

# THE ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE

Prepared under the auspices of the  
Academic Community of St. Athanasius Academy  
of Orthodox Theology, Elk Grove, California.  
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# INTRODUCTION TO THE ORTHODOX STUDY BIBLE

The last decade of the twentieth century saw an historic event. In 1993, *The Orthodox Study Bible: New Testament and Psalms* was released as the first English Bible with study material reflecting the ancient faith of the Eastern Orthodox Church.

St. Athanasius Academy, which had organized this effort, began receiving requests for the completion of the Old Testament—a monumental task which involved not only preparation of the study notes and outlines, but also the presentation of an acceptable Old Testament text. Though the Orthodox Church has never officially committed itself to a single text and list of Old Testament books, it has traditionally used the Greek Old Testament of the Septuagint (LXX). However, in Orthodoxy's 200-year history in North America, no English translation of the LXX has ever been produced by the Church.

The contributors used the Alfred Rahlfs edition of the Greek text as the basis for the English translation. To this base they brought two additional major sources. The first is the Brenton text, a British translation of the Greek Old Testament, published in 1851. The availability of this work, and the respect accorded it, made it an obvious choice as a source document. Secondly, Thomas Nelson Publishers granted use of the Old Testament text of the New King James Version in the places where the English translation of the LXX would match that of the Masoretic (Hebrew) text. The development team at St. Athanasius Academy carefully studied these sources, along with other documents, to produce an English Old Testament text suitable for the project.

The organization of the Old Testament books, that is, their canonical order, was taken from *The Old Testament According to the Seventy*, published with the approval of the Holy Synod of the Church of Greece. The first edition was released in June, 1928. The Old Testament text presented in this volume does not claim to be a new or superior translation. The goal was to produce a text to meet the Bible-reading needs of English-speaking Orthodox Christians.

In some Old Testament books, including the Psalms, the numbering of chapters, and sometimes individual verses is different in the LXX version from the English translation of the Hebrew text (such as the *New King James Version* and *New Revised Standard Version*). To help the reader, the LXX psalm number appears first, followed by the alternate number in parentheses, such as Psalm 50 (51).

In addition to the difference in the numbering of the Psalms, the books of Jeremiah and Malachi show differences in the chapter and verse numbering when comparing *The Orthodox Study Bible* alongside English translations based on the Hebrew Old Testament text. The following shows how the Hebrew and LXX texts compare in the books of Jeremiah and Malachi.

## Jeremiah

Hebrew	LXX	Hebrew	LXX
1:1—25:13	1:1—25:13	49:34b	25:20
25:14	—	50:1—51:44	27:1—28:45
25:15—38	32:1—25	51:45—49	—
26:1—43:13	33:1—50:13	51:50—64	28:46—60
44:1—30	51:1—30	52:1	52:1
45:1—5	51:31—35	52:2—3	—
46:1	—	52:4—14	52:2—12
46:2—25	26:1—24	52:15	—
46:26	—	52:16—27	52:13—24
46:27, 28	26:25, 26	52:28—30	—
47:1—7	29:1—7	52:31—34	52:25—28
48:1—44	31:1—44		
49:1—5	30:17—21		
49:6	—	<b>Malachi</b>	
49:7—22	30:1—16	1:1—3:18	1:1—3:18
49:23—27	30:28—32	4:1—3	3:19—21
49:28—33	30:22—27	4:4	3:24
49:34a, 35—39	25:14—19	4:5—6	3:22—23

The New Testament of *The Orthodox Study Bible* is taken from the New King James Version of the Bible. It is a translation of the Received Text of the Greek New Testament, with notes showing major variants in the Majority Text and the critical text of Nestle-Aland and the United Bible Societies.

The introductory material, commentary and notes accompanying the Old and New Testament books are presented in a vocabulary understandable to a high school graduate. This is not a book of scholars addressing other scholars, but rather scholars clearly communicating the treasures of the Orthodox biblical tradition with clergy and laypeople desirous of understanding their Christian beliefs and making them accessible to others.

Further, the decision was made that the notes and commentary which clarify the biblical text would emphasize the major themes of the Christian faith. Thus, the notes give primary attention to:

1. The Holy Trinity: Father, Son and Holy Spirit
2. The Incarnation: The Divine Son of God becoming Man
3. The Centrality of the Church, the “dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22)
4. The Virtues: God’s call to His people to live righteous and holy lives in Christ

To attain these goals, specific attention was given to the biblical interpretations of the fathers of the ancient and undivided Church, and to the consensus of the Seven Ecumenical or Church-wide Councils of Christendom, held from the fourth to eighth centuries.

The Holy Scriptures have always been integral to the life of the Church. The liturgical cycle of the year and the days of feasting and fasting are accompanied by Scripture readings from throughout the Bible. The lectionary in the back of *The Orthodox Study Bible* guides the reader along this biblical path through the Church year. Further, liturgical notes at the foot of the pages of *The Orthodox Study Bible* relate specific readings to the yearly cycle of prayer and worship. These notes are designated with the symbol □.

The prayer of the editors and contributors of *The Orthodox Study Bible* is that it presents an understandable Bible text and commentary to (1) English-speaking Orthodox Christians the world over and to (2) non-Orthodox readers interested in learning more about the faith of the historic Orthodox Church.

Lent, 2008

# THE OLD TESTAMENT BOOKS LISTED AND COMPARED

## Orthodox Old Testament

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy  
Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Kingdoms (1 Samuel)  
2 Kingdoms (2 Samuel)  
3 Kingdoms (1 Kings)  
4 Kingdoms (2 Kings)  
1 Chronicles (1 Paraleipomenon)  
2 Chronicles (2 Paraleipomenon)\*  
1 Ezra\*\*  
2 Ezra\*\* (Ezra)  
Nehemiah  
Tobit  
Judith  
Esther  
1 Maccabees  
2 Maccabees  
3 Maccabees  
Psalms (151 in number)  
Job  
Proverbs of Solomon  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Songs  
Wisdom of Solomon  
Wisdom of Sirach  
Hosea  
Amos  
Micah  
Joel  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi  
Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Baruch  
Lamentation of Jeremiah  
Epistle of Jeremiah  
Ezekiel  
Daniel \*\*\*

\* Includes the Prayer of Manasseh  
\*\*Also known as 1 & 2 Esdras  
\*\*\*"Susanna" is at the beginning of Daniel, "Bel and the Serpent" at the end. Also includes the "Hymn of the Three Young Men."

## Roman Catholic Old Testament

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy  
Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
3 Kings  
4 Kings  
1 Chronicles (1 Paraleipomenon)  
2 Chronicles (2 Paraleipomenon)  
1 Esdras  
2 Esdras (Nehemiah)  
Tobit  
Judith  
Esther  
1 Maccabees  
2 Maccabees  
Psalms (150 in number)  
Job  
Proverbs of Solomon  
Ecclesiastes  
Canticle of Canticles  
Wisdom of Solomon  
Ecclesiasticus (Sirach)  
Hosea  
Amos  
Micah  
Joel  
Obadiah  
Jonah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi  
Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Baruch\*  
Lamentations  
Ezekiel  
Daniel

49 \*

\*Includes Epistle of Jeremiah

## Protestant Old Testament

Genesis  
Exodus  
Leviticus  
Numbers  
Deuteronomy  
Joshua  
Judges  
Ruth  
1 Samuel  
2 Samuel  
1 Kings  
2 Kings  
1 Chronicles  
2 Chronicles  
Ezra  
Nehemiah  
Esther\*  
Job  
Psalms (150 in number)  
Proverbs  
Ecclesiastes  
Song of Solomon  
Isaiah  
Jeremiah  
Lamentations  
Ezekiel  
Daniel\*\*  
Hosea  
Joel  
Amos  
Obadiah  
Micah  
Nahum  
Habakkuk  
Zephaniah  
Haggai  
Zechariah  
Malachi

\* Esther does not include those sections called "Additions to Esther."

\*\*Daniel here does not include those sections separately labeled as the "Hymn of the Three Young Men," "Susanna," "Bel and the Serpent."



# OVERVIEW OF THE BOOKS OF THE BIBLE

By The Right Reverend BASIL, Bishop of the Diocese of Wichita and Mid-America

## THE OLD TESTAMENT

This introduction is a brief description of each of the forty-nine books of the Old Testament. It is helpful to keep in mind that, like the earliest Christian community, the Orthodox Church of today continues using the Greek version of the Old Testament known as the Septuagint (LXX). The Septuagint—referencing the seventy finest Jewish scholars, from all twelve Jewish tribes, who made the translation from the Hebrew into Greek—became the universally accepted version of the Old Testament since the time of its appearance some three centuries before the birth of Christ. Our Lord Jesus Christ, together with His apostles and evangelists, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, and also Peter and Paul, used this Greek version when quoting the Old Testament in their gospels and epistles. These inspired Old Testament books tell the story of God's dealings with ancient Israel, from approximately 2000 BC until the time of Jesus.

A study of the Old Testament in the light of the authentic apostolic tradition will lead the reader to Him Who fulfilled the Law and the Prophets as He promised: Our Lord and God and Savior, Jesus Christ. This collection of forty-nine Old Testament books is traditionally subdivided into four sections: 1) the five books of the Law; 2) the books of history; 3) the books of wisdom and; 4) the books of prophecy.

### The Five Books of the Law

First there are the books of the Law: *Genesis*, meaning "beginning," since it recounts the beginning of God's creation; *Exodus*, which means "exit" or "departure," referring to the journey of the Hebrews from out of slavery in Egypt; *Leviticus*, a book detailing worship as led by the priests ordained from the tribe of Levi; *Numbers*, whose title is derived from the book's opening account of the census or numbering of the people of Israel; *Deuteronomy*, meaning "second law," since it gives a detailed listing of the additional laws given by God through Moses.

These first five books of the Old Testament, known jointly as the Pentateuch (*penta* means "five" in Greek) describe God's creation of the world, the rebellion of Adam and Eve and the fall of man, and the history of God's people from the days of Abraham, about 2000 BC, through the days of Moses, dated by many scholars at approximately 1250 BC.

### The Books of History

The second section of the LXX Old Testament is known as the historical books. This group begins with the book of *Joshua*, the leader of the children

of Israel following the death of Moses, who brings God's people into the promised land after their forty years of wandering in the wilderness. *Judges* relates to the traditions of the various Hebrew tribes and the exploits of their own particular heroes, the Judges of whom the title speaks, who ruled the nation. The book of *Ruth* is the charming and heroic account of a Gentile woman who placed herself under the protection of the one true God, and in the process became an ancestor of King David, and of his descendent, Jesus Christ the Messiah of Israel.

*First and Second Kingdoms* (First and Second Samuel), whose principle characters are Samuel the faithful prophet, Saul the first king to rule over God's people, and David, Saul's successor and the first king of Judah in the south of Palestine, and Israel to the north. The books of *Third and Fourth Kingdoms* (First and Second Kings) opens with the enthronement of David's son Solomon and ends with the fall of the kingdom, including the destruction of its capital city of Jerusalem, and the exile of God's people from Palestine to Babylon.

*First and Second Chronicles* (First and Second Paraleipomenon) expand on the history recorded in *Third and Fourth Kingdoms*. The word *Paraleipomenon* is transliterated from the Greek and means "that which is omitted" in the two preceding books. The books of *First and Second Ezra* and *Nehemiah* continue this chronicle of divine history, focusing on the Jewish religious community after its return to Jerusalem from exile in Babylon.

The final books in the historical section of the Old Testament reveal the stories of people who lived heroic and God-directed lives under foreign domination and during the exile: *Tobit*, who was taken into captivity by the Assyrians; *Judith*, the pious and beautiful widow who saved her people from massacre by the invading Assyrian general; *Esther*, the Jewish queen of Persia who achieved the revocation of Haman's decree that would have allowed the persecution and mass murder of God's people; and the *Maccabees*, the family of the Hasmoneans and their followers, the faithful people who began the revolt and fought the wars of independence against foreign armies occupying their land.

### The Books of Wisdom

The third section of the Old Testament is known as the books of Wisdom. The magnificent *Psalms* is the hymnal of both ancient Israel and of the Church. The book of *Job*, which in the canonical Greek LXX comes between *Psalms* and *Proverbs*, probes the depths of a man's unshakable faith in the face of tragedy and innocent suffering. *Proverbs* is a collection of moral and religious instruction taught to young people after their return from exile in Babylon. *Ecclesiastes* tells of the preacher who philosophically seeks to understand the meaning of human existence that the good man can find in this life. The moving *Song of Songs* by Solomon is a collection of lyric poems, written



in the language of human love and courtship, which also speaks prophetically of God's love for His beloved Bride, His Church. The *Wisdom of Solomon* promises reward and immortality to the righteous, praises wisdom and condemns the folly of idolatry. The *Wisdom of Sirach* consists of lectures to young people on ethical and religious themes.

These seven books of Wisdom literature—*The Psalms*, *Job*, *Proverbs*, *Ecclesiastes*, the *Song of Songs*, the *Wisdom of Solomon*, and the *Wisdom of Sirach*—proclaim that happiness (or “blessedness,” in the language of the Bible) is possible only through faith in and obedience to the one true God.

### The Books of Prophecy

The fourth and final section of the LXX Old Testament includes the books of prophecy, which appear in an order different from the Hebrew and Vulgate collections.

*Hosea* gives a message of God's own redeeming love for His chosen people, even when they spurn Him and prostitute themselves to false gods. *Amos* is the simple shepherd called by God to denounce a self-satisfied nation for its grave social injustice, abhorrent immorality and its shallow and meaningless piety. *Micah* foretells the day when nations shall beat their swords into plowshares and their spears into pruning hooks. He speaks of peace reigning over all who do justice, who love kindness, and who walk humbly with God. *Joel* is the prophet who foretells the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon all flesh. *Obadiah* prophesies the return of the exiles from Babylon. *Jonah* unwillingly accepts God's command to preach His mercy and forgiveness to a foreign nation.

*Nahum* prophesies the defeat of the powerful Assyrian enemy. *Habakkuk* deals with the perennial question, “How long, O Lord, shall I cry out to You, and You will not hear me?” (Hab 1:2). *Zephaniah* prophesies the dark days of Judah's destruction, but promises comfort and conciliation to those who wait patiently for the Lord and serve Him. *Haggai*, following the return of the exiles, exhorts them to rebuild the destroyed temple in order to unify their disrupted religious life and, more importantly, to prepare for the coming of the long awaited Messiah.

*Zechariah* prophesies the image of the messianic Prince of Peace, the Good Shepherd who would lay down His life for the flock. *Malachi* exhorts God's people to faithfulness and asserts the fatherhood of God over all nations. He foretells that God will appoint a forerunner, similar to the ancient prophet Elijah (or Elias) who will appear before the Messiah and prepare the world for the coming Day of the Lord.

*Isaiah* exhorts the people of God to place their confidence in the Lord, and to lead private and public lives which manifest this reliance. From Isaiah, we hear the prophecies of a Son to be born of a virgin, and of the Suffering

Servant—the Messiah—who would be led as an innocent sheep to the slaughter, and by whose stripes we would be healed. *Jeremiah* severely criticizes God's people for abandoning the one true God and turning instead to the worship of idols. *Baruch* was appointed to be read on feast days as a confession of sins. In *Lamentations*, the author Jeremiah mourns the destruction of the holy city of Jerusalem by the Babylonians. The *Epistle of Jeremiah* is addressed to those about to be carried off into exile in Babylon.

*Ezekiel*, the prophet of the exiles, assures his hearers of the abiding presence of God amongst them, even in exile and servitude. Finally, *Daniel* writes an apocalyptic or mystical end-time prophecy which is filled with difficult and often obscure signs and symbols. In the Greek LXX, *Daniel* begins with the heroic story of Susanna and ends with the fascinating account of Bel and the Serpent.

These forty-nine God-inspired Old Testament books divided into four sections—books of the Law, of History, of Wisdom, and of Prophecy—which serve as an introduction to John the Baptist's preparation of the world for the coming of the Messiah, who is Isaiah's Suffering Servant, Zechariah's Prince of Peace, and the Good Shepherd who lays down His life for the flock.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT

### The Four Gospels

*Matthew*, *Mark*, *Luke* and *John* recall the events in the life of Jesus Christ, Son of God and Son of Man. The first three are called the Synoptic Gospels, in that they set forth a "common viewpoint" of the chronology of events and the message of Christ in His life and ministry. *Matthew* addresses his gospel primarily to fellow Jews. *Mark* is likely the first gospel to be written, and speaks of Christ as servant of all (Mk 10:45). *Luke*, himself a physician, reveals the Incarnate Christ and His earthly ancestry. This Son of Man saves and heals the fallen race.

*John*, the last of the four gospels to be written, emphasizes the divinity of Christ, the eternal Son and Word of God, who became Man. John's gospel further reveals seven miracles of Christ, not all of them in chronological order.

### Acts

Written by St. Luke, these are the *Acts* (or accomplishments) of the *Apostles*, but mainly of Peter (chapters 1—12) and Paul (chapters 13—28). Acts chronicles the earliest history of the Church from Pentecost through approximately AD 65.

### The Letters (or Epistles) of St. Paul

The first nine of Paul's letters are written to churches. *Romans*, which begins this section, was the only letter Paul wrote to a community he had not

previously visited. Thus, the implication is that much of what he wrote to the church at Rome he preached in other places.

Most prominent of the cities of first century Greece was Corinth, a center of commerce, immorality and false religion. Predictably, this fledgling church would have to deal with these same matters. *First Corinthians* is therefore a corrective epistle calling for unity, virtue, forbearance, Eucharistic order and proper use of the gifts of the Holy Spirit. In contrast *Second Corinthians* recognizes the repentance within the church on the part of many, and St. Paul defends his apostolic authority.

In *Galatians*, Paul addresses several churches in Asia Minor, defending his apostleship and calling the faithful to live their lives in the strength of the Holy Spirit instead of in submission to the laws of the old covenant. *Ephesians* is a marvelous discourse on how the Church should conduct itself. This community is rich in dedication to Christ. Yet just a few decades later the Lord tells them, "you have left your first love" (Rev 2:4).

*Philippians* is the epistle of joy. Paul writes from a Roman prison, "Rejoice in the Lord always. Again I will say, rejoice!" (Php 4:4). *Colossians* presents Christ as "the head of the body, the church . . ." (Col 1:18), preeminent in all things.

*First Thessalonians*, the first letter St. Paul penned, was written to the believers at Thessalonica, a beautiful coastal city of Greece in about AD 51, shortly after Paul planted that Church. This is a letter of encouragement. *Second Thessalonians* acknowledges persecution and warns of lawlessness, urging the Christians to "stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught . . ." (2Th 2:15).

Next, Paul addresses the following letters to individuals. In *First Timothy*, the aging apostle speaks to his youthful understudy about effective oversight of the church. In *Second Timothy*, the last letter St. Paul wrote (see 2Ti 4:6-8), he encourages Timothy to "be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus" (2Ti 2:1). Paul is already in prison in Rome (1:8) awaiting martyrdom.

*Titus* is sent by Paul to Crete to set the church "in order," and "appoint elders in every city" (Tts 1:5). If this sounds like the work of a bishop, it is (Tts 1:7, 8), and Titus is consistently named in early Church records as the first bishop of Crete. *Philemon* is a Christian slave-holder, and Paul writes him to receive back Onesimus (Phm 10-16), his runaway slave, who has become a Christian with Paul in Rome.

*Hebrews* is the last of the epistles attributed to St. Paul, but with little evidence it was actually written by Paul. It is a general letter to Jewish believers in Christ to continue on in the Faith. It assures them that Christ, the great High Priest in the heavenlies (Heb 8:1), is their once for all sacrifice for sin (Heb 10:10) and victor over death (Heb 12:1, 2).

### The General Epistles

*James*, the brother of the Lord and first bishop of Jerusalem, writes to fellow Jews, “the twelve tribes which are scattered abroad” (Jam 1:1). His message? “Faith without works is dead” (Jam 1:20). Christianity is a belief that behaves.

*First Peter*, written by the first among the apostles, urges obedience to God and man, willingness to suffer for Christ’s sake, and effective pastoring of the flock. In *Second Peter*, the apostle discusses divine power for the faithful (deification), divine judgment for false teachers and the Day of the Lord.

Next, John the Theologian offers three general epistles. *First John* is a stirring personal testimonial to God’s forgiveness, His love for His children and His gift of eternal life. In *Second John*, he addresses an “elect lady and her children” (v. 1), urging them to obey the Lord’s commands and beware of deceivers. *Third John* commends Gaius and Demetrius, and warns against Diotrephes.

Finally, *Jude*, the Lord’s brother, writes a short letter exhorting the faithful to contend for the truth and to beware of the devil’s servants. He finishes with a stunning benediction.

### Revelation

Written by St. John the Theologian, he entitles his book “The Revelation of Jesus Christ” (1:1). What the book of *Daniel* is to the Old Testament, *Revelation* is to the New Testament. Another title is the *Apocalypse*, which is a transliteration of the Greek word for “revelation” or “unveiling.” The book speaks prophetically both to current and future events, to judgment and salvation, and ends with the glorious New Jerusalem coming down out of heaven “as a bride adorned for her husband” (21:2).

# INTRODUCING THE ORTHODOX CHURCH

The publication of *The Orthodox Study Bible* begs a question: exactly what is the Orthodox Church? Many people have heard of the Russian Orthodox Church which celebrated its 1000th birthday in 1988, or the Greek Orthodox Church which was born centuries earlier. But Orthodoxy itself—what is it, and what are its historic roots?

## THE CHURCH IN THE NEW TESTAMENT

To answer the question, let us go back to the pages of the New Testament, specifically to the Book of Acts and the birth of the Church at Pentecost. For on that day the Holy Spirit descended on the twelve apostles in the Upper Room, and by afternoon some 3000 souls believed in Christ and were baptized. The Scriptures record that when the first Christian community began, “they were continually devoting themselves to the apostles’ teaching and to fellowship, to the breaking of bread and to prayer” (Acts 2:42).

From Jerusalem, the faith in Christ spread throughout Judea, to Samaria (Acts 8:5–39), to Antioch and the Gentiles (Acts 11:19–26). We find new converts and new Churches throughout Asia Minor and the Roman Empire as recorded in Acts and the Epistles.

The Church, of course, was not simply another organization in Roman society. The Lord Jesus Christ had given the promise of the Holy Spirit “to lead you into all truth” (Jn 16:13). With the fulfillment of that promise beginning with Pentecost, the Church was born far beyond mere institutional status. She was not an organization with mystery, but a mystery with organization. St. Paul called the Church “a dwelling place of God in the Spirit” (Eph 2:22). The Church was a dynamic organism, the living Body of Jesus Christ. She made an indelible impact in the world, and those who lived in her life and faith were personally transformed.

But we also discover in the New Testament itself that the Church had her share of problems. All was not perfection. Some individuals even within the Church sought to lead her off the path the apostles established, and they had to be dealt with along with the errors they invented. Even whole local communities lapsed on occasion and were called to repentance. The Church in Laodicea is a vivid example (Rev 3:14–22). Discipline was administered for the sake of purity in the Church. But there was growth and maturation, even as the Church was attacked from within and without. The same Spirit who gave her birth gave her power for purity and correction, and she stood strong and grew, eventually invading the whole of the Roman Empire.

## THE EARLY CENTURIES

As the Church moves from the pages of the New Testament and on into the succeeding centuries of her history, it is helpful to trace her growth and development in terms of specific categories. We shall look first at a category important for all Christian people: *doctrine*. Did she maintain the truth of God as given by Christ and His apostles? Second, what about *worship*? Is there a discernible way in which the people of God have offered a sacrifice of praise and thanksgiving to Him? Third, we will consider Church *government*. What sort of polity did the Church practice?

1. *Doctrine*: Not only did the Church begin under the teaching of the apostles, but she was also instructed to “stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught, whether by word or our epistle” (2Th 2:15). The apostle Paul insisted that those matters delivered by him and his fellow apostles, both in person and in the writings that would come to be called the New Testament, be adhered to carefully. Thus, followed such appropriate warnings as “in the name of Jesus Christ . . . withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which he received from us” (2Th 3:6). The doctrines taught by Christ and His disciples are to be safeguarded by “the Church, the pillar and support of the truth” (1Ti 3:15) and are not open for renegotiation.



Midway through the first century, a dispute had arisen in Antioch over adherence to Old Testament laws. The matter could not be settled there; outside help was needed. The leaders of the Antiochian Church, the community which had earlier dispatched Paul and Barnabas as missionaries, brought the matter to Jerusalem for consideration by the apostles and elders there. The matter was discussed, debated, and a written decision was forthcoming.

It was James, the brother of the Lord and the first bishop of Jerusalem, who put forth the solution to the problem. This settlement, agreed to by all concerned at what is known as the Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:1–35), set the pattern for the use of Church councils in the centuries ahead to settle doctrinal and moral issues that arose. Thus, throughout the history of the Church we find scores of such councils, and on various levels, to settle matters of dispute and to deal with those who do not adhere to the Apostolic faith.

The first three hundred years of Christian history were marked by the appearance of certain heresies or false teachings such as secret philosophic schemes for the elite (Gnosticism), dazzling prophetic aberrations (Montanism), and grave errors regarding the three Persons of the Trinity (Sabellianism).

Then, in the early fourth century, a heresy with potential for Church-wide disruption appeared, propagated by one Arius, a presbyter in Alexandria, Egypt. He denied the eternity of the Son of God, claiming contrary to the apostles' doctrine that the Son was a created being who came into existence at a point in time and thus was not truly God. This deadly error struck the Church like a cancer. Turmoil spread almost everywhere. The first Church-wide, or Ecumenical, Council met in Nicea in AD 325 to address this issue. Some 318 bishops, along with many priests, deacons and laymen rejected the new teaching of Arius and his associates, upholding the apostles' doctrine of Christ, affirming the eternity of the Son and His consubstantiality with the Father. Their proclamation of the Apostolic teaching concerning Christ included a creed, which, with the additions concerning the Holy Spirit made in 381 at the Council of Constantinople, forms the document we today call the Nicene Creed.

Between the years 325 and 787, seven such Church-wide conclaves were held, all dealing first and foremost with some specific challenge to the Apostolic teaching about Jesus Christ. These councils, meeting in the cities of Nicea, Ephesus, Chalcedon, and Constantinople, are known as the Seven Ecumenical Councils.

For the first thousand years of Christian history, the entire Church, save for the heretics, embraced and defended the New Testament Apostolic faith. There was no consequential division. And this one faith, preserved through all trials, attacks and tests, this Apostolic doctrine, was called "the Orthodox faith."

**2. Worship:** Doctrinal purity was tenaciously maintained. But true Christianity is far more than adherence to a set of correct beliefs alone. The life of the Church is centrally expressed in her worship, adoration of God the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It was Jesus Himself Who told the woman at the well, "the hour is coming, and now is, when the true worshippers will worship the Father in spirit and truth; for the Father is seeking such to worship Him" (Jn 4:23).

At the Last Supper, Jesus instituted the Eucharist, the communion service, when He took bread and wine, gave a blessing, and said to His disciples, "This is My body which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me" and "This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you" (Lk 22:19, 21). From the New Testament we know the Church participated in communion at least each Lord's Day (Acts 20:7, 11). From such first and second century sources as the *Didache*, the letters of St. Ignatius of Antioch, and St. Justin Martyr, we are assured the Eucharist is the very center of Christian worship from the Apostolic era on.

And just as the Law, the Psalms, and the Prophets were read in the Temple worship and the synagogue in Israel, so the Church also immediately gave high priority to the public reading of Scripture and to preaching in her worship, along with the Eucharistic meal.



Even before the middle of the first century, Christian worship was known by the term *liturgy* which literally means "the common work" or "the work of the people." The early liturgy of the Church's worship was composed of two essential parts, (1) the liturgy of the word, including hymns, Scripture reading, and preaching and (2) the liturgy of the faithful, composed of intercessory prayers, the kiss of peace, and the Eucharist. From virtually the beginning, Christian worship has had a definable shape or form which continues to this day.

Modern Christians advocating freedom from liturgy in worship are usually shocked to learn that spontaneity was never the practice in the ancient Church! A basic pattern or shape of Christian worship was observed from the start. And as the Church grew and matured, liturgy matured as well. Hymns, Scripture readings, and prayers were intertwined in the basic foundation. A clear, purposeful procession through the year, marking and joining in word, song, and praise the birth, ministry, death, resurrection, and ascension of the Lord Jesus Christ, and sanctifying crucial aspects of Christian life and experience, was forthcoming. The Christian life was lived in reality in the worship of the Church. Far from being routine, the worship of the historic Church participated in the unfolding drama of the richness and mystery of the Gospel itself!

Further, specific landmarks in our salvation and walk with Christ were celebrated and sanctified. Baptism and the anointing with oil, or chrismation, were there from the start. Marriage, healing, confession of sin, and ordination to the ministry of the Gospel are other early rites in the Church. On each of these occasions Christians understood, in a great mystery, grace and power from God were being given according to the individual need of each person. The Church saw these events as holy moments in her life and called them mysteries or sacraments.

3. **Government:** No one seriously questions whether the apostles of Christ led the Church at her beginning. They had been given the commission to preach the Gospel (Mt 28:19, 20) and the authority to forgive or retain sins (Jn 20:23). Theirs was by no means a preaching-only mission! They built the Church itself under Christ's headship. To govern it, three definite and permanent offices, as taught in the New Testament, were in evidence.

a. *The office of bishop.* The apostles themselves were the first bishops in the Church. Even before Pentecost, after Judas had turned traitor, Peter declared in applying Psalm 108:8, "Let his bishopric another take" (Acts 1:20). The word "bishopric" refers, of course, to the office of bishop and its use indicates the apostles themselves are bishops. Some have mistakenly argued the office of bishop was a later invention. Quite to the contrary, the apostles were themselves bishops, and they appointed bishops to succeed them to oversee the Church in each locality.

Occasionally, the objection is still heard that the office of bishop and presbyter were originally identical. The terms are used interchangeably in the New Testament while the apostles were present, the bishop being the presiding elder in a local church. But after the apostles' deaths, the offices of bishop and presbyter soon became distinct throughout the Church. Ignatius of Antioch, consecrated bishop by AD 70 in the Church from which Paul and Barnabas had been sent out, writes just after the turn of the century that bishops appointed by the apostles, surrounded by their presbyters, were everywhere in the Church.

b. *The office of presbyter.* Elders or presbyters are mentioned very early in the life of the Church in Acts and the Epistles. It is evident that in each place a Christian community developed, elders were appointed by the apostles to pastor the people.

As time passed, presbyters were referred to in the short form of the word as "prests," then as "priests," in full view of the fact that the Old Covenant priesthood had been fulfilled in Christ and that the Church is corporately a priesthood of believers. The priest was not understood as an intermediary between God and the people nor as a dispenser of grace. It was the role of the priest to be the presence of Christ in the Christian community. And in the very

capacity of being the presence of the Chief Shepherd, Jesus Christ, the priest was to safeguard the flock of God.

c. *The office of deacon.* The third order or office in the government of the New Testament Church was the deacon. At first the apostles fulfilled this office themselves. But with the rapid growth of the Church, seven initial deacons were selected (Acts 6:1-7) to help carry the responsibility of service to those in need. It was one of these deacons, Stephen, who became the first martyr of the Church.

Through the centuries, the deacons have not only served the material needs of the Church, but have held a key role in the liturgical life of the Church as well. Often called "the eyes and ears of the bishop," many deacons have become priests and ultimately entered the episcopal office.

The authority of the bishop, presbyter, and deacon was not anciently understood as being apart from the people, but always from among the people. In turn the people of God were called to submit to those who ruled over them (Heb 13:17), and they were also called to give their agreement to the direction of the leaders for the Church. On a number of occasions in history, that "Amen" was not forthcoming, and the bishops of the Church took note and changed course. Later in history, many Church leaders departed from the ancient model and usurped authority for themselves. In the minds of some this brought the ancient model into question. But the problem was not in the model but in the deviation from it.

It should also be mentioned that it was out of the ministry and life of the apostles that the people of God, the laity, were established in the Church. Far from being a herd of observers, the laity are vital in the effectiveness of the Church. They are the recipients and active users of the gifts and grace of the Spirit. Each of the laity has a role in the life and function of the Church. Each is to supply something to the whole (1Co 12:7). And it is the responsibility of the bishops, the priests, and the deacons to be sure that this is a reality for the laity.

The worship of the Church at the close of its first 1000 years had substantially the same shape from place to place. The doctrine was the same. The whole Church confessed one creed, the same in every place, and had weathered many attacks. The government of the Church was recognizably one everywhere. And this One Church was the Orthodox Church.

### ❧ DISAGREEMENTS BETWEEN WEST AND EAST ❧

Tensions began to mount as the first millennium was drawing to a close. While numerous doctrinal, political, economic, and cultural factors were working to separate the Church in an East-West division, two giant divisive issues ultimately emerged above others: (1) that one man, the Pope of Rome, considered himself the universal bishop of the Church and (2) the addition of a novel clause to the Church's creed.

1. *The Papacy:* Among the Twelve, Saint Peter was early acknowledged as the leader. He was spokesman for the Twelve before and after Pentecost. He was the first bishop of Antioch and later bishop of Rome. No one challenged his role.

After the death of the apostles, as leadership in the Church developed, the bishop of Rome came to be recognized as first in honor, even though all bishops were equals. But after nearly 300 years, the bishop of Rome slowly began to assume to himself a role of superiority over the others, ultimately claiming to be the only true successor to Peter. The vast majority of the other bishops of the Church never questioned Rome's primacy of honor, but they patently rejected the Roman bishop's claim as the universal head of the Church on earth. This assumption of papal power became one major factor in rending the Roman Church, and all those it could gather with it, from the historic Orthodox Church.

2. *The Addition to the Creed:* A disagreement concerning the Holy Spirit also began to develop in the Church. Does the Holy Spirit proceed from the Father? Or, does He proceed from the Father and the Son?

Our Lord Jesus Christ teaches, "But when the Helper comes, Whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth Who *proceeds from the Father*, he will testify of Me" (Jn 15:26). This is the basic statement in all the New Testament about the Holy Spirit "proceeding," and it is clear: He "proceeds from the Father."

Thus, when the ancient council at Constantinople in AD 381 reaffirmed the Creed of Nicea (AD 325), it expanded that Creed to proclaim these familiar words: "And in the Holy Spirit, the Lord and Life-Giver, Who proceeds from the Father, Who is worshipped and glorified together with the Father and the Son. . . ."

But two hundred years later, at a local council in Toledo, Spain (AD 589), King Reccared declared, "the Holy Spirit also should be confessed by us and taught to proceed from the Father and the Son." The King may have meant well, but he was contradicting Jesus' teaching, confessed by the entire Church, concerning the Holy Spirit. Unfortunately, that local Spanish council agreed with his error.

Because of the teaching of the Holy Scriptures, believed by the Church at Nicea and at Constantinople and for centuries beyond, there is no reason to believe anything other than that the Holy Spirit proceeds from the Father.

But centuries later, in what was at least partially a politically motivated move, the Pope of Rome unilaterally changed the universal creed of the Church without an ecumenical council. Though this change was initially rejected in both East and West, even by some of Rome's closest neighboring bishops, the Pope managed to eventually get the West to capitulate. The consequence, of course, in the Western Church has been the tendency to relegate the Holy Spirit to a lesser place than God the Father and God the Son. The change may appear small, but the consequences have proven disastrously immense. This issue, with the Pope departing from the Orthodox doctrine of the Church, became another instrumental cause separating the Roman Church from the historic Orthodox Church, the New Testament Church.

### ❧ THE GREAT SCHISM ❧

Conflict between the Roman Pope and the East mounted—especially in the Pope's dealings with the bishop, or patriarch, of Constantinople. The Pope even went so far as to claim the authority to decide who should be the bishop of Constantinople, in marked violation of historical precedent. No longer operating within the government of the New Testament Church, the Pope appeared to be seeking by political means to bring the whole Church under his domination.

Bizarre intrigues followed, one upon the other, as a series of Roman popes pursued this unswerving goal of attempting to control all Christendom. Perhaps the most incredible incident of these political, religious, and even military schemes occurred in the year 1054. A Cardinal, sent by the Pope, slapped a document on the altar of the Church of Holy Wisdom in Constantinople during the Sunday worship, excommunicating the Patriarch of Constantinople from the Church!

The Pope, of course, had no legitimate right to do this. But the repercussions were staggering. Some dismal chapters of Church history were written during the next decades. The ultimate consequence of the Pope's action was that the whole Roman Catholic Church ended up dividing itself from the New Testament faith of Orthodox Christianity. The schism has never been healed.

As the centuries passed conflict continued. Attempts at union failed and the Roman Church drifted farther and farther from its historic roots. There are inevitable consequences in deviating from the Church. The breaking away of Rome from the historic Orthodox Church would prove no exception.

### ❧ FURTHER DIVISIONS IN THE WEST ❧

During the centuries after AD 1054, the growing distinction between East and West was becoming indelibly marked in history. The East maintained the full stream of New Testament

faith, worship, and practice—all the while enduring great persecution. The Western or Roman Church, crippled because of its schism from the Orthodox Church, bogged down in many complex problems. Then, less than five centuries after Rome committed itself to its unilateral alteration of doctrine and practice, another upheaval was festering—this time not next door to the East, but inside the Western gates themselves.

Though many in the West had spoken out against Roman domination and practice in earlier years, now a little-known German monk named Martin Luther inadvertently launched an attack against certain Roman Catholic practices which ended up affecting world history. His famous Ninety-Five Theses were nailed to the Church door at Wittenburg in 1517. In a short time those theses were signalling the start of what came to be called in the West the Protestant Reformation. Luther sought an audience with the Pope but was denied, and in 1521 he was excommunicated from the Roman Church. He had intended no break with Rome. Its papal system of government, heavy with authority, refused conciliation. The door to future unity in the West slammed shut with a resounding crash.

The protests of Luther were not unnoticed. The reforms he sought in Germany were soon accompanied by demands of Ulrich Zwingli in Zurich, John Calvin in Geneva, and hundreds of others all over Western Europe. Fueled by complex political, social, and economic factors, in addition to religious problems, the Reformation spread like a raging fire into virtually every nook and cranny of the Roman Church. The ecclesiastical monopoly to which it had grown accustomed was greatly diminished, and massive division replaced its artificial unity. The ripple effect of that division impacts even our own day as the Protestant movement itself continues to split and shatter.

If trouble on the continent were not trouble enough, the Church of England was in the process of going its own way as well. Henry VIII, amidst his marital problems, replaced the Pope of Rome with himself as head of the Church of England. For only a few short years would the Pope ever again have ascendancy in England. And the English Church itself would soon experience great division.

As decade followed decade in the West, the many branches of Protestantism took various forms. There were even divisions that insisted they were neither Protestant nor Roman Catholic. All seemed to share a mutual dislike for the Bishop of Rome and the practice of his Church, and most wanted far less centralized forms of leadership. While some, such as the Lutherans and Anglicans, held on to certain forms of liturgy and sacrament, others, such as the Reformed Churches and the even more radical Anabaptists and their descendants, questioned and rejected many biblical ideas of hierarchy, sacrament, historic tradition, and other elements of Christian practice, no matter when and where they appeared in history, thinking they were freeing themselves of Roman Catholicism. To this day, many sincere, modern, professing Christians will reject even the biblical data which speaks of historic Christian practice, simply because they think such historic practices are “Roman Catholic.” To use the old adage, they threw the baby out with the bathwater without even being aware of it.

Thus, while retaining, in varying degrees, portions of foundational Christianity, neither Protestantism nor Catholicism can lay historic claim to being the true New Testament Church. In dividing from the Orthodox Christianity, Rome forfeited its place in the Church of the New Testament. In the divisions of the Reformation, the Protestants—as well-meaning as they might have been—failed to return to the New Testament Church.

### THE ORTHODOX CHURCH TODAY

But that original Church, the Church of Peter and Paul and the apostles—despite persecution, political oppression, and desertion on certain of its flanks—miraculously carries on today the same faith and life of the Church of the New Testament. Admittedly, the style of Orthodoxy looks complicated to the modern Protestant eye, and understandably so. But given an historical understanding of how the Church has progressed, it may be seen that the simple



Christ-centered faith of the apostles is fully preserved in its doctrines, practices, services, and even in its architecture.

In Orthodoxy today, as in years gone by, the basics of Christian doctrine, worship, and government are never up for alteration. One cannot be an Orthodox priest, for example, and reject the divinity of Christ, His virgin birth, resurrection, ascension into heaven, and second coming. The Church simply has not left its course in nearly 2000 years. It is One, Holy, Catholic, and Apostolic. It is the New Testament Church. The gates of hell have not prevailed against it.

But Orthodoxy is also, in the words of one of her bishops, "the best kept secret in America." Though there are more than 225 million Orthodox Christians in the world today, many in the West are not familiar with the Church. In North America, for example, the Orthodox Church has, until recently, been largely restricted to ethnic boundaries, not spreading much beyond the parishes of the committed immigrants that brought the Church to the shores of this continent.

Still, the Holy Spirit has continued His work, causing new people to discover this Church of the New Testament. People have begun to find Orthodox Christianity both through the writings of the early Church Fathers, and through the humble witness of contemporary Orthodox Christians. Significant numbers of evangelicals, Episcopalians and mainline Protestants are becoming Orthodox. And Orthodox student groups are springing up on campuses worldwide. The word is getting out.

What, then, is the Orthodox Church? It is the first Christian Church in history, the Church founded by the Lord Jesus Christ, described in the pages of the New Testament. Her history can be traced in unbroken continuity all the way back to Christ and His Twelve apostles.

And what is it that's missing in the non-Orthodox Churches—even the best of them? Fullness. For the fullness of the New Testament faith is to be found only in the New Testament Church. Being in the Church does not guarantee all those in it will take advantage of the fullness of the faith. But the fullness of the faith is there for those who do.

For persons who seriously desire the fullness of Orthodox Christianity, action must be taken. There must be a return to this Church of the New Testament. Being aware of this ancient Church is not enough. In our time people have had ample opportunity to investigate and decide about the Roman Catholic faith, the Baptist, the Lutheran, and so on. But relatively few have taken a serious look at the Orthodox Church. Three specific suggestions will provide those interested with a tangible means of becoming acquainted with Orthodox Christianity on a personal basis.

1. **Visit:** Look up "Orthodox" or "Eastern Orthodox" in the "Church" section of your Yellow Pages. Ask the whereabouts of the nearest Orthodox parish. Pay a visit—several visits. Meet the priest, and ask him to help you study and learn. And be prepared to exercise patience—sometimes a portion of the Liturgy is not in English! But the Service Book in the pew will help.
2. **Read:** There are a number of books and periodicals immensely helpful to people seeking to learn about the Orthodox Church. *The Orthodox Church* by Kallistos Ware (Penguin); *For the Life of the World* by Alexander Schmemmann (St. Vladimir Seminary Press); *The Apostolic Fathers* edited by Jack N. Sparks (Light and Life Publishers), and *Becoming Orthodox* by Peter E. Gillquist, *Divine Energy* by Jon E. Braun, and *AGAIN Magazine* (all by Conciliar Press).
3. **Write:** The people at Conciliar Press (P.O. Box 76, Ben Lomond, CA 95005-0076) have volunteered to answer questions regarding the Orthodox Church from *Orthodox Study Bible* readers, and to suggest further reading. Send your name and address, with a request for information.

In a day when Christians are realizing anew the centrality and importance of worship, of the Church as the body of Christ, and the need to preserve true Christian faith, the doors of

Orthodoxy are open wide. The invitation is extended to “come and see.” Examine her faith, her worship, her history, her commitment to Christ, her love for God the Father, her communion with the Holy Spirit. ,

For two thousand years the Orthodox Church has by God’s mercy kept the faith delivered once for all to the saints. Within her walls is the fullness of the salvation which was realized when “God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish, but have everlasting life” (Jn 3:16).




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## ✠✠✠ CREATION ✠✠✠

 "We believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of Heaven and Earth, and of all things visible and invisible." These opening words of the Nicene Creed, the central doctrinal statement of Christianity, affirm that the One True God is the source of everything that exists—both physical and spiritual, both animate and inanimate. The Holy Scriptures begin with a similarly striking assertion: "In the beginning God made heaven and earth." St. Basil the Great declares:

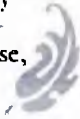
In the fear that human reasonings may make you wander from the truth, Moses has anticipated inquiry by engraving in our hearts, as a seal and a safeguard, the awesome name of God: 'In the beginning God created.' It is He—beneficent Nature, Goodness without measure, a worthy object of love for all beings endowed with reason, the beauty the most to be desired, the origin of all that exists . . .—it is He who 'in the beginning created heaven and earth.'

The ever-existent Almighty God was not forced to create the universe. Rather, in His goodness and lovingkindness, He freely chose to do so. And the fact that the Lord created the universe *out of nothing* stands in clear contrast to the creation myths of the surrounding cultures in the ancient world.

The central role of Jesus Christ, the Word of the Father, in the creation of all things is plainly stated in the first chapter of the apostle John's gospel, where it is written, "In the beginning was the Word, . . . All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made." And the specific role of the Holy Spirit, the Third Person of the Undivided Trinity, in the creation of the world is seen in Genesis 1:2 (see also Ps 103:30; 32:6).

Regarding questions about the scientific accuracy of the Genesis account of creation, and about various viewpoints concerning evolution, the Orthodox Church has not dogmatized any particular view. What is dogmatically proclaimed is that the One Triune God created everything that exists, and that man was created in a unique way and is alone made *in the image and likeness of God* (Gn 1:26, 27). The Church Fathers also consistently affirm that each species of the animate creation came into existence instantaneously, at the command of God, with its seed within itself.

The development of life was not by accident. Rather, Supreme Intelligence and Impenetrable Wisdom were at work in the creation and sustenance of all that exists. In discussing various scientific theories of his day, St. Basil the Great declared, "If there is anything in this [or any other] system which seems probable to you, keep your admiration for the source of such perfect order—the wisdom of God." He also wrote, "We must still remain faithful to the principle of true religion and recognize that all that exists is sustained by the Creator's power."

The repeated affirmation "and God saw that it was good" in Genesis 1 underscores the intrinsic, fundamental *goodness* of matter and the whole created order, even after the Fall. This understanding is the basis for a sacramental world-view—that the created order not only is good, but also can be a means for communion with God, by virtue of being created by the All-Good God. Moreover, the astounding beauty, intricate order, and sublime harmony of all aspects of Creation, as well as the tremendously vast expanse of the universe, are intended to draw mankind to an awareness of and appreciation for the Creator, and to the worship of Him—and Him alone (see Ps 18:1-4; Rom 1:20). 

# THE HOLY TRINITY

The Holy Trinity is revealed both in the Old Testament and in the New Testament. In the Old Testament, the Trinity is revealed in subtle ways; in the New Testament, the Trinity is revealed fully and plainly, beginning at the Baptism of our Lord.

The Holy Trinity is one God in three Persons, Father, Son and Holy Spirit. These Persons are distinct, but not separate, and are not three gods. They are One God because They are one in essence or nature. The Father is the unbegotten Fountainhead of Deity. The Son is eternally begotten of the Father (Jn 1:18; 3:16; 16:28). The Holy Spirit is the Helper (Jn 14:16) and Spirit of Truth (Jn 14:17; 16:13), Who proceeds from the Father (Jn 15:26).

## THE HOLY TRINITY CREATED THE WORLD

Genesis 1:1—God the Father created the heavens and the earth. The Creed says: "I believe in one God, the Father Almighty, Maker of heaven and earth."

Genesis 1:2—The Spirit of God is the Holy Spirit. He hovered over creation in creative power and equality with the Father. He co-created with the Father.

Genesis 1:3—As the Word of God, the Son made the light (Jn 1:1-3). With creative power and equality with the Father, He also co-created with the Father and the Spirit.

Genesis 1:26—The pronouns "Us" and "Our" reveal a plurality of divine Persons. These Persons are the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit operating in complete unity out of the one divine Nature.

## THE HOLY TRINITY SAVES THE WORLD

Isaiah 63:16—The Father is our Redeemer. He not only created the world but redeems it as well.

Psalms 2:7, 8—The Father's decree reveals the Son as inheriting the world. This inheritance is the people saved by the Son.

Isaiah 6:1-3—The words "Holy, Holy, Holy" declare the three Persons who save us. The name "Lord" declares the one essence of the Three.

Isaiah 44:3—The Father pours out His Spirit on people like water on dry ground. The Holy Spirit quenches the thirst of the person who thirsts for salvation.

Isaiah 48:16, 17—The Son declares that the Father and the Spirit sent Him to redeem the world. Although the Son alone became a Man, all three Persons save mankind.

## THE NEW TESTAMENT AFFIRMS THE HOLY TRINITY

### IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

John 1:1-3—The Word is the Son of God, who was present with the Father at the beginning of creation. He was Co-worker with the Father in creating the world.

John 8:58—Jesus identifies Himself as having existed before Abraham. Before His coming in the flesh as Man, Jesus existed as the eternal Son of the Father, for He is begotten from the Father before all time and ages. He appeared to Moses in the burning bush and proclaimed Himself as "I Am" (Ex 3).

Acts 2:17—The Holy Spirit's descent at Pentecost affirms His presence in the Old Testament (Joel 2:28-32).


Hebrews 1:8-10—This Scripture affirms the Father is speaking to the Son in Psalms 44:7 and 101:26-28, in which the Father acknowledges the Son as God and Creator of the world. For the Son was the Father's Co-worker in creation.

## THE INCARNATE SON FULLY REVEALS THE HOLY TRINITY

Luke 1:35—At the Annunciation, the Holy Spirit, the "power" of God the Father ("the Highest"), overshadowed the Virgin Mary, and she gave birth to the Son of God in His flesh.

Matthew 3:16-17—When the Son of God was baptized in the Jordan by John, the Father's voice was heard from heaven, and the Holy Spirit descended on Him like a dove. As the main hymn for the Feast of Theophany says, "When You, O Lord, were baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest."

## ANCESTRAL SIN



1 In the Old Testament account of creation, God created mankind and established a place for him called Paradise. He also gave him a commandment regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil: “And the Lord God commanded Adam, saying, ‘You may eat food from every tree in the garden; but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you may not eat; for in whatever day you eat from it, you shall die by death’” (Gn 2:16, 17). In that Adam and Eve did not physically die the day they ate from the tree, the words “you shall die” indicate a spiritual death through separation from God.

Ancestral sin is the disobedience of Adam to God’s command regarding the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Adam willingly disobeyed this commandment and diverted himself, or fell, from God’s path to perfection, thus separating himself from His Creator, the Source of life.

### WHAT ARE THE CONSEQUENCES OF THE FALL?

1 This Fall of Adam caused mankind to become subject to mortality. While this is often seen mainly as a punishment, or penalty, the emphasis concerning God’s judgments on Adam and Eve at the Fall is best understood in terms of His mercy. So, for example, concerning man’s mortality (Gn 3:19), St. Gregory the Theologian states, “Yet here too He provides a benefit—namely death, which cuts off sin, so that evil may not be everlasting. Thus His punishment is changed into a mercy.”

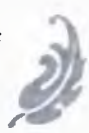
2 We who are of Adam’s race are not guilty because of Adam’s sin, but because of our own sin. However, because all of mankind fell away from the grace of God through Adam’s disobedience, man now has a propensity, a disposition, an inclination towards sin, because just as death entered the world through sin, now sin enters through fear of death.

3 Mankind’s strong propensity to commit sin reveals that in the Fall, the image of God in man (Gn 1:26, 27) is also fallen. However, the ancient Fathers emphasize that the divine image in man has not been totally corrupted or obliterated. Human nature remains inherently good after the Fall; mankind is not totally depraved. People are still capable of doing good, although bondage to death and the influences of the devil can dull their perception of what is good and lead them into all kinds of evil.

4 Adam’s Fall not only brought mortality and sin into the world, but also sweat, toil, hunger, thirst, weariness, sorrow, pain, suffering, sickness, tribulations, tragedy and tears.


5 Even after the Fall, the intellectual, desiring and incensive (forceful or driving) aspects of the soul are natural and therefore neutral. They can be used in a good way, or in a bad, harmful way. For instance, desire is very good when one directs it towards God. But when desire is out of control, one may use it in very inappropriate ways, such as becoming gluttonous or desiring another person’s spouse. The classic analogy is that these powers of the soul are like iron, which can be made into a plow to help grow food, or into a sword to be used to kill someone.

Christ, by His Death and Resurrection, conquered the devil and death, freeing mankind from the fear of death (Heb 2:14–15) and making possible a more complete communion between God and man than was ever possible before. This communion allows people to become “partakers of the divine nature” (2Pt 1:4), to transcend death and, ultimately, all the consequences of the Fall.





## CHRIST OUR PASSOVER

 Passover, the central rite and symbol of Judaism, is based on the experience of the liberation of the Hebrew people from bondage in Egypt (Ex 12:1–15:21). It is called Passover both because the Lord passed over the homes of the Hebrews, sparing them from the death that came to the first-born in Egypt, and because the Hebrews passed over the Red Sea as if it were dry land. Passover celebrates God's steadfast love and devotion to His people and their freedom in Him.

Throughout the rest of the Old Testament, Passover preeminently signifies God's rescue and forging together of His chosen people, Israel. The Lord repeatedly brings this event to mind as He encourages and exhorts His people to return to their covenantal responsibilities (Jdg 6:7–10; 1Kg 10:17–19; Ps 80:10, 11; Jer 11:1–8; Mic 6:1–8).

Through His saving work, Christ becomes our Passover (*pascha* in Greek). Through Him we experience liberation from sin, death, and the devil. St. Paul exclaims, "Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast" (1Co 5:7, 8). He is the Paschal Lamb (Is 53:7; Jn 1:29; Rev 5:6–14) who gave Himself up in sacrifice "once for all" (Heb 10:10–14) to reconcile us with God. At every Pascha—"Easter"—the Church sings:

Today a sacred Pascha is revealed to us, a new and holy Pascha, a mystical Pascha, a Pascha worthy of veneration, a Pascha which is Christ the Redeemer.

In many typological details, the Passover of the Jews clearly points towards Christ as our Passover.

1 The Passover lamb, whose blood was smeared by the Hebrews on their doorposts in the sign of the Cross, was a male without blemish; Jesus was a male without blemish who died on the Cross.

2 The blood of the Passover lamb saved the first-born of the Hebrews from death; the blood of Christ saves all those believing in Him from eternal death (Rom 5:8–10; 1Pt 1:17–19).


3 The Passover lamb had none of its bones broken (Ex 12:10, 46); Jesus also had no bones broken as He was sacrificed (Jn 19:31–36).

4 The Hebrews escaped from the burden of slavery in Egypt by passing through the Red Sea; Christians pass "from Egypt, from the burden of sin," being "set free and saved" through the waters of Holy Baptism (GrgNy). For in the waters of Baptism, we are "baptized into His death," "crucified with Him," and raised up "in the likeness of His resurrection" to "walk in newness of life" (Rom 6:3–11).

St. John Chrysostom marvels at the power of Christ's blood:

If the type of it had such great power . . . in the midst of Egypt, when smeared on the doorposts, much more the reality. . . if death so shuddered at the shadow, tell me how would it not have dreaded the very reality? This blood is the salvation of our souls; by it the soul is washed, and made beautiful and . . . more gleaming than gold (see Rev 7:13, 14).

Sustained and strengthened by the blood of Christ our Passover, we resume daily our journey to the eternal promised land, the promised kingdom to come.



# THE GRACE OF CHRIST AND THE LAW OF MOSES



The Apostle John wrote, "The law was given through Moses, but grace and truth came through Jesus Christ" (Jn 1:17). The grace of Christ and the Law of Moses are complementary, not contradictory. The following helps explain both.

## FRIENDSHIP BETWEEN CHRIST AND MOSES

Christ and Moses were friends and conversed as friends. The pre-incarnate Christ gave Moses the Law; in turn, Moses gave it to Israel (Ex 20:1-26). As the Lawgiver, Christ, not Moses, was the Author of the Law. Moses was His servant.

In the New Testament, Moses and Elijah appeared with Christ on the Mount of Transfiguration, and they conversed with Him as friend with friend (Mt 17:1-8). The presence of Moses shows Christ as the fulfillment of the Law. The presence of Elijah shows Christ as the fulfillment of the Prophets.

## CONTRAST BETWEEN CHRIST AND MOSES

Christ is incomparably greater than Moses, for Christ, the Son of God, who brought all creation into existence from nonexistence, is building His Church. When Christ gave Moses and Israel the Law, He spoke as the Lord their God. Moses, however, spoke to Israel in the name of the Lord their God, not in his own name (Ex 20:22). When the Son of God became incarnate, He continued to speak to Israel, but now directly and not through a prophet. Although during His three-year ministry in Israel, He did works and spoke words in His almighty power, Israel refused to believe Him, their own Lord God. But to those Jews who did believe, He gave authority to become His children (Jn 1:11, 12).

Christ also gave authority to believing Gentiles to become His children. In the Old Testament, He made it clear through Moses and His prophets the Gentiles would be included in promises to Israel (for example, Gn 12:1-3; Is 49:5, 6). Both would be in His Church. Race is not the issue, but rather faith in Christ. His Church is one, composed of every nation, tongue and tribe (Rev 5:9).

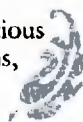
## HARMONY BETWEEN LAW AND GRACE

Christ is the Lawgiver in both Old and New Testaments. Therefore, there is no opposition or contradiction between the old and new laws. In His Incarnation, the Lawgiver Himself fulfilled the old Law, making it obsolete (Heb 8:13).

Christ gave His written Law through Moses to make sin known (Rom 3:20; 7:7). Man's God-given natural law, written in the conscience, was dulled through disobedience in the years between Adam and Moses. The Mosaic Law helped renew this knowledge of sin to lead man to repentance. After His Ascension, Christ sent the Holy Spirit at Pentecost to convict the world of sin (Jn 16:8), to renew the natural law in man's conscience (Heb 8:10), to lead us into all truth (Jn 16:13), and to make it possible for us to become partakers of the divine nature (2Pt 1:4).


## GRACE FROM THE LAWGIVER

Christ is the Incarnate Lawgiver who offers us remission of sins through His precious blood. The old Law could never remit sins (Heb 10:1-4). Christ not only forgives sins, but also heals the damage done through sinning. This is the unspeakable grace of the Lawgiver.





## IMAGES AND IMAGERY



Many people have been taught that the second of the Ten Commandments prohibits icons. However, if correct, all artistic representations of anything would be forbidden. The Lord Himself in the same book of Exodus commanded Moses to make two gold cherubim (angels) “of hammered work,” and to place them at each end of the mercy seat on the ark of the covenant (Ex 25:17–21). The Lord also stipulated that the ten curtains of the tabernacle be woven with images of cherubim on them (Ex 26:1), and likewise the veil (Ex 26:31).

When King Solomon built the temple, the huge basin, or “sea,” was set upon twelve statues of oxen (3Kg 7:13, 30). And upon the ten bases of the sea were cast or engraved “lions, oxen, and cherubim” (3Kg 7:16), as well as palm trees (3Kg 7:22). The Lord bestowed His blessing upon all these artistic representations first by filling the new temple with His Glory (3Kg 8:10, 11), and then by declaring to Solomon, “I have consecrated this house which you have built to put My name there forever, and My eyes and My heart will be there perpetually” (3Kg 9:3).

Perhaps a most striking example of an image made at God’s command in the Old Testament is the bronze serpent that God ordered Moses to make and put on a pole in order to protect the Hebrews bitten by the deadly serpents (Nm 21:4–9; see Jn 3:14, 15). Hundreds of years later, when the Israelites were offering incense to this same bronze serpent in a kind of idol-worship, King Hezekiah, who “did what was right in the sight of the Lord,” had the serpent smashed into pieces (4Kg 18:3, 4).


So it is not the image itself which is faulty or prohibited, but rather its improper use. The prohibition in Exodus 20:4 is not against all artistic representations. Rather, it is against images, whether in human form or not, which would be worshipped as gods and goddesses—“gods of silver, and gods of gold” (Ex 20:23). For the Lord knew that such images would tempt the Hebrews to depart from worshipping Him, the One true God (Ex 20:3–5).

Certainly, before the invisible and limitless Lord God of Israel became incarnate, it was impossible to make an image of Him. However, after God the Son assumed a visible and tangible human body, it was natural and beneficial for the Church to create artistic representations of Him—and of His holy Mother, and of the saints and angels—from the earliest times. According to tradition, St. Luke the Evangelist made at least three icons of Christ and His Mother.

Every image, or *icon*, of Christ has significant theological content. For it proclaims anew the Incarnation of God, who “became flesh” for our salvation (Jn 1:14). Recognized icons of our Savior, prayerfully made, provide us with inspired, trustworthy representations of Him.

The Seventh Ecumenical Council, held in Nicæa in AD 787, condemned the heresy of iconoclasm (the rejection, and even destruction, of icons). These Holy Fathers articulated the critical distinction between the *worship* reserved for God alone, and the *veneration/honor/reverence* given to the icons. In addition, this Council declared that “the honor given to the image passes on to that which the image represents.”

Through icons, Orthodox Christians are drawn closer to Christ. A hymn sung the first Sunday of Great Lent, which commemorates the restoration of icons in AD 843, declares: “the icons that depict Thy flesh lead us to the desire and love of Thee.”



# THE PRIESTHOOD, HEBREW AND CHRISTIAN

## OLD TESTAMENT PRIESTS

The Hebrew word for "priest" is *kohen*. He is the Levite who stood as intercessor for the people before God. Old Testament priests offered up gifts and sacrifices to the Lord on behalf of the people, that they might be reconciled to Him.

The Lord directed Moses to construct the tabernacle (Ex 25:1—27:21). Then He established a permanent, hereditary priesthood, beginning with Moses' brother Aaron and continuing through Aaron's sons (Ex 28:1). The priests were sanctified, or consecrated, with holy oil (Ex 30:22–30). Their holy garments of finely woven and richly decorated material were for the honor and glory of God (Ex 28:2–39).

After Aaron's death, "the Lord separated the tribe of Levi [Aaron's tribe] to bear the ark of the covenant of the Lord, to stand before the Lord, to minister to Him, and to bless in His name" (Dt 10:8). Besides the various sacrifices, the priests blessed the people (Nm 6:23–25), maintained the tabernacle (later, the temple) and its grounds (Nm 18:1–7), received tithes and offerings (Nm 18:8–32), supervised purification procedures (Lv 13:1–14:57), acted as judges (Dt 17:8–13) and taught the Law (Dt 33:8–11). Only male Levites administered the liturgical rites.

## NEW TESTAMENT PRIESTS

From the Christian perspective, the authority of the levitical priesthood ended when Christ willingly offered Himself up to the Father as a perfect sacrifice on the cross, typified by the curtain being torn asunder in the temple (Mt 27:51).

Orthodox Christians believe the priesthood of the Church is Christ's priesthood, with the Eucharist as the first-fruit offering. Concerning the Eucharist, St. John Chrysostom notes, "It is not men who sanctify this offering. It is the Same One who sanctified the first one [the Last Supper] who also sanctifies this one . . . Christ even now is present, and even now acts." In the Divine Liturgy, the celebrant prays, "Thou Thyself art the One who offers and is offered, who accepts and is distributed." The Church retains the male priesthood because the Man Christ Jesus, the Son of God, officiates at every Eucharistic service in and through His bishops, priests and deacons. The clergy do not serve in the place of Christ; rather, Christ Himself serves in them.

St. John Chrysostom marvels at how the "fearful and awe-inspiring symbols" of the levitical priesthood are now "outshone by a splendor greater still" (see 2Co 3:10), namely the new covenant priesthood. He writes:

When you see the Lord sacrificed and lying before you, and the priest standing over the sacrifice and praying, and all who partake being instilled with that precious blood, can you think that you are still among men and still standing on earth? Are you not at once transported to heaven? . . . He who sits above with the Father is at that moment held in our hands, and gives Himself to those who wish to clasp and embrace Him . . . how great is the honor which the grace of the Spirit has bestowed on priests.

While the ordained priesthood serves on behalf of all, every believer—baptized and anointed—is a member of God's royal priesthood. This priestly calling of all believers is foretold in Exodus 19:6: "You shall be to Me a royal priesthood and a holy nation" (see also Is 61:6), and finds its fulfillment in the Church, the new Israel: "You are . . . a royal priesthood, a holy nation" (1Pt 2:9; see also 2:5; Rev 1:5, 6). Thus, all Christians are called to offer all of creation back to God, with praise and thanksgiving. And in this work, man and creation become evermore reconciled with God.

## THE TABERNACLE

On Mt. Sinai Moses received not only the Ten Commandments, but also precise and detailed instructions for building the tabernacle—a moveable tent—where God met the assembly of the people Israel (Ex 25:1—27:21). Consequently, the tabernacle is built according to the divine blueprints (Ex 35:4—40:33). Here God's Presence, His Glory, will be made manifest through the shining cloud filling the holy place (Ex 40:34—38).

The importance of God's Presence in the tabernacle is apparent in the prayers of the Psalms, which express a longing to be with God, a fervent desire to be in His tabernacle (Pss 26:4—6; 60:4; 64:4; 83:1—4, 10; see also 22:6; 25:8). Indeed, the Lord promises that at the tabernacle, "I shall be known to you to speak to you. There I shall give directions to the children of Israel, and I shall be sanctified in My glory" (Ex 29:42—43; see also Ezk 37:26—28). While the tabernacle is the specific place where God was encountered in Israel, this did not exhaust His Presence, for as Almighty God, He has always been everywhere present, filling all things.

Israel's most sacred objects were kept in the ark of the covenant, located in the holy of holies (Heb 9:2—5). Each object it held was prophetic of Christ: the tablets of the Law inscribed by God (Ex 25:15) prefigure Christ the Lawgiver; the manna (Ex 16:31—34) points to Christ as the Bread of Life (Jn 6:30—58); and Aaron's staff that budded (Nm 17:16—26) prefigures the life-giving Cross of Christ. Further, the veil separating the holy place from the holy of holies foreshadows the Incarnation (Heb 10:19, 20).


The tabernacle as a whole prefigures Christ, the eternal Word of God, who "became flesh and tabernacled (the usual English translation is 'dwelt') among us" (Jn 1:14; see also Col 2:9). St. Gregory of Nyssa observes, "Moses was earlier instructed by a type in the mystery of the tabernacle, which encompasses the universe. This tabernacle would be Christ, who is the power and the wisdom of God (1Co 1:24)." The tabernacle also prefigures Mary the Theotokos, whose womb will be the tabernacle in which the Lord will dwell as He takes His flesh from her.

On the cross, Jesus offers the ultimate sacrifice of His body, which the New Testament calls "the greater and more perfect tabernacle not made with hands" (Heb 9:11). St. John Chrysostom comments that by this greater tabernacle St. Paul "means the flesh [of Christ]. And well did he say, 'greater and more perfect,' since God the Word and all the power of the Spirit dwell therein."

In time, the moveable tabernacle of the wilderness is superseded by the permanent temple in Jerusalem. The temple, in turn, is superseded by Christ (Jn 2:18—21) and the Church, which is His Body (Eph 1:22, 23). Moreover, in Baptism every Christian becomes a tabernacle, a dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. As St. Paul exclaims, "Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit?" (1Co 6:19). St. Isaac of Nineveh declares, "Lord, I give praise to Your holy nature, for You have made my nature a sanctuary for Your hiddenness, a tabernacle for Your Mysteries, a place where You can dwell, and a holy temple for Your divinity."

In his vision of the kingdom of heaven, St. John writes, "But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple" (Rev 21:22). All earthly types vanish as the redeemed behold God and the Lamb in unmediated glory (2Pt 1:4). The ultimate promise of the tabernacle, the temple and the Church is for God Himself to dwell in each believer forever (Jn 14:16, 17, 23; 17:20—23; see also Rev 3:20).

## ✠ SACRIFICE ✠

 In the Book of Leviticus and detailed further in Deuteronomy 12–26, the Lord commands Moses to institute a comprehensive system of ritual sacrifices to be offered by the priests on behalf of the people of God, thus giving the Hebrews a means to be reconciled with God and to restore harmony amongst themselves, relationships disrupted by sin.

The word “sacrifice” means to make holy or sacred. These sacrifices and offerings—offered first at the tabernacle and later in the temple—were basically of two types: animal (cattle, sheep, goats, doves) and vegetable (wheat, barley, olive oil, wine, cereal, frankincense). The offerings were types prefiguring a greater reality to be fulfilled in the coming Incarnation of Christ.

### ✠ THE OLD COVENANT ✠


In the Old Testament animal sacrifices, the blood shed and poured out represented the life-force of the animal offered to God (Gn 9:4; Lv 17:11; Dt 12:23). The animal was more than simply a substitute for the worshiper. There was also identification between the animal sacrificed and the one on whose behalf it was offered, explaining the emphasis in the Old Testament on the blood of the sacrifice (Ex 12:13; 24:4–8; 29:15–21; 30:1–10; Lv 14:24, 25; Nm 19:1–4). These sacrifices point to the blood of Christ in the New Testament: “My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt 26:28; see also Acts 20:28; Rom 5:8–10; Col 1:19, 20; Heb 9:11–14; 1Pt 1:17–19; 1Jn 1:7; Rev 1:4–6; 7:13–15).

On the Day of Atonement, the preeminent Old Testament sacrifice was made. It was to atone for all the sins the nation of Israel had committed that year (Lv 16:2–34). The ceremony included (1) animal sacrifices as offerings for sins, and (2) the placing of “all the transgressions of the children of Israel . . . on the head of the living kid”—the scapegoat—which was then driven off into the wilderness (Lv 16:21). This event prefigures the once-for-all self-sacrifice of Christ, our great High Priest (Heb 4:14–5:10; 10:19–22), who takes upon Himself all the sins of all humanity (Is 53:11, 12; Jn 1:29; 2Co 5:21; 1Pt 2:24), tramples down death by His voluntary Death on the cross, and thereby reconciles us to God (Is 53:5; Gal 3:13, 14; Col 1:13, 14; Tts 2:13, 14; 1Pt 3:18).


### ✠ THE NEW COVENANT ✠

Christ’s once-for-all offering of Himself is for all people for all time, and supersedes the Mosaic sacrificial system. Accordingly, the mystery of the eucharistic service, accomplished within the Divine Liturgy of the Church, is done “in remembrance” of Christ’s sacrifice (Lk 22:19) and is a “reasonable and bloodless sacrifice” to be understood as our sacrifice-offering to God—“a mercy of peace, a sacrifice of praise.” In the Divine Liturgy, instead of an animal or grain offering, we offer the Body and Blood of Christ to God. In a mystery known only to God, we thereby participate in the very Body and Blood of Christ offered once for all. And in this substantial union between Christ—the One sacrificed—and the worshiper, we come to more fully understand how we are united to Christ in our baptism and nurtured in our union with Christ by the eucharistic offering. The Church prays, “Thine own of Thine own we offer unto Thee, on behalf of all and for all.”

Offering sacrifices never exempted the Hebrews from the duty to live prayerfully and morally (Pr 15:8, 9). Moreover, Old Testament prophets stood against empty ritual and vain sacrifice (1Kg 15:22; Pss 49:7–15; 50:15–17; Is 1:1–20; Hos 6:6; Am 5:9–27; Mic 6:1–8). Hence, the Mosaic sacrificial system not only prefigures Christ’s own sacrifice, but also points to the pouring out of ourselves in self-sacrificial service as detailed in Romans 12:1 and 1 Peter 2:5.



# THE FEAST OF WEEKS — PENTECOST

 The Feast of Weeks was the festival celebrated at the beginning of the grain harvest (Ex 34:22). This was the feast at which the Hebrews offered their firstfruits of the harvest to the Lord at the tabernacle. It was one of the three major Jewish feasts, along with the Passover and the Feast of Tabernacles (see Ex 23:14–17; 34:18–23; Dt 16:1–17).

According to Leviticus 23:15, 16, the Feast was celebrated for seven consecutive weeks beginning “the morning following the Sabbath day” of Passover. Thus comes its title, the “Feast of Weeks.” Later in the Old Testament this feast became known as “Pentecost” (“fiftieth”), since it was celebrated on the fiftieth day after Passover (see Tb 2:1; 2Mc 12:32).

## PENTECOST: A FULFILLMENT OF THE JEWISH FEAST

The Jewish Feast of Pentecost was fulfilled as described in Acts 2. On this Day of Pentecost came the outpouring of the Holy Spirit upon the disciples of Christ, as Christ Himself had promised (Jn 14:16, 17). The descent of the Holy Spirit fulfills the Jewish Feast of Pentecost in a number of ways.

1 The reaping of the firstfruits of the grain harvest is fulfilled by the first harvest on the Day of Pentecost, which consisted of the Jews who believed and were baptized. St. John Chrysostom says the Holy Spirit “came down as the keen-edged sickle.”

2 The offering of the two “deposit loaves” of leavened bread (Lv 23:17, 18) is prophetic of the ingathering of both Jews and Gentiles (Bede). St. John Cassian says the preaching of the apostles on the Day of Pentecost was “the true bread of the first fruits . . . when five thousand men were filled with the gift of its food” (Acts 4:4).


3 The fiftieth day—seven consecutive weeks following Pascha plus one day—indicates the fullness of time in a mystery, similar to the Christian understanding of the eighth day.

4 The giving of the Law to Moses by the Son of God is brought to completion by the giving of the Spirit (see Rom 8:3–11; Gal 5:3–6; Eph 2:13–18) to the Church.


## THE SERVICES FOR PENTECOST

The Orthodox services for Pentecost place their emphasis on the descent of the Holy Spirit in all His fullness. His descent means that the Mosaic Law, given by the Lawgiver and honored on the Jewish feast day of Pentecost, is now transcended: “The All-Holy Spirit, who freely distributes gifts to all, has descended and come to earth; not as He formerly had in the Law’s dark shadow, shining in the Prophets, but now in very truth, He is bestowed in us through Christ” (Vespers, Thursday after Pentecost).

The worship services for Pentecost repeatedly emphasize how Old Testament prophecies of the Holy Spirit are fulfilled on this day. Two of the greatest of these prophecies are found in the Old Testament readings for this Feast—Ezekiel 36:24–28 and Joel 2:23–32. St. Peter directly quotes the passage from Joel in his exhortation to the Jews on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:16–21). A third reading—Numbers 11:16–17, 24–29—relates how the Lord commands Moses to select seventy of the elders of Israel, who, when the Spirit comes upon them, prophesy at the tabernacle. The comment of Moses regarding this event, “Would that all the Lord’s people might be prophets when the Lord would put His Spirit upon them” (Nm 11:29), is prophetic of the Day of Pentecost.

A hymn for the Feast of Pentecost declares, “Once, when He descended and confounded the tongues, the Most High divided the nations [Gn 11:1–9]; and when He divided the tongues of fire, He called all men into unity; and with one accord we glorify the All-holy Spirit.” 



 Typology is the interpretation of certain historical events occurring in the Old Testament as “types” that prefigure events to be fulfilled through the Incarnation of the Son of God, and in His life and ministry as confirmed in the New Testament. In each case, the type—the first event—is linked to its corresponding future event, called the “antitype.” It is a relationship that begins with a promise and ends with a fulfillment in Christ.

St. John Chrysostom explains, “The types, like patterns, anticipated and sketched out beforehand the dispensations [the order of things] which would be accomplished under the new covenant.” Types are in action what prophecy is in words: through them both, truths about Christ, His Mother, the Church, the Sacraments, and the Kingdom of Heaven are revealed.

### THE OLD TESTAMENT, LOOKING FORWARD

Typology was the primary lens used by the Church through which the Old Testament was read and interpreted. St. Irenaeus writes concerning the Old Testament, “If anyone, therefore, reads the Scriptures with attention, he will find in them an account of Christ, and a foreshadowing of the new calling. . . . The treasure hidden in the Scriptures is Christ, since He was pointed out by means of types and prophecies.” Christ indeed came to fulfill in reality what had been in the Old Testament but “a shadow of the good things to come” (Heb 10:1). Jesus told His apostles, “All things must be fulfilled which were written in the Law of Moses and the Prophets and the Psalms concerning Me” (Lk 24:44, 45; see also 24:27; Jn 5:38, 46).


Sometimes Old Testament prophecies refer to past events as types—for example, the reference in Psalm 109:4 to Melchizedek, and in Jeremiah 38:31–34 to the Old Covenant. Yet it is the New Testament which confirms typology as the key to understanding the Old Testament. This is evident in the famous exclamation by St. John the Baptist when Jesus approached him at the Jordan: “Behold! The Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world!” (Jn 1:29). Here John not only is asserting that Jesus is the fulfillment of prophecy (Is 53:7), but he is also making the first recorded public declaration linking the Person of Jesus with an Old Testament event—the sacrifice of the lamb at Passover (Ex 12:1–11; see also 1Co 5:7; 1Pt 1:18, 19). The ultimate sacrifice of the Only Begotten Son of God was also foreshadowed in type by Abraham’s offering of his son, Isaac (Gn 22:1–14).

### THE NEW TESTAMENT, LOOKING BACK

In the Gospels, Christ sometimes refers to Old Testament events that typologically pointed forward to Himself, such as the serpent in the wilderness (Nm 21:4–9; Jn 3:14, 15), the manna in the wilderness (Ex 16:11–36; Jn 6:30–35, 47–51), and Jonah’s three days and nights in the belly of the great fish (Jon 2:1–11; Mt 12:39, 40). Saints Paul and Peter, writing under the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, also reveal truths found in Old Testament types, such as Adam/Christ (Gn 2:7–9, 15–17; 1Co 15:20–22), Melchizedek/Christ (Gn 14:18–20; Heb 6:19, 20) and Noah and the Flood/Baptism (Gn 7:1–8:19; 1Pt 3:20, 21).

Typological revelation further plays an important role in the hymns of the Church. For example:

The bush on the mountain that was not consumed by fire (Ex 3:1–6), and the Chaldean furnace that brought refreshment as the dew (Dan 3:19–50), plainly prefigured thee, O Bride of God. For in a material womb, unconsumed thou hast received the divine and immaterial Fire (Matins, Nativity of the Theotokos).

With the Old Testament looking forward to the New through types, theophanies, and prophecies, and the New, in antitypes and fulfillment, pointing back to the Old, the essential unity of the two Testaments within one comprehensive Testament is revealed. As St. Maximus observes, “The Old and New Testaments together form a single mystery.” 



# THE SABBATH DAY, SUNDAY, AND THE EIGHTH DAY

## THE SABBATH DAY

When the Lord commanded the Hebrews, in the fourth of the Ten Commandments, to “Remember the Sabbath day, to keep it holy,” He also gave them the reason: “For in six days the Lord made heaven and earth, the sea, and everything in them, and rested on the seventh day. Therefore, the Lord blessed the Sabbath day and hallowed it” (Ex 20:8, 11; cf. Gn 2:1–3). When Moses restated the Ten Commandments in Deuteronomy 5, he added another reason: “Remember, you were a servant in the land of Egypt, and the Lord your God brought you out from there by a mighty hand and by an outstretched arm; therefore, the Lord your God ordered you to guard the Sabbath day and to sanctify it” (5:15).

The Hebrews were called to “remember” (Ex 20:8), to “keep” (Lv 19:3, 30), and to “hallow” or “sanctify” (Jer 17:19–27; Ezk 20:19, 20; Neh 13:15–22) the Sabbath by resting from almost every kind of work. God provided them this sacred time each week to help them contemplate His awesome work in creation and their miraculous deliverance from Egypt. Stipulating the faithful observance of the Sabbath was one of the main ways God ordained to reinforce the people’s covenant with Him (Ex 31:12–17; cf. Lv 24:8). Originally, communal worship was not linked with Sabbath observance; but with the development of the synagogue, probably during the Hebrews’ exile in Babylon (sixth century BC), the Sabbath naturally became the day for synagogue worship, as it is for the Jews today.

## SUNDAY, THE DAY OF WORSHIP

At first, early Jewish Christians continued to observe Sabbath regulations and to worship on the Sabbath (Acts 13:13–15, 42–44; 18:1–4). But they also met for the celebration of the Holy Eucharist on Sunday (Acts 20:7; 1Co 16:1–2), called “the Lord’s Day” (Rev 1:10), since Jesus rose on a Sunday. St. Ignatius of Antioch, in about AD 107, confirms that Sunday was the main day of worship for the early Church: “They have given up keeping the Sabbath, and now order their lives by the Lord’s Day instead—the Day when life first dawned for us, thanks to Him and His death.”


St. Constantine the Great, the first Christian emperor, honored the Church’s practice of celebrating the Lord’s Resurrection every Sunday by decreeing, in AD 321, that every Sunday would be a holy day. For Orthodox Christians, Saturday is still the Sabbath, the day on which the Church especially remembers the departed, since Christ rested in the tomb on Great and Holy Saturday.

## SUNDAY, THE EIGHTH DAY

As the day after the seventh day (when God rested from His six days of creation) and as the day of Christ’s Resurrection, Sunday early on came to be understood in a mystical way among Christians as the “Eighth Day.” It was the day “beyond nature and time” (MaxCon), “the beginning of another world” (Barn). “Whether you call it day, or whether you call it eternity, you express the same idea” (BasilG).

Fittingly, during the week after Pascha (Easter), called Bright Week, the Church celebrates Pascha for eight days, almost as though it were one continuous day. By tradition, babies are named on the eighth day after birth. And from ancient times, Christian baptisteries and fonts have been built with eight sides, indicating the newly baptized are entering the realm of the Eighth Day, the day of eternal rest (Heb 4:1–11) in Christ’s Heavenly Kingdom.

# JESUS CHRIST: PROPHET, PRIEST, AND KING

 Throughout the Old Testament, God raised up prophets, priests, and kings from among His chosen people to serve and lead Israel. Not only did these servants minister in their own right, many prefigured the coming of Christ our God, the promised Prophet, Priest, and King.

## PROPHET

Deuteronomy 18:15–19 foreshadows Christ as the promised Prophet. The Lord speaks to Moses: “I will raise up for them a Prophet like you from among their brethren, and I will put My word in His mouth, and He shall speak to them all I command Him” (v. 18). The words, “like you” and “from among their brethren” speak of the preincarnate Word taking on human nature to become the promised Prophet.

The New Testament reveals several instances when Jesus is recognized and proclaimed as this Prophet of whom Moses wrote. For example, after witnessing Jesus’ miracle of feeding the five thousand, those present said, “This is truly the Prophet who is to come into the world” (Jn 6:14; see also Jn 7:40). Later St. Peter, while preaching to the Jews, quotes from Deuteronomy 18:18, 19, showing Jesus Christ as the long-awaited Prophet, the fulfillment of God’s promise (Acts 3:22, 23).

## PRIEST

Psalms 109:1–4 foreshadows Christ as the great High Priest: “The Lord said to my Lord . . . ‘You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.’” The Book of Hebrews leaves no doubt as to whom this passage envisions: “Consider the Apostle and High Priest of our confession, Jesus Christ” (Heb 3:1). And, “We have such a High Priest, who is seated at the right hand of the throne of the Majesty in the heavens” (Heb 8:1). This long-awaited High Priest is our Lord Jesus Christ. See also Hebrews 6:20.

A priest is one “appointed to offer both gifts and sacrifices” (Heb 8:3). As our eternal High Priest, Jesus Christ freely offers Himself by willingly dying on the Cross for us. He did so as the perfect sacrifice, fulfilling the requirements of atonement through the remission of sins. By this gift, the promise of resurrection is offered, paradise is reopened, the Comforter is sent, and the hope of eternal life is given. As High Priest, Jesus is both the offerer and the offering.


## KING

The Prophet Jeremiah records God’s promise of a coming King. The Lord says, “Behold, days are coming when I will raise up for David the Righteous Orient, and a King shall reign. He will understand, and bring about judgment and righteousness on the earth” (Jer 23:5).


Isaiah promises His government will be not temporal, but eternal, ruling from the throne of David (Is 9:6, 7). In Zechariah 6:13, a priest on His throne is foreshadowed.

On Palm Sunday, Jesus enters Jerusalem as a humble servant-King on the foal of a donkey (see Zec 9:9 and Mt 21:1–7). He willingly and without hesitation, doubt, or fear accepts the extreme humiliation of the Cross. Above His head is written, “King of the Jews” (Jn 19:12–22).

At His Second Coming, foretold in Old Testament prophecy, Christ will come as the all-conquering King of kings to execute judgment, destroy the forces of evil, and establish an everlasting peace. Psalm 2:6 tells us the Father established His Son over the holy hill of Zion. In Psalm 21:28, the kingdom belongs to the Lord, and He will rule over all nations. Isaiah reveals the Gentiles as being included in His kingdom (Is 62:2, 3). Jesus Himself promised the day when people “see the Son of Man coming in His kingdom” (Mt 16:28). In the apocalyptic vision of the Apostle John, Christ’s title is: “KING OF KINGS AND LORD OF LORDS” (Rev 19:16).

We have a Prophet who is the Truth, a Priest whose eternal offering is accepted by the Father and received by us, and a King who will rule and reign forever over His Kingdom. 

# GOD'S COVENANTS WITH HIS PEOPLE ISRAEL

 The Lord had a covenantal relationship with the Israelites whereby He promised to always protect and provide for them as well as rescue them. In return, they agreed to worship and serve only Him, as prescribed. When foreign armies invaded Israel, or when other disasters occurred, the Prophets consistently interpreted such calamities as resulting from the people falling away from their covenantal commitment to the Lord.

The Prophets convey God's grief and anger when the Hebrews stray from Him (Is 1:1–31; 24:1–12; Am 3:1–6:14). Yet He remains faithful to His covenant, even when His people do not. God even commands the Prophet Hosea to marry a prostitute in order to demonstrate His unfailing fidelity to Israel despite all the times she has played the harlot with other gods (Hos 1:2–3:5; Jdg 2:17).

The Old Testament records several covenants between God and His people. Through these successive, overlapping covenants, God gradually draws all of mankind, through His chosen people, closer to Himself:

1 The covenant with Noah (Gn 9:8–17). God pledges that there will never be another flood like the one which destroyed the previous civilization.

2 The covenant with Abraham (Gn 12:1–3; 15:1–21; 17:1–21; see Ps 104:1–15). God promises to Abraham a great multitude of descendants, who will inherit the land of Canaan and always be His people. Through them, “all the tribes of the earth shall be blessed” (Gn 12:3).

3 The covenant under Moses (Ex 19:1–31:18; 34:1–28; Dt 5:1–30:20). Established by the Lord shortly after He miraculously rescues His people out of Egypt, this covenant provided the lengthy and detailed Mosaic Law to guide the Hebrews in their relations with one another and with Him.

4 The renewal of the Mosaic Covenant under Joshua (Jos 23:1–24:27).

5 The covenant with David (2Kg 7:1–29; 23:1–5; Ps 88:1–37; Is 55:3, 4) and his son Solomon (3Kg. 8:1–9:9). This covenant establishes the house of David forever: “His seed shall remain forever, and his throne as the sun before Me” (Ps 88:37). From this promise comes the expectation of a great King and Savior, David's descendant (Jer 23:5, 6) who will deliver Israel from all her enemies and will rule the earth with righteousness and peace.


The Prophet Ezekiel prophesies a “covenant of peace” inaugurating a future era of peace and prosperity for Israel under the care of “one shepherd . . . My Servant David” (Ezk 34:20–31; see 37:15–28). Jeremiah and Ezekiel envision this “new covenant” (Jer 38:31–34; Ezk 36:22–28) to be based on the spiritual cleansing and renewal of men's hearts. Isaiah foresees the new, “everlasting covenant” when God will gather all peoples to share in the blessings of Israel (Is 2:1–4; 49:6; 55:5; 60:1–6; see Jer 3:12–17; 4:1, 2; Ps 71:1–19).

The New Testament (or New Covenant), prophesied by Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Isaiah, is inaugurated on earth by Jesus Christ, the “Son of David” (Mt 21:9–11; Mk 10:46–48), the one Shepherd (Jn 10:1–16, 25–28) who comes to gather all people to Himself in spiritual unity and who sends the Holy Spirit (Jn 15:26) on Pentecost to dwell in His followers. Jesus declares at the Last Supper, “This cup is the new covenant in My blood” (Lk 22:20), thus directly linking this new covenant with a covenant meal—the Eucharist. Calling Christ the “Mediator of a better covenant” (Heb 8:6), the Book of Hebrews dramatically demonstrates how He fulfills and supersedes the old covenant made with the Israelites (3:1–10:22).

In the Church, the New Israel (Gal 6:12–16; see 2Co 3:12–18; Eph 2:11–16; Mt 21:33–46), we all have the opportunity to experience the spiritual joy of the new covenant as a foretaste of the heavenly kingdom (Heb 12:18–24), in which believers from all nations will rejoice with God eternally. Hence, it is very fitting that every Divine Liturgy begins with the proclamation, “Blessed is the Kingdom!”



## SAINTS OF THE OLD TESTAMENT

 Immediately after quoting the Lord's proclamation to Moses, "I am the God of Abraham, the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob," Jesus asserts, "God is not the God of the dead, but of the living" (Mt 22:32). Thus He affirms that the great patriarchs of the Old Testament still live, as do all the righteous men and women of old who lived in anticipation of the coming Messiah. Hebrews 11 reviews the wonderful deeds of many of these Old Testament saints, and we then read that "we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses" (Heb 12:1).

For the New Testament Church, then, these "witnesses" were the saints of the Old Testament. Eusebius of Caesarea, the church historian, writing early in the fourth century, called these great saints "Christians in fact, if not in name." He went on to say:

It is obvious that they knew God's Christ Himself, since He appeared to Abraham, instructed Isaac, spoke to Jacob, and conversed freely with Moses and the Prophets who came later, as I have already shown. Hence, you will find that those divinely favored men were even honored with the name of "Christ," according to the word which says of them, "Touch not my Christs [Greek *christoi*, anointed ones], and do My Prophets no harm" (Ps 104:15).

### HONORING THE SAINTS

The Church's natural and fitting veneration of the saints of the Old Testament is very evident in a hymn sung on the second Sunday preceding Christmas, the Sunday of the Holy Forefathers:

Come feast-lovers, let us extol with hymns the assembly of the forefathers—Adam the first father, Enoch, Noah, and Melchizedek, Abraham, Isaac and Jacob; and those after the Law—Moses, Aaron, Joshua, and Samuel; and with them Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, and the twelve Prophets, with Elijah and Elisha, and all the rest.


Besides being remembered on these two Sundays, many Old Testament saints have their own days of commemoration, such as Jeremiah (May 1); Job (May 6); Isaiah (May 9); Elijah (July 20); Samuel (August 20); Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (August 21); Joshua (September 1); Moses (September 4); Baruch (September 28); Hannah (December 9); Daniel (December 17); and Joseph (son of Jacob) and King David (first Sunday after Christmas).

The church fathers often extol these Old Testament heroes. St. John Chrysostom repeatedly urged his flock to emulate the patient endurance of "the great and noble Job." St. Gregory of Nyssa writes, "Noah was a righteous man, the Scriptures say, and Abraham was faithful, Moses meek, Daniel wise, Joseph chaste, Job blameless, and David perfect in patience."

Eleazar and the Maccabean martyrs, whose story is told in 2 Maccabees 6:18—7:42, deserve special attention. This Jewish scribe and seven brothers, along with their mother, Solomonia, valiantly defied the sacrilegious commands of King Antiochus IV Epiphanes, who was fiercely persecuting the Jews. For their defiance, they were brutally executed in Jerusalem in about 167 BC. These unwaveringly faithful Jews are prototypes of all the Christian martyrs. In their commemoration on August 1, they are called "great martyrs, before the martyrs of Christ."

The Church's high esteem for the Old Testament saints is also seen in her custom of depicting the forefathers and prophets around the base of the interior central dome of a church. And by remembering these saints in her liturgical calendar, the Orthodox Church demonstrates her understanding that the Body of Christ transcends limitations of time and space. This awareness is clearly expressed at every Divine Liturgy: "And again we offer unto You this reasonable service for all those who in faith have gone before us to their rest: patriarchs, prophets, apostles, preachers, evangelists, martyrs, confessors, ascetics, and every righteous spirit made perfect in faith."

For Orthodox Christians, it is the experience of worshipping God with all the saints that powerfully confirms their continuing presence in our midst.



## LIFE AFTER DEATH

For the ancient Hebrews, death meant a return to the same earth from which all are taken: "For earth you are, and to the earth you shall return" (Gn 3:19; Job 7:21). Nevertheless, a general idea developed that the souls of the dead do continue, though only in a shadowy, semi-comatose kind of existence in a netherworld called *sheol*, or Hades (Gn 37:34, 35; Pss 114:3, 138:8; Is 14:9-11), a land of "oblivion" (Ps 87:10-12; Job 14:18-22). In *sheol*—the depths or abyss of the earth, "the Pit"—even the righteous dead abide, without any power of deliverance (Job 7:6-10; Ps 88:48; Is 38:18; Ezk 26:19-21). Yet there was at least a general hope that one's memory would be kept alive by one's community and descendants (Ps 111:1-6; Pr 10:7; Dt 25:5, 6).

Only gradually did God reveal glimpses of a glorious life after death to His people, a hope that would become available to all through the power of Christ's Resurrection. An early hint of this coming hope was revealed to Job. Amid his terrible suffering, Job asks, "If a man dies, shall he live again?" And through a flash of divine insight, he says: "I will wait until I arise" (Job 14:14). Psalms also begin to reflect upon personal resurrection to everlasting life (Ps 15:8-11; 48:15; 70:20-23; 90:1-16).

The first indications of a corporate resurrection of the people of Israel are given in the 8th century BC through Hosea (Hos 6:1-3; 13:14) and Isaiah (Is 26:19). In the early 6th century BC, Ezekiel receives the dramatic vision of a miraculous reconstitution of "the whole house of Israel" on the plain covered with dry bones (Ezk 37:1-14). The Church reads this passage triumphantly on Great and Holy Saturday. Why? Because it is prophetic of the freeing of all the souls from Hades by Christ on that day (1Pt 3:19; Eph 4:8-10) and the general resurrection of all the dead on the last day.

By the late first century BC, as seen in the Wisdom of Solomon, immortality is directly linked with living in wisdom and righteousness: "Kinship with Wisdom is immortality" (WSol 8:17); "The righteous shall live forever" (WSol 5:15; see also 1:13-15; 2:22, 23; 6:17-21). Various passages from this book (WSol 3:1-9; 4:7-15; 5:15-6:3) are read at Vespers in commemoration of some of the more prominent saints.

At the time of Christ, the Sadducees rejected belief in an afterlife (see Mt 22:23), while the Pharisees did believe in resurrection and immortality (Acts 23:6-8). It was the Pharisees' view which came to dominate in later Judaism. Lazarus' sister Martha knew about a general "resurrection at the last day" (Jn 11:24), but Jesus declares to her that resurrection and eternal life come only through Him (Jn 11:25; see 3:14-16; 4:14; 6:40, 47-58; 14:1-6).

Christ promises that believers will be with Him after their death (Lk 23:42, 43; see 2Co 5:8; Php 1:21-23). The souls of believers are further enlightened in Christ, as they experience a foretaste of the eternal heavenly kingdom. Yet all the departed still await the general resurrection, the day when their souls will be reunited with their bodies, which are transformed into a glorified state (1Co 15:50-54) like Christ's own body (Php 3:20, 21; 1Jn 3:2).



## THE PROPHETS

The holy Prophets of Israel played a unique and critical role in their society. They repeatedly called the people back to their commitment to obey and worship only the one true God; they warned of foreign invasions; they protested against social and economic injustice; and they even rebuked kings face to face for their sinfulness (2Kg 12:1-15; 3Kg 18:17, 18; 20:1-29; 2Ch 12:1-8; 16:7-10). In times of crisis they were consulted by kings to discern the Lord's will (4Kg 3:5-20; 8:7-15; 22:8-20; Jer 21:1-14). Yet their most significant task was prophesying about the coming of the Messiah, the King of Kings.

Through prayer, asceticism, repentance, and the practice of virtue, the Prophets were particularly receptive to the Holy Spirit—He “Who spoke by the Prophets,” as the Nicene Creed declares. St. Basil the Great writes, “In souls pure and cleansed from all defilement, the prophetic gift shines clear.” Most unique was the preparation received by St. John the Baptist, the greatest of the Prophets (Mt 11:7-14), who was “filled with the Holy Spirit, even from his mother's womb” (Lk 1:15).

The backgrounds of the Prophets were varied. Amos was a shepherd (Am 1:1; 7:14, 15), Ezekiel a priest (Ezk 1:1-3), Daniel a young nobleman reared in captivity at the royal court in Babylon (Dan 1:3-6), Deborah a judge and military leader (Jdg 4:1—5:31), and Huldah was the wife of the keeper of the king's wardrobe (4Kg 22:14). Also varied were their responses to the Lord's call. For example, Moses and Jeremiah protested (Ex 3:7—4:17; Jer 1:4-6), and Jonah immediately tried to flee from the Lord (Jon 1:1-3). Isaiah, on the other hand, though acutely aware of his own sinfulness said, “Here am I, send me” (6:8). Moses, Jeremiah (Jer 1:7—2:2), and Ezekiel (Ezk 2:1—3:14) all received repeated reassurances from the Lord that He would be with them to strengthen them in fulfilling their prophetic calling.

The Prophets vividly demonstrated their willingness to obey the Lord when asked to do unusual things in dramatized prophecies. Ezekiel drew a picture of Jerusalem on a clay tablet and pretended to besiege it (Ezk 4:1-3); he was also asked to take a sword and cut off his hair and beard and burn part of it (5:1-13; see 12:1-15). Jeremiah buried a linen sash by the Euphrates River (Jer 13:1-11); Isaiah walked naked and barefoot for three years (Is 20:1-6); Hosea was commanded to marry a harlot (Hos 1:1-3).

Sometimes the Prophets experienced fierce opposition from the authorities—kings, priests, and even other prophets—who resented the condemnatory messages being delivered. Micaiah was slapped and imprisoned for being the only one of about four hundred prophets who dared to tell King Ahab of Israel the true word of the Lord (3Kg 22:2-38). Jeremiah was threatened with death by his fellow citizens of Anathoth (Jer 11:19-23) and later by the priests and the false prophets (33:1-19); and he was imprisoned under King Zedekiah (44:1-21; see 20:1, 2). The priest of Bethel tried to expel Amos out of Israel (Am 7:10-13). According to tradition, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Amos all were executed, as was St. John the Baptist (Mt 14:1-12; see Lk 11:47-51; Mt 23:29-37; 2Ch 24:17-22; Jer 33:20-23; Heb 11:32-38).

At times certain Prophets even wanted to die, such as Elijah (3Kg 19:1-4) and Jonah (Jon 4:1-3). But the Prophets always reaffirmed their reliance upon God's will and their hope in His mercy (Lam 3:21-41). In this, as well as in their sufferings for our Lord's sake, the holy Prophets serve as important examples for us who have received, at our Baptism and Chrismation, the gift of the same Holy Spirit who came upon them.

## TYPES OF MARY IN THE OLD TESTAMENT

Types of both Christ and Mary, His Mother, fill the Old Testament. Indeed, most of the Old Testament types of Mary—a natural consequence of her essential role in the Incarnation of her Son, Jesus Christ—reveal the awesome marvel of her womb which contained the almighty God. Referring to Genesis 2:9, the hymnography of the Church sees the garden of Eden as a type of Mary: “Rejoice, . . . O living Paradise, having the Lord, the Tree of Life, in your midst” (Akathist Hymn). The burning bush beheld by Moses in the wilderness (Ex 3:1–6) is one of the most often mentioned types of Mary. For example, “She is the Bush springing from barren ground [her mother, St. Anna, had been barren] and burning with the immaterial fire that cleanses and enlightens our souls” (Small Vespers, Nativity of the Theotokos). St. John of Damascus observes, “The burning bush is an image of God’s Mother . . . If, therefore, the ground where the image of the Theotokos was seen by Moses is holy ground [Ex 3:5], how much more holy is the image itself?”

The tabernacle in the wilderness, where God dwelt among the wandering Israelites (Ex 25:1—27:19), also prefigures Mary: “The tabernacle that is to hold God, the sanctuary of the glory, has chosen to dwell in the holy temple” (Matins, Entry of the Theotokos into the Temple). Another hymn from this service addresses her as “O Holy of Holies,” identifying her with the most holy inner place of the tabernacle and the temple (Ex 26:33; 3Kg 8:6).


Other Old Testament types of Mary relating to the Lord dwelling in her womb include the jar of manna (Ex 16:33, 34); Aaron’s rod that budded (Nm 17:16–23); the tablet of the Law “written with the finger of God” (Ex 31:18); the ladder reaching from earth to heaven (Gn 28:10–17); the fleece that received the dew (Jdg 6:36–38; see Ps 71:1–6); the tongs bearing the live coal (Is 6:6); and the fiery furnace in Babylon (Dan 3:19–50). Concerning this last image, the hymnographer St. Cosmas of Maiuma writes, “The furnace moist with dew was the image and figure of a wonder past nature. For it burned not the Children whom it had received, even as the fire of the Godhead consumed not the Virgin’s womb into which it had descended” (Matins, Nativity of Christ).

The miracle of the Virgin Birth is another prominent theme among the Old Testament types of Mary. One of the most striking of these is found in Ezekiel 43:27–44:4, the only Old Testament passage read at all four of the major Feasts of the Theotokos. This reading tells about the east gate of the heavenly temple remaining shut even as the Lord God of Israel, and He alone, goes in and out through it. This is prophetic of the Lord entering Mary’s womb and being born nine months later with her virginity remaining intact. Hence in various hymns the Church proclaims her as “the Gate that looks towards the East,” “the Gate through which none may pass,” and “the East Gate . . . [who] awaits the entrance of the Great Priest.”

Another such image occurs in Daniel 2:45, where the Theotokos is the mountain out of whom a stone (that is, Christ; 1Co 10:4) is cut “without hands.” This refers to Christ’s birth from the Virgin, untouched by a man.

Mary is the culmination of the whole history of the ancient Hebrews. She is the perfection to which all of faithful Israel aspired through the long centuries of preparation for the coming of the Messiah, beginning with the promise given to Abraham: “God promised to our forefather Abraham that in his seed the Gentiles would be blessed [Gn 22:18], O pure Lady; and through thee today, the promise receives its fulfillment” (Matins, Annunciation).

# THEOPHANIES OF CHRIST



The word "theophany" derives from the Greek words *theos* ("God"), and *phainesthai* ("to show forth, appear"). Hence, a theophany is an appearance or manifestation of God. While types of Christ in the Old Testament prefigure His coming in the flesh, theophanies are recognized by the Church as being actual appearances of the pre-incarnate Son and Word of God. How this happens remains a mystery. But because the Son of God took on human nature in the fullness of time, each theophany directly prefigures Christ's Incarnation. St. John of Damascus wrote, "No one saw the divine nature, but rather the image and figure of what was yet to come. For the invisible Son and Word of God was to become truly Man."

## THREE THEOPHANIES OF CHRIST

An often cited theophany of Christ occurs in the visit of the "three men" to Abraham and Sarah in Genesis 18:1-16: "Then God appeared to him at the oak of Mamre" (v. 1). Though three men are there, Abraham addresses them in the singular, "Lord." He responds in the singular (vv. 9-15). As St. Ephraim the Syrian says, "Therefore the Lord . . . now appeared to Abraham clearly in one of the three." The three are generally considered to be Christ the Lord, along with two attending angels.

At Genesis 32:25-31, Christ is the "man" who wrestles with Jacob, after which Jacob says, "I saw God face to face" (v. 30). St. Cyril of Jerusalem asks the Jews concerning these theophanies to Abraham and Jacob, "What strange thing do we announce in saying that God was made Man, when you yourselves say that Abraham received the Lord as a guest? What strange thing do we announce, when Jacob says, 'For I have seen God face to face, and my life is preserved'? The Lord, who ate with Abraham, also ate with us."

In the Book of Daniel, a heathen king bears witness to another theophany of Christ. When King Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon peers into the fiery furnace, upon seeing a "fourth man" he exclaims, "The vision of the fourth is like the Son of God" (Dan 3:92).

## OTHER APPEARANCES OF GOD


At times Christ appears as "the Angel of the Lord" or "the Angel of God." At Exodus 3:1-4:17, "the Angel of the Lord" appears to Moses in the burning bush and identifies Himself as the God of Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob (Ex 3:6, 15, 16; 4:5). He also says that His name is "I AM HE WHO IS" (Ex 3:14), which in Greek is represented by the three letters placed around Christ's head in the holy icons. St. Ambrose of Milan observes, "Christ therefore is, and always is; for He who is, always is. And Christ always is, of whom Moses says, 'He that is has sent me.'"

## THE INCARNATION


When God the Son became incarnate, this can be called an everlasting theophany. For having assumed human nature, Christ not only manifests God to the world during His earthly life (Jn 1:14; see also 14:9; Col 2:9; 1Jn 1:1-3), but He ascends into heaven in the same glorified flesh in which He will return at His Second Coming (see Acts 1:9-11).

At the baptism of Christ (Mt 3:13-17), a further theophany occurs, as all three Persons of the Holy Trinity are made known: the Father in the voice from heaven, the Holy Spirit in the form of a dove, and the Incarnate Son. Hence, the feast day commemorating this event is known as Holy Theophany. On this day the Church sings, "When Thou, O Lord, wast baptized in the Jordan, the worship of the Trinity was made manifest."

Additionally, at Christ's Transfiguration on Mt. Tabor (Mt 17:1-9), the Father again is heard, the Holy Spirit is present in the brightness of the cloud, and the Son shines with the gleaming radiance of His Divinity.



## APOCALYPTIC LITERATURE


 Within Holy Scripture there are certain visionary, prophetic writings that are specifically seen as *revelations* because they *reveal* something about the last days, or end times. These writings within Holy Scripture are part of a larger group of works known as *apocalyptic literature* (from a Greek word meaning “to uncover” or “unveil”).

From about 250 BC to AD 200, there were some thirty to forty such works circulating within the Jewish and early Christian communities. Only one of all these writings, the Revelation of John (also called the Apocalypse), was accepted by the Church to be part of Holy Scripture. There are other sections in the Bible which also are written in an apocalyptic style, such as Isaiah 24—27, 60—66; Ezekiel 38—39; Daniel 7—12; Zechariah 1—6, 9—14; and Mark 13.

It is typical for apocalyptic writings to describe visions of angels, animals of various kinds, scrolls, lamps, stars, and dragons, as well as battles and various natural disasters. The Revelation of John includes much imagery found also in Ezekiel, Daniel, and Zechariah (see Ezk 40:1–5 and Rev 11:1; 21:9–17; Dan 7:1–8 and Rev 13:1–5; Zec 4:1–6, 11–14 and Rev 4:5; 11:3, 4). About three-fourths of the 404 verses in Revelation refer to something in the Old Testament.


How are we to understand this not easily understood literary form? How are we to apply these Scriptures to our lives? Christ taught it is impossible to know when He will come again (Mt 24:36, 44). It is impossible to determine the precise meaning of all the imagery in the apocalyptic writings. Rather, we are to look forward to the end of time with sober yet eager anticipation, as pilgrims seeking His eternal kingdom (Php 3:20; Col 3:1–4). A prayer by St. Basil the Great says, “Grant us to pass through all the night of this present life with vigilant heart and sober thought, in expectancy of the coming of the bright and manifest day of . . . our Lord.”

The apocalyptic texts are offered to Christians in every generation to encourage them in their struggles against sin, the principalities and powers of darkness in this world (Eph 6:12) and the fear of death. These writings assure us that even in the midst of the cosmic cataclysms and battles against evil powers occurring just before Christ returns—the time of “great tribulation” (Mt 24:21)—the Lord will strengthen and guide His people (Mt 28:20), bringing them to final victory over all forces of evil (Rev 20:7–10). Making references to Daniel 7 and 12 concerning the end times, St. Cyril of Jerusalem explains that as in the persecutions, God will again permit these things. Why? Not because He wants satanic power to hinder His people, but because He desires to crown His own champions for their patient endurance—just as He did His prophets and apostles—so that having toiled for a little while, they may inherit the eternal kingdom of Heaven.

So the essential purpose of the apocalyptic writings is to encourage the faithful to be full of hope and prepared to persevere to the end, no matter what happens (Mt 24:3–13; Lk 21:25–28). All are inspired to look through the darkness of the present age and to behold the ultimate victory of Christ and the joyful consummation that awaits His Bride—the Church—who, through Her sacraments, has prepared herself for the coming of the Lord (2Pt 3:7–14; Tts 2:11–14). The closing words of the New Testament express this very sense of expectation: “Even so, come, Lord Jesus” (Rev 22:20). 



# THE SERMON ON THE MOUNT

 In the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5–7), Jesus introduces the kind of life those who seek the Kingdom of God must lead. His homily could properly be called, “The Righteousness of the Kingdom.” It can be divided into several sections.

1 *The Beatitudes* (5:1–16). The sermon begins with the Beatitudes (the “blessings”), which describe the joys of true discipleship, the blessed way of life. The people of God await the rewards Jesus promises in this section.

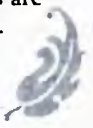
2 *The new covenant* (5:17–48). Then, as the Son of God whose authority is greater than that of Moses, Christ proclaims the new law, the righteousness leading toward perfection, to which the Mosaic Law and the prophets pointed. Jesus reveals the deeper meaning of several Old Testament laws, broadening their implications.

- (a) “You shall not murder” is expanded beyond the command against physically killing another (5:21–26). Murder now includes anger, calling someone a fool, and failure to be reconciled with a friend or adversary.
- (b) “You shall not commit adultery” (5:27) no longer refers only to the unlawful act of sex outside marriage. It now includes lust.
- (c) Divorce was allowable under the Old Testament law. But under the new covenant, divorce is permissible only because of sexual immorality, and remarriage to a divorced person is not permitted (5:31, 32).
- (d) “Perform your oaths to the Lord” is the Old Testament law. Jesus instructs us to say “yes” or “no” without taking an oath, and to keep our word (5:33–37).
- (e) “An eye for an eye”—a graphic way of seeing justice from a human perspective—becomes “turn the other [cheek]” and “love your enemies.” Not only must we forsake vengeance, even when it is just retribution; we must treat others as God treats us, with mercy and grace (5:38–45).

3 *Spiritual disciplines* (6:1–7:12). Jesus assumes we will follow three disciplines that help us attain true righteousness (6:1–18) and true wisdom (6:19–7:12). These disciplines are a vital part of Christian tradition.

- (a) *Giving alms*, or doing charitable deeds for the poor, should be done secretly, before God and not before men (6:1–4).
- (b) *Prayer* should follow the model of the Lord’s Prayer, which Jesus here reveals to His Church (6:5–15).
- (c) *Fasting* should likewise be done to please God, not men (6:16–18).

These disciplines help us find true wisdom, which consists of (1) the love of God and pursuit of His righteousness by bringing our treasure (6:19–26) as alms to God, and our worries (6:22–7:34) in prayer and fasting to Him; and (2) the love of human beings and pursuit of righteous reconciliation with them by submitting our judgments of them (7:1–6) to God’s severe mercy. For these difficult tasks we need divine discernment and guidance, which God provides to those who follow Jesus’ spiritual rule (7:7–12). Thus, our natural impulses are redirected toward their proper goal: the righteousness of God in His Kingdom (6:33).

4 *Exhortations to righteousness* (7:13–29). Jesus concludes with exhortations to true righteousness, warnings about hypocritical and deceitful professions of righteousness, and instructions to build on the rock of His teachings. 



## PARABLES



Parables are stories in word-pictures, revealing spiritual truth. The Hebrew and Aramaic words for *parable* also mean “allegory,” “riddle,” or “proverb.” The Scriptures, especially the Gospels, are filled with parables—images drawn from daily life in the world to represent and communicate the deep things of God. Parables give us glimpses of Him whose thoughts are not our thoughts and whose ways are not our ways (Is 55:8, 9).

The truth communicated by Jesus’ parables, however, is not evident to all who hear them. The listener must have spiritual ears to hear, and even then not all have the same degree of understanding.

Thus, Jesus’ statement that “to those who are outside, all things come in parables” (Mark 4:11) may be translated, “. . . all things come in riddles.” Jesus’ quotation of Isaiah 6:9, 10 (Mt 13:14, 15) does not mean He used parables to blind the people or to lead them to punishment. On the contrary, it demonstrates that the people are responsible for their own lack of receptivity: having grown dull and insensitive, they are unwilling to accept the message of the parables. As the mission of Isaiah in the Old Testament was to open the eyes of Israel to see the acts of God, so the parables of Jesus are intended to open the eyes of His hearers to the truth and lead them to produce the fruit of righteousness.

Parables challenge the hearer and call for faith to perceive the mysteries of the Kingdom. Insight into God’s Kingdom does not come simply through an intellectual understanding of the parables. Spiritual enlightenment is essentially a communication of faith in the Person, words, and deeds of the Lord Jesus Christ.

The use of parables was known in Jewish culture long before Jesus (2Kg 12:1–4; 3Kg 21:35–42; Is 5:1–7). Jesus, however, brought the art of parables to perfection, relating aspects of the Kingdom and speaking of God Himself through vivid stories. His purpose was not only to reveal truth to those with hearts prepared. He wished to draw responsive hearts past the entrance and into the very reality of God’s Kingdom which He proclaimed and inaugurated.

Among the familiar parables read on Sundays throughout the church year are those of the Sower (Lk 8:5–15); the Good Samaritan (Lk 10:25–37); the Rich Man and His Crops (Lk 12:16–21); the Great Supper (Lk 14:16–24); the Talents (Mt 25:14–30); the Pharisee and the Tax Collector (Lk 18:10–14); and the Prodigal Son (Lk 15:11–32).

In opening to us the door to the Kingdom of heaven, the parables help us to love God and to know Him, to understand and believe His grace, mercy, and forgiveness, and to order our lives according to His Holy Word.



## THE TRANSFIGURATION



"And He was transfigured before them. His face shone like the sun, and His clothes became as white as the light" (17:2).

The Transfiguration is a *theophany*—a manifestation of God, especially of the divinity of Christ, through a display of His uncreated, divine energy. Therefore, the Orthodox Church celebrates the Transfiguration of the Lord as a major feast day.

Several elements of the Transfiguration show that Christ is Messiah and God.

1 Because God is light (1Jn 1:5), the bright cloud, the shining of Jesus' face like the sun, and the whiteness of His garment (Mt 17:2, 5) all demonstrate that Jesus is God. (In some icons this light is shown as *beyond* white, a blue-white, ineffable color, indicating its spiritual origin.)

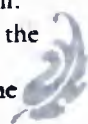
2 The Father bears witness from heaven concerning His Son. He does not say, "This has become My beloved Son," but "This is My beloved Son" (17:5), indicating that this divine glory is Christ's by nature. From eternity past, infinitely before Jesus' Baptism and Transfiguration, He is God's Son, fully sharing in the essence of the Father: Jesus Christ is God of God.

3 The Transfiguration not only proclaims Christ's divine sonship, but foreshadows His future glory when He as the Messiah will usher in the long-awaited Kingdom. The bright cloud recalls temple worship and the cloud that went before the Israelites in the wilderness, the visible sign of God being extraordinarily present. Peter sees this as a sign that the Kingdom has come. Knowing that the Feast of Tabernacles is the feast of the coming Kingdom, he asks to build booths (17:4), as was done at that feast, to serve as symbols of God's dwelling among the just in the Kingdom.


4 Moses represents the law and all those who have died. Elijah represents the prophets and—since he did not experience death—all those who are alive in Christ. Their presence shows that the law and the prophets, the living and the dead, all bear witness to Jesus as the Messiah, the fulfillment of the whole Old Testament.

The presence of Moses and Elijah also manifests the communion of the saints (Heb 12:1). Both men are immediately recognizable and talk with the Lord. The disciples are now able to understand Jesus' words that "Elijah has come already" (17:12) referring to John the Baptist. Their eyes have been opened to the fact that Malachi's prophecy (4:5, 6) refers to one coming "in the spirit and power of Elijah" (Lk 1:17), rather than to Elijah himself.

5 Finally, the Holy Trinity is manifest here, for Christ is transfigured (Mt 17:2), the Father speaks from heaven testifying to Jesus' divine sonship (17:5), and the Spirit is present in the form of a dazzling light surrounding Christ's person, overshadowing the whole mountain (17:5).



## JOHN THE BAPTIST

 "John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins" (Mk 1:4).


John the Baptist plays a crucial role in the history of salvation. Chosen before his birth to be the herald and forerunner of the Messiah (Lk 1:13-17), he knew his Lord from the beginning. Luke writes of John's miraculous conception (Lk 1:24). He then records that when the Virgin Mary visited Elizabeth, who was then six months pregnant with John the Baptist, the baby in Elizabeth's womb leaped at the sound of Mary's voice (Lk 1:41).

Jesus taught that John fulfilled the prophecy of the return of Elijah (Mt 11:14), who was to precede the Messiah as "the voice of one crying in the wilderness: 'Prepare the way of the LORD'" (Mt 3:3; Mk 1:3; Lk 3:4; Jn 1:23).

Shortly before Jesus began His public ministry, John went out to the wilderness of Jordan to prepare the way for the Messiah. He carried out his prophetic role with a brotherhood of disciples characterized by repentance in expectation of the Kingdom, baptism for forgiveness of sins, bearing the fruit of righteousness, and spiritual discipline. John himself lived by an ascetic rule of poverty and fasting; in fact, he may have been a lifelong Nazirite (see Lk 1:15; Nm 6). His eyes were set not on the body and its desires, but on Christ the Lord, and his influence was widespread (see Mk 11:32; Lk 7:29; Acts 18:25; 19:1-7).

John prophesied Messiah was coming, One immeasurably greater than himself, "whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose" (Mk 1:7). This One would baptize not only with water but with the Holy Spirit (Mk 1:8). When Jesus appeared before him to be baptized, John was humbled, realizing he was in need of being baptized by Jesus (Mt 3:14). But Jesus knew what was fitting "to fulfill all righteousness" (Mt 3:15), and John obeyed. Thus, came about the event so familiar in Orthodox icons: Christ in the Jordan being baptized by John as the Holy Spirit descends on Him in the form of a dove. The Father's voice from heaven declares, "This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased" (Mt 3:17).


John's work was crucial to Jesus' ministry. Jesus considered John's testimony important—not because Jesus, the Son of God, needed to be validated by any human witness, but because the people's acceptance of John as a godly man prepared them to accept Jesus as well (Jn 5:33-35). Jesus' first disciples came from John's brotherhood (Jn 1:35-39), and the vacancy in the apostolic college left by Judas' betrayal was filled by one who had been John's follower (Acts 1:22).

John the Baptist died a martyr for Christ (Mk 6:24-29). The Orthodox Church commemorates him in special hymns every Tuesday, as well as on designated feast days throughout the year. 

## ✠ M A R Y ✠

“For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed.”

(Lk 1:48)

 For two thousand years the Church has preserved the memory of the Virgin Mary as the prototype of all Christians—the model of what we are to become in Christ. Mary was truly pure and unconditionally obedient to God. The tradition of the Church holds that Mary remained a virgin all her life (see note on Mt 12:46–50). While lifelong celibacy is not a model for all Christians to follow, Mary’s spiritual purity, her wholehearted devotion to God, is certainly to be emulated.

Mary is also our model in that she was the first person to receive Jesus Christ. As Mary bore Christ in her womb physically, all Christians now have the privilege of bearing God within them spiritually. By God’s grace and mercy we are purified and empowered to become like Him.


The honor we give to Mary also signifies our view of who Jesus is. From early times the church has called her Mother of God (Gr. *Theotokos*, lit. “God-Bearer”), a title which implies that her Son is both fully man and fully God. As His Mother, Mary was the source of Jesus’ human nature; yet the One she bore in her womb was also the eternal God.

Therefore, because of her character and especially because of her role in God’s plan of salvation, Christians appropriately honor Mary as the first among the saints. The archangel Gabriel initiated this honor in his address to her: “Rejoice, highly favored *one*, the Lord *is* with you; blessed *are* you among women!” (Lk 1:28). This salutation clearly indicates that God Himself had chosen to honor Mary. Her favored status was confirmed when she went to visit her cousin Elizabeth, who was then six months pregnant with John the Baptist. Elizabeth greeted Mary with these words: “Blessed *are* you among women, and blessed *is* the fruit of your womb! But why *is* this *granted* to me, that the mother of my Lord should come to me?” (Lk 1:42, 43). And Mary herself, by the inspiration of the Holy Spirit, predicted the honor that would be paid her throughout history: “For behold, henceforth all generations will call me blessed” (Lk 1:48).

In obedience to God’s clear intention, therefore, the Orthodox Church honors Mary in icons, hymns, and special feast days. We entreat her, as the human being who was most intimate with Christ on earth, to intercede with her Son on our behalf. We ask her, as the first believer and the Mother of the Church, for guidance and protection. We venerate her—but we do not worship her, for worship belongs to God alone.


In Matins, Vespers, and all the services of the hours of prayer, we sing this hymn, which expresses Mary’s unique place in creation.

It is truly right to bless you, O Theotokos, ever-blessed and most pure, and the Mother of our God. More honorable than the cherubim and more glorious beyond compare than the seraphim, without defilement you gave birth to God the Word: True Theotokos, we magnify you.





## THE SEVENTY



In Luke 10:1-17, the Lord appoints seventy men to go out as missionaries—as apostles. Though not so prominent as the Twelve, the Seventy carried out their missions with fervor and enthusiasm. The Tradition of the Church confirms that the Seventy remained true to the Lord and their calling, fulfilling a vital role in the spread of the gospel. These were not random choices or accidental volunteers but true disciples, true apostles, whose labors carried the message of their Lord throughout the Roman Empire and beyond.

Though lists of the Seventy vary somewhat, all these men are remembered in the calendar of the Church (see chart, “The Seventy,” on page 1822). One day, January 4, is set aside to remember them all, and the record of their work is preserved in accounts handed down through the centuries from place to place, especially in those locations where they labored.


To tell all the stories passed down in the Church concerning the Seventy would fill a book of considerable size, but the stories of a few will convey the conviction and faith of this illustrious body.

Barnabas, a Jew of the tribe of Levi, was born in Cyprus of wealthy parents. He is said to have studied under Gamaliel with Saul of Tarsus, who was to become Paul the apostle. Originally named Joseph, he was called Barnabas (Son of Consolation) by the apostles (Acts 4:36) because he had a rare gift of comforting people’s hearts. He sought out Paul when everyone else was afraid of him, bringing him to the apostles. It was Barnabas whom the apostles first sent to Antioch with Paul. Their long association was broken only when Barnabas was determined to take his cousin Mark, whom Paul did not trust just then, on a missionary journey. The three were later reconciled (Col 4:10). Many ancient accounts say Barnabas was the first to preach in Rome and in Milan, but he was martyred in Cyprus, then buried by Mark at the western gate of the city of Salamis.

Also among the more prominent of the Seventy was the apostle Titus, whom Paul called his brother (2Co 12:18) and his son (Tts 1:4). Born in Crete, Titus was educated in Greek philosophy, but after reading the prophet Isaiah he began to doubt the value of all he had been taught. Hearing the news of the coming of Jesus Christ, he joined some others from Crete who were going to Jerusalem to see for themselves. After hearing Jesus speak and seeing His works, the young Titus joined those who followed Him. Baptized by the apostle Paul, he worked with and served the great apostle to the Gentiles, traveling with him until Paul sent him to Crete, making him bishop of that city. It is said that Titus was in Rome at the time of the beheading of St. Paul and that he buried the body of his spiritual father before returning home. Back in Crete, he converted and baptized many people, governing the Church on that island until he entered into rest at the age of ninety-four.


Many less prominent among the Seventy also labored for Christ unto death. Aristarchus, whom Paul mentions several times (Acts 19:29; Col 4:10; Phm 24), calling him a “fellow laborer,” became bishop of Apamea in Syria. Sosthenes (Acts 18:17; 1Co 1:1) became bishop of Caesarea, and Tychicus (Acts 20:4; Eph 6:21; Col 4:7; 2Ti 4:12; Tts 3:12) succeeded him in that city. Simeon (Mt 13:55; Mk 6:3), son of Cleopas (who was the brother of Joseph, the betrothed of the Virgin Mary), succeeded James as bishop of Jerusalem. Aristobulus (Rom 16:10), the brother of the apostle Barnabas, preached the gospel in Britain and died peacefully there.

The lives of these few are quite representative of the Seventy, who were instrumental in helping to plant the Church throughout the world. Many became bishops, but the names of all are numbered in heaven in the Book of Life as faithful servants of the Lord, apostles and foundations of the Church.





## CHRISTOLOGY

 The center of Christianity is the Lord Jesus Christ Himself. In fact, He is the centerpiece of all history. But the world struggles with His identity. Who is He? Is He God? Is He man? Both? The Scriptures clearly answer these crucial questions.

In his Gospel, John gives a specific and definitive explanation of who Christ is. “In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God” (1:1). John the Baptist, the Forerunner of Christ, revealed God the Word as “the Light” (1:7). “The Word became flesh and dwelt among us” (1:14). Who then is Jesus Christ?

1 He is God, for He was with God from before all time. Clearly, the One born Jesus of Nazareth did not have His beginning in His earthly birth. Rather, He is the eternal Son of God, without beginning. There never was a time when the Son of God did not exist.


2 He is also man, for He “became flesh.” He has become one of us, being like us in all things, but without sin.

3 He acts both as God and as man, doing what is appropriate for each nature in the unity provided by His one divine Person. Never does divine nature and activity become changed into human nature and activity. The two are in union without confusion. Christ does, however, “energize” human nature with divine energy so that human nature is redeemed from sin and death and brought into union with God. He thus “deifies” humanity.


The miracle of these incomparable truths is known as the knowledge of Christ or “Christology.” Many documents have expounded on Christology, but the definitive text is the Nicene Creed, the outcome of the first and second Ecumenical Councils in the fourth century. The Creed of Chalcedon (issued by the Fourth Ecumenical Council, AD 451) embodies other truths concerning the Incarnation of the Word. These creeds set the doctrinal fences outside of which we do not wander in our knowledge of Christ.

The apostle John bears witness to Christ: “That which was from the beginning, which we have heard, which we have seen with our eyes, which we have looked upon, and our hands have handled, concerning the Word of life—the life was manifested, and we have seen, and bear witness, and declare to you that eternal life which was with the Father and was manifested to us—that which we have seen and heard we declare to you, that you also may have fellowship with us; and truly our fellowship is with the Father and with His Son Jesus Christ” (1Jn 1:1–3).

We, too, bear witness to Jesus Christ. For since God became man, and we are united with Him in baptism, we experience His Incarnation in our lives. The miracle of Christology for us is that, as the Son of God became man, we in turn may participate in God.



## THE NEW BIRTH

 Early in His ministry, Jesus revealed the way to enter God's eternal Kingdom. We must be "born again" (3:3), a birth from above realized by water and the Spirit.

In His conversation with Nicodemus, Christ states, "Unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5). From the beginning, the Church has recognized the "water" to be the water of baptism, "the Spirit" to be the Holy Spirit. Therefore, the new birth consists of being joined to Christ in the water of baptism and receiving the Holy Spirit through anointing or "chrismation."


Salvation, then, is more than forgiveness of sins, more than a mental acceptance of Christ and His teachings. For in salvation we are given union with God through Christ, a right and full relationship with the Holy Trinity, and the restoration of our full humanity. All these things are accomplished through the Incarnation, the union of God and man in the Person of Jesus Christ. Salvation, then, is founded on a substantial union of the believer with Christ in His full humanity, a flesh-to-flesh relationship. Paul likens it to the joining of husband and wife (Eph 5:23-32).

Throughout their epistles, the apostles remind us the new birth is necessary for salvation. We die to sin; then, buried with Christ and risen with Him, we are united to Christ and to His body, the Church. We are cleansed, justified, and sanctified—all in baptism, "the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit" (Tts 3:5). Without our repentance and faith, however, immersion in water would be of no effect.

Some Christians bypass baptism and stress only faith. Why is the mystery of the water necessary? Because just as Christ actually died on a cross, was buried, and rose again—all through His faith and God's grace—so we must actually be immersed in the sacramental waters of baptism, made effectual through our faith and God's grace.

The basic form of baptism is simple. The person to be born again, joined to Christ, is immersed in the water three times in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit (see Mt 28:19). The first-century *Didache* teaches, "If you do not have running water, use whatever is available. And if you cannot do it in cold water, use warm. But if you have neither, pour water on the head three times—in the name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit."

In the new birth, a true mystery takes place. For in the sacrament of baptism, we die, going down into the water to be mystically united to Christ in His death, and we live again, rising up out of the water in His resurrected humanity. In short, we are born again.



*Promises of the Holy Spirit from the Old Testament.* In his sermon on Pentecost, St. Peter quotes the well-known prophecy of Joel, "I will pour out of My Spirit on all flesh" (2:17; see Joel 3:1). This promise was significant because under the old covenant, the gift of the Spirit had been given only to a few—the patriarchs, the prophets, and some of the judges. Certain leaders of Israel were indwelt with the Holy Spirit to accomplish their tasks. Joel, however, prophesied that the Holy Spirit would be given to all God's people, "all flesh." This was fulfilled at Pentecost, for Peter exclaims, "this [outpouring of the Spirit] is what was spoken by the prophet Joel" (2:16).

Other Old Testament prophets who speak of this same promise of the Spirit include Jeremiah (Jer 38:31-34) and Ezekiel (Ezk 36:25-27). In fact, the Ezekiel passage ties together the water and the Spirit in a prophetic vision of baptism and chrismation.

*Jesus promises the Holy Spirit.* Our Lord Jesus Christ repeatedly promised the gift of the Holy Spirit to His disciples. Early in His public ministry He said, “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ But this He spoke concerning the Spirit” (Jn 7:37–39). Jesus also said, “I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever” (Jn 14:16).

Christ promised the Holy Spirit would reveal truth to the Church. "When He, the Spirit of truth, has come, He will guide you into all truth; for He will not speak on His own *authority*, but whatever He hears He will speak; and He will tell you things to come. He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare *it* to you" (Jn 16:13, 14). Jesus says the Holy Spirit will bring glory to Him, Christ. This gives us an excellent means of testing whether or not acts attributed to the Holy Spirit do indeed belong to Him.


The last words of Christ before His Ascension include a promise: "John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now" (1:5). This word was fulfilled ten days later on the Day of Pentecost.

*How is the Holy Spirit given to us?* The people who heard Peter speak at Pentecost asked him how they might receive salvation. He answered, "Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins; and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit" (2:38). We repent (turn from our sins and toward Christ); we are baptized; we are given "the gift of the Holy Spirit," chrismation. That practice has never changed.

In Acts 8, Philip, the deacon and evangelist, preached in Samaria (vv. 5-8). Many believed and were baptized (v. 12). The apostles came and later confirmed these new believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (vv. 14-17). Here is the sacrament of chrismation following Holy Baptism. Later, the apostle Paul met some disciples of John the Baptist who had not been present when Peter spoke at Pentecost (19:1-7). They believed in Christ, "were baptized" (v. 5), and "the Holy Spirit came upon them" (v. 6), again through the hands of an apostle.

The promise of God includes both our union with Christ in Holy Baptism and the gift of the Holy Spirit at chrismation.

## ORDINATION

 Sacraments (or mysteries) are holy actions of the Church by which spiritual life is imparted to those receiving them. Ordination, which means “setting in place” or “selection by the outstretched hand,” is one of several Orthodox sacraments. It is extended specifically to bishops, presbyters (priests), and deacons, and generally to all through Holy Baptism.

1 *Bishops*. Christ in His ministry ordained or “set in place” the Twelve, assuring them, “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit, and *that* your fruit should remain” (Jn 15:16).

Both the New Testament and the church fathers recognize the Twelve as the first bishops or overseers in the Church. When Judas had fallen away and the disciples were considering his successor, Peter said, “Let another take his office” (Gr. *episkopen*, lit., “bishopric”; Acts 1:20). This bishopric was given to Matthias (Acts 1:25).

The apostles—these first bishops—in turn ordained presbyters and deacons.

2 *Deacons*. The account of the first ordination of deacons (Acts 6:1–6) is quite detailed. “Seek out from among you seven men of *good* reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom,” the apostles said, “whom we may appoint [Gr. *kathistemi*, “to set down or ordain”] over this business” (Acts 6:3). The manner of this appointment is clear: “they laid hands on them” (Acts 6:6). The ordination of deacons in the Orthodox Church takes place in this same manner today, through the laying on of hands by the bishop.

3 *Presbyters*. The first account of the ordination of elders or presbyters is in Acts 14:23. The apostles Paul and Barnabas “appointed [lit., “elected by stretching forth the hand”] elders in every church, and prayed with fasting,” then “commended them to the Lord in whom they had believed.” Similarly, Paul reminds his apostolic apprentice, Titus, “For this reason I left you in Crete, that you should set in order the things that are lacking, and appoint [set in place, ordain] elders in every city as I commanded you” (Tts 1:5).


The Titus passage brings to mind the first prayer the bishop prays over one being ordained to the Orthodox priesthood: “The grace divine, which always heals that which is weak and completes that which is lacking, elevates through the laying on of my hands this most devout deacon to be priest.”

The bishop continues to ask God to “fill with the gift of the Holy Spirit this man . . . that he may be worthy to stand in innocence before Your holy altar, to proclaim the Gospel of Your Kingdom, to minister the word of Your truth, to offer You spiritual gifts and sacrifices, to renew Your people through the laver of regeneration.”

A dramatic moment in the service of ordination comes when the candidate is led around the altar three times, kissing or venerating the four corners of the altar each time. This symbolizes his marriage to Christ, his death with Christ, and his willingness to serve the Church sacrificially after the example of his Master.

Ordination is seen as an eternal appointment, “for the gifts and the calling of God *are* irrevocable” (Rom 11:29). It is in this spirit that during each Divine Liturgy the priest prays for his bishop that “the Lord God remember him in His Kingdom always, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.”

Through the sacrament of ordination in His Church, Christ entrusts to the shepherd the very salvation of His people’s souls.



# THE BASIS OF GOD'S JUDGMENT

Even as believing Christians, we must not take the outcome of God's final judgment for granted. In every Divine Liturgy Orthodox Christians pray, "For a good defense before the dread Judgment Seat of Christ, let us pray to the Lord: Lord have mercy." Romans 2:2-16 describes God's judgment, showing how we can prepare ourselves for it. God's righteous judgment will be:

1 *According to truth* (2:2, 3): Nothing is hidden from God. He sees everything and knows the truth about each of us. One of mankind's great self-deceptions is to say, "Who sees us?" (Is 29:15) and think there is no judgment.

2 *According to impenitent hearts* (2:4, 5): An unrepentant or hard heart despises God's goodness, treasuring up the wrath of God at the judgment. A repentant heart, on the other hand, is grateful for God's patience and abides in Christ, practicing a lifetime of repentance, which produces confidence before Him at the judgment (1Jn 2:28).

3 *According to our deeds* (2:6-15): The "doing good" referred to in 2:7 is not an attempt to gain merit with God. Rather, it is the unity of intentions with actions, faith with works. Even unbelievers are rewarded for good works, apart from spiritual understanding (2:14, 15). But note the following:

- (a) "Doing good" means seeking God's glory (2:10), not our own glory; God's honor, not our own honor; the eternal reward of immortality, not reward here and now. "Doing good" is seeking first the Kingdom of God (Mt 6:33).
- (b) Good intentions alone, or faith without works, will not save (2:13). Simply to hear and not do is religion without reality. Those with true faith, "the doers" of the truth, practice virtue from pure and repentant hearts (Jam 1:21-27).
- (c) "By nature" (v. 14) people are inspired by and cooperate with God's grace. Therefore, good deeds are natural to us, whereas evil deeds are contrary to nature. Because we all fail, we need God's mercy (3:9-19). The presence of God's law in our conscience (2:15) condemns anything we do contrary to true human nature. Therefore, even Gentiles—people not under the Law of Moses, those who do not know of Christ—have an internal law from God, the natural law written in their hearts, according to which God will judge them. Melchizedek, Job, and the Ninevites are Old Testament examples of non-Jews judged to be righteous. Jews, then, have two laws from God—the Law of Moses and conscience—and are accountable to Him for both (2:12).
- (d) Those who are condemned *choose* to reject God. There is no automatic, fated condemnation: God's just judgment of us is based on our exercise of free will. Although sin impairs our powers, it does not destroy God's image in us, or our free will.
- (4) *By Jesus Christ* (2:16): In the day of judgment we are not judged directly by God the Father, whom we cannot see, but by the incarnate Son whom we do see, Christ Jesus (Acts 17:31; see Jn 3:16-21, 35, 36). Christ will judge on the basis of the light He Himself has given to each of us (Jn 1:9) and our response to His light (Jn 3:16-21). "The secrets of men" (Rom 2:16) are "the thoughts and intents of the heart" (Heb 4:12).



## THE LAW

One key to understanding Romans is to distinguish properly between the several ways Paul uses the word "law" in this epistle.

1 *The Mosaic Law* (2:12, 13) was written by God on tablets of stone (2Co 3:3, 7) and given to the Jews through Moses. This Law reveals God's righteousness to prepare men for the Messiah and for God's grace. When Paul speaks of "the law," he is most often referring to the Mosaic Law.

The Law is good, but cannot be kept. It is revelation from God, but not an end in itself. The purpose of the Mosaic Law is (a) to reveal the difference between good and evil; (b) to make the world accountable to God (3:19); (c) to manifest sin (3:20); and (d) to be a schoolmaster to lead us to Christ (Gal 3:24). Though it is not opposed to the grace of God, the Law cannot save us or make us righteous.

2 *The natural law* (2:14, 15) has been "written" by God in the heart of every human who has ever lived as the voice of conscience. It is a reliable guide to God's righteousness for those who are pure in heart; but it can be dulled or obscured completely by habitual sin.


3 *The law of works* (3:27) is our attempt to establish righteousness before God on the basis of keeping the natural law and/or the Mosaic Law. This law reveals human weakness and sin.

4 *The law of faith* (3:27) is the synergy, the cooperation, of our faithfulness with God's. It alone is the means by which we attain the righteousness of God. God has been revealing His righteousness by this law little by little since the time of creation, but now has revealed it fully in Christ. As both the natural law and the Mosaic Law bear witness to this law of faith, so those who become righteous by grace through faith fulfill in Christ both the natural and the Mosaic Law.

5 *The law of sin* (7:25; 8:2) is the power of the sinful passions in our mortal humanity. Passions—desires for such things as food, sex, praise, possessions—are natural; their sinful overindulgence is not. Carnal (physical) passions are especially strong. They aid the unnatural domination of the body over the soul. Sometimes carnal passions overpower the will. The law of sin coupled with the Mosaic Law breeds intense warfare between sin and righteousness. Only God's grace can bring victory for righteousness.

6 *The law of the Spirit* (8:2) is also called "the law of Christ" (Gal 6:2) and "the law of liberty" (Jam 1:25; 2:12). It is the power and life of the Holy Spirit active in those who by faith in Christ live out their baptism and chrismation to the fullest possible degree. This makes the righteousness of God gained by faith real in one's life. Coupled with the law of faith, the law of the Spirit defeats the law of sin and fulfills the natural and Mosaic Law. It orients one's innermost being toward God and restores the power of the spirit over the flesh, the soul over the body.

## JUSTIFICATION BY FAITH



For most of church history, salvation was seen as comprehending all of life: Christians believed in Christ, were baptized, and were nurtured in their salvation in the Church. Key doctrines of the faith centered around the Holy Trinity, the Incarnation of the Son of God, the atonement.

In Western Europe during the sixteenth century and before, however, justifiable concern arose among the Reformers over a prevailing understanding that salvation depended on human works of merit, and not on the grace and mercy of God. Their rediscovery of Romans 5 led to the slogan *sola fides*: justification by *faith alone*.

This Reformation debate in the West raised the question for the Orthodox East: Why this new polarization of faith and works? It had been settled since the apostolic era that salvation was granted by the mercy of God to righteous men and women. Those baptized into Christ were called to believe in Him *and* do good works. An opposition of faith *versus* works was unprecedented in Orthodox thought.

The Orthodox understanding of justification differs from the Protestant in several ways.


1 *Justification and the new covenant.* When Orthodox Christians approach the doctrine of salvation, the discussion centers around the new covenant. Justification—being or becoming righteous—by faith in God is part of being brought into a covenant relationship with Him. Whereas Israel was under the old covenant, in which salvation came through faith as revealed in the law, the Church is under the new covenant. Salvation comes through faith in Christ, who fulfills the law. We receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, who dwells in us, leading us to the knowledge of God the Father. Rather than justification as a legal acquittal before God, Orthodox believers see justification by faith as a covenant relationship with Him, centered in union with Christ (Rom 6:1–6).

2 *Justification and God's mercy.* Orthodoxy emphasizes it is first God's mercy—not our faith—that saves us. "Therefore, having been justified by faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ, through whom also we have access by faith into this grace in which we stand, and rejoice in hope of the glory of God" (Rom 5:1, 2). It is God who initiates or makes the new covenant with us.


3 *Justification by faith is dynamic, not static.* For Orthodox Christians, faith is living, dynamic, continuous—never static or merely point-in-time. Faith is not something a Christian exercises only at one critical moment, expecting it to cover all the rest of his life. True faith is not just a decision, it's a way of life. Thus, the Orthodox Christian sees salvation in at least three aspects: (a) I have been saved, being joined to Christ in Holy Baptism; (b) I am being saved, growing in Christ through the sacramental life of the Church; and (c) I will be saved, by the mercy of God at the Last Judgment.

Justification by faith, though not the major New Testament doctrine for Orthodox as it is for Protestants, poses no problem. But justification by faith *alone* brings up an objection. It contradicts Scripture, which says, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only" (Jam 2:24). We are "justified by faith apart from the deeds of the law" (Rom 3:28), but nowhere does the Bible say we are justified by faith "alone." On the contrary, "faith by itself, if it does not have works, is dead" (Jam 2:17).

As Christians we are no longer under the demands of the Old Testament law (Rom 3:20), for Christ has fulfilled the law (Gal 2:21; 3:5, 24). By God's mercy, we are brought into a new covenant relationship with Him. We who believe are granted entrance into His Kingdom by His grace. Through His mercy, we are justified by faith and empowered by God for good works or deeds of righteousness that bring glory to Him.



## HOLY BAPTISM

 *What is baptism?* Simply put, baptism is our death, burial, and resurrection in union with Jesus Christ. It is a rite of passage, given by Christ to the Church as an entrance into the Kingdom of God and eternal life.

The apostle Paul describes the promise of God in this “mystery,” as most Orthodox call it, most succinctly when he writes, “Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in newness of life” (Rom 6:4). To baptize (Gr. *baptizo*) literally means “to immerse, to put into.” Historically, the Orthodox Church has baptized by triple immersion, “in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19).

In the Old Testament, baptism was pictured by the passage of God’s people with Moses through the Red Sea (1Co 10:1, 2). John the Baptist, the last prophet of the old covenant, baptized in water for repentance (Mk 1:4; Acts 19:4). Jesus received John’s baptism, thereby transforming the water and baptism itself. In the new covenant, baptism is the means by which we enter the Kingdom of God (Jn 3:5), are joined to Christ (Rom. 6:3), and are granted the remission of our sins and the gift of the Holy Spirit (Acts 2:38).

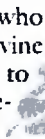
*What results from baptism?* From the start, the Church has understood baptism as:

1 *A first and second dying.* Our first dying with Christ in baptism was our death with Him on the Cross. In the fourth century, St. Cyril of Jerusalem instructed his new converts, “You were led by the hand to the holy pool of divine baptism . . . and each of you was asked if he believed in the Name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. And you made that saving confession, you descended into the water and came up again three times. In the very same moment you died and were born.”

The second death of baptism is continual—dying to sin daily as we walk in newness of life. St. Paul writes to the Colossians concerning baptism (Col 2:12) and concludes by saying, “Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry” (Col 3:5).

2 *The resurrection of righteousness.* This is our life in Christ, our new birth and entrance into God’s Kingdom (Jn 3:3), our “newness of life” (Rom 6:4). It is our being joined to Christ in His glorified humanity and indwelt by God Himself (Jn 14:23). Our relationship with God is not something static, a legal fiction given to us by a Divine Judge. Rather, this is a dynamic and real life in Christ, holding the promise of everlasting life. Our resurrection to new life now forms a prelude to the resurrection of our body at Christ’s second coming.

3 *An intimate and continual communion with God.* We are raised to new life for a purpose: union and communion with God. In this sense, baptism is the beginning of eternal life. For this reason, Peter writes that baptism now saves us (1Pt 3:21)—it is not the mere removal of dirt from our bodies, but provides us with “a good conscience toward God.”

Because of these promises, the priest prays for the newly baptized, thanking God, “who have given us, unworthy though we be, blessed purification through holy water, and divine sanctification through life-giving chrismation, and who now also have been pleased to bring new life to Your servant newly illuminated by water and the Spirit, and granted remission of sins—voluntary and involuntary.” 

## IS GOD FAITHFUL TO ISRAEL?



In the early chapters of Romans (1–8), Paul expounds the gospel of God’s righteousness for the salvation of all who believe in Christ, both Jews and Gentiles. In the middle chapters of the epistle (9–11), he grapples with the perplexing theme of the Jews’ unbelief in their own promised Messiah. This matter not only causes Paul great anguish, but also raises questions about God’s faithfulness to the Jewish people.

An accusation was circulating in the first century that God had not kept His promises to Israel—that He had unjustly abandoned His chosen people in favor of idol-worshipping Gentiles. Although many Jews believed in Christ, the majority of the Jewish people adhered to their old leaders and traditions. Meanwhile, increasing numbers of Gentiles were becoming Christians.

How was one to view these developments? What was God’s plan for Jews and Gentiles in this decisive period of the history of salvation? Why were most Jews unresponsive or opposed to the gospel while Gentiles were becoming the majority in the young Church?

Paul’s letter to the Romans indicates how important such questions were to Christians in the sixth decade of the first century. Has God been fair to Israel? Paul’s conclusion is yes: He has been faithful to Israel, and through them to the Gentiles. God’s unchanging faithfulness is seen in several ways.

1 *Through Paul* (Rom 9:1–3). God miraculously saved the Jewish zealot Saul (Acts 9:1–22), who later, as Paul the Apostle, confesses, “I am indeed a Jew” (Acts 22:3). The faithfulness of God to Israel and to the Gentiles is witnessed “in the Holy Spirit” (Rom 9:1) through Paul, who is even willing to be “accursed from Christ” (9:3) if by that Israel could be saved.

2 *Through Providence* (Rom 9:4, 5). God the Father shows His sovereign care for both Israel and the Gentiles through bestowing on them His adoption, glory, covenants, law, service (Gr. *latreia*, a reference to proper worship) and promises. The gospel itself came to “the Jew first” (Rom 1:16) and then to the Gentile.


3 *Through the patriarchs* (Rom 9:6–13). God has been faithful to Israel and thus to the Gentiles through His servants Abraham (v. 7), Isaac (v. 10), and Jacob (v. 13). As Isaac’s birth came by the promise of God (vv. 6–9), so the new birth comes to us by His promise. For just as it was possible to be in the nation of Israel but not truly a child of God; so being born into a Christian home, church, and culture does not *de facto* guarantee our faithfulness. We must, like Isaac, be born of God’s promise. For the Christian this new birth comes from the watery womb of baptism, with the injunction that we grow to serve the Lord with all our heart, mind, and strength.

4 *Through the prophets* (Rom 9:14–29). Beginning with Moses (v. 15) and including Hosea (vv. 25, 26) and Isaiah (vv. 27–29), the prophets reveal God’s faithfulness in His sovereign mercy and election of His faithful—Jew and Gentile alike. The “potter” has “power over the clay” (v. 21) “that He might make known the riches of His glory on the vessels of mercy” (v. 23).

We therefore conclude that God is faithful to Israel as He is to the Gentiles. But we also see that to benefit from His faithfulness to us, we must be faithful to Him.



## THE EUCHARIST



"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you: that the Lord Jesus on the *same* night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks [Gr. *eucharistesas*], He broke *it* and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.' In the same manner *He* also *took* the cup after supper, saying, 'This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink *it*, in remembrance of Me' (1Co 11:23-25).

With these words—quoting the words of Christ in Luke 22:19, 20—St. Paul instructs the Corinthians concerning the Eucharist, the giving of thanks. Some two thousand years after Jesus gave Himself "for the life of the world" (Jn 6:51), there are in Christendom at least three different interpretations of His words.

For the first thousand years of Christian history, when the Church was visibly one and undivided, the holy gifts of the Body and Blood of Christ were received as just that: His Body and Blood. The Church confessed this was a mystery: The bread is truly His Body, that which is in the cup is truly His Blood, but one cannot say *how* they become so.

The eleventh and twelfth centuries brought on the scholastic era, the Age of Reason in the West. The Roman Church, which had become separated from the Orthodox Church in 1054, was pressed by the rationalists to define *how* the transformation occurs. They answered with the word *transubstantiation*, meaning a change of substance. The elements are no longer bread and wine; they are physically changed into flesh and blood. The sacrament, which only faith can comprehend, was subjected to a philosophical definition. This second view was unknown in the ancient Church.


Not surprisingly, one of the points of disagreement between Rome and the sixteenth-century reformers was this issue of transubstantiation. Unable to accept this explanation of the sacrament, the radical reformers, who were rationalists themselves, took up the opposite point of view: the gifts are nothing but bread and wine, period. They only represent Christ's Body and Blood; they have no spiritual reality. This third, symbol-only view helps explain the infrequency with which some Protestants partake of the Eucharist.

What do the Scriptures teach concerning the Eucharist?

1 Jesus said, "This *is* My body . . . this *is* My blood" (Lk 22:19, 20). He never says these gifts merely symbolize His Body and Blood. Critics have charged that Jesus also said of Himself, "I am the door" (Jn 10:7), and He certainly is not a seven-foot wooden plank. The flaw in that argument is obvious: at no time has the Church ever believed He was a literal door. But she has always believed the consecrated gifts of bread and wine are truly His Body and Blood.

2 In the New Testament, those who receive Christ's Body and Blood unworthily are said to bring condemnation upon themselves. "For this reason many *are* weak and sick among you, and many sleep" (literally, "are dead"; 1Co 11:30). A mere symbol, a quarterly reminder, could hardly have the power to cause sickness and death!

3 Historically, from New Testament days on, the central act of worship, the very apex of spiritual sacrifice, took place "on the first day of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread" (Acts 20:7). The Eucharist has always been that supreme act of thanksgiving and praise to God in His Church.





## ✠ "WORKS" IN PAUL'S WRITING ✠

St. Paul uses the term "works" extensively in his letters, especially in Romans, Galatians, and Ephesians. By this term, he means human activities which he generally classifies in two categories:

1 *Dead works*: These can be works that are evil, such as murder, adultery, idol worship, and robbery—which the Scriptures also call "works of the flesh" (Gal 5:19) and obviously condemn. But in addition, dead works can be works—even good works—done for the wrong reasons. These are works that are good in themselves—such as fasting, giving money, and feeding the poor—but are done to call attention to oneself or to gain standing in the community. Selfish motivation turns good works into dead works. (The solution to this problem is not to cease fasting, giving, or helping, but rather to turn from the sin of self-glorification.)

2 *Living works*: These are deeds that are both good in themselves and done for a good purpose: the glory of God. Good works the Scriptures commend. Paul teaches they are an outgrowth of our salvation when he writes, "For we are His workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand that we should walk in them" (Eph 2:10). They contribute to our faith, as James teaches, "You see then that a man is justified by works, and not by faith only [or alone]" (Jam 2:24). When we do living works, we rely on the strength and grace of God, and we seek to bring glory to Him and not to ourselves through what we do.

Some have erroneously interpreted Paul, particularly in Romans 4, to be condemning all works. A careful reading of Romans, however, reveals Paul is not putting down works in general, but *dead works*. St. Maximos the Confessor, writing in the seventh century, states clearly the view of the Church concerning dead works:

Many human activities, good in themselves, are not good because of the motive for which they are done. For example, fasting, vigils, prayer, psalmody [the singing of hymns], acts of charity and hospitality are by nature good. But when performed for the sake of self-esteem [vainglory, self-glorification] they are not good. In everything we do, God searches out our purpose to see whether we do it for Him or for some other motive . . . quite clearly He bestows blessings only when something is done for the right purpose. For God's judgment looks not at the actions, but at the purpose behind them.

Thus, the Christian actively cultivates a habit of doing good works for the glory of God, and as a way of life. The writings of Paul are clear. If we are joined to Christ and cleansed from the dishonor of the past, we become "a vessel for honor, sanctified and useful for the Master, prepared for every good work" (2Ti 2:21). God sets us apart to Himself so we will be productive and useful to Him.

"Therefore, my beloved brethren," Paul tells the Corinthians, "be steadfast, immovable, always abounding in the work of the Lord, knowing that your labor is not in vain in the Lord" (1Co 15:58).

## THE CHURCH

One of the tragic aberrations of so-called modern religion is "Churchless Christianity." The assertion is that it is Christ who saves us, not the Church, so "all you need is Jesus."

Few who claim to be Christians would argue against the statement that it is Christ who saves. For He is the eternal Son of God who has assumed human flesh, and has done so "for us and for our salvation" (Nicene Creed). Thus Paul writes, "For *there is* one God and one Mediator between God and men, *the Man Christ Jesus*" (1Ti 2:5).

But because this Mediator established the Church which is His body, we who are joined to Him are joined to His Church as well. To say we love Christ, who is Head of the Church, and at the same time reject His body is to deny New Testament teaching.

*The Gospel and Acts.* The first use of the word "church" (Gr. *ecclesia*) in the New Testament comes in the Gospel of Matthew, when our Lord gives His approval of Peter's confession of faith and promises, "I will build My church" (Mt 16:18). Jesus Christ builds, and we cooperate with Him.

The Book of Acts amplifies what Jesus meant in Matthew 16. When Peter's sermon on the Day of Pentecost concludes, those present ask for guidance toward salvation: "What shall we do?" (Acts 2:37). Following Peter's word, they are baptized and join with the other believers, three thousand of them (Acts 2:38, 41).

Having been joined to Christ and His Church, these baptized believers begin living as the body of Christ. We find them looking after each other, using their personal resources for one another's care, continuing together in prayer and in the Eucharist (Acts 2:42-47). From this point on "the Lord added to the church daily those who were being saved" (Acts 2:47), and throughout Acts, we see the Church being built as the Gospel of Christ spreads.

*The Epistles.* Paul's instructions in his letters to the churches throughout the eastern Mediterranean clearly show what it means to be members of Christ: to be the Church and to be in the Church. Nowhere in the New Testament is Paul's teaching on the Church more fully disclosed than in Ephesians 4. He instructs us that:

1 The Church is *one*, "endeavoring to keep the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (4:3). There is one Church, one God, one doctrine, one baptism.

2 The Church is *people*, men and women who are energized by the Holy Spirit. For "to each one of us grace was given according to the measure of Christ's gift" (4:7). We are not all given the same gifts, but together we are equipped to do God's will.

3 The Head of the Church is *Christ*, "from whom the whole body [is] joined and knit together" (4:16).

4 The Church is "the *new man*" (4:24), the new creation, made to be righteous and holy. We are no longer alienated from God (4:18); we are being renewed together (4:23), "members of one another" (4:25).

The Church, then, is that place established by Christ where we each may become what we are created to be, maturing and being perfected, while the Church receives what it needs from each of us, so that it too is being perfected. The Church as the body of Christ carries us beyond our petty and worldly personal concerns, stretching our vision to the eternal and the heavenly as we ascend together to worship the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit.

## ✠ MARRIAGE ✠



The Bible and human history begin and end with marriages. Adam and Eve come together in marital union in Paradise, before the Fall, revealing marriage as a part of God's eternal purpose for humanity in the midst of creation (Gn 2:22–25). History closes with the marriage of the Bride to the Lamb (Rev 19:7–9), earthly marriage being fulfilled in the heavenly, showing the eternal nature of the sacrament.

Between these bookend events of history are the accounts of numerous other unions of man and wife. In the centuries-old Christian wedding ceremony used to this day in the Orthodox Church, several of these historic marriages are remembered: Abraham and Sarah (Gn 11:29–23:20); Isaac and Rebecca (Gn 24); Joachim and Anna, the parents of the Virgin Mary; and Zacharias and Elizabeth (Lk 1:5–58).

The marriage most prominently featured in the wedding ceremony, however, is the one at Cana of Galilee, described in the Gospel passage read at every Orthodox wedding (Jn 2:1–11). In attending this wedding and performing His first miracle there, Jesus Christ, the Son of God, forever sanctified marriage. As with all the Christian sacraments, marriage is sacramental because it is blessed by God.

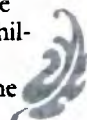
Parenthetically, we note that it is at this wedding at Cana that Mary first intercedes with Christ on behalf of others: “They have no wine” (Jn 2:3). Then she calls all humanity to obey Him: “Whatever He says to you, do it” (Jn 2:5).

In modern society, as well as in Christendom, a recurring debate concerns the tension between equality of the partners in marriage and office or order in marriage. Often, this tension has turned into a polarity between men and women, and sometimes even breeds hostility. Two elements in the Orthodox service of marriage serve to heal such tension, while making clear the teaching of the Church on the twin themes of equality and order concerning husband and wife.


As to equality, during the ceremony crowns are placed on the heads of the bride and groom. This act is symbolic of their citizenship in the Kingdom of God, where “there is neither male nor female” (Gal 3:28), and of their dying to each other (the crown is often a symbol of martyrdom; see Rev 2:10). The words of St. Paul on marital equality are clear: “The wife does not have authority over her own body, but the husband *does*. And likewise the husband does not have authority over his own body, but the wife *does*” (1Co 7:4). Husband and wife belong to each other as martyrs, they belong to God as royalty, and they are called to treat each other accordingly.

But within marital equality there is also order. The epistle passage read at the sacrament of marriage is Ephesians 5:20–33, an exhortation to husbands and wives that begins with a call to submit to each other (v. 21). The husband is to serve God as head of his wife, as Christ is Head of the Church (v. 23). The wife is to be subject to her husband as the Church is subject to Christ (v. 24). There is nothing here to suggest the wife is oppressed in marriage, any more than one would call the Church oppressed in relationship to Christ. He who calls us “brethren” (Heb 2:11) and “friends” (Jn 15:15) exhorts the husband to love his wife, to nourish and cherish her as He Himself does the Church (vv. 28, 29).

Thus, marriage is a sacrament—holy, blessed, and everlasting in the sight of God and His Church. Within the bonds of marriage, husband and wife experience a union with one another in love. We pray for them the fruit of children and one day the joy of grandchildren. And within the bonds of marriage there is both a fullness of equality between husband and wife and a clarity of order, with the husband as the icon of Christ and the wife as the icon of the Church.



# THE FOUR "ORDERS" IN CHURCH GOVERNMENT

 The New Testament teaches that all four "orders" which form the government of the Church—laity, deacons, presbyters, and bishops—are necessary to the proper functioning of the body of Christ. All four are clearly visible in Paul's first letter to Timothy.

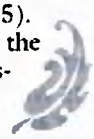
1 *The laity* are also called "saints" (Rom 1:7; 2Co 1:1; 1Ti 5:10), the "faithful" (Eph 1:1), and "brethren" (Col 1:2). The laity (Gr. *laos*) are the people of God, the "priesthood" (1Pt 2:4–10). Technically, the term "laity" includes the clergy, though in our day the word usually refers to those in the Church who are not ordained. It is from among the laity that the other three orders emerge.

2 *The deacons*, literally "servants," are ordained to serve the Church and must meet high qualifications (1Ti 3:8–13). The apostles were the first to take on the service tasks of deacons, and when the workload became too great they called for "seven men of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom, whom we may appoint over this business" (Acts 6:3). Besides serving the material needs of the people, deacons occupy a crucial role in the liturgical life of the Church.


3 *The presbyters*, or elders, are visible throughout the New Testament. Their ministry from the start was to "rule," "labor in the word," and teach true "doctrine" (1Ti 5:17) in the local congregation. Paul "appointed elders in every church" (Acts 14:23) and later instructed his apostolic apprentice, Titus, to do the same in Crete (Tts 1:5). From the word "presbyter" came the shorter form "prest," which finally became "priest." In no way is the ordained Christian priesthood seen as a throwback to or a reenacting of the Old Testament priesthood. Rather, joined to Christ who is our High Priest "according to the order of Melchizedek" (Heb 5:6, 10), the Orthodox priest is likewise a minister of a new covenant that supersedes the old.

4 *The bishop* is the "overseer" of the congregation and clergy in a given area. Often the terms "bishop" and "elder" are used interchangeably in the New Testament (Acts 20:17, 28), with the bishop being the leader of the elders. The qualifications for bishop listed in 1 Timothy 3:17 and Titus 1:7–9 underscore this role. Nonetheless, the bishopric is a specific office both in the New Testament and in the early Church. The Twelve were the first to hold this office (in Acts 1:20 "office" could literally be translated "bishopric") and they in turn consecrated other bishops to follow them. For example, Timothy and Titus are clearly of a separate order from that of elder (see 1Ti 5:17–22; Tts 1:5). Early records show James was bishop of Jerusalem by AD 49 and functioned accordingly at the first council there (Acts 15:13–22). Peter is on record as the first bishop of Antioch prior to AD 53, and later first bishop of Rome, where he was martyred about AD 65.

Perhaps the strongest early reference outside the New Testament to the presence of the four orders in church government occurs in the writings of Ignatius, bishop of Antioch from AD 67–107, the very heart of the New Testament era. To the church at Philadelphia (see Rev 3:7–13) he writes of "Christians [*laity*] at one with the *bishop* and the *presbyters* and the *deacons*" (italics added).

In the Orthodox Church, authority is resident in all four orders, with the bishop providing the center of unity. His authority is not over the Church, but within the Church. He is an icon of Jesus Christ, "the Shepherd and Overseer [lit., *bishop*] of your souls" (1Pt 2:25). Church leadership does not consist of one or more of the orders functioning without the others. Rather the Church, with Christ as Head, is conducted like a symphony orchestra, a family, the body of Christ, where all the members in their given offices work together as the dwelling place of the Holy Trinity. 

## THE SECOND COMING OF CHRIST

 The Orthodox understanding of the second coming of Christ is clear: The Lord Jesus Christ truly will return. His second advent is not a myth nor an empty promise, nor is it a metaphor. In fact, each time the Divine Liturgy is celebrated, the priest makes a proclamation to the Father that reveals how the Church responds not only to the second coming of Christ, but to all of His work.

Remembering this saving commandment [Jesus' command to eat His flesh and drink His blood] and all that has been done for us—the Cross, the Tomb, the Resurrection on the third day, the Ascension into heaven, the sitting at the right hand, and the second and glorious coming—we offer You Your own, from what is Your own, on behalf of all and for all.

Orthodox Christians also believe the New Testament revelation of the second coming of Christ is meant to stimulate our preparation for it, not our speculation about it. This explains the relative simplicity with which the Nicene Creed, the most universal confession of faith in all of Christendom, addresses Christ's return: "He . . . will come again, with glory, to judge the living and the dead, whose Kingdom shall have no end." The emphasis of historic Orthodoxy is *that* Jesus will come again, not *when* He will come again.

Thus, St. Paul writes, "denying ungodliness and worldly lusts, we should live soberly, righteously, and godly in the present age, looking for the blessed hope and glorious appearing of our great God and Savior Jesus Christ, who gave Himself for us, that He might redeem us from every lawless deed and purify for Himself His own special people, zealous for good works" (Tts 2:12-14).


There are signs of Christ's coming, to be sure. Jesus prophesied many events that would take place in the world prior to His return (Mt 24; Lk 21:7-36). But even these Gospel passages close with Jesus' exhortation to virtue, righteousness, and preparation for the Judgment. Christ and His apostles issue severe warnings, implicit and explicit, against second-guessing the time of His coming (Mt 24:3-8, 36, 43, 44, 50; Lk 21:7-9, 34; Acts 1:7; 1Th 5:1-3; 2Pt 3:8-10).

Much of modern Christendom has succumbed to divisive speculation regarding Christ's return. We are divided into premillennial, postmillennial, and amillennial camps. Breaking it down even further, there are pre-tribulation, mid-tribulation, and post-tribulation adherents. Christians part ways and new denominations spring up around interpretations of events that have not yet even come to pass!

Throughout history the Orthodox Church has steadfastly insisted on the reality of the second coming of Christ as a settled belief, but has always granted liberty on the question of when it will occur. In the last chapter of Revelation, Jesus speaks the words, "I am coming quickly," three different times (22:7, 12, 20). His coming will occur on a day and at an hour when it is not expected. The apostle John, the author of Revelation, concludes his book with a warning:

For I testify to everyone who hears the words of the prophecy of this book: If anyone adds to these things, God will add to him the plagues that are written in this book; and if anyone takes away from the words of the book of this prophecy, God shall take away his part from the Book of Life, from the holy city, and *from* the things which are written in this book (Rev 22:18, 19).

To confess the return of Christ is to stand squarely within the apostolic tradition. To add "when" to the promise of His coming is warned against in the Scriptures. As members of the Bride of Christ, let us attend instead to being ready.





# THE PRIESTHOOD — EARTHLY AND ETERNAL

A major theme of the Book of Hebrews is the contrast between the earthly, or Levitical, priesthood and the eternal priesthood of Melchizedek, which is fulfilled in Christ.

The Levitical priesthood, established by Aaron of the tribe of Levi, is limited simply because those who fill it are ordinary human beings. The Levitical priests carry out God's instructions and assist the people in their worship, but they cannot ultimately reconcile people to God.

The mysterious figure of Melchizedek, on the other hand, represents an entirely different kind of priesthood. Melchizedek appears in Genesis 14:18–20, long before the establishment of the Levitical priesthood. He is given no genealogy, and nothing is said of his death. He receives tithes from Abraham, implying he is superior to Abraham in rank—and by extension, superior to Abraham's descendants, the Levites. Melchizedek is not only a priest but a king as well. In this dual office he is able to reconcile the justice of God (the business of a king) with His mercy (the business of a priest). His name means "King of Righteousness," and his title "King of Salem" means "King of Peace." He maybe a theophany—a preincarnate appearance of Christ; at the very least he is a type of Christ, as the author of Hebrews explains in detail.

There are several specific points of contrast between the Levitical priesthood and the priesthood of Melchizedek, which is fulfilled in Christ.

## THE PRIESTHOOD OF LEVI

1 *Genealogical requirement:* The Levitical priesthood is limited to one tribe. It cannot transform mortal and corrupt humanity because it consists of mere men.

2 *Ordination:* The power given at ordination is incomplete. The Levitical priesthood is weak, its sacrifices have to be repeated, and it cannot perfect the worshipers. It cannot reconcile people to God nor give them the inner power to obey. The ordination is without direct confirmation from God.

3 *Term of office:* The Levitical priesthood is temporary. Since it is composed of mortal men, it requires many members.

4 *Moral and spiritual requirements:* These must be less than perfection, for the Levitical priests are all created beings subject to sin.

## THE PRIESTHOOD OF MELCHIZEDEK

As Melchizedek was without earthly genealogy, so is Christ by virtue of His virgin birth. He is God incarnate, immortal and sinless, and therefore His priesthood is able to transform humanity.

The power given at ordination is strong and effective. The power of Christ's priesthood is perfect and draws us near to God. His sacrifice is offered once for all. The Father Himself ordains the Son.

Since Christ is immortal, the priesthood of Melchizedek needs only one, eternal priest.

The requirement of perfect holiness is met in Christ, the only sinless One. He is more than mere man—He is the Son of God.

## HEALING



"Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven" (5:14, 15).

One of the great prophetic themes of the Old Testament concerning the promised Messiah is that the Father would send His Son "to heal the brokenhearted, to proclaim liberty to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind" (Lk 4:18; see also Is 49:8; 61:1). The ministry of Christ was one of numerous healings of "all kinds of sicknesses and all kinds of disease" (Mt 4:23). In addition, Jesus healed darkened hearts and minds as He released people from demonic oppression.

Like their Master before them, the early apostles participated in God's work of healing as well, attributing their miracles to the risen and ascended Christ. "Jesus the Christ heals you," Peter told a newly restored man who had been bedridden for eight years (Acts 9:34). St. Paul identified healing as a gift of the Holy Spirit (1Co 12:9). Thus, the New Testament foundation was established for the healing ministry to be a part of the sacramental life of the Church (Jam 5:14, 15).

*Healings throughout history.* The Orthodox Church has never believed or behaved as though the gifts of the Spirit or the healing miracles of Christ have somehow passed away. Did not Jesus promise, "He who believes in Me, the works that I do he will do also; and greater works than these he will do, because I go to My Father" (Jn 14:12)?

St. Ireneaus, writing at the close of the second century, speaks of miracles in his day: "Some drive out devils . . . some have foreknowledge of the future . . . others heal the sick through the laying on of hands . . . and even the dead have been raised up before now and have remained with us for many years." The writings of other Church Fathers speak often of miracles within the Church.

Quite widely known are the supernatural healings Christ performs through St. Seraphim of Sarov, an eighteenth-century Russian monk. He was blessed with the gift of healing during his lifetime, and even after his departure many people have been restored to wholeness at his graveside.

*The practice of the Church today.* To this day, the Orthodox practice of prayer for the sick follows the New Testament instruction of St. James. The Orthodox Church has a special service of healing, which may be performed at any time. The presbyter prays for the ill person, anointing him with oil and saying, "O Lord Almighty, Healer of our souls and bodies, who put down and raise up, who chastise and heal also, visit now in Your mercy our brother or sister, N., who is ill. Stretch forth Your arm, which is full of healing and health, and raise (*him/her*) up from this bed, and cure this illness. Put away the spirit of disease and every malady and pain and fever. And if (*he/she*) has committed sins and transgressions, grant remission and forgiveness, because You love mankind."

As Orthodox Christians we pray, neither commanding God to heal nor doubting His ability to heal, but pleading for His promised mercy on all who are ill.



## DEIFICATION



*Deification* is the ancient theological word used to describe the process by which a Christian becomes more like God. St. Peter speaks of this process when he writes, “As His divine power has given to us all things that *pertain* to life and godliness . . . you may be partakers of the divine nature” (1:3, 4).

What does it mean to partake of the divine nature, and how do we experience this? To give an answer, let us first address what deification is not, and then describe what it is.

*What deification is not.* When the Church calls us to pursue godliness, to be more like God, this does not mean that human beings become divine. We do not become like God in His nature. That would not only be heresy, it would be impossible. For we are human, always have been human, and always will be human. We cannot take on the nature of God.

St. John of Damascus makes a remarkable observation. The word “God” in the Scriptures refers not to the divine nature or essence, for that is unknowable. “God” refers rather to the divine energies—the power and grace of God that we can perceive in this world. The Greek word for God, *theos*, comes from a verb meaning “run,” “see,” or “burn.” These are energy words, so to speak, not essence words.

In John 10:34, Jesus, quoting Psalm 81:6, repeats the passage, “You are gods.” The fact that He was speaking to a group of hypocritical religious leaders who were accusing Him of blasphemy makes the meaning doubly clear: Jesus is not using “god” to refer to divine nature. We are gods in that we bear His image, not His nature.

*What deification is.* Deification means we are to become more like God through His grace or divine energies. In creation, humans were made in the image and likeness of God (Gn 1:26) according to human nature. In other words, humanity by nature is an icon or image of deity: The divine image is in all humanity. Through sin, however, this image and likeness of God was marred, and we fell.

When the Son of God assumed our humanity in the womb of the blessed Virgin Mary, the process of our being renewed in God’s image and likeness was begun. Thus, those who are joined to Christ, through faith, in Holy Baptism begin a process of re-creation, being renewed in God’s image and likeness. We become, as St. Peter writes, “partakers of the divine nature” (1:4).

Because of the Incarnation of the Son of God, because the fullness of God has inhabited human flesh, being joined to Christ means that it is again possible to experience deification, the fulfillment of our human destiny. That is, through union with Christ, we become by grace what God is by nature—we “become children of God” (Jn 1:12). His deity interpenetrates our humanity.

Historically, deification has often been illustrated by the example of a sword in the fire. A steel sword is thrust into a hot fire until the sword takes on a red glow. The energy of the fire interpenetrates the sword. The sword never becomes fire, but it picks up the properties of fire.

By application, the divine energies interpenetrate the human nature of Christ. When we are joined to Christ, our humanity is interpenetrated with the energies of God through Christ’s glorified flesh. Nourished by the Body and Blood of Christ, we partake of the grace of God—His strength, His righteousness, His love—and are enabled to serve Him and glorify Him. Thus we, being human, are being deified.



## ✠✠✠ CONFESSION ✠✠✠



Perhaps the most misunderstood sacrament of the Christian Church is confession. How did it originate? What role does a priest play? Is there a special procedure for confession? The Scriptures hold answers to these questions.

Concerning our sins, God's Word gives a marvelous promise: "If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us *our* sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness" (1:9). The faithful are to bring their sins to God in repentance and receive cleansing and forgiveness.

The early Christian community had a specific practice in this regard. People would stand and confess their sins to God in the presence of the whole congregation! Had not Jesus encouraged His followers to walk in the light together, to confront problems corporately, to "tell it to the church" (Mt 18:17)? Thus, James writes, "Confess *your* trespasses to one another" (Jam 5:16). But as time went on and the Church grew in numbers, strangers came to visit and public confession became more difficult. Out of mercy, priests began to witness confessions of sin privately on behalf of the Church.

Jesus gave His disciples the authority to forgive sin. "If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the *sins* of any, they are retained" (Jn 20:23; see also Mt 16:19). From the beginning, Christians understood that the grace of ordination endowed the shepherd of the flock with the discernment and compassion to speak the words of remission on behalf of Christ regarding the sins of those who confess and turn from sin. For God has promised to remove sin from us "as far as the east is from the west" (Ps 102:12).

"You did not choose Me," Jesus told the Twelve, "but I chose you and appointed [ordained] you" (Jn 15:16). To these same disciples He promised, "It is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit" (Mk 13:11). Whom God calls, He equips. Paul writes to Timothy, "Stir up the gift of God which is in you through the laying on of my hands" (2Ti 1:6). It is the grace of the Holy Spirit that enables the priest to serve God and the people.

Thus, the Church has encouraged her faithful: If you know you have committed a specific sin, do not hide it but confess it before coming to the Holy Eucharist. St. Paul wrote, "Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread and drink of the cup" (1Co 11:28), and "If we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged" (1Co 11:31).


King David learned a lesson regarding his sin that is recorded for our benefit. For about a year, he had hidden his sins of adultery with Bathsheba and the murder of her husband (2Kg 11:1—12:13). Then, confronted by Nathan the prophet, David repented from his heart and confessed his sin in a psalm that is used for general confession to this day (Ps 50). The joy of salvation was restored to him.

People ask, "Can't I confess to God privately?" Certainly, though there is no clear biblical basis for it. Even general confession occurs in the Church. In His mercy, God provides the sacrament of confession (more properly called the sacrament of repentance) to give us deliverance from sin and from what psychologists call denial. It is easy to pray in isolation yet never come clean. It is far more effective to confess aloud to God before a priest and benefit from his guidance and help.

Thus, we come before the holy icon of Christ, to whom we confess, and are guided by our spiritual father in a cleansing inventory of our lives. When we tell God all, naming our sins and failures, we hear those glorious words of freedom that announce Christ's promise of forgiveness of all our sins. We resolve to "go and sin no more" (Jn 8:11).



# LITURGY IN THE NEW TESTAMENT CHURCH

 Virtually all students of the Bible realize there was liturgical worship in Israel. Immediately after the giving of the Ten Commandments (Ex 20:1-17), instructions for building the altar were set forth (Ex 20:24-26). Then comes instruction concerning keeping the Sabbath (Ex 23:10-13), the annual feasts (Ex 23:14-19), and the various offerings and furnishings in the sanctuary (Ex 25:1-40). Following this, chapters 26-30 deal with such matters as the design of the tabernacle, the altar, and the outer court, the priests' vestments and their consecration, and instructions for daily offerings.

Liturgical worship is also found in heaven, which is to be expected, since God instructed Moses to make the earthly place of worship as a "copy and shadow of the heavenly things" (Heb 8:5; see Ex 25:40). Heavenly worship is revealed in such passages as Isaiah 6:1-8, where we see the prophet caught up to heaven for the liturgy, and Revelation 4, which records the apostle John's vision of heaven's liturgy.

The key to comprehending liturgy in the New Testament is to understand the work of the High Priest, our Lord Jesus Christ, who inaugurates the new covenant. Christ is "a priest forever" (Heb 7:17, 21). It is unthinkable that He would be a priest but not serve liturgically: "forever" suggests He serves continually, without ceasing, in the heavenly tabernacle. Further, He is called not only a priest but a liturgist: "a Minister [Gr. *leitourgos*, lit., "liturgist") of the sanctuary and of the true tabernacle which the Lord erected" (Heb 8:2). Christian worship on earth, to be fully Christian, must mirror the worship of Christ in heaven.

Moreover, Christ is "Mediator of a better covenant" (Heb 8:6). What is that covenant? In the words of the Lord, "This cup is the new covenant in My blood" (1Co 11:25). Just as the blood of bulls and goats in the old covenant prefigured Christ's sacrifice to come, so the eucharistic feast brings to us the fullness of His new covenant offering, completed at the Cross and fulfilled in His Resurrection. This once-for-all offering of Himself (Heb 7:27) which He as High Priest presents at the heavenly altar is an offering in which we participate through the Divine Liturgy in the Church. This is the worship of the New Testament Church!

Given this biblical background, a number of New Testament passages take on new meaning.

1 *Acts 13:2*: "As they ministered to the Lord [lit., "as they were in the liturgy of the Lord"] and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, 'Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul.'" We learn that (a) these two apostles were called by God during worship, and (b) the Holy Spirit speaks in a liturgical setting.


2 *Acts 20:7*: "Now on the first *day* of the week, when the disciples came together to break bread, Paul, ready to depart the next day, spoke to them." Communion was held each Sunday.

3 *Romans 16:16*: "Greet one another with a holy kiss." A kiss of greeting was common in this ancient culture. The "holy kiss," however, was an element of the Christian liturgy that signified the people of God were reconciled to one another, so that they might receive the Body and Blood of Christ in peace.

4 *Ephesians 5:14*: "Awake, you who sleep, / Arise from the dead, / And Christ will give you light." This is an ancient baptismal hymn, already in use by the time Ephesians was written. Other examples of creeds and hymns of New Testament times are seen in 1 Timothy 3:16 and 2 Timothy 2:11-13.


5 *Hebrews 13:10*: "We have an altar" reveals the continuation of the altar in New Testament worship.

6 *Revelation 1:10*: "I was in the Spirit on the Lord's Day." Many scholars believe John saw his vision of Christ during the Sunday liturgy, as the Lord appeared to him "in the midst of the seven lampstands" (Rev 1:13). Lampstands would be found in the Christian sanctuary just as they were in the Hebrew temple.





## THE ETERNAL KINGDOM

 Few saints have been blessed with a vision of heaven while still in this life. Isaiah saw heaven (Is 6:1–8), as did Ezekiel (Ezk 1:1–28), and the apostle John saw a new heaven—God’s eternal Kingdom revealed as a city (Rev 21:1–22:5).

When we read these passages, we note an abundance of mystical, apocalyptic imagery. But the strong similarities between these passages suggests an inspired consistency of reporting on the visions. The living creatures, the light, the cherubic beings, the throne, and the glory of the Lord all work together to unveil a Kingdom of celestial majesty and splendor.

While confessing with the prophet Isaiah and the apostle Paul that “eye has not seen, nor ear heard, nor have entered into the heart of man the things which God has prepared for those who love Him” (1Co 2:9), we nonetheless find, taking the Scriptures as a whole, that certain things can be said about the eternal Kingdom.

1 *The saints who inhabit God’s Kingdom live in active fulfillment of His eternal plan.* In the Kingdom, humanity becomes all it is meant to be. There is nothing at all in Scripture to suggest that eternal life means people passively afloat on huge white clouds strumming harps unto the ages of ages.

Originally created to inhabit Paradise, our first parents chose to sin against God and were expelled from the Garden. The Kingdom of God was closed to mankind (Gn 3:24). But God in His love called His creation back to Himself, speaking to us through the law and the prophets and ultimately through His incarnate Son. Through new life in Jesus Christ, we are brought back by God’s mercy into the new creation, His everlasting Kingdom. As kings and priests we will reign with Him forever (Rev 1:6).

2 *We experience a foretaste of the Kingdom in the Church.* The very first words of the Divine Liturgy spoken by the priest are, “Blessed is the Kingdom of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, now and ever and unto ages of ages.” The Church at worship enters or ascends to the heavenly Kingdom. For it is in the Church that we are seated “together in the heavenly places in Christ Jesus” (Eph 2:6) and are raised to “where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God” (Col 3:1).

In worship we join the heavenly hosts—the saints and the angels—in giving praise to our God. As the body of Christ, we participate with that “great cloud of witnesses” (Heb 12:1) surrounding us as we come to “the throne of God” (Heb 12:2). We come liturgically “to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, to an innumerable company of angels, to the general assembly and church of the firstborn *who are* registered in heaven, to God the Judge of all” (Heb 12:22, 23). With this heavenly vision, the Orthodox Church each Sunday remembers not only those in the parish but “all those who in faith have gone on before us to their rest.”

3 *Knowledge of the Kingdom motivates us to live in complete devotion to Christ.* In this life, we have a foretaste of the Kingdom that inspires us to seek its fullness. In Paul’s words, “For now we see in a mirror, dimly, but then face to face” (1Co 13:12). Worship is not a solitary act. Rather it is the Bride of Christ, the one Church—those on earth joining with those in heaven—giving thanks to our God and King, who has made us citizens of His magnificent domain.

The apostle John writes, “Beloved, now we are children of God; and it has not yet been revealed what we shall be, but we know that when He is revealed, we shall be like Him, for we shall see Him as He is. And everyone who has this hope in Him purifies himself, just as He is pure” (1Jn 3:2, 3).

