

# The Feast Day of the Apostle Barnabas

June 11, 2020

**Epistle: Acts 11:19-26, 29-30**

**Gospel: Luke 10:16-21**

The Epistle for the Feast Day of Barnabas is not used in the West. In the Orthodox Church this Epistle is also used for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha. The Gospel for the Feast Day of Barnabas is sometimes used in the West for the 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost. In the Orthodox Church, this Gospel is used for many of the Feast Days of the Apostles.

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## Background on the Apostle Barnabas

Barnabas was a very well-known and well liked member of the Apostles. He had a unique gift for encouraging the brethren, which showed up in the name “Barnabas” that the brethren gave him. Before getting into the Epistle Lesson, we need to understand more about who Barnabas was.

## Barnabas’ Relationship with Christ

The Apostle Barnabas of the Seventy was born<sup>1</sup> in c. 14 BC on the island of Cyprus into the family of the tribe of Levi, and he was named Joseph (Acts 4:36). He received his education at Jerusalem<sup>2</sup>, being associated with his friend and fellow student Saul (the future Apostle Paul) under the renowned teacher of the Law, Gamaliel. Joseph was pious; he frequented the Temple; he strictly observed the fasts and avoided youthful distractions. During this time period our Lord Jesus Christ began His public ministry. Seeing the Lord and hearing His Divine Words, Joseph believed in Him as the Messiah. Filled with love for Christ, he followed Him, and the Lord chose him to be one of His Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-11). The other Apostles called him Barnabas, which means “son of consolation” (Acts 4:36). After the Ascension of the Lord to Heaven, Barnabas sold land belonging to him near Jerusalem and he brought the money to the feet of the Apostles, leaving nothing for himself (Acts 4:36-37). After the stoning of Stephen, it was Barnabas who was the leader of the Seventy Apostles, the first in preaching and chief spokesman of the Seventy<sup>3</sup>.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>4</sup> that when Luke wrote that Barnabas was “a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith” (Acts 11:24), he meant that he was kind, sincere, and exceedingly desirous of the salvation of his neighbors.

Chrysostom also stated<sup>5</sup> that Paul considered Barnabas to be a truly great man, and he insisted that if Barnabas should come to visit, the saints should welcome him appropriately.

“Paul praised Barnabas still from his former relationship, for Barnabas was a great man; ‘about whom you received instructions: if he comes to you, welcome him’ (Colossians 4:10). Why? Would they not have received him? Yes, but he means, with much attention; and this shows Barnabas to be a great man. Where they received these commandments, he does not say.”

Barnabas, on the other hand, considered Paul in the same manner. As we shall see as the life of Barnabas unfolds, Barnabas took the same attitude toward Paul as John the Baptist did toward Christ, where John had said, “He must increase, but I must decrease” (John 3:30). Barnabas recognized the value to the Church of the gifts given to Paul, and he actively tried to promote their use in the Church. We will see how this unfolds step-by-step on their First Missionary Journey. Barnabas, who was originally a follower of John the Baptist, as were most of the Twelve and the Seventy, was taught this first hand by John.

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<sup>1</sup> See <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101691>. If Barnabas died in 62 AD at age 76, he had to have been born in c. 14 BC, and he was probably 15 to 20 years older than the Apostle Paul.

<sup>2</sup> Nikolai Velimirovic, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

<sup>3</sup> See [http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints\\_view?contentid=83](http://www.goarch.org/chapel/saints_view?contentid=83).

<sup>4</sup> John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, XXV, Recapitulation.

<sup>5</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on Colossians*, XI, vv. 9-10.

## Barnabas in the Early Church in Jerusalem

Luke writes, “Now 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. And with great power the apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus. And great grace was upon them all. 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. And Joseph, who was also named Barnabas by the apostles (which is translated Son of Encouragement), a Levite of the country of Cyprus, having land, sold *it*, and brought the money and laid *it* at the apostles' feet” (Acts 4:32-37).



**Figure 1**  
**Icon of Barnabas in His Liturgical Robes<sup>6</sup>**

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<sup>6</sup> <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101691>.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>7</sup> the contrast in Luke's account in Acts between Barnabas and Ananias & Sapphira (Acts 5:1-10). The conduct of Ananias was detestable compared to all the others; Barnabas

“Luke was just about to enter the narrative of Ananias and Sapphira to show the detestable conduct of that pair; first he speaks about the noble behavior of the rest, and singles out Barnabas as a notable example. In my opinion, their love of the saints begat their desire to give away all their property, not vice versa, and then the poverty drew tight the cords of love. Observe what he says, ‘The multitude of those who believed was of one heart and one soul’ (Acts 4:32). Notice, heart and soul are what make the ‘together’. ‘Neither did anyone say that any of the things he possessed was his own, but they had all things in common. And with great power the Apostles gave witness to the resurrection of the Lord Jesus’ (Acts 4:32-33). The phrase suggests them to be as persons put in trust with a deposit. He speaks of it as a debt or obligation; that is, their testimony they gave with boldness to all. ‘And great grace was upon them all. Nor was there anyone among them who lacked’ (Acts 4:34). Their feeling was just as if they were under their father’s roof, all for a while sharing alike. Though they maintained the rest, yet they did not do it with the feeling that the means were still their own. The admirable circumstance is this, that they first gave away their property on purpose that the maintenance might not come as of their own private means, but as of the common property. ‘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 4:34-35). A great mark of honor is this that ‘they laid them at the Apostles’ feet. Joseph was surnamed Barnabas by the Apostles, which is, being interpreted, the son of consolation’ (Acts 4:36). I suppose he also received the name from his virtue, as being qualified and suited for this duty. Barnabas was ‘A Levite, and of the country of Cyprus by birth’ (Acts 4:36). But how could Barnabas be also a ‘Cypriot by birth?’ The Jews relocated to other countries, and still were called Levites.

Chrysostom also stated<sup>8</sup> that it was his opinion from the text that Barnabas was very much like the Archdeacon Stephen, full of grace and power.

“When did that grace bloom upon the face of Stephen? Luke gives him the report that he was ‘full of faith’ (Acts 6:8). It is possible to have a grace that does not consist in works of healing. ‘To one is given the word of wisdom through the Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:8-9) yet to all in different manners. But here, it seems to me, it says that he was also gracious to look at. ‘They saw his face as it had been the face of an angel’ (Acts 6:15). That is, full of faith and of power, which is also the character given of Barnabas: ‘he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith’ (Acts 11:24). From this we learn that the sincere and innocent are, above all others, the men to be saved, and that these same are also more gracious.”

Luke describes what happened when Barnabas and Paul came to Antioch in Pisidia. “After the reading of the Law and the Prophets, the rulers of the synagogue asked them, saying, ‘Men *and*

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<sup>7</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XI, v. 32.

<sup>8</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XV, v. 8.

brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on'. Then Paul stood up, and motioning with *his* hand said, 'Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen'" (Acts 13:15-16). Chrysostom pointed out<sup>9</sup> an interesting aspect of Barnabas' character here:

"Notice that Barnabas gives place to Paul -- how should it be otherwise? This was why Barnabas brought Paul from Tarsus to Antioch in Syria (Acts 11:25-26). Similarly we find John on all occasions giving way to Peter; yet Barnabas was more looked up to than Paul. Barnabas had an eye only to the common advantage. 'Then Paul stood up', where this was a custom of the Jews, 'and beckoned with his hand'".

### **Barnabas Receives Paul after His Conversion**

After Paul's conversion on the Road to Damascus, Paul returned to Jerusalem, but everyone was afraid of him due to his intense persecution of the Church only a short while before. Only Barnabas befriended Paul and took him in to meet the other Apostles.

"Paul spent some days with the disciples at Damascus. Immediately he preached Christ in the synagogues, that He is the Son of God. Then all who heard were amazed, and said, 'Is this not he who destroyed those who called on this Name in Jerusalem, and has come here for that purpose, so that he might bring them bound to the chief priests?' But Paul increased all the more in strength, and confounded the Jews who dwelt in Damascus, proving that this *Jesus* is the Christ. Now after many days were past, the Jews plotted to kill him. But their plot became known to Paul. They watched the gates day and night, to kill him. Then the disciples took him by night and let *him* down through the wall in a large basket. When Paul had come to Jerusalem, he tried to join the disciples; but they were all afraid of him, and did not believe that he was a disciple. But Barnabas took him and brought *him* to the Apostles. Barnabas declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, and that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus. So Paul was with them at Jerusalem, coming in and going out. He spoke boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus and disputed against the Hellenists, but they attempted to kill him. When the brethren found out, they brought him down to Caesarea and sent him out to Tarsus" (Acts 9:19-30).

John Chrysostom noted<sup>10</sup> that it was not just the Apostles in Jerusalem who were afraid of Paul, but Ananias in Damascus also. They just didn't believe that he was a disciple! This was not something that they would have expected! Barnabas proved to be different and changed that! As a result, the Church took care of Paul.

"They didn't believe that Paul was a disciple. Truly that was beyond all human expectation. He was no longer a wild beast, but a man mild and gentle! Observe how Paul does not go to the Apostles, such is his forbearance, but to the disciples, as being a disciple. He was not thought worthy of credit. But Barnabas -- Son of Consolation he was called -- also he makes himself easy access to Paul. 'He was a kind man' (Acts 11:24), exceedingly; this is proved both by the present instance, and in the affair of John Mark. Barnabas took Paul, 'brought him to the

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<sup>9</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXIX, vv. 16-17.

<sup>10</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXI, vv. 26-27, Recapitulation.

Apostles, and he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, that He had spoken to him, and how he had preached boldly at Damascus in the name of Jesus' (Acts 9:27). It is likely that at Damascus also Barnabas had heard all about him; *he* was not afraid but the others were, for Barnabas was a man whose glance inspired fear.

“Notice how the disciples feared the dangers, how the alarm was still at its height in them. But Barnabas changed that! It seems to me that Barnabas was of old a friend of Paul's. Notice how Paul says nothing of all this himself; nor would he have brought it forward to the others, had he not been compelled to do so. ‘Paul was with them, coming in and going out at Jerusalem, and speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus’ (Acts 9:28-29). This gave them all confidence. ‘The Jews went about to slay him; but the brethren found out’. Notice how both at Damascus and here, the rest take care of Paul, provide him the means of departure, and that we nowhere find him thus far receiving direct supernatural aid from God! So the energy of his character is exhibited. ‘They took him to Caesarea, and sent him off to Tarsus’ (Acts 9:30) so that he did not continue his journey by land, but sailed the rest of it. This departure is providentially ordered, that he might preach there also; so likewise were the plots against him ordered by God's Providence, and his coming to Jerusalem, that the story about him might no longer be disbelieved. There he was ‘speaking boldly in the name of the Lord Jesus; he spoke and disputed with the Hellenists. So the Church throughout all Judea, Galilee and Samaria had peace”.

What did Paul do in Tarsus for a number of years until Barnabas brought him to Antioch? There were a number of things: it was there that he had his vision of the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12:2). Paul also had some patching up to do among his own relatives. The Archdeacon Stephen was a kinsman of Paul<sup>11</sup>; since Paul was intimately involved with the slaying of Stephen (Acts 7:58), Paul had some work to do among the families back home in Tarsus.

### **Epistle: Acts 11:19-26, 29-30**

Today's Epistle lesson focuses on the beginning of the Church in Antioch. [This is the Antioch in Syria, not the Antioch in Pisidia that the Apostle Paul visited later in Acts 13:14]. Antioch was founded by Alexander the Great and was a Greek city in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century. Since the Islamic conquest, the Church in Antioch has been an Arab church and still is today. The Church moved to Damascus in the 13<sup>th</sup> century due to economic conditions and due to massacres of the Christians by the Moslems; it is still located there on the street called “Straight” (Acts 9:11). This Epistle is not used in the West; in the Orthodox Church this Epistle is also used for the 5<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Pascha.

The time span of the Epistle lesson covers about 13 years from the death of Stephen in 31 AD (Acts 11:19) to the death of James Zebedee in 44 AD (Acts 12:1-2). Immediately after the death of Stephen, everyone was scattered by the bloodbath organized by the Jewish leaders, where Deacon Stephen, Deacon Nicanor and 200 others were stoned to death on the same day (Acts 7:59-8:4). The Seventy, the Twelve and others began preaching to Jews only at first. Two weeks ago,

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<sup>11</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

we saw the effects of Deacon Philip’s preaching to the Samaritans (Acts 8:5-8). When James and the Apostles in Jerusalem heard that the Samaritans had received the Word of God – sown perhaps by Photini of Sychar, 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. Later on, Peter was involved with the chrismation and baptism of the Gentiles in Caesarea at the request of Cornelius (Acts. 10).

### The Scattering of the Saints after the Death of Stephen

“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” (Acts 11:19-21).

The scattering of the Saints from Jerusalem began in early 31 AD, after the martyrdom of Stephen on December 27<sup>th</sup>, 30 AD. Thus the development of the Church in Jerusalem occurred very rapidly, and the span of time for Acts 1-7 is about 1 year<sup>12</sup>. The motivation for this scattering was not just the martyrdom of Stephen; Stephen’s fellow deacon Nicanor was also stoned along with about 200 others<sup>13</sup> during a major bloodbath in Jerusalem.

We note the last time that the Twelve Apostles are mentioned as being together in Jerusalem is at the ordaining of the seven deacons (Acts 6:1-6). During the first year of the Church, the Twelve had been planning their missionary journeys as Christ had commanded them. “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the Name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you; and lo, I am with you always, *even* to the end of the age” (Matthew 28:19-20). The way they did this is to first divide the world up into different regions, then to draw lots for who should go where. At the time of the martyrdom of Stephen, they knew where they were going to go; so this was seen as the leading of the Lord to start their journeys. Knowing that they may never see each other again, they drafted a common statement<sup>14</sup> of the Faith – which we call today “The Apostles’ Creed”.

As part of this scattering, men from Cyprus and Cyrene who were also scattered at the death of Stephen 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, the men we know who were from (the island of) Cyprus and Cyrene (in Northern Africa) were:

| Name  | From   | Bishop of | Reference  | Notes                |
|-------|--------|-----------|------------|----------------------|
| Simon | Cyrene | ?         | Mark 15:21 | Carried Jesus’ Cross |

<sup>12</sup> A few authors place it at two years.

<sup>13</sup> Along with Deacon Stephen, Deacon Nicanor and 200 others were also murdered. This generated such a bloodbath that the Church was scattered to other parts of the world. See:

Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, July 28.

Hippolytus, On the Seventy Apostles, 9.

See also <http://www.oca.org/FSlives.asp> , July 28, December 28.

<http://www.goarch.org/en/chapel/saints.asp?contentid=144>, July 28.

<sup>14</sup> Rufinus, A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, v. 3.

|             |        |           |              |  |
|-------------|--------|-----------|--------------|--|
| Rufus       | Cyrene | Thebes    | Mark 15:21   | Son of Simon                             |
| Alexander   | Cyrene | (heretic) | Mark 15:21   | Son of Simon                             |
| Lucius      | Cyrene | Laodicea  | Acts 13:1    |  |
| Aristobulus | Cyprus | Britain   | Romans 16:10 | Barnabas' brother; Peter's father-in-law |
| Barnabas    | Cyprus | Cyprus    | Acts 12-15   |  |

All of the above, except for 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 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). This would explain the connection between Rufus (Simon’s son, Mark 15:21) and Antioch -- Rufus was martyred in c. 107 AD with Ignatius of Antioch. The connection being that Rufus came to Antioch with his father.

We should note also that Luke made a point to mention where some of the people present at the first Pentecost of the Church had come from. Notably present to hear Peter speak were a contingent from the parts of Libya about Cyrene (Acts 2:5-11).

Of the people listed above, all may have been involved in starting the church in Antioch, although Alexander ended up as an apostate later (1 Timothy 1:20, 2 Timothy 4:14). John Chrysostom notes<sup>15</sup> 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<sup>16</sup> in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to investigate. This was similar to the sending of Peter and John to chrismate the converts of Deacon Philip in Samaria (Acts 8:14) and the Lord sending Peter to chrismate and baptize Cornelius and those with him (Acts 10:19-21, 44-48). Barnabas may have been chosen to go because his brother Aristobulus was involved.

### **Barnabas was sent to Antioch by the Church in Jerusalem**

“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. Barnabas was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:22-24).

Ambrose of Milan singled<sup>17</sup> out Barnabas as a man who was worthy of his calling at this time.

“Barnabas also believed, and obeyed because he believed. Therefore, being chosen by the authority of the Holy Spirit, Which came on him abundantly, as a

<sup>15</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v. 19.

<sup>16</sup> We might note that at this time “the Apostles in Jerusalem” only included Peter and John from among the Twelve. “James” was James, the Lord’s brother, author of the Epistle of James, and who had been ordained as Bishop of Jerusalem by the Twelve. Judas, called Barsabas, and Silas (Acts 15: ) from the Seventy Apostles among others were there also.

<sup>17</sup> Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, II, 157.

special sign of his merits, he was worthy of so great a fellowship. For one grace shone in these whom one Spirit had chosen.”

Since Barnabas was sent to Antioch just before Herod Agrippa killed the Apostle James the son of Zebedee in 44 AD (Acts 12:1-2), we can put a date on Barnabas’ trip to Antioch as just a few years earlier.

Chrysostom also speculates<sup>18</sup> 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.” (Compare the attitude of the Jewish Christians in Jerusalem who are very zealous for the Mosaic Law: Acts 21:20-21).

“What may be the reason that, when such a city received the Word, they did not come themselves? Because of the Jews! But they sent Barnabas. However, it is no small part of the providential management so that Paul comes to be there. It is both natural, and it is wisely ordered, that they are averse to him, so that Voice of the Gospel that Trumpet of heaven is not shut up in Jerusalem. Note how on all occasions, Christ turns their ill dispositions to needful account and for the benefit of the Church! From the hatred of Paul by the Judaizers, God made Himself available for the building up of the Church. Observe this holy man, Barnabas, how he looked not to his own interests, but hastened to Tarsus. ‘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. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord’ (Acts 11:23-24). He was a very kind man, single-hearted, and considerate”.

### **Barnabas Leaves for Tarsus to Get Paul**

“Then Barnabas departed for Tarsus to seek Paul. And when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for a whole year they assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch” (Acts 11:25-26).

When Barnabas got to Antioch and saw the grace of God among the Gentiles (Acts 11:23), he encouraged them and then left for Tarsus to get Paul (Acts 11:25). Why? Paul had been sent to Tarsus, his home town (Acts 22:3), by James and the Jerusalem brethren, to get him away from murder plots in Jerusalem (Acts 9:29-30). Paul had been in Tarsus now for about 8 years (Acts 9:31), and 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 why Barnabas went to get Paul. Just before Paul was sent to Tarsus, he had a vision in the Temple where the Lord told him that He was going to send him to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17-21). This vision occurred before Peter’s vision of the sheet (Acts 10:9-17) leading up to the baptism of Cornelius. Therefore Paul and the Jerusalem brethren probably

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<sup>18</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v. 21.

didn't know what to do about the vision at the time. But when Barnabas saw the grace of God in Antioch, he went immediately to get the guy who had had the vision about the Gentiles 8 years earlier. And together, Barnabas and Paul spent a year teaching a great many people in Antioch. Following this, Barnabas and Paul were sent out by the church in Antioch on what has come to be known as Paul's First Missionary Journey.

Following the events described here, James (Zebedee) was killed by Herod (Acts 12:2) and Peter was imprisoned (Acts 12:3). 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 to Antioch, but the Lord sent Peter also a little later.

### **Origin of the Name "Christian"**

Luke writes, "So it was that for a whole year Barnabas and Paul assembled with the church and taught a great many people. And the disciples were first called Christians in Antioch" (Acts 11:26).

Ignatius of Antioch stated<sup>19</sup> that the name "Christians" for the believers in Antioch was the fulfillment of a prophecy by Isaiah. We need to work at being worthy of being called by that name that we have received.

"Let us not be insensible to the kindness of God. Were He to reward us according to our works, we should cease to be. 'If You, Lord, should mark iniquities, O Lord, who could stand?' (Psalm 130:3) Let us therefore prove ourselves worthy of that name, which we have received. For whoever is called by any other name besides this, he is not of God; for he has not received the prophecy which speaks thus concerning us. 'The people shall be called by a new name, which the Lord shall name them, and shall be a holy people' (Isaiah 62:2, 12). This was first fulfilled in Syria; for 'the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch' (Acts 11:26), when Paul and Peter were laying the foundations of the Church. Lay aside, therefore, the evil, the old, the corrupt leaven, and be changed into the new leaven of grace. Abide in Christ, that the stranger may not have dominion over you. It is absurd to speak of Jesus Christ with the tongue, and to cherish in the mind a Judaism, which has now come to an end. Christ is one, in whom every nation that believes, and every tongue that confesses, is gathered to God. Those that were of a stony heart have become the children of Abraham, the friend of God; and in his seed all those have been blessed who were ordained to eternal life in Christ."

According to tradition, it was Evodius<sup>20</sup>, the 2<sup>nd</sup> Bishop of Antioch, and a member of the original Seventy Apostles, who coined the term "Christian" in Antioch<sup>21</sup>. This occurred while Barnabas and Paul were in Antioch.

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<sup>19</sup> Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Magnesians, 10.

<sup>20</sup> Sometimes spelled Euodius, where the Apostle Peter was considered the 1<sup>st</sup> Bishop of Antioch. Ignatius of Antioch followed Evodius as Bishop of Antioch. See also Eusebius, Church History, III, 22 and Ignatius, Epistle to the Antiochians, 7.

<sup>21</sup> Holy Apostles Convent, The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2002, September 7, p. 239.

## Agabus the Prophet Warns of a Famine

Paul stated, “God has appointed these in the church: first apostles, second prophets, third teachers, after that miracles, then gifts of healings, helps, administrations, varieties of tongues” (1 Corinthians 12:28). The “prophets” that Paul refers to as being almost as important as apostles are not just those of the Old Testament, but also those of the New Testament such as Agabus (Acts 11:28, 21:10), Judah Barsabas and Silas (Acts 15:22-32).

Agabus predicted the worldwide famine that occurred during the reign of Emperor Claudius (41-52 AD), and he also predicted the suffering of the Apostle Paul by the Jews in Jerusalem. He also preached<sup>22</sup> in many other lands and converted many pagans to Christ.

From Paul’s and Barnabas’ Missionary Journeys, we can see that the spiritual gift of Apostleship is of Primary importance in establishing Churches. How does the spiritual gift of prophecy fit in? Paul stated,

“Pursue love, and desire spiritual *gifts*, but especially that you may prophesy. For he who speaks in a tongue does not speak to men but to God, for no one understands *him*; however, in the spirit he speaks mysteries. But he who prophesies speaks edification and exhortation and comfort to men. He who speaks in a tongue edifies himself, but he who prophesies edifies the church. I wish you all spoke with tongues, but even more that you prophesied; for he who prophesies *is* greater than he who speaks with tongues, unless indeed he interprets, that the church may receive edification” (1 Corinthians 14:1-5).

How this works, Paul describes as follows: “If all prophesy, and an unbeliever or an uninformed person comes in, he is convinced by all; he is convicted by all. Thus the secrets of his heart are revealed. Falling down on *his* face, he will worship God and report that God is truly among you” (1 Corinthians 14:24-25). This is what happened with Photini, the woman at the well in Sychar (John 4:16-26).

Thus Paul said that prophesying is not for unbelievers but for those who believe’ (1 Corinthians 14:22). Paul’s advice on how this should be done is:

“Let two or three prophets speak, and let the others judge. But if *anything* is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent. You can all prophesy one by one, that all may learn and all may be encouraged. And the spirits of the prophets are subject to the prophets. God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace, as in all the churches of the saints” (1 Corinthians 14:29-33).

Included in the gift of prophecy is the understanding of all mysteries and all knowledge (1 Corinthians 13:2). This understanding led to the ordination of Timothy as an Apostle (1 Timothy 4:14). Yet prophecy outside the Church is false, since “no prophecy of Scripture is of any private interpretation. For prophecy never came by the will of man, but holy men of God spoke *as they were* moved by the Holy Spirit” (2 Peter 1:20-21). Also included in the spirit of prophecy is the testimony of Jesus (1 Peter 1:10).

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<sup>22</sup> See <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101024>.

Early Christian tradition described<sup>23</sup> the difference between prophecy in the Church and false prophecy:

“The false prophet falls into a spurious ecstasy, which is accompanied by a lack of all shame and fear. Beginning with an intentional rudeness, he ends with an involuntary madness of soul. But they will never be able to show that any one of the Old Testament prophets, or any one of the New, was carried away in spirit after this fashion. Nor will they be able to boast that Agabus, Judah Barsabas, Silas, the daughters of Philip (Acts 21:8-9), the woman Ammia in Philadelphia, Quadratus, or any of the others who do not in any respect belong to them, were moved in this way.”

Vincent of Lerins summarized<sup>24</sup> what is the mind of the Church regarding prophets and the unity of the Church. It is not an option to reject this; doing so places one outside the Church.

“Lest anyone should rashly think the holy and Catholic consent of the fathers of the Church to be despised, Paul says, ‘God has placed some in the Church, first Apostles’, of whom Paul was one; ‘secondly Prophets’ (1 Corinthians 12:28), such as Agabus. We ‘doctors’, are now called Homilists, Expositors; Paul sometimes calls them also ‘Prophets’, because by them the mysteries of the Prophets are opened to the people. Whoever shall despise these, who had their appointment of God in His Church in their several times and places, when they are unanimous in Christ, in the interpretation of some one point of Catholic doctrine, despises not man, but God. From their unity in the truth, lest anyone should vary, Paul earnestly protests, ‘I plead with you, brethren, by the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, that you all speak the same thing, and *that* there be no divisions among you, but *that* you be perfectly joined together in the same mind and in the same judgment’ (1 Corinthians 1:10). But if anyone dissent from their unanimous decision, let him listen to Paul’s words, ‘God is not *the author* of confusion but of peace’. That is, God is not the God of him who departs from the unity of consent, but of those who remain steadfast in the peace of consent, ‘As in all the churches of the saints’ (1 Corinthians 14:33). The churches of the saints continue steadfast in the communion of the faith.”

All this is what Agabus (and Judah Barsabas & Silas) did. Agabus started in Jerusalem; then he prophesied in Antioch, then in other parts of the world.

### **Alms for the Jerusalem Church**

“In these days 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 the entire world, which also happened in the days of Claudius Caesar. Then 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).

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<sup>23</sup> Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, VIII, I, 6.

<sup>24</sup> Vincent of Lerins, Commonitory, XXVIII, 73.

There was more to this famine than immediately meets the eye. As persecution developed, especially at the hand of Saul (Acts 8:3), the Jewish leaders would raid houses occupied by Christians, drag people off to prison, plunder the house of food and clothing and confiscate the property. In Jerusalem and vicinity the long-term effect of the persecution was the impoverishment of the Jerusalem church. The effect of the famine of 44 AD was felt particularly hard by the Christians. By 57 AD, it was so bad that the Apostle Paul took up another major collection among the Gentile churches in Macedonia (Philippi, Thessalonica, Berea), Achaia (Corinth, Athens) and Galatia (Iconium, Lystra, Derbe), to bring relief to the Jerusalem church (Romans 15:25-27, 1 Corinthians 16:1-4, 2 Corinthians 8:1-4, Acts 24:17).

Since the Christians in and about Jerusalem had sold their property and laid the proceeds at the Apostles' feet (Acts 4:35-37), these proceeds had to have been used for food, clothing and shelter for the saints. But if large portions were now being confiscated by the persecution, the Church began to be impoverished. The Gentile Churches that Paul started are never described as selling their property and laying the proceeds at the feet of the Apostles. Instead they are described as taking up a collection to help out the saints in Jerusalem. What the saints in Jerusalem were doing is certainly a blessed undertaking. James, the Bishop of Jerusalem, asked Paul specifically to remember the poor (Galatians 2:10). This refers not just to the poor among the Gentiles, but also to the very poor brethren in Jerusalem; and Paul was very eager to help out.

John Chrysostom referred<sup>25</sup> to the reason why this famine occurred: it was because of the evils done to the Apostles by the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem. The whole world suffered through the famine as a result. Jesus had predicted this, saying, "You shall have tribulation" (John 16:33).

Chrysostom noted<sup>26</sup> one every important development in Antioch: the alms for the Jerusalem Church (Acts 11:29-30). Chrysostom said 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 come follow me"" (Matthew 19:21).

Chrysostom also spoke<sup>27</sup> of the good use of wealth as a relief for the poor, and how neglecting that has dire consequences for us. Paying attention to this can cause us to inherit the Kingdom of God.

"Let us flee from this root of all evils, and we shall escape them all. 'The love of money is the root'; says Paul, or rather Christ by Paul, and let us see how this is. The actual experience of the world testifies to it. What evil is not caused by wealth, or rather not by wealth, but by the wicked will of those who don't know how to use it? It is possible to use wealth in well doing, and even by means of it to inherit the kingdom. What was given to us for the relief of the poor, to make amends for our past sins, and to please God, this we employ against the poor, or

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<sup>25</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v. 28.

<sup>26</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, Recapitulation.

<sup>27</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XVII, Moral.

rather against our own souls, and to the great displeasure of God. A man may rob someone of his wealth, and reduce him to poverty; but he reduces himself to death. The man he robs he causes to pine in poverty here; but himself in that eternal punishment. Are they equal sufferers, do you think?"

Chrysostom further stated<sup>28</sup> that people mired in deep poverty sometimes make unseasonable clamor, idle complaints and lamentations about matters for which they ought to be grateful. Others can easily be provoked by their unreasonable annoyance and complaints. This class of persons deserves to be pitied for their misfortunes, not insulted. To trample on their calamities, and add the pain of insult to that which poverty brings, would be an act of extreme brutality. The nature of poverty has a terrible power to depress even the noblest character, and induce it often to act in these same respects without shame. A man coming to help should not be irritated when accused of stinginess, or be provoked by continual begging to become an enemy. He should be affable and accessible to the needy, as Sirach said, 'Incline your ear to a poor man and give him a friendly answer with meekness' (Ecclesiasticus 4:8). The man, who is able to bear the other's infirmity, should bestow his gift to correct the suppliant by the gentleness of his countenance and the mildness of his words. If someone coming to help with a gift loads the poor with reproaches, insults them, and is exasperated against them, he not only fails through his gift to alleviate the despondency produced by poverty, but aggravates the distress by his abuse. Although the poor may be compelled to act very shamelessly through the necessity of hunger, they are nevertheless distressed at this compulsion. Due to the dread of famine, when they are constrained to beg, they feel shame because of their begging. Then on account of their shamelessness, if they are insulted, the power of despondency becomes a complex kind, accompanied by much gloom, and settles down on the soul.

In dealing with the poor, one ought to be so long-suffering, as to avoid increasing their despondency by his fits of anger, but also to remove the greater part of it by his exhortation. The man, who has been insulted, although he is in the enjoyment of great abundance, does not feel the advantage of his wealth, on account of the blow, which he has received from the insult. On the other hand, the man who has been addressed with kind words, and for whom the gift has been accompanied with encouragement, exults and rejoices all the more, and the thing given becomes doubled in value through the manner in which it is offered. I say this not of myself, but borrow from him whose precept I quoted just now: 'My son, do not mix reproach with your good deeds, nor cause grief by your words when you present a gift. Does not the dew ease the scorching heat? So a word is better than a gift. Indeed, does not a word surpass a good gift? Both are to be found in a gracious man'" (Ecclesiasticus 18:15-17).

Chrysostom continued<sup>29</sup> that alms can be done by other means than money, and that the services done by deeds often do more good than if done by money.

"But alms may be done not only by money, but by acts. For example: one can stand by a person kindly 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. It is, 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

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<sup>28</sup> John Chrysostom, Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood, III, 16.

<sup>29</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, Recapitulation.

part and do not be remiss. Have you seen him in bonds? For wealth is indeed bonds (Matthew 25:41-43). 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.

In considering the spread of the Early Church, one might think about how terrible the persecutions were. However, as Chrysostom put<sup>30</sup> it: “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, 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). 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!”

### **Distinguishing Characteristics about the City of Antioch**

The city of Antioch acquired a special dignity due to the extended presence of Peter, Paul, Barnabas and others. This was the cradle of Christianity, which is why believers were first called “Christians” there.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>31</sup> that the city of Antioch was very distinguished for three reasons: (1) Believers were first called Christians there. (2) Even while they were expecting a famine, they gave generously instead of hoarding for their own sustenance. (3) When the Jewish believers tried to lay Judaism on them, they didn’t bear this in silence, but sent Barnabas and Paul to Jerusalem to resolve the issue.

“Do you wish to learn the dignity and ancestry of the city of Antioch? I will tell it exactly; not only that you may know, but that you may also emulate it. ‘It came to pass, that the disciples were first called Christians at Antioch’ (Acts 11:26). This dignity, none of the cities throughout the world possesses, not even the city of Rome herself! On account of that love toward Christ, that boldness and virtue, Antioch can look the whole world in the face.”

“Do you wish farther to hear of a different dignity and commendation belonging to the city of Antioch? A really bad famine was approaching (Acts 11:28-30), and the inhabitants of Antioch determined, as far as each person had the means, to send relief to the Saints dwelling at Jerusalem. Notice this; charity in a time of famine! The times did not make them stingy; the expectation of the calamity did not make them backward in helping. When everyone is apt to be storing up what is not their own, then they distributed their own, not merely to those

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<sup>30</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v.22.

<sup>31</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statues, XVII, 10.

who were near, but also to those who were living afar off! Do you see here the faith towards God, and the love towards their neighbor?"

"Another dignity of the city of Antioch was displayed when certain men came down from Judaea to Antioch, defiling the doctrine preached, and introducing Jewish observances. The men of Antioch did not bear this novelty in silence. They came together, sent Paul and Barnabas to Jerusalem, and caused the Apostles to provide pure doctrines, cleared from all Jewish imperfection, distributed throughout all parts of the world! This is the dignity of Antioch! This is its precedence! This makes it a metropolis, not on earth, but in heaven. All other honors are corruptible, fleeting, perish with the present life, and often come to their end before the close of it! To me, a city that doesn't have pious citizens is inferior to any village, and less noble than any cave."

### **Barnabas and Paul take their First Missionary Journey**

"When Barnabas and Paul returned from Jerusalem when they had fulfilled *their* ministry of delivering the alms, they also took with them John whose surname was Mark" (Acts 12:25). Thus they brought Barnabas' cousin John Mark to Antioch, who was to begin accompanying them on their missionary journey. John Mark had been one of the original Seventy, along with Mark the Evangelist (who wrote the Gospel of Mark).

Barnabas and Paul's First Missionary Journey lasted from about 46 AD to 48 AD. We note that the Apostle Peter is not mentioned as being in Antioch when they started (Acts 13:1-3), but he had been there earlier. Herod Agrippa had tried to kill Peter to please the Jews in 44 AD, after he had killed James the son of Zebedee (Acts 12:1-3). Peter escaped, took the Evangelist Mark with him, and headed first to Caesarea (Acts 12:19) then to Antioch of Syria.

After staying in Antioch for a short time, Peter left for Rome with the Evangelist Mark in late 44 AD or early 45 AD. At this time, the people of Rome asked the Evangelist Mark to write down the things that Peter was preaching so that they could read it over and over. Mark did this, drafting what we now know as his Gospel. Peter read what Mark wrote, and asked that this be read regularly in the Churches. Thus began the Gospel Readings in the Churches according to a set schedule – now called the Orthodox Lectionary. In 45 AD, Peter also sent the Evangelist Mark<sup>32</sup> to Alexandria to start the Church there.

During the time that Peter was in Antioch, Paul was there also, and the two became good friends for the rest of their lives. This was probably the time that Paul referred to when he criticized Peter for eating with the Jews only and not as he had done before the Jews arrived from Jerusalem (Galatians 2:11-13). Even Barnabas got carried away with what Peter did. More on this later!

After Peter left Antioch, "Now in the church that was at Antioch there were certain prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen who had been

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<sup>32</sup> For more details about the Evangelist Mark's work in Egypt, see Mark Kern, [The Feast Day of the Evangelist Mark](http://www.stathanasius.org/), April 25<sup>th</sup>, at the web site <http://www.stathanasius.org/>. The work of the Evangelist Mark was quite different than that of John Mark, and they were working in different parts of the world most of their lives.

brought up with Herod the tetrarch, and Paul. As they ministered<sup>33</sup> to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Paul for the work to which I have called them’. Then, having fasted and prayed and laid hands on them, they sent *them* away (Acts 13:1-3). We might emphasize that this is the work of the Holy Spirit.

Thus as Paul’s first journey starts, Barnabas, Paul and John Mark (also of the 70) are traveling together while Rufus and Luke (also of the 70) are in Antioch. Not mentioned in Luke’s account in Acts, the Apostle Titus of the Seventy was also traveling<sup>34</sup> with Barnabas and Paul on this First Missionary Journey. This makes sense, since later Paul wrote that Titus went up to Jerusalem with he and Barnabas as another witness to the events of the First Missionary Journey; but the Apostles did not compel Titus to be circumcised (Galatians 2:3). If Titus had not accompanied Barnabas and Paul, there would have been no point of him going up to Jerusalem and risking offense from the brothers there.

In Luke’s account in Acts, we note that he used the third person (they) exclusively in the account of the First Missionary Journey. Later on in Paul’s Second Missionary Journey, Luke switches to the first person (we) since he was then traveling with Paul. John Mark returned to Jerusalem after they arrived in Perga (in Pamphylia, Acts 13:13), apparently shrinking back from the long and dangerous journey up the mountains from Perga to Antioch in Pisidia. Later (Acts 15:37-39), this became a sore point where Paul didn’t want to take John Mark along on his Second Missionary Journey.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>35</sup> the details that Luke mentions. Barnabas was the leader acknowledged by everyone. They were ordained to confer the authority of God to their work.

Note that Luke still mentions Barnabas first; Paul was not yet famous, he had not yet done any miracles<sup>36</sup>. What does ‘ministering’ mean? Preaching! What does ‘separate to Me Barnabas and Paul’ mean? For the work, for the Apostleship! See again by what persons he is ordained; by Lucius the Cyrenean and Manaen, or rather, by the Spirit. The fewer the persons, the more palpable the grace! Barnabas and Paul were ordained to the Apostleship, so as to preach with authority. Why then does Paul himself say that he is, ‘an Apostle, not from men nor through man, but through Jesus Christ and God the Father?’ (Galatians 1:1) Because it was not man that called or brought him over to Christ; that is, that he was not sent by this man, but by the Spirit. Luke thus proceeds, ‘So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus’ (Acts 13:4).

Up to this point, the only (human) teacher that Paul had had was Ananias in Damascus for a short time and Barnabas for the year they spent teaching in Antioch. Since Paul didn’t have the benefit of spending three years with Jesus, he is still learning at this point, and those of the Seventy, who had spent three years with Jesus, were especially helpful. Paul has not performed any miracles

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<sup>33</sup> The Greek word that is translated “ministered” is *leitourgouton*, which means to perform the Liturgy in the Church. Included then in their “ministering” is both worship and preaching.

<sup>34</sup> Holy Apostles Convent, The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, 2009, August 25, p . 935.

<sup>35</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXVII, v. 25.

<sup>36</sup> While Paul had not done any miracles yet, Barnabas had done some as one of the Seventy (Like 10:9), although Barnabas was not renowned for this as Stephen had been (Acts 6:8).

yet, but those of the Seventy, which included Barnabas, had done so at least during the time that Jesus sent them out (Luke 10:1-11), and perhaps subsequently.

Chrysostom noted<sup>37</sup> that there were prophets in Antioch also, and not just in Jerusalem. The Spirit saw that Barnabas and Paul were ready for this mission, and sent them out.

“If this wasn’t the Holy Spirit saying ‘Separate to Me’, what being would have dared to say this, if not of the same authority? But this is done, that they may not hide themselves together in Antioch. The Spirit saw that Barnabas and Paul had greater power, and were able to be sufficient for many. How did He speak to them? Probably by prophets (Acts 13:1); therefore Luke says, that there were prophets in Antioch also. They were fasting and ministering, that we may learn that there was need of great sobriety. In Antioch Paul was ordained, where he preaches. Why did the Holy Spirit not say, ‘Separate for the Lord’, but, ‘For Me’? It shows that He is of one authority and power. Notice what a great thing fasting is! “So they were sent forth by the Holy Spirit”; this shows that the Spirit did everything.”

Chrysostom also pointed out<sup>38</sup> that Paul excelled the other Apostles chiefly in his immediate and implacable war with the Jews to overthrow the foundation of their error. His critics said that this had been entrusted to him by the Apostles, and thus by man. Yet the Apostleship was given to Barnabas and Paul by the Holy Spirit; it is only after this that Paul starts to work miracles. Barnabas had been given that already when he was called for the work of the Seventy.

“Just as Peter, Andrew, James and John did not require a second call, but immediately left their nets and all that they had, and followed Him, so Paul at his call pressed vigorously forward, waging as soon as he was baptized, an implacable war with the Jews. In this respect he chiefly excelled the other Apostles, as he says, ‘I labored more abundantly than they all’ (I Corinthians 15:10). As he began his missionary journeys, however, he makes no such claim, but is content to be placed on a level with them. His great object was not to establish any superiority for himself, but to overthrow the foundation of the Jewish error. The not being ‘from men’ applies to everyone, for the Gospel’s root and origin is divine; the not being ‘through man’ is peculiar to the Apostles; for He called them not by men’s agency, but by His own.”

“Why does Paul not speak of his calling rather than his apostolate, and say, ‘Paul’ called ‘not by man?’ Here lay the whole question; his critics said that the office of a teacher had been committed to him by men, namely by the Apostles, whom therefore he ought to obey. That it was not entrusted to him by men, Luke declares, ‘As they ministered to the Lord, and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Separate to Me Barnabas and Saul’ (Acts 13:2). It is clear that the power of the Son and Spirit is one, for being commissioned by the Spirit, Paul says that he was commissioned by Christ.”

As Barnabas and Paul began their First Missionary Journey, they traveled very simply, just as Barnabas had done when he had traveled as part of the Seventy Apostles (Luke 10:1-11). That

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<sup>37</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXVII, Recapitulation.

<sup>38</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, I, vv. 1-3.

is, they traveled with no food, money bag, knapsack, and perhaps no sandals; they were entirely dependent on the kindness of those that they met along the way. In addition, both Barnabas and Paul worked at their trade to support themselves in the places that they went (1 Corinthians 9:6). Paul's trade was a tentmaker; we're not told what Barnabas' trade was.

### **Mission to Cyprus, Barnabas' Homeland**

“Being sent out by the Holy Spirit, Barnabas and Paul went down to Seleucia, and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived in Salamis, they preached the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. They also had John as *their* assistant. Now when they had gone through the island to Paphos, they found a certain sorcerer, a false prophet, a Jew whose name *was* Bar-Jesus, who was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man. This man called for Barnabas and Saul and sought to hear the word of God. But Elymas the sorcerer (for so his name is translated) withstood them, seeking to turn the proconsul away from the Faith. Then Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, ‘O full of all deceit and all fraud, *you* son of the devil, *you* enemy of all righteousness, will you not cease perverting the straight ways of the Lord? And now, indeed, the hand of the Lord *is* upon you, and you shall be blind, not seeing the sun for a time’. Immediately a dark mist fell on him, and he went around seeking someone to lead him by the hand. Then the proconsul believed, when he saw what had been done, being astonished at the teaching of the Lord” (Acts 13:4-12).

Why would they choose to go to Cyprus first? Granted it was Barnabas' homeland; but there is another reason. In the dispersion of the Christians after the stoning of Stephen, “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” (Acts 11:19-20). Barnabas had been sent by the Church in Jerusalem to help the Church in Antioch, which he did. The Christians in Phoenicia had been taken care of by the Apostles in Jerusalem following the conversion of the Samaritans by Deacon Philip (Acts 8:5-12). But no one had yet gone to help out the Christians on the island of Cyprus. Cyprus was not that far from Antioch, so it was natural for Barnabas to extend his commission from Jerusalem to the island of Cyprus, even though his mission had been only to go as far as Antioch (Acts 11:22).

When Barnabas, Paul and John Mark were on the Island of Cyprus, the homeland of Barnabas and John Mark, Aristobulus, Barnabas' brother, (and also Peter's father-in-law) was probably there also. Barnabas had a very strong desire for bringing his countrymen to the Lord and went back to Cyprus later with John Mark. According to tradition, Barnabas spent most of the rest of his life on Cyprus. John Mark, however, showed up on some of Paul's later missionary journeys (Colossians 4:10, 2 Timothy 4:11, Philemon 1:24).

We note that the blinding of the sorcerer Elymas was the first miracle recorded as being done by the Apostle Paul. The impact was that the Apostle Paul was starting to gain a more leading role in the Mission that he and Barnabas started.

Why didn't Barnabas and Paul stay longer on Cyprus, since it was Barnabas' homeland? Cyprus is fairly close to Antioch of Syria, where Barnabas and Paul had sailed from. John

Chrysostom stated<sup>39</sup> that it was relatively easy for Cyprus to get teachers to come over from Antioch, provided that the roadblock, Elymas bothering the proconsul, was removed. So they moved on to the coast of Asia Minor where there was a greater need – at the direction of the Holy Spirit.

### **John Mark Abandons His Apostleship in Pamphylia**

John Mark had been called as one of the Seventy, like his cousin Barnabas, and had worked miracles on that mission. Yet after leaving Cyprus and coming to the coast of Asia Minor, he left Barnabas and Paul and returned to Jerusalem. As a result of this, Paul refused to take him along on the Second Missionary Journey and Barnabas and Paul split up.

Why would John Mark abandon them? Perhaps he didn't want to go beyond his homeland (Cyprus). Since the Apostles traveled very light: no bag, no food, no money, no change of clothes (Mark 6:8-9), this was a difficult journey traveling by foot.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>40</sup> that the work of an apostle is a very dignified calling, and he doesn't take the honor to himself. He who shrinks from it when offered to him gets blame of a different kind. When John Mark abandoned his Apostleship in Pamphylia (Acts 13:13), Barnabas, being a kind man, sought an opportunity to bring his cousin back to the work.

“Great and admirable is the dignity of an Apostle, and we find Paul constantly listing the causes of it, not as if he took the honor to himself, but as entrusted with it, and being under the necessity of so doing. He speaks of himself as ‘called’, and that ‘by the will of God’, and elsewhere, ‘a necessity is laid upon me’ (1 Corinthians 9:16). He says, ‘for this I was separated’; by these expressions, all idea of arrogance and ambition is removed. Just as he deserves the severest blame, who intrudes into an office which is not given him of God, so he who refuses and shrinks from it when offered to him, incurs blame of another kind, that of rebellion and disobedience. Therefore Paul expresses himself, ‘Paul, an Apostle of Jesus Christ by the commandment of God’ (1 Timothy 1:1). He does not say here, ‘Paul called’, but ‘by commandment’. He begins in this manner, that Timothy may not feel any human infirmity from supposing that Paul addresses him on the same terms as his disciples. Where is this commandment given? ‘The Spirit said, Separate to Me Barnabas and Paul’ (Acts 13:2). Everywhere in his writings Paul adds the name of Apostle, to instruct his hearers not to consider the doctrines he delivered as proceeding from man. For an Apostle can say nothing of his own, and by calling himself an Apostle, he at once refers his hearers to Him that sent him.”

Chrysostom also pointed out<sup>41</sup> Paul's words to Timothy, where Paul was trying to persuade Timothy not to abandon his apostleship. He was ordained by prophecy and the Holy Spirit; this was not a human vote. Similarly in the case of John Mark; Barnabas felt that he had to bring John Mark back.

“If we neglect even what is clearly evident, how will God reveal to us what is unseen? ‘If you have not been faithful in the unrighteous mammon, who will

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<sup>39</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXVIII, Recapitulation.

<sup>40</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, I, v. 1.

<sup>41</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, v, 18.

commit the true riches to your trust?’ (Luke 16:11) Timothy was ordained ‘by prophecy’ (1 Timothy 1:1); what does this mean? By the Holy Spirit! Prophecy is not only the telling of things future, but also of the present. It was by prophecy that Saul was discovered ‘hidden among the equipment’ (1 Samuel 10:17-24). God reveals things to the righteous. So it was said by prophecy, ‘Separate to Me Barnabas and Paul’ (Acts 13:2). In this way Timothy also was chosen, concerning whom he speaks of prophecies in the plural; when Paul ordained him, he said, “Do not neglect the gift that is in you, which was given to you by prophecy’ (1 Timothy 4:14). Therefore to elevate him, and prepare him to be sober and watchful, Paul reminds him by whom he was chosen and ordained. It is as if Paul had said, ‘God has chosen you. He gave you your commission, you were not ordained by human vote. Do not therefore abuse or bring into disgrace the appointment of God.’”

### **The Church of Antioch in Pisidia**

Sailing from Cyprus to the mainland, Barnabas, Paul, Titus and John Mark arrived at Attalia and hiked inland about 10 miles (as the crow flies) to Perga in Pamphylia. This was not too much of a hike, since Perga is only 175 feet above sea level. Perga was built inland, however, to frustrate raids by pirates operating along the shore.

John Mark left to return to Jerusalem shortly after they arrived in Perga, and Barnabas and Paul didn’t stay long in Perga either, moving on across the 4500-foot-peak mountains and climbing from there to Antioch of Pisidia at an elevation of 5500 feet, about 100 miles North of Perga. On the Sabbath, they went into the local synagogue and sat down. After the Readings from the Law and the Prophets as prescribed for that day, the synagogue rulers asked if Barnabas or Paul had a word of encouragement for the people. Paul stood up and began to speak. As Paul spoke, he quoted from the Scriptures, which may have been part of the Readings for that day. After the synagogue service,

“The Gentiles begged that these words might be preached to them the next Sabbath. When the congregation had broken up, many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas, who, speaking to them persuaded them to continue in the grace of God. On the next Sabbath almost the whole city came together to hear the word of God. But when the Jews saw the multitudes, they were filled with envy; and contradicting and blaspheming, they opposed the things spoken by Paul. Then Paul and Barnabas grew bold and said, ‘It was necessary that the word of God should be spoken to you first; but since you reject it, and judge yourselves unworthy of everlasting life, behold, we turn to the Gentiles. For so the Lord has commanded us: “I have set you as a light to the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth”’. Now when the Gentiles heard this, they were glad and glorified the word of the Lord. And as many as had been appointed to eternal life believed. And the word of the Lord was being spread throughout the entire region. But the Jews stirred up the devout and prominent women; the chief men of the city raised up persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their region. But they shook off the dust from their feet against them, and came to Iconium. And the disciples were filled with joy and with the Holy Spirit” (Acts 13:42-52).

When Barnabas first came to Antioch of Syria, he encouraged everyone to continue in the Grace of God. “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. He was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were added to the Lord” (Acts 11:23-24).

Now here in Antioch of Pisidia, Paul and Barnabas do the same thing, since many of the Jews and devout proselytes followed Paul and Barnabas out of the synagogue. They “persuaded them to continue in the grace of God” (Acts 13:43). This was coming right from Barnabas’ heart as the “son of encouragement” (Acts 4:36).

John Chrysostom stated<sup>42</sup> just as the “scattering” of the saints (Acts 8:4) produced a good result in spreading the Gospel, so did the contentious behavior here. They simply judged themselves unworthy; the Apostles had no choice but to go elsewhere. We note that now Paul is the chief speaker, not Barnabas.

“Do you observe the eagerness, how great it is? They ‘followed’ them! Why did Paul and Barnabas not baptize them immediately? It was not the proper time: there was need to persuade them in order to assure their steadfastness.”

“The next Sabbath when the whole city turned out – this hadn’t happened before with the synagogue rulers – the Jews got envious and began contradicting the things spoken by Paul.”

“By the contentious behavior of the Jews, the preaching was extended, and the Apostles gave themselves the more to the Gentiles, having freed themselves of all blame with their own people at Jerusalem. By their ‘envy’ the Jews brought about great things, other than what they looked for; namely, the Apostles spoke out boldly, and came to the Gentiles! By saying ‘To you first’, Paul showed that to the Jews also it was their duty to preach, and in saying ‘Necessary’, he showed that it was necessary to preach to the Gentiles also.”

“Paul does not say, ‘You are unworthy’, but ‘have judged yourselves unworthy’; therefore we turn to the Gentiles. So has the Lord commanded us, I have sent you to be a light of the Gentiles that you should be for salvation to the ends of the earth” (Acts 13:47).

“Notice what the Jews accomplished by their opposition the preaching, and to what dishonor they brought these ‘honorable women’. Here the Apostles used that awesome sign, ‘shaking off the dust from their feet’ (Matthew 10:14; Mark 6:11). They did it on no light ground, but because they were driven away by them. This was no hurt to the disciples; on the contrary, they continued all the more in the word: for the suffering of the teacher does not check his boldness, but makes the disciple more courageous.”

## **The Church of Iconium in Galatia**

Iconium is about 75 miles East of Antioch in Pisidia, and is lower in elevation, about 4000 feet. But one has to climb up from Antioch in Pisidia at 5500 feet over a 6000-foot-peak mountain range to get there. After their arrival at Iconium:

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<sup>42</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXX, v. 43.

“It happened in Iconium that they went together to the synagogue of the Jews, and so spoke that a great multitude both of the Jews and of the Greeks believed. But the unbelieving Jews stirred up the Gentiles and poisoned their minds against the brethren. Therefore they stayed there a long time, speaking boldly in the Lord, who was bearing witness to the word of His grace, granting signs and wonders to be done by their hands. But the multitude of the city was divided: part sided with the Jews, and part with the Apostles. And when a violent attempt was made by both the Gentiles and Jews, with their rulers, to abuse and stone them, they became aware of it and fled to Lystra and Derbe, cities of Lycaonia, and to the surrounding region. And they were preaching the gospel there” (Acts 14:1-7).

We note from this account that Paul was the primary speaker in Antioch in Pisidia, but here in Iconium, Barnabas spoke also. No signs and wonders were recorded as being done in Antioch in Pisidia, but in Iconium many signs and wonders were performed by both Barnabas and Paul. At this point, Barnabas was still the leader, but Paul was taking on more responsibility for the work.

During the “long time” that Barnabas and Paul stayed in Iconium, there were two notable people that became prominent later because of Barnabas and Paul’s visit: Onesiphorus (2 Timothy 1:16, 4:19) and Thekla. Onesiphorus was one of the original members of the Seventy<sup>43</sup>, and Barnabas and Paul stayed in his house for at least part of the time they were there during this visit and on Paul’s Second Missionary Journey<sup>44</sup>. Thekla was a young lady that was converted through the preaching of Paul and she went on to become one of the famous Unmercenary Healers of the Orthodox Church<sup>45</sup>.

Following her baptism, Thekla desired to have nothing to do with her fiancé’s and her family’s idolatry and began following Paul for a short time. Soon she was condemned to be burned alive in the amphitheater. Paul and Onesiphorus fasted and prayed for several days and a sudden electrical storm with rain and hail erupted in the theater and extinguished the fire. Thekla walked home unharmed.

Later when Thekla returned to Antioch with Paul the chief magistrate took a liking to her. She refused his advances and was condemned to the arena to be eaten by lions and bears. However, some lionesses licked her feet and defended her while the other animals fought among themselves. Unable to kill her, they released her.

Eventually, she went off to live a simple life of fasting and prayer in a cave near Seleucia (northwest of Antioch). After living there for about 70 years, she was martyred by the local physicians who were seeing all their patients healed by Thekla. Thekla came to be called “Equal to the Apostles” as a result of her ministry<sup>46</sup>.

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<sup>43</sup> Hippolytus, “On the Seventy Apostles”, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Hendrickson Publishers, 1995, v. 5.

<sup>44</sup> Holy Apostles Convent, The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, 2002, September 24, pp. 589-593.

<sup>45</sup> For more information on the Unmercenary Healers, see Mark Kern, The Unmercenary Healers, St. Athanasius Press, 2001.

<sup>46</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, September 24.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>47</sup> that the Jews in Iconium again extended the preaching against their will, this time with the help from the Gentiles.

“See how far they were from becoming more timid! It is likely they spoke to Greeks also, so the Jews began stirring up the Gentiles too, as not being enough by themselves. The Apostles didn’t leave since they were not driven away, only attacked. Because of the long time that they continued speaking boldly in the Lord, signs and wonders were granted to be done by their hands (Acts 14:3). It was no small matter that the multitude of the city was divided; part supported the Jews, and part the Apostles. This was what the Lord said, ‘I am not come to bring peace, but a sword’ (Matthew 10:34). Again, as if the Jews purposely wished to extend the preaching after it was increased, they once more did this.”

### **The Churches of Lystra and Derbe in Lycaonia of Galatia**

Lystra is about 20 miles Southwest of Iconium and at about the same elevation (4000 feet) with no major mountains to cross. Derbe is about 60 miles Southeast of Iconium, about 70 miles East of Lystra and at about 3500 feet elevation, with no mountain ranges to cross. After their arrival in Lystra, an unusual event occurred. Because the miracles were becoming more prominent, the unknowing pagans began to treat Barnabas and Paul as gods. This occurred as follows:

“In Lystra, a certain man without strength in his feet was sitting, a cripple from his mother's womb, who had never walked. This man heard Paul speaking. Observing him intently, and seeing that he had faith to be healed, Paul said with a loud voice, ‘Stand up straight on your feet!’ And he leaped and walked. Now when the people saw what Paul had done, they raised their voices, saying in the Lycaonian language, ‘The gods have come down to us in the likeness of men!’ And Barnabas they called Zeus<sup>48</sup>, and Paul, Hermes<sup>49</sup>, because he was the chief speaker. Then the priest of Zeus, whose temple was in front of their city, brought oxen and garlands to the gates, intending to sacrifice with the multitudes” (Acts 14:8-13).

John Chrysostom noted<sup>50</sup> the consequences if Barnabas and Paul had not acted quickly to defuse the desire of the pagans to offer sacrifice to them. It would have been more difficult for the pagans to distinguish them from the Greek gods.

“When something needs to be done, let us not decline it. Even after all this they hardly persuaded them; if they had not acted, what might have been the consequence? If they had not done thus, they would have been thought to make a show of humility, and to be all the more desirous of the honor. Observe their

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<sup>47</sup> John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, XXX, v. 1.

<sup>48</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Zeus>. Zeus was the Father of gods and men who ruled the Olympians of Mount Olympus as a father ruled the family. He was the god of sky and thunder in Greek mythology. This implies that Barnabas’ role was as a fatherly image or leader, with a dignified appearance. This is a natural association for Barnabas, since he was 15 to 20 years older than Paul. If Barnabas died in 62 AD at age 76 according to <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101691>, he had to be about that much older than Paul.

<sup>49</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Hermes>. Hermes is the great messenger of the gods in Greek mythology Hermes was born on Mount Cyllene in Arcadia and is an Olympian god. This implies that Paul’s role was seen as communicating to the people what Barnabas wanted him to.

<sup>50</sup> John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, XXXI, Recapitulation.

language, how in rebuking, it is moderated, both full of wonder and of rebuke. This above all it was that hindered them, the saying, ‘Preaching to you to turn from these useless things to the living God’ (Acts 14:15). Note how they not only subvert the false, but teach the true, saying nothing about things invisible. ‘Who made the heaven, the earth, the sea, and all things that are in them. Who in bygone generations’ (Acts 14:15-16). He names as witnesses even the years in their courses.”

With much effort Barnabas and Paul barely restrained the pagans from offering sacrifice to them in Lystra. Barnabas and Paul had already gotten their point across, when they had to leave Lystra on short notice. Paul barely escaped death by stoning when Jews came from Antioch and Iconium; but the testimony of the man who was healed remained behind as a witness that Paul’s message needed serious consideration.

“Then Jews from Antioch and Iconium came there; and having persuaded the multitudes, they stoned Paul *and* dragged *him* out of the city, supposing him to be dead. However, when the disciples gathered around him, he rose up and went into the city. And the next day he departed with Barnabas to Derbe” (Acts 14:19-20).

Paul stated that he was “untrained in speech, but not in knowledge” (2 Corinthians 11:6). How is it then that he appeared as a spokesman in Lystra and the pagans thought that he was the Greek god Hermes? John Chrysostom stated<sup>51</sup> that the opinion that Barnabas and Paul were gods came from their miracles; but the notion that Paul was Hermes did not arise from this, but was a consequence of his speech. Paul may not have been a good orator, but he was very knowledgeable in the Scriptures; this knowledge allowed him to master his opponents to the point that they wanted to kill him. It was this knowledge in his speech that came across in Lystra.

“Paul was not as unskilled, as some count him to be. The unskilled person in men’s estimation is not only one who is unpracticed in the tricks of oratory, but also the man who is incapable of contending for the defense of the right faith, and they are right. But Paul did not say that he was unskilled in both these respects, but in the first only.”

“How was it, tell me, that he confounded the Jews in Damascus (Acts 9:22), though he had not yet begun to work miracles? How was it that he wrestled with the Hellenists and overwhelmed them so much that they tried to kill him? (Acts 9:29) Why was he sent to Tarsus? (Acts 9:30) Was it not because he was so strong in the Word, and brought his adversaries to such a point that they were unable to stop their defeat, and were provoked to seek his life? Those who contended with him were not overpowered by the force of public opinion concerning him. At this time he conquered by means of argument only. How was it that he disputed successfully in Antioch with those who tried to push circumcision? (Acts 15:1-2) How was it that that Dionysius of Athens followed Paul, he and his wife? (Acts 17:34) How do we find him employed at Thessalonica and Corinth, in Ephesus and in Rome? Did he not spend whole nights and days in interpreting the Scriptures in their order? (Acts 20:7-8) He also disputed with the Epicureans and Stoics” (Acts 17:18-32).

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<sup>51</sup> John Chrysostom, Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood, IV, 6-7.

“Paul’s sermons and disputations were admired by all who heard them. How is it that up and down the world he is so much on everyone’s tongue? Is it not from the power of his epistles? (2 Peter 3:15-16) Not only to the faithful of today, but from his time forward, he has been and will continue to be profitable so as long as the human race shall last. His writings fortify all the Churches of the world, and he brings into captivity every thought to the obedience of Christ, casting down imaginations, and every high thing which exalts itself against the knowledge of God. All this he does by those epistles which he has left to us full of wonders and of Divine wisdom. His writings are not only useful to us for the overthrow of false doctrine and the confirmation of the true, but they help not a little towards living a good life. Such are the medicines and the effects left us by this so-called unskillful man; they know them and their power best that constantly use them. From all this it is evident that Paul had given himself to the study of the Scriptures with great diligence and zeal.”

As the Light increased with more prominent miracles, the darkness matched it. While the Jews from neighboring cities were on a witch-hunt, for Paul especially, the believers who were observing all this were being enlightened regarding what was really happening. Taking all this in at this time was the future Apostle Timothy, who became prominent himself later when Paul returned to this region (Acts 16:1-3). Also Gaius of Derbe (Acts 20:4) was involved. Both Timothy and Gaius were later added to the ranks of the Seventy Apostles to replace some who apostatized<sup>52</sup>, just like Matthias was added to the ranks of the Twelve Apostles to replace Judas.

John Chrysostom stated<sup>53</sup> that God so ordered the affliction of the Apostles so that the people would not think of them as gods. This is how the Greek gods came to be popular; God didn’t want His followers to fall into that same trap.

“When Peter and John had restored the lame man, in order to restrain the people, Peter said, ‘Why do you marvel at this? Or why look so intently at us, as though by our own power or godliness we had made this man walk?’ (Acts 3:12) Again at Lystra, the people were not only filled with astonishment, but led out bulls, after crowning them with garlands, to offer sacrifice to Paul and Barnabas. Observe the malice of the demons. By the same persons through whom the Lord was at work, to purge out ungodliness from the world, by the same did that enemy try to introduce it, persuading them to take men for gods. This was what our enemy had done in former times. This is especially what introduced the principle and root of idolatry. Many after having had success in wars, set up trophies, built cities, and did other benefits to the people of those times; as a result, they came to be thought of as gods by the multitude, and were honored with temples and altars. The whole catalogue of the Grecian gods is made up of such men. In order that this may not be done towards the Saints, God permitted them constantly to be banished, scourged, and fall into diseases. By the abundance of bodily weakness, God might convince those who observed, both that they were men who did such wonders and that they contributed nothing of their own power. It was mere grace that did all these miracles through them. If the pagans regarded as gods, men who had done

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<sup>52</sup> For more information on those of the Seventy who apostatized and why they did so, see the Study: Mark Kern, Simon Magus Heresiarch, St Athanasius Press, 2004, pp. 58-59.

<sup>53</sup> John Chrysostom, Concerning the Statues, I, 17.

simple things, much more would they have thought the Apostles to be such, when they performed miracles that no one had ever seen or heard of. If when they were scourged, thrown down cliffs, imprisoned, banished, and placed in peril every day, there were some who still wanted to treat them as gods, how much rather would they have been thus regarded, had they endured nothing which belongs to human nature.”

Chrysostom also noted<sup>54</sup> the stark contrast between the Jews and the Gentiles: the Gentiles thought the Apostles were gods; the Jews thought they were evildoers. This is a truly great attitude of the Apostles: to ascribe everything to God and not to their ability or gift.

“Observe both the simplicity of the Gentiles, and the malignity of the Jews. By their actions the Gentiles showed that they were worthy to hear; they honored them from the miracle only. The Gentiles honored them as gods; the Jews persecuted them as pestilent fellows. The Gentiles not only took no offense at the preaching, but said, ‘The gods, in the likeness of men, are come down to us’. But the Jews were offended! Here was a new sort of trial, from immoderate zeal, and no small one; from this is shown the virtue of the Apostles, and how on all occasions they ascribe everything to God. Let us imitate them; let us think nothing our own, seeing even faith itself is not our own, but more God’s than ours. ‘For by grace you are saved through faith; and this is not of ourselves; it is the gift of God’ (Ephesians 2:8). Then let us not think great things of ourselves, nor be puffed up, being as we are, men, dust and ashes, smoke and shadow.”

Chrysostom further noted<sup>55</sup> the extremity of the evil of the Jews versus the humility of the Apostles. This presented a day-versus-night contrast in the minds of all those who were looking on.

“The Jews coming from Antioch and Iconium (Acts 14:20) were indeed children of the devil; not in their own cities only, but also beyond them, they did these things. They as much made it their study to make an end of the preaching, as the Apostles were in earnest to establish it! The Gentiles regarded them as gods, but the Jews ‘dragged’ Paul out of the city, supposing he was dead. The Jews persuaded the multitude since it is not likely that everyone revered them. In the same city in which they received this reverence, they were treated really badly. This also profited those looking on. ‘Lest anyone should think of me above what he sees me *to be* or hears from me’ (2 Corinthians 12:6). Here is fulfilled that saying, ‘My grace is sufficient for you, for My strength is made perfect in weakness’ (2 Corinthians 12:9). This humility is greater than the raising of the lame man! Note Paul’s zeal; note how fervent he is, how set on fire! He returned to the city itself again; this is proof that he retired only because he had already sown the Word, and because it was not right to inflame the wrath of the Jews.”

This occurred in c. 47 AD, and the future Apostles Timothy and Gaius were there witnessing it all. About 20 years later, when Timothy was going through similar things, but now as an Apostle, Paul wrote to Timothy:

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<sup>54</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXX, v. 6.

<sup>55</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXI, v. 18.

“You have carefully followed my doctrine, manner of life, purpose, faith, longsuffering, love, perseverance, persecutions, afflictions, which happened to me at Antioch, at Iconium, at Lystra -- what persecutions I endured. And out of *them* all, the Lord delivered me. Yes, and all who desire to live godly in Christ Jesus will suffer persecution” (2 Timothy 3:10-12)

### **Ordaining Elders and the Report Back to Antioch of Syria**

“When Barnabas and Paul had preached the Gospel in Derbe and made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, Iconium, and Antioch, strengthening the souls of the disciples, exhorting *them* to continue in the Faith, and saying, ‘We must through many tribulations<sup>56</sup> enter the kingdom of God’. So when they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed. After they had passed through Pisidia, they came to Pamphylia. Now when they had preached the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work which they had completed. Now when they had come and gathered the Church together, they reported all that God had done with them, and that He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles. So they stayed there a long time with the disciples” (Acts 14:21-28).

One of the elders (that is, presbyters) that Barnabas and Paul ordained was Cephas<sup>57</sup> in Iconium. This was a man of the same name as the Apostle Peter, but who had been one of the Seventy. Cephas served well in Iconium and was later replaced by Sosipater<sup>58</sup>, also one of the Seventy. Sosipater later left Iconium for a missionary journey to the Island of Corfu, and was replaced by Tertius<sup>59</sup>, also one of the Seventy.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>60</sup> that the primary issue on Barnabas and Paul’s First Missionary Journey was being counted worthy to suffer shame for the Name of Christ. Miracles were secondary, and the saints never rejoice in that.

“Barnabas and Paul said, ‘We must through many tribulations enter into the kingdom of God’ (Acts 14:22). This they said, this they showed. This was done on purpose, not only by the Apostles, but by their disciples also, that they may learn from the very outset both the might of the preaching, and that they must themselves also suffer such things. They need to stand nobly, not idly gaping for the miracles, but much more ready for the trials. Therefore Paul himself said, ‘Having the same conflict which you saw in me and now hear *is* in me’ (Philippians 1:30). Persecutions succeeded persecutions: wars, fighting, stoning. These things, not less than the miracles, both made them more illustrious, and prepared for them a greater rejoicing. The Scripture nowhere says that they returned rejoicing because they had done miracles, but it does say that they rejoiced that ‘they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His name’ (Acts 5:41). They were taught this by Christ, ‘Do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you’ (Luke 10:20). The joy indeed

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<sup>56</sup> The Church Fathers have had a great deal to say about this. For a synopsis, see the Study Mark Kern, [The Evangelist Mark](#), St Athanasius Press, 2012, pp. 61-100.

<sup>57</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, [Prologue From Ochrid](#), Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 8.

<sup>58</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, [Prologue From Ochrid](#), Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, November 10, April 28.

<sup>59</sup> Nickolai Velimirovic, [Prologue From Ochrid](#), Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, November 10.

<sup>60</sup> John Chrysostom, [Commentary on Acts](#), XXXI, v. 15.

is this, to suffer anything for Christ’s sake. What sort of cheering is it to say, ‘through much tribulation’? How did they persuade them by telling them at the outset of tribulations? Then also another consolation! ‘When they had appointed elders in every church, and prayed with fasting, they commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed’” (Acts 14:23).

Chrysostom also noted<sup>61</sup> that something else was happening just as Barnabas and Paul returned to Antioch: the Judaizers were coming to Antioch to try to force circumcision. This needed to take place to clarify what the Holy Spirit had been leading Barnabas and Paul to do.

“Why do Barnabas and Paul come back to Antioch? To report what had taken place among the Gentiles. Besides, there was a great purpose of Providence involved; they needed to preach with boldness to the Gentiles in the future. They came therefore, reporting these things that the elders in Antioch may be able to know what happened. It is providentially ordered that just then those, who forbade keeping company with the Gentiles (Acts 15:1), came in order that from Jerusalem they might obtain great encouragement, and so go their ways with boldness. Besides, it shows that in their temperament there was nothing of self-will. They came showing their boldness; they had preached to the Gentiles without the authority of those at Jerusalem, and the Gentiles obeyed; now they refer the matter to Jerusalem. They were not made arrogant, as having achieved so great successes. It says, ‘They commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed’ (Acts 14:23). And yet the Spirit had said, ‘Separate to Me Barnabas and Paul for the work to which I have called them’” (Acts 13:2).

**Table 1**  
**Summary of the Seventy Apostles Involved on Paul’s First Missionary Journey**

| Name        | Journey | Notes                                    |
|-------------|---------|--|
| Barnabas    | 1       | Leader of Group                          |
| Paul        | 1       | Barnabas’ co-Apostle                     |
| John Mark   | 1       | Began journey; left at Perga             |
| Titus       | 1       | Accompanied Barnabas and Paul            |
| Rufus       | 1       | In Antioch at sendoff                    |
| Luke        | 1       | In Antioch at sendoff                    |
| Aristobulus | 1       | Met at Cyprus                            |
| Cephas      | 1       | Met at Iconium, ordained presbyter       |
| Onesiphorus | 1       | Paul stayed with him in Iconium          |
| Timothy     | 1       | Met at Lystra, possible presbyter        |
| Gaius       | 1       | Met in Derbe, possible presbyter         |
| Thekla      | 1       | Met at Iconium; later Unmercenary Healer |

### **Barnabas and Paul at the Council of Jerusalem**

When the question arose whether those converted from the Gentiles should accept circumcision, Barnabas and Paul went to Jerusalem. There they were warmly received by the

<sup>61</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXI, v. 26.

Apostles and elders. The preachers related “what God had wrought with them and how He had opened the door of faith to the Gentiles” (Acts 14:27).

“However 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. So, being sent on their way by the Church, they passed through Phoenicia and Samaria, describing the conversion of the Gentiles; and they caused great joy to all the brethren. And when they had come to Jerusalem, they were received by the Church, the Apostles and the elders; and they reported all things that God had done with them. But 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’. Now the Apostles and elders came together to consider this matter” (Acts 15:1-6).

John Chrysostom noted<sup>62</sup> how twisted the situation was when Barnabas and Paul returned from their First Missionary Journey. Some thought that people couldn’t be saved without circumcision, when the opposite was the case.

“The Apostles from Antioch, as being taught of God, spoke to everyone indifferently; this moved to jealousy those of the Jews who had believed. They did not merely speak of circumcision, but they said, ‘You cannot even be saved’. Whereas the opposite was the case, that receiving circumcision they could not be saved (Galatians 5:2-3). Note how closely the trials follow each other, from within, from without! It is well ordered too, that this happens when Paul is present, that he may answer them. ‘When therefore Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and disputation with them, they determined that Paul and Barnabas, and certain other of them, should go up to Jerusalem to the Apostles and elders about this question’” (Acts 15:2).

Why was the issue of circumcision so important? This goes back to the Covenant that God had made with Abraham, where God had instituted a means of identifying His people from all the other nations of the earth. God had said to Abraham,

“As for you, you shall keep My covenant, you and your descendants after you throughout their generations. This *is* My covenant which you shall keep, between Me and you and your descendants after you: Every male child among you shall be circumcised; and you shall be circumcised in the flesh of your foreskins, and it shall be a sign of the covenant between Me and you. He who is eight days old among you shall be circumcised, every male child in your generations, he who is born in your house or bought with money from any foreigner who is not your descendant” (Genesis 17:9-12).

Chrysostom looked<sup>63</sup> carefully at Peter’s words at the Council in Jerusalem; his words were aimed more at teaching the Jewish believers to abandon the details of the Mosaic Law than to apologize for the Gentiles. The real issue is faith: the Gentiles have it; the Judaizers don’t.

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<sup>62</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXII, v. 1.

<sup>63</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXII, v. 8.

“Everywhere Peter puts the Gentiles on a thorough equality. ‘And made no distinction between us and them, purifying their hearts by faith’ (Acts 15:9). From faith alone, they obtained the same gifts. This is also meant as a lesson to those objectors; this is able to teach them that faith only is needed, not works or circumcision. They do not say all this only by way of apology for the Gentiles, but to teach the Jewish believers also to abandon the Law. However, at present this is not said. ‘Now therefore why do you tempt God, to put a yoke on the neck of the disciples?’ (Acts 15:10) What does he mean, ‘Tempt God?’ As if He had no power to save by faith! Consequently, this bringing in the Law proceeds from a lack of faith. Then Peter shows that they themselves were not benefited by it, and he turns the whole stress of his speech against the Law, not against the Judaizers, and so cuts short their accusation: ‘which neither our fathers nor we were able to bear. But we believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus we shall be saved, in the same manner as they’ (Acts 15:10-11). These are powerful words! The same thing that Paul says, Peter says here. ‘If Abraham was justified by works, he has *something* to boast about, but not before God’ (Romans 4:2). Do you perceive that all this is more a lesson for the Jews than an apology for the Gentiles?”

Chrysostom also noted<sup>64</sup> that the problem with those men that came down from Judea to Antioch teaching the necessity for circumcision was a lust for power.

“Therefore there came down certain men laboring under this disease of the love of power, and wishing to have those of the Gentiles attached to them. Though Paul was educated in the Law, he was not thus affected. ‘Paul and Barnabas had no small dissension and dispute with them’ (Acts 15:2). When Paul returned from Jerusalem, the doctrine also became more exact. For if they at Jerusalem enjoin no such thing, much more these men from Judea have no right to do so. Note that Barnabas and Paul ‘caused great joy to all the brethren as they proceeded to Jerusalem’ (Acts 15:3). Note also, as many as do not have a love of power, rejoiced in their believing (Galatians 6:12-13). It was no ambitious feeling that prompted their testimony about their First Missionary Journey, neither was it for display, but in justification of the preaching to the Gentiles.. They said nothing of what had happened to the Jews on their First Missionary Journey. ‘But some of the sect of the Pharisees who believed rose up’ (Acts 15:4-5). Even if these Pharisees with a love of power did bring over the Gentiles to their side, they learned that the Apostles in Jerusalem can’t just overlook it.”

Chrysostom further noted<sup>65</sup> how mild and gentle the Apostles were even in the face of rank insubordination on the part of the believing Pharisees. Barnabas and Paul don’t accuse them either, but just speak of the facts as they happened, and let the facts speak for themselves.

“As Peter spoke at the Council of Jerusalem, he said, ‘Why do you tempt God?’ He has become the God of the Gentiles; this was the tempting of God: denying that He is could save anyone apart from the Law. Notice what Peter does. He shows that those clinging to the Mosaic Law are in danger. What the Law could not do, faith had power to do. ‘We believe that through the grace of the Lord Jesus

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<sup>64</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXII, Recapitulation.

<sup>65</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXII, Recapitulation.

we shall be saved even as they' (Galatians 2:16). But if faith falls away, notice that they themselves are headed for destruction. Peter did not say, 'Why do you disbelieve?' which was 'harsher, but, 'Why do you tempt God'. Great impudence is this of the Pharisees; even after faith they set up the Law as greater than faith, and will not obey the Apostles. But notice the Apostles, how mildly they speak, and not in the tone of authority; such words are amiable, and more apt to fix themselves in the mind. Observe, it is nowhere a display of words, but demonstration by facts, by the Spirit. Though they have such proofs, yet they still speak gently. Notice also that Barnabas and Paul do not come accusing those causing the trouble at Antioch, but 'declaring all things that God had done with them' (Acts 15:4). But again these men seize upon the occasion to champion their own cause. 'But there rose up' etc. (Acts 15:5). Such were the pains they took in their love of power; it was not with the knowledge of the Apostles that Paul and Barnabas were blamed. But still Barnabas and Paul brought forward none of these charges. However, when the Apostles had proved the matter, then they wrote in stronger terms. For gentleness is everywhere a great good; gentleness, I say, not stupid indifference; gentleness, not flattery; for between these there is a vast difference."

Clement of Alexandria quoted<sup>66</sup> Barnabas as encouraging the fear of God as being the beginning of wisdom. This was the culture of the Church in Jerusalem, where everyone obeyed the Mosaic Law, but in a good way.

"Certain heresies appealed to Paul to say that the Law is not good, 'For by the Law is the knowledge of sin?' (Romans 3:20) To whom we say, The Law did not cause, but showed sin. Commanding what is to be done, it reprehended what ought not to be done. It is the part of the good to teach what is beneficial, and to point out what is harmful; to counsel the practice of the one, and to command to shun the other. Paul, whom they do not comprehend, said that by the Law the knowledge of sin was made clear, not that it derived its existence from the Law. How can the Law not be good, which is given as the instructor until Christ (Galatians 3:24), for the attainment of the perfection which is by Christ? He says, 'I have no pleasure in the death of the wicked, but in his repentance' (Ezekiel 33:11, 18:23, 32). Now the commandment works repentance; inasmuch as it deters from what ought not to be done, and commands good deeds. 'A wise man in heart will receive the Commandments' (Proverbs 10:8). Barnabas the Apostle said<sup>67</sup>, 'Woe to those who are wise in their own conceit, clever in their own eyes' (Isaiah 5:21 LXX), then added, 'Let us be spiritually minded; let us be a perfect temple to God. As much as in us lies, let us meditate upon the fear of God, and let us keep His commandments, that we may rejoice in His ordinances'. Consequently 'the fear of God' is divinely said to be the beginning of wisdom."

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<sup>66</sup> Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, II, 7. Early writers such as Clement, Origen et al, ascribed the Epistle of Barnabas (written anonymously) to the Apostle Barnabas, even though few do so today. Chapter 16 seems to refer to the destruction of the Temple in Jerusalem, even though this occurred after the traditional death of the Apostle Barnabas in 62 AD. Inclusion here of early statements attributed to the Apostle Barnabas is given to allow the early writers to speak in their own words. It may be that the Apostle Barnabas wrote these words but someone later added to and published them after the destruction of Jerusalem.

<sup>67</sup> Barnabas, Epistle of Barnabas, 4.

## The Issues in Jerusalem, 48 AD

The real issues in Jerusalem had strong political overtones. In Jerusalem at that time was a small, but very vocal, group of zealots bent on expelling Roman rule. One of the Twelve Apostles, Simon the Zealot, was part of this group at one time, and Judas Iscariot may have been involved also. According to Josephus, the political party of the Zealots was ultimately responsible for the destruction of Jerusalem<sup>68</sup> as a result of their scheming and conspiring to achieve their goals. To them, circumcision represented Jewish national identity. They didn't necessarily keep all the requirements of the Law, but they were very vocal about those aspects of the Law that spoke to their political agenda<sup>69</sup>.

This ideology spilled over to the Christians. The conflict among the Christians<sup>70</sup> was between a small minority of Jewish Christian Zealots, who were zealous about keeping the Law (Acts 21:20) and a large majority of Jewish Christians with a weak faith, who also kept the Law, but were not involved with the political agenda of the Zealots. They knew Christ after the flesh, as the Jewish Messiah, and were very sincere about that. If Paul (and James) handled this situation wrong and offended either group, many people might revert back to Judaism and be lost in the destruction coming to Jerusalem in a few years.

Tertullian stated<sup>71</sup> that circumcision was the only issue involved when Paul wrote to the Galatians. To the Jews, "circumcision" had their national identity associated with it, since this was part of the Covenant God made with Abraham, and the Law required anyone who rejected circumcision to be cut off from Israel (Genesis 17:9-14). Paul's opponents still believed in God, but they perverted the Gospel by retaining an emphasis on the Law. If the Zealots had not brought in the spies to see what Paul was doing regarding Christian liberty, Paul may not have made it such an issue. For Paul, the major issue was the basis for his teaching; for his opponents, the major issue was Jewish national identity.

"When Paul said, that 'neither was Titus compelled to be circumcised' (Galatians 2:3), he for the first time shows us that circumcision was the only question connected with the maintenance of the Law, which had been agitated by those whom he called 'false brethren secretly brought in' (Galatians 2:4). While these persons went no further than to insist on a continuance of the Law, they retained unquestionably a sincere belief in God. They perverted the Gospel in their teaching, not by tampering with the Scripture to eliminate Christ, but by retaining the emphasis on the Law. Therefore he said, 'Because of false brethren secretly brought in, who came in secretly to spy out our liberty, which we have in Christ, that they might bring us into bondage, to whom we submitted not even for an hour'

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<sup>68</sup> See Josephus, *Wars of the Jews*, IV, vi, 3.

<sup>69</sup> In a way, this is similar to the US today, where there are Christian zealots who have a very strong political agenda involving US national identity. Those aspects of Christianity that speak to their political agenda are very important to them. Yet out of kindness and mercy, we don't want to offend them and cause them to abandon the Faith.

<sup>70</sup> See Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 3, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1995, Footnote 22, p. 433.

<sup>71</sup> Tertullian, *The Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, 5, 3.

(Galatians 2:4-5). Let us listen to the clear sense and to the reason for their actions, and the perversion of the Scripture will be apparent”.

“Paul first said that the Apostles did not compel Titus, a Greek, to be circumcised and added that false brethren were secretly brought in. He gives us an insight into his reason for acting in a clean contrary way, showing us why he did what he would neither have done nor shown to us, if the Zealots had not induced him to act as he did. But then would they have yielded to the subjection that the Zealots 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 Paul himself had some suspicion that he might have run, and be still running, in vain (Galatians 2:2). 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 (1) to discover whether his labor had been in vain; (2) those who preceded him in the Apostolate to have the opportunity to give him the right hand of fellowship; and (3) to have an understanding before he entered on the office of preaching to the Gentiles, according to the Apostles’ arrangement with him (Galatians 2:9-10). He therefore made some concession, as was necessary, for a time; and this was the reason why he had Timothy circumcised (Acts 16:3), and the Nazirites introduced into the temple (Acts 21:23-26). Their truth may be inferred from their agreement with Paul’s own profession, how ‘he became all things to all men, that he might gain all’”.

John Cassian stated<sup>72</sup> that Paul identified with those he wished to reach. “To the Jews, I became as a Jew that I might gain the Jews. To those who were under the Law I became as being under the Law, though not myself under the Law, that I might gain those who were under the Law. To those who were without law, I became as without law, though I was not without the Law of God but under the Law of Christ, that I might gain those who were without law; to the weak I became weak, that I might gain the weak: I became all things to all men, that I might save all” (1 Corinthians 9:19-22). The Apostles in Jerusalem recognized that there would be a change in the Law as a result of the Coming of Christ (Hebrews 7:12), and they worked with the Apostle Paul in this regard.

“The Apostle James and all the chief princes of the primitive Church urged the Apostle Paul, in consequence of the weakness of feeble persons, to condescend to a fictitious arrangement and insisted on his purifying himself according to the requirements of the Law. By shaving his head and paying his vows (Acts 21:20-25), they thought that the present harm, which would come from this hypocrisy, was of no account, but had regard rather to the gain, which would result from his continued preaching. For the gain to the Apostle Paul from his strictness would not have counterbalanced the loss to all nations from his speedy death. And the whole Church would certainly have then incurred this unless this good and salutary hypocrisy had preserved him for the preaching of the Gospel”.

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<sup>72</sup> John Cassian, The Second Conference of Abbot Joseph, II, xvii, 20.

“Someone may ask how we can prove that Paul suited himself to all men in all things. When did he to the Jews become as a Jew? He had said, ‘Behold, I, Paul, say to you that if you become circumcised, Christ shall profit you nothing’ (Galatians 5:2). Yet by circumcising Timothy (Acts 16:3), he adopted a shadow of Jewish superstition. And again, where did he become to those under the Law, as under the Law? James and all the Elders of the Church, fearing lest he might be attacked by the multitude of Jewish Christians, who had received the faith of Christ in such a way as still to be bound by the rites of legal ceremonies, came to his rescue in his difficulty with this counsel and advice” (Acts 21:20-24).

“And so for the good of those who were under the Law, he trod under foot for a while the strict view which he had expressed. ‘I through the Law am dead to the Law; that I may live to God’ (Galatians 2:19). Contrary to this, he was driven to shave his head, and be purified according to the Law and pay his vows after the Mosaic rites in the Temple” (Acts 21:20-24).

“For the good of those who were utterly ignorant of the Law of God, Paul himself became as if without law. In Athens, where heathen wickedness was flourishing, he stated, ‘as I passed by, I saw your idols and an altar on which was written: To the unknown God’ (Acts 17:23). When he began speaking to them, as if he himself also had been without law, he introduced the faith of Christ, saying, ‘The One whom you worship ignorantly, Him I proclaim to you’ (Acts 17:23). And after a little, as if he had known nothing whatever of the Divine Law, he chose to bring forward a verse of a heathen poet rather than a saying of Moses or Christ, saying, ‘As some of your own poets have said; for we are also His offspring’ (Acts 17:28). And when he had thus approached them with their own authorities, which they could not reject, thus confirming the truth by things false, he added, ‘Since then we are the offspring of God we ought not to think that the Godhead is like gold or silver or stone sculptured by the art and device of man’” (Acts 17:29).

“In this way he fulfilled what he had commanded the Corinthians to do when he said, ‘be without offense to Jews and Greeks and the Church of Christ, as I also please all men in all things, not seeking my own profit but that of the many, that they may be saved’ (1 Corinthians 10:32-33, Romans 14:3-13, 2 Corinthians 11:29). For it had certainly been profitable at other times not to circumcise Timothy, not to shave his head, not to undergo Jewish purification, not to practice going barefoot, not to pay legal vows. But he did all these things because he did not seek his own profit but that of the many”.

### **The Result of Barnabas’ and Paul’s Actions**

At the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD, Paul sought (1) clarification of his interpretation of the Gospel and (2) agreement with the other Apostles and elders in Jerusalem. This he received very clearly, and Paul was of one mind with the other Apostles and elders. Later Church Councils were patterned after Paul’s agreement with the Apostles and elders in Jerusalem, and this agreement came to be referred to as “The mind of the Church”.

There were four distinct steps in this first Church Council:

1. A great deal of disputing between the Pharisees who believed on the one side and Barnabas and Paul on the other side.

2. Peter spoke up about the giving of the Holy Spirit to Cornelius and the Gentiles in Caesarea. His point was that God Himself had treated the Gentiles exactly as He had treated the Jews at Pentecost. God had even warned Peter in a vision not to think otherwise (Acts 10).
3. After Peter spoke, everyone quieted down to listen intently to Barnabas and Paul<sup>73</sup> speak about their recent First Missionary Journey, including the wondrous things they did,
4. After Barnabas and Paul spoke, James, the Lord's brother and Bishop of Jerusalem gave the verdict of the Council. He said the following:

“Men *and* brethren, listen to me: Simon has declared how God at the first visited the Gentiles to take out of them a people for His name. And with this the words of the prophets agree, just as it is written: 'After this I will return and will rebuild the tabernacle of David, which has fallen down; I will rebuild its ruins, and I will set it up; so that the rest of mankind may seek the Lord, even all the Gentiles who are called by My Name, says the Lord who does all these things' (Amos 9:11-12 LXX). Known to God from eternity are all His works. 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” (Acts 15:13-20).

Following the Council of Jerusalem, James and the Apostles in Jerusalem wrote a letter to the Gentile Churches that stated that these men that came down from Judea had no permission to teach what they did from the Apostles in Jerusalem (Acts 15:24). Thus they were acting as overzealous rogues in doing this.

While the Jewish Christian Zealots had to agree with the Council, because their disagreement would be an obvious gesture of countermanding God, they later opposed the decision of the Council. Paul ended up opposing them for the rest of his life. A similar pattern emerged following most of the later Councils of the Church, where the heretics often accepted the decisions of the Council initially, but later opposed these decisions<sup>74</sup>. In both cases, this showed the basic dishonesty of the heretics, and where their allegiance was really based.

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>75</sup> that a change in the Law was foreseen in the Mosaic Law as it referred to Christ:

“The Law itself has taught me no longer to obey itself; and therefore if I do so, I shall be transgressing even its teaching. How, and in what way has it so taught? Moses says, speaking of Christ, ‘The Lord God will raise up for you a prophet from your midst of your brethren, like me; to Him shall you listen’ (Deuteronomy 18:15). Therefore those who do not obey Him transgress the Law”.

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<sup>73</sup> Since Luke lists Barnabas first, the implication is that Barnabas was the primary speaker at the Council. This makes sense since Paul had done most of the miracles; Barnabas emphasized Paul's miracles so that Paul didn't have to appear like he was boasting.

<sup>74</sup> For example, at the Council of Nicaea in 325 AD, the Arian Bishops were so embarrassed by the clear teachings from the Scriptures by Athanasius of Alexandria and others that they signed the decrees of the Council in order to avoid being defrocked for countermanding God. Later they opposed the decrees of the Council, and it took about 65 years for the decrees of the Council to be finally upheld throughout Christendom.

<sup>75</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 2, v 19.

John Chrysostom noted<sup>76</sup> that all agreed that the doings in Antioch and on Barnabas and Paul's First Missionary Journey were the hand of God. There was no dispute about this! What was lacking was that nothing had been written in the Scriptures concerning how to handle a mass conversion of the Gentiles. James made considerable condescension for the weakness of the believing Pharisees: even they need to observe no more than what the Gentiles are observing.

“The question is whether the Gentiles must be circumcised. What the objectors asserted, was not that the Gentiles must be rejected upon believing, but that it must be with the Law. Peter pleaded very well about this, since this above all others troubled the hearers; therefore he sets this right. Observe, that which needed to be enacted as a rule, that it is not necessary to keep the Law, this Peter introduced. The milder part, James said, dwells upon that concerning which nothing is written. ‘Therefore’, he said, ‘I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God’ (Acts 15:19); that is, not to subvert. If God called them, and observing the Law subverts them, we fight against God. When James said, ‘My judgment is’, he was speaking not as from Moses but from the Apostles. The four commandments that James gave, although relating to the body, were necessary to be observed, because these things caused great evils. James’ words ‘For Moses has throughout many generations in every city’ (Acts 15:21), above all quieted the believing Pharisees. Why do we not write the same injunctions to Jews also? Moses speaks to them every Sabbath. Notice what condescension James makes to their weakness! Where it did no harm, he set Moses up as teacher, gratifying them, but which hindered nothing; he permitted Jews to hear Moses in regard of these matters, even 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 the Gentiles away from him! ‘Being read in the synagogues every Sabbath day’! Then why do the believing Pharisees not learn what is to be learned from Moses? Through their perversity! James shows that even these believing Pharisees need observe no more than these necessary things given to the Gentiles.”

In conveying the agreement of the Council to the Gentiles, John Chrysostom stated<sup>77</sup> that the Apostles in Jerusalem did not send Judas Barsabas and Silas to slight Barnabas and Paul, but to confirm everything. Even in their letter they are not overly critical of the rashness and subversion of the believing Pharisees; but the letter does make it very clear that the believing Pharisees were wrong.

“Notice that the Apostles in Jerusalem did not merely enact these matters, and nothing more. They sent Judas surnamed Barsabas, and Silas, chief men among the brethren to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They also sent letters with them the more to authenticate the decree, that there may be no room for regarding Paul and his company with suspicion. Notice with what patience and with no harsh berating of those brethren they indict their epistle. ‘Forasmuch as we have heard, that certain which went out from us have troubled you with words, subverting your souls, saying, You must be circumcised, and keep the Law, to whom we gave no such commandment’ (Acts 15:24). Sufficient was this charge against the rashness

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<sup>76</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXIII, Recapitulation.

<sup>77</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXIII, vv. 19-21.

of 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, that with deliberation they wrote this, 'It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord, to send men of ours whom we have chosen' (Acts 15:25). That it may not look like a belittling of Paul and Barnabas that those men are sent, observe the glowing praise passed on them. They spoke of 'Our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men that have hazarded their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have sent therefore Judas and Silas; who shall also tell you the same things by mouth. For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us' -- it is not man's doing, it says -- 'to lay on you no greater burden' -- again it calls the Law a burden. Apologizing even for these injunctions, they added, 'Except these necessary things': 'That you abstain from meat offered to idols, from blood<sup>78</sup>, from things strangled, and from fornication from which if you keep yourselves, you shall do well (Acts 15:26-29). These things the New Testament did not forbid; we nowhere find that Christ spoke about these matters; but these things they took from the Law."

### **What is the Place of the Mosaic Law Today?**

At this point, some clarification is needed regarding "the Law". The Lord referred to the Greatest Commandment, "You shall love the Lord your God with all your heart, with all your soul and with all your mind, and you shall love your neighbor as yourself" (Matthew 22:37-39, Deuteronomy 6:5, Leviticus 19:18). On this, He said, hangs all the Law and the Prophets (Matthew 22:40); and this Greatest Commandment was part of a Creed<sup>79</sup> used in the 1<sup>st</sup> Century Synagogue worship. In addition, the Lord had said, "Assuredly I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod (smallest Hebrew letter) or one piece of a Hebrew letter will by no means pass from the Law till all<sup>80</sup> is fulfilled" (Matthew 5:18). He also said that those who worship the Father must worship Him in spirit and truth (John 4:24).

All this is not contradictory. All the details of the Mosaic Law regarding sacrifices, uncleanness, Feast Days, avoiding certain foods, etc., had a purpose in leading the Lord's people toward holiness. Once Israel ceased to exist as a nation, these tenets of the Law changed. We no longer offer animal sacrifices, but we are urged to present our bodies as a living sacrifice (Romans 12:1). We no longer follow the various washings prescribed by the Mosaic Law, but we are advised to avoid the defilement<sup>81</sup> from unclean spirits, which can be really foul.

Clement of Alexandria quoted<sup>82</sup> Barnabas in his teaching on what the dietary parts of the Mosaic Law really refer to. If our ears and heart are circumcised as Moses commands (Deuteronomy 10:16, 30:6), we see that the unclean animals refer to unclean men and what they do, and we are commanded to avoid this.

"Barbarian philosophy prophesied also obscurely and by symbols, like the injunctions of Moses, 'These common things, the sow, the eagle, the hawk and the

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<sup>78</sup> "From blood" implies a prohibition against murder (Genesis 9:5-6).

<sup>79</sup> Edersheim, *Sketches of Jewish Social Life*, p. 245, 101-104.

<sup>80</sup> For more details, see the Gospel lesson for the 15th Sunday after Pentecost.

<sup>81</sup> For more details regarding sacrifice, see the Epistle lesson for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost; for more details on uncleanness, see the Epistle lesson for the 17<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.

<sup>82</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, V, 8.

raven, are not to be eaten' (Leviticus 11). The sow is the emblem of unclean lust of food, lecherousness and licentiousness, always craving, lying in the mire, and being fattened for slaughter. Some barbarians command a person to eat that which parts the hoof and ruminates. Barnabas says that this intimates 'that we ought to cling to those who fear the Lord, and meditate in their heart on that portion of the word which they have received. Those who speak and keep the Lord's statutes are those to whom meditation is a work of gladness, and who ruminate on the Word of the Lord. What is the parted hoof? This is the righteous, who walk in this world, and who expect the holy eternity to come'. Then he adds, 'See how well Moses enacted. We who have rightly understood speak the commandments as the Lord wished; therefore He circumcised our ears and hearts, that we may comprehend these things. When He says, 'You shall not eat the eagle, the hawk and the raven', He says, 'You shall not adhere to or become like those men who don't know how to live by toil and sweat, but live by plunder and lawlessness'. For the eagle indicates robbery, the hawk injustice, and the raven greed. It is also written, 'With the holy you will be holy; and with the innocent man you will be innocent. With the excellent *man* you will be excellent; and with the perverse you will be perverse' (Psalm 18:25-26 LXX). 'We ought to join ourselves<sup>83</sup> to those that fear the Lord, those who meditate in their heart on the commandment which they have received, those who both utter the judgments of the Lord and observe them, those who know that meditation is a work of gladness, and who ruminate upon the word of the Lord'".

The usefulness of the Law is as a tutor to get us started in the right direction (Galatians 3:24, 25). As we grow in the Faith and can distinguish the Holy Spirit speaking to us, we don't need the Law anymore, because it is written on our hearts (Jeremiah 31:31-34, Hebrews 10:16-17). John Chrysostom stated<sup>84</sup> that the Law and the Gospel work together:

"The Law is not the adversary but the fellow worker of Grace. But if when Grace is come, the Law continues to hold us down, it becomes an adversary. If it confines those who ought to go forward to Grace, it is the destruction of our salvation. If a candle which gave light by night kept us, when it became day, from the sun, it would not only cease to benefit us, but would injure us. And so does the Law if it stands between the greater benefits of Grace and us. Just so a tutor or pedagogue makes a youth ridiculous, by retaining him with himself, when time calls for his departure".

Clement of Alexandria also quoted<sup>85</sup> Barnabas on what happens at conversion. Sinners imitate demons saying that our bodies are merely a human dwelling. At Baptism the demons are driven out, and God begins to dwell in us along with the Word, His calling, and the wisdom of His statutes and commandments.

"Vapors, which arise from the earth, and from marshes, gather into mists and cloudy masses; so the vapors of fleshly lusts bring an evil condition on the soul, scattering about the idols of pleasure before the soul. They spread darkness over the light of intelligence, the spirit attracting the heat that arises from lust, and

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<sup>83</sup> Barnabas, Epistle of Barnabas, 10.

<sup>84</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on Galatians, Chapter 3, vv 25-26.

<sup>85</sup> Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, II, 20.

thickening the masses of the passions by persistence in pleasures. Gold is not taken from the earth as a lump, but is purified by smelting; then, when made pure it is called gold, the earth being purified out. ‘Ask, and it shall be given you’ (Mark 7:7), is said to those who are able of themselves to choose what is best. The powers of the devil, and the unclean spirits, sow into the sinner’s soul. Barnabas speaks in these words, ‘Before we believed<sup>86</sup> in God, the habitation of our heart was corrupt and weak, being like a temple made with hands. It was full of idolatry, and was a habitation of demons, through our doing such things as were opposed to the will of God’”.

“Sinners exercise activities appropriate to demons; but he does not say that the spirits themselves dwell in the soul of the unbeliever. He also adds<sup>87</sup>, ‘The temple of the Lord shall be built in the name of the Lord, in order that it may be built in glory. How? Having received the forgiveness of sins, and placing our trust in the name of the Lord, we have become new creatures, formed again from the beginning’. What Barnabas says is not that demons are driven out of us, but that the sins, which like them we commit before believing, are remitted. Rightly thus he puts in opposition what follows: ‘Therefore in our habitation God truly dwells. How? His word of faith; His calling of promise; the wisdom of the statutes; the commandments of the doctrine dwell in us; He himself prophesying in us; He himself dwelling in us; opening to us the doors of the temple, we who were enslaved by death’”.

Clement quotes<sup>88</sup> Barnabas as really understanding the Mosaic Law in its intents, and he gives examples of the humaneness of the Law, and how wisdom based on the Law is piety. Those who really get this, Barnabas calls them “Children of love and peace”.

“Moses wrote, ‘If anyone who has newly built a house, and has not previously inhabited it; or cultivated a newly-planted vine, and not yet partaken of the fruit; or betrothed a virgin, and not yet married her’ (Deuteronomy 20:5-7); these people the humane Law orders to be relieved from military service. They were exempted in the first place, lest, bent on their desires, they turn out sluggish in war; it is those who are untangled by passion that boldly encounter perils. From motives of humanity, in view of the uncertainties of war, the Law reckoned it right that one should enjoy his own labors, and not another, who without any labor, should receive what belonged to those who had labored. The Law seems also to point out manliness of soul, by enacting that he who had planted should reap the fruit, and he that built should inhabit, and he that had betrothed should marry. It is not vain hopes that the Law provides for those who labor. ‘For the hope of a good man dead or living does not perish’ (Proverbs 11:7 LXX); also ‘I love those that love Me; and they that seek Me shall find Me’ (Proverbs 8:17 LXX). The women of Midian, by their beauty, seduced the Hebrews from wisdom into impiety, through licentiousness, when making war against them. Having seduced them from a serious mode of life, and by their beauty ensnared them in wanton delights; they made them insane about idol sacrifices and strange women. Overcome by women and by pleasure at once, they revolted from God, and revolted from the Law. The

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<sup>86</sup> Barnabas, Epistle of Barnabas, 16.

<sup>87</sup> Barnabas, Epistle of Barnabas, 16.

<sup>88</sup> Clement of Alexandria, Stromata, II, 18.

whole people were about to fall under the power of the enemy through female stratagem, until fear by its admonitions pulled them back (Numbers 25:1-9). ‘The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom, and the counsel of saints is understanding. To know the Law is the character of a sound mind’ (Proverbs 9:10 LXX). Those who suppose that the Law agitates fear are neither good at understanding the Law, nor have they in reality comprehended it. ‘The fear of the Lord is life to a man; he shall lodge without fear in places where knowledge is not seen’ (Proverbs 19:23 LXX). Accordingly, Barnabas says mystically<sup>89</sup>, ‘May God, who rules over the entire world, give to you wisdom, intelligence, understanding, knowledge of His judgments, with patience. Be therefore God-taught, inquiring diligently what the Lord asks from you; and do it that you may be safe in the Day of Judgment’. Barnabas calls those who do this, ‘Children of love and peace’”.

Chrysostom stated<sup>90</sup> that Paul’s accusers thought that he had run in vain; so Paul went up to Jerusalem to prove that this was not the case. He met privately with the Apostles, not to reform doctrines, but to cut off the grounds of the deceivers. The Apostles permitted the use and the details of the Law in Judea due to the weakness of the people there. If Paul had announced that he was going to forbid the practice of the Law in Judea, he would have been attacked by those who practiced the Law. So he did this privately with the Apostles.

“Paul’s accusers thought that Peter and John, of whom they thought more highly than Paul, differed from him in that he omitted circumcision in his preaching, while the former allowed it; and they believed that in this he acted unlawfully, and was running in vain. Paul went up and communicated to them his Gospel, not that he might learn anything himself, as appears more clearly further on, but that he might convince these suspicious persons that he did not run in vain. The Spirit foreseeing this contention had provided that he should go up and make this communication.”

“Therefore Paul said that he went up by revelation, taking Barnabas and Titus as witnesses of his preaching, and communicated to them the Gospel which he preached to the Gentiles; that is, with the omission of circumcision. ‘But privately before them who were of repute’. What does ‘privately’ mean? He who wishes to reform doctrines held in common, proposes them, not privately, but before all in common; but 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. All at Jerusalem would be offended if the Law was transgressed, or the use of circumcision forbidden; as James says, ‘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’ (Acts 21:20-21). To avoid offense, Paul 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, that they might credibly testify to his accusers, that the Apostles found no discrepancy in his preaching, but confirmed it. The expression, ‘those that were of

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<sup>89</sup> Barnabas, Epistle of Barnabas, 21.

<sup>90</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 2, v. 2.

repute', does not impugn the reality of their greatness; here the phrase implies his own assent to the common opinion.”

“Here arises a very important question: Who were these false brethren? If the Apostles permitted circumcision at Jerusalem, why are those who championed it, in accordance with the Apostolic sentence, to be called false brethren? First; because there is a difference between commanding an act to be done, and allowing it after it is done. He, who commands 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. 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, it would plainly have likewise 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. Whereas the purpose of the false brethren was to cast them out of grace, and place 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 Judaea, where the Law was in force, but the false brethren, everywhere, for all the Galatians were influenced by them. Their intention was, not to build up, but entirely to pull down the Gospel, and that the thing was permitted by the Apostles on one ground and zealously practiced by the false brethren on another.

### **Peter and Paul's Ruse; Barnabas Gets Carried Away**

Paul stated, “When Peter had come to Antioch, I withstood him to his face, because he was to be blamed; for before certain men came from James, he would eat with the Gentiles; but when they came, he withdrew and separated himself, fearing those who were of the circumcision. And the rest of the Jews also played the hypocrite<sup>91</sup> with him, so that even Barnabas was carried away with their hypocrisy” (Galatians 2:11-13).

Something is going on here that is not readily apparent! Peter had been absolutely fearless in facing up to the Jewish leaders in Jerusalem (Acts 4:8-22). Peter had been the one who had stepped forward before the others, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God” (Matthew 16:16). He was bolder than the others, and willing to come forward in spite of danger. When Christ was seen on the beach, and the others were pushing the boat in, he was too impatient to wait for its coming to land (John 21:7). After the Resurrection, when the murderous Jews sought to tear the Apostles in pieces, he first dared to come forward and to declare that the Crucified was taken up into heaven (Acts 2:14, 36). But there was no danger here in Antioch; is it reasonable to suggest that Peter was fearful of the believing Jews?

John Chrysostom pointed out<sup>92</sup> what was really happening. Peter withdrew to eat with the Jews such that Paul would notice this and rebuke him in front of everyone. If this were not part of

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<sup>91</sup> The Greek words *sunupokritesan* (translated “play the hypocrite”) and *upokrisei* (translated “hypocrisy”) come from a root meaning of an actor playing out a role on the stage. Thus they can mean hypocrisy, but there is a more basic implication in their meaning: an actor.

<sup>92</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 2, vv. 11-12.

a ruse, Paul would have rebuked Peter privately, not publicly<sup>93</sup>. The point of the rebuke was for the effect it would have on the Jewish disciples who had come up from Jerusalem.

“Many, on a superficial reading of Galatians, suppose that Paul accused Peter of hypocrisy. But this is not so, indeed it is not, far from it; we shall discover great wisdom, both of Paul and Peter, concealed in their words for the benefit of their hearers.”

“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 time. But when some came from Jerusalem, who had heard the doctrine he delivered there, he no longer did so fearing to perplex them. Peter changed his course, with two objects secretly in view, both to avoid offending those Jews, and to give Paul a reasonable pretext for rebuking him. 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 consistency. This would have created no small offense. But to Paul, who was well acquainted with all the facts, Peter’s withdrawal would have raised no such suspicion, as knowing the intention with which he acted. Therefore Paul rebukes, and Peter submits, that when the master is blamed, yet keeps silence, the disciples may more readily come over from the Law to faith. Without this occurrence Paul’s exhortation would have had little effect; but the occasion gave an opportunity to deliver a severe reproof, and impressed Peter’s disciples with a more lively fear. Had Peter disputed Paul’s sentence, he might justly have been blamed as upsetting the plan; but now that the one reproves and the other keeps silence, the Jewish party is filled with serious alarm. This is why Paul spoke to Peter so severely. Observe also Paul’s careful choice of expressions, whereby he points out to the discerning, that he uses them in pursuance of the plan, and not from anger.”

“The cause of Paul’s censure is this, ‘Before that certain men came from James’, who was the teacher at Jerusalem, ‘and Peter ate with the Gentiles; but when they came he drew back and separated himself, fearing those that were of the Circumcision’. His cause of fear was not his own danger, but their defection. If he didn’t fear in the beginning, much less would he do so now. 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, ‘I fear, lest somehow, as the serpent deceived Eve by his craftiness, so your minds may be corrupted from the simplicity that is in Christ’ (2 Corinthians 11:3). Thus they didn’t know the fear of death; but the fear that their disciples should perish, agitated their inmost soul.”

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<sup>93</sup> Chrysostom stated that Paul’s words are, ‘When Cephas came to Antioch, I resisted him to the face, because he stood condemned’ (Galatians 2:11); that is, not by me but by others. Had he himself condemned him, he would not have shrunk from saying so. And the words, ‘I resisted him to the face’, imply a scheme, 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.

Chrysostom noted<sup>94</sup> that the ruse was so well done that even Barnabas was carried away with their ruse. They just weren't walking uprightly according to the truth of the Gospel (Galatians 2:13-14).

“Don't be surprised at Paul giving this proceeding the name of a ruse, for he was unwilling to disclose the true state of the case, in order for the correction of his disciples. On account of their vehement attachment to the Law, he calls the present proceeding “ruse,” and severely rebukes it, in order effectually to eradicate their prejudice. And Peter also, hearing this joins in the feint, as if he had erred, that they might be corrected by means of the rebuke administered to him. Had Paul reproved these Jews, they would have spurned it with indignation, for they held Paul in slight esteem; but now, when they saw their Teacher silent under rebuke, they were unable to despise or resist Paul's sentence.”

“Don't let the phrase, ‘They didn't walk uprightly’, disturb you, for in using it Paul does not condemn Peter, but so expresses himself for the benefit of those who were to be reformed by the reproof of Peter.”

Chrysostom also noted that it is completely illogical that Peter had erred in Antioch. Peter had been the moving force behind the Council of Jerusalem and its decrees.

“Why did Paul address this to Peter, who is more intimately acquainted with it than anyone? Has not God declared to him, that an uncircumcised man ought not to be judged by circumcision; and did he not in his discussion with the Jews at the Council in Jerusalem rest his bold opposition on the vision which he saw? Did he not send from Jerusalem unequivocal decrees on this subject? Paul's object is not therefore to correct Peter, but his criticism needed to be addressed to him, though it was pointed at the disciples; and not only at the Galatians, but also at others who labor under the same error with them.”

Chrysostom continued<sup>95</sup> to say that the impact of Peter's conduct in Antioch was to marginalize the death of Christ. That is, one is not justified by circumcision or by Jewish rituals, but by faith. Because of the circumstances, Paul had to do something!

“Christ's death is a plain proof of the inability of the Law to justify us; and if the Law does justify, then His death is superfluous. Yet how could it be reasonable to say Christ's death has been done heedlessly and in vain, when it is so awesome, so surpassing human reason, a mystery so ineffable, with which Patriarchs travailed, which Prophets foretold, which angels gazed on with consternation, which all men confess as the summit of Divine tenderness? How utterly out of place it would be if they should say that so great and high a deed had been done superfluously, for this is what their conduct (i.e. the conduct of Peter and the Jews in Antioch) came to”.

### **Barnabas Goes Back to the Church on Cyprus**

“Now Judas and Silas, themselves being prophets also, exhorted and strengthened the brethren with many words. And after they had stayed *there* for a time, they were sent back with

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<sup>94</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 2, vv. 13-14.

<sup>95</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Galatians, Chapter 2, v. 21.

greetings from the brethren to the Apostles. However, it seemed good to Silas to remain there. Paul and Barnabas also remained in Antioch, teaching and preaching the word of the Lord, with many others also. Then after some days Paul said to Barnabas, ‘Let us now go back and visit our brethren in every city where we have preached the word of the Lord, *and see* how they are doing’. Now Barnabas was determined to take with them John called Mark. But Paul insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work. Then the contention became so sharp that they parted from one another. And so Barnabas took Mark and sailed to Cyprus; but Paul chose Silas and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches” (Acts 15:32-41).

John Chrysostom described<sup>96</sup> how the splitting up of Barnabas and Paul was the work of God. The immediate issue was Paul’s reluctance to take with them John Mark, who had deserted them earlier. Barnabas wanted to rescue his cousin back into Apostolic work, but Paul didn’t have the patience to do this.

“Luke has described to us the character of the Apostles that Barnabas was more tender and indulgent, but Paul was more strict and austere. In the Prophets too we find this: diverse minds, diverse characters. For instance, Elijah was austere; Moses was meek. So here Paul is more vehement. Observe how gentle Barnabas is. Paul ‘insisted that they should not take with them the one who had departed from them in Pamphylia, and had not gone with them to the work’ (Acts 15:39). There seems indeed to be exasperation, but in fact the whole matter is a plan of the Divine Providence, that each should receive his proper place. Barnabas and Paul both needed to be on a par; Barnabas should lead, and John Mark should be led. ‘And so Barnabas took John Mark, and sailed to Cyprus; and Paul chose Silas, and departed, being commended by the brethren to the grace of God. And he went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches’” (Acts 15:39-41). This also is a work of Providence.

Chrysostom pointed out<sup>97</sup> that neither Barnabas nor Paul did something wrong. Both honored the other very much. However Cyprus needed Barnabas while the Churches of Asia Minor needed Paul

“The Cyprians had exhibited nothing of the sort as they at Antioch of Pisidia, Iconium and the rest; the Cyprians needed the softer character, but the others needed such a character as Paul’s. Which then would you say did well? He that took or he that left? A general would not choose to have an untrustworthy person always to be his baggage-bearer, so neither did Paul. This corrected and instructed John Mark himself. Then did Barnabas do something wrong? In the first place, no evil came of it; they were divided the one from the other, but for a great good. They would not readily have chosen to leave each other. But admire the writer, how he does not conceal this either. The contention cannot be said to be evil, when each disputes for such objects and with just reason. If the exasperation were in seeking his own way, and contending for his own honor, this might well be reprovved. But if wishing, both the one and the other, to instruct and teach, the one

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<sup>96</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXIV, v. 35.

<sup>97</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXIV, v. 39-41.

took this way and the other that, what is there to find fault with? Observe how Paul impeaches John Mark, and gives the reason. In his exceeding humility, Paul revered Barnabas, as having been partner with him in so great works; but still he did not so reverence him, as to overlook what was necessary. Now which of them advised best, it is not for us to pronounce; but thus far we can say that it was a great arrangement of Providence. If they stayed together, Antioch, Iconium, etc. would be granted a second visitation, but Cyprus would not to be visited even once.”

Chrysostom further pointed out<sup>98</sup> that while there was a sharp contention, there was also an admirable mutual respect. They did not part on a bad note at all. The chief beneficiary of this contention was John Mark, who was brought back due to both Paul’s rebuke and Barnabas’ kindness.

“The point to be considered is not that they differed in their opinions, but that they accommodated themselves the one to the other, seeing that it was for a greater good. Did they withdraw in enmity? God forbid! In fact after this Barnabas received great praises from Paul in the Epistles. There was ‘sharp contention’, not enmity or quarrelling. The contention happened to part them. What each supposed to be profitable, he did not abandon because of the fellowship with the other. It seems to me that they said one to another, ‘As I wish not, and you wish, therefore that we may not fight, let us distribute the places’. They did this, each yielding to the other. Barnabas wished Paul’s plan to stand, therefore he withdrew; on the other hand, Paul wished the Barnabas’ plan to stand, therefore he withdrew. Would to God we too made such separations, as to go forth for preaching. A wonderful man this is; and exceedingly great! To John Mark this contest was exceedingly beneficial. The awe inspired by Paul converted him, while the kindness of Barnabas caused that he was not left behind. Seeing Paul choosing to leave him, he would be exceedingly awed, and would condemn himself; and seeing Barnabas taking his part, he would love him exceedingly. So the disciple was corrected by the contention of the teachers; so far was he from being offended.”

### **Barnabas’ Later Work**

Having multiplied the number of believers, Barnabas traveled to Rome after he went to Cyprus, where he was perhaps the first to preach Christ.

Barnabas founded the Episcopal see at Mediolanum (now Milan), and upon his return to Cyprus he continued to preach about Christ the Savior. Then the enraged Jews incited the pagans against Barnabas, and they led him out beyond the city and stoned him, and then built a fire to burn the body. Later on, having come upon this spot, John Mark took up the unharmed body of Barnabas and buried it in a cave, placing upon the saint's bosom, in accord with his final wishes, the Gospel of Matthew which he had copied in his own hand.

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<sup>98</sup> John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXXIV, v. 37-40.

Barnabas died<sup>99</sup> in about the year 62 AD, at age seventy-six. In time, the burial spot was forgotten, but numerous signs took place at this spot. In the year 448, during the time of the emperor Zeno, Barnabas appeared three times in a dream to Archbishop Anthimus of Cyprus and indicated the place where his relics were buried. Starting to dig at the indicated spot, Christians found the incorrupt body of the saint and upon his chest was the Holy Gospel.

It was during this time that the Church of Cyprus began to be regarded as Apostolic in origin, and received the right of choosing its head. Thus Barnabas defended Cyprus against the pretensions of the opponent of the Fourth Ecumenical Council, the heretic surnamed Knapheios, who had usurped the patriarchal throne at Antioch and tried to gain dominion over the Church of Cyprus.

### **The Teachings of Barnabas**

The Apostle Paul stated, “And we have sent with him the brother whose praise *is* in the Gospel throughout all the churches, and not only *that*, but who was also chosen by the churches to travel with us with this gift” (2 Corinthians 8:18-19). John Chrysostom stated<sup>100</sup> that Paul was referring to Barnabas, although he acknowledged that some people in his day thought that Paul was referring to Luke. The Scriptures don’t say that Luke was chosen by the Churches to travel with Paul – he may have been – but they do speak about Barnabas being so chosen.

Clement of Alexandria described<sup>101</sup> how Barnabas explained righteousness and godliness in the words of the Mosaic Law using Psalm 1 and the dietary laws of Leviticus 11.

“David, and Moses before David, speaks of the following words: ‘Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly’ (Psalm 1:1). Some fish go down to the depths in darkness; for those which don’t have scales, which Moses prohibits touching, feed at the bottom of the sea. Those who ‘stand in the way of sinners’ (Psalm 1:1) are those who, while appearing to fear the Lord, commit sin, like the sow; for when hungry it cries, and when full knows not its owner. Those who ‘sit in the seat of the pestilent’ (Psalm 1:1), are birds ready for prey. Moses commands not to eat the sow, the eagle, the hawk, the raven, or any fish without scales. Barnabas says the same thing. I heard one skilled in such matters say that ‘the counsel of the ungodly’ was the heathen; ‘the way of sinners’ was the Jewish persuasion, and ‘the seat of pestilence’ was heresies. Another said, with more propriety, that the first blessing was assigned to those who had not followed wicked sentiments which revolt from God. The second blessing was assigned to those who do not remain in the wide and broad road, whether they are those who have been brought up in the Law, or Gentiles who have repented. ‘The seat of pestilence’ is the theaters and tribunals, or rather the compliance with wicked and deadly powers, and complicity with their deeds. ‘In contrast, the blessed man’s delight is in the Law of the Lord’” (Psalm 1:2).

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<sup>99</sup> See <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101691>.

<sup>100</sup> John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Corinthians*, XXVIII, vv. 18-19.

<sup>101</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II, 15.

Clement of Alexandria quoted<sup>102</sup> the Apostle Barnabas as saying<sup>103</sup> that faith is an intrinsic part of life; fear and patience are helpers of faith; long-suffering and temperance are allies; wisdom, understanding, intelligence and knowledge come with faith. Therefore, says Clement, faith cannot be belittled and is something divine.

“Paul said, ‘For therein is the righteousness of God revealed from faith to faith’, (Romans 1:17) teaching the one salvation which from prophecy to the Gospel is perfected by one and the same Lord. ‘This charge’, he says, ‘I commit to you, son Timothy, according to the prophecies which went before on you, that you by them might war the good warfare; holding faith, and a good conscience; which some having put away concerning faith have made shipwreck’ (1 Timothy 1:19), because they defiled by unbelief the conscience that comes from God. Accordingly, faith may not be belittled in an offhand way, as simple and vulgar, appertaining to anybody. If it were a mere human habit, as the Greeks supposed, it would have been extinguished. But if it grows, and there is no place where it is not; then I affirm, that faith, whether founded in love, or in fear, as its disparagers assert, is something divine. It is neither torn apart by other mundane friendship, nor dissolved by the presence of fear. Love, on account of its friendly alliance with faith, makes men believers. Faith, which is the foundation of love, in its turn, introduces the doing of good. Fear, the pedagogue of the Law, is believed to be fear by those, by whom it is believed. Its existence is shown in its working; it does not itself generate faith, but is by faith tested and proved trustworthy. Such a change, then, from unbelief to faith — and to trust in hope and fear, is divine. Faith is discovered by us to be the first movement towards salvation; after which fear, hope, and repentance, advancing in company with temperance and patience, lead us to love and knowledge. Rightly, therefore, the Apostle Barnabas says<sup>104</sup>, ‘From the portion I have received I have done my diligence to send it to you little by little; that along with your faith you may also have perfect knowledge. Fear and patience are then helpers of your faith; and our allies are long-suffering and temperance. These, then’, he says, ‘with respect to the Lord, wisdom, understanding, intelligence and knowledge rejoice along with them’. These virtues are the elements of knowledge; the result is that faith is more elementary, being as necessary as respiration is to life. Without these four elements it is not possible to live; so neither can knowledge be attained without faith. It is then the support of truth.”

### **Gospel: Luke 10:16-21**

The Gospel Lesson for the Feast Day of the Apostle Barnabas is also used in the Orthodox Church for the Feast Days of the Apostles Nathanael (Bartholomew), James the Son of Alphaeus, Luke and Tryphon. It is also used for the Feast Day of the Archangels (November 8) and for some of the Unmercenary Healers. In the West, this Gospel Lesson is often used in July for the 9<sup>th</sup> Sunday after Pentecost.

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<sup>102</sup> Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, II, 6.

<sup>103</sup> Barnabas, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 2.

<sup>104</sup> Barnabas, *Epistle of Barnabas*, 1

## Men and Angels Serve as Apostles

The word translated “Apostle” (Greek: *apostolos*) refers to someone who is sent, and is often used for ambassadors. Both men and angels fit the sense of this word and there are a number of facets to it.

### Messengers of the Word

The Seventy were sent out as messengers, or “angels”, ahead of the Lord (Luke 10:1). There are a number of other places where men are referred to as messengers or “angels” from God; some examples:

- King David: 1 Samuel 29:9, 2 Samuel 14:17-20, 19:27
- Prophet Haggai: Haggai 1:13
- The Prophets: 2 Chronicles 36:15, 16
- The Priests: Malachi 2:7
- John the Baptist: Malachi 3:1, Matthew 11:10, Mark 1:2, Luke 7:27
- Apostle Paul: Galatians 4:14
- Paul’s fellow Apostles: 2 Corinthians 8:23
- The Book of Malachi: “Malachi” means “My angel”

The Gospel lesson makes this statement: “He who hears you (the Seventy) hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16). Cyril of Alexandria comments<sup>105</sup> on this,

“He entrusts to them His Words, that they may be condemned who in anything resist or venture to reject them. When they are rejected, He assumes then that it is He who suffers this; and then again He shows that the guilt of this wickedness, as being committed against Him, mounts up to God the Father. See, therefore, with the eyes of the mind, to how vast a height He raises the sin committed by men in rejecting the saints! What a wall He builds around them! How great security He establishes for them! He makes them such as must be feared, and in every way plainly provides for their being uninjured.

If such words apply to the Seventy (lesser) Apostles acting as messengers of God, how much more does it apply to angels and archangels! Yet Deacon Stephen accused the Sanhedrin of doing just that: “Which of the prophets did your fathers not persecute? And they killed those who foretold the coming of the Just One (i.e. Jesus), of whom you now have become the betrayers and murderers; you who have received the Law in ordinances of angels and have not kept it” (Acts 7:52, 53). Paul mentioned the same thing: “Why therefore the Law? It was added until the Seed should come to Whom it has been promised, being ordained through angels by the hand of a mediator” (Galatians 3:19, see also Hebrews 2:2).

Basil the Great commenting<sup>106</sup> on this, interpreted the mediator referred to here as Moses (from Exodus 20:19), since the people asked Moses to speak to God rather than have God speak directly with them. This implies that the angelic involvement in the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai

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<sup>105</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 63, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 270

<sup>106</sup> Basil the Great, On the Spirit, 14.

was the very loud trumpet sound that grew louder and louder leading up to the voice of the Lord, speaking with thunder (Exodus 19:16-19). The lightning and some of the thunder may have also been the angels that surround the Lord wherever He goes. Thus, to set aside the Law, when it had been ordained by angels and given by God is a very serious matter.

Another very serious matter is alluded to in the Gospel lesson for Matins of this Feast Day (Matthew 18:10-20). In this passage, the Lord had just mentioned the angels' role regarding children, using the illustration of a shepherd and concluding that He does not wish them to perish (Matthew 18:10-14). Then He went on to speak of a brother sinning against a brother, and instructing them to confirm every disagreement with two or three witnesses. If the brother who sinned refuses to hear them, the Church was to consider the sinning brother as a heathen and a tax collector. This will be bound in heaven as it was on earth (Matthew 18:15-18). While the Lord was talking here of human witnesses, there are also the angelic witnesses who will confirm everything in heaven. And the books in heaven that record the deeds of all men will record these also.

### **The Word Goes Out**

As the Seventy went about their mission, angelic activity accompanied them. They had been given the power to heal the sick (Luke 10:9), which included casting out demons (Luke 10:17). Since all sickness has something to do with demons<sup>107</sup>, they encountered demonic activity everywhere they went. [For more discussion on the relation between demons and sickness, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.] They returned with joy that the demons were subject to them in Christ's Name (Luke 10:7). The Lord responded, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

Paul referred to Satan as "the prince of the power of the air" (Ephesians 2:2). For Satan to fall from "heaven" does not necessarily mean that he fell from the abode of God. The First Century concept of heaven placed God in the "third heaven" (2 Corinthians 12:2), where the atmosphere, clouds, sun, etc., represent the first and second heaven. For example "the heaven gave rain" (James 5:18), refers to the first or second heaven. In our Gospel lesson, Satan fell from the first or second heaven, not from the third heaven.

As the Seventy returned with joy and told the Lord that the demons were subject to them, He responded that He was aware of that. He then summarized their mission by saying that He had given them "the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). Cyril commented<sup>108</sup> that Christ said this in order that they might not be carried away with the ignorance of the Jewish leaders who, not understanding the mystery of the Incarnation, approached Him as a mere man.

Cyril confirmed<sup>109</sup> that for Satan to fall like lightning means that something has changed drastically on earth. He has been overthrown and is put under the feet of the Christians.

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<sup>107</sup> For more discussion on the relation between demons and sickness, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.

<sup>108</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 275.

<sup>109</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 274.

“For Satan to fall like lightning means that he was cast down from on high to earth; from overwhelming pride to humiliation; from glory to contempt; from great power to utter weakness. Before the coming of Christ, he possessed the world; all was subject to him, and there was no man able to escape the meshes of his overwhelming might. He was worshipped by everyone; everywhere he had temples and altars for sacrifice, and an innumerable multitude of worshippers. But because the Only-Begotten Word of God has come down from heaven, he has fallen like lightning. For he who of old was bold and haughty, and who vied with the glory of Deity; he who had as worshippers all that were in error, is put under the feet of those that worshipped Him. He has suffered a great and terrible overthrow”.

The angels of God also have a hand in this overthrow. David had said, “Bless the Lord, you His angels, mighty in strength, who perform His word, obeying the Voice of His Word! Bless the Lord, all you His hosts, you who serve Him, doing His will” (Psalm 103:20). “He makes winds (or spirits) His angels; flaming fire His ministers” (Psalm 104:4). The word translated “ministers” (Hebrew: *sharath* = to serve in the Temple) implies a liturgical worship. Paul had elaborated on this also in Hebrews, quoting both Psalm 103 and Psalm 110: “But to which of the angels has He ever said, ‘sit at My Right Hand till I make Your enemies Your footstool’? Are they not all ministering spirits sent forth for service for those who will inherit salvation?” (Hebrews 1:13, 14). The word “ministering” (Greek: *leitourgikos* = to serve in the Temple) also implies a liturgical worship.

The angels see themselves as our fellow servants. After the Apostle John had seen a series of incredible visions, his inclination was to fall down and worship the angel who had shown him all these things. The angel (perhaps Gabriel) corrected him saying, “See that you do not do that. I am your fellow servant, and of your brethren the prophets and of those who keep the words of this book. Worship God!” (Revelation 22:9, 19:10).

The angels are constantly involved in the battle as the Word goes out. Some are involved in disputes with Satan (Jude 1:9). Others have the duty of the care and oversight of children. The Matins Gospel for the Feast Day of the Archangels is Matthew 18:10-20, quoted earlier. Jesus said, “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones; for I say to you that in heaven their angels always see the face of My Father Who is in heaven” (Matthew 18:10). Anyone disrupting the Word being planted in a child would be better off if a millstone was hung around his neck and he were drowned in the depth of the sea (Matthew 18:6). He said that “it is not the Will of your Father who is in heaven that one of these little ones should perish” (Matthew 18:14). Thus, the angels have a job to do to encourage each person to seek the Lord.

Mixed in with the statement of angels guarding children, the Lord used an illustration that describes the angels’ role well: that of a shepherd. “What do you think? If a man has a hundred sheep and one of them goes astray, does he not leave the ninety nine and go to the mountains to seek the one that is straying? And if he should find it, assuredly I say to you, he rejoices more over that one sheep than over the ninety nine that did not go astray” (Matthew 18:12-13, Luke 15:3-7). Jesus referred to Himself as the Good Shepherd (John 10:1-15). In the battle for men’s’ souls, the angels have a significant role to play in following the Good Shepherd’s orders to see to it that we are not tempted beyond what we are able to resist, and with the temptation, also making a way of escape (1 Corinthians 10:13).

## Courage

Because the angels see God all the time, they have an advantage over us. Because they see, it is easy for them to believe and obey. For us, it is more difficult because we are asked to believe without having seen. This is why Jesus gave His famous admonition: “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed” (John 20:29). When the Seventy returned with joy at having the demons subject to them, it was easy to believe. What required faith for them was to take up their crosses as the Lord took up His.

Basil the Great wrote<sup>110</sup> about how the angels are very much like us as pertains to free will. “The powers of heaven are not holy by nature; were it so, there would in this respect be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. It is in proportion to their relative excellence that they have their gift of holiness from the Holy Spirit. Their substance is an aerial spirit, or an immaterial fire, as it is written, ‘Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire’ (Psalm 104:4). Therefore they exist in space and become visible, and appear in their proper bodily form to those that are worthy. But their sanctification, being external to their substance, induces their perfection through the communion of the Holy Spirit. They keep their rank by their abiding in the good and true, and while they retain their freedom of will, never fall away from their patient attendance on Him who is truly good. The results is that, if you do away with the Holy Spirit, the hosts of the angels are disbanded, the dominions of archangels are destroyed, all is thrown into confusion, and their life loses law, order, and distinctness. For how are angels to cry ‘Glory to God in the highest’ (Luke 2:14) without being empowered by the Holy Spirit? For ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit, and no man speaking by the Holy Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed’ (1 Corinthians 12:3); as might be said by wicked and hostile spirits, whose fall establishes our statement of the freedom of the will of the invisible powers. I indeed maintain that even Gabriel (Luke 1:11-20) in no other way foretells events to come than by the foreknowledge of the Holy Spirit, by reason of the fact that one of the blessings distributed by the Holy Spirit is prophecy. How did he, who was ordained to announce the mysteries of the vision, derive the wisdom whereby he was enabled to teach hidden things, if not from the Holy Spirit? The revelation of mysteries is indeed the peculiar function of the Spirit, as it is written, ‘God has revealed them to us by His Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 2:10). And how could ‘thrones, dominions, principalities and powers’ (Colossians 1:16) live their blessed life, if they did not ‘behold the face of the Father which is in heaven’? (Matthew 18:10). To behold it is impossible without the Holy Spirit!”.

As a consequence, the angels exhibit a great deal of courage. Likewise the Seventy and the Twelve did, so long as they maintained their faith. At the time of the Crucifixion, they lost it and were scattered as sheep without a Shepherd as was predicted by Zechariah (Zechariah 13:7, Mark 14:27). But they regained their senses after the Resurrection. We note especially the Lord’s prayers for His disciples, that their faith should not fail, and when they had returned to Him, that they would strengthen their brethren (Luke 22:32). Having had the experience of trampling on demons (serpents and scorpions - Luke 10:19), courage was easier to come by. Cyril quoted<sup>111</sup> David’s experience to describe this: “They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy Countenance.

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<sup>110</sup> Basil the Great, On the Spirit, 16.

<sup>111</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 275.

And in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day; and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted (Psalm 89:15-16 LXX).

The Lord put all this in perspective by saying, “Nevertheless do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rather rejoice because your names are written in heaven” (Luke 10:20). The real glory is having one’s name written in the Book of Life (Revelation 20:12, Psalm 69:28). Other books exist that record the deeds or works of all men (Revelation 20:12, Daniel 7:10). If each child (Matthew 18:10) and each adult (Peter in Acts 12:14-16) have their own guardian angel, then there is a witness to everyone’s deeds spanning his entire life.

Not everyone, who was allowed to work miracles, has their name written in heaven, however. The Lord said, “Many will say to Me in that day, ‘Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, cast out demons in Your Name, and done many wonders in Your Name?’ and then I will declare to them, ‘I never knew you; depart from Me, you who practice lawlessness!’” (Matthew 7:22-23).

Cyril gives<sup>112</sup> some perspective on this: “To rejoice solely in the fact that they were able to work miracles, and crush the heads of demons, was likely to produce in them possibly the desire also of vainglory - and the neighbor of this passion constantly is pride. Most usefully, therefore, does Christ rebuke the first boasting, and quickly cuts away the root that had sprung up in them of the love of glory. Thus He imitates a good sower who, immediately when he sees a thorn springing up in his garden, tears it up with a hoe before it strikes its root deep”.

## **Humility**

The Gospel lesson concludes with Jesus’ words to His Father, “In that hour, Jesus rejoiced in the Spirit and said, ‘I thank You, Father, Lord of heaven and earth, that You have hidden these things from the wise and prudent and revealed them to babes. Even so, Father, for so it seemed good in Your sight’” (Luke 10:21).

By rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, Jesus was rejoicing in the works and miracles that were performed by means of the Holy Spirit. Cyril said<sup>113</sup> of this the Seventy were truly enlightened by their experience.

“Knowing that those who had been sent by Him had benefited a great deal, and that they had themselves learned His glory by experience, He was full of joy, or rather of exultation. Being good and loving to man, and wishing that all should be saved, He found the cause of His rejoicing (1) in the conversion of those that were in error, (2) in the enlightenment of those that were in darkness, and (3) in the answer of the understanding to the acknowledgment of His Glory for those who had been without knowledge and without instruction”.

When the Lord said that the Father had revealed these things to babes, He did not mean to imply that the Seventy were infants, but, in Cyril’s words<sup>114</sup>, they were “of an innocent and guileless mind and simple as a child regarding wickedness”.

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<sup>112</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 275.

<sup>113</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 65, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 277.

<sup>114</sup> Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 65, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 279.

Paul said that “He made known to us the mystery of His will according to His good pleasure” (Ephesians 1:9). He said this was “the unsearchable riches of Christ which from the beginning of the ages has been hidden in God who created all things through Jesus Christ” (Ephesians 3:8, 9). “This mystery which has been hidden from ages and from generations has now been revealed to His saints, where the mystery is Christ in us, the hope of glory” (Colossians 1:26, 27).

This is foolishness to the wise of this world (1 Corinthians 1:18-21) because the recipients of the mystery take up their crosses and die like their Master did. For more discussion on taking up one’s cross, see the Feast Day of the Exaltation of the Cross and the Sundays before and after.

To the angels, all this is fascinating, and they are always desiring to look into human affairs (1 Peter 1:12). There is joy among the angels when one sinner repents (Luke 15:10). Paul wrote to the Hebrews, “Do not forget to entertain strangers, for by so doing, some have unwittingly entertained angels” (Hebrews 13:2). This statement does not fit very well with the story of the Lord’s visit to Abraham, where the Lord and two others (angels) ate dinner with Abraham (Genesis 18). However, it describes the visit of the Archangel Raphael to Tobit and Tobias quite well (Tobit 3:16 - 12:22 LXX).

Yet the angels are not completely informed of the Lord’s plans. While they carry the souls of the righteous to Paradise (Luke 16:22) and they will gather together the elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven (Mark 13:27), yet they don’t know the day or the hour when they will need to do so (Matthew 24:36). Even Satan, with all his wisdom, did not understand the wisdom of God in a mystery; if he had understood, he wouldn’t have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:7, 8).

### **The Apostolic Work of Healing**

Many miracles accompanied the work of the Twelve and the Seventy in their various missionary journeys. This was true both when they were first sent out by the Lord (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:9, 17), later on after Pentecost (Acts 3:1-8, 5:15-16, 9:39-42) and wherever they went on their missionary journeys. Paul joined them later and performed similar miracles: “God performed 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 of them” (Acts 19:11, 12). Paul refers to this: He did not come to Corinth “with persuasive words of human wisdom, but in demonstration of the Spirit and of power” (1 Corinthians 2:4).

The Gospel readings for the feast days of some of the Unmercenary Healers have similar themes. For example, the feast days for Cyrus and John, Cosmas & Damian of Asia and Cosmas & Damian of Rome use Matthew 10:1, 5-8 which is the account of the sending out of the Twelve. The feast days for the Apostles Luke and Tryphon of the Seventy use Luke 10:16-21, which is the account of the return of the Seventy.

Both with the Twelve and the Seventy, there was extensive conflict with the forces of Satan. They were both instructed to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:9, 17), and the Twelve were given the additional authority to raise the dead (Matthew 10:8).

Commenting on this conflict at the return of the Seventy, the Lord said, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you” (Luke 10:18, 19).

John Cassian classified<sup>115</sup> healing into three different classes in decreasing order of effectiveness. (1) Healing done by holy men and women. (2) Healing done by the faith of caretakers or by the sick themselves. There are many limitations on those involved. (3) Faked healing done by demons.

“The first is indeed for the sake of healing when the grace of signs accompanies certain elect and righteous men on account of the merits of their holiness. For example, the Lord said, ‘Heal the sick, raise the dead, cleanse the lepers, and cast out demons. Freely you have received, freely give’” (Matthew 10:8).

“The second is for edification of the Church and proceeds from either the faith of those who bring the sick or from those who are to be cured. “The virtue of health proceeds even from sinners and men unworthy of it. Of whom the Savior says, ‘Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out devils, and in Your Name done many mighty works? And then I will confess to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity’ (Matthew 7:21-23). If the faith of those who bring the sick or if the faith of the sick is lacking, it prevents those on whom the gifts of healing are conferred from receiving the healing. For example, Mark said, ‘And Jesus could not do any mighty works there because of their unbelief.’ (Mark 6:5-6). The Lord Himself said, ‘Many lepers were in Israel in the days of Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian’” (Luke 4:27).

“The third class of healing is copied by the deceit and contrivance of demons. When a man who is regarded as a saint and a servant of God is enslaved to sins, men may be persuaded to copy his sins out of admiration for his miracles. Thus an opening is made for objections and the sanctity of the Faith may be brought into disgrace. Or else he who believes that he possesses the gift of healing may be puffed up by pride of heart and so fall more grievously. When the names are invoked of those who have no merits of holiness or any spiritual fruits, the demons pretend that by their merits they are disturbed and made to flee from the bodies they have possessed. Moses had said, ‘If there rise up in the midst of you a prophet, or one who says he has seen a dream, and declare a sign and a wonder. And that which he has spoken comes to pass, and he says to you: Let us go and follow after other gods whom you do not know, and let us serve them. You shall not hear the words of that prophet or of that dreamer, for the Lord your God is tempting you that it may appear whether you love Him or not with all your heart and with all your soul’ (Deuteronomy 13:1-3). The Lord said, ‘There shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall give great signs and wonders, so that, if it were possible, even the elect should be led astray’” (Matthew 24:24).

## **Hatred by the World**

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<sup>115</sup> John Cassian, *Second Conference of Abbot Nesteros*, II, xv, 1.

As one can expect, there was a reaction by the world to the work of the Apostles and the Unmercenary Healers. Just as all of the Twelve except John died the death of a martyr, so did many of the Unmercenary Healers. The reason for this is explained in the Gospel reading for the feast day of some of the Unmercenary Healers, such as Panteleimon and Haralampos (John 15:7-16:2). This reading addresses the hatred of the world in response to their work. This hatred is a very passionate, but often totally illogical hatred. How can one logically hate people who go around healing their fellow men for free?

Usually it was the civil authorities and seemingly good people that were behind the hatred and martyrdom of the Apostles and the Unmercenary Healers. But why would seemingly good people persecute the righteous? This is something that occurs today also, and this is described in the above Gospel reading. In the case of the Lord and the Twelve, it was the Jewish leaders or King Herod (trying to please the Jewish leaders). This was not the underbelly of Jewish society but the leaders who were respected and who upheld the law -- seemingly good people. There was a dark side to this, however. The Lord pointed out that there was considerable hypocrisy involved regarding the Jewish leaders (Matthew 23). And the Jewish historian, Josephus, describes in chapter after chapter the sordid, scheming, homicidal family life of the Herods. But most people didn't see this side of it; it seemed like good people were persecuting the righteous.

The Lord said, "If the world hates you, know that it hated Me before it hated you" (John 15:18). Because Christ and the Twelve were not of the world, they were hated by the world (John 15:19). Because they were of the Father (John 17:11, 12) and the ruler of this world hated the Father, they were hated by the world. This then led to persecution of the Lord and the Twelve by the world. In the centuries that followed, the same thing applied to the Unmercenary Healers: they stood out very dramatically as being of the Father.

This same Gospel lesson is used for the warrior-martyrs Demetrios of Thessalonica and George of Cappadocia. For a more detailed discussion of this, see the study for October 26 on the feast day of Demetrios and George.

### **The Purpose of Suffering<sup>116</sup>**

One of the Epistle readings for the Unmercenary Healers is 2 Timothy 2:1-10. This is used for Panteleimon (Table I), Haralampos (Table II) and Laurence (Appendix I) as well as for the warrior-martyrs Demetrios and George. Paul penned his last words before his martyrdom in encouraging Timothy to continue the Apostolic work that he was called to. Paul wrote that he himself had "finished the race" and that "his departure (i.e. martyrdom) was at hand" (2 Timothy 4:6,7). Some time earlier, Paul had established Timothy as Bishop of Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:3), and his encouragements to Timothy were:

- Be strong in the Grace that is in Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:1).
- The things you heard from me, commit to faithful men who will be able to teach others also (2 Timothy 2:2).
- You must endure hardship as a good soldier of Christ Jesus (2 Timothy 2:3).

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<sup>116</sup> For more discussion on the purpose of suffering, see the Epistle lesson for the Feast Day of Demetrios and George.

Why should Timothy, Paul, the Lord, the Twelve and the Unmercenary Healers have to suffer? The answer is that they do this for the sake of those who follow them in the Faith. They help others to see what is beyond this life and what really matters.

John Chrysostom made<sup>117</sup> some analogies. Wounded soldiers who recover are an encouragement to their fellow soldiers; so holy men and women who bear up patiently under persecution are an encouragement to the Church.

“In war, the Captain who sees his General wounded and recovered again, is much encouraged. Thus it produces some consolation to the faithful, that the Apostle Paul should have been exposed to great suffering and not rendered weak by the utmost of them. Timothy heard that Paul, who possessed so great powers (see Acts 19:11-12), was a prisoner and afflicted, yet was not impatient or discontented on the desertion of his friends. Timothy, if ever exposed to the same sufferings himself, would not consider that it proceeded from human weakness, nor from being a disciple, nor because he was inferior to Paul, but that all this happened in the natural course of things. For if Paul endured these things, much more Timothy ought to be able to bear them.”

In this regard, the Lord had said, “A disciple is not above his teacher, nor a servant above his master. If they have called the Master of the house ‘Beelzebub’, how much more will they call those of His household” (Matthew 10:24).

Chrysostom added<sup>118</sup> that Timothy knew where the battle lines were drawn and that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). Paul said to stand firm not to depress Timothy but to excite him.

“Be sober therefore, he means, and watch; have the Grace of the Lord cooperating with you, and aiding you in the contest; contribute your own part with much cheerfulness and resolution”. When we go to watch a wrestling match today, we don’t go there in depression, but with excitement to root for our favorite contestant. In the same vein, we are all contestants in a larger wrestling match where the angels and saints are cheering for us.

Chrysostom concluded<sup>119</sup> with a very fitting example: a comparison of the Emperor Nero with the Apostle Paul, where it was Nero who had Paul beheaded. Even though Nero had all the power, he couldn’t stop Paul from proclaiming the Word. Nero had all the honor from the world; Paul had none. Yet at the Second Coming of Christ, this situation will be reversed.

“Nero had the glory of this world, Paul had the dishonor of this world. Nero was a tyrant who had great success, many trophies, wealth overflowing, numerous armies, the greater part of the world in his sway, the Senate crouching to him and a splendid palace to live in. When he went out, he was arrayed in gold and precious stones and was surrounded by guards and attendants. When he sat down, he was clothed in robes of purple. He was called lord of land and sea, Emperor, King and other high-sounding names. Even wise men, potentates and sovereigns trembled at

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<sup>117</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, IV, vv. 1-7.

<sup>118</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, IV, vv. 1-7.

<sup>119</sup> John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, IV, Moral.

him for he was said to be a cruel and violent man. He wished to be thought of as a god, and he despised both all the idols and the very God Who is over all.”

“Now in opposition to him, let us consider Paul, a Cilician, a tent-maker, a poor man, unskilled in the wisdom of Rome, knowing the Hebrew language, which was especially despised by the Italians. He was a man that often lived in hunger, often went to bed without food, a man that didn’t have clothes to put on, often in cold and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:27). Paul was cast into prison by Nero himself, confined with robbers, impostors, grave-robbers and murderers, and scourged as a malefactor. Yet (in the 4th Century), the greater part of the world had never heard of Nero while Paul is daily celebrated among Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians and those who inhabit the extremities of the earth. No one knows where Nero’s grave<sup>120</sup> is, while the tent-maker occupies the midst of the city<sup>121</sup> as if he were a king and living.”

“Yet let us consider what the case was when Paul was in chains, dragged bound from prison, while Nero was clothed in purple and walked out from a palace. Nero, with armies at his command, said, ‘Do not disseminate the Word of God!’ Paul said, ‘I cannot stop, the Word of God is not chained!’ (2 Timothy 2:9) Thus the Cilician, the prisoner, the poor tent-maker, who lived in hunger, despised the rich Roman emperor with all his armies. He that was in chains was a conqueror; he that was in a purple robe was conquered. A single man defeated the Emperor and his armies. The surrounding multitudes were all slaves of Nero, yet they admired not their lord but him who was superior to their lord.”

“And yet I am but praising the lion for his claws, when I ought to be speaking of his real honors. How will Paul come in shining garments with the King of Heaven? How will Nero stand then, mournful and dejected? Let us, my beloved children, be imitators of Paul, not in his faith only, but in his life, that we may attain to heavenly glory, and trample upon that glory that is here”.

## **Doing Battle with Demons**

Sickness of all kinds is related to activities of demons<sup>122</sup> that try to discredit God and turn man away from God. For example, the Patriarch Job was the most righteous man of his day, yet Satan demanded, and received, permission to afflict Job with very painful diseases. It was so bad that Job’s own wife advised her husband to just “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Another example of the connection between demons and sickness is the healing of various physical ailments by merely casting out the demon, who brought on the ailment. This occurred for the blind and mute demoniac (Matthew 12:22), the mute demoniac (Matthew 9:32-33) and the epileptic demoniac (Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 9:17-27, Luke 9:38-42).

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<sup>120</sup> See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero>. When Nero was about to be overthrown, he committed suicide and was buried in the Mausoleum of the Domitii Ahenobarbi, in what is now the [Villa Borghese \(Pincian Hill\)](#) area of Rome.

<sup>121</sup> See [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul\\_the\\_Apostle](http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle). Paul’s gravesite was in the middle of the city of Rome at the [Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls](#).

<sup>122</sup> For more details on the relationship of sickness to demoniac activity, see the Gospel lesson for the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Luke

If sickness is demon-related, then the Apostles and the Unmercenary Healers are likely to incur a great deal of demonic wrath by their work. It should be no surprise, then, that many of the Apostles and the Unmercenary Healers died as martyrs.

One of the traditional activities of many ascetics for the last 2,000 years has been to withdraw from society in order to do battle with demons, either in seclusion or in company with other ascetics. Again, it should be no surprise that all or most of the Unmercenary Healers were also ascetics.