

James the Son of Alphaeus

October 9, 2017

Gospel: Luke 10:16-21
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

James was the son of Alphaeus, who was also called Cleopas. One of James' brothers, Matthew, was a member of the Twelve Apostles (Mark 2:14) along with James. Since Alphaeus (Cleopas) was the brother of Joseph, the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary, James was Jesus' step cousin. In trying to understand Jesus' extended family, there were three men named James, which makes things confusing. Figure 1 should be consulted for details concerning all the Lord's relatives. The Scriptures record James' father, Alphaeus (Cleopas), along with the Evangelist Luke, meeting the risen Christ on the road to Emmaus (Luke 24:13-18). James' mother, Mary, the wife of Clopas, was one of the myrrh-bearing women at the foot of the Cross, and at the Tomb (John 19:25).

Table of Contents

James the Son of Alphaeus versus James the Lord's Brother.....	1
James in the First Year of the Church.....	2
The Missionary Journeys of James.....	4
Gospel: Luke 10:16-21.....	7
Men and Angels Serve as Apostles.....	7
Messengers of the Word.....	7
The Word Goes Out.....	8
Courage.....	10
Humility.....	12
The Apostolic Work of Healing.....	13
Hatred by the World.....	14
The Purpose of Suffering.....	15
Doing Battle with Demons.....	17
Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16.....	17
The Spectacle of the Apostles in Their Work.....	17
Our Imitation of the Apostles.....	20
The Problem in Corinth.....	22

James the Son of Alphaeus versus James the Lord's Brother

Shortly after the Ascension, while James the son of Alphaeus was about to begin his missionary journeys abroad, Peter, James Zebedee and John appointed James the Lord's brother as Bishop of Jerusalem. Clement of Rome¹ and Eusebius² stated that Peter, James and John did not strive after honor for themselves, and therefore chose James the Lord's brother as Bishop rather than themselves. James the Lord's brother served as Bishop until c. 62 AD, when he was murdered by the Jewish leaders. Simeon, the other brother of James the son of Alphaeus and one of the Seventy, and was appointed as the second Bishop of Jerusalem³ after the martyrdom of James the Lord's brother. The Apostles at that time felt that one of the Lord's kinsmen should be Bishop of Jerusalem after James.

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¹ Clement, Hypotyposes, Book 6. This document is now lost, but it is quoted by Eusebius.

² Eusebius, Church History, II, 1.

³ Hegesippus, "Concerning His Journey to Rome, and the Jewish Sects", Remains of the 2nd and 3rd Centuries, Ante-Nicene Fathers, v. 8.

There is some confusion today, especially in the West, regarding James the son of Alphaeus. In the West, some say that James the Lord's brother and James the son of Alphaeus were the same person⁴. In the East, it is the teaching of the Church that they were distinct persons. James the Lord's brother never left Judea, but spent his time as a shepherd for the Jews, and pleading for mercy for his people, until he was martyred in front of the Temple in Jerusalem. James the son of Alphaeus was eventually crucified in Egypt.

At the Council of Jerusalem in 48 AD, James the Lord's brother, was clearly the authority figure in Jerusalem. After everyone had spoken, James the Lord's brother answered saying, "Therefore I judge that we should not trouble those from among the Gentiles who are turning to God..." (Acts 15:13, 19). Then it pleased the Apostles and elders with the whole church to send chosen men: Joseph (Barsabas), i.e. James' brother, and Silas with a letter to the Gentile churches documenting this.

We see James the Lord's brother in this position much earlier also. Paul's conversion was about 34 AD. Three years after this (or 37 AD) Paul went to Jerusalem, but had to leave after 15 days due to an assassination plot (Galatians 1:18, Acts 9:26-30). During those 15 days, Paul only saw Peter and James the Lord's brother; he saw none of the rest of the Twelve (Galatians 1:19). Later on, he saw the Apostle John and remarked that James the Lord's brother, Peter and John were the pillars of the Jerusalem Church (Galatians 2:9). That this is James the Lord's brother, and not James the brother of John, is clear from Acts 12:2. James the brother of John was martyred by Herod in 44 AD, right after returning from Spain, or four years before the Council of Jerusalem. During all this time, James the son of Alphaeus was away evangelizing the Gentile nations and was finally crucified in Egypt.

From iconographic tradition⁵, James the son of Alphaeus is portrayed as a young man with a short beard, while James the Lord's brother is portrayed as an old man with a long beard. See Figures 2 and 3 for details. As cousins, they naturally resemble each other. This may have led some to think that the old man is the same person as the young man, but later in life. Some confusion about their identity is understandable, but the icons portray different people.

James in the First Year of the Church

In the first year of the Church, the Book of Acts describes several encounters between the Apostles and the religious leaders. In all cases, either Peter or John is quoted as being the spokesman for the Apostles. On Pentecost, Peter was described "standing with the Eleven" (Acts 2:14) in his message to the people who were confused by the events taking place. When Peter and John healed the lame man, the man held onto both Peter and John, but Peter was the one who spoke to the people about what had happened (Acts 3:1-12). When Peter and John were arrested for this, it was Peter who spoke in their defense (Acts 4:1-8). When the Twelve were

⁴ See for example the discussions for and against contained in the following:

Roberts and Donaldson, "Fragments of Papias", 9-10, *Ante-Nicene Fathers*, v. 1

Hippolytus, "*On the Twelve Apostles*", 9.

Jerome, "The Perpetual Virginity of Blessed Mary", ch. 13-19, *Against Helvidius*, where Jerome refers to the following references.

Tertullian, "On the Flesh of Christ", II, v, 7.

Irenaeus, *Against Heresies*, III, xi, 6-8; III, xv, 1-3; III, xxi, 1-3; V, I, 1-3.

Ignatius, "To the Trallians", ch. 11.

⁵ Paul Hetherington, *The 'Painter's Manual' of Dionysius of Fourna*, p. 53, Oakwood Publications, 1996.

arrested and put in prison, an angel let them out during the night. Summoned before the High Priest and the Sanhedrin, the account reads that Peter and the other Apostles answered and said, “We ought to obey God rather than men” (Acts 5:17-29).

Few details are given in Acts regarding the exact accusations that were brought against the Apostles, or who of the Twelve answered these accusations. Pseudo Clement⁶ records one example where James responded:

“Then a certain Pharisee, hearing this, chided Philip because he put Jesus on a level with Moses. To whom Bartholomew boldly declared that we do not only say that Jesus was equal to Moses, but that He was greater than he, because Moses was indeed a prophet, as Jesus was also, but that Moses was not the Christ, as Jesus was. And therefore He is doubtless greater who is both a prophet and the Christ, than he who is only a prophet. After following out this train of argument, he stopped.

After him James the son of Alphaeus gave an address to the people to show that we are not to believe on Jesus just on the ground that the prophets foretold concerning Him. But rather that we are to believe the prophets, that they were really prophets, because the Christ bears testimony to them. For it is the presence and coming of Christ that show that they are truly prophets: for testimony must be born by the superior to his inferiors, not by the inferiors to their superior. After these and many similar statements, James also was silent. After him Lebbaeus (i.e. Jude, Matthew 10:3) began vehemently to charge it upon the people that they did not believe in Jesus, who had done them so much good by teaching them the things that are of God, by comforting the afflicted, healing the sick, relieving the poor. Yet for all these benefits their return had been hatred and death. When he had declared these and many more such things to the people, he ceased”.

Following the giving of the Holy Spirit on Pentecost, 30 AD, the Church had peace for exactly one year⁷. At the time of Pentecost 31 AD, Stephen was stoned (Acts 7) along with Deacon Nicanor (Acts 6:5) and 200 others. As a result, the Church was scattered and those who were scattered went everywhere preaching the Word (Acts 8:4). During this first year of the Church, the Twelve were still together in Jerusalem (Acts 6:2). However, following the ordination of the first seven “deacons” (Acts 6:6), the Twelve are never mentioned as being all together for the rest of the New Testament.

During this year of peace, James’ father, Alphaeus (Cleopas) died. Alphaeus was probably quite old by this time, since his brother, Joseph, the Betrothed of the Virgin Mary had died about 5 years earlier⁸ at the age of 110. There is no mention of Alphaeus (Cleopas) in any of the literature following Pentecost, whereas he was prominent before that time (Luke 24:18). James’ mother, Mary the wife of Clopas, who was now a widow, left Jerusalem about this time with James the son of Zebedee to help with the missionary work in Spain.

⁶ Pseudo-Clement, Recognitions of Clement, I, 59.

⁷ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 27.

⁸ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, December 31.

In making preparations for their various missionary journeys, the Twelve had cast lots to divide up the world into regions⁹ where each of the Twelve had one lot. The lot for James the son of Alphaeus included Egypt, but may have included other areas of the world as well. Also during this first year, Matthew had finished writing his Gospel in Hebrew¹⁰, and the Twelve had finished drafting¹¹ what was later called “The Apostles’ Creed”. The Creed was a common statement of the Faith that they and their successors could use as a metric, since they realized that they may never see each other again.

The Missionary Journeys of James

We have very little information about James’ missionary journeys. A brief summary¹² of his work reads as follows:

“Having received, the Holy Spirit, Who descended upon them in the likeness of tongues of fire, with the other apostles, James went to the Gentiles to preach Christ and guide the erring to the path of salvation. Aflame with the fire of divine zeal, he burned up the thorns of ungodliness, smashed idols to pieces, destroyed their temples, healed diverse illnesses, drove evil spirits out of people, and brought a great multitude of people to Christ. For this he acquired for himself a new name, the ‘Divine Seed’. Because he sowed the seed of the Word of God in men’s hearts, planted faith and grew piety, he was called the ‘Divine Seed’”.

“Going about many lands, he sowed the seed of heaven, gathered in the harvest of men’s salvation, and ended his earthly course in the steps of Christ. Being an emulator of the sufferings of Christ, he surrendered his spirit into the hands of God while nailed to a cross in Egypt.”

“Then this ‘Divine Seed’, the holy James, was gathered into the heavenly granary with the fruits he bore a hundredfold. And there, delighting in the vision of the countenance of God, he intercedes for us by his supplications, that we too may win such delight.”

Another traditional account¹³ of James’ missionary work reads as follows.

“After the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost, it fell to the lot of the Apostle James to preach Christ’s Gospel in Eleutheropolis and the surrounding area, and then in Egypt, where he suffered for his Savior. With great power, both in word and in act, James spread abroad the saving news of the incarnate Word of God, rooting out idol worship, driving demons out of men, healing all manner of sickness and disease in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ. His labors and his zeal were crowned with great success. Many pagans came to believe in Christ the Lord, Churches were founded and set in order, and priests and Bishops were made. He suffered in Egypt in the town of Ostracina, being crucified by the

⁹ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 6, October 9, November 30.

¹⁰ For details of Matthew’s draft of his Gospel in Hebrew, see the separate study on the life of Matthew.

¹¹ Rufinus, A Commentary on the Apostles’ Creed, Post-Nicene Fathers, Series 2, v. 3.

¹² Isaac Lambertsen, The Lives of the Holy Apostles, Holy Apostles Convent Press, Buena Vista, CO, 1990, pp. 218-220. This is a translation from the following:

The Lives of the Saints in the Russian Language, According to the Menology of St. Dimitri of Rostov, Moscow, Synodal Press, 1904, v. 2, (October) pp. 166-167.

¹³ Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, October 9.

pagans. Thus this great and wonderful Apostle of Christ went to the heavenly Kingdom, to reign forever with the King of Glory”.

The hymns of the Church speak of James’ work among the Gentiles as follows:

“As radiant as the sun¹⁴ you shown forth, O Apostle, with the beams of the Spirit, and have illumined the whole world with divine knowledge, and driven away the darkness of polytheism with your divine preaching. Celebrating your all-splendid and right laudable festival today, we glorify you with piety. You thundered forth sacred and saving doctrines upon the whole world, cleansed all creation of the madness of idolatry, and enlightened the people with the radiance of the knowledge of God. Demolishing the temples of the idols through grace, you raised up Churches to the praise of our God. Seated in the heights of divine knowledge, O James, you received the grace of the Spirit, which appeared to you in the guise of fire and consumed all the idolatrous filth of impiety with a tongue of flame. Wherefore we praise you as an Apostle and herald of God, celebrating today your holy festival. Receiving the grace of the divine Spirit, O James, you were numbered among the sacred choir of the Apostles. By His descent from the heavens and His mighty inspiration, He illumined you with a tongue of fire, and you consumed the thorny ungodliness of the heathen”.

“Illuminating those¹⁵ that sat in the darkness of ignorance with the lightning flashes of your preaching, you showed them forth as children of our God and Master for the sake of their faith. His sufferings and death you emulated and were an inheritor of glory, in that you were wise and divinely eloquent, a disciple of Truth. Forsaking earthly things, you followed after Christ. Signed with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you were sent by Him to the nations that had fallen into perdition, that you turn men to the light of knowledge of God. Having completed the struggles of your divine suffering and diverse torments, you committed your soul unto Christ, O Apostle James. You received invincible authority and power over the demons to drive away their dark princes with the name of Christ. You passed over the earth, shedding light like the sun, and taught all the nations, preaching the first salvific coming of Christ. As an instrument well wrought by the skill of God, O Apostle James, you committed yourself to summon the nations, by your words and acts teaching them to acknowledge Christ. And you enlightened all to confess the true divinity of Jesus, the Savior of our souls”.

“The glorious apostle¹⁶ pursued the nations, teaching the ends of the earth to worship You with the Father and the Spirit, O Christ God. For his sake establish Your Church, and send down your blessing upon the faithful, O only Merciful One, Who loves mankind. Christ, the Sun of Righteousness, emitted you like a ray, to enlighten the whole world. And with your divine supplications you illumine and enlighten with the never-waning light of God all who with faith celebrate your holy memory. We magnify you, O holy Apostle James, and we honor the pangs and labors whereby you struggled in the proclamation of the Gospel of Christ”.

“O James, disciple¹⁷ of Christ and seer of God, grant your hand to me who have striven to praise your honored Feast, and by your supplications shine forth light unto my heart. Watered

¹⁴ “Antiphon for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

¹⁵ “Stichera for Vespers of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

¹⁶ “Stichera for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

¹⁷ “Ode I for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

with streams of divine wisdom, you flowed forth from the paradise of sweetness like a river, and truly have irrigated the face of the earth with torrents of piety”.

“The Lord Himself¹⁸, Who alone is holy, numbered you among the honored choir of His disciples, foreseeing the honor and splendor of your life. Full of the miracles of the divine Spirit, O herald of God, you worked wonders, dispelled infirmities; and freed men from the wickedness of the evil spirits. The effulgence of God, which descended upon your heart, made it divinely radiant, and in manner past understanding made it full of the gifts of the Spirit”.

“As one who conversed¹⁹ with the Noetic Sun, you assimilated the rays thereof. And while He is by essence the primal Light, you became a secondary luminary through grace. Possessed of a most pure intelligence, and having acquired a radiant and pure heart, you beheld the incarnate God, Who is incomprehensible to the mind. Every prophecy and every law inclines toward you, O disciple who are most rich; for you saw with your own eyes Him Who of old was proclaimed by them”.

“Your beautiful feet²⁰ truly proclaim the glad tidings of transcendent peace, and your mind is excellent, O most honored disciple of Christ. It was granted to you to understand and preach the awesome mystery of the incarnation of God, O ever-memorable James, who received pristine rays of light from the Most High Himself. Shining with the splendors of ineffable light as is meet, earnestly pray for those who celebrate your all-honorable memory. With praises let us all bless the divine herald James, who steadfastly instilled the dogmas of wisdom in the souls of the pious”.

“The multitudes²¹ of the nations have you as a divine seed illumined by the splendors and radiance of the Spirit. Adorned with divinely given wisdom, you destroyed the wisdom of the world, speaking out with godly wisdom. Your sound hath gone forth into all the earth like thunder, O Apostle James, and you proclaimed the incarnate Word to all lands, preaching Him as is meet”.

“Truly taught the mysteries²² of heaven as a sacred disciple, O blessed apostle, you passed through the whole world, preaching aloud the word of the Faith of Christ, and giving instruction through ineffable grace. As one rich and blessed, granted all beatitude, you conversed with and accompanied the Master, and were enriched truly in your final portion”.

“O blessed one²³, you appeared to the world flashing like lightning, drawing those who from of old have been sitting in the darkness and shadow of ignorance toward the never-waning light of the incarnate Only-Begotten Son, Whose witness and true servant you were, and Whom we magnify. Receiving the breath of the tempest borne down from the heavens, and enriched by the Spirit’s tongue of fire, you burned up the ungodly wisdom of the world like thorns, shining with the luminous rays of the proclamation of Christ, and dispelling the darkness. O divinely eloquent Apostle James, accept the hymn of supplication which we offer to you, celebrating your all-honored and all-radiant memory”.

“We acknowledge you²⁴ not as the son of Alphaeus, but as the disciple of the Word, O

¹⁸ “Ode IV for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

¹⁹ “Ode V for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²⁰ “Ode VI for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²¹ “Ode VII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²² “Ode VIII for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²³ “Ode IX for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

²⁴ “Exapostiliarion for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, [Russian Menaion](#), St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

James, glory of the apostles; for you manifestly received divine effulgence and the grace of miracles, to drive away the infirmities of those who celebrate your most sacred memory with faith”.

“With the rod of grace²⁵ you drew men from the depths of vanity. O James, obedient to your Teacher, He enlightened your understanding in all things and showed you forth as an apostle and honored divine herald of His unapproachable divinity. The effulgence of the Spirit descended upon you in the guise of fire, and made you a divine receptacle who quickly drove away the darkness of ungodliness. You illumined the world with the radiance of your most wise words, O you who give utterance to mysteries. Illumining those who sat in the darkness of ignorance with the lightning-flashes of your preaching, you showed them to be children of God the Master because of their faith. And you emulated His sufferings and death, and have become an heir to His glory, in that you are wise and divinely eloquent, a disciple most true. Forsaking earthly things, you followed after Christ; and, sealed with the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, you were sent by Him to nations, which were perishing, to convert men to the light of the knowledge of God. And, finishing the struggles of your divine suffering and diverse torments, you committed your soul to Christ. Entreat Him that He grant us great mercy”.

Gospel: Luke 10:16-21

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

Men and Angels Serve as Apostles

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

Messengers of the Word

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

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

²⁵ “Four Stichera for Matins of the Commemoration of the Apostle James, the Son of Alphaeus”, October 9th, Russian Menaion, St. John of Kronstadt Press, Liberty, TN.

The Gospel lesson makes this statement: “He who hears you (the Seventy) hears Me, he who rejects you rejects Me, and he who rejects Me rejects Him who sent Me” (Luke 10:16). Cyril of Alexandria comments²⁶ on this,

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

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

Basil the Great commenting²⁷ on this, interpreted the mediator referred to here as Moses (from Exodus 20:19), since the people asked Moses to speak to God rather than have God speak directly with them. This implies that the angelic involvement in the giving of the Law on Mt. Sinai was the very loud trumpet sound that grew louder and louder leading up to the voice of the Lord, speaking with thunder (Exodus 19:16-19). The lightning and some of the thunder may have also been the angels that surround the Lord wherever He goes. Thus, to set aside the Law, when it had been ordained by angels and given by God is a very serious matter.

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

The Word Goes Out

As the Seventy went about their mission, angelic activity accompanied them. They had been given the power to heal the sick (Luke 10:9), which included casting out demons (Luke

²⁶ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 63, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 270

²⁷ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, 14.

10:17). Since all sickness has something to do with demons²⁸, they encountered demonic activity everywhere they went. [For more discussion on the relation between demons and sickness, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.] They returned with joy that the demons were subject to them in Christ's Name (Luke 10:7). The Lord responded, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven" (Luke 10:18).

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

As the Seventy returned with joy and told the Lord that the demons were subject to them, He responded that He was aware of that. He then summarized their mission by saying that He had given them "the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions and over all the power of the enemy" (Luke 10:19). Cyril commented²⁹ that Christ said this in order that they might not be carried away with the ignorance of the Jewish leaders who, not understanding the mystery of the Incarnation, approached Him as a mere man.

Cyril confirmed³⁰ that for Satan to fall like lightning means that something has changed drastically on earth. He has been overthrown and is put under the feet of the Christians.

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

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

²⁸ For more discussion on the relation between demons and sickness, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke.

²⁹ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 275.

³⁰ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 274.

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

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

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

Courage

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

Basil the Great wrote³¹ about how the angels are very much like us as pertains to free will. “The powers of heaven are not holy by nature; were it so, there would in this respect be no difference between them and the Holy Spirit. It is in proportion to their relative excellence that they have their gift of holiness from the Holy Spirit. Their substance is an aerial spirit, or an immaterial fire, as it is written, ‘Who makes his angels spirits and his ministers a flame of fire’ (Psalm 104:4). Therefore they exist in space and become visible, and appear in their proper bodily form to those that are worthy. But their sanctification, being external to their substance, induces their perfection through the communion of the Holy Spirit. They keep their rank by their abiding in the good and true, and while they retain their freedom of will, never fall away from their patient attendance on Him who is truly good. The results is that, if you do away with the Holy Spirit, the hosts of the angels are disbanded, the dominions of archangels are destroyed, all

³¹ Basil the Great, On the Spirit, 16.

is thrown into confusion, and their life loses law, order, and distinctness. For how are angels to cry ‘Glory to God in the highest’ (Luke 2:14) without being empowered by the Holy Spirit? For ‘No man can say that Jesus is the Lord but by the Holy Spirit, and no man speaking by the Holy Spirit of God calls Jesus accursed’ (1 Corinthians 12:3); as might be said by wicked and hostile spirits, whose fall establishes our statement of the freedom of the will of the invisible powers. I indeed maintain that even Gabriel (Luke 1:11-20) in no other way foretells events to come than by the foreknowledge of the Holy Spirit, by reason of the fact that one of the blessings distributed by the Holy Spirit is prophecy. How did he, who was ordained to announce the mysteries of the vision, derive the wisdom whereby he was enabled to teach hidden things, if not from the Holy Spirit? The revelation of mysteries is indeed the peculiar function of the Spirit, as it is written, ‘God has revealed them to us by His Spirit’ (1 Corinthians 2:10). And how could ‘thrones, dominions, principalities and powers’ (Colossians 1:16) live their blessed life, if they did not ‘behold the face of the Father which is in heaven’? (Matthew 18:10). To behold it is impossible without the Holy Spirit!”.

As a consequence, the angels exhibit a great deal of courage. Likewise the Seventy and the Twelve did, so long as they maintained their faith. At the time of the Crucifixion, they lost it and were scattered as sheep without a Shepherd as was predicted by Zechariah (Zechariah 13:7, Mark 14:27). But they regained their senses after the Resurrection. We note especially the Lord’s prayers for His disciples, that their faith should not fail, and when they had returned to Him, that they would strengthen their brethren (Luke 22:32). Having had the experience of trampling on demons (serpents and scorpions - Luke 10:19), courage was easier to come by. Cyril quoted³² David’s experience to describe this: “They shall walk, O Lord, in the light of Thy Countenance. And in Thy Name shall they rejoice all the day; and in Thy righteousness shall they be exalted (Psalm 89:15-16 LXX).

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

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

Cyril gives³³ some perspective on this: “To rejoice solely in the fact that they were able to work miracles, and crush the heads of demons, was likely to produce in them possibly the desire also of vainglory - and the neighbor of this passion constantly is pride. Most usefully, therefore, does Christ rebuke the first boasting, and quickly cuts away the root that had sprung up in them of the love of glory. Thus He imitates a good sower who, immediately when he sees a thorn springing up in his garden, tears it up with a hoe before it strikes its root deep”.

³² Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 275.

³³ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 64, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 275.

Humility

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

By rejoicing in the Holy Spirit, Jesus was rejoicing in the works and miracles that were performed by means of the Holy Spirit. Cyril said³⁴ of this the Seventy were truly enlightened by their experience.

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

When the Lord said that the Father had revealed these things to babes, He did not mean to imply that the Seventy were infants, but, in Cyril's words³⁵, they were "of an innocent and guileless mind and simple as a child regarding wickedness".

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

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

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

Yet the angels are not completely informed of the Lord's plans. While they carry the souls of the righteous to Paradise (Luke 16:22) and they will gather together the elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven (Mark 13:27), yet they don't know the day or the hour when they will need to do so (Matthew 24:36). Even Satan, with

³⁴ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 65, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 277.

³⁵ Cyril of Alexandria, Commentary on the Gospel of Luke, Homily 65, Studion Publishers, 1983, p. 279.

all his wisdom, did not understand the wisdom of God in a mystery; if he had understood, he wouldn't have crucified the Lord of Glory (1 Corinthians 2:7, 8).

The Apostolic Work of Healing

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

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

Both with the Twelve and the Seventy, there was extensive conflict with the forces of Satan. They were both instructed to heal the sick and cast out demons (Matthew 10:8, Luke 10:9, 17), and the Twelve were given the additional authority to raise the dead (Matthew 10:8). Commenting on this conflict at the return of the Seventy, the Lord said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold I give you the authority to trample on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall by any means hurt you" (Luke 10:18, 19).

John Cassian classified³⁶ healing into three different classes in decreasing order of effectiveness. (1) Healing done by holy men and women. (2) Healing done by the faith of caretakers or by the sick themselves. There are many limitations on those involved. (3) Faked healing done by demons.

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

"The second is for edification of the Church and proceeds from either the faith of those who bring the sick or from those who are to be cured. "The virtue of health proceeds even from sinners and men unworthy of it. Of whom the Savior says, 'Many shall say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your Name, and in Your Name cast out devils, and in Your Name done many mighty works? And then I will confess to them, I never knew you. Depart from Me, you workers of iniquity' (Matthew 7:21-23). If the faith of those who bring the sick or if the faith of the sick is lacking, it prevents those on whom the gifts of healing are conferred from receiving the healing. For example, Mark said, 'And Jesus could not do any mighty works there because of their unbelief.' (Mark 6:5-6). The Lord Himself said, 'Many lepers were in Israel in the days of

³⁶ John Cassian, Second Conference of Abbot Nesteros, II, xv, 1.

Elisha the prophet, and none of them was cleansed but Naaman the Syrian” (Luke 4:27).

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

Hatred by the World

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

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

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

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

The Purpose of Suffering³⁷

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

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

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

John Chrysostom made³⁸ some analogies. Wounded soldiers who recover are an encouragement to their fellow soldiers; so holy men and women who bear up patiently under persecution are an encouragement to the Church.

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

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

Chrysostom added³⁹ that Timothy knew where the battle lines were drawn and that “we do not wrestle against flesh and blood” (Ephesians 6:12). Paul said to stand firm not to depress Timothy but to excite him.

³⁷ For more discussion on the purpose of suffering, see the Epistle lesson for the Feast Day of Demetrios and George.

³⁸ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, IV, vv. 1-7.

³⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 2 Timothy, IV, vv. 1-7.

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

Chrysostom concluded⁴⁰ with a very fitting example: a comparison of the Emperor Nero with the Apostle Paul, where it was Nero who had Paul beheaded. Even though Nero had all the power, he couldn’t stop Paul from proclaiming the Word. Nero had all the honor from the world; Paul had none. Yet at the Second Coming of Christ, this situation will be reversed.

“Nero had the glory of this world, Paul had the dishonor of this world. Nero was a tyrant who had great success, many trophies, wealth overflowing, numerous armies, the greater part of the world in his sway, the Senate crouching to him and a splendid palace to live in. When he went out, he was arrayed in gold and precious stones and was surrounded by guards and attendants. When he sat down, he was clothed in robes of purple. He was called lord of land and sea, Emperor, King and other high-sounding names. Even wise men, potentates and sovereigns trembled at him for he was said to be a cruel and violent man. He wished to be thought of as a god, and he despised both all the idols and the very God Who is over all.”

“Now in opposition to him, let us consider Paul, a Cilician, a tent-maker, a poor man, unskilled in the wisdom of Rome, knowing the Hebrew language, which was especially despised by the Italians. He was a man that often lived in hunger, often went to bed without food, a man that didn’t have clothes to put on, often in cold and nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:27). Paul was cast into prison by Nero himself, confined with robbers, impostors, grave-robbers and murderers, and scourged as a malefactor. Yet (in the 4th Century), the greater part of the world had never heard of Nero while Paul is daily celebrated among Greeks, Barbarians, Scythians and those who inhabit the extremities of the earth. No one knows where Nero’s grave⁴¹ is, while the tent-maker occupies the midst of the city⁴² as if he were a king and living.”

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

⁴⁰ John Chrysostom, *Homilies on 2 Timothy*, IV, Moral.

⁴¹ See <http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Nero>. When Nero was about to be overthrown, he committed suicide and was buried in the Mausoleum of the Domitii Ahenobarbi, in what is now the [Villa Borghese \(Pincian Hill\)](#) area of Rome.

⁴² See http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Paul_the_Apostle. Paul’s gravesite was in the middle of the city of Rome at the [Basilica of Saint Paul Outside the Walls](#).

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

Doing Battle with Demons

Sickness of all kinds is related to activities of demons⁴³ that try to discredit God and turn man away from God. For example, the Patriarch Job was the most righteous man of his day, yet Satan demanded, and received, permission to afflict Job with very painful diseases. It was so bad that Job’s own wife advised her husband to just “curse God and die” (Job 2:9). Another example of the connection between demons and sickness is the healing of various physical ailments by merely casting out the demon, who brought on the ailment. This occurred for the blind and mute demoniac (Matthew 12:22), the mute demoniac (Matthew 9:32-33) and the epileptic demoniac (Matthew 17:14-18, Mark 9:17-27, Luke 9:38-42).

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

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

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 4:9-16

This Epistle Reading is used in the Orthodox Church for the Feast Day of the Apostles Andrew, Matthew, Philip (of the Twelve), Simon the Zealot and Simeon (of the Seventy). In the West, this Epistle is not used at all.

There have been many people throughout the ages who think that the things they do in secret are hidden from the eyes of God. For example, murderers often think, “The Lord does not see...” (Psalm 94:7), slanderers often say, “Who can see them?” (Psalm 64:2-6), and adulterers think that, “No eye will see me” because their activities are private and in the dark (Job 24:15). But Paul says that “there is no creature hidden from His sight but all things are naked and open to the eyes of Him to whom we must give account” (Hebrews 4:13). Paul speaks of the Lord’s return when He will bring to light the hidden things of darkness (1 Corinthians 4:5) and judge the secrets of men (Romans 2:16). Thus everything we do – even the most private things – we do as if it were in a fishbowl with many observers looking in.

The Spectacle of the Apostles in Their Work

The Epistle lesson begins with Paul’s statement that he and the other Apostles have been displayed as a spectacle (Greek: *theatron* meaning theatre or showtime) to the world, both to

⁴³ For more details on the relationship of sickness to demoniac activity, see the Gospel lesson for the 6th Sunday of Luke

angels and to men (1 Corinthians 4:9). Why to angels? Table I is a brief summary of New Testament references to the function of angels; that is, a list of the things angels are recorded as doing.

One of the things angels do is witness human affairs and the working out of our salvation. Angels desire very much to look into the things the Prophets ministered (literally deaconed) to us, and the evangelization of the Church by the Holy Spirit (1 Peter 1:12). The writer of Hebrews cautions his readers not to forget to entertain strangers; they may be angels looking in on human affairs (Hebrews 13:2). When one sinner repents as a result of the Holy Spirit's evangelism, there is joy in the presence of the angels (Luke 15:10). When Paul set Timothy up as overseer (1 Timothy 5:21), Paul charged him before God, the Lord Jesus and the angels (who look in) to do things right.

**TABLE I
WHAT ANGELS DO**

1. Surround Throne of God	Hebrews 12:22
2. Always see Face of the Father	Matthew 18:10
3. Witness Christ's confession of us	Mark 8:38, Luke 12:8-9; 9:26
4. Are subject to Christ	1 Peter 3:22
5. Are personal servants of Christ	Matthew 4:6, 11; 26:53, Mark 1:13, John 1:51
6. Passed Law on to men	Acts 7:53, Galatians 3:19
7. Sang praise to God at nativity	Luke 2:15
8. Don't judge anyone	2 Peter 2:11
9. Are witnesses to human affairs	Luke 15:10, 1 Corinthians 4:9, 1 Timothy 3:16; 5:21, Hebrews 13:2, 1 Peter 1:12
10. Guard Children	Matthew 18:10
11. Don't marry; we'll be like them	Matthew 22:30, Mark 12:25, Luke 20:34-36
12. Gather righteous at 2 nd Coming	Matthew 13:39-49; 16:27; 24:31; 25:31, Mark 13:27
13. Don't know time of 2 nd Coming	Matthew 24:36, Mark 13:32
14. Are judged by the righteous	1 Corinthians 6:3

Quoting an ancient hymn or creed, Paul referred to the mystery of godliness as having at least six parts (from 1 Timothy 3:16):

- The incarnation
- Justified in the Spirit (baptism and resurrection) see Matthew 3:16, Romans 1:4
- Seen by angels
- Preached among the Gentiles
- Believed on in the world
- Received up in glory

Most of us would see the incarnation, justification, preaching, believing and receiving as a much bigger deal than just being seen by angels. Perhaps that's because we're so focused on our own human affairs that we don't realize that we are in the fishbowl and they are all watching us.

John Chrysostom commented⁴⁴ that there is more to this than meets the eye, and that Paul was speaking of a very severe rule of life.

⁴⁴ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XII, 6.

“There is a great depth of meaning and severity implied in (Paul’s) saying...’us the Apostles’ who are enduring such innumerable ills, who are sowing the word of godliness, who are leading you to this severe rule of life. But what does ‘unto angels’ mean? It is possible to ‘become a spectacle unto men’, but not so to angels when the things done are ordinary. But our wrestling is such as to be worthy even of angelic contemplations”.

Clement of Alexandria stated⁴⁵ that there is contempt for the Faith on the part of the multitude. As a result, Paul’s words are not appreciated and his work is not understood.

“To the multitude, the vain labor of stuffing themselves to satiety like cattle is desirable. But to us the apostle says, ‘Now we know this, that our old man is crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be destroyed, that henceforth we should not serve sin’ (Romans 6:6). Does not the apostle then plainly add the following, to show the contempt for faith in the case of the multitude? ‘For I think that God has set forth us the apostles last, as appointed to death we are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men. Up to this present hour we both hunger, and thirst, and are naked, and are beaten, and are feeble, and labor, working with our hands. Being reviled, we bless; being persecuted, we endure; being defamed, we entreat; we are become as it were the off scouring of the world’ (1 Corinthians 4:9-13). Such also are the words of Plato in the *Republic*: ‘The just man, though stretched on the rack, though his eyes are dug out, will be happy’”.

Tertullian stated⁴⁶ that the “spectacle to the world” does not refer to just unbelievers but to both men and angels, both of whom have work to do in the world.

“He has promised Christ to be a Light, and He has declared Himself to be a lamp, ‘searching the hearts and reins’ (Psalm 7:9 LXX). From Him also shall ‘praise be had by every man’ (1 Corinthians 4:5); from Him proceeds also, as from a judge, the opposite of praise. You say he interprets the world to be the God thereof, when he says, ‘We are made a spectacle to the world, and to angels, and to men’ (1 Corinthians 4:9). If by world he had meant the people, he would not have afterwards specially mentioned ‘*men*’. The Holy Spirit has providentially explained the meaning of the passage thus, ‘We are made a spectacle to the world’, *i.e.* ‘both to *angels*’, who minister therein, ‘and to *men*’, who are the objects of their ministrations”.

So what is Paul doing that is worthy of angelic contemplation? He and others are:

- Morons because of Christ
- Weak or feeble
- Dishonored
- Hungry and thirsty
- Poorly clad
- Punched out (with the fist)
- Homeless
- Working with their hands

⁴⁵ Clement of Alexandria, *Stromata*, IV, 7.

⁴⁶ Tertullian, *Five Books Against Marcion*, II, ii, v, 7.

- Reviled
- Persecuted
- Defamed
- Refuse (lit. Pot scrubbing) of the world
- Off scouring (lit. floor sweepings) of all things

Yet Paul said that the Corinthians claimed to be:

- Wise in Christ
- Strong
- Held in Honor

Chrysostom then went on⁴⁷ to say that if men were looking on, no one would choose to commit adultery and fornication. In the sight of God, men not only commit adultery and fornication, but other things also that are much more dreadful. When we commit uncleanness, we fear men more than God; we have thus subjected ourselves unto them and made them lords over us.

“There are many other things also which seem to these our lords to be evil, but aren’t; these we flee for our part in like manner. For instance to live in poverty, many account disgraceful; and we flee poverty not because it is disgraceful nor because we are so persuaded, but because our masters count it to be disgraceful and we fear them. Again, to be dishonored and contemptible and void of all authority seems likewise to the most part a matter of great shame. This again we flee, not condemning the thing itself, but because of the sentence of our masters”.

“Again on the contrary side also, we undergo the same mischief. As wealth is counted a good thing, and pride, and pomp, and to be conspicuous; accordingly this we pursue. Not from considering the nature of the things as good, but persuaded by the opinion of our masters. This master is savage and a severe tyrant; not so much as a command being needed in order to make us listen to him. It is enough that we just know what he wills, and without a word we submit; so great a good will do we bear toward him. God may threaten and admonish day by day but we don’t hear that. But the common people, our master, made up of all manner of the dregs of society, have no occasion for one word of command. Enough for it only to signify with what it is well pleased, and in all things we obey immediately”.

Our Imitation of the Apostles

Paul spoke to the Corinthians as a father, since he had founded the Church in Corinth. As a father desiring to correct his spiritual children, Paul could have returned to Corinth with a “rod” (1 Corinthians 4:21) to discipline them. But he preferred to come in a spirit of gentleness. As a father, he urged the Corinthians to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16) as an example, as we all imitate our parents.

⁴⁷ John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XII, 8.

Cyril of Jerusalem pointed out⁴⁸ that it is not only a natural father who is called “father” in the Scriptures. Paul, Job, Christ and Joseph are all called a “father” for people other than their natural children.

“In the Divine Scriptures the natural father is not the only one called ‘father’. For Paul was father of the Corinthians, not by having begotten them after the flesh, but by having taught and begotten them again after the Spirit (1 Corinthians 4:15). Hear Job also said, ‘I was a father of the needy’ (Job 29:16); for he called himself a father, not as having begotten them all, but as caring for them. And God’s Only-begotten Son Himself, when nailed in His flesh to the tree at the time of crucifixion, on seeing Mary, His own Mother according to the flesh, and John, the most beloved of His disciples, said to him, ‘Behold! your mother’, and to her, ‘Behold! your Son’ (John 19:26-27). He taught her the parental affection due to him, and indirectly explained that which is said in Luke, ‘and His father and His mother marveled at Him’ (Luke 2:33): words which the tribe of heretics snatch up, saying that He was begotten of a man and a woman. For as Mary was called the mother of John, because of her parental affection, not from having given him birth, so Joseph also was called the father of Christ, not from having begotten Him, but because of the care bestowed on His nurture”.

How do we imitate Paul and the other Apostles as the fathers of the Faith? By our strictness and dedication to the things of the Lord. If we can see ourselves as in a fishbowl, where the angels and the bodiless powers are constantly watching to see how we will do, we will gain a better perspective. To this end, tribulation may be helpful, even if it is very unpleasant.

John Chrysostom stated⁴⁹ that tribulation is expedient for us, as we imitate the Master. If he took the path of affliction while we take the path of ease and comfort, it may be open to question whether we are on the same path.

“For a great, a truly great consolation are both the sufferings of Christ, and those of the Apostles. For He so well knew that this is the better way of virtue, as even to go that way Himself, not having need thereof. He knew so well that tribulation is expedient for us, and that it becomes rather a foundation for repose. For hear Him saying, ‘If a man take not his cross, and follow after Me, he is not worthy of Me’ (Matthew 10:38). If you are a disciple, He means, imitate the Master, for this is to be a disciple. But if He went by the path of affliction and you go by that of ease, you no longer tread the same path, which He trod, but another. How then do you follow, when you don’t follow? How shall you be a disciple, not going after the Master? This Paul also says, ‘We are weak, but you are strong; we are despised, but you are honored’ (1 Corinthians 4:10). How is it reasonable, he means, that we should be striving after opposite things, and yet that you should be disciples and we teachers?”

Ambrose of Milan stated⁵⁰ that part of Paul’s humility in his persecution was his repentance for persecution of the Church. This was like plowing land in order to remove brambles and produce good fruit.

⁴⁸ Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, VII, 9.

⁴⁹ John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVIII, 6.

⁵⁰ Ambrose, Two Books Concerning Repentance, II, 5.

“Let us then not be ashamed to confess our sins unto the Lord. Shame indeed there is when each makes known his sins; but that shame, as it were, plows his land, removes the ever-recurring brambles, prunes the thorns, and gives life to the fruits which he believed were dead. Follow him who, by diligently plowing his field, sought for eternal fruit. ‘Being reviled we bless, being persecuted we endure, being defamed we entreat, we are made as the off scouring of the world’ (1 Corinthians 4:13). If you plow after this fashion you will sow spiritual seed. Plow that you may get rid of sin and gain fruit. Paul plowed so as to destroy in himself the last tendency to persecution of the Church. What more could Christ give to lead us on to the pursuit of perfection, than to convert and then give us for a teacher one who was a persecutor?”

Dionysius the Great of Alexandria gave⁵¹ an example of how the saints of his day (3rd Century) interpreted Paul’s words about seeking humility in the helping of others. By sacrificing themselves and their own comfort, they received the martyr’s crown.

“Certainly very many of our brethren, while, in their exceeding love and brotherly kindness, did not spare themselves, but kept by each other, and visited the sick without thought of their own peril. They ministered to them, and treated them for their healing in Christ; they died from time to time most joyfully along with them, bringing on themselves pains derived from others. They drew upon themselves their neighbors’ diseases, and willingly took over to their own persons the burden of the sufferings of those around them. And many who had thus cured others of their sicknesses, and restored them to strength, died themselves, having transferred to their own bodies the death that lay upon these. And that common saying, which otherwise seemed always to be only a polite form of address, they expressed in actual fact, as they departed this life, like the ‘off scouring of all’ (1 Corinthians 4: 13). The very best of our brethren have departed this life in this manner, including some presbyters and some deacons, and among the people those who were in highest reputation. Because of the distinguished piety and the steadfast faith, which were exhibited in it, this form of death appeared to come in nothing short of martyrdom itself”.

The Problem in Corinth

The Corinthians had tolerated sexual immorality such as was not even named among the Gentiles (1 Corinthians 5:1). They had separated into cliques: some of Paul, some of Apollos, some of Peter, etc. (1 Corinthians 1:12). Paul could not speak to them as spiritual people but as fleshly people, who needed milk and not solid food (1 Corinthians 3:1-3). If the Corinthians thought they were wise in Christ, strong and held in honor, the question is: who says so? Paul thought they were puffed up and was planning to come to see what power was behind their haughtiness (1 Corinthians 4:18-21). Paul’s aim was to get the Corinthians to imitate him (1 Corinthians 4:16) and focus on what God considers good rather than what their peers consider good.

To help them with this, he sent Timothy (one of the Seventy who had been traveling with Paul for about seven years at this point) on ahead to remind them of Paul’s ways in Christ (1 Corinthians 4:17). The Corinthians had become somewhat puffed up (1 Corinthians 4:18, 19;

⁵¹ Dionysius, “Epistle to the Alexandrians”, XII, 4, in Extant Fragments, VI.

5:2) but were unaware of their problem (which everyone outside the fishbowl could see). Paul was diligent to point this out as a loving father concerned for his children (1 Corinthians 4:14-15).

Earlier in 1 Corinthians 1:18, Paul had mentioned the Word of the Cross. This is the Lord's way and this was Paul's way and it produces much angelic contemplation regarding how the Lord will work it out. The Corinthians needed to learn that and as we'll see, the Twelve Apostles in the Gospel lesson needed to learn that also. Sometimes we don't see the reasons for our crosses for many years, and we should consider the lessons to be learned from the patriarch Job (Job 1-2).

Chrysostom stated⁵² that Paul put it this way to shame them and was leading up to addressing the immoral man, who had his father's wife, in the next chapter.

“How can it be that you should be wise and we fools in the things relating to Christ? Here he sets himself against the noble and those who plumed themselves upon external advantages. How can it be that the Apostles are beaten and despised and dishonored and esteemed as nothing, while the Corinthians enjoy honor and are looked up to by many as a wise and prudent kind of people? We (the Apostles) take no account of outward pomp, but we look to God only. This everyone needs to practice in every place. For not only are angels looking on, but even more than they: He that presides over the spectacle”.

“Let us not then desire any others to applaud us. For this is to insult Him; hurrying past Him, as if He were insufficient to admire us, we make our way quickly to our fellow servants. Just as they who contend in a small theatre seek a larger audience, as if this were insufficient for their display, so also do they. Contending in the sight of God, they are not content; afterwards they seek the applause of men. Giving up the greater praise and eager for the lesser, they draw upon themselves severe punishment. This turns everything upside down”.

⁵² John Chrysostom, Homilies on 1 Corinthians, XII, 6-7.

FIGURE 1

FAMILY TREE OF JESUS

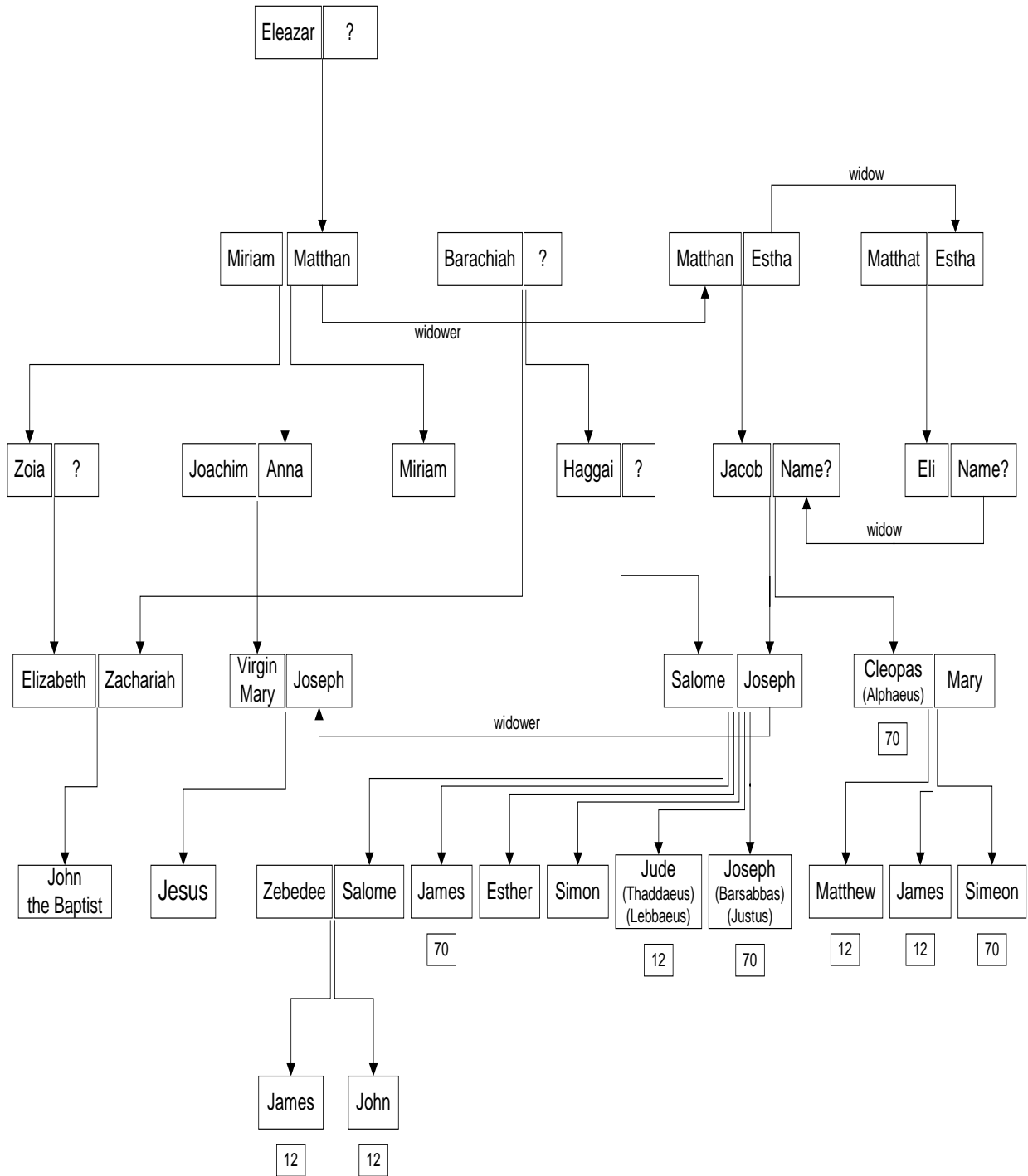


Figure 2
James the Son of Alphaeus



Figure 3
James the Lord's Brother

