

SUNDAY AFTER EPIPHANY
THE LORD BEGINS HIS WORK
Impact of His Work

Sunday after Epiphany
January 8, 2023
Revision C

GOSPEL: Matthew 4:12-17

EPISTLE: Ephesians 4:7-13

Most Western Churches use the Gospel accounts of the visit of the Magi as the Epiphany readings. The Lord's baptism is then used in the West as the reading for the 1st Sunday after Epiphany and today's Gospel reading becomes the reading for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany. In the Eastern Church, the visit of the Magi is used for Christmas Day and the Lord's Baptism for Epiphany.

Epiphany celebrations began very early in the Eastern Church using the theme of the Lord's appearance (or Epiphany) at His baptism. This celebration included a Blessing of the Waters of Baptism. [For more discussion, see text from Epiphany.] In addition, the original Epiphany celebrations also celebrated the birth of Christ, which later became a separate Feast Day. When the Western Church began to celebrate Epiphany in the 4th Century, the theme of the Lord's appearance to the Gentiles (represented by the Magi) was chosen and did not include the Blessing of the Waters as in the East.

In the Eastern Church, today's Gospel lesson continues as the third in a series of three aspects of Epiphany. The first of the series centered on John the Baptist and Preparation for Baptism; the second centered on the Lord's Epiphany at His baptism; today's Gospel speaks about the Lord's Epiphany to His own people in Nazareth and Capernaum.

Today's Epistle lesson is sometimes used in the West for Pentecost Sunday, also called Whitsunday.

Table of Contents

Background for the Gospel.....	2065
Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 4:14-30.....	2066
Naphtali and Zebulun See a Great Light.....	2068
Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13	2072
Background to Ephesians	2072
Union with Christ.....	2072
Christ's Descent into Hell	2073
The Ascension	2073
Security Against Universal Corruption	2074
Coming to the Perfect Man	2075
The Measure of Christ's Gift	2080
Galilee at the Time of Joshua	2083
Galilee at the Time of Jesus.....	2084

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Background for the Gospel

Prior to the Gospel lesson, Jesus was tempted by the devil after His Baptism. Both His Baptism and His temptation were preparation for His work described by the Gospel lesson.

Tertullian of Carthage spelled out the advantages Christ had in fasting before His encounter with the devil. By doing this, Christ was initiating the new man that He might show the new man to the devil. The devil was tempting Christ to be too strong for the power of hunger. Later Christ prescribed fasting as a tool for battling the stronger demons. Paul used this tool a lot.

“The Lord Himself consecrated His own baptism (and, in His own, that of all) by fasts (Matthew 4:2); having the power to make ‘loaves out of stones’ (Matthew 4:3, Luke 4:3). By the virtue of refraining from food He was initiating ‘the new man’ into ‘a severe handling’ of ‘the old’ (Ephesians 4:22-23), that He might show that new man to the devil. The devil was seeking to tempt him by means of food, to be too strong for the whole power of hunger.”

“Thereafter He prescribed to fasts a law — that they are to be performed ‘without sadness’ (Matthew 6:16-18): for why should what is salutary be sad? He taught likewise that fasts are to be the weapons for battling with the more direful demons (Matthew 17:21, Mark 9:29). For what wonder if the same operation is the instrument of the iniquitous spirit’s egress as of the Holy Spirit’s ingress? Finally, granting that upon the centurion Cornelius, even before baptism, the honorable gift of the Holy Spirit, together with the gift of prophecy besides. The Spirit had hastened to descend; we see that his fasts had been heard. Moreover, that Paul too, among his labors, perils, and hardships, after ‘hunger and thirst’, enumerates ‘fasts’ also ‘often’” (2 Corinthians 11:27).

Cyril of Jerusalem stated¹ that Christ didn’t preach at all until He was baptized. Then He began to preach ‘Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand. Similarly, with us: but instead of the Father’s voice, “This is My Son”, it is, “This has now been made My Son”’.

“Jesus Christ was the Son of God, yet He didn’t preach the Gospel before His Baptism. If the Master Himself followed the right time in due order, ought we, His servants, to venture out of order? ‘From that time Jesus began to preach and to say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand”’ (Matthew 4:17). This was when ‘the Holy Spirit descended in bodily form like a dove upon Him’ (Luke 3:22). Not that Jesus might see Him first, for He knew Him even before He came in a bodily shape, but that John, who was baptizing Him, might behold Him. For ‘I did not know Him, but He who sent me to baptize with water said to me, “Upon whom you see the Spirit descending, and remaining on Him, this is He who baptizes with the Holy Spirit”’ (John 1:33). If we have unfeigned piety, the Holy Ghost comes down on us also, and a Father’s voice sounds over us from on high — not, ‘This is My Son’, but, ‘This has now been made My son’. For the ‘is’ belongs to Him alone, because ‘In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God’ (John 1:1). To Him belongs the ‘is’, since He is always the Son of God. But to us ‘has now been made’: since we don’t have the sonship by

¹ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, III, 14.

nature, but receive it by adoption. He eternally ‘is’; but we receive the grace by adoption”.

John Chrysostom spoke² a lot about the tyranny of wealth, but Jesus introduced His teaching on the subject slowly to His disciples. First, He says “Blessed are the merciful”; later He points out that the giver is blessed just for giving! We note that at Jesus’ temptation by Satan, Jesus was offered ownership of all the kingdoms of the world, but turned it down.

Now above He had only said, that we must show mercy; but here He points out also how great mercy we must show. He says, ‘Do not lay up for yourselves treasures on earth, where moth and rust destroy and where thieves break in and steal’ (Matthew 6:19). Since it wasn’t possible at the beginning to introduce all at once His discourse on contempt of riches, by reason of the tyranny of the passion, He breaks it up into small portions. Having set the hearer’s mind free, He instills it therein, so as that it shall become acceptable. First, He said, ‘Blessed are the merciful, for they shall obtain mercy’ (Matthew 5:7). After this ‘Agree with your adversary quickly, while you are on the way with him, lest your adversary deliver you to the judge, the judge hand you over to the officer, and you be thrown into prison’ (Matthew 5:25). After that again, ‘If anyone wants to sue you and take away your tunic, let him have *your* cloak also’ (Matthew 5:40); but here, that which is much greater than all these. For there His meaning was, ‘if you see a law-suit impending, do this; since to want to be freed from strife is better than to possess and strive’. But here, supposing neither adversary nor anyone at law with you, and without all mention of any other such party, He teaches the contempt of riches itself by itself. He implies that not so much for their sake who receive mercy, as for the giver’s sake, He makes these laws. So that though there be no one injuring us, or dragging us into a court of justice, even so we may despise our possessions, bestowing them on those that are in need. And neither here has He put the whole, but even in this place it is gently spoken; although He had in the wilderness shown forth to a surpassing extent His conflicts in that behalf³. However, He does not express this, nor bring it forward; for it was not yet time to reveal it. But for a while He searches out for reasons, maintaining the place of an adviser rather than a lawgiver, in His sayings on this subject.

Gospel: Matthew 4:12-17, Mark 1:14-15, Luke 4:14-30

The Gospel accounts in Matthew, Mark and Luke skip over a portion of Jesus’ life between His baptism and temptation and His departure for Galilee to begin His work. Details of this omitted portion are found in John 1:35-3:36. To understand this, Matthew records Jesus leaving for Galilee after His temptation when He heard John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod (Matthew 4:12, Mark 1:14). John records Jesus’ trip to Cana in Galilee (John 2:1), then to Capernaum (John 2:12), then to Jerusalem for Passover (John 2:13) and finally into Judea near the Jordan to do some baptizing with John the Baptist (John 3:22ff) before heading North to Galilee (John 4:3). This is summarized in Table I. Today’s Gospel lesson covers just the time He spent in Nazareth and Capernaum at the bottom of Table I.

² John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XX, 2.

³ i.e. Satan had offered Jesus during his temptation ownership of all the kingdoms of the world; but Jesus turned him down. See Matthew 4:9-10.

TABLE I
SEQUENCE OF EVENTS FOLLOWING JESUS' BAPTISM

EVENT	LOCATION	REFERENCE
Jesus' Baptism	Jordan River	Matthew 3:12-17 Mark 1:9-11 Luke 3:21-22 John 1:29-34
Tempted by Satan	Judean Wilderness	Matthew 4:1-11 Mark 1:12-13 Luke 4:1-13
Jesus calls some Disciples	Near Jordan River	John 1:35-51
Wedding Feast at Cana	Cana, Galilee	John 2:1-11
A few days in Capernaum	Capernaum, Galilee	John 2:12
Passover Feast	Jerusalem	John 2:13
Threw out money changers	Jerusalem	John 2:14-25
Met Nicodemus	Jerusalem	John 3:1-21
Baptized with Disciples	Judea	John 3:22-36
Left for Galilee on hearing about John's imprisonment		Matthew 4:12 Mark 1:14 Luke 4:14
Met Samaritan woman	Sychar	John 4:1-42
Arrival in Galilee	Cana, Galilee	John 4:43-54 Luke 4:14-15
Went to Nazareth	Nazareth, Galilee	Matthew 4:12-13 Mark 1:14 Luke 4:16-30
Went to Capernaum	Capernaum	Matthew 4:13-22 Mark 1:16-34 Luke 4:31-41

From "Harmony of the Gospels" Orthodox Study Bible, New Testament, pp. 838-843.

Prior to arriving in Nazareth, Jesus stopped in at Cana (John 4:46) where He had changed the water into wine (John 2:1-11). While He was there a certain "royal⁴ official" (perhaps a member of the family of Herod Antipas) came to Him from Capernaum requesting that Jesus come heal his son. Jesus sent him on his way back to Capernaum with word that his son was well (John 4:50); the royal official and his whole household believed (John 4:53). This was probably a large household with many servants. The word of this undoubtedly spread very rapidly because Jesus saw the results of it when He then went to Nazareth (Luke 4:31).

Later on, Luke tells us of Joanna, the wife of Chuza, Herod's steward, where she was one of the myrrh-bearing women (along with Mary Magdalene, the Virgin Mary, Mary and Martha of Bethany, Mary the wife of Cleopas, Susanna and Salome) and who, with the others, provided for and financed the Lord's public ministry out of her possessions (Luke 8:3). Whether Chuza was

⁴ The Greek word translated "royal official" is *basilikos* which is derived from the Greek word for king: *basileus*.

the “royal official” of Capernaum (John 4:46) who believed along with his whole household (John 4:53), or whether he was one of the servants in the household, we don’t know.

Naphtali and Zebulun See a Great Light

The Gospel lesson begins with Jesus leaving Judah to go to Galilee when He heard that John the Baptist had been put in prison. John had been bound and imprisoned by Herod Antipas because John had criticized Herod for the incest of marrying his brother Philip’s wife (Matthew 14:3-4). Herod wanted to put John to death but feared the multitude because they counted John as a prophet (Matthew 14:5). John languished in prison for over a year before Herodias, Herod’s wife, persuaded him to bring her John’s head on a platter at Herod’s birthday party (Matthew 14:6-11). Jesus, as God, knew what was going on here and quietly withdrew to Galilee so as to avoid being caught up in politics. He knew His time had not yet come.

John Chrysostom comments⁵ on this as follows: “Why does He depart? Again, instructing us not to go to meet temptation but to give place and withdraw ourselves, He retires to Capernaum; at once fulfilling the prophesy regarding Naphtali and Zebulun seeing a great light (Isaiah 9:1-2). By plotting against His forerunner (i.e. John) and casting him into prison, they thrust out Christ into Galilee of the Gentiles”.

Hippolytus spoke of how Jacob’s prophecy of his twelve sons was fulfilled. The light appearing to Naphtali and Zebulun is Christ at His coming to their area. This represents the calling of the Gentiles by Christ Himself, bestowing beauty on the fruit of the Gospel. Jacob’s prophecy concerning Joseph was speaking of Christ also.

“Who is the son, portrayed by Joseph, goodly and envied, even to this day, but our Lord Jesus Christ? An object of envy is He indeed to those who choose to hate Him, yet He is not by any means to be overcome. For though He endured the cross, yet as God He returned to life, having trampled upon death, as His God and Father addresses Him, and says, ‘Sit at My right hand, till I make Your enemies Your footstool’ (Psalm 110:1). And that even those are brought to nothing who strive with the utmost possible madness against Him, he has taught us, when he says, ‘Against whom men taking evil counsel reproached *him*, and the archers pressed hard upon him’. For the ‘archers’ — that is, the leaders of the people — convened their assemblies, and took bitter counsel. ‘But their bows and arrows were mightily consumed, and the sinews of their arms were slackened by the hand of the mighty one of Jacob’ (Genesis 49:23-24 LXX). That is to say, by God the Father, who is the Lord of Power, who also made His Son blessed in heaven and on earth. And he (Naphtali) is adopted as a figure of things pertaining to us, as the Gospel shows: ‘The land of Zebulun and the land of Naphtali, *by* the way of the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles. The people who sat in darkness have seen a great light, and upon those who sat in the region and shadow of death, Light has dawned’ (Matthew 4:15-16). And what other light was this but the calling of the Gentiles, which is the trunk, i.e., the tree of the Lord, in whom engrafted it bears fruit? And the word, ‘bestowing beauty on its fruit’ (Genesis 49:21 LXX),

⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XIV, 1.

John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLIX, 1.

expresses the excellency of our calling. And if the words, ‘bestowing beauty on its fruit’, are understood, as perhaps they may, with reference to us, the clause is still quite intelligible. For, by progressing in virtue, and attaining to better things, ‘forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead’ (Philippians 3:13), according to the word of the blessed Paul, we rise ever to the higher beauty. I mean, however, of course, spiritual beauty, so that to us too it may be said hereafter, ‘So the King will greatly desire your beauty; because He *is* your Lord, worship Him”’ (Psalm 45:11).

Figures 1 and 2, on pages 2083 and 2084, are maps of Galilee that show the boundaries of Naphtali and Zebulun during the days of Joshua versus Galilee in 30 AD. As one can see, the Galilean cities of Cana, Nazareth and Capernaum are within the regions given to Naphtali and Zebulun after the conquest. However, they were part of the Northern Kingdom that was led into captivity by Assyria in the 8th Century BC. Galilee of the 1st Century had a mixed Jewish-Gentile population and Galileans were considered second-class citizens⁶ by the Jews of Judea.

For example, the Pharisees ridiculed Nicodemus when he spoke in Jesus’ defense: “Are you also from Galilee? Search and look for no prophet has arisen out of Galilee” (John 7:52). While the Pharisees were wrong that no prophet had come from Galilee, few prophets did. Jonah the son of Amittai was born in Gath-hepher, near Nazareth (2 Kings 14:25) and Nahum was also from Galilee according to Jerome⁷.

The Gospel text, quoting Isaiah 9:1-2, refers to the Galileans as sitting in darkness (Matthew 4:15) and sitting in the region and shadow of death (Matthew 4:16). Could this be merely because few prophets had arisen from Galilee or is there something more sinister involved? To see what this darkness is, let us look at the reaction of three Galilean cities to the words and teaching of Christ.

On His return from Judea, Jesus went first to Cana, then to Nazareth, then to Capernaum (see Table I). His stay in Nazareth is covered in detail by Luke. He arrived in the Power of the Spirit (Luke 4:14), taught in their synagogues and was glorified by all (Matthew 4:15). He even showed how the Scripture was fulfilled in His doing so (Matthew 4:16-21). But they also said, “Is this not Joseph’s son?” and wanted Him to perform some miracles (Matthew 4:22-23) as He did at Capernaum. The miracles of Capernaum were done at a distance for the benefit of the royal official from Capernaum who sought Jesus out at Cana (John 4:46-54). Matthew comments later that, “He did not do many mighty works there (in Nazareth) because of their unbelief” (Matthew 13:58). And this unbelief is the darkness and the shadow of death that Isaiah prophesied about. The darkness was so strong that all those in the synagogue ran Jesus out of town and tried to throw Him off a cliff (Luke 4:28-30). This is some very serious darkness!

As a result, Jesus largely abandoned His hometown of Nazareth in favor of Capernaum (Matthew 4:13), where Capernaum was later called “His own city” (Matthew 9:1). And He was able to do many more mighty works in Capernaum (Luke 4:31-41, 5:17-26, 7:1-10) than in Nazareth. While the residents of Capernaum were amazed (Luke 4:36), glorified God and were

⁶ Edersheim, Sketches of Jewish Social Life, pp. 23-26, 30-33.

⁷ Merrill Unger, Unger’s Bible Dictionary, Moody Press, Chicago, 1967, p. 774

filled with fear (Luke 5:26), they did not repent as Jesus' basic message called them to do (Matthew 4:17). He later stated that it would be more tolerable on Judgment Day for the people of Sodom than the people of Capernaum because of this. If similar miracles had been done in Sodom, Jesus said, the Sodomites would have repented and their city would have been spared (Matthew 11:23-24; compare Genesis 19:1-29). It sounds like the darkness in Capernaum was almost as bad as Nazareth. Similar for Chorazin and Bethsaida, which are close by to Capernaum.

Not all cities in Galilee were put into the category of Capernaum, Chorazin, Bethsaida and Nazareth by the Lord. Nain (about 6 miles SE of Nazareth, but part of the lot to Issachar by Joshua), seems to have responded to Him quite well. After raising a widow's only son from the dead, "fear came upon all, and they glorified God, saying, 'A great prophet has risen up among us' and 'God has visited His people'" (Luke 7:11-16).

Thus, in Galilee of the Gentiles (Matthew 4:15), the people who sat in darkness saw a great light (Matthew 4:16). And their reaction to the light varied. Nazareth tried to kill Him (Luke 4:28-30); Capernaum glorified God (Luke 5:26), but regarded His miracles as a circus attraction (John 4:48); Nain recognized God as visiting His people. There are similar reactions today by people who sit in darkness in cities all over the earth, including our own city. All that we as Christians can do is to be light as He is Light (Ephesians 5:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:5, 1 Peter 2:9, 2 Corinthians 4:6). This will expose darkness (Ephesians 5:13), and may very well generate a reaction from those who are blinded by the god of this age (2 Corinthians 4:4) similar to the reaction the Lord got when He made His Epiphany to His own.

Clement of Alexandria stated⁸ that Christ called all men to repentance and so did Paul. The Scriptures are an important guide, given by inspiration of God, to lead us in that direction to become sanctified and deified⁹. Some people come out of fear, but this is really of Faith. As we come, we taste and see that the Lord is good, and we are blessed.

"Godliness, that makes man as far as can be like God, designates God as our suitable teacher, who alone can worthily assimilate man to God. This teaching Paul knows as truly divine. You, O Timothy, he says, 'from childhood you have known the Holy Scriptures, which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus' (2 Timothy 3:15). For truly holy are those letters that sanctify and deify. The writings or volumes that consist of those holy letters and syllables, Paul consequently calls 'All Scripture *is* given by inspiration of God, and *is* profitable for doctrine, for reproof, for correction, for instruction in righteousness, that the man of God may be complete, thoroughly equipped for every good work' (2 Timothy 3:16-17). No one will be so impressed by the exhortations of any of the saints, as he is by the words of the Lord Himself, the lover of man. For this, and nothing but this, is His only work — the salvation of man. Therefore, He Himself, urging them on to salvation, cries, 'Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand' (Matthew 4:17). Those men that draw near through fear, He converts. Thus, also Paul, beseeching the Macedonians, becomes the interpreter of the divine voice, when he says, 'The Lord is at hand' (Philippians 4:5). But are ye so devoid of fear, or rather of faith, as not to believe the Lord Himself, or Paul, who in Christ's

⁸ Clement of Alexandria, Exhortation to the Heathen, 9.

⁹ Deification means to become like God as far as is possible.

stead thus entreats: ‘Taste and see that the Lord *is* good; blessed *is* the man *who* trusts in Him!’ (Psalm 34:8). Faith will lead you in; experience will teach you; Scripture will train you, for it says, ‘Come, you children, listen to me; I will teach you the fear of the Lord’ (Psalm 34:11). Then, as to those who already believe, it briefly adds, ‘Who *is* the man *who* desires life, and loves *many* days, that he may see good?’ (Psalm 34:12) It is we, we shall say — we who are the devotees of good, we who eagerly desire good things.”

Impact of Christ's Work

Revision C

Epistle: Ephesians 4:7-13

While the Gospel lesson addresses the beginning of Christ's Epiphany to His own, the Epistle lesson fast-forwards to describe a summary of the impact of His work.

Background to Ephesians

Paul wrote his Epistle to the Ephesians from house-arrest in Rome in about 62 AD. He had first met with and reasoned with Jews in the synagogue there in about 52 AD on his Second Missionary Journey (Acts 18:19). Although Paul did not stay there long in 52 AD (Acts 18:20), he left Aquila (of the Seventy) and his wife Priscilla there and promised to return (Acts 18:18-21). About 53 AD, Paul returned on his Third Missionary Journey and spent two years in Ephesus (Acts 19:8-10). At this time, the church took a separate direction, distinct from the synagogue. Toward the end of his Third Missionary Journey in 57 AD, Paul had a very emotional farewell meeting (Acts 20:37-38) with the elders of the Church (Acts 20:17), knowing he may never return.

Ephesus had had a number of distinguished visitors over the years. The Apostle John and the Virgin Mary had gone there to escape the bloodbath of Herod (Agrippa) trying to please the Jews -- which resulted in the martyrdom of James the son of Zebedee and the imprisonment of Peter (Acts 12:1-4). That bloodbath began in 44 AD and ended with the death of Herod soon thereafter (Acts 12:2-23). Apollos (of the Seventy) also was in Ephesus in 53 AD and vigorously refuted the Jews showing from the Scriptures that Jesus was the Messiah (Acts 18:24-28).

After the death of the Virgin Mary in the mid 50's AD, the Apostle John returned to Ephesus and worked with a number of Churches in that area: Ephesus, Smyrna, Pergamos, Thyatira, Sardis, Philadelphia and Laodicea (Revelation 2, 3). John may have been in the area when Paul wrote his Epistle.

Today's Epistle lesson speaks about the measure (or quantity) of Christ's gifts to men and how this was given after He made His Epiphany to the souls and spirits in Hades. The context is Christ and the Church and our union with Christ.

Union with Christ

Paul had just encouraged the Ephesians to walk worthy of their calling (Ephesians 4:1) endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace (Ephesians 4:3). He was referring to Christ and the Church as he did later (Ephesians 5:32) when he used the illustration of a husband and wife (Ephesians 5:22-33). Just as husband and wife become one flesh (Ephesians 5:28-31), so those in the Church are members of Christ's body (5:30), where Christ is the head (Ephesians 5:23).

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The Apostle John, who was probably working in the Ephesus area as Paul wrote this Epistle, taught the same “Union with Christ” using the analogy of a vine and its branches (John 15:1-8). The branches may carry all the fruit, but the vine and the root provide support and nourishment; and the vine is all one plant. In terms of union with Christ, there is one body, one Spirit, one Lord, one Faith, one baptism and one God and Father of all (Ephesians 4:4-6). For more discussion on this, see the 25th Sunday after Pentecost.

Christ’s Descent into Hell

As part of the Apostles’ Creed (drafted by the Twelve shortly after Pentecost) is the statement of the Faith that Christ descended into hell after His crucifixion. This is referred to in our Epistle lesson (Ephesians 4:9-10), where Hades (Greek) and Sheol (Hebrew) had been understood as the lower parts of the earth. Peter stated that the Gospel had been preached even to the dead (1 Peter 4:6) and that the Lord made proclamation to the spirits that had been in prison since the days of Noah due to disobedience (1 Peter 3:19-20, 2 Peter 2:4).

These spirits may be identified with the “sons of God” (Genesis 6:2) who created the Nephilim who were the “mighty men who were of old, men of renown” (Genesis 6:4). These caused the wickedness of man to be so great on the earth that the Lord felt it necessary to destroy the earth with water (Genesis 6:5-7, 2 Peter 3:6). Goliath of Gath was later referred to as a descendant of the Nephilim (Numbers 13:33, Joshua 11:22, 1 Samuel 17:4). Currently these spirits in prison are restrained (2 Thessalonians 2:7-8); but there will come a time when they will be released again (Revelation 9:1-11).]

In descending into hell, the Lord overthrew death by His death (Colossians 2:15). As God, He cannot die; as man, He died in our place. As God in Hades, our Epistle text states that He led captive a host of captives (Ephesians 4:8). The Church has interpreted this to mean that the Old Testament saints (Adam, Eve, etc.) who had been held captive in Hades awaiting the Lord’s Epiphany were then released and taken to heaven by the Lord. For more discussion on this, see Holy Saturday.

Of the Lord’s descent into hell, Chrysostom said¹⁰, “He descended into the lower parts of the earth (Ephesians 4:9) beyond which there are none other; and He ascended up far above all things (Ephesians 4:10) to that place, beyond which there is none other. This is to show His divine energy and supreme dominion. For indeed even of old had all things been filled.

The Ascension

Christ’s descent into Hades was compared to His ascension into heaven. John Chrysostom compared¹¹ the two events: descent and ascension. The expressions are adapted both to the conceptions of the Apostles and to the Divine Majesty. The same person Who descended into Hades now ascends into heaven! As they watch Him ascend, their conceptions are elevated. We note that the disciples realized that the two “men” standing by were actually angels.

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XI, vv. 9-10.

¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Acts, II, vv. 6-11.

Jesus did not merely say, 'I go', lest they should again grieve, but He said, 'I send the Spirit' (John 16:5, 7); and that He was going away into heaven they saw with their eyes. O what a sight they were granted! 'And while they looked steadfastly toward heaven, as he went up, behold, two men stood by them in white apparel; which also said, You men of Galilee, why do you stand gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven will come in like manner as you have seen Him going into heaven' (Acts 1:10-11). Again, the outward appearance is cheering ['in white apparel']. They were Angels, in the form of men. And they say, 'You men of Galilee:' they showed themselves to be trusted by the disciples, by saying, 'You men of Galilee'. For this was the meaning: else, what needed they to be told of their country, who knew it well enough? By their appearance they attracted their regard, and showed that they were from heaven. But why didn't Christ Himself tell them these things, instead of the Angels? He had beforehand told them all things; 'What if you shall see the Son of Man going up where He was before?' (John 6:62). Moreover, the Angels did not say, 'whom you have seen taken up,' but, 'going into heaven'. Ascension is the word, not assumption; the expression 'taken up', belongs to the flesh. For the same reason they say, 'He which is taken up from you shall thus come', not, 'shall be sent', but, 'shall come'. 'He that ascended, the same is he also that descended' (Ephesians 4:10). So again, the expression, 'a cloud received Him' (Acts 1:9): for He Himself mounted on the cloud. Of the expressions, some are adapted to the conceptions of the disciples, some agreeable with the Divine Majesty. Now, as they behold, their conceptions are elevated: He has given them no slight hint of the nature of His second coming. For this, 'Shall thus come', means, with the body; which thing they desired to hear; and, that he shall come again to judgment 'thus' upon a cloud. 'And, behold, two men stood by them'. Why is it said, 'men?' Because the angels had fashioned themselves completely as such, that the beholders might not be overpowered. 'Which also said': their words moreover were calculated for soothing: 'Why do you stand gazing up into heaven?' (Acts 1:11). They would not let them any longer wait there for Him. Here again, the angels tell what is greater, and leave the less unsaid. That 'He will thus come', they say, and that 'you must look for Him from heaven'. For the rest, they called them off from that spectacle saying that they might not, because they could not see Him, imagine that He was not ascended, but even while they are conversing, would be present before they were aware. For if the disciples said on a former occasion, 'Where are You going?' (John 13:36) much more would they have said it now.

Security Against Universal Corruption

Paul wrote to the Ephesians, "He Himself gave some *to be* apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers, for the equipping of the saints for the work of ministry, for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ" (Ephesians 4:11-15).

John Chrysostom stated¹² that one of the benefits of having Apostles, prophets, pastors and teachers is for security against universal corruption. Bishops may be wicked (although this is rare), but the actual work of God does not depend on how good the priest or bishop is. For example, a baptism performed by a wicked priest is still valid and still conveys the gift of the Holy Spirit. Even Balaam prophesied; even Nebuchadnezzar was shown things to come; even Caiaphas prophesied as he was crucifying Christ.

“Why does Christ call those ‘carnal’, who had attained so large a measure of the Spirit? Because they also were carnal, unto whom the Lord said, ‘I tell you I do not know you, where you are from. Depart from Me, all you workers of iniquity’ (Luke 13:27); and yet they both cast out demons, raised the dead, and uttered prophecies. So that it is possible even for one who wrought miracles to be carnal. For so God wrought by Balaam (Numbers 22-24), and to Pharaoh He revealed things to come (Exodus 10:28-29), and to Nebuchadnezzar (Daniel 2); and Caiaphas prophesied, not knowing what he said (John 11:49-53). Some others cast out demons in His name, though they were ‘not with Him’ (Luke 9:49); since not for the doers’ sake are these things done, but for others’ sake. Nor is it seldom, that those who were positively unworthy have been made instrumental to them. Now why wonder, if in the case of unworthy men these things are done for others’ sake, seeing that so it is, even when they are wrought by saints? For Paul says, ‘All things are yours; whether Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, or life, or death’ (1 Corinthians 3:22). And again, ‘He gave some Apostles, and some Prophets, and some Pastors and Teachers, for the perfecting of the saints, unto the work of ministering’ (Ephesians 4:11-12). For if it were not so, there would have been no security against universal corruption. For it may be that rulers are wicked and polluted, and their subjects good and virtuous; that layman may live in piety, and priests in wickedness; and there could not have been either baptism, or the body of Christ, or oblation, through such, if in every instance grace required merit. But as it is, God works even by unworthy persons, and in no respect is the grace of baptism damaged by the conduct of the priest; if so, the receiver would suffer loss. Accordingly, though such things happen rarely, still, it must be owned, they do happen. Now these things I say, lest anyone of the bystanders busying himself about the life of the priest, should be offended as concerning the things solemnized. ‘For man introduces nothing into the things which are set before us, but the whole is a work of the power of God, and He it is who initiates you into the mysteries’”.

Coming to the Perfect Man

Paul continued in his Epistle to the Ephesians, “for the edifying of the body of Christ, till we all come to the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ; that we should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting, but, speaking the truth in love, may grow up in all things into Him who is the head – Christ” (Ephesians 4:12-15).

¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, VIII, 2.

What does “the perfect man” mean? Christ and the Father are One by nature; they share the Divinity of the Godhead. Yet Christ also has a human body and He has suffered for us. He has given us the Holy Spirit and we are a temple of the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:19-20). Because of His suffering on the Cross, Christ has perfected the salvation of men. As we partake of the Eucharist and confess our sins, we grow up into the perfect man. Athanasius of Alexandria summarized¹³ this as follows:

“The Word then has the real and true identity of nature with the Father. But to us it is given to imitate it; for He immediately adds, ‘That they all may be one, as You, Father, *are* in Me, and I in You; that they also may be one in Us, that the world may believe that You sent Me’ (John 17:21). Here the Lord asks something greater and more perfect for us; for it is plain that the Word has come to be in us, for He has put on our body. ‘As You, Father, *are* in Me’; for I am Your Word, and since You are in Me, because I am Your Word, and I in them because we both have a body. Because of the Father, the salvation of men is perfected in Me. Therefore, I ask that they also may become one, since we share a human body that is in Me and according to its perfection. That they too may become perfect, having oneness with My body; and having become one in It; that, as if all were carried by Me, all may be one body and one spirit, and may grow up unto a perfect man. For we all, partaking of the Same, become one body, having the one Lord in ourselves. Having this meaning, still more plainly is refuted the heterodoxy of Christ’s enemies. If He had said simply and absolutely ‘that they may be one in You,’ or ‘that they and I may be one in You,’ God’s enemies had had some plea, though a shameless one. But He has not spoken simply, but, ‘As You, Father, in Me, and I in You, that they may be all one.’ Moreover, using the word ‘as’, He signifies those who become distantly as He is in the Father; distantly not in place but in nature. For in place nothing is far from God, but in nature only all things are far from Him. And whoever uses the particle ‘as’ implies, not identity, nor equality, but a pattern of the matter in question, viewed in a certain respect”.

John Cassian pointed out¹⁴ how this works in practice. In one man, there is found wisdom, in another righteousness, in another sanctification, in another kindness, in another chastity, in another humility, in another patience. We do not see Christ as “all in all” yet; but we do find these blessings distributed among all the saints. Together all the saints comprise the “perfect man”.

The blessed Antony said that monks endeavor to reach the heights of a more advanced perfection after the plan of the monastic life. Having learned the consideration of discretion, the monk is able to stand in his own judgment, and to arrive at the very summit of the anchorite’s life. He should by no means seek for all kinds of virtues from one man, however excellent that one man is. For one is adorned with flowers of knowledge, another is more strongly fortified with methods of discretion, another is established in the dignity of patience. Another excels in the virtue of humility, another in that of continence, another is decked with the grace of simplicity. This one excels all others in magnanimity, that one in pity, another in vigils, another in silence, another in earnestness of work. Therefore, the monk who desires to gather spiritual honey, ought like a most careful honeybee, to

¹³ Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses against the Arians, III, xxv, 22.

¹⁴ John Cassian, Institutes, V, 4.

suck out virtue from those who specially possess it, and should diligently store it up in the vessel of his own breast. He should not investigate what anyone is lacking, but only regard and gather whatever virtue he has. For if we want to gain all virtues from some one person, we shall with great difficulty or perhaps never at all find suitable examples for us to imitate. For though we do not as yet see that even Christ is made ‘all things in all’ (1 Corinthians 15:28); still in this way we can find Him bit by bit in all. For it is said of Him, ‘But of Him you are in Christ Jesus, who became for us wisdom from God -- and righteousness and sanctification and redemption’ (1 Corinthians 1:30). In one there is found wisdom, in another righteousness, in another sanctification, in another kindness, in another chastity, in another humility, in another patience. Christ is at the present time divided, member by member, among all of the saints. But when all come together into the unity of the faith and virtue, He is formed into the ‘perfect man’ (Ephesians 4:13), completing the fullness of His body, in the joints and properties of all His members. Until then, that time arrives when God will be ‘all in all’. For the present, God can in the way of which we have spoken be ‘in all’, through particular virtues, although He is not yet ‘all in all’ through the fullness of them. For although our religion has but one end and aim, yet there are different ways by which we approach God, as will be more fully shown in the Conferences of the Elders. And so, we must seek a model of discretion and continence more particularly from those from whom we see that those virtues flow forth more abundantly through the grace of the Holy Spirit. Not that anyone can alone acquire those things which are divided among many. But in order that in those good qualities of which we are capable we may advance towards the imitation of those who especially have acquired them”.

John Cassian continued to say¹⁵ that we are constantly seeking perfection and the fullness of Christ. Our dedication to this aim takes us on small steps as we cling to the things of God and labor for His Will. We need to be watchful and diligent even in the face of great difficulties.

“We shall find out by our own experience that we can and ought to cling to the Lord if we have our wills mortified and the desires of this world cut off. And we shall be taught by the authority of those who in converse with the Lord. They say in all confidence: ‘Send forth your light and your truth: they have led me, and brought me to your holy mountain’ (Psalm 43:3). Also: ‘I cling to Your testimonies; O Lord, do not put me to shame!’ (Psalm 119:31); and: ‘But *it is* good for me to draw near to God; I have put my trust in the Lord God, that I may declare all Your works’ (Psalm 73:28); and: ‘But he who is joined to the Lord is one spirit *with Him*’ (1 Corinthians 6:17). We ought not then to be wearied out by these wanderings of mind and relax from our fervor. For ‘He who tills his land will have plenty of bread, but he who follows frivolity will have poverty enough’ (Proverbs 28:19). Nor should we be drawn away from being intent on this watchfulness through a dangerous despair, for ‘In all labor there is profit, but idle chatter *leads* only to poverty’ (Proverbs 14:23). And again: ‘A man who labors, labors for himself, and drives from *him* his own ruin’ (Proverbs 16:26 LXX). Moreover also: ‘And from the days of John the Baptist until now the kingdom of heaven suffers violence, and the violent take it by force’ (Matthew 11:12), for no virtue is acquired

¹⁵ John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Serenus, I, vii, 6.

without effort. Nor can anyone attain to that mental stability which he desires without great sorrow of heart, for 'Man is born to trouble, as the sparks fly upward' (Job 5:7). In order that he may be able to attain to 'the unity of the faith and of the knowledge of the Son of God, to a perfect man, to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ' (Ephesians 4:13), he must ever be on the watch with still greater intentness, and toil with ceaseless carefulness. But to the fullness of this measure no one will ever attain, but one Who has considered it beforehand and been trained to it now and has had some foretaste of it while still in this world. And being marked a most precious member of Christ, has possessed in the flesh an earnest of that 'joint' (Ephesians 4:16) by which he can be united to His body. He desires one thing alone, thirsts for but one thing, ever bringing not only his acts but even his thoughts to bear on one thing alone. That is, that he may even now keep as an earnest that which is said of the blessed life of the saints; that 'God may be' to him 'all in all' (1 Corinthians 15:28).

Jerome of Bethlehem cautioned¹⁶ the newly ascetic lady Demetrias to be sure to learn from the elders at her convent. Some people don't bother to learn, but pass themselves off as if they were very wise. By doing this, they set themselves up to be carried off by every wind of doctrine.

"If persons untrained in secular learning read the works of able church writers, they only acquire from them a wordy fluency and not, as they might do, a fuller knowledge of the Scriptures. The old saying is found true of them: although they do not have the ability to speak, they cannot remain silent. They teach to others the Scriptures that they do not understand themselves; and if they are fortunate enough to convince them, they take upon themselves airs as men of learning. In fact, they set themselves up as instructors of the ignorant before they have gone to school themselves. It is a good thing therefore to defer to one's betters, to obey those set over one. To learn not only from the Scriptures but from the example of others how one ought to order one's life, and not to follow that worst of teachers: one's own self-confidence. Of women who are thus presumptuous Paul says that they 'are carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting' (Ephesians 4:14), yet are 'always learning and never able to come to the knowledge of the truth'" (2 Timothy 3:7).

Gregory the Theologian pointed out¹⁷ that some people need milk; that is, simple, elementary doctrines (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14), while others need solid food, since they can discern truth and falsehood. If those needing milk were to be fed solid food, they would be overwhelmed and oppressed. If those needing solid food were to be fed milk, they would be annoyed.

"Some need to be fed with the milk (1 Corinthians 3:1-2; Hebrews 5:12-14) of the most simple and elementary doctrines, i.e., those who are in habit babes and, so to say, new-made, and unable to bear the manly food of the word. If it were presented to them beyond their strength, they would probably be overwhelmed and oppressed. Owing to the inability of their mind, as is the case with our material bodies, to digest and appropriate what is offered to it, they would lose even their

¹⁶ Jerome of Bethlehem, Letter to Demetrias, CXXX, 17.

¹⁷ Gregory the Theologian, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, Oration II, 45.

original power. Others require the wisdom which is spoken among the perfect (1 Corinthians 2:6), and the higher and more solid food, since their senses have been sufficiently exercised to discern (Hebrews 5:14) truth and falsehood. If they were made to drink milk, and fed on the vegetable diet of invalids, they would be annoyed. And with good reason, for they would not be strengthened (Colossians 1:11; 2:19) according to Christ, nor make that laudable increase, which the Word produces in one who is rightly fed. Being rightly fed makes us perfect men, and brings us to the measure of spiritual stature” (Ephesians 4:13).

Gregory the Theologian continued to say¹⁸ that people who don’t understand the things of God may listen to many different teachers and judge by themselves which is best. They may end up tossing sound doctrine to the winds and despising and deriding the true Faith.

“What again of those who come with no private idea, or form of words, better or worse, in regard to God? They listen to all kinds of doctrines and teachers, with the intention of selecting from all what is best and safest, in reliance upon no better judges of the truth than themselves? They are, in consequence, borne and turned about here and there by one plausible idea after another. After being deluged and trodden down by all kinds of doctrine (Ephesians 4:14), and having rung the changes on a long succession of teachers and formula, which they throw to the winds as readily as dust, their ears and minds at last are wearied out. They become equally disgusted with all forms of doctrine, and assume the wretched character of deriding and despising our faith as unstable and unsound. Passing in their ignorance from the teachers to the doctrine: as if anyone whose eyes were diseased, or whose ears had been injured, were to complain of the sun for being dim and not shining, or of sounds for being inharmonious and feeble”.

Gregory the Great in his book on pastoral rule compared¹⁹ those who are carried about by every wind of doctrine to people who are fickle. The fickle need to understand that they undervalue themselves too much; if they paid attention to what they are, they would not be turned around so much by the breezes of current opinion. The fickle do not disperse wisdom; they need to learn to strengthen their mind with gravity.

Differently to be admonished are the obstinate and the fickle. The obstinate are to be told that they think more of themselves than they are, and therefore do not acquiesce in the counsels of others. But the fickle are to be given to understand that they undervalue and disregard themselves too much, and so are turned aside from their own judgment in successive moments of time. The obstinate are to be told that, unless they esteemed themselves better than the rest of men, they would by no means set less value on the counsels of all than on their own deliberation. The fickle are to be told that, if they at all gave heed to what they are, the breeze of mutability would by no means turn them about through so many sides of variableness. To the obstinate it is said through Paul, ‘Be of the same mind toward one another. Do not set your mind on high things, but associate with the humble. Do not be wise in your own opinion’ (Romans 12:16). But the fickle on the other hand should hear this: ‘We should no longer be children, tossed to and fro and

¹⁸ Gregory the Theologian, In Defense of His Flight to Pontus, Oration II, 42.

¹⁹ Gregory the Great, Pope of Rome, Book of Pastoral Rule, III, 18.

carried about with every wind of doctrine, by the trickery of men, in the cunning craftiness of deceitful plotting' (Ephesians 4:14). Concerning the obstinate it is said through Solomon, 'Therefore they shall eat the fruit of their own way, and be filled to the full with their own fancies' (Proverbs 1:31). But concerning the fickle it is written by him again, 'The lips of the wise disperse knowledge, but the heart of the fool *does not do so*' (Proverbs 15:7). For the heart of the wise is always like itself, because, while it rests in good persuasions, it directs itself constantly in good performance. But the heart of the foolish is unlike, because, while it shows itself various through mutability, it never remains what it was. And since some vices, as out of themselves they generate others, so themselves spring from others, it ought by all means to be understood that we then better wipe these away by our reproofs, when we dry them up from the very fountain of their bitterness. For obstinacy is engendered of pride, and fickleness of levity. The fickle are to be admonished to strengthen their mind with gravity. For they then dry up the germs of mutability in themselves when they first cut off from their heart the root of levity; since also a strong fabric is built up when a solid place is first provided whereon to lay the foundation. Unless, then, levity of mind be previously guarded against, inconstancy of the thoughts is by no means conquered. From this Paul declared himself to be free, when he said, 'Therefore, when I was planning this, did I do it lightly? Or the things I plan, do I plan according to the flesh, that with me there should be Yes, Yes, and No, No?' (2 Corinthians 1:17) As if to say plainly, for this reason I am moved by no breeze of mutability, that I yield not to the vice of levity.

The Measure of Christ's Gift

Christ did not just lead captivity captive following His Epiphany in Hades; He also gave gifts to men (Ephesians 4:8). This was part of the mystery the Lord revealed which for ages had been hidden in God (Ephesians 3:9). Something that's easy to overlook is that heaven and earth aren't the same anymore following the ascension. Among other things, Heaven now has a Man seated at the Right Hand of God (Hebrews 10:12); and those on earth in the Body of Christ sit together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus (Ephesians 2:6). In revealing the mystery of the Body of Christ, the manifold Wisdom of God might be made known through the Church to the rulers and authorities in the heavenly places (Ephesians 3:10). This is a significant impact of His work.

In order to establish and promote this union, each one of us was given Grace according to the measure of Christ's gift to us (Ephesians 4:7). These gifts, such as apostles, prophets, evangelists, pastors, teachers, etc., are for the equipping of the saints for the work of (literally) deaconing and for the building up of the Body of Christ (Ephesians 4:11-12, 16). These gifts have their purposes listed in the following verses:

- That we all come to the Unity of the Faith and knowledge of the Son of God (Ephesians 4:13).
- That we all come to a Perfect Man (Ephesians 4:13). This is the New Man referred to elsewhere (Ephesians 2:15, 4:24).
- That we all come to the measure of the stature of the fullness of Christ (Ephesians 4:13).
- That the truth of this might be preserved in spite of deceitful attempts to undo it (Ephesians 4:14).

- That the whole body might grow up in love with every part of the body doing its share, being joined and knit together with every joint supplying (Ephesians 4:15-16).

This is the aim of the illustrations of the vine and the branches and the husband and wife: to give us a glimpse into some of the mysteries of God being worked out in our midst (Ephesians 1:9-10, 3:1-10).

John Chrysostom commented²⁰ on this to point out that the gifts we receive are given for the work of the Church, not for our individual honor.

“If then this or that man possesses any superiority in any spiritual gift, do not grieve at it, since his labor also is greater. He who had received five talents, had five required of him, while he who had received the two, brought only two, and yet received no less reward than the other. Therefore, the Apostle here also encourages the hearer on the same ground, showing that gifts are bestowed not for the honor of one above another, but for the work of the Church, ‘for the perfecting of the saints for the work of ministering to the building up of the body of Christ’. By this He shows that it is not of his own intrinsic merit that one has received more and another less, but that it is for the sake of others, as God Himself has measured it.”

Irenaeus of Lyons stated²¹ that the Apostles were weighed down as His passion approached, and He found them sleeping in Gethsemane. Yet He told them that many prophets and righteous men have desired to see and hear what you are experiencing.

“The eyes of the disciples weighed down when Christ’s passion was approaching; and when, in the first instance, the Lord found them sleeping, He let it pass — thus indicating the patience of God in regard to the state of slumber in which men lay. But coming the second time, He aroused them, and made them stand up, in token that His passion is the arousing of His sleeping disciples, on whose account ‘He also descended into the lower parts of the earth’ (Ephesians 4:9-10), to behold with His eyes the state of those who were resting from their labors, in reference to whom He did also declare to the disciples: ‘Many prophets and righteous *men* desired to see what you see, and did not see *it*, and to hear what you hear, and did not hear *it*’” (Matthew 13:17).

Jerome of Bethlehem pointed out²² that Jovinianus (an apostate monk condemned in a Western Church Council) had a heretical view of the resurrection where both the righteous and the unrighteous will inherit the Kingdom. Jerome quotes Paul in saying that there will be different rewards for different people in the Kingdom. Some will shine like the sun, while others will shine like the moon or the stars. Christ’s measure of the gifts bestowed on us does not vary; what varies is our ability to receive it.

“‘There are also celestial bodies and terrestrial bodies; but the glory of the celestial *is* one, and the *glory* of the terrestrial *is* another. *There is* one glory of the sun, another glory of the moon, and another glory of the stars; for *one* star differs from *another* star in glory. So also, *is* the resurrection of the dead’ (1 Corinthians

²⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Ephesians, XI, v. 7.

²¹ Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, IV, xxii, 1.

²² Jerome of Bethlehem, Against Jovinianus, II, 23.

15:40-42). Like a learned commentator, you have explained this passage by saying that the spiritual differs from the carnal. Following your logic, there will be both spiritual and carnal persons, and not only will the sheep climb there, but your goats also. ‘One star differs from another star in glory’. This is not the distinction of sheep and goat, but of sheep and sheep, star and star. Lastly, Paul says, ‘there is one glory of the sun, and another glory of the moon’. But for this, you might maintain that the phrase one star from another star covers the whole human race; but he introduces the sun and moon, and you cannot possibly reckon them among the goats. ‘So’, says he, ‘is also the resurrection of the dead’. The just will shine with the brightness of the sun, and those of the next rank will glow with the splendor of the moon, so that one will be a Lucifer, another an Arcturus, a third an Orion, another Mazzaroth²³, or some other of the stars whose names are hollowed in the book of Job (Job 9:9, 38:32). ‘For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may receive the things *done* in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad’ (2 Corinthians 5:10). You cannot say that the mode of our manifestation before the judgment-seat of Christ is such that the good receive good things, the bad evil things. For he teaches us in the same epistle: ‘He who sows sparingly will also reap sparingly, and he who sows bountifully will also reap bountifully’ (2 Corinthians 9:6). Surely, he who sows more and he who sows less are both on the right side. Although they belong to the same class, that of the Sower, yet they differ in respect of measure and number. The same Paul, writing to the Ephesians, says: ‘to the intent that now the manifold wisdom of God might be made known by the church to the principalities and powers in the heavenly *places*’ (Ephesians 3:10). You observe that it is a varied and manifold wisdom of God which is spoken of as existing in the different ranks of the Church. And in the same epistle we read, ‘But to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift’ (Ephesians 4:7). Not that Christ's measure varies, but only that so much of His grace is poured out as we can receive”.

Thus, the impact of the Lord's work was phenomenal. To the rulers of this world, it was totally unexpected. If they had known this would result, they wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:8). The Old Testament Saints were raised from Hades as a result of the Lord's work and have become a great cloud of witnesses (Hebrews 12:2). “Because God had provided something better for us so that apart from us, they should not be made perfect” (Hebrews 11:40). The “something better” is the Body of Christ where we are actually joined to the resurrected Christ.

²³ Lucifer is the traditional name for the planet Venus; Arcturus is the brightest star in the northern constellation of Boötes; Orion is a constellation where the brightest stars are young blue giants or super giants; Mazzaroth can be translated as either “the morning star” or “the zodiac”.

Figure I
Galilee at the Time of Joshua



Figure II
Galilee at the Time of Jesus



