strength, but rather that God permitted it, two things resulted, namely, ‘Some of them were persuaded’ (Acts 13:43). But also, of the devout Greeks a great multitude believed; but the chief women, the Jews stirred up, being moved with envy (Acts 13:45, 50). The Apostles neither thought great things of themselves, as if the triumph were their own, nor were they terrified as being responsible for everyone”.

“But how comes it that he said, ‘That we should go unto the heathen, and they to the Circumcision’ (Galatians 2:9), and yet he spoke first to the Jews? He did this as a thing over and above. For he did other things also more than he was obliged! For instance, Christ ordained that they should ‘live by the Gospel’ (1 Corinthians 9:14), but Paul didn’t ask to be supported. Christ sent him not to baptize, yet he did baptize. Note how he was equal to everything: Peter to the Circumcision, he to the Gentiles, to the greater part”.

“Since if it was necessary for him to discourse to Jews, why did he say, ‘For He that worked effectively in him toward the Circumcision, the same was mighty also in me toward the Gentiles’ (Galatians 2:8)? In the same way as those Apostles also spoke with the Gentiles; though they had been set apart for the Circumcision, so likewise did Paul. The greater part of Paul’s work indeed was with the Gentiles; still he did not neglect the Jews either, that the Jews might not seem to be severed from the Gentiles. And how was it, you will ask, that he entered first of all into the synagogues in every city, as if this were his leading object? True, he did this; but he persuaded the Gentiles through the Jews, and from the things, which he spoke of to the Jews. And he knew that this was most suitable for the Gentiles and most conducive to belief. Therefore he says, ‘I am the Apostle of the Gentiles’ (Romans 11:13). In his Epistles too, he constantly fought against the Jews”.

Paul Had to Go to the Gentiles; the Jews Wouldn’t Accept Him

Constantine of Antioch⁶¹⁴ noted how Paul referred to himself as “the Apostle to the Gentiles”. This had to be so, since the Jews were so angry with Paul as a deserter from their ranks. Because of this, the Lord sent him far away from Jerusalem to the Gentiles. Yet Paul still had a soft spot in his heart for his fellow countrymen, and therefore he wrote his Epistle to the Hebrews.

“The blessed Paul, writing to the Romans, says, ‘Inasmuch as I am the Apostle of the Gentiles, I magnify my office: if by any means I may provoke to jealousy *those who are* my flesh’ (Romans 11:13-14). And again, in another place, ‘For He that worked effectively in Peter to the Apostleship of the Circumcision, the same was mighty in me toward the Gentiles’ (Galatians 2:8). He was the ‘Apostle of the Gentiles’, for God said to him, ‘Depart; for I will send you far from here to the Gentiles’ (Acts 22:21). But then, what did he have to do with the Hebrews? And why did he write an Epistle to them?”

To understand this, we need to consider several aspects. “The Jews were ill-disposed towards Paul, and this can be seen from many places. For hear what James says to him, ‘You see, brother, how many myriads of Jews there are who have believed, and they have been informed about you that you teach men to

⁶¹⁴ Constantine of Antioch was a presbyter in Antioch who wrote the Introduction to John Chrysostom’s Homilies on Hebrews, which were published after Chrysostom’s death.

forsake the Law' (Acts 21:20-21). And often he had many disputes concerning this".

"Since Paul was so learned in the Law, why therefore, one might ask didn't God send him to the Jews? He was instructed in the Law at the feet of Gamaliel (Acts 22:3), and had great zeal in the matter, and was especially able to confound them in this respect. On this very account, they were more vehement in their enmity against him. 'For they will not receive you', God said unto him. 'But depart far from here to the Gentiles, for the Jews will not receive your testimony concerning Me' (Acts 22:18, 21). Paul replied, 'Yes, Lord, they know that I imprisoned and beat in every synagogue them that believed on you; and when the blood of your martyr Stephen was shed, I was standing by and consenting to his death, and guarding the clothes of those who were killing him'" (Acts 22:19-20).

"And this he says is a sign and proof of their not believing him. For thus it is: when a man goes away from any people, if he was one of the least and of those who contribute nothing worthwhile, he does bother those from whom he went. But if he was among the distinguished and active leaders, and those who care most for these things, he grieves and bothers them beyond measure, in that he especially overthrows their system in the eyes of the multitude".

"Why, then, not being a teacher of the Jews, does he send an Epistle to them? And where were those to whom he sent it? It seems to me in Jerusalem and Palestine. How then does he send them an Epistle? Just as he baptized, though he was not commanded to baptize. For, he says, 'I was not sent to baptize': he was not forbidden, but he does it as a subordinate matter. And how could he fail to write to those, for whom he was willing even to become accursed?" (Romans 9:3)

The Misinterpretation by Heretics of Paul Criticizing Peter

Paul's interaction with Peter over these matters has been taken out of context and misinterpreted many times over the history of the Church. Sometimes Paul is viewed as an independent free-spirit, who goes off on his own, and criticizes the Apostles in Jerusalem for being caught up in old ways and not listening to God. This is the view taken by some of the heretics, who felt that they had heard from God on various matters, but were isolated because the Church didn't accept their "word" from God.

John Chrysostom commented⁶¹⁵ on Paul's meaning in his reference to Peter in his Epistle to the Galatians, when he said, "They added nothing to me" (Galatians 2:6). That is to say, they did not correct him on any point. Some heretics stated that Paul, who had been instructed by God alone, then proceeded to instruct the Apostles in Jerusalem. Chrysostom denies this, stating that the purpose of the Council was to reach an agreement, not to instruct each other. The Twelve had already been perfectly instructed by Christ.

"Paul stated that the Apostles in Jerusalem did not oppose him, but their sense of the Holy Spirit agreed. This appears from his expression, 'they gave me the right hand of fellowship'; but he does not say this at present, but only that they neither informed nor corrected him on any point, nor added to his knowledge".

⁶¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2.

“That is to say, when told of his proceedings, they added nothing, they corrected nothing, and though aware that the object of his journey was to communicate with them, that he had come by revelation of the Spirit. He had Titus⁶¹⁶ with him, who was uncircumcised; they neither circumcised him, nor imparted to Paul any additional knowledge”.

“Some hold his meaning to be, not only that the Apostles did not instruct Paul, but that they were instructed by him. But I would not say this, for what could they have learned from Paul, each of whom was himself perfectly instructed by Christ? He does not therefore intend this by the expression, ‘on the contrary’ (Galatians 2:7), but that so far were they from blaming Paul, that they praised him; for praise is the contrary of blame”.

“Some would probably reply here, ‘Why didn’t the Apostles abolish circumcision, if they praised Paul’s procedure as the proper consequence?’ Now to assert that they did abolish it, Paul considered much too bold; this is not what happened. On the other hand, to admit that the Apostles in Jerusalem had sanctioned circumcision would necessarily expose him to another objection. For it would be said, if the Apostles praised your preaching, yet sanctioned circumcision, they were inconsistent with themselves. Paul didn’t want to say this either. While it was true that the Apostles sanctioned circumcision in Jerusalem due to the weak faith of the Jewish believers, Paul didn’t want to broadcast this weakness. What then is the solution? Is he to say that they acted thus out of condescension to Judaism? To say this would have shaken their relationship”.

“Therefore he left the subject in uncertainty, by the words, ‘But from those who seemed to be something -- whatever they were, it makes no difference to me’ (Galatians 2:6). Which is in effect to say, I don’t accuse or blame those holy men; they know what it is they have done; to God must they render their account. What Paul was desirous to prove is, that they neither reversed nor corrected his procedure, nor added to it as defective, but gave it their approval and assent; and to this Titus and Barnabas bore witness”.

Irenaeus stated⁶¹⁷ that the heretical followers of Marcion⁶¹⁸ taught that Paul alone knew the truth due to his revelations from God. To Marcion, it was just “Me and God”, his own revelations were sufficient, and he didn’t need to submit to any human authority. Marcion interpreted Paul’s remarks (Galatians 2:5-9) as a put-down to the Apostles in Jerusalem, since Paul had a better Gospel due to greater revelations (2 Corinthians 12:1-4). In all this, it was Marcion’s “gospel” that was defective, not anything to do with the Apostles in Jerusalem.

“With regard to those Marcionites who allege that Paul alone knew the truth, and that to him the mystery was manifested by revelation, let Paul himself convict them. He says that one and the same God worked in Peter for the Apostolate of the circumcision, and in himself for the Gentiles. Peter, therefore, was an Apostle of that same God who sent Paul; and Him whom Peter preached

⁶¹⁶ Titus was not one of the original Seventy (Luke 10:1-20), but was added to the Seventy later; Christ did not ask him to be circumcised either, setting a precedent for the Church to back off on the requirement for circumcision.

⁶¹⁷ Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, xiii, 1-2; III, xiv, 4.

⁶¹⁸ Marcion (d. c. 160 AD) was the son of a Bishop, who excommunicated him for immorality. His “gospel” was wholly a gospel of love to the absolute exclusion of Law. He rejected the Old Testament completely, as being established by a god of Law, as opposed to the God of Jesus Christ. He followed many of the teachings of Simon Magus.

as God among those of the Circumcision was the same as Paul declared the Son of God among the Gentiles. For our Lord never came to save Paul alone, nor is God so limited in means, that He should have but one Apostle who knew the dispensation of His Son”.

“To allege, then, that these men did not know the truth is to act the part of false witnesses, and of those who have been alienated from the doctrine of Christ. For why did the Lord send the Twelve Apostles to the lost sheep of the house of Israel, if these men did not know the truth? How also did the Seventy preach, unless they had themselves previously known the truth of what was preached? Or how could Peter have been in ignorance, to whom the Lord gave testimony, that flesh and blood had not revealed to him, but the Father, who is in heaven? (Matthew 16:16-17) Just, then, as ‘Paul was an Apostle, not of men, neither by man, but by Jesus Christ, and God the Father’ (Galatians 1:1), so with the other Apostles; the Son led them to the Father, but the Father revealed to them the Son”.

“It follows then, as of course, that these men must either receive the rest of Luke’s narrative⁶¹⁹, or else reject these parts also. For no person of common sense can permit them to receive some things recounted by Luke as being true, and to set others aside, as if Luke had not known the truth. And if indeed Marcion’s followers reject these, they will then possess no Gospel; for, curtailing that according to Luke, they boast in having the Gospel in what remains. But the followers of Valentinus⁶²⁰ must give up their utterly vain talk; for they have taken from that Gospel many occasions for their own speculations, to put an evil interpretation upon what he has well said”.

Tertullian, writing against the heretics Marcion and Valentinus primarily, rebuked⁶²¹ their misinterpretation of Paul’s words about Peter. They claimed that there was something lacking in Peter and that Paul had a fuller knowledge of spiritual things. Paul’s rebuke pertained to times and persons and causes, not to doctrine. What they conveniently overlooked is that Peter could have rebuked Paul for circumcising Timothy before they came to Derbe (Acts 16:1-4). Paul’s revelations, which the heretics claimed gave him a fuller knowledge, cannot have qualified Paul for teaching another doctrine, since he could not communicate what he saw to any human being.

“Now, regarding branding the Apostles with ignorance, they put forth the case of Peter having been rebuked by Paul. ‘Something therefore’, they say, ‘was lacking in them’. This they allege in order that they may construct that other position of theirs, that a fuller knowledge may have afterwards come over the Apostles, such as fell to Paul, when he rebuked those who preceded him. They reject parts of The Acts of the Apostles; therefore it is first necessary that they show us who this Paul was — both what he was before he was an Apostle, and how he became an Apostle — so very great is the use, which they make of him with respect to other questions. But let them believe without the Scriptures, if their object is to believe contrary to the Scriptures”.

“Still they should show that Paul added another form of the gospel different than that which Peter and the rest had previously set forth. But the fact

⁶¹⁹ Marcion edited the Gospel of Luke to delete those parts that didn’t fit with his theology.

⁶²⁰ Valentinus, a native of Egypt and a very eloquent speaker, formed his own sect after he was passed over in vying to become Bishop of Rome. His theology was similar to that of Simon Magus.

⁶²¹ Tertullian, *The Prescription Against Heretics*, II, I, 23-24.

is, having been converted from a persecutor to a preacher, he is introduced as one of the brethren to brethren, by brethren — to them by men who had put on faith from the Apostles' hands. Afterwards, he 'went up to Jerusalem for the purpose of seeing Peter' (Galatians 1:18), because of his office, no doubt, and by right of a common belief and preaching".

"Now the Apostles certainly would not have been surprised at his having become a preacher instead of a persecutor, if his preaching were of something contrary. Nor would they have 'glorified the Lord' (Galatians 1:24, Acts 21:20), because Paul had presented himself as an adversary to Him. They accordingly even gave him 'the right hand of fellowship' (Galatians 2:9), as a sign of their agreement with him. They arranged among themselves a distribution of office, not a diversity of gospel, so that they should severally preach not a different gospel, but the same, to different persons, Peter to the Circumcision, Paul to the Gentiles. Peter was rebuked because, after he had lived with the Gentiles, he proceeded to separate himself from their company out of respect for persons (Galatians 2:11-15). The fault surely was one of conversation, not of preaching. For it does not appear from this, that any other God than the Creator, or any other Christ than the son of Mary, or any other hope than the resurrection, was announced by him".

"Our very perverse heretics skew the rebuke in question for the set purpose of bringing the earlier doctrine of Peter into suspicion. I will put in a defense, as it were, for Peter. Paul said that he was 'made all things to all men — to the Jews a Jew' (1 Corinthians 9:20-22), to those who were not Jews as one who was not a Jew — 'that he might gain all'. Therefore it was according to times and persons and causes that they used to avoid certain practices, which they would pursue at different times and to different persons. For example, Paul held that circumcision was no longer necessary; yet Paul actually circumcised Timothy himself (Acts 16:1-4), and Peter could have censured Paul for this. Never mind those who pass sentence on Apostles!"

"It is a happy fact that Peter is on the same level with Paul in the glory of martyrdom. Now, although Paul was carried away even to the third heaven, and was caught up to paradise (2 Corinthians 12:4), and heard certain revelations there, yet these cannot possibly have qualified him for teaching another doctrine. Their very nature was such as to render them communicable to no human being. If, however, that unspeakable mystery did leak out, and if any heresy claims that it follows this, then (1) either Paul must be charged with having betrayed the secret. Or (2) some other man must be shown to have been afterwards 'caught up into paradise', who had permission to speak out plainly what Paul was not allowed to utter".

Peter's First Epistle

Earlier, we covered⁶²² the Apostle Peter's missionary journeys to Cappadocia, Galatia, Pontus, Bithynia and Northeastern Asia Minor. This most likely occurred before Peter's imprisonment by Herod in 44 AD. In Peter's First Epistle, he addresses the Epistle to the Churches in this region of his early missionary journeys. He wrote, "Peter, an apostle of Jesus Christ, to the pilgrims of the Dispersion in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia, and Bithynia, elect according to the foreknowledge of God the Father, in sanctification of the Spirit, for obedience and sprinkling of the blood of Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 1:1-2).

We might also note that Jews and Gentile converts to Judaism from this region had been in Jerusalem for Pentecost 30 AD when Peter spoke to the crowd (Acts 2:7-11). Peter's preaching resulted in 3000 people from these outlying regions being added to the Faith, and most of these people stayed in Jerusalem, having all things in common (Acts 2:44, 4:32). During the persecution that followed the stoning of Stephen one-year later, the Church was scattered, and many of these people may have gone home. During the year they spent in Jerusalem, Peter probably got to know some of them well, and this may have prompted his visit to these regions first.

In Peter's First Epistle, he addressed his words to "The Pilgrims of the Dispersion". "The Dispersion" refers to those Jews living outside the borders of Israel among Greek-speaking people (John 7:35). These Jews living abroad made it a very high priority to make a pilgrimage to Jerusalem three times a year according to the command in the Mosaic Law (Deuteronomy 16:16-17, Exodus 23:14-17, 34:21-24). For Peter to call them "Pilgrims" implies that many of them had been to Jerusalem regularly, and some of them may have been in Jerusalem when Peter spoke at Pentecost, 30 AD.

Silvanus of the Seventy, the Courier

We get a clue regarding when Peter wrote his First Epistle from some of the people he mentions. Peter closes his Epistle with the words:

"By Silvanus, our faithful brother as I consider him, I have written to you briefly, exhorting and testifying that this is the true grace of God in which you stand. She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and *so does* Mark, my son. Greet one another with a kiss of love. Peace to you all who are in Christ Jesus. Amen (1 Peter 5:12-14).

Silvanus was the courier of the Epistle, and he was also one of the original Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-20). Some people have speculated that Silvanus, the courier of Peter's Epistle, and Silas, who accompanied Paul on his Second Missionary Journey, were the same person. This comes from a study of the names themselves, which are a Greek version of the Hebrew name, Saul. In Hebrew, *Shaul* (i.e. Saul, "asked for" Strong # 7586) and *Sheol* (i.e. "hell" Strong # 7585) have the same spelling, but are pronounced differently. An Aramaic equivalent of *Shaul* is *Sheelah* ("ask or request", Strong # 7593). Transliterated from Aramaic to Greek, *Sheelah* becomes *Silas* in Greek, where a contracted form of Silas is Silvan or Silvanus (Greek: *Silouanos*). Thus both Silas and Silvanus were Greek-speaking Hebrews.

⁶²² See page 191 for details of this part of the missionary journeys of the Apostle Peter.

According to a number of traditional sources, there were two members of the original Seventy Apostles: Silas and Silvanus, and both are remembered⁶²³ on the same day. Silas is remembered for his work as Bishop of Corinth, and Silvanus is remembered for his work as Bishop of Thessalonica. What makes it confusing is that Paul calls Silas “Silvanus” several times in his Epistles (2 Corinthians 1:19, 1 Thessalonians 1:1, 2 Thessalonians 1:1). Since one name is a contracted form of the other, this is understandable.

The Evangelist Mark Was in Rome Also

Peter also referred to the Evangelist Mark in his First Epistle, as being with him in “Babylon”. There is a city in Egypt named “Babylon”, and it is possible that Peter and Mark could have been there together at one time. But this reference to “Babylon” refers to the city of Rome, where Peter was appalled⁶²⁴ at the extent of the corruption in Rome when he first arrived there. Eusebius wrote⁶²⁵

“And Peter makes mention of Mark in his first epistle, which they say that he wrote in Rome itself, as is indicated by him, when he calls the city, by a figure, Babylon, as he does in the following words: ‘She who is in Babylon, elect together with *you*, greets you; and *so does* Mark my son’” (1 Peter 5:13-14).

Other early writers also interpreted⁶²⁶ the reference to “Babylon” in Revelation to the city of Rome. John wrote of a woman called, “Mystery Babylon, the mother of harlots and of the abominations of the earth” (Revelation 17:5). She was carried by a beast, which has seven heads and ten horns, where the seven heads are seven mountains on which the woman sits (Revelation 17:7, 9). Since Rome, as a city, was built on seven hills or mountains, “Babylon” was interpreted as “Rome”.

Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, clarified⁶²⁷ the term “Babylon” as referring to the things of this world, where citizens of “Babylon” can be found doing task-work in the Church and vice versa.

“It commonly comes to pass that the citizens of Babylon serve in task-work for Jerusalem, while the citizens of Jerusalem, which is of the heavenly country, do the task-work of Babylon. When the elect of God, endowed with moral excellence, distinguished for moderation, seeking not their own gain, do their earthly business, what else is it but that the citizens of holy Jerusalem serve in the work of Babylon? And when some, unbridled in immorality, hold places of holy dignity, and in the very things, which they seem to do well, seek praise to themselves, what else is it but that the citizens of Babylon execute the task-work of the heavenly Jerusalem? For so Judas mixed with the apostles, preached the Redeemer of the human race, and did signs with the rest. But, because he had been a citizen of Babylon, he executed his work as task-work for the heavenly Jerusalem. But on the other hand, the Patriarch Joseph, who was carried into Egypt, served an earthly court, bore the charge of administration in temporal

⁶²³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 30.

Hippolytus, On the Seventy, 16, 17.

⁶²⁴ For a description of this corruption, see page 219.

⁶²⁵ Eusebius, Church History, II, 15.

⁶²⁶ Tertullian, An Answer to the Jews, I, vii, 9.

Tertullian, The Five Books Against Marcion, II, ii, 3, 13.

⁶²⁷ Gregory the Great, Epistles, VIII, 35.

things, and exhibited whatever was justly due to a transitory kingdom. But, because he was still a citizen of holy Jerusalem, he administered the service of Babylon, in the way of task-work only”.

Gregory of Nyssa noted⁶²⁸ that “Babylon” means “confusion”, such as occurred at the Tower of Babel (Genesis 11:4-9). Gregory referred to the heretics Montanus and Sabellius of his day as “Babylon” because they pervert and confuse the truth of the Church.

“It seems to me that lamentations should be chanted when this imitator of Jehoiakim draws away those whom he deceives to this new kind of idolatry, banishing them from their ancestral inheritance, — I mean the Faith. They too, in a way corresponding to the Scriptural record, are carried away captive to Babylon from Jerusalem that is above, — that is from the Church of God to this confusion of pernicious doctrines, — for Babylon means ‘confusion’. And even as Jehoiakim was mutilated⁶²⁹, so this man, having voluntarily deprived himself of the light of the truth, has become a prey to the Babylonian despot. The poor wretch never learned that the Gospel commands us to behold eternal life alike in the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit”.

Content of Peter’s First Epistle

If Peter visited Cappadocia, Galatia, Pontus, Bithynia and Northeastern Asia Minor in the early 40’s AD, and if he sent the Evangelist Mark to Egypt in the mid 40’s AD, there is a rather narrow window for the time of his drafting his First Epistle. Unless the Evangelist Mark returned to Rome for a brief time, for which we don’t have any record, Peter must have drafted his First Epistle by the mid 40’s AD⁶³⁰.

Prior to the persecution of Christians by the Emperor Nero in the 60’s AD, most of the persecution came at the hands of or at the instigation of the Jews. This is a consistent theme on Paul’s missionary journeys as recorded in Acts. Peter’s First Epistle was written to people living a few miles North of the cities Paul visited on his First Missionary Journey, and they were suffering similar persecution (1 Peter 1:6, 3:9, 3:16, 4:12-19). We might infer that this persecution was also incited and organized by the Jews in that area (1 Peter 2:7-8).

While Peter addressed his Epistle to the “Dispersion”, referring to Jews living abroad, Gentiles are included also (1 Peter 2:9-10). The Gentiles, who had not believed, were also involved in the persecution (1 Peter 2:12). There was a temptation on the part of the Christians to fight back. Peter cautioned them not to do this, but to endure it patiently, just as Christ had done (1 Peter 3:13-18).

Peter wrote of those (plural) who “have evangelized you” (1 Peter 1:12). That would be Andrew, Peter himself, and several of the Seventy, including the Evangelist Mark, who accompanied Peter. Peter also addressed the Bishops that he and Andrew had ordained for this

⁶²⁸ Gregory of Nyssa, *Against Eunomius*, X, 2.

Also Gregory of Nyssa, “Funeral Oration on Meletius”, *Oratorical Works*, V.

⁶²⁹ Josephus, *Antiquities of the Jews*, X, vi, 3 (97). Jehoiakim was a vicious man who encouraged the abomination of idolatry. For violating his oath to King Nebuchadnezzar, Jehoiakim was thrown over the city walls and left to rot without burial. Jeremiah had predicted that Jehoiakim would be “buried with a donkey’s burial, dragged off and thrown out beyond the gates of Jerusalem” (Jeremiah 22:19).

⁶³⁰ Most scholars put the drafting of Peter’s first Epistle a little later than this. In doing so, they don’t consider the details of what is happening at the time such as is outlined here.

region (1 Peter 5:1-4). He wrote instructions to them using words that are similar to the words Paul used in writing to Timothy and Titus.

Significant by its absence are two things: First, there is no reference to the work of the Apostle Paul in cities a few miles away. In Peter's Second Epistle, probably written to the people in the same region, who were familiar with his First Epistle (2 Peter 3:1), Peter acknowledged the work of "our beloved brother Paul" (2 Peter 3:15). The lack of reference to Paul's work suggests that Peter wrote his first Epistle before Paul started his missionary journeys to that area. Paul began his First Missionary Journey in c. 46 AD and arrived in Asia Minor in c. 47 AD.

Second is the lack of any reference to the Council in Jerusalem in c. 48 AD, and the decrees regarding the Gentiles, where the Gentiles were not obligated to be circumcised or to follow the Mosaic Law (Acts 15:18-21). By this time, the Lord has already instructed Peter regarding Cornelius and the Gentiles (Acts 10). And Peter has put this instruction to good use in his Epistle. He writes to the "Dispersion", but the Gentiles are included! All of this implies a date for the drafting of Peter's First Epistle in the mid 40's AD.

Peter's Second Epistle

Peter's Second Epistle was written just prior to his death (2 Peter 1:14-15), where Peter referred to his exodus using the same word Moses and Elijah used about Jesus at the Transfiguration. [Exodus is a Greek word that was taken directly into English with the same meaning.] Peter had recently arrived in Rome from Britain where he had had a vision from the Lord to return to Rome where he would suffer and be martyred. After arriving in Rome, the Emperor Nero imprisoned him after the spectacular way he debunked the magician and illusionist Simon Magus. Peter had run into Simon Magus earlier (c. 32 AD) in conjunction with Deacon Philip's evangelism (Acts 8:9-13, 18-23). Simon Magus had become good friends with Nero and had been proclaiming himself to be the Christ in Rome, supporting his claims with his magic and illusions (see Acts 8:9-11). Peter was crucified upside down shortly after his imprisonment.

Perhaps making an allusion to the "cleverly devised fables" (2 Peter 1:16), spread by Simon Magus, Peter stated that this was not his method. He was an eyewitness of the Lord's majesty on the mountain of Transfiguration. And Peter recalled how he heard God the Father speaking to Jesus from the cloud, "This is My Beloved Son in Whom I am well pleased!" (2 Peter 1:17, 18; Matthew 17:5). Peter's method was simply to proclaim to everyone what he saw and heard.

Referring also to the Feast of Tabernacles, Peter stated that he was currently living in the tent that was his body (2 Peter 1:13-14). While he is in this tent, he will stir up the people to whom he is writing to be diligent to make sure of their calling and their choice (2 Peter 1:10) in the face of false teachers bringing in destructive heresies (2 Peter 2:1). Following his exodus (2 Peter 1:15), there will be his entrance into the Kingdom of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ (2 Peter 1:11).

Peter concluded by referring to the work of the Apostle Paul, and assumed that the people, to whom he was writing, were familiar with what Paul had written in his Epistles. He stated:

“Therefore, beloved, looking forward to these things, be diligent to be found by Him in peace, without spot and blameless. And consider *that* the longsuffering of our Lord *is* salvation -- as also our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given to him, has written to you. As also in all his epistles, speaking in them of these things, in which are some things hard to understand, which untaught and unstable *people* twist to their own destruction, as *they do* also the rest of the Scriptures” (2 Peter 3:14-16).

Emperor Nero was so angry with Peter and Paul that he had them executed shortly after their imprisonment. Thus Paul wrote his second Epistle to Timothy about the same time that Peter wrote his Second General Epistle. According to tradition, Peter and Paul were martyred on the same day in 67 AD, Paul by beheading since he was a Roman citizen and “merited” a quick death. Peter was not a Roman citizen, so he died by crucifixion.

Appendix A

The Development of the Liturgy of the Old Testament

During the times of the Patriarchs prior to Moses, it was customary in the worship of God for the worshipper to build an altar wherever he might be (Genesis 8:20, 12:7, 13:18). This practice continued during the forty years of the Exodus where the Lord spoke to Moses directing true worship and sacrifice to be later centered in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 12:5-14, 17-19, 26-28), where the Lord's Name was to be established (Deuteronomy 12:5). After the Conquest, the Tabernacle was set up at Shiloh (Joshua 18:1) for the duration of the time of the Judges. David later moved it to Zion (2 Samuel 6:1-12), and the site for the Temple in Jerusalem was finally established in David's old age (2 Samuel 24:18-25). It is interesting to note that the location for the Temple in Jerusalem was the same spot that Abraham used for his offering of his only son, Isaac (Genesis 22:1-8), which also prefigures Christ.

During the time of Samuel and David, the worship of God became more spiritual, based of course, on the fundamental principle of sacrifice. Samuel's parents dedicated him to God before his birth (1 Samuel 1). In his adult years, he organized companies or schools of prophets whose impact was so profound that even the unbelieving and the stiff-necked were moved by the Spirit of God when they came in contact with them (1 Samuel 19:20-24, 10:9-12). A thousand years later, the Apostle Paul described this effect on unbelievers as a true test of prophecy (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). While the Mosaic Law described a detailed system of expiation, atonement and the blood of innocence as propitiation for sin and guilt, Samuel was the prime mover who built the liturgy around this.

At the same time, David produced many deeply spiritual Psalms out of his trials and fasting (e.g. Psalm 51). In his worship of God, he began the practice of continual prayer (Compare 1 Thessalonians 5:17, Ephesians 6:18) by praying at seven set hours of the day (Psalm 119:164, 55:17). David had taken prayer to heart and meditated on the Law day and night (Psalm 1:2, 34:1, 55:17, 119:1-2). Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁶³¹ that David arose seven times daily (Psalm 119:164) including during the middle of the night, to give thanks for the righteous judgments of God. When David says "In the morning, O Lord, You will hear my voice; in the morning I will order my prayer to You and eagerly watch" (Psalm 5:3), he is referring to the morning prior to dawn in addition to the Prayers of the Hours. 3rd Hour, 6th Hour and 9th Hour Prayers were customary for David (Psalm 55:17), where 3rd Hour and 9th Hour were also the customary times for the morning and evening continual burnt offering (Exodus 29:38-42, Numbers 28:3-8).

These hours of prayer were used by the Twelve Apostles (Acts 3:1, 10:3, 10:9) and continue to be used by the Orthodox Church today. Today the seven Hours of Prayer are known as 1st Hour (6 AM) or Matins, 3rd Hour (9 AM), 6th Hour (Noon), 9th Hour (3 PM), Vespers (Sundown), Compline (Late Evening) and Midnight. These Hours take themes from the life of Christ, where 1st Hour is the Resurrection (John 20:1), 3rd Hour is the Crucifixion (Mark 15:25), 6th Hour is darkness (Mark 15:33), 9th Hour is the death of Christ (Mark 15:34-37), etc.

John Cassian wrote⁶³² about how the Prayers of the Hours correspond to the events in the Scripture that occurred at that time of day.

⁶³¹ Athanasius of Alexandria, *Festal Letters* VI, 12.

⁶³² John Cassian, *The Institutes of the Coenobia*, III, 3.

“It is with good reasons that these times are more particularly assigned to religious offices, since at these Hours what completed the promises and summed up our salvation was fulfilled. We are compelled, as it were, by some rule to discharge these pious offices at least at stated times so that we spend the whole day engaging in prayer”.

At Third Hour, the Holy Spirit first descended on the Apostles assembled for prayer (Acts 1:14, 2:1-4) and Christ was nailed to the Cross (Mark 15:25). At Sixth Hour, Christ was hanging on the Cross, darkness covered the earth (Luke 23:44), and He nailed our sins to the Cross (Colossians 2:14). At the same Hour, it was divinely revealed to Peter about both the calling and the cleansing of the Gentiles. At Ninth Hour, Christ penetrated Hades (Mark 15:34-37); Cassian described this as follows:

“By the brightness of His splendor, He extinguished the indescribable darkness of hell, bursting its brazen gates and breaking the iron bars. He brought away with Him to the skies the captive band of saints, which was shut up in the darkness of inexorable hell. By taking away the fiery sword, He restored to Paradise its original inhabitants”.

Also at Ninth Hour, Cornelius, continuing in prayer, was shown the mystery of the calling of the Gentiles, and Peter and John healed a lame man as they went up to prayer (Acts 3:1-8).

In the Old Testament, the morning whole-burnt offerings and evening sacrifices were offered every day continually in the Temple. David said, “Let my prayer be set forth in Your sight as the incense, and let the lifting up of my hands be an evening sacrifice” (Psalm 141:2). Cassian stated:

“We can understand it in the higher sense of that true evening sacrifice, which was given by the Lord in the evening to the Apostles at the Supper, when He instituted the holy mysteries of the Church. And also of that evening sacrifice which He Himself, on the following day, offered up to the Father by the lifting up of His hands for the salvation of the whole world; where the spreading forth of His hands on the Cross is quite correctly called a ‘lifting up’”.

Cassian described⁶³³ the Matins office of his day. At Matins, we sing, ‘O God, my God, to You do I watch at break of day’ (Psalm 63:1); and ‘I will meditate on You in the morning’ (Psalm 5:1-3); and ‘I prevented the dawning of the day and cried’; and again, ‘My eyes to You have prevented the morning, that I might meditate on Your words’ (Psalm 119:147-148).

“At these hours that householder in the Gospel hired laborers for his vineyard (Matthew 20:1-16). For he hired them in the early morning, which time denotes the Matins office; then at the third hour; then at the sixth; after this, at the ninth; and last of all, at the eleventh, by which the hour of the lamps is denoted. Cassian noted⁶³⁴ that while Matins was instituted in about the 4th Century to counter laziness by some monks, yet it clearly makes up that number which the blessed David indicates, ‘Seven times a day do I praise You because of Your righteous judgments’ (Psalm 119:164). For by the addition of this service we certainly hold these spiritual assemblies seven times a day, and are shown to sing

⁶³³ John Cassian, *The Institutes of the Coenobia*, III, 3.

⁶³⁴ John Cassian, *The Institutes of the Coenobia*, III, 4.

praises to God seven times in it. Also, he noted⁶³⁵, the order of the Psalms used in Matins follows the ancient arrangement”.

David also commissioned three great Prophet-Musicians, Asaph, Heman, and Jeduthun, to help set up the Liturgy for the Temple worship (1 Chronicles 25:1-8), where Asaph and Jeduthun wrote some of the Psalms. Under the authority of David, these three Prophet-Musicians organized the singers, musicians and priests into 24 lots for the service of the Temple liturgy (1 Chronicles 24:1-18). Out of this, the synagogue liturgy developed, where the synagogue liturgy was different from the Temple liturgy because no animal sacrifices were offered at the synagogues. In years following the Captivity in Babylon, synagogues throughout the world were created, inspired by these companies of prophets, resulting in the worship of God being available to every believer.

Hippolytus referred⁶³⁶ to the epoch of David as the dawning of a new era in the worship of God that went beyond the basic precepts of the Law of Moses. In this way, David anticipated Christianity itself.

Illustrations of the Old Testament Liturgy

The Sacrificial Meals at the Temple Liturgy

Three times every year at the season of Passover, Pentecost and Tabernacles, every man was commanded to bring his tithes and offerings to the Lord in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16). All sacrifices that were brought to Jerusalem were holy by association with a Holy God. The people of God who offered the gifts were to be holy as God is holy (Leviticus 19:2), and they were to be partakers of His Holiness (Hebrews 12:10).

The types of offerings included in the Sacrificial Meals were (1) Animal Sacrifices, (2) Tithes, (3) Vows and Freewill Offerings and (4) the Firstborn Offering. “There (in Jerusalem) you and your households shall eat before the Lord your God, and rejoice in all your undertakings in which the Lord your God has blessed you” (Deuteronomy 12:7, 18). Included in these Sacrificial Meals were “your sons and daughters, your male and female servants, and the Levite who is within your gates, since he has no portion or inheritance with you” (Deuteronomy 12:12). For those who lived far away from Jerusalem and for whom it was not practical to bring livestock as an offering, they were to exchange the livestock for money and buy what is appropriate in Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 14:24-26). An example of the provision for this was the shepherds that were watching their flocks by night at the birth of Christ (Luke 2:8). They were tending the animals that were in the queue for purchase by visitors for sacrifice, as well as being used for the Morning and Evening Continual Burnt Offering.

There were three tithes required under the Mosaic Law. The first tithe was offered to the Lord and belonged to the Levites (Numbers 18:18-20). The second and third tithes (Tobit 1:7-8) were part of the Sacrificial Meals that everyone partook of. The burnt offerings were totally consumed on the altar (Leviticus 1), and consequently were not part of the Sacrificial Meals. But different portions of the other sacrifices were allocated to different people. For example, the breast and right thigh of the Peace Offering went to the priests (Leviticus 7:30-34) along with the best of the oil, wine and grain (Numbers 18:12-13). Other portions of the Peace Offerings were

⁶³⁵ John Cassian, *The Institutes of the Coenobia*, III, 6.

⁶³⁶ Hippolytus, *On the Psalms*, I, 1.

shared by everyone who was clean and were eaten at the Sacrificial Meals in the Presence of God at the Temple (Leviticus 7:16-21). This was the case for other offerings as well (Deuteronomy 12:11-19, 15:19-20). Eating of the things offered to God could not be done at their homes, but only at the Temple (Deuteronomy 12:17-18, 26-27). Leftovers of some offerings could be eaten the next day, but anything remaining was burned on the third day (Leviticus 7:15-18).

The Sacrificial Meals foreshadow the Eucharistic Feast in the Church. As was the common expectation in Israel, “Blessed is he who shall eat bread in the Kingdom of God” (Luke 14:15). This is what the people of God do in both the Sacrificial Meals and the Eucharist Feast. The animal sacrifices themselves foreshadowed the sacrifice of Christ once for all (Hebrews 9:26, 10:12). In the Eucharistic Feast, referring to the bread and wine, Christ has said, “Take, eat; this is My body”. “Drink from it all of you. For this is My blood of the New Covenant” (Matthew 26:27-28). Christ emphasized the importance of doing so, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (John 6:53-54). Similarly, the Lord had emphasized the importance of the Sacrificial Meals, where continued prosperity in the Land was conditioned on its continued observance (Deuteronomy 26:12-19, 11:26-32).

The blood of the animal being sacrificed was also to be respected by being poured out at the altar (Deuteronomy 12:27, Leviticus 1, 3, 4, 5). Even the blood of animals slaughtered for food at their homes was to be respected by being poured out on the ground like water (Deuteronomy 12:16, 24). They were thus taught to discern the body and blood of Christ (1 Corinthians 11:26-30). Even the Gentiles were admonished to abstain from blood and things strangled, and thus containing blood (Acts 15:29), in order to help them discern the body and blood of Christ in the Sacrificial Meal of the Eucharistic Feast.

The Day of First-fruits

An illustration of Old Testament liturgical observances can be seen from the instructions in the Mosaic Law for the Day of First-fruits. This was the first of the harvest festivals, and celebrated the first sheaf of the barley crop, which was waved before the Lord. This Feast Day could not be celebrated during the 40 years of the Exodus, because there were no crops in the wilderness.

The Day of First-fruits was the day after the Sabbath of the 15th Nisan (Leviticus 23:6, 11) and the third day after Passover, but it was not a Sabbath. The first sheaf of the barley harvest was offered as a wave offering using a basket of the first grain (Leviticus 23:10-14). In a liturgy prescribed for this day, Israel recalled the resurrection of the nation from Egypt by a mighty Hand, an outstretched arm, awe-inspiring terror, signs and wonders (Deuteronomy 26:8). Then Jew and Gentile together rejoiced in all their blessings. Also on this day, Jesus rose from the dead as the first-fruits of man’s compound nature (i.e. body and soul), the first-fruits of those who have fallen asleep and the first-fruits of those who are His at His Coming (1 Corinthians 15:20, 23). Described in these verses (Deuteronomy 26:1-11) is the foundation for the Old Testament liturgy for this Feast Day, because it centered on giving thanks for the Grace of God in delivering the nation from slavery to Egypt. There were unique Sacrificial Meals also associated with this Feast Day.

In the 1st Century, the 16th Nisan was a Sunday, the 1st day of the week (Matthew 28:1). Later in the 1st Century, Christians had already started to meet on “The Lord’s Day”, or Sunday (Revelation 1:10), to celebrate the “Eucharist” or Thanksgiving for their deliverance from slavery to sin by the Resurrection of Christ. In becoming the first-fruits of the resurrection, Christ made Himself the way and image and pattern, in order that we, too, may become by adoption what He is by nature. “If the first-fruit is holy, the lump also is holy” (Romans 11:16).

Additionally, John of Damascus referred⁶³⁷ to the bread of the Lord’s Table as another kind of first-fruit. 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 (John 3:6).

The Liturgy of the Second Tithe

The Day of First-fruits was one of three times during the year when the “holy tithes” were brought to Jerusalem (Deuteronomy 16:16, Exodus 23:15, 34:20). Accompanying the giving of the Second Tithe (Deuteronomy 26:12) as alms for the poor was a solemn Liturgy that testified that this was done from a pure heart according to the Lord’s commandment, and that it was not done in sadness, uncleanness, or idolatry. By doing this, the people declared that Christ, the Rock that followed them (1 Corinthians 10:4), was their God. They also proclaimed that they would obey His voice and keep His statutes and judgments, which are part of the Mosaic Law.

Also included in this Liturgy was the Lord’s proclamation that Israel was His special people, holy in praise, in Name and in honor, as a kingdom of priests (Exodus 19:5-6, 1 Peter 2:5,9). At the conclusion of the Liturgy was a prayer asking for the Lord’s continued blessings on His people. After the prayers and blessings everyone rejoiced around the Sacrificial Meals, where this Liturgy is notably similar to the New Testament Eucharistic Liturgy and the love feasts (Jude 1:12).

Clement of Alexandria stated⁶³⁸ that three things are the key to both repentance and devotion: the mouth, the heart and the hands. With the heart comes volition or belief, with the mouth comes speech or confession (Romans 10:9-10), and with the hands come action that demonstrates what is in the heart (James 2:22). With the heart the people came to Jerusalem for the Sacrificial Meals. With the mouth they confessed Christ as their God. And with the hands they brought their second tithe as alms for their less fortunate brethren, who are also members of Christ (Matt 25:40).

The Amen

The Amen was part of the Old Testament liturgy and continued as such in the early Christian liturgy (1 Corinthians 14:16). As a liturgical term, the Amen speaks of a witness of the people with what is happening. Christ Himself is also called “The Amen, the Faithful and True Witness” (Revelation 3:14), and the Amen includes all the promises of God (2 Corinthians 1:20). Just as the Amen was used as a witness during the liturgy of the water of bitterness to discern unfaithfulness (Numbers 5:12-28), so it is used during the liturgy on Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim as a witness that the Law being proclaimed from the mountaintop is the Word of God. Just as Moses stood up when the Lord spoke to him the words of the Law (Deuteronomy 5:31-33), so

⁶³⁷ John of Damascus, An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith IV, 13.

⁶³⁸ Clement of Alexandria, Stromata II, 19.

the people stood when Moses spoke to them (Deuteronomy 27:11-26). The early Church Fathers quoted⁶³⁹ this passage (Deuteronomy 27:12-13, 5:31) as the reason for having the people stand to hear the Gospel reading during the Liturgy of the early Church.

The Liturgy on Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim After the Conquest

Mt. Ebal and Mt. Gerizim are adjacent peaks a short distance apart, both about 2500 ft. high and located in the center of Israel. Immediately following the Conquest, the Law was painted on stone on Mt. Ebal as an icon and as a curse for those who refuse to keep it (Deuteronomy 27:2-4).

Cyprian stated⁶⁴⁰ that the stones on which the Law was written represent Christ, the Lawgiver. As references he cited, “Thus says the Lord, Behold, I place on the foundations of Zion a precious stone, elect, chief, a corner stone, honorable; and he who trusts in Him shall not be confounded” (Isaiah 28:16). “The stone which the builders rejected, the same is become the head of the corner. The Lord has done this, and it is wonderful in our eyes. This is the day, which the Lord has made, let us rejoice and be glad in it. O Lord, save therefore, O Lord, direct therefore. Blessed is He who comes in the Name of the Lord” (Psalm 118:22-25). Cyprian went on to say that the stone has seven eyes (Zechariah 3:9), and is a witness against broken covenants (Joshua 24:26-27). Jacob placed it under his head (Genesis 28:11-22, 49:24), because the head of a man is Christ (1 Corinthians 11:3). In the battle against Amalek, Moses sat on it (Exodus 17:12), indicating how Christ overcame the devil. The Ark was placed on it (1 Samuel 6:15), and David struck the unsealed head of Goliath with it (1 Samuel 17:49), where by this seal we are always safe and live. Samuel called its Name Ebenezer (1 Samuel 7:12); that is, the stone that helps

The blessings and the curses were given very dramatic, liturgical prominence following the Conquest (Deuteronomy 27:12-26). The elders of six tribes stood on Mt. Ebal while the elders of the other six tribes stood on Mt. Gerizim. The elders, standing on Mt. Gerizim, blessed the people. The Levites read the words of Moses describing the curses, and the elders, standing on Mt. Ebal, cursed the people if they didn’t obey the words of the Law. And all the people responded with the “Amen”.

Since “those who are of faith are blessed with the believing Abraham” (Galatians 3:9), the blessing on Mt. Gerizim represents the blessing Abraham received for loving God and neighbor (Genesis 15:6). Mt. Gerizim continued to stand for holiness to the Samaritans, and Photini, the Samaritan woman, considered Mt. Gerizim more proper than Jerusalem (John 4:20). On the other hand, “the Law is not made for a righteous person” (1 Timothy 1:9), and “as many as are of the works of the Law are under the curse” (Galatians 3:10, Deuteronomy 27:26). The curse on Mt. Ebal represents what those who refuse to love God and neighbor can expect to receive after being reminded by the Law their entire life about what God expects, and yet refusing to obey. Just to show the love of God for His people, Christ Himself became the curse that was proclaimed on Mt. Ebal in becoming sin and taking away the sin of the world (Galatians 3:13, 2 Corinthians 5:21). Tertullian referred⁶⁴¹ to the blessing and the curse as good and evil.

“Behold”, says the Lord, “I have set before you good and evil. Choose that which is good. If you cannot because you will not (for that you can if you

⁶³⁹ *Apostolic Constitutions* II, vii, 57

⁶⁴⁰ Cyprian, *Treatises* XII, ii, 16.

⁶⁴¹ Tertullian, *On Monogamy*, xiv

will He has shown, because He has proposed each to your free-will) then you ought to depart from Him whose will you do not do”.

The Reading of the Law at the Feast of Tabernacles

The Feast of Tabernacles every seventh year was specified as a time for the Reading of the Law, but was not the only time for the Reading of the Law. An example of the readings done at the Feast of Tabernacles is given at the return of the captives, where Ezra, the priest, did not just the reading but also explained what it meant regarding the Feast (Nehemiah 8:13-18). After the Captivity, the priests became the Sadducean party and the Pharisees developed as an offshoot of the Scribes. The Pharisees then took the lead in the matters of teaching the people due to their zeal for the Law. It is truly ironic that both the Scribes (the guardians of the Scriptures), the Pharisees (the teachers of the Scriptures) and the Sadducees (the priests) rejected Christ, Who had given the Law to Moses on Mt. Sinai.

The Songs of Moses

There are two songs of Moses recorded in the Law (Exodus 15 and Deuteronomy 32) and both are still used today as part of the hymns of the Church. The former is used on Mondays during Lent as Ode 1 of the Matins canon, while the latter is used on Tuesdays during Lent as Ode 2 of the Matins canon, where Matins and Vespers are the modern equivalents of the Morning and Evening Continual Burnt Offering (Exodus 29:38-46). Just as both of these were used as part of the liturgical life of the people of God in the Old Testament, so they have been used by the Church, and have not been “forgotten in the mouths of their seed” (Deuteronomy 31:19-22). The 2nd song of Moses outlines the entire history of the people of God, past and future, and includes many things that man needs to repent from, but also includes the compassion of Christ. The song ends by proclaiming the Second Coming of Christ and the Resurrection of the Dead. Because this song was so popular and familiar, it became a witness during apostasy as to exactly what was wrong. For this reason, it is very apropos during Lent, which is a season of repentance.

The Liturgical Life of the Sabbath

The Lord commanded the Sabbath to remember how He created the world in six days and rested on the seventh (Exodus 31:15-17, 20:9-11). Other cultures, including ancient Babylon, also commemorated a Sabbath prior to Abraham. But the Sabbath was also a recalling of the time Israel was being “worked to death” in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). Thus the Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath (Mark 2:27). This is very apparent from a careful re-reading of the original Sabbath commands where the whole point is complete rest (Exodus 23:12, 31:15-17, 35:2, Deuteronomy 5:14).

The Sabbath was more than just rest, however. It was also a holy day (Exodus 16:23, 20:11, 31:15), and a day of gladness (Numbers 10:10). On this day, the daily offering was doubled from two lambs to four lambs (Numbers 28:3-15), and the showbread was set out in the Holy Place before the Lord (Leviticus 24:8). The Sabbaths were also to be a sign (or omen) between Israel and God “that they might know that I am the Lord who sanctifies them” (Ezekiel 20:12, 20). John of Damascus stated⁶⁴² that the Sabbath is the cessation from sin. When we take our ease from the distraction of material things, we may gather together unto God, spending the

⁶⁴² John of Damascus, An Exact Exposition of the Orthodox Faith IV, 23.

whole of the 7th day in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs and the study of the divine Scriptures and resting in God.

In the Law there were many prohibitions about doing work on the Sabbath. For example, one could not so much as kindle a fire (Exodus 35:3) or gather wood (Numbers 15:32-36), never mind carry heavy loads (Deuteronomy 5:14, Jeremiah 17:21). Travel was also restricted⁶⁴³ to what came to be known as a “Sabbath day’s journey” (Exodus 16:29, Acts 1:12). To enforce these prohibitions, the death penalty was prescribed for anyone breaking the Sabbath (Exodus 31:15). All this was intended to help focus a stiff-necked people back to the purpose of the Sabbath.

In the true spirit of the Sabbath, Jesus did a lot of healing on the Sabbath. For example, there was the paralytic (John 5:9), the man with a withered hand (Matthew 12:10), the man born blind (John 9:14), the hunchbacked woman (Luke 13:14), and the man with dropsy (Luke 14:3). Cyril of Alexandria stated⁶⁴⁴ that Jesus made the Sabbath truly a day of rest for the people He healed. If labor of the mouth in performing healing were forbidden, then one couldn’t sing psalms or pray either. Jesus compared His healing to commonly accepted humane practices in caring for livestock (Luke 13:15), where livestock, under the Mosaic Law, also observed the Sabbath (Deuteronomy 5:14).

Jesus was criticized for doing good on the Sabbath and asked His critics, “Is it lawful on the Sabbath to do good or to do evil, to save life or to kill?” (Mark 3:3-6). Doing good had been the intent of the Sabbath as a time for rest and concentration on the things of God (Luke 6:6-11, Ezekiel 20:12, 20). One who loves and honors the Lawgiver can see this; people who try to keep the Law without honoring the Lawgiver may have difficulty. If we get into a workaholic state, we can easily be distracted from the things of God.

In the late 1st Century, Christians began meeting for worship on Sunday rather than Saturday. At the beginning of the 2nd Century (107 AD), Ignatius of Antioch referred⁶⁴⁵ to the Lord’s Day as having replaced the Sabbath as the time for worship. Sunday was seen as comparable to the 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles and to Pascha (as the day after the Sabbath), which speak of the Feast as stretching into eternity. It was on this 8th day of the Feast of Tabernacles, the “Great Day” that Jesus stood up and said: “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water” (John 7:37-38). The living water refers to the Holy Spirit (John 7:39), where the righteous will shine forth like the sun in the Kingdom of their Father (Matthew 13:43). In this life, we live in the Light of His Resurrection, and therefore we have a foretaste of the prophetic meaning of the 8th day. Barnabas stated⁶⁴⁶ that Christ’s rest on the 7th day at Creation prefigured the age to come.

Applying the Sabbath to our lives today, we as individuals often need healing on the Sabbath also. Our culture drives us to be workaholics where working harder or longer gives us the illusion that we will catch up. Demons try to bind us with this treadmill lifestyle, and we should remember that the Sabbath laws recalled how Israel was being “worked to death” by

⁶⁴³ A “Sabbath’s Day Journey” (Acts 1:12) was 2000 cubits, or about ½ mile.

⁶⁴⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, *Commentary on the Gospel of Luke*, Ch 13.

⁶⁴⁵ Ignatius of Antioch, *Epistle to the Magnesians*, 9:1.

⁶⁴⁶ *Epistle of Barnabas*, 15.

slavery in Egypt (Deuteronomy 5:15). We should also remember Jesus' gentle rebuke to Martha, who had gotten into a workaholic state serving God: "One thing is needed, and Mary has chosen that good part which will not be taken away from her" (Luke 10:41-42).

The Importance of Jerusalem as a Place of Worship

All true worship of God involves some kind of sacrifice, and all sacrifice points in some way to the sacrifice of Christ on the Cross. When Abraham traveled to the "mountains of Moriah" (Genesis 22:2) to offer Isaac as a sacrifice, the mountain he went to was the spot where Jesus was to be crucified almost 2000 years later. After the Conquest, for c. 400 years, there was a time when, all over Israel, every man did what was right in his own eyes (Deuteronomy 12:8, Judges 17:6, 21:25). Finally during the time of David and Samuel, the center of worship in Israel was moved to Jerusalem. Of Jerusalem, the Lord had said, "There you shall bring all that I command you: your burnt offerings, your sacrifices, your tithes, the heave offerings of your hand, and all your choice offerings which you vow to the Lord" (Deuteronomy 12:11).

Jerusalem is also symbolic of spirituality, since the Lord's Name was established there. Designating a focal point for worship of God (i.e. Jerusalem) was a first step towards a more spiritual worship. Basil stated⁶⁴⁷,

"It is an extraordinary statement, but it is none the less true, that the Spirit is frequently spoken of as the *place* of them that are being sanctified". Speaking to Moses, He said, 'Behold there is place by me, and stand upon a rock' (Exodus 33:21). "He meant the place or contemplation in the Spirit wherein, after Moses had entered, he was able to see God intelligibly manifested to him. This is the special and peculiar place of true worship; for it is said, 'Take heed that you offer not your burnt offerings in every place, but in the place the Lord your God shall choose' (Deuteronomy 12:5, 13). Now what is a spiritual burnt offering? The sacrifice of praise! And in what place do we offer it? In the Holy Spirit! Where have we learned this? From the Lord himself in the words 'The true worshippers shall worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23). This place Jacob saw and said, 'The Lord is in this place' (Genesis 28:16). It follows that the Spirit is truly the place of the saints and the saint is the proper place for the Spirit, offering himself as he does for the indwelling of God, and called God's Temple".

⁶⁴⁷ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, XXVI, 62.