

SUNDAY OF THE SAMARITAN WOMAN
Preparation of Samaria
THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

May 14, 2023
5th Sunday of Pascha
Revision F

Gospel: John 4:5-42
Epistle: Acts 11:19-30

Today’s Gospel lesson about Photini, the Samaritan woman Jesus met at the well in Sychar, is used in the West either on the third Sunday in Lent or the Monday after Ascension Day. Today’s Epistle lesson is not used in the West, however. Today’s Epistle is also used in the Orthodox Church for the Feast Day of Barnabas¹ on June 11th.

In today’s readings, the theme of the development of the early Church continues from the past three weeks and will continue for three more weeks.

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¹ For more details on the life of the Apostle Barnabas, see Mark Kern, The Feast Day of the Apostle Barnabas, St Athanasius Press, 2011.

In the Epistle lesson for the 4th Sunday of Pascha (Acts 9:32-42), we saw multitudes from the Plain of Sharon turn to the Lord because of the Apostle Peter's miracles and preaching. Two weeks ago, we saw Deacon Philip's preaching in the City of Samaria and how it created such a stir that James and the Apostles in Jerusalem sent Peter and John to check it out. Peter and John laid hands on the Samaritans in what has come to be called the "Samaritan Pentecost." This laying on of hands is called "Chrismation" today in the Orthodox Church.

In today's Gospel lesson, we step back a few years to the little town of Sychar² near the city of Samaria. [Samaria is the name given both to the city of Samaria and the region or province of Samaria]. Peter's miracles near the Plain of Sharon from last week took place in the late 30's AD. Deacon Philip's work in the city of Samaria took place around 32-33 AD. Today's Gospel lesson took place in mid-27 AD.

The occasion for this Gospel lesson is a growing conflict with the Pharisees (John 4:1-3). In order to let things cool down a little, Jesus left town. This later became a pattern: "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).

Background: the Life of Photini after Pentecost

To understand the implication of some parts of today's Gospel lesson, let us look ahead to what Photini and her family did with their lives and then return to the Gospel lesson to see the seeds of her life beginning to grow from her conversation with Jesus.

With regard to this, Jerome noted³ the effect that Photini had on the people of Sychar: she brought salvation to many due to her tenacity to know the truth.

"Neither the close company of the banquet, the dipping of the sop nor the Lord's gracious kiss could save Judas from betraying as man Him whom he had known as the Son of God. Could anyone have been viler than the woman of Samaria? Yet not only did she herself believe, but after her six husbands she found one Lord. Not only did she recognize Messiah by the well, whom the Jews failed to recognize in the temple, she brought salvation to many. While the Apostles were away buying food, she refreshed the Savior's hunger and relieved His weariness."

² See <http://www.edwardfudge.com/sychar.html>. Although called "Jacob's Well" from Jesus' time forward (John 4:6, 12), the Old Testament does not mention its origin specifically. The Genesis saga does say that Jacob purchased land at the village of Shechem, modern Nablus, very near this Samaritan site of Sychar, now known as Askar (Gen. 33:19; Joshua 24:32; John 4:5). But the authenticity of this well is undisputed. Samaritans, Muslims, Christians and Jews all agree that this is the place where this story took place. At this time Jacob's Well was about 120 feet deep; today it is only about half that deep due to so many small stones dropped down by pilgrims to "sound its depth". In Photini's day, Jacob's Well connected to a moving underground river; today it is dry except for wet years.

³ Jerome, Letter to Rustics, CXXV, 1.

After Pentecost⁴, Photini is credited with preaching the Gospel in a number of places, but principally in Carthage, having been sent there with her son Joseph by the Apostles. Epaenetus, one of the Seventy, became Bishop of Carthage, perhaps while Photini was there. From Romans 16:5, we can infer that the Apostle Paul ran across Epaenetus on his second missionary journey, that Epaenetus was very helpful to Paul, and that Paul sent him on ahead to Rome (where Epaenetus was when Paul wrote Romans).

Meanwhile, Photini's eldest son Victor was a general in the Roman army and won many campaigns for the Emperor Nero around the world. In the mid-60s AD, Nero ordered General Victor to return to Italy to arrest and punish Christians. The duke, Sebastianos, who brought Nero's decree to Victor, begged Victor to follow the Emperor's decrees since he and Victor were friends. Victor, on the other hand, brought Sebastianos to the faith and baptized him. This created quite a scandal when the duke and one of Nero's top generals began preaching Christ all over Italy.



Figure 1
St. Photini⁵

Nero was infuriated and began a roundup of Christians all over the empire. Photini, her five sisters, and a large entourage of Christians journeyed to Rome of their own accord to appear

⁴For further details, see <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=100846> and Holy Apostles Convent, *The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church*, February 26, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista CO, 81211.

⁵ From the OCA web site <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=100846>. Photini's name is spelled either Photini, Photina or Photine by different authors. In Russian, she is Svetlana.

before Nero. When Nero questioned them, Photini replied, “We came so that we might instruct you to believe in Christ.”

Nero then began a series of tortures and temptations to try to break the faith of Photini, her sons, her sisters and the duke. First he had their finger joints smashed with iron balls. Neither had any effect; they were healed overnight and appeared whole the next morning. Nero also tried to cut off their hands, but the executioners couldn’t do it. He further ordered his chief shaman to give them all a strong poison; nothing happened to anyone and the shaman believed and was beheaded.

Nero then tried to bribe the women with gold and fancy clothing, and sent his daughter Domnina to show the women all the wealth they would receive if they denied Christ. Domnina, however, had heard about Christ and had wanted to be baptized. This Photini did, along with 100 maidservants of Domnina. Photini then asked Domnina to distribute all the gold, etc., that Nero was offering them to the poor.

Nero also tried placing Photini and her family in a furnace; then he poured molten lead on their backs; then he locked them in a room with poisonous snakes. With each torture, the Christians gave thanks to God for the opportunity to suffer for His sake. And each time as they emerged unharmed, bystanders by the hundreds went away as believers and desired to be baptized. Sometimes the soldiers who performed the tortures were injured themselves because of the severity of what they did; Photini prayed for them and healed them. And they believed also.

Finally, the entire family, plus the duke, were skinned alive and either beheaded or drawn and quartered. Photini herself was skinned and then drowned in a well.

Because of her faith and perseverance, her evangelism and all the people that came to believe because of her, Photini was referred to in the early church as Equal to the Apostles.

From this, we can see that Photini was a very influential lady, was very strong in her convictions and was able to focus attention on the things she was speaking about. These abilities are also apparent in today’s Gospel lesson. Given that Photini’s martyrdom was in the late 60’s during the reign of Nero, she was probably still a relatively young woman when Jesus met her at the well.

Gospel: John 4:5-42

In today’s Gospel lesson, Jesus was traveling north from Judea to Galilee and went through Samaria. The time was May (John 4:35) of the first year of Jesus’ public ministry (27 AD) and Jesus and the Twelve were now baptizing more disciples than John the Baptist (John 4:1-2). To get away from the Pharisees, Jesus headed North with His disciples. They arrived in Sychar (modern Nablus) about noon (the 6th hour) on a hot day and Jesus’ disciples including the women (Luke 8:3, who were later called the Myrrh-Bearing Women), went into the city to buy food. Jesus, being wearied from the journey, sat down next to the well⁶ and asked Photini for a drink.

⁶ This well was located where Simeon and Levi had massacred Shechem and Hamor over the treatment of their only sister Dinah (Genesis 34). See John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXI, 2. The well was also a very deep well fed by underground springs, and its water is fresh and cool. The depth of the well to the water level has

John Chrysostom asked a question about this. Later when Jesus sent the Twelve Apostles out two-by-two, He told them not to go to the Samaritans or to the Gentiles. Why does He talk to the Samaritan woman now? The answer is that Jesus never told His disciples to reject the Samaritans if they come to them; He only told them not to go to Samaria yet.

Photini was surprised that a Jew would even speak to her. Jesus elevated the conversation by suggesting Photini ask Him for living water (meaning the Holy Spirit). John Chrysostom noticed⁷ Photini's polite reverence. She could have said, "If you had that living water, you would not have asked me, but would rather have provided for yourself. You are just a braggart". But she said nothing like this; she answers with much gentleness, both at first and afterwards. Photini initially mistook Jesus' reference to living water for running water⁸.

John Chrysostom noted⁹ that Photini had more insight and more patience to understand the things of God than the Jewish leaders. She can see that He has no bucket or a long rope to get water out of the well; but she inquires what water He is speaking of, and how He can be greater than the Patriarch Jacob.

"She implies that she had a notion of better water, but that she never found it, and didn't clearly know what it was. The sense of her words is this: 'You can't assert that Jacob gave us this well, and used another himself; for he and his children drank of this one, which they would not have done if they had had another and a better. The water of this well is not in Your power to give me, and You can't have another and a better, unless You are greater than Jacob. Where is that water which you promise that you will give us?' The Jews did not speak with Him this mildly, and yet He spoke to them on the same subject, making mention of the same water (John 7:38), but they just didn't get it. And when He made mention of Abraham, they even attempted to stone Him (John 8:52-59). Not so does this woman approach Him; but with much gentleness, in the midst of the heat, at noon, with much patience, she listens to everything, and doesn't even think of what the Jews said. She could have said, 'This fellow is mad, and beside himself; he has tied me to this well, giving me nothing but big words'; no, she endures and perseveres until she has found what she seeks."

"Photini was so occupied by Jesus' words, that she even called others to hear them. The Jews, on the contrary, not only did not call, but even hindered and impeded those who desired to come to Him, saying, 'Are you also deceived? Have any of the rulers or the Pharisees believed in Him? But this crowd that does not know the law is accursed' (John 7:47-49). Let us then imitate this woman of Samaria; let us commune with Christ."

varied over the years, from 240' in 670 AD to 67' in 1881 to 125' today. The water is moving and not from a cistern. For further information, see <http://www.edwardfudge.com/sychar.html>.

⁷ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, XXXI, 4.

⁸ There is a play on words here between living water and running water, where the same word is used in Hebrew for both.

⁹ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, XXXI, 4.

Jesus then went one step farther by asking Photini to call her husband, since her husband needed to share in the Gift also. When she admitted that she had no husband, Jesus proceeded to tell her that He knew all about her promiscuous lifestyle. She then tried to deflect Jesus' ability to look right through her by referring to the differences between Samaritans and Jews symbolized by the location of their temples (Mt. Gerazim visible in the distance versus Mt. Zion in Jerusalem). Jesus cut right through that argument by saying that while salvation is of the Jews, true worship of God is in spirit and truth and is geographic independent.

The lights were turning on inside Photini by now and she mentioned that the Samaritans also are waiting for the Messiah who "will tell us all things" (John 4:25). Jesus said, "I AM is the one speaking to you" (John 4:26). The name "I AM" is referred to in Hebrew tradition as THE NAME or Yahweh and is the Name God gave for Himself in speaking with Moses at the burning bush (Exodus 3:14). Modern Jews do not even pronounce the Name of God but simply refer to Him as "Ha Shem" which means THE NAME. What Jesus was saying to Photini is that He is not only the Messiah (or the Anointed One) but He is also God Incarnate.

John Chrysostom compared¹⁰ Photini's response to Jesus' words to that of Nicodemus. Not only did Photini receive Him immediately, but she did the work of an Apostle in bringing out the whole town of Sychar.

"Photini immediately believed, showing she was much wiser than Nicodemus; not only wiser, but manlier. When Nicodemus heard such things, he neither invited any others to this hearing, nor spoke openly himself. But Photini exhibited the actions of an Apostle, preaching the Gospel to all, calling them to Jesus, and drawing a whole city out to Him. Nicodemus when he had heard said, 'How can these things be?' (John 3:8-9) When Christ set before him a clear illustration -- that of 'the wind' -- he did not even so receive the Word. But Photini not so; at first she doubted, but afterwards receiving the Word not by any regular demonstration, but in the form of an assertion, she immediately embraced it."

Just then, the disciples came with some food and Photini left her water pot and ran into the city. John Chrysostom noted¹¹ that Photini did exactly what the Apostles did when they were called by Jesus: they left everything. Jesus stood watching Photini go from house to house in Sychar telling everyone to come, see and meet the Messiah. Since Sychar was built on a hillside, this was easy for Jesus to see.

Meanwhile the disciples urged Jesus to have something to eat. Jesus just kept watching Photini and said that, "I have food that you don't know about" (John 4:32, compare Matthew 4:4, Deuteronomy 8:3). Jesus' food was doing the Will of His Father. As they were talking, He pointed to the people of Sychar coming down the hill to talk to Him and said that the fields were already white for harvest even though harvest time was still four months away.

John Chrysostom noted¹² that Photini had now tasted of the well of living water that Jesus had mentioned, and the men of Sychar picked that up. She didn't conceal the rebuke which Jesus

¹⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXII, 1.

¹¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXIV, 1.

¹² John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXIV, 1.

had given her for her past life; but she parades her life, and brings it forward before all the men, so as to attract and capture everyone.

Jesus said that He was sending His disciples to reap this harvest even though they did not sow or labor to bring this harvest to maturity (John 4:38). Others had labored and the disciples had entered into their labors (John 4:38) in order that the sower and the reaper may rejoice together (John 4:36).

John Chrysostom stated¹³ that the Prophets did the sowing at Sychar, which was a far more difficult task. The reaping by the Apostles was a much easier and much more pleasant task, but both rejoice together.

“The Prophets are the ones who sowed but they didn’t reap, the Apostles did. Yet on this account they are not deprived of the pleasure and recompense of their labors, but they rejoice and are glad with us, although they don’t reap with us. For harvest is not as much work as sowing. Jesus therefore has kept the Apostles for that in which the labor is less and the pleasure greater. In harvest the return is large, the labor not so great; everyone wants to help. By these arguments Jesus desired to prove that ‘the wish of the Prophets is that all men should come to Me’. This also the Law was engaged in affecting; and for this the Prophets sowed, that they might produce this fruit.”

Similarly we are reaping today what the Apostles sowed almost 2000 years ago; and both they and we rejoice together. Their work in sowing the seeds of the Kingdom of God after Pentecost was very difficult and most of the Twelve ended up being crucified for their efforts. John Chrysostom stated¹⁴ that the sowing by the Prophets was still more difficult than that of the Apostles, perhaps because they didn’t have as many Gifts at their disposal.

From our perspective, this harvest of the people of Sychar seems to come completely out of the blue. Some Samaritan villages would not receive Jesus or His disciples at all since they were Jews. James and John (Zebedee) at a later time asked Jesus if they should call down fire from heaven to consume a Samaritan village that wouldn’t receive them (Luke 9:51-56). What occurred that this Samaritan village was ready?

Photini certainly had a hand in it. Many of the Samaritans believed just because of her word of testimony (John 4:39). Many more believed when they heard Him themselves. But Photini certainly was persuasive to get them all to come and listen! From this viewpoint, she was very influential even though her personal life was a mess.

While the Scripture doesn’t mention it, the disciples may have baptized all those Samaritans, including Photini, during the two days they stayed in Sychar. They had been baptizing many people before they left Judea (John 4:1-2) and it was just natural that they do the same in Sychar.

¹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXIV, 2.

¹⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXXIV, 2.

After his incident, Photini never remarried but remained celibate the rest of her life as did many of the disciples including the Myrrh-Bearing women from two weeks ago. We can also presume that Photini did not all of a sudden quiet down after her baptism. She probably spread the word around the whole area. When Deacon Philip (Acts 8:5-6) began preaching 7-8 years later in the city of Samaria (about 7 miles from Sychar), Photini and the people of Sychar may have already prepared the people there to receive him. And again the Apostles reaped a harvest that they did not sow or bring to maturity.

This often happens with us also; the Word goes out and doesn't return to Him empty (Isaiah 55:8-12, 2 Corinthians 9:6-11). Sometimes we have an impact on people by our words and example quite out of proportion to what we think.

The Gift of God is the Holy Spirit

In speaking with Photini at the well in Sychar, Jesus said, "If you knew the gift of God, and who it is who says to you, 'Give Me a drink,' you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water" (John 4:10). What does Jesus mean here by "The Gift of God"? This is not just "a Gift of God", but "The Gift of God", implying something specific.

In the time of David and Solomon, a common perception was that economic prosperity was "The Gift of God" (Ecclesiastes 3:12, 5:19). However God had said, "If you diligently obey the voice of the Lord your God, to observe carefully all His commandments which I command you today, that the Lord your God will set you high above all nations of the earth" (Deuteronomy 28:1). The economic prosperity was a result of godliness, not just a result of living in Israel.

In a different part of Samaria, not too far from Sychar, just following the work of Deacon Philip, The Apostle Peter had an encounter with the sorcerer Simon Magus. "When Simon Magus saw that through the laying on of the Apostles' hands, the Holy Spirit was given, he offered them money, saying, 'Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit'. But Peter said to him, 'Your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money!'" (Acts 8:18-20) Thus "The Gift of God" is the Holy Spirit.

This becomes clearer from other comments from the Apostles. "The wages of sin *is* death, but the gift of God *is* eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23). "By grace you have been saved through faith, and that not of yourselves; *it is* the gift of God, not of works, lest anyone should boast" (Ephesians 2:8-9). "Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2 Timothy 1:6).

John Chrysostom pointed out¹⁵ that Paul did not say that the wages of good deeds were eternal life but the Gift of God. This Gift of God changed them for the better by Who He is.

"After saying that the wages of sin is death (Romans 6:23), Paul changes the order. He does not say the wages of good deeds was eternal life, but 'the gift of God'. He shows that it was not of themselves that they were freed, nor was it a due they received, neither a return, nor a recompense of labors; by grace all these things came about. This cause was superior in that He did not free them only; he

¹⁵ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Romans, XII, v.23.

did not just change their condition for a better; He did it without any labor or trouble on their part. He not only freed them, but also gave them much more than before.”

Irenaeus of Lyons stated¹⁶ that the Gift of God, the Holy Spirit, has been entrusted to the Church like breath was to the first created man. Those who do not partake or join themselves to the Church dig broken cisterns and drink putrid water from the mud.

“The preaching of the Church is everywhere consistent, continues in an even course, and receives testimony from the prophets, apostles, and all the disciples through those in the beginning, the middle, and the end, and through the entire dispensation of God. This is a well-grounded system which tends to man’s salvation, namely, our Faith. We preserve the Faith, which we received from the Church, and which always, by the Spirit of God, renews its youth, like some precious deposit in an excellent vessel. This gift of God has been entrusted to the Church, as breath was to the first created man, for this purpose, that all the members receiving it may be enlivened. The means of communion with Christ has been distributed throughout it; that is, the Holy Spirit, the earnest of incorruption, the means of confirming our faith, and the ladder of ascent to God. ‘For in the Church’, Paul said, ‘God has set apostles, prophets, teachers’ (1 Corinthians 12:28), and all the other means through which the Spirit works. All those, who do not partake and who do not join themselves to the Church, defraud themselves of life through their perverse opinions and infamous behavior. Where the Church is, there is the Spirit of God; and where the Spirit of God is, there is the Church, and every kind of grace; but the Spirit is truth. Those, therefore, who do not partake of Him, are neither nourished into life from the mother’s breasts, nor do they enjoy that fountain which issues from the body of Christ. They dig for themselves broken cisterns (Jeremiah 2:13) out of earthly trenches, and drink putrid water out of the mud, fleeing from the faith of the Church lest they be convicted; rejecting the Spirit, they are not instructed.”

Early Apostolic tradition also linked¹⁷ the Gift of God with the giving of the Holy Spirit, as this commentary on Simon Magus’ attempt to purchase the laying on of hands indicates. The devil tried to trick Peter into a lack of respect for the Gift of God, just like he tricked Adam.

“When Simon Magus saw that the Spirit was given to believers by the imposition of our hands, he took money, and offered it to us, saying, ‘Give me this power also, that anyone on whom I lay hands may receive the Holy Spirit’ (Acts 8:19). He desired just like the devil deprived Adam of that immortality which was promised him by his tasting of the tree, so also that Simon might entice us by the receiving of money. He wanted to cut us off from the gift of God, that so by exchange we might sell to him for money the inestimable gift of the Spirit. We were all troubled at this offer and Peter, with a fixed attention on that malicious serpent which was in him, said, ‘Let your money perish with you, because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money! You have neither part nor portion in this matter, for your heart is not right in the sight of God. Repent

¹⁶ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, III, xxiv, 1.

¹⁷ “Constitutions of the Holy Apostles”, VI, ii, 7, in Roberts and Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, Hendrickson Press, Peabody MA, date.

therefore of this your wickedness, and pray God if perhaps the thought of your heart may be forgiven you. For I see that you are poisoned by bitterness and bound by iniquity” (Acts 8:20-23).

The Free Gift of God Requires Effort on Our Part

We sometimes think of the free Gift of God as needing no effort on our part. Jesus said, “Come to Me, all *you* who labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest. Take My yoke upon you and learn from Me, for I am gentle and lowly in heart, and you will find rest for your souls. For My yoke *is* easy and My burden is light” (Matthew 11:28-30). Therefore all we need to do is kick back and enjoy the Christian life, right? That’s not what the Apostles did; they worked very hard with their Gifts. In this context, James the Lord’s brother (and one of the Seventy Apostles) stated that “Faith without works is dead” (James 2:26).

John Chrysostom reflected¹⁸ on the free Gift of God; many people don’t appreciate it. Put to sleep by luxury, we dwell on the things of this world. We become like spoiled nestlings who want to remain in the nest forever, even though it makes us feebler the longer we stay.

“Seeing we have come to enjoy so great a benefit, we ought to be ever mindful of it, and continually to consider in our minds the free gift of God, and to reflect upon what we have been delivered from, what we have obtained. So we shall be thankful; so we shall heighten our love toward Him. What do we say? We are called to the kingdom of the Son of God — and are we full of yawning, scratching, and dozing? If it were necessary that we should leap into ten thousand deaths every day, shouldn’t we endure it all? For the sake of business we do all manner of things; when we are going to share the kingdom of the Only-Begotten, will we not spring down upon ten thousand swords? Would we not leap into fire? What is strange is that when about to depart, we moan and would gladly dwell among the things which are here, being a lover of the body. What is this all about? Do we regard death as a thing of terror? The cause of this is luxury and ease; for he that lives a hard life wishes for wings, and to be freed from these things. We are like the spoiled nestlings, which want to remain in the nest forever. But the longer they remain, the feebler they become.”

Chrysostom also noted¹⁹ that Paul considered Timothy to be dejected, and he tried to rouse him up. Just as fire requires fuel, so grace requires our cheerful readiness; otherwise we quench the Spirit and neglect the Gift of God.

“Notice how greatly dispirited and dejected Paul considered Timothy to be. He almost says, ‘Don’t think that I despise you, but be assured that I do not condemn you, nor have I forgotten you. Consider, at any rate, your mother and your grandmother. It is because I know that you have unfeigned faith that I put you in remembrance’ (2 Timothy 1:5). It requires much zeal to stir up the gift of God. As fire requires fuel, so grace requires our cheerful readiness, that it may be always fervent. ‘Therefore I remind you to stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands’ (2 Timothy 1:6); that is, the grace of the Spirit, which

¹⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, II, v. 15.

¹⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, I, vv. 5-7.

you have received, for presiding over the Church, for the working of miracles and for every service. This grace it is in our power to kindle or to extinguish; elsewhere Paul says, ‘Don’t quench the Spirit’ (1 Thessalonians 5:19). By sloth and carelessness it is quenched, and by watchfulness and diligence it is kept alive. It is in us indeed, but we need to make it more vehement; that is, fill it with confidence, joy and delight. We need to stand manfully! God has not given us the spirit of fear, but of power, of love, and of a sound mind’ (2 Timothy 1:7). That is, we did not receive the Spirit, that we should shrink from exertion, but that we may speak with boldness. To many He gives a spirit of fear, as we read in the wars of the Conquest. ‘A spirit of fear fell upon them’ (Exodus 15:16). That is, he infused terror into them. But to us He has given a spirit of power and of love toward Himself; this is of grace.”

Chrysostom further noted²⁰ how the Apostles contributed to the Gift of God that they had received out of their own effort in order to retain the Gift.

“Since the Apostles were going to hear from the Holy Spirit after Pentecost, why did they need to accompany Christ, when they would not retain His words? This was because the Spirit didn’t teach them; He called to their mind what Christ had said earlier. It contributes a lot to the glory of Christ, that they were referred to the memory of the words He had spoken to them. At the first it was of the Gift of God that the grace of the Spirit lighted upon them so largely and abundantly; but after that, it was of their own virtue that they retained the Gift. They displayed a shining life, much wisdom, great labors, and despised this present life, and thought nothing of earthly things, but were above them all. They were like a sort of light-winged eagle, soaring high by their works; they reached to heaven itself and by these things, they possessed the unspeakable grace of the Spirit.”

Chrysostom also noted²¹ that there needs to be some effort on our part after we receive the Gift of God. We need to work at becoming friends of God by our own diligence in what we do.

“How strict the search will be on Judgment Day as to purity of life! How does that suffice to introduce us into the kingdom? The absence of it gives up the man to destruction, though he has ten thousand miracles and signs to show. Nothing is as pleasing to God as an excellent course of life. ‘If you love Me’, He declares, ‘Keep My commandments’ (John 14:15). He didn’t say, ‘work miracles’. Again, ‘You are My friends’, not when you cast out demons, but ‘if you do whatever I command you’ (John 15:14). Working miracles comes of the Gift of God; but keeping His Commandments comes after the Gift of God, from our own diligence. Let us strive to become friends of God, and not remain enemies to Him.”

Other Aspects of the Gift of God

When Man was created by the Trinity, They said, “Let Us make man in Our image, according to Our likeness” (Genesis 1:26). Yet man today does not often express anything like

²⁰ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, XXIII, 3.

²¹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXIV, 9.

the likeness of God. The image and likeness of God was a Gift of God to man, but man has fallen away from his Gift.

Gregory of Nyssa stated²² that at the Fall of Man, the godly beauty of the soul, which was an imitation in the likeness of God, was disfigured with the ugliness of sin like fine steel blackened with rust. Reason counsels man to wash this off and return to what he was like in the beginning. This is not our work at all, but it is the great Gift of God. This is not far away, but it is within us, but it is stifled beneath the cares and pleasures of life.

“A man in building a house for himself may omit to make any way for light to enter; he will necessarily be in darkness, though he cuts himself off from the light voluntarily. Similarly he who generated evil in man, had for his choice the Good and the Beautiful lying all around him in the nature of things(); yet he willfully cut out a new way for himself against this nature, and in the act of turning away from virtue, he created the usage of evil. Observe that there is no such thing in the world as evil irrespective of a will. Every creature of God is good, and nothing of His is ‘to be rejected’; all that God made was ‘very good’ (Genesis 1:31, 1 Timothy 4:4). The habit of sinning entered, with fatal quickness, into the life of man; and from that small beginning spread into this infinitude of evil. The godly beauty of the soul which was an imitation of the Archetypal Beauty, like fine steel blackened with the vicious rust, preserved no longer the glory of its familiar essence, but was disfigured with the ugliness of sin. As those who have slipped and fallen heavily into mud, and have all their features so smeared with it, that their nearest friends do not recognize them, so this creature has fallen into the mire of sin and lost the blessing of being an image of the imperishable Deity. He has clothed himself instead with a perishable and foul resemblance to something else; Reason counsels him to put it away by washing it off in the cleansing water of this calling. When the earthly envelopment is removed, the soul’s beauty will again appear. The putting off of this strange earthly baggage is equivalent to the return to that which is familiar and natural; such a return becomes like the creation in the beginning. This likeness to the divine is not our work at all; it is not the achievement of any faculty of man; it is the great gift of God bestowed upon our nature at the moment of our birth. Human efforts can only go so far as to clear away the filth of sin, and so cause the buried beauty of the soul to shine again.

This truth is taught in the Gospel, when our Lord says, to those who can hear what Wisdom speaks beneath a mystery, that ‘the Kingdom of God is within you’ (Luke 17:21, Romans 14:17). The Divine good is not something apart from our nature, and is not removed far away from those who have the will to seek it. It is in fact within each of us, ignored indeed, and unnoticed while it is stifled beneath the cares and pleasures of life, but found again whenever we can turn our power of conscious thinking towards it. Consider the searching for the lost coin (Luke 15:8). The widowed soul reaps no benefit from the other virtues (called silver coins in the Parable), if that one other is not among them. The Parable suggests that a candle should first be lit, signifying doubtless our reason which throws light on hidden principles. Then in one’s own house, that is, within oneself, we should search for that lost coin; and by that coin the Parable hints at the image of our King, not yet

²² Gregory of Nyssa, “On Virginitly”, Chapter 12, in Ascetic and Moral Works, II.

hopelessly lost, but hidden beneath the dirt. The dirt is the impurities of the flesh, which, being swept and purged away by carefulness of life leave a clear view of the object of our search. The soul herself who finds this rejoices over it and with her the neighbors, whom she calls in to share with her in this delight. All those powers which are the housemates and neighbors of the soul, when the image of the mighty King is revealed in all its brightness at last, will then be converted to that divine delight and festivity, and will gaze upon the ineffable beauty of the recovered one. ‘Rejoice with me’, she says, ‘because I have found the coin which I had lost’ (Luke 15:9). The neighbors are the soul’s familiar powers, both reasoning and appetite, grief and anger, and are well called her friends also. It is fit that they should all rejoice in the Lord when they all look towards the Beautiful and the Good, and do everything for the glory of God, no longer instruments of sin. If such is the lesson of this Finding of the lost, that we should restore the divine image from the foulness which the flesh wraps round it, let us become that which the First Man was at the moment when he first breathed. What was that? He was destitute of his covering of dead skins, but he could gaze without shrinking upon God’s countenance. He did not yet judge what was lovely by taste or sight; he found in the Lord alone all that was sweet. He used the helpmeet given him only for this delight, as Scripture signifies when it said that ‘he knew her not’ (Genesis 4:1) until he was driven out of the garden.”

There are other Gifts of God, such as the service that we are privileged to give to Him out of gratitude for what He has done for us.

John Chrysostom pointed out²³ some terms that are used frequently, but loosely. In English translations, these terms are looser still. Many of these terms are a translation of the Greek word *diakonian*, from which we get the English word “deaconate”. This deaconate is also a Gift of God since it is from the Holy Spirit.

“What is the difference between a working, a gift and a ministry? They are just different names for the same thing. A gift that is a ministry, Paul calls ‘an operation’ also. ‘Thus fulfill your ministry -- literally deaconate’; (2 Timothy 4:5); and, ‘I glorify my ministry – again literally deaconate’ (Romans 11:13). Writing to Timothy, Paul says, ‘Therefore I put you in remembrance that you stir up the Gift of God, which is in you’ (2 Timothy 1:6). Again, he said, ‘for he that wrought in Peter for the Apostleship to the circumcised, also worked effectively in me toward the Gentiles’ (Galatians 2:8). Do you see you that he implies that there is no difference in the gifts of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit? Not confounding the Persons, but declaring the equal honor of the Essence. What the Spirit bestows, God also works; and the Son likewise ordains and grants. If the one were inferior to the other, he would not have set it down this way.

Chrysostom stated²⁴ that even the lesser gifts are still the Gifts of God, even if they don’t have the same impact as Apostleship. Even some of our own good deeds are Gifts of God.

²³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXIX, 4.

²⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XXXII, 3.

“What are Helpers²⁵, Administrators? (1 Corinthians 12:28) They support the weak! Is this then a gift, tell me? In the first place, this too is of the Gift of God, apt for a patron’s role and the dispensing of spiritual things; besides he calls many of our own good deeds, gifts. He does not mean for us to lose heart, but shows that in every case we need God’s help. Paul prepares us to be thankful, and thereby makes us more forward, stirring up our minds.”

Paul said, “The Gifts and calling of God are irrevocable” (Romans 11:29). What does this mean? To use the Gifts, we need the help of the Holy Spirit; but if we’ve fallen into sin, will the Holy Spirit stick around to help? Our own effort is important in maintaining a good relationship with God. Suppose we’ve returned from some serious sin, like the Prodigal Son (Luke 15:11-32); will the Gifts return, that we used to have? This is all dependent on the mercy of God and the conditions of our repentance, but the answer is usually, “Yes!”

Living Water

The term “living water” (Greek: *udor zon*) means water that is moving as if alive. It was used synonymously for running water and the spiritual term that Jesus referred to as living water. For example, the servants of Isaac dug a well that contained²⁶ “living water” (Genesis 26:19 LXX). Also In the 1st century document, The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles, the Church was given instruction²⁷ to baptize in “living water” if at all possible, meaning running water.

Concerning baptism, baptize as follows: Having first said all these things²⁸, baptize in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit, in living water. But if you don’t have living water, baptize in other water; and if you can’t baptize in cold water, use warm water. If you have neither, pour out water three times on the head in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Before the baptism let the baptizer and the baptized fast, and whatever others can; but you shall order the baptized to fast one or two days before.

Zechariah used the spiritual living water in a play on words with running water also. Referring to the end of this age, “In that day living water shall come forth out of Jerusalem; half of it toward the former sea, and half of it toward the latter sea: and so shall it be in summer and spring” (Zechariah 14:8). Jeremiah stated that the Lord’s people had forsaken Him, the fountain of living water, and created broken cisterns that can hold no water (Jeremiah 2:13, 17:13). The spiritual form of living water will continue into the Age to Come (Revelation 7:17).

What is the Living Water?

“Living Water” centers on the Person and operation of the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is not a lesser god than the Father, but like the Son, He is consubstantial – of one Essence – with the

²⁵ Helpers (Greek: *antilempseis*) is a general word meaning to help; Administrators (Greek: *kuberneseis*) refers to a helmsman steering a ship; similarly an administrator steers a group of people.

²⁶ The same root words are used in Genesis 26:19 as in John 4:10.

²⁷ “The Teaching of the Twelve Apostles”, Chapter 7, in Roberts & Donaldson, ed., *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, Volume 7, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA 01961, 1995.

²⁸ That is, Chapters 1-6 of the above document.

Father and the Son. Consider what some of the Church Fathers have had to say about the Holy Spirit and “Living Water”.

Irenaeus of Lyons pointed out²⁹ the relationship of the persons of the Trinity to each other, where the Holy Spirit is the living water that Jesus referred to.

“The Word borne by the Father grants the Spirit to all as the Father wills. To some He gives after the manner of creation what is made; but to others He gives after the manner of adoption, that is, what is from God, namely generation. Thus one God the Father is declared, who is above all, through all, and in all. The Father is indeed above all, and He is the Head of Christ; but the Word is through all things, and is Himself the Head of the Church. The Spirit is in us all, and He is the living water, which the Lord grants to those who rightly believe in Him, love Him, and who know that ‘there is one God and Father of all, who *is* above all, and through all, and in us all’” (Ephesians 4:6).

Ambrose of Milan stated³⁰ that the living water is the Holy Spirit, and that “the Fount” could refer to the Father, the Son or the Holy Spirit. The Fount and the living water are not created things, but they are the Grace of God. This is the water of the Grace of the Spirit that David thirsted for.

“As the Father is the Fount of Life, so too, many have stated that the Son is signified as the Fount of Life; he says, ‘with You *is* the Fountain of Life; in Your light (i.e. in Your Son) we see light’ (Psalm 36:9). That is the Fount of the Holy Spirit, for the Spirit is Life, as the Lord says, ‘The words which I speak to you are Spirit and they are Life’ (John 6:63), for where the Spirit is, there also is Life; and where Life is, the Holy Spirit is.”

“Many, however, consider that the Father only is signified by the Fount. Let them, however, notice what the Scripture says, ‘With You is the Well or Fountain of Life’. That is, the Son is with the Father; since the Word was with God, Who was in the beginning, and was with God.”

“But whether in this place one understands the Fount to be the Father or the Son, we certainly do not understand a fount of that water which is created, but the Fount of that divine grace, that is, of the Holy Spirit, for He is the living water. Therefore the Lord said, ‘If you knew the gift of God, and Who He is that said to you, Give me a drink, you would have asked Him, and He would have given you living water’” (John 4:10).

“This was the water for which the soul of David thirsted, like the hart that desires the fountains of waters (Psalm 42:1), not thirsting for the poison of serpents. The water of the grace of the Spirit is living, that it may purify the inner parts of the mind, may wash away every sin of the soul, and may purify the transgression of hidden faults.”

“Lest anyone should speak of the littleness of the Spirit, and try to establish a difference in greatness, arguing that water seems to be a small part of a Fount, examples taken from creatures seem are not suitable for application to the Godhead. In this comparison taken from creatures, let them learn that not only is the Holy

²⁹ Irenaeus, Against Heresies, V, xviii, 2.

³⁰ Ambrose of Milan, On the Holy Spirit, I, xv, 172-175.

Spirit called Water, but also a River, as we read, ‘Out of his heart shall flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, Whom those believing in Him would receive’ (John 7:38-39), who were about to believe in Him”.

Cyprian of Carthage, addressing heretics of his day, stated³¹ that the heretics don’t have the fountain and river of living water. Heretics claim that the Orthodox are against unity; the Orthodox reply by refusing to accept unity at any price.

“The Lord cries out loud, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’ (John 7:37-38). Where is he to come who is thirsty? Shall he come to the heretics, where there is no fountain and river of living water at all? Or shall he come to the Church, which is one, and which is founded on one who has received the keys of it by the Lord’s voice? It is she who holds and possesses alone all the power of her spouse and Lord. In her we preside; for her honor and unity we fight; her grace, as well as her glory, we defend with faithful devotedness. By divine permission we water the thirsting people of God; we guard the boundaries of the living fountains. If we hold the right of our possession, if we acknowledge the sacrament of unity, why are we considered deviators from the truth? Why are we judged betrayers of unity? The faithful, saving, holy water of the Church cannot be corrupted and adulterated, as the Church herself also is uncorrupted, chaste, and modest. If heretics are devoted to the Church and established in the Church, they may use both her baptism and her other saving benefits. But if they are not in the Church, if they act against the Church, how can they baptize with the Church’s baptism?”

Ambrose of Milan stated³² that the river flowing from the Throne of God is the Holy Spirit, and we drink from this river when we believe in Christ. This river is not material water, but the Power of God.

“It is not a trivial matter that we read that a river flows from the throne of God. We read John’s words, ‘He showed me a river of living water, clear as crystal, proceeding out of the throne of God and of the Lamb. In the middle of its street, and on either side of the river, was the Tree of Life, which bore twelve kinds of fruits, each *tree* yielding its fruit every month. The leaves of the tree were for the healing of all nations” (Revelation 22:1-2).

“This is certainly the River proceeding from the throne of God, that is, the Holy Spirit, Whom he drinks who believes in Christ, as He Himself says, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke of the Spirit’ (John 7:37-38). Therefore the river is the Spirit.”

“The Spirit, then, is in the throne of God, for the water does not wash the throne of God. Whatever you may understand by that water, David did not say that it was above the throne of God, but above the heavens, ‘Let the waters which are above the heavens praise the Name of the Lord’ (Psalm 148:4). Let them praise, he says, not let it praise. If he had intended us to understand the element of water,

³¹ Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistles*, LXXII, 11.

³² Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit*, III, xx, 153-155.

he would certainly have said, 'Let it praise'; by using the plural he intended the Powers to be understood."

Cyprian of Carthage wrote³³ about the connection of living water to Baptism. Just as Baptism is done once, so drinking living water quenches one's thirst forever, since the Holy Spirit is received by Baptism.

"As often as water is named alone in the Holy Scriptures, baptism is referred to, as we see in Isaiah: 'Do not remember the former things, or consider the ancient things. Behold, I will do new things, which will now spring forth; and you shall know them. I will even make a way in the wilderness, and rivers in the dry land, to give drink to My chosen race, My people whom I have preserved to tell forth My praises' (Isaiah 43:18-21 LXX). God foretold that among the Gentiles, in places which previously had been dry, rivers should afterwards flow plentifully, and should provide water for the elect people of God, that is, for those who were made sons of God by the generation of baptism. Moreover, it is again predicted that the Jews, if they should thirst and seek after Christ, should drink with us, that is, should attain the grace of baptism. 'If they shall thirst, He shall lead them through the desert; He shall bring water for them out of the rock; the rock shall be split, and the water shall flow, and my people shall drink' (Isaiah 48:21 LXX). This is fulfilled in the Gospel, when Christ, who is the Rock, is split by a stroke of the spear in His passion. Christ admonished us on what was announced by the prophet, 'If any man thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water'. That it might be clearer that the Lord is speaking there, not of the cup, but of baptism, the Scripture adds, 'But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive' (John 7:37-39). The Holy Spirit is received by baptism; thus those who are baptized, and have attained to the Holy Spirit, attain the drinking of the Lord's cup. Let it disturb no one, that when the divine Scripture speaks of baptism, it says that we thirst and drink. The Lord also says, 'Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness' (Matthew 5:6); because what is received with a thirsting desire is drunk more fully and plentifully. The Lord also speaks to the Samaritan woman, 'Whoever drinks of this water shall thirst again; but whoever drinks of the water that I shall give him, will never thirst' (John 4:13-14). By this is also signified the very baptism of saving water, which is once received, and is not again repeated. But the cup of the Lord is always both thirsted for and drunk in the Church."

On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, "If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water" (John 7:37-38).

John Chrysostom took³⁴ a closer look at what Jesus said. The rivers refer to the largeness and abundance of grace. Elsewhere living water is called eternal life, where by "living", He means always working. The grace of the Spirit, when it has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain.

³³ Cyprian of Carthage, Epistle to Caecilius, LXII, 8.

³⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LI, 1.

“Why did Jesus do this ‘on the last day, that great day’? Both the first day and the last were ‘great’, while the intermediate days they spent rather in enjoyment. But on that last day they were all collected together. He didn’t come on the first day, and told the reason to His brethren (John 7:1-9); He didn’t come on the second or third days either, lest His words should be wasted, the hearers being about to over indulge. But on the last day when they were returning home He gave them supplies for their salvation, partly showing to us His boldness, and partly for the greatness of the multitude. To show that He spoke not of material drink, He added, ‘He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’ (John 7:38). In another place He says, ‘I have not hidden Your truth within my heart’ (Psalm 40:10). But where does the Scripture say, that ‘rivers of living water shall flow from his heart?’ Nowhere! What then does it mean, ‘He that believes on Me, as the Scripture says?’ Here we must place a stop, so that the, ‘rivers shall flow from his heart’, may be an assertion of Christ. Because many said, ‘This is the Christ’ (John 7:26, 41); and, ‘When the Christ comes, will He do more signs than these which this Man has done?’ (John 7:31), He shows that it is necessary to have a correct knowledge, and to be convinced not so much from the miracles as from the Scriptures. Many, in fact, who saw Him working marvels received Him not as Christ; and were ready to say, ‘Don’t the Scriptures say that Christ comes of the seed of David?’ And they continually dwelt on this. Christ desired to show that He did not shun the proof from the Scriptures, and constantly referred them to the Scriptures. He said, ‘Search the Scriptures’ (John 5:39); and again, ‘It is written in the Prophets, And they shall be taught by God’ (John 6:45); and, ‘Moses accuses you’ (John 5:45); and here, ‘As the Scripture has said, rivers shall flow from his heart’, alluding to the largeness and abundance of grace. In another place He said, ‘A fountain of water springing up into everlasting life’ (John 4:14); that is to say, ‘he shall possess much grace’; elsewhere He calls it, ‘eternal life’, but here, ‘living water’. He calls that ‘living’ which is always working; for the grace of the Spirit, when it has entered into the mind and has been established, springs up more than any fountain, never fails, doesn’t become empty. To signify therefore its unfailing supply and unlimited operation, He has called it ‘a well’ and ‘rivers’; not one river but numberless; He has represented its abundance by the expression, ‘springing’. One may clearly perceive what is meant, if he will consider the wisdom of Stephen, the tongue of Peter, the vehemence of Paul. Nothing endured them, nothing withstood them, not the anger of multitudes, not the risings up of tyrants, not the plots of demons, not daily deaths, but as rivers born along with a great rushing sound, so they went on their way hurrying all things with them.”

Living Water in Operation

Following are some miscellaneous insights from the Church Fathers into the operation of the Holy Spirit as “Living Water” in our lives.

John Chrysostom compared³⁵ the life of the Apostle Paul to living water. Even though he was persecuted and harassed everywhere he went, his life was like sailing a calm sea due to the “winds” of the Holy Spirit.

“Paul’s words are like the ocean, but nothing is equal to them. One would not be mistaken in calling Paul’s heart a sea and a heaven, the one for purity, the other for depth. He is a sea, having for its voyagers not those who sail from city to city, but those from earth to heaven; if anyone sails on this sea, he will have a prosperous voyage. On this sea, the winds of the Holy Spirit carry souls along; no waves are here, no rock, no monsters; all is calm. It is a sea which is calmer and more secure than a harbor, having a pure fountain sweeter, brighter and more transparent than the sun. He, who wishes to descend into this sea, doesn’t need divers, or oil, but much loving-kindness; he will find in it all the good things that are in the kingdom of Heaven. He will even be able to become a king, to take the whole world into his possession, and to be in the greatest honor. He who sails on this sea will never undergo shipwreck, but will know all things well. We need to know the depth, or else not venture. If we are to sail on this sea, let us come well-prepared. Paul said, ‘I could not speak to you as to spiritual, but as to carnal, as to babies in Christ’ (1 Corinthians 3:1). Let no one who is without endurance sail on this sea. Let us provide for ourselves ships, that is, zeal, earnestness, prayers, that we, may pass over the sea in quiet. For indeed this is the living water. It’s like getting a mouth of fire; such a mouth does that man get who knows Paul well.”

Athanasius of Alexandria stated³⁶ that the nearness of Jesus’ Divinity brought living water to those close by. His disciples were continually nourished by this and the Canaanite woman came to belief in Him by this, and she was rewarded accordingly.

“Let us be nourished with living bread, by faith and love to God, knowing that without faith it is impossible to be partakers of such bread. When Jesus called all men to him, He said, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink’ (John 7:37). He spoke of the faith without which a man cannot receive such food; ‘He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water’ (John 7:38). To this end He continually nourished His believing disciples with His words, and gave them life by the nearness of His divinity. But to the Canaanite woman, because she was not yet a believer, He didn’t even reply, although she stood greatly in need of food from Him. He did this not from scorn; far from it; the Lord loves men and is good, and on that account He went to the coasts of Tyre and Sidon where the Canaanite woman lived. Because of her unbelief, and because she was of those who did not have the word, there would have been nothing gained for her to offer her supplication before she believed; but by her faith she would support her petition. ‘He who comes to God must believe that He is, and *that* He rewards those who diligently seek Him’; and ‘without faith it is impossible to please Him’ (Hebrews 11:6). She was an unbeliever before; He shows that, ‘It is not good to take the children’s bread and throw *it* to the little dogs’ (Matthew 15:26). She was convinced by the power of the word, and changed her ways, also gaining faith; for the Lord no longer spoke to her as a dog, but conversed

³⁵ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, LV, v. 29.

³⁶ Athanasius of Alexandria, Festal Letters, VII, 7.

with her as a human being, saying, ‘O woman, great is your faith!’ Since she believed, He granted to her the fruit of faith, and said, ‘Let it be to you as you desire.’ And her daughter was healed from that very hour” (Matthew 15:28)

Hilary of Poitiers pointed out³⁷ that Jesus thirsted in His human nature at the same time that He was giving out living water in His Divine nature. There was no conflict between His two natures.

“It may be said, ‘We find Jesus giving way to weeping, hunger and thirst; must we not suppose Him liable to all the other affections of human nature?’ If we do not understand the mystery of His tears, hunger, and thirst, let us remember that He Who wept also raised the dead to life; He did not weep for the death of Lazarus, but rejoiced; He Who thirsted, gave from Himself rivers of living water. He could not be parched with thirst, if He was able to give the thirsty drink. He Who hungered condemned the tree which offered no fruit for His hunger; but how could His nature be overcome by hunger if He could strike the green tree barren by His word? Beside the mystery of weeping, hunger and thirst, if the flesh He assumed, that is, His entire manhood, was exposed to our weaknesses, even then it was not left to suffer from their loss of dignity. His weeping was not for Himself; His thirst needed no water to quench it; His hunger no food to sustain it. It is never said that the Lord ate or drank or wept when He was hungry, or thirsty, or sorrowful. He conformed to the habits of the body to prove the reality of His own body, to satisfy the custom of human bodies by doing as our nature does. When He ate and drank, it was a concession, not to His own necessities, but to our habits.”

Ambrose of Milan made an analogy³⁸ between the Old Testament as a deep well of living water that it was difficult to draw from, and the New Testament as a river of living water.

“Elijah went first to Beersheba, to the mysteries and sacraments of the divine and holy Law; next he was sent to the brook, to the stream of the river, which makes glad the City of God. You perceive the two Testaments of the One Author; the old Scripture as a well deep and obscure, where you can only draw with labor. It is not full, for He Who was to fill it had not yet come, Who afterwards said, ‘I have not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law and the Prophets’ (Matthew 5:17). So we are asked by the Lord to pass over to the stream, for he who drinks of the New Testament, not only is a river, but also ‘from his heart shall flow rivers of living water’ (John 7:38). That is, rivers of understanding, rivers of meditation, spiritual rivers, which dried up in the times of unbelief, lest the sacrilegious and unbelieving should drink.”

The Garden of Living Waters

The Church is sometimes referred to as a Garden with a well of “Living Water”, such as in Solomon’s Song of Songs. This “Living Water” – being the Holy Spirit – is just not available to those outside the Church. Those outside the Church usually aren’t interested anyway, because they are not interested in God.

³⁷ Hilary of Poitiers, *On the Trinity*, X, 24.

³⁸ Ambrose of Milan, *Epistles*, LXIII, 78.

Cyprian of Carthage stated³⁹ that Christ was referred to in the Song of Solomon as a Garden with a well of living water (Song of Solomon 4:12-15). This Garden is enclosed and the fountain is sealed against outsiders – heretics like Novatian. Peter concurred using the figure of Noah’s Ark. Paul stated this also in describing the Church. This well of living water is available to the Church and is not available to the synagogues of heretics.

“The Holy Spirit declares that the Church is one in the Song of Songs, saying, in the person of Christ, ‘My dove, my undefiled, is one; she is the only one of her mother, she is the choice one of her that bore her’ (Song of Solomon 6:9). Concerning which also He says again, ‘A garden enclosed is my sister, my spouse; a spring sealed up, a well of living water’. But if the spouse of Christ, which is the Church, is a garden enclosed; a thing that is closed up cannot lie open to strangers and profane persons. If it is a sealed fountain, he who is outside has no access to the spring, neither can he drink or be sealed. The well also of living water, if it is one and the same within, he who is outside cannot have life and be sanctified from that water of which it is only granted to those who are within to make any use, or to drink. Peter showed this and set forth that the Church is one, and that only they who are in the Church can be baptized. He said, ‘In the Ark of Noah, a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water; the like figure is that baptism now saves us’ (1 Peter 3:20-21), proving that the one Ark of Noah was a type of the one Church. The Apostle Paul more openly and clearly said the same thing, ‘Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word’ (Ephesians 5:25-26). If the Church is one, which is loved by Christ, and is alone cleansed by His washing, how can he who is not in the Church be either loved by Christ, or washed and cleansed by His washing?”

“Therefore, since the Church alone has the living water, and the power of baptizing and cleansing man, he who says that anyone can be baptized and sanctified by Novatian⁴⁰ must first show that Novatian is in the Church or presides over the Church. The Church is one, and she cannot be both inside and outside. If she is with Novatian, she was not with Cornelius. But if she was with Cornelius, who succeeded the bishop Fabian by lawful ordination, and whom, beside the honor of the priesthood, the Lord glorified also with martyrdom, Novatian is not in the Church. Novatian cannot be reckoned as a bishop, succeeding no one, and despising the evangelical and apostolic tradition, to spring from himself. He who has not been ordained in the Church cannot have or hold to the Church in any way.”

Broken Cisterns versus Living Water

³⁹ Cyprian of Carthage, *Epistle to Magnus*, LXXV, 2-3.

⁴⁰ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Novatianism>. Novatian was a priest who opposed the election of Pope Cornelius after the assassination of Pope Fabian in 251 AD. His followers went so far as the elect Novatian as an AntiPope. The major point of difference was over receiving back into the Church those who had lapsed during intense persecution. Novatian said “No!” But the Church, and Pope Cornelius said that the Church must show mercy.

Whereas the Church is described as a Garden with a fountain of living water, synagogues of heretics are described as broken cisterns that can't hold water. Following are some accounts of 3rd and 4th century heretics related to how they differ from the grace of the living water of the Holy Spirit.

Cyprian of Carthage continued to say⁴¹ that the Lord permits heretics to come in order to test our hearts to discern the truth. The end result is that the righteous and the unrighteous are already divided before the Day of Judgment. The heretics promise the grace of living water while they have forsaken the fountain of living water.

“Heresies not only have come frequently, but continue to do so, while a discordant faithlessness does not maintain unity. The Lord permits these things so that, while our hearts and minds are tested to discriminate truth, the sound faith of those that are approved may shine with clear light. The Holy Spirit warns, ‘There must also be heresies among you, that those who are approved may be recognized among you’ (1 Corinthians 11:19). Thus the faithful are approved; thus the treacherous are detected. Thus even here, before the Day of Judgment, the souls of the righteous and of the unrighteous are already divided, and the chaff is separated from the wheat. The heretics are they who of their own accord, without any divine arrangement, set themselves as prelates without any law of ordination, who assume to themselves the name of bishop, although no one gives them the episcopate. These are the ones the Holy Spirit points out in the Psalms as sitting in the seat of pestilence (Psalm 1:1), deceiving with serpent’s tongue, and artfully corrupting the truth. Their speech creeps like a cancer, their discourse forms a deadly poison in the heart of everyone.”

“Against people of this kind the Lord cries; from these He restrains and recalls His erring people, saying, ‘Don’t listen to the words of the false prophets; they speak a vision of their own heart, not from the mouth of the Lord. They say to those who reject the word of the Lord, there shall be peace to you. To everyone who walks after their own lusts and to everyone who walks in the error of his heart, they have said that no evil shall come upon him. I have not spoken to them, yet they prophesied. If they had stood in My counsel, and if they had listened to My words, then would they have turned my people from their evil practices’ (Jeremiah 23:16-22 LXX). The Lord points out, ‘They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water’ (Jeremiah 2:13 LXX). Although there can be no other baptism but one, they think that they can baptize; although they forsake the fountain of life, they promise the grace of living and saving water. Men are not washed among them, but rather are made foul; sins are not purged away, but are even accumulated. Such a nativity does not generate sons to God, but to the devil. By a falsehood they are born, and they do not receive the promises of truth. Begotten of treachery, they lose the grace of faith. They cannot attain to the reward of peace, since they have broken the Lord’s peace with the madness of discord.”

⁴¹ Cyprian of Carthage, Treatises, I, 10-11.

Athanasius of Alexandria stated⁴² that life and wisdom are proper to the Essence of the Fountain of living waters. To say, like the Arians, that “Once the Son was not” is to say that once the Fountain was dry. This is clearly heretical.

“If God is the Fountain of wisdom and life, as He says, ‘They have forsaken Me, the Fountain of living waters’ (Jeremiah 2:13); and again, ‘A glorious high throne from the beginning, is the place of our sanctuary. O Lord, the Hope of Israel, all who forsake You shall be ashamed. Those who depart from Me shall be written in the earth, because they have forsaken the Lord, the Fountain of living waters’ (Jeremiah 17:12-13). And, ‘You have forsaken the Fountain of wisdom’ (Baruch 3:12). This implies that life and wisdom are proper to the Essence of the Fountain; It was never at any time without existence, but was always. Now the Son is all this, who says, ‘I am the Life’ (John 14:6) and, ‘I Wisdom dwell with prudence’ (Proverbs 8:12). Is it not heretical to say, ‘Once the Son was not?’ This is the same as saying, ‘Once the Fountain was dry, destitute of Life and Wisdom’. A fountain it would then cease to be; for what begets not from itself, is not a fountain. What a load of baloney! God promises that those who do His will shall be as a fountain where the water never fails.”

Basil the Great eloquently stated⁴³ that the Arians were shepherds of the Philistines for introducing the terms “unbegotten” and “begotten”, and claiming that there was a time when the Everlasting was not. They have forsaken the Fountain of living water for broken cisterns.

“Friends godly and well beloved, I implore you to beware of the shepherds of the Philistines. Don’t let them choke your wills without your knowledge; don’t let them foul the purity of your knowledge of the faith. This is always their object, not to teach simple souls lessons drawn from Holy Scripture, but to mar the harmony of the truth by heathen philosophy. Is not he an open Philistine who is introducing the terms ‘unbegotten’ and ‘begotten’ into our Faith, and who asserts that there was once a time when the Everlasting was not; that He who is by nature and eternally a Father became a Father; that the Holy Spirit is not eternal? He bewitches our Patriarch’s sheep that they may not drink ‘of the fountain of water springing up into everlasting life’ (John 4:14). Instead they will rather bring upon themselves the words of the prophet, ‘They have forsaken Me, the fountain of living waters, and hewn themselves cisterns -- broken cisterns that can hold no water’ (Jeremiah 2:13). All the while they ought to confess that the Father is God, the Son God, and the Holy Spirit God, as they have been taught by the divine words, and by those who have understood them in their highest sense. Against those who cast it in our teeth that we are Tritheists, let it be answered that we confess one God not in number but in nature.”

Gregory of Nyssa pointed out⁴⁴ that anytime that we put limits on God, such as saying that He is with our group and not with others, we worship what we do not know. This also applied to the heretics that Gregory was dealing with.

⁴² Athanasius of Alexandria, Four Discourses against the Arians, I, vi, 19.

⁴³ Basil the Great, Letters, VIII, 2.

⁴⁴ Gregory of Nyssa, Against Eunomius, III, 5.

“We know the loftiness of the glory of Him Whom we worship, by the fact that we are not able by reasoning to comprehend in our thoughts the incomparable character of His greatness. That saying of our Lord to the Samaritan woman is brought forward against us by our enemies; but it might more properly be addressed to them. The words, ‘You worship what you do not know’ (John 4:22), the Lord speaks to the Samaritan woman, prejudiced as she was by corporeal ideas in her opinions concerning God. To her the phrase well applies, because the Samaritans, thinking that they worship God, yet supposing the Deity to be corporeally settled in place⁴⁵, adore Him in name only, worshipping something else, and not God. Nothing is Divine that is conceived as being circumscribed; it belongs to the Godhead to be in all places, and to pervade all things, and not to be limited by anything. Those who fight against Christ find the phrase they use against us turned into an accusation of themselves. Just as the Samaritans supposed the Deity to be compassed round by some circumscription of place, and were rebuked by the words they heard, so one might well say to these new Samaritans. In supposing the Deity to be limited by the absence of generation, as it were by some local limit, they do service to Him as God, but don’t know that the infinity of God exceeds all the significance and comprehension that names can furnish.”

In Spirit and In Truth

What does it mean to “worship God in Spirit and in Truth”? One aspect is that God is spirit and must be worshipped in spirit. The ultimate act of “worship in spirit” is the Eucharist, which represents the real Presence of Christ in spirit. As we pray, the Spirit makes intercession for us “with groaning which cannot be uttered”. This leads us to a full knowledge of God.

Basil the Great pointed out⁴⁶ that worship “in Spirit and in truth” plainly means by the Truth Himself. The Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son.

“Just as the Father is seen in the Son, so is the Son in the Spirit. The ‘worship in the Spirit’ suggests the idea of the operation of our intelligence being carried on in the light, as may be learned from the words spoken to the woman of Samaria. Deceived as she was by the customs of her country into the belief that worship was local, our Lord, with the object of giving her better instruction, said that worship ought to be offered ‘in Spirit and in Truth’ (John 4:23), plainly meaning by the Truth, Himself. As we speak of the worship offered in the Image of God the Father as worship in the Son, so too do we speak of worship in the Spirit as showing in Himself the Godhead of the Lord. In our worship the Holy Spirit is inseparable from the Father and the Son.”

Hilary of Poitiers stated⁴⁷ that God, being Spirit, must be worshipped in Spirit; He becomes both the object and the means of true worship. If we concentrate just on “God is Spirit”, we may end up denying not just the Name of the Holy Spirit, but also the gift and working of the Holy

⁴⁵ That is, on Mt Gerazim.

⁴⁶ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, XXVI, 64.

⁴⁷ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, II, 31.

Spirit. As Spirit, God cannot be confined to a location, such as a temple or a hill, since He is omnipresent.

“The words, ‘For God is Spirit’ (John 4:24), need careful examination as to their sense and their purpose. Every saying has a preceding event and an aim which must be ascertained by study of the meaning. We must bear this in mind lest, on the strength of the words, ‘God is Spirit’, we deny not only the Name, but also the work and the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Lord was speaking with a woman of Samaria, and He had come to be the Redeemer for all mankind. After He had spoken at length of the living water, of her five husbands, and of him whom she then had who was not her husband, the woman answered, ‘Lord, I perceive that You are a prophet. Our fathers worshiped on this mountain, and you Jews say that in Jerusalem is the place where one ought to worship’ (John 4:19-20). The Lord replied, ‘Woman, believe Me, the hour is coming when you will neither on this mountain, nor in Jerusalem, worship the Father. You worship what you do not know; we know what we worship, for salvation is of the Jews. But the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him. God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth’ (John 4:21-24). We see that the woman, her mind full of inherited tradition, thought that God must be worshipped either on a mountain, as at Samaria, or in a temple, as at Jerusalem. Samaria in disobedience to the Law had chosen a site upon the mountain for worship, while the Jews regarded the temple founded by Solomon as the home of their Faith, and the prejudices of both confined the all-embracing and illimitable God to the crest of a hill or the vault of a building. God is invisible, incomprehensible, and immeasurable; the Lord said that the time had come when God should be worshipped neither on a mountain nor in a temple. Spirit cannot be cabined or confined; it is omnipresent in space and time, and under all conditions present in its fullness. Therefore, He said, they are the true worshippers who shall worship in the Spirit and in truth. These, who are to worship God the Spirit in the Spirit, shall have the One for the means, the Other for the object, of their reverence. Each of the Two stands in a different relation to the worshipper. The words, ‘God is Spirit’, do not alter the fact that the Holy Spirit has a Name of His own, and that He is the Gift to us. The woman who confined God to hill or temple was told that God contains all things and is self-contained; He, the Invisible and Incomprehensible, must be worshipped by invisible and incomprehensible means. The imparted gift and the object of reverence were clearly shown when Christ taught that God, being Spirit, must be worshipped in the Spirit; He revealed what freedom and knowledge, what boundless scope for adoration, lay in this worship of God, the Spirit, in the Spirit.”

Irenaeus of Lyons spoke⁴⁸ of the Eucharist as the ultimate expression of worshipping God in Spirit and in truth. It is a pure sacrifice; the accompanying incense is the prayers of the saints; and we present our bodies as a living sacrifice, offering the fruit of our lips.

“Those who have become acquainted with the secondary (i.e., under Christ) Constitutions of the Apostles, are aware that the Lord instituted a new oblation in

⁴⁸ Irenaeus, Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus, 37.

the new covenant. ‘From the rising of the sun even to the going down My Name has been glorified among the Gentiles; and in every place incense is offered to My Name, and a pure offering’ (Malachi 1:11 LXX). John also declares, ‘The incense is the prayers of the saints’ (Revelation 5:8). Then again, Paul exhorts us ‘to present our bodies a living sacrifice, holy, acceptable to God, which is our reasonable service’ (Romans 12:1). Again, ‘Let us continually offer the sacrifice of praise to God, that is, the fruit of our lips’ (Hebrews 13:15). Now those oblations are not according to the Law, the handwriting of which the Lord took out of the way by nailing it to the cross (Colossians 2:14); but they are according to the Spirit, for we must worship God ‘in spirit and in truth’ (John 4:24). Therefore the oblation of the Eucharist is not a carnal one, but a spiritual one; and in this respect it is pure. For we make an oblation to God of the bread and the cup of blessing, giving Him thanks in that He has commanded the earth to bring forth these fruits for our nourishment. When we have perfected the oblation, we invoke the Holy Spirit, that He may exhibit this sacrifice, both the bread the body of Christ, and the cup the blood of Christ, in order that the receivers of these antitypes may obtain remission of sins and life eternal. Those persons, then, who perform these oblations in remembrance of the Lord, do not fall in with Jewish views; but, performing the service after a spiritual manner, they shall be called sons of wisdom.”

Gregory the Great stated⁴⁹ that we pray in the mind and the Spirit as the Holy Spirit makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered.

“It is the Spirit in Whom we worship, and in Whom we pray. Scripture says, God is a Spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in Spirit and in truth. Again, we don’t know what we should pray for as we ought; but the Spirit Himself makes intercession for us with groaning which cannot be uttered. I will pray with the Spirit and I will pray with the understanding also; that is, in the mind and in the Spirit. Therefore to adore or to pray to the Spirit seems to me to be simply Himself offering prayer or adoration to Himself. What godly or learned man would disapprove of this? In fact the adoration of One is the adoration of the Three, because of the equality of honor and Deity between the Three.”

Basil the Great pointed out⁵⁰ that “in Spirit” means leading us to the full knowledge of God. This leads to truth, where the Spirit shows the glory of the Only Begotten, from the One Spirit through the One Son to the One Father.

“By means of the power that enlightens us, we fix our eyes on the beauty of the image of the invisible God, and through the image are led up to the supreme beauty of the spectacle of His Majesty. Then the Spirit of knowledge is with us inseparably, in Himself bestowing on them, that love the vision of the truth, the power of beholding the Image, not making the exhibition from without, but in Himself leading on to the full knowledge. ‘No man knows the Father except the Son’ (Matthew 11:27). And so, ‘no one can say that Jesus is the Lord except by the Holy Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 12:3). It is not said through the Spirit, but by the Spirit; and ‘God is a spirit, and they that worship Him must worship Him in spirit

⁴⁹ Gregory Nazianzen, Fifth Theological Oration on the Holy Spirit, 12.

⁵⁰ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, XVIII, 47.

and in truth' (John 4:24). As it is written 'in Your light we shall see light' (Psalm 36:9 LXX); namely by the illumination of the Spirit, 'the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world' (John 1:9). The result is that in Himself He shows the glory of the Only Begotten, and on true worshippers He in Himself bestows the knowledge of God. Thus the way of the knowledge of God lies from One Spirit through the One Son to the One Father. Conversely the natural Goodness, the inherent Holiness and the royal Dignity extend from the Father through the Only-begotten to the Spirit. Thus there is acknowledgment of the hypostases, and the true teaching of the Monarchy is not lost."

Sacrifices in Spirit and Truth

Basil the Great stated⁵¹ that true worship still involves sacrifice, but sacrifice in the Spirit. Jacob and Moses did this, and the Spirit is truly the place of the saints. We are not able to do this just anywhere, but only in the place that the Lord chooses.

"We find the Psalmist, even in reference to God, saying 'Be to me a protecting God, and a strong hold to save me' (Psalm 71:3 LXX) and concerning the Spirit 'Behold, there is a place by me; you shall stand upon the rock' (Exodus 33:21 LXX). Plainly meaning the place or contemplation in the Spirit wherein, after Moses had entered there, he was able to see God intelligibly revealed to him. This is the special and peculiar place of true worship; for it is said, 'Pay attention that you don't offer your whole-burnt-offerings in any place which you shalt see; except in the place which the Lord your God shall choose' (Deuteronomy 12:13-14 LXX). Now what is a spiritual burnt offering? 'The sacrifice of praise' (Psalm 50:14 LXX). And in what place do we offer it? In the Holy Spirit. Where have we learned this? From the Lord himself in the words, 'The true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and in truth' (John 4:23). This place Jacob saw and said, 'The Lord is in this place' (Genesis 28:16). It follows that the Spirit is truly the place of the saints and the saint is the proper place for the Spirit; we offer ourselves for the indwelling of God, and we are called God's Temple (1 Corinthians 6:19). So Paul speaks in Christ, 'We speak in the sight of God in Christ' (2 Corinthians 2:17), and Christ in Paul, as Paul says, 'Since you seek a proof of Christ speaking in me' (2 Corinthians 13:3). So also in the Spirit he speaks mysteries (1 Corinthians 14:2), and again the Spirit speaks in him" (1 Peter 1:11).

Tertullian stated⁵² that we both pray in spirit and sacrifice in spirit, which is what God requires.

"We are the true worshippers and the true priests, who pray in spirit and sacrifice in spirit. Prayer is a victim proper and acceptable to God, which assuredly He has required, which He has looked forward to for Himself! This *victim*, devoted from the whole heart, fed on faith, tended by truth, entire in innocence, pure in chastity, garlanded with love, we ought to escort with the pomp of good works, amid psalms and hymns, to God's altar, to obtain for us all things from God."

⁵¹ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, XXVI, 62.

⁵² Tertullian, On Prayer, III, iii, 28.

John Chrysostom noted⁵³ the connection between “sacrifice” and offering “in Spirit and truth”. We offer sacrifices today, but not bloody ones. We also do this in Spirit and truth, and our mode of offering these sacrifices was foreshadowed in the Old Testament.

“Those, who have Christ as High Priest, ought to be greatly superior. As great as the difference is between Christ and Aaron, so great should it be between us and the Jews. We have our victim, our priest, our sacrifice on high; let us bring such sacrifices as can be offered on that altar. All bloody sacrifices have been done away with; in their place is ‘the reasonable service’ (Romans 12:1). But what is ‘the reasonable service’? The offerings made through the soul; those made through the spirit. ‘God *is* Spirit, and those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth’ (John 4:24). These are things which have no need of a body, no need of instruments, or of special places, where everyone is himself the Priest. Sacrifices are such as moderation, temperance, mercifulness, enduring ill-treatment, long-suffering, humbleness of mind. These sacrifices one may see in the Old Testament shadowed beforehand. ‘Offer the sacrifice of righteousness’ (Psalm 4:5 LXX); ‘Offer to God the sacrifice of praise’ (Psalm 50:14 LXX); ‘The sacrifice of praise will glorify Me’ (Psalm 50:23 LXX); ‘the sacrifice to God is a broken spirit’ (Psalm 51:17 LXX); and ‘what does the Lord require of us but to listen to Him? (Micah 6:8 LXX). ‘Sacrifice and offering You did not desire; then I said, behold I come and delight to do Your will, O my God!’ (Psalm 40:6-8); also ‘Why do you bring Me frankincense from Sheba?’ (Jeremiah 6:20 LXX); and ‘Take away from Me the noise of your songs, For I will not hear the melody of your stringed instruments’ (Amos 5:23). But instead of these, ‘I desire mercy and not sacrifice, and the knowledge of God more than burnt offerings’ (Hosea 6:6). We see with what kind of ‘sacrifices God is well pleased’ (Hebrews 13:16). We also see that already from the beginning, the one kind of offering has been replaced by the other.”

The Harvest

Jesus said, “My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me, and to finish His work. Do you not say, ‘There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest’? Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest! And he who reaps receives wages, and gathers fruit for eternal life, that both he who sows and he who reaps may rejoice together. For in this the saying is true: ‘One sows and another reaps.’ I sent you to reap that for which you have not labored; others have labored, and you have entered into their labors” (John 4:34-38).

What does Jesus mean by “the harvest”? There are two aspects of harvest referred to in the Scriptures: one going on right now and another comes at the end of the age. Referring to the first aspect, Jesus said to His disciples, “The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest” (Matthew 9:37-38, Luke 10:2). It is this first harvest that Jesus spoke to His disciples about after meeting Photini at the well in Sychar.

⁵³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XI, 5.

The second aspect of harvest was illustrated by Moses with the Feast of Tabernacles⁵⁴, which was also called the Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16). Joel prophesied that this will be a Judgment Day event (Joel 3:11-17). The Apostle John describes some of the events of that harvest (Revelation 14:14-20). In the meantime, the tares, which resemble wheat, grow up with the wheat until that second harvest, where they will be separated (Matthew 13:24-30, 36-43).

John Chrysostom noted⁵⁵ that Jesus used the terms: “fields” and “white for harvest” for two reasons: to keep what He said clearly before our minds, and to sweeten the idea.

“Why did Jesus call them ‘fields’ and ‘white for harvest’, instead of plainly saying that ‘They were coming to believe and were ready to receive the Word, having been instructed by the Prophets; and now bringing forth fruit? He does this all through the Gospel; the Prophets employ the same method, saying many things in a metaphorical manner. What may be the cause of this? The grace of the Spirit did not ordain it to be so without a reason. There are two reasons.”

1. “That the teaching may be more vivid, and bring what is said more clearly before our eyes. When our minds lays hold of a familiar image, it is more aroused; it beholds them as it were in a picture; and it is occupied by them to a greater degree.”
2. “That the statement may be sweetened, and that the memory of what is said may be more lasting. Just stating something does not subdue and bring in an ordinary hearer so much as narration by objects, and the representation of experience. This was most wisely affected by the parable.”

The Harvest in Our Days

We have a harvest going on in our day also, but this harvest is dwarfed by the harvest at the end of the age. The “harvest” in our day also involves a lot of sowing, where we won’t see the exact results until the end of the age – and then we will be really surprised at what the Lord has done with our work.

Irenaeus of Lyons stated⁵⁶ that those who sowed the seed that the Apostles reaped in Sychar were the Patriarchs and Prophets, who had prepared the people to accept Christ.

“The saying is true, that one sows and another reaps. Jesus sent His Apostles forward to reap that on which they had not labored; other men labored, and they entered into their labors (John 4:37-38). Who, then, are they that have labored, and have helped forward the dispensations of God? It is clear that they are the Patriarchs and Prophets, who prefigured our faith, and disseminated through the earth the advent of the Son of God, who and what He should be. Thus posterity, possessing the fear of God, might easily accept the advent of Christ, having been instructed by the Prophets.”

⁵⁴ To see the details of how the Feast of Tabernacles, along with the Day of Atonement, fits into the harvest at the end of this age, see Mark Kern, *The Meaning and Prophetic Significance of the Hebrew Feast Days*, St Athanasius Press, 2009.

⁵⁵ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on John*, XXXIV, 2.

⁵⁶ Irenaeus of Lyons, *Against Heresies*, IV, xxiii, 1.

John Chrysostom pointed out⁵⁷ that Jesus sent out the Twelve Apostles for the harvest in the 1st century with little help. Instead of additional workers, He gave them additional power for the tasks at hand.

“Jesus said He to His disciples, ‘The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few. Therefore pray the Lord of the harvest to send out laborers into His harvest’” (Matthew 9:37-38).

“Note how He points out the necessity. That is, it was not to the sowing, but to the reaping that He sent them. ‘Other men labored, and you have entered into their labors’” (John 4:38).

“Of what laborers does He speak here? Of the Twelve Apostles! He had said, ‘The laborers are few’; did He add to their number? No; He sent them out alone. Why then did He say, ‘Pray the Lord of the harvest, that He would send laborers into His harvest’; and made no addition to their number? Because though they were only twelve, He made them many from that time forward, not by adding to their number, but by giving them power.”

“To signify how great the gift is, He said, ‘Pray the Lord of the harvest’; and indirectly declares it to be His own prerogative. Having said, ‘Pray the Lord of the harvest’; when they had not made any prayer, He Himself at once ordains them. He reminded them of the sayings of John the Baptist, the threshing floor, the Person winnowing, the chaff, and of the wheat (Matthew 3:12). From this it is clear that He is the husbandman, He the Lord of the harvest, He is the master and owner of the prophets. If He sent them to reap, clearly it was not to reap what belongs to another, but what He had sown by the prophets.”

“Not in this way only was He indirectly encouraging them, in calling their ministry a harvest; He also made them able for the ministry. ‘When He had called His twelve disciples to *Him*, He gave them power *over* unclean spirits, to cast them out, and to heal all kinds of sickness and all kinds of disease’” (Matthew 10:1).

Chrysostom also pointed out⁵⁸ the meaning of the first Pentecost of the Church. For 1500 years the harvesting of the wheat was celebrated in the form of two loaves made from the new wheat. At this Pentecost, the Holy Spirit shows that the two loaves are Jew and Gentile, and a harvest is in process that drew in many people.

“Do you perceive the type of Pentecost? This is the time when the sickle was to be put to the barley harvest, and the ingathering was made. Notice the reality, when the time was come to put in the sickle of the word. Just as the keen-edged sickle came, so the Spirit came down. Listen to the words of Christ, ‘Lift up your eyes, and look on the fields, for they are white already for harvest’ (John 4:35). Again, ‘The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few’ (Matthew 9:37). Just as the first-fruits of this harvest, He Himself took our nature, and bore it up on high. He first put in the sickle. Therefore He calls the Word the Seed Luke 8:11). ‘When the day of Pentecost was fully come’ (Acts 2:1); that is, when at the Pentecost, while about it. It was essential that the present events likewise should take place during the feast, that those who had witnessed the crucifixion of Christ, might also behold these.”

⁵⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XXXII, 4.

⁵⁸ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, IV, v. 2.

The Harvest at the End of the Age

Just as there is a harvest in our days, there will also be a harvest at the end of the age we live in. This later harvest is commonly known as Judgment Day.

Jesus' disciples came to Him, 'Explain to us the parable of the tares of the field'. He answered and said to them: 'He who sows the good seed is the Son of Man. The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned in the fire, so it will be at the end of this age. The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, and will cast them into the furnace of fire. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He, who has ears to hear, let him hear!' (Matthew 13:36-43).

John Chrysostom explained⁵⁹ what Jesus meant by calling the gathering of the Samaritans in Sychar a harvest; but the end of the age is also a greater harvest. In one case He was distinguishing the Apostles as reapers from the Prophets as sowers; but at the same time, it is He Himself who has done both the sowing and the reaping.

"Elsewhere Jesus said, the harvest has already come; as when He said of the Samaritans, 'Lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest' (John 4:35). Again, 'The harvest truly *is* plentiful, but the laborers *are* few' (Matthew 9:37). Why did He say there that the harvest has already come, while here He said, it is yet to be?"

"Having said, 'One sows, and another reaps' (John 4:35), does He here say, it is He Himself that sows? There He was speaking to distinguish the Apostles from the Prophets in the case of the Jews and Samaritans. It certainly was He who sowed through the prophets also."

"At times He calls this same thing harvest and sowing, naming it with respect now to one thing, now to another. When He is speaking of the conviction and obedience of His converts, He calls the thing 'a harvest', as though He had accomplished everything. But when He is seeking the fruit of their hearing (as He was with the Samaritans at Sychar), He calls it seed, and the end, and harvest. Why did He say elsewhere, that 'the righteous are caught up first?' (1 Thessalonians 4:16-17) They are indeed caught up first; but Christ having come, those others are given over to punishment, and the righteous depart into the kingdom of heaven. But He Himself has come to judge all men here; having passed sentence upon these, like some king, He rises with His friends, leading them to that blessed portion."

Hilary of Poitiers stated⁶⁰ that part of the recognition of the final harvest at the end of the age is the recognition that Jesus is the Son of God. This is not an earthly vision, but a heavenly one. One does not necessarily see this by looking at Christ's human flesh, but by recognizing the power of His Divinity.

⁵⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XLVII, 1.

⁶⁰ Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, VII, 37.

“Jesus said, ‘He that has seen Me has seen the Father also’ (John 14:9). He was not speaking of a bodily manifestation, of perception by the eye of flesh, but by that eye of which He had once spoken: ‘Do you not say, “There are still four months and *then* comes the harvest?” Behold, I say to you, lift up your eyes and look at the fields, for they are already white for harvest!’ (John 4:35) The season of the year, the fields white for harvest are allusions equally incompatible with an earthly and visible prospect. He was asking them lift the eyes of their understanding to contemplate the bliss of the final harvest. And so it is with His present words, ‘He that has seen Me has seen the Father also’. It was not the fleshly body, which He had received by birth from the Virgin, that could show to them the image and likeness of God. The human aspect which He wore could be no aid towards the mental vision of the incorporeal God. But God was recognized in Christ, by such as recognized Christ as the Son on the evidence of the powers of His Divine nature; and recognition of God the Son produces recognition of God the Father. The Son is in such a sense the Image, as to be One in kind with the Father, and yet to indicate that the Father is His Origin.”

Hilary continued to say⁶¹ that the meaning of lifting up our eyes is not to turn our gaze elsewhere, but to fix them once for all on that to which they have been raised.

“The strict sense of the Greek here conveys a different meaning; that is, we have not been lifted up from one object to look on another. Yet the eyes must be lifted up in obedience to the Prophet’s words, ‘Lift up your eyes on high, and see, who has displayed all these things’ (Isaiah 40:26 LXX). The Lord says, ‘Lift up your eyes and look on the fields; for they are white for harvest’ (John 4:35). The eyes, then, are to be lifted up; not, however, to transfer their gaze elsewhere, but to remain fixed once for all upon that to which they have been raised.”

Ambrose of Milan pointed out⁶² that the harvest comes at the close of the year. Similarly is the harvest of the Church at the close of the age.

“The primeval state of the world as of all things has passed away, that the venerable old age of faith might follow. Let those whom this touches find fault with the harvest, because its abundance comes late; let them find fault with the vintage, because it is at the close of the year; let them find fault with the olive, because it is the latest of fruits.”

“Our harvest is the faith of souls; the grace of the Church is the vintage of merits, which from the beginning of the world flourished in the Saints. In the last age, this has spread itself over the people, that all might notice that the faith of Christ has entered minds which were unlearned. There is no crown of victory without an adversary; but since the opinion has been exploded, which before prevailed, that which was true is rightly preferred.”

⁶¹ Hilary of Poitiers, Homilies on the Psalms, CXXXI, 2.

⁶² Ambrose of Milan, Letters, XVIII, 28-29.

Leo the Great stated⁶³ that in this present life almsgiving is a sowing of seed that we will reap at harvest time. No one shall be disappointed at that harvest and little sums from little means shall produce as much as great sums from great means.

“Let no one flatter himself on any merits of a good life, if works of charity are lacking in him, and let him not trust in the purity of his body, if he is not cleansed by the purification of almsgiving. ‘Almsgiving atones for sin’ (Ecclesiasticus 3:30 LXX), kills death, and extinguishes the punishment of perpetual fire. But he who has not been fruitful in this shall have no indulgence from the great Recompenser. ‘He, that shuts his ears to the cry of the poor, will also cry himself, and not be heard’ (Proverbs 21:13). Tobias, while instructing his son in the precepts of godliness, says, ‘Give alms from your possessions to all who live uprightly, and do not let your eye begrudge the gift when you make it. Do not turn your face away from any poor man, and the face of God will not be turned away from you’ (Tobit 4:7 LXX). This virtue makes all virtues profitable; for by its presence it gives life to that very faith, by which ‘the just lives’ (Habakkuk 2:4). Faith is ‘dead without works’ (James 2:26), because the reason for works consists in faith, so the strength of faith consists in works. ‘As we have opportunity’, Paul says, ‘let us do good to all, especially to those who are of the household of faith’. ‘But let us not grow weary while doing good, for in due season we shall reap if we do not lose heart’ (Galatians 2:9-10). The present life is the time for sowing, and the day of retribution is the time of harvest, when everyone shall reap the fruit of his seed according to the amount of his sowing. No one shall be disappointed in the produce of that harvesting, because it is the heart’s intentions rather than the sums expended that will be reckoned up. Little sums from little means shall produce as much as great sums from great means.”

⁶³ Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Sermons, X, 4.

THE CHURCH IN ANTIOCH

5th Sunday of Pascha
Revision F

Epistle: Acts 11:19-30

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]. Located where it was (i.e. Syria), it has always been an Arab church and still is today. The Church moved to Damascus in the 13th 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 Feast Day of the Apostle Barnabas.

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, 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).

Background on the Early Life of Barnabas

To clarify the workings of the Epistle, it is useful to examine the background of 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 born⁶⁴ 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 Jerusalem⁶⁵, 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

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⁶⁴ 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.

⁶⁵ Nikolai Velimirovic, *The Prologue from Ochrid*, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, June 11.

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).

John Chrysostom stated⁶⁶ 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 stated⁶⁷ 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, Paul does not say.”

Barnabas, on the other hand, considered Paul in the same manner. 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 Paul⁶⁸, and he actively tried to promote their use in the Church. 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.

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).

John Chrysostom noted⁶⁹ 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

⁶⁶ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, Recapitulation.

⁶⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Colossians, XI, vv. 9-10.

⁶⁸ For more details about how Barnabas imitated John the Baptist during the First Missionary Journey of Barnabas and Paul, see the Study Mark Kern, The Feast Day of the Apostle Barnabas, St Athanasius Press, 2011.

⁶⁹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XI, v. 32.

others; Barnabas was singled out as being particularly honorable, and that great grace was upon the entire Church.

“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 were 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 stated⁷⁰ 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* brethren, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, say on’. Then Paul stood up, and

⁷⁰ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XV, v. 8.

motioning with *his* hand said, ‘Men of Israel, and you who fear God, listen’” (Acts 13:15-16). Chrysostom pointed out⁷¹ 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 noted⁷² 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 Apostles, and he declared to them how he had seen the Lord on the road, that He

⁷¹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXIX, vv. 16-17.

⁷² John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXI, vv. 26-27, Recapitulation.

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 Paul⁷³; 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.

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 27th, 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 year⁷⁴. The motivation for this scattering was not just the martyrdom of Stephen; Stephen's fellow deacon Nicanor was also stoned along with about 200 others⁷⁵ during a major bloodbath in Jerusalem.

⁷³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

⁷⁴ A few authors place it at two years.

⁷⁵ 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.

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 statement⁷⁶ 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
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 notes⁷⁷ that when the text states, “the hand of the Lord was with them” (Acts 11:21),

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.

⁷⁶ Rufinus, A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, v. 3.

⁷⁷ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v. 19.

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 Apostles⁷⁸ 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 singled⁷⁹ 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 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 speculates⁸⁰ 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

⁷⁸ 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.

⁷⁹ Ambrose of Milan, *On the Holy Spirit*, II, 157.

⁸⁰ John Chrysostom, *Commentary on Acts*, XXV, v. 21.

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 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 stated⁸¹ 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 whosoever 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 Evodius⁸², the 2nd Bishop of Antioch, and a member of the original Seventy Apostles, who coined the term “Christian” in Antioch⁸³. This occurred while Barnabas and Paul were in Antioch.

Alms for the Jerusalem Church

“In these days prophets came 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).

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

⁸¹ Ignatius of Antioch, Epistle to the Magnesians, 10.

⁸² Sometimes spelled Euodius, where the Apostle Peter was considered the 1st 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.

⁸³ Holy Apostles Convent, The Great Synaxaristes of the Orthodox Church, Holy Apostles Convent, Buena Vista, CO, 2002, September 7, p. 239.

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 referred⁸⁴ 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 noted⁸⁵ 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 spoke⁸⁶ 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 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?"

⁸⁴ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v. 28.

⁸⁵ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, Recapitulation.

⁸⁶ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Timothy, XVII, Moral.

Chrysostom further stated⁸⁷ 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 continued⁸⁸ 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 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.

⁸⁷ John Chrysostom, Treatise Concerning the Christian Priesthood, III, 16.

⁸⁸ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, Recapitulation.

In considering the spread of the Early Church, one might think about how terrible the persecutions were. However, as Chrysostom put⁸⁹ 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!”

Agabus the Prophet

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 preached⁹⁰ 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 prophecy, 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).

⁸⁹ John Chrysostom, Commentary on Acts, XXV, v.22.

⁹⁰ See <http://ocafs.oca.org/FeastSaintsViewer.asp?SID=4&ID=1&FSID=101024>.

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).

Early Christian tradition described⁹¹ 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 summarized⁹² 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

⁹¹ Constitutions of the Holy Apostles, VIII, I, 6.

⁹² Vincent of Lerins, Commonitory, XXVIII, 73.

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.

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 stated⁹³ 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 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.”

⁹³ John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statues, XVII, 10.

