THE GENEALOGY OF CHRIST
A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

Sunday before Christmas
December 24, 2024
Revision B

Gospel: Matthew 1:1-25
Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-40

The genealogy of Christ from either Matthew 1 or Luke 3 is not used at all in the West and is largely scoffed at as being very dull reading. Similarly, the Epistle reading consists of a long list of people who might be referred to as God's Hall of Fame. This is also omitted in the Western lectionaries.

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Differences in Genealogies

A glaring difference between Matthew's and Luke's genealogy is that Matthew traces Christ's roots back to David through Solomon, whereas Luke traces Christ to David through Nathan, another of David's sons by Bathsheba (1 Chronicles 3:5). See the Appendix for a complete list of the genealogies as listed in Matthew, Luke, Kings, Chronicles and Genesis.

One will note that both Matthew's and Luke's genealogies trace Christ's line through Zerubbabel and his father Shealtiel (highlighted in Table I); where Zerubbabel was the governor of Judah following the return from exile in Babylon (Haggai 1:1, 2:2, Ezra 3:2). What is difficult to understand about these two genealogies is how both could be correct. How could Shealtiel have two fathers: Neir and Jeconiah (Matthew 1:12, Luke 3:27)? How could Joseph, the husband of the Virgin Mary, have two fathers: Heli (or Eli) and Jacob (Matthew 1:16, Luke 3:23)?

According to Jewish law, both can be correct. (See the Family Tree of Jesus). If Heli and Jacob were half-brothers with the same mother and Heli married but died childless, Jacob would be obligated to marry Heli's widow and raise up children for his brother (Deuteronomy 25:5-6). Thus, Joseph could have been the natural son of Jacob but the legal son of Heli. Julius Africanus[1] states that this is, in fact, what happened.

[1] Julius Africanus, Letter to Aristides, I, vi

Similarly, in the case of Shealtiel: Matthew traces Joseph back to David through the line of the reigning kings of Judah. Luke traces Joseph back to David through a royal line that wasn't the royal family. The problem occurred with Shealtiel who was born in captivity. Jeconiah (Jehoiachin) was taken into captivity at the age of 18 (2 Kings 24:8-12) but lived in prison until he was 55 years old (2 Kings 25:27-30). According to some commentators, Shealtiel was the natural son of Neir but married Jeconiah's only child (a daughter), making him the legal heir to the throne and the legal son of Jeconiah (Keil, quoted by Unger, Bible Dictionary).

One might ask why Matthew and Luke would record different genealogies. One answer to this is that Matthew effectively records Mary's genealogy while Luke records Joseph's genealogy. From Figure 1, Joseph and Mary had the same grandfather (Matthan), making them cousins. Thus, Matthew records Mary's genealogy under the name of Joseph's (natural) genealogy since the genealogies of women were not traced. In Mary's case, this makes sense since Jesus did not have a human father. Luke, thus, recorded Joseph's legal genealogy since Jacob raised up children for his brother Heli and Joseph was legally Heli's son.

These genealogies crisscross again with Shealtiel. Matthew follows the legal side since his genealogy traces the reigning kings. Luke follows the natural generation back to David. Since Matthew wrote his Gospel first, Luke can be seen as adding to what Matthew wrote for completeness. [Matthew wrote his Gospel in Hebrew before leaving for (black) Africa shortly after Pentecost. Nathaniel took a copy of it written in the original Hebrew to Thomas in India by c. 50 AD. Luke's Gospel was written a few years before Acts, which ends chapter 28 in 62 AD.]

Another aspect of Matthew's genealogy is the omission of some names found in 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles. Between Joram and Uzziah, 2 Kings and 1 Chronicles include three additional names (Ahaziah, Joash, and Amaziah, 1 Chronicles 3:11-12) and one additional name between Josiah and Jeconiah (Jehoiakim: 1 Chronicles 3:15) around the time of the Babylonian captivity. Most studies of the Kings of Judah deal with who reigned when; Matthew's and Luke's genealogy on the other hand addresses parentage, not a succession of kings. During this time also, there was a number of occasions where there were co-regencies: father and son reigning at the same time. In addition, one of the omitted names, Ahaziah, reigned for only one year. Thus, the matter of the missing names in Matthew's genealogy is complicated and can't be easily dismissed as an error. John Chrysostom refers[2] to a work by Jerome and another by Justin Martyr that explains the reason for these missing names in Matthew's genealogy. Neither of these works is easily available in English.

Eusebius of Caesarea, the Church Historian, stated[3] that the Gospel accounts are accurate, but also very intricate.

> "Some of those who are inserted in this genealogical table succeeded by natural descent, the son from the father; while others, though born of one father, were ascribed by name to another. Thus, neither of the Gospels is in error. Both these accounts (Matthew and Luke) are strictly true and come down to Joseph with considerable intricacy indeed, yet quite accurately".

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[2] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 3, footnote, in Philip Schaff, Post-Nicene Fathers, First Series, Volume 10, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody, MA, 1995.

[3] Eusebius of Caesarea, "Church History", I, vii, 1-10, Post-Nicene Fathers, Series II, vol. 1.

A textual error can be noted by comparing Luke's genealogy with the Hebrew text from Genesis. Luke includes the Patriarch Cainan in his genealogy (Luke 3:36), as does the Septuagint. However, the Hebrew Old Testament omits Cainan (Genesis 10). Probably the best explanation for this is that there is a copying error in the oldest extant Hebrew texts that is not in the oldest extant copy of the Greek Septuagint.

Irenaeus of Lyons compares[4] the purpose of the four Gospels using their opening statements: John states Christ's eternal generation from the Father, while Luke takes up Christ's priestly character. Matthew describes Christ's humanity and Mark begins with the fulfillment of prophesy in Christ.

> "John relates Christ's original, effectual, and glorious generation from the Father, thus declaring, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God' (John 1:1). Also, 'All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made' (John 1:3). For this reason, too, is that Gospel full of all confidence, for such is His person. But the Gospel according to Luke, taking up His priestly character, commenced with Zachariah the priest offering sacrifice to God. Now the fatted calf was made ready, about to be immolated for the finding again of the younger son (Luke 15:13-23). Matthew relates His generation as a man, saying, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1). And also, 'The birth of Jesus Christ was as follows' (Matthew 1:18). This, then, is the Gospel of His humanity. For this reason, the character of a humble and meek man is kept up through the whole Gospel. Mark, on the other hand, commences with a reference to the prophetical spirit coming down from on high to men, saying: 'The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophet Isaiah' (Mark 1:1-2), pointing to the winged aspect of the Gospel. On this account he made a compendious and cursory narrative, for such is the prophetical character. And the Word of God Himself used to converse with the ante-Mosaic patriarchs, in accordance with His divinity and glory; but for those under the Law he instituted a sacerdotal and liturgical service."

Genealogies: Why Bother?

The main point of both Matthew's and Luke's genealogy of Christ is to emphasize the Incarnation. Christ had been sent by the Father (1 John 4:10, John 8:18-29) and had offered His flesh as the "one sacrifice for sins forever" (Hebrews 10:12, 9:28, 1 John 2:2, Galatians 2:4). He is called "the first fruits of those who had died" (1 Corinthians 15:20-23); without Him, we are still in our sins (1 Corinthians 15:17). The Apostle John linked the spirit of the Antichrist with those who denied that Christ came in the flesh (1 John 4:3); he also stated that many false prophets (i.e. heretics) have gone out into the world (1 John 4:1).

John Chrysostom had to deal with many of these false prophets who denied that Jesus was truly a man. [If He weren't a man like us, He couldn't die in our place as the "one sacrifice for sins forever"]. They claimed He took a semblance of a body, but from heaven, similar to the

[4] Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, III, xi, 8.

theophanies that visited Abraham (Genesis 18). They claimed that He passed through the Virgin Mary's womb as water through a conduit or channel. Chrysostom answers this[5] by saying:

> "If this were so, He has nothing in common with us, but the flesh is of some other kind and not of the mass which belongs to us. How then was He of the root of Jesse? How was He a rod (Isaiah 11:1)? How the son of Man? How was Mary His mother? How was He of David's seed (John 7:42)? How did He take the form of a servant (Philippians 2:7)? How was the Word made flesh (John 1:14)? Therefore, that He was of us and of our substance and of the Virgin's womb is manifest from these things and from others beside".

Chrysostom continued[6] to say that by becoming a son of David, He was able to make God a father to us.

> "Hearing these things, arise and surmise nothing ordinary; but even because of this very thing, especially marvel: that being Son of the Un-originate God and His true Son, He allowed Himself to be called Son of David that He might make you son of God (Romans 8:14-19). He allowed a slave (i.e. Joseph) to be father to Him, that He might make the Lord Father to you, a slave".

Genealogy Traced Through Joseph

One will note that both Matthew's and Luke's genealogy trace Jesus' ancestry through Joseph and not Mary, even though Joseph had no part in Mary's conception. There are several reasons for this. The first and most obvious one is that it was not customary to trace the genealogy of women. Genealogies were traced through the head of the family -- the husband (compare Genesis 5 and 10).

A second reason for tracing Jesus' genealogy through Joseph is that he was Jesus' legal father according to Jewish law. However, this didn't really make any difference to the genealogical line since Joseph and Mary were cousins. They had a common grandfather: Matthan (Matthew 1:15). From Matthan back to David, the ancestry was the same for Mary as it was for Joseph; thus Matthew traces Mary's ancestry by tracing Joseph's.

Appendix A shows Jesus' family tree going back to Matthan. Note how there can easily be two distinct lines going back to David: one as mentioned by Matthew through Matthan, Luke mentions the other and going through Heli (or Eli) and Matthat. Either of these lines fulfills Jacob's prophecy for his son Judah: "The scepter shall not depart from Judah nor a lawgiver from his loins, until Shiloh comes; and to Him shall be the expectation of the Gentiles" (Genesis 49:10 OSB).

Matthew's genealogy lists three sets of fourteen generations from Abraham to Christ. Yet only thirteen are listed from the Babylonian captivity to Christ (if Christ is the thirteenth). There are two possible explanations for this. John Chrysostom thought[7] that Matthew had included the Babylonian captivity itself as one generation . Another possibility is the age

[5] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 6.
[6] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, II, 3.
[7] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 1

difference between Joseph and Mary: Joseph was 80; Mary was 15. They were at least a generation apart in age.

Leo the Great stated[8] that it is important for Christ not only to be perfect man, but also to be the descendant of David and Abraham. The first Adam and the last Adam had the same human nature. Wisdom built a house for herself in the body of the Virgin Mary, and thus, the Word became flesh. The form of God and the form of a slave came together into one person and the Creator of time was born in time.

> "But it is of no avail to say that our LORD, the Son of the Virgin Mary, was true and perfect man, if He is not believed to be Man of that stock which is attributed to Him in the Gospel. For Matthew says, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1). He follows the order of His human origin, so as to bring the lines of His ancestry down to Joseph to whom the LORD's mother was espoused. Whereas Luke going backwards step by step traces His succession to the first of the human race himself, to show that the first Adam and the last Adam were of the same nature. No doubt the Almighty Son of God could have appeared for the purpose of teaching, and justifying men in exactly the same way that He appeared both to patriarchs and prophets in the semblance of flesh. For instance, when He engaged in a struggle, and entered into conversation with Jacob (Genesis 32:24), or when He accepted hospitable entertainment, and even partook of the food set before Him (Genesis 18:1-15). But these appearances were indications of that Man whose reality it was announced by mystic predictions would be assumed from the stock of preceding patriarchs. And the fulfillment of the mystery of our atonement, which was ordained from all eternity, was not assisted by any figures because the Holy Spirit had not yet come upon the Virgin. The power of the Most High had not over-shadowed Mary: so that 'Wisdom has built a house for herself' (Proverbs 9:1 LXX) within her undefiled body, and thus, 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14). The form of God and the form of a slave coming together into one person, the Creator of times was born in time; and He Himself through whom all things were made, was brought forth in the midst of all things. The New Man was made in the likeness of sinful flesh, and took on Him our old nature, being consubstantial with the Father, and deigned to be consubstantial with His mother also, being alone free from sin. If Christ had not united our nature to Him the whole human race would be held in bondage beneath the Devil's yoke, and we would not be able to make use of the Conqueror's victory, if it had been won outside our nature."

Leo the Great also stated[9] that Christ had to have been fully human, like us, to have been crucified for us. He rendered void the force of the old bond, by paying it for all, because He alone of us all did not owe it. By one man's guilt all had become sinners; so, by one man's innocence all might become innocent.

> "The true birth of Christ, therefore, is confirmed by the true cross; since He is Himself born in our flesh, Who is crucified in our flesh, which, as no sin entered into it, could not have been mortal, unless it had been that of our race. But

[8] Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Letters, XXXI, 2.
[9] Leo the Great, Pope of Rome, Letters, CXXXIX, 3.

> in order that He might restore life to all, He undertook the cause of all and rendered void the force of the old bond, by paying it for all, because He alone of us all did not owe it: that, as by one man's guilt all had become sinners, so by one man's innocence all might become innocent, righteousness being bestowed upon men by Him Who had undertaken man's nature. For in no way is He outside our true bodily nature, of Whom the Evangelist in beginning his story says, 'the book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1), with which Paul's teaching agrees, when he says 'of whom *are* the fathers and from whom, according to the flesh, Christ *came,* who is over all, *the* eternally blessed God' (Romans 9:5), and so to Timothy 'Remember that Jesus Christ, of the seed of David, was raised from the dead according to my gospel'" (2 Timothy 2:8).

The Virgin Birth Was Concealed

Not everyone knew that the Virgin Mary was a virgin when she gave birth to Jesus. This was done to protect both her and Joseph from the wrath of the Jewish leaders.

Another reason for tracing Christ's genealogy through Joseph was to conceal the Virgin birth. Elizabeth and Zachariah knew (Luke 1:41-45), as did Joseph and the two midwives who attended Mary at Jesus' birth. But the shepherds aren't told these details (Luke 2:8-20). Early historical accounts of Joseph and Mary's life reveal that some of the priests had been told of the Virgin birth, but they don't seem to have believed it. For more details see the Feast Day for the Nativity of Mary.

According to Mosaic Law, if a betrothed virgin willingly had sex with someone, both she and her lover were to be stoned to death for adultery (Deuteronomy 22:23-24). In order to protect the Virgin Mary from suspicion, Joseph was directed to raise the Holy Child as his own Son (Matthew 1:18-25). This did create some controversy in that Joseph was presumed by the priests to have "defiled" the Virgin Mary before their marriage. Both Joseph and Mary denied any wrong doing under oath before the priests in Jerusalem and the "waters of conviction" were applied to them both. [The "water of conviction" was holy water used in the Old Testament to discern extra-marital affairs before the Lord in the Temple. See Numbers 5:11-31.] When neither Joseph nor Mary was "convicted", the priest stated, "If the Lord God did not disclose your sin, neither will I judge you". Thus the priests were presented with evidence of the Virgin birth, but they do not seem to have grasped it.

John Chrysostom stated[10] that the reason for concealing this from the Jewish leaders was that, "If after so many miracles, they still called Him son of Joseph (i.e. and not Son of God), how before the miracles would they have believed that He was born of a virgin?" (Homily III on Matthew 1). Ignatius of Antioch stated[11] that the virginity of Mary after conception and after the birth of her Son was hidden from the Prince of this world also. (Ad Ephesians 19:1)

In our Gospel reading, we notice Joseph's difficulty when he discovered Mary was pregnant. From historical sources, Joseph was away from home for about six months building

[10] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 1.
[11] Ignatius of Antioch, Ad Ephesians, 19, 1.

houses near the Sea of Galilee beginning just before the Annunciation. During this period, Mary visited Elizabeth, her cousin, for three months before the birth of John the Baptist. Upon his arrival home, Joseph was confronted with a very obviously pregnant Mary, who was six months along.

This put Joseph in a major dilemma. Mary had been born of aged parents similar to John the Baptist. Prior to the conception of Mary by Anna, her mother, her parents had vowed to the Lord that if He gave them a child, they would dedicate the child to the Lord's service just as Hannah did with the Prophet Samuel (1 Samuel 1:10-28). And thus Mary grew up living in the Temple just as Samuel did.

By the time Mary was twelve, both her parents had died of old age, leaving her an orphan. She, herself, had also vowed to the Lord to serve Him in fasting and prayer just like the Prophetess Anna did at that time (Luke 2:36-38). By the time Mary reached age fourteen, however, the priests did not like the idea of a young girl living in the Temple since hanky-panky could cause the Temple to be defiled.

After much discussion they consulted the Lord in the Holy of Holies and Joseph, a recent widower was selected to be her husband/caretaker so that she could continue her vow as she wished without causing embarrassment to them. Joseph responded by saying, "I am an old man and have children. Why do you hand over to me this infant who is younger than my grandsons?" Yet he did as he was instructed, and intended to honor Mary's vow.

But now, seeing her six months pregnant, he didn't know what to do. Mary and her five young virgin friends testified that no one had touched Mary and that they had been continuing in prayer and fasting since Joseph left. Joseph was very self-restrained; he did not get passionate or jealous. "Being a just man, he did not want to make her a public example (i.e. death by stoning) and was considering divorcing her secretly" (Matthew 1:19). While he considered this, an angel appeared to him in a dream and explained things to him (Matthew 1:20-23). The child Mary was carrying was the Messiah and was conceived of the Holy Spirit! Thus the angel addressed Joseph as "son of David" and commanded Joseph to call His name Jesus (meaning "Savior"). By Joseph naming the child, Joseph assumed the role of His father and publicly accepted Jesus as his own son, thus deflecting suspicion regarding Jesus' true parentage.

Chrysostom comments[12] on this to note Joseph's wakefulness to the things of God in his willingness to do what the angel asked.

> "Do you see his obedience and his submissive mind? Do you see a soul truly awakened and in all things incorruptible? For neither when he suspected something amiss could he endure to keep the Virgin with him; nor yet when he was freed from this suspicion, could he bear to cast her out, but rather he keeps her with him and ministers to the whole dispensation.

Anyone Who Was Interested Could Have Discovered What Was Concealed

[12] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, V, 5.

John Chrysostom stated[13] that Christ's birth in Bethlehem was a Divine dispensation; He didn't leave Bethlehem immediately either to give people time to investigate everything exactly. When people refused to see what had happened, Christ hid Himself for 30 years; then He revealed Himself again from a more glorious beginning at the Jordan with John the Baptist. Just so that no one could say "We didn't know when or where He was born", the wise men came from Persia knowing just that. No one else has come from Bethlehem as a Ruler except Christ; so, there is no excuse for missing Him. By investigating everything carefully, one could determine that Christ was both a man as Ruler, and God Who created the universe.

> "But why, if He was to come from Bethlehem, did He live in Nazareth after the birth, and obscure the prophecy?" No, He did not obscure it, but unfolded it the more. For the fact, that while His mother had her constant residence in Nazareth, He was born in Bethlehem, shows the thing to have been done by a Divine dispensation. And let me add: neither did He move from Bethlehem immediately after His birth, but stayed forty days, giving opportunity to them that were inquisitive to examine all things accurately. Because there were many things to move people to make such an inquiry, at least if they had been minded to pay attention to them. Thus, at the coming of the wise men the whole city of Jerusalem was in a flutter, and together with the city the king, and the prophet was brought forward, and a court of high authority was summoned (Matthew 2:1-5); and many other things too were done there, all which Luke relates minutely. Such were what concerns Anna, Simeon, Zachariah, the angels, and the shepherds; all which things were to the attentive sufficient to give hints for ascertaining what had taken place (Luke 2). For if the wise men, who came from Persia, were not ignorant of the place, much more might they, who lived there, acquaint themselves with these things."
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> "Christ manifested Himself then from the beginning by many miracles, but when they would not see, He hid Himself for 30 years, to be again revealed from another more glorious beginning. For it was no longer the wise men, nor the star, but the Father from above that proclaimed Him at the streams of Jordan. The Spirit likewise came upon Him, guiding that voice to the head of Him just baptized; and John, with all plainness of speech, cried out everywhere in Judaea. Inhabited and waste country alike were filled with that kind of doctrine; and the witness too of the miracles, and earth, sea, and the whole creation, uttered in His behalf a distinct voice. But at the time of the birth, just so many things happened as were fitted quietly to point out Him that came. Thus, in order that the Jews might not say, 'We don't know when He was born, nor where', both all these events in which the wise men were concerned were brought about by God's providence. Similarly, the rest of the things which we have mentioned; so that they would have no excuse to plead, for not having inquired into that which had come to pass. But note also the exactness of the prophecy. For it does not say, 'He will abide' in Bethlehem, but 'He will come out' from there. So that this too was a subject of prophecy, His being simply born there. Some of them, however, being past shame, say that these things were spoken of Zerubbabel. But how can they be right? For surely 'his goings forth' were not 'from of old, from everlasting' (Micah 5:2). And how can that suit him which is said at the beginning, 'Out of you shall He come forth' (Matthew 2:6). Zerubbabel was

[13] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, VII, 2.

not born in Judaea, but in Babylon, whence also he is called Zorobabel, because he had his origin there. And as many as know the Syrians' language know what I say."

"And together with what has been said, all the time also since these things is sufficient to establish the testimony. For what saith he? 'You are not the least among the princes of Judah' (Matthew 2:6), and he adds the cause of the pre-eminence, saying, 'out of you shall He come'. No one else has made that place illustrious or eminent, except Him alone. For example: since that birth, men come from the ends of the earth to see the manger, and the site of the shed. And this the prophet foretold aloud from the first, saying, 'You are not the least among the princes of Judah'; that is, among the heads of tribes. By which expression he comprehended even Jerusalem[14]. But not even so have they paid attention, although the advantage passes on to themselves. Because of this the prophets at the beginning say nowhere so much of His dignity, as touching the benefit which accrued to them by Him. For when the Virgin was bearing the child, Matthew said, 'You shall call His name Jesus'; and he gives the reason, 'for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). The wise men also said not, 'Where is the Son of God?' but 'He that is born King of the Jews' (Matthew 2:2). And here again it is not affirmed, 'Out of you shall come forth' the Son of God, but 'a Ruler, that shall shepherd my people Israel' (Matthew 2:6). It was necessary to converse with them at first, setting out in a tone of very exceeding condescension, lest they should be offended; and to preach what related to their salvation in particular, that hereby they might be the rather won over. At any rate, all the testimonies that are first cited, and for which it was the season immediately at the time of the birth, say nothing great, nothing lofty concerning Him. Those subsequent to the manifestation of the miracles are different; for these speak more distinctly concerning His dignity. For instance, when after many miracles children were singing hymns to Him, hear what the prophet said, 'Out of the mouth of babes and sucklings You hast perfected praise' (Matthew 21:16, Psalm 8:2). And again, 'I will consider the Heavens, the works of Your fingers' (Psalm 8:3); which signifies Him to be Maker of the universe. And the testimony too, which was produced after the ascension, manifests His equality with the Father; thus saying, 'The Lord said unto my Lord, sit on My Right Hand' (Psalm 110:1, Acts 2:34). And Isaiah also said, 'He that riseth up to rule over the Gentiles, in Him shall the Gentiles trust'" (Isaiah 11:10, Romans 15:12)

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[15] that although Jesus means "Savior", his Name was veiled due to the murderous spirit of the Jews. Even before He was born, He had a people, since He has existed from eternity.

"There is One Lord Jesus Christ, a wondrous name, indirectly announced beforehand by the Prophets. For Isaiah the Prophet says, 'Behold, your Savior has come to you, having his reward and his work before his face' (Isaiah 62:11 LXX). Now Jesus in Hebrew is by interpretation Savior. For the Prophetic gift, foreseeing the murderous spirit of the Jews against their Lord, veiled His name, lest from knowing it plainly beforehand they might plot against Him readily. But

[14] That is, Bethlehem was greater than Jerusalem!

[15] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, X, 12.

> He was openly called Jesus not by men, but by an Angel, who came not by his own authority, but was sent by the power of God. He said to Joseph, 'Do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus' (Matthew 1:20-21). And immediately he renders the reason of this name, saying, 'for He shall save His people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). Consider how He who was not yet born could have a people, unless He was in being before He was born. This also the Prophet says in His person, 'From my mother's womb he has called My Name' (Isaiah 49:1 LXX); because the Angel foretold that He should be called Jesus. Again, concerning Herod's plot again, he says, 'He has made my mouth as a sharp sword, and he has hidden me under the shadow of his hand'" (Isaiah 49:2 LXX).

John of Damascus stated[16] that the Virgin Mary remained a virgin after the birth of Christ. There are three reasons for this: (1) The term "first-born" does not imply the birth of others and could refer to "only begotten". (2) The word "till" refers only to the appointed time, not to subsequent times. (3) After such a miraculous birth, it is not a chaste mind that thinks of sex with other men.

> "The ever-virgin One thus remains even after the birth still virgin, having never at any time up till death consorted with a man. For although it is written, Joseph 'did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son' (Matthew 1:25), yet note that he who is first-begotten is first-born even if he is only-begotten. For the word 'first-born' means that he was born first but does not at all suggest the birth of others. And the word 'till' signifies the limit of the appointed time but does not exclude the time thereafter. For the Lord says, 'And lo, I am with you all the days until the completion of the age' (Matthew 28:20), not meaning thereby that He will be separated from us after the completion of the age. Paul, indeed, says, 'And thus we shall always be with the Lord' (1 Thessalonians 4:17), meaning after the general resurrection."
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> "For could it be possible that Mary, who had borne God and from experience of the subsequent events had come to know the miracle, should receive the embrace of a man? God forbid! It is not the part of a chaste mind to think such thoughts, far less to commit such acts."

Matthew concludes the Gospel lesson by saying that Joseph "did not know her until she brought forth her firstborn Son" (Matthew 1:25). Chrysostom comments[17] on this as follows:

> "He has used the word *until* not that you should suspect that afterwards he did know her, but to inform you that before the birth, the Virgin was wholly untouched by man. But why then, it may be said, has he used the word *until*? It is usual in Scripture to do this, and to use the expression without reference to limited times. For so with respect to the ark it is said 'The raven did not return until the water was dried from off the earth' (Genesis 8:7 LXX). And yet the raven did not return even after that time. And when discoursing also of God, the Scripture says: 'From age until age, Thou art' (Psalm 90:2 LXX), not as fixing limits in this case. And again when it is preaching the Gospel beforehand, it says:

[16] John of Damascus, Exposition of the Orthodox Faith, IV, 14.
[17] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, V, 5.

> 'In His days shall righteousness spring up and abundance of peace until the moon be removed' (Psalm 72:7 LXX). It does not set a limit to this fair part of creation. So then here likewise it uses the word *until* to make certain what was before the birth; but as to what follows, it leaves you to make the inference." Chrysostom continued to say that Joseph kept Mary a virgin the rest of his life.

He Will Be Called Emmanuel

"So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel', which is translated, 'God with us'" (Matthew 1:22-23).

Hilary of Poitiers pointed out[18] that when Christ emptied Himself and took on human nature, the weakness of His humanity did not affect His Deity. The purpose was not that the Godhead should be lost, but that man should be born to God. When He asked to be glorified (John 17:1-5), He is asking that His humanity might be elevated to what His Deity was before the world began.

> "This timeless and ineffable generation of the Only-begotten, which transcends the perception of human understanding, we are taught the mystery of God born to be man from the womb of the Virgin. This shows how according to the plan of the Incarnation, when He emptied Himself of the form of God and took the form of a servant, the weakness of the assumed humanity did not weaken the divine nature. That Divine power was imparted to humanity without the virtue of divinity being lost in the human form. For when God was born to be man the purpose was not that the Godhead should be lost, but that, the Godhead remaining, man should be born to be God. Thus, Emmanuel is His name, which means 'God with us' (Matthew 1:23), that God might not be lowered to the level of man, but man raised to that of God. When He asks that He may be glorified (John 17:5), it is not a glorifying of His divine nature, but of the lower nature He assumed. For He asks for that glory which He had with God before the world was made."

Cyril of Jerusalem stated[19] that Matthew addressed primarily Jesus' humanity according to the flesh that he received from the Virgin Mary. Jesus has two fathers: David according to the flesh, and God from eternity past.

> "If you hear the Gospel saying, 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1), understand 'according to the flesh'. For He is the Son of David at the end of the ages (Hebrews 9:26), but the Son of God before all ages, without beginning. The one, which before He had not, He received from the Virgin Mary; but the other, which He has, He has eternally as begotten of the Father. Christ has two fathers: one, David, according to the flesh, and one, God, His Father in a Divine manner. As the Son of David, He is subject to time, and to handling, and to genealogical descent. But as Son according to the Godhead, He is subject neither to time nor to place, nor to genealogical descent: for 'Who will declare His generation?' (Isaiah

[18] Hilary of Poitiers, On the Trinity, X, 7.
[19] Cyril of Jerusalem, Catechetical Lectures, XI, 5.

53:8) God is a Spirit (John 4:24); He who is a Spirit has been spiritually begotten, as being incorporeal, an inscrutable and incomprehensible generation. The Son Himself says of the Father, 'The Lord has said to Me, 'You *are* My Son, today I have begotten You'' (Psalm 2:7). Now this today is not recent, but eternal: a timeless today, before all ages. 'I have begotten You from the womb before the morning'" (Psalm 110:3 LXX).

Leo the Great pointed out[20] some aspects of the Incarnation. Isaiah's prophesy, "Who shall declare His generation?' applies both to His eternal birth from the Father before time, and to His birth of the Virgin Mary. Mary's virginity was violated neither by her conception nor by her giving birth to Christ. The Incarnation produced one Person Who is truly human and truly Divine. Yet the two natures of Christ are in such close union that Christ is just one Son.

"The things which are connected with the mystery of today's solemn feast are well known to you, dearly-beloved, and have frequently been heard. But as yonder visible light affords pleasure to eyes that are unimpaired, so to sound hearts does the Savior's nativity give eternal joy; and we must not keep silent about it, though we cannot treat of it as we ought. For we believe that what Isaiah says, 'who shall declare his generation?' (Isaiah 53:8) applies not only to that mystery, whereby the Son of GOD is co-eternal with the Father, but also to this birth whereby 'the Word became flesh' (John 1:14). The Son of GOD, equal and of the same nature from the Father and with the Father, Creator and Lord of the Universe, is completely present everywhere, and completely exceeds all things. In the due course of time, which runs by His own disposal, He chose for Himself this day on which to be born of the blessed virgin Mary for the salvation of the world, without loss of the mother's honor. For her virginity was violated neither at the conception nor at the birth: 'that it might be fulfilled, which was spoken by the Lord through Isaiah the prophet. 'Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel, which is translated, "God with us"' (Matthew 1:23). For this wondrous child-bearing of the holy Virgin produced in her offspring one person which was truly human and truly Divine. Neither substance so retained their properties that there could be any division of persons in them. Nor was the creature taken into partnership with its Creator in such a way that the One was the in-dweller, and the other the dwelling, but so that the one nature was blended with the other. Although the nature which is taken is one, and that which takes is another, yet these two diverse natures came together into such close union that it is one and the same Son. He says both that, as true Man, 'He is less than the Father' (John 14:28), and that, as true God, 'He is equal with the Father'" (John 10:30).

Irenaeus of Lyons stated[21] that the Holy Spirit both proclaimed through the prophets what was to come, and also interpreted this through the elders. The prophets described the Incarnation, and they clearly made it known that Christ would be both God and man. The Apostles and elders understood what the prophets wrote, and proclaimed the virgin birth, His humanity and His deity.

[20] Leo the Great, Sermons, XXIII, 1.

[21] Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, III, xxi, 4.

> For the one and the same Spirit of God, who proclaimed by the prophets what and of what sort the Advent of the Lord should be, did by these elders give a just interpretation of what had been truly prophesied. By the Apostles, He Himself announced that the fullness of the times of the adoption had arrived, that the kingdom of heaven had drawn near, and that He was dwelling within those that believe on Him who was born Emmanuel of the Virgin. To this effect they testify, saying, 'After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 1:18). The angel Gabriel said to her, 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). The angel said to Joseph in a dream, 'So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet Isaiah, saying: Behold, the virgin shall be with child' (Matthew 1:22-23). But the elders have thus interpreted what Isaiah said: 'And the Lord again spoke to Ahaz, saying, "Ask for yourself a sign of the Lord your God, in the depth or in the height". And Ahaz said, "I will not ask, neither will I tempt the Lord". And he said, "Hear now, O house of David; is it a little thing for you to contend with men? And how do ye contend against the Lord? Therefore, the Lord himself shall give you a sign; behold, a virgin shall conceive in the womb, and shall bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Emmanuel. Curds and honey, shall he eat, before he knows either to prefer evil *or* choose the good. For before the child shall know good or evil, he refuses evil, to choose the good"' (Isaiah 7:10-16 LXX). Carefully, then, has the Holy Spirit pointed out, by what has been said, His birth from a virgin, and His essence, that He is God (for the name Emmanuel indicates this). He shows that He is a man, when He says, 'Curds and honey shall He eat' (Isaiah 7:15). In that He terms Him a child also, in saying, 'before He knows good and evil' (Isaiah 7:16); for these are all the tokens of a human infant. But that He 'will not consent to evil, that He may choose that which is good' — this is proper to God. By the fact, that He shall eat curds and honey, we should not understand that He is a mere man only; nor, on the other hand, from the name Emmanuel, should suspect Him to be God without flesh.

Ambrose of Milan compared[22] the action of the Holy Spirit on the Virgin Mary to create Christ's humanity to His action on the Font in Baptism to create the new birth. This should elevate Baptism in our minds to something more than just washing with water (1 Peter 3:21).

> "So, then, having obtained everything, let us know that we are born again, but let us not say, 'How are we born again?' Have we entered a second time into our mother's womb and been born again? I do not recognize here the course of nature. But here there is no order of nature, where is the excellence of grace. Again, it is not always the course of nature which brings about conception, for we confess that Christ the Lord was conceived of a Virgin, and reject the order of nature. For Mary conceived not of man, but was with child of the Holy Spirit, as Matthew says: 'She was found with child of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 1:18). Then, the Holy Spirit came down upon the Virgin, wrought the conception, and

[22] Ambrose of Milan, Concerning the Mysteries, IX, 59. The "mysteries" is what the Early Church called the Eucharist.

effected the work of generation. Surely, we must not doubt that coming down upon the Font, or upon those who receive Baptism, He also effects the reality of the new birth."

Justin Martyr stated[23] that circumcision, the Law and the sacrificial system began with Moses due to the hardness of heart of His people. These all have an end in Christ. Instead we have a spiritual circumcision through baptism like that experienced by Enoch and those like him.

> "Circumcision began with Abraham, and the Sabbath, sacrifices, offerings and feasts began with Moses, and it has been proved they were enjoined on account of the hardness of your people's heart. So, it was necessary, in accordance with the Father's will, that they should have an end in Him who was born of a virgin, of the family of Abraham and tribe of Judah, and of David. Christ the Son of God, who was proclaimed as about to come to all the world, to be the everlasting Law and the everlasting covenant, was shown by the aforementioned prophecies. And we, who have approached God through Him, have received not carnal, but spiritual circumcision, which Enoch and those like him observed. And we have received it through baptism, since we were sinners; and all men may equally obtain it. But since the mystery of His birth now demands our attention, I shall speak of it. Isaiah then asserted in regard to the generation of Christ, that it could not be declared by man: 'Who shall declare His generation?'" (Isaiah 53:8)

Joseph Was Instructed to Call His Name Jesus

"Then Joseph her husband, being a just *man,* and not wanting to make her a public example, was minded to put her away secretly. But while he thought about these things, behold, an angel of the Lord appeared to him in a dream, saying, "Joseph, son of David, do not be afraid to take to you Mary your wife, for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins." So all this was done that it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the Lord through the prophet, saying: "Behold, the virgin shall be with child, and bear a Son, and they shall call His name Immanuel," which is translated, "God with us." Then Joseph, being aroused from sleep, did as the angel of the Lord commanded him and took to him his wife, and did not know her till she had brought forth her firstborn Son. And he called His name Jesus" (Matthew 1:19-25).

John Chrysostom stated[24] that some women were barren in order to emphasize the virgin-birth of Christ and to help us believe. Elizabeth had two hindrances: her age (70 years) and her extreme post-menopausal womb. The Virgin Mary had just one hindrance: not having shared in marriage. The manner of the birth of Christ was too grand for marriage. Mary would not have been considered worthy to bear Christ if she had previously known her husband. Christ needed to share in a birth like ours, but still be more special than our birth. This was done that we may learn both the pre-eminence and the fellowship with us of Him who was born.

> "It is necessary to state the cause for which those women were barren. It was in order that when you have seen the Virgin bringing forth our common Master, you might not disbelieve. Therefore, exercise your mind in the womb of

[23] Justin Martyr, Dialogue with Trypho, 43.
[24] John Chrysostom, Homily Against Publishing the Errors of the Brethren, 7.

the barren; in order that when you have seen the womb, disabled and bound as it is, being opened to the bearing of children from the grace of God, you might not marvel at hearing that a virgin has brought forth. Or rather even marvel and be astounded; but do not disbelieve the marvel. When the Jew says to you, 'How did the virgin bear?', say to him 'how did she bear who was barren and enfeebled by old age?' There were then two hindrances, both her age and the unserviceableness of nature; but in the case of the Virgin there was one hindrance only, the not having shared in marriage. The barren one therefore prepares the way for the virgin. And that you may learn that it was on this account that the barren ones had anticipated it, in order that the Virgin's childbirth might be believed, hear the words of Gabriel which were addressed to her. For when he had come and said to her, 'You shall conceive in the womb and bring forth a son, and you shall call his name Jesus' (Luke 1:31); the Virgin was astonished and marveled, and said, 'How can this be, since I do not know a man' (Luke 1:34). What then said the Angel? 'The Holy Spirit will come upon you, and the power of the Highest will overshadow you; therefore, also, that Holy One who is to be born will be called the Son of God' (Luke 1:35). Seek not the sequence of nature, he says, when that which takes place is above nature; look not round for marriage and throes of child-birth, when the manner of the birth is too grand for marriage. 'How can this be, since I know not a husband'? Truly on this account shall this be, since you know no husband. For if you had known a husband, you would not have been deemed worthy to serve this ministry. So that, for the reason why you disbelieve, for this believe. And you would not have been deemed worthy to serve this ministry, not because marriage is an evil; but because virginity is superior. Right it was that the entry of the Master should be more distinguished than ours; for it was royal, and the king enters through one more distinguished. It was necessary that He should both share in a birth like ours, and be diverse from ours. Wherefore both these things are managed."

"For the being born from the womb is common in respect to us, but the being born without marriage is a thing greater than on a level with us. The gestation and conception in the womb belong to human nature; but that the pregnancy should take place without sexual intercourse is too distinguished for human nature. For this purpose, both these things took place, in order that you may learn both the pre-eminence and the fellowship with you of Him who was born."

Matthew 1:1 The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham:

Chrysostom also stated[25] that the Apostle John's intent in his Gospel is different than that of the other evangelists. The others started with the humanity of Christ, giving details of how that happened. John started his Gospel with the Eternal Generation of Christ from the Father. Some heretics never got past Christ's humanity; John's Gospel needed to set that straight.

[25] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, IV, 1.

"John stated, 'In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God' (John 1:1). All the other Evangelists began with the Dispensation. Matthew says, 'The Book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1); Luke relates to us in the beginning of his Gospel the events relating to John the Baptist and the Virgin Mary. Mark dwells on the same narratives, from that point detailing to us the history of John the Baptist. Why, when the others began with these matters, did John briefly and in a later place hint at them, saying, 'the Word was made flesh' (John 1:14). He passed by everything else, His conception, His birth, His bringing up, His growth, and at once discoursed to us concerning His Eternal Generation?"

"I will now tell you what the reason for this is. Because the other Evangelists had dwelt mostly on the accounts of His coming in the flesh, there was fear lest some, being of groveling minds, might for this reason rest in these doctrines alone, as indeed was the case with Paul of Samosata. In order, therefore, to lead away from this fondness for earth those who were like to fall into it, and to draw them up towards heaven, with good reason he commences his narrative from above, and from the eternal subsistence. For while Matthew enters upon his relation from Herod the king, Luke from Tiberius Caesar, Mark from the Baptism of John, the Apostle John, leaving alone all these things, ascends beyond all time or age. He darts forward the imagination of his hearers to the 'was in the Beginning', not allowing it to stay at any point, nor setting any limit, as they did in Herod, Tiberius, and John."

Christ Came as Physician, Not Judge

In itemizing His genealogy, Matthew points out some not so illustrious aspects of Jesus' ancestors. For example, "Jacob begot Judah and his brothers" (v.2). Together, Judah and his brothers are the twelve tribes of Israel. In Revelation 21:12, the gates of the New Jerusalem are inscribed with the names of the twelve tribes of Israel. Yet four of the sons of Jacob (Dan, Naphtali, Gad and Asher) were children of slaves (Leah's and Rachael's maids Zilpah and Bilhah).

"Judah begot Perez and Zerah by Tamar" (Matthew 1:3). Tamar was Judah's daughter-in-law whose husband died. Judah had promised her his younger son for a husband according to Jewish law, but reneged on his promise. Tamar then pretended to be a prostitute and got pregnant by her father-in-law, Judah (Genesis 38:6-30). The twins that were born were likened by Chrysostom[26] to the Jew and Christian.

Another figure in Christ's genealogy is the prostitute from Jericho, Rahab, who helped the spies and was spared during the destruction of Jericho (Joshua 2, 6). Boaz, Rahab's son married Ruth, a poverty-stricken Gentile who renounced her father, household, race, country and kindred (Matthew 1:5, Ruth 1-4). Chrysostom noted[27] that Ruth is a model for the Gentile church in the New Testament.

[26] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 4.
John Chrysostom, Homilies on Genesis, LXII, 4-10.
[27] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 5.

Other kings in Christ's genealogy, like Ahaz and Manasseh, led the people into idol worship, human sacrifice and witchcraft (2 Kings 16, 21). This ultimately led to the Babylonian captivity (2 Kings 24:1-4) and the burning and plundering of Jerusalem (2 Kings 25).

Commenting on the many examples of wickedness in Christ's genealogy, Chrysostom wrote[28] that Christ came as a physician and not as a judge.

> "If we were recounting the race of a mere man, one might naturally have been silent touching these things. But if of God Incarnate, so far from being silent one ought to make a glory of them, showing forth His tender care and His power. Because of this He came, not to escape our disgraces, but to bear them away. It is not only because He took flesh upon Him, and became man, that we stand justifiably amazed at Him. But also, because He permitted to have such relatives, being in no respect ashamed of our evils. And this He was proclaiming from the very beginnings of His birth that He is ashamed of none of the things that belong to us. He has come as a physician and not as a Judge".

He Will Save His People from Their Sins

"And she will bring forth a Son, and you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins" (Matthew 1:21).

Irenaeus of Lyons summarized[29] the birth of Christ as follows: The Apostles recognized Christ as being both God and man. God had promised both David and Abraham that He would raise up one of their descendants as an eternal king. But Joseph had some difficulty with Mary being pregnant until an angel explained it to him. This clearly signified that the promise made to the fathers had been accomplished, that the Son of God was born of a virgin, and that He Himself was Christ the Savior whom the prophets had foretold

> "John knew the one and the same Word of God, that He was the only begotten, and that He became incarnate for our salvation, Jesus Christ our Lord. Matthew recognized one and the same Jesus Christ, exhibiting his generation as a man from the Virgin. God had promised David that He would raise up from the fruit of his body an eternal King, having made the same promise to Abraham a long time previously. 'The book of the generation of Jesus Christ, the son of David, the son of Abraham' (Matthew 1:1). Then, that he might free our mind from suspicion regarding Joseph, he says: 'Now the birth of Jesus Christ was as follows: After His mother Mary was betrothed to Joseph, before they came together, she was found with child of the Holy Spirit' (Matthew 1:18). Then, when Joseph had it in contemplation to put Mary away, since she proved with child, [Matthew tells us of] the angel of God standing by him, and saying: 'Fear not to take unto you Mary your wife: for that which is conceived in her is of the Holy Spirit. And she shall bring forth a son, and you shalt call His name Jesus; for He shall save His people from their sins. Now this was done, that it might be fulfilled which was spoken of the Lord by the prophet: Behold. a virgin shall conceive, and bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel, which is, God with us' (Isaiah 7:14). This clearly signified that both the promise made to

[28] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, III, 3.
[29] Irenaeus of Lyons, Against Heresies, III, xvi, 2.

the fathers had been accomplished, that the Son of God was born of a virgin, and that He Himself was Christ the Savior whom the prophets had foretold."

John Cassian pointed out[30] how the title "Savior" is given to Christ in one sense, but to men in another sense. It is only possible for Christ to be a savior from sin; others can be a savior from their enemies.

> Scripture has most plainly pointed to the name of Christ by using the name of Savior: for Savior is the same as Christ, as the angel says: 'For to you is born this day a Savior who is Christ the Lord' (Luke 2:11). For everybody knows that in Hebrew 'Jesus' means 'Savior', as the angel announced to the holy Virgin Mary, saying: 'And you shall call His name Jesus, for He will save His people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). We cannot say that He is termed Savior in the same sense as the title is given to others. 'And the Lord raised up to them a Savior, Othniel the Son of Kenaz, Caleb's younger brother' (Judges 3:9), and again, 'the Lord raised up to them a Savior, Ehud the son of Gera, the Benjamite, a left-handed man' (Judges 3:15). 'He will save His people from their sins' (Matthew 1:21). But it does not lie in the power of a man to redeem his people from the captivity of sin — a thing which is only possible for Him of whom it is said, 'Behold the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world' (John 1:29). For the others saved a people not their own but God's, and not from their sins, but from their enemies.

John Chrysostom pointed out[31] that Christ did not repeal the Mosaic Law, but fulfilled it. Some early heretics stated that the Mosaic Law was of the devil; but if Christ established and fulfilled the Law, this stops their mouths. Christ fulfilled what the prophets had foretold by all the details of His life; He fulfilled the Law in several ways. First, He fulfilled the Law by keeping all of its precepts. Second, He fulfilled the Law by granting that we also would fulfill the Law by not walking according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. Third, He fulfilled the Law by upgrading it to include anger and not just murder, lust and not just adultery.

> "Christ did not say it once only, 'I do not repeal the Law', but He both repeated it again, and added another and a greater thing. 'Do not think that I came to destroy the Law or the Prophets. I did not come to destroy but to fulfill. For assuredly, I say to you, till heaven and earth pass away, one yod or one letter point will by no means pass from the law till all is fulfilled'" (Matthew 5:17-18).
>
> "Now this not only obstructs the obstinacy of the Jews, but stops also the mouths of those heretics[32], who say that the old covenant is of the devil. For if Christ came to destroy his tyranny, how is this covenant not only not destroyed, but even fulfilled by Him? For He said not only, 'I do not destroy it'; though this had been enough; but 'I even fulfill it', which are the words of one so far from opposing himself, as to be even establishing it. And how, one may ask, did He not destroy it? In what way did He rather fulfill either the Law or the prophets? The prophets He fulfilled, inasmuch as He confirmed by His actions all that had been said concerning Him. The evangelist Matthew used to say[33] in each case,

[30] John Cassian, Seven Books on the Incarnation, IV, 12.
[31] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, XVI, 3.
[32] That is, some of the Gnostics and the Manichaeans.
[33] Matthew uses this expression 16 times throughout his Gospel.

'That it might be fulfilled which was spoken by the prophet'. Both when He was born (Matthew 1:22-23), and when the children sung that wondrous hymn to Him (Matthew 21:16), and when He sat on the donkey (Matthew 21:4-9), and in very many more instances He worked this same fulfillment. All these things would have been unfulfilled, if He had not come. But the Law He fulfilled, not in one way only, but in a second and third also. In one way, by transgressing none of the precepts of the Law. For that He did fulfill it all, hear what He said to John, 'For thus it fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness' (Matthew 3:15). To the Jews also He said, 'Which of you convicts Me of sin' (John 8:46)? And to His disciples again, 'The ruler of this world is coming, and he has nothing in Me' (John 14:30). And the prophet too from the first had said that 'He had done no violence, nor was any deceit in His mouth'" (Isaiah 53:9).

"This then was one sense in which He fulfilled it. Another, that He did the same through us also; for this is the marvel, that He not only Himself fulfilled it, but He granted this to us likewise. Which thing Paul also declared saying, 'Christ is the end of the Law for righteousness to everyone who believes' (Romans 10:4). And he said also, that 'He condemned sin in the flesh, that the righteous requirement of the Law might be fulfilled in us who do not walk according to the flesh but according to the Spirit' (Romans 8:3-4). And again, 'Do we then make void the Law through faith? Certainly not! On the contrary, we establish the law' (Romans 3:31). For since the Law was laboring at this, to make man righteous, but had not power, He came and brought in the way of righteousness by faith, and so established that which the Law desired. What the Law could not do by letters, this He accomplished by faith. On this account He said, 'I did not come to destroy but to fulfill the Law'" (Matthew 5:17).

John Chrysostom stated[34] that Noah, Abraham, Job and Moses didn't have the written Word. Their minds were pure and they had the grace of the Spirit instead. Similarly, the Apostles didn't have the written words of Christ that are recorded in the New Testament. Since we don't have the grace that they did, we need the written word

"It was fitting for us not at all to require the aid of the written Word, but to exhibit a life so pure, that the grace of the Spirit should be instead of books to our souls. Books are inscribed with ink; even so should our hearts be with the Spirit. But, since we have utterly put away from us this grace, come, let us at any rate embrace the second-best course. The grace of the Spirit was better; God has made this clear, both by His words, and by His doings. To Noah, Abraham, and his offspring, to Job, and Moses too, He discoursed not by writings, but Himself by Himself, finding their mind pure. But after the whole people of the Hebrews had fallen into the very pit of wickedness, then and thereafter was a written word, and tablets, and the admonition which is given by these."

"One may perceive that this was the case, not of the saints in the Old Testament only, but also of those in the New. For neither to the Apostles did God give anything in writing, but instead of written words He promised that He would give them the grace of the Spirit. For 'the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My Name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your

[34] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, I, 1.

remembrance all things that I said to you' (John 14:26). And that you may learn that this was far better, listen to what He said by the Prophet: 'I will make a new covenant with the house of Israel and with the house of Judah. I will put My Law in their minds, and write it on their hearts; and I will be their God, and they shall be My people' (Jeremiah 31:31-33; Hebrews 8:8-11). Also 'All your children shall be taught by the Lord, and great shall be the peace of your children' (Isaiah 54:13; John 6:45). And Paul too, pointing out the same superiority, said that they had received a Law: 'clearly you are an epistle of Christ, ministered by us, written not with ink but by the Spirit of the living God, not on tablets of stone but on tablets of flesh, that is, of the heart' (2 Corinthians 3:3). But since in process of time they made shipwreck, some with regard to doctrines, others as to life and manners, there was again need that they should be put in remembrance by the written word."

The Fullness of Time

The Patriarch Jacob had said that Jesus would come when the Jewish rulers had come to an end (Genesis 49:10 LXX). This happened when Jerusalem was destroyed in 66-70 AD. Daniel also prophesied the exact year when Messiah would come (Daniel 9:24-26). It was this prophecy that the Magi followed in order to know when to come to worship the newborn King of the Jews (Matthew 2:1-2).

Chrysostom noted that Matthew began his Gospel with the genealogy: "The book of the genealogy of Jesus Christ, the Son of David, the Son of Abraham" (Matthew 1:1). Commenting on this, Chrysostom said[35]:

> "Observe a most admirable order in the things he (Matthew) has mentioned. For he did not proceed directly to the birth, but puts us in mind, first, how many generations He was from Abraham, how many from David and how many from the captivity of Babylon. Thus, he sets the careful hearer upon considering the times, to show that this is the Christ who was preached by the prophets. For when you have numbered the generations and have learned by the time that this is He, you will readily receive likewise the miracle which took place in His birth".

The Apostle Paul spoke of this also: "But when the fullness of time had come, God sent forth His Son, born of a woman, born under the Law to redeem those who were under the Law, that we might receive the adoption as sons" (Galatians 4:4-5).

John Chrysostom stated[36] that the Scriptures are very clear about the birth of Christ. He was born into a very poor family; yet He did not need wealth to save the world.

> "Let us then, beloved, pay attention to the Scriptures; and if no other part be so, let the Gospels at least be the subjects of our earnest care; let us keep them in our hands. For immediately when you open the Book you see the name of Christ there, and hear one say, 'The birth of Jesus Christ was on this wise. When His mother Mary was espoused to Joseph, she was found with Child of the Holy

[35] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Matthew, IV, 4.

[36] John Chrysostom, Homilies on John, LIII, 3.

> Spirit' (Matthew 1:18). He that hears this will immediately desire virginity, will marvel at the Birth, and will be freed from earthly things. It is not a little thing when you see the Virgin deemed worthy of the Spirit, and an Angel talking with her. And this is merely scratching the surface; but if you persevere to go on to the end, you shall loathe all that pertains to this life, and mock all worldly things. If you are rich, you shall think nothing of wealth, when you hear that she who was (the wife) of a carpenter, and of humble family, became the mother of your Lord. If you are poor you shall not be ashamed of your poverty, when you hear that the Creator of the world was not ashamed of the humble dwelling."

Chrysostom also mentions that there is great significance to the names themselves in Jesus' genealogy and that it was not without purpose that these names were given to His forbears. For example, the root meaning of some of the more familiar names is:

Abraham	Exalted father
Isaac	He laughs (Genesis 18:12)
Jacob	Heel, footprint (Genesis 3:15)
Judah	Praised
Joseph	He increases
David	Beloved one
Solomon	Peaceable or Peacemaker
Zerubbabel	Begotten in Babylon
Zadok	To be just or righteous

In mentioning this, Chrysostom had access to works by Justin Martyr and Jerome on the same subject.

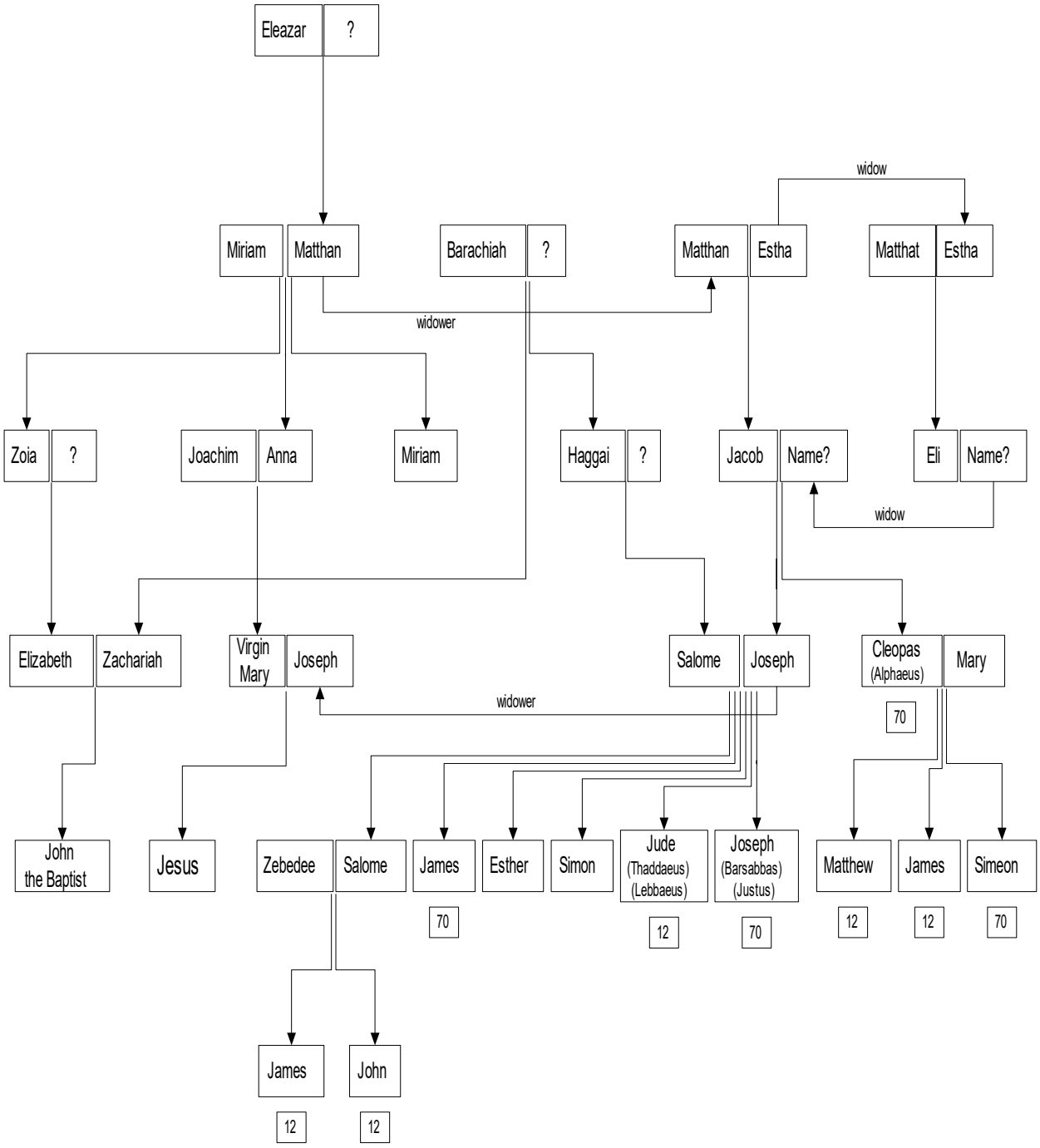
Thus, the central feature of the genealogy of Christ is the Incarnation. Some of the heretics over the last 1900 years have denied that Christ was truly a man; reading the genealogies contradicts the heretics very strongly.

APPENDIX A
Genealogies in the Scriptures

LUKE (Legal tree of Joseph)	MATTHEW (The Kings of Israel)	2 KINGS & 1 CHRONICLES	GENESIS (Hebrew)	GENESIS (Septuagint)
Adam		Adam	Adam	Adam
Seth		Seth	Seth	Seth
Enosh		Enosh	Enosh	Enosh
Cainan		Cainan	Cainan	Cainan
Mahalalel		Mahalalel	Mahalalel	Mahalalel
Jared		Jared	Jared	Jared
Enoch		Enoch	Enoch	Enoch
Methuselah		Methuselah	Methuselah	Methuselah
Lamech		Lamech	Lamech	Lamech
Noah		Noah	Noah	Noah
Shem		Shem	Shem	Shem
Arphaxad		Arphaxad	Arphaxad	Arphaxad
Cainan				Cainan
Shelah		Shelah	Shelah	Shelah
Eber		Eber	Eber	Eber
Peleg		Peleg	Peleg	Peleg
Reu		Reu	Reu	Reu
Serug		Serug	Serug	Serug
Nahor		Nahor	Nahor	Nahor
Terah		Terah	Terah	Terah
Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham	Abraham
Isaac	Isaac	Isaac	Isaac	Isaac
Jacob	Jacob	Jacob	Jacob	Jacob
Judah	Judah	Judah	Judah	Judah
Perez	Perez	Perez	Perez	Perez
Hezron	Hezron	Hezron	Hezron	Hezron
Ram	Ram	Ram		
Amminadab	Amminadab	Amminadab		
Nahshon	Nahshon	Nahshon		
Salmon	Salmon	Salmon		
Boaz	Boaz	Boaz		
Obed	Obed	Obed		
Jesse	Jesse	Jesse		
David	David	David		
Nathan	Solomon	Solomon		
Mattathah				
Menan	Rehoboam	Rehoboam		
Melea				
Eliakim	Abijah	Abijah		

LUKE (Legal tree of Joseph)	MATTHEW (The Kings of Israel)	2 KINGS & 1 CHRONICLES	GENESIS (Hebrew)	GENESIS (Septuagint)
Jonan	Asa	Asa		
Joseph	Jehoshaphat	Jehoshaphat		
Judah	Joram (Jehoram)	Joram (Jehoram)		
Simeon		Ahaziah		
Levi		Joash		
		Amaziah		
Matthat	Uzziah (Azariah)	Uzziah (Azariah)		
Jorim	Jotham	Jotham		
Eliezar	Ahaz	Ahaz		
Jose	Hezekiah	Hezekiah		
Er	Manassah	Manasseh		
Elmodan	Amon	Amon		
Cosam	Josiah	Josiah		
Addi		Jehoiakim		
Melchi	Jeconiah	Jeconiah (or Jehoiachin)		
Neir				
Shealtiel	Shealtiel	Shealtiel		
Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel	Zerubbabel		
Rhesa				
Joannas	Abiud			
Judah	Eliakim			
Joseph				
Semei	Azor			
Mattathiah				
Maath	Zadok			
Naggai				
Esli	Achim			
Nahum				
Amos	Eliud			
Mattathiah				
Joseph	Eleazar			
Janna				
Melchi	Matthan			
Levi				
Matthat	Jacob			
Heli				
Joseph	Joseph			

FAMILY TREE OF JESUS



A CLOUD OF WITNESSES

December 24, 2023
Revision C

Epistle: Hebrews 11:9-40

Parts of today's Epistle lesson are used in the Eastern lectionary also for the Sunday of All Saints (Hebrews 11:32-12:2) and for the 1st Sunday of Lent (Hebrews 11:24-26, 32-40). On the Sunday of All Saints, the theme is the communion of Saints; on the 1st Sunday of Lent, the theme is a vision of where we are going as we point toward Easter Sunday (or Pascha). In today's Epistle lesson, we look backward to see where we have come.

The Western lectionaries also use parts of today's Epistle lesson. Verses 8-19 are sometimes used for the 14th Sunday after Trinity and verses 1-19 are sometimes used for the 3rd Sunday after Epiphany. Thus, East and West emphasize different parts of Hebrews 11.

Some of the people mentioned in Hebrews 11 are also included in the genealogy of the Gospel lesson: Enoch (Hebrews 11:5), Noah (Hebrews 11:7), Abraham (Hebrews 11:8-19), Isaac (Hebrews 11:20), Jacob (Hebrews 11:21), Rahab (Hebrews 11:31) and David (Hebrews 11:32). Common to all of them is a good testimony (Hebrews 11:39) of things they did by faith. They knew God's promises (Hebrews 11:39) and the things to come (Hebrews 11:20), but they never received the promises. In their life, they were ill-treated (Hebrews 11:37-38) by a world that was not worthy of them similar to their Lord in His 33 years. The conclusion of the Epistle lesson is that "God provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Hebrews 11:40). To see how this applies to us, let us look at some of the details of the lives of the Old Testament Saints and compare that with our situation.

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Abel, Enoch and Noah

Abel is remembered for having offered a more excellent sacrifice to God than his brother Cain (Hebrews 11:4). Since the Patriarchs before the flood were not meat-eaters[37], the implication is that Abel's offering was a whole burnt offering (Genesis 4:4) similar to that later decreed in the Mosaic Law (Exodus 29:38-42), Numbers 28:3-8). The only part of the animal Abel used was probably the skin for clothing (Genesis 3:21, Leviticus 7:8). It is interesting that Abel's technique in offering the best of his flock precisely anticipates the technique specified by Moses (Leviticus 1:10-13, 3:6-11).

"The Lord had regard for Abel and for his offering, but for Cain and for his offering, He had no regard" (Genesis 4:4-5). How could one know whether the Lord "had regard"? The usual way of offering a sacrifice was demonstrated by Elijah in his face-off with the prophets of Baal (1 Kings 18:21-39). After the sacrifice was placed on the altar, the sacrifice was considered "accepted" if the Lord sent down fire from heaven to consume it (1 Kings 18:23-24, 38-39). When Moses and Aaron first set up the sacrificial system, the Lord lit the fire (Leviticus 9:24) and instructed Moses and Aaron to maintain it (Leviticus 6:13). The fire of the Lord also fell on some people who rebelled against Him (Numbers 11:1, 16:35, Leviticus 10:1-2). Thus it was very obvious to Cain that he was rejected!

Following the rejected offering, the Lord spoke to Cain about his sin and about how the desire of his sin was after his soul, but that he must master it. Cain's response was to kill his brother, Abel (Genesis 4:7-8). Abel was the first of a long history of martyrs and his blood cried out to the Lord from the ground (Genesis 4:10). Similarly, the voice of the blood of the martyrs killed later on cries out to the Lord from the ground (Revelation 6:9-11) in the days before the Second Coming.

The righteousness of Abel, his offering and his martyrdom still speak to us (Hebrews 11:4). The voice of Abel's blood speaking is compared to the blood of Christ speaking (Hebrews 12:24). John Chrysostom stated[38] that the message of the voice of Abel's blood is thus:

> "Cain did not slay Abel's glory or his memory. Abel is not dead; therefore neither shall we die. The more grievous a man's sufferings are, so much the greater is his glory. These things do not take place with impunity nor lightly, neither do they pass away".

Enoch lived five generations after Abel and benefited greatly from Abel's example. The Apostle Jude quoted a prophecy of Enoch regarding the Second Coming of Christ to judge the ungodly (Jude 1:14). How did Enoch know Christ? It was by faith and he pleased God (Hebrews 11:5). Evidently Enoch's faith was rather spectacular since he is one of only two people ever translated to heaven without seeing death (compare Genesis 5:22-24). The other was Elijah (2 Kings 2:1-12).

[37] Compare Genesis 1:29 & 2:16-17 with Genesis 9:2-4

[38] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXII, 3.

John Chrysostom stated that Enoch displayed greater faith than Abel. Enoch knew Abel[39] and how he suffered and how Cain had gotten off easy. Chrysostom said[40] that it would have been easy for Enoch to think that there is no point in suffering for God's sake since Abel was not rewarded in this life. "Abel honored God, yet God did not protect him. What advantage had he that was killed from the punishment of his brother?" However, Enoch knew about the resurrection and the rewards that God bestows (Jude 1:14) and his faith caused him to please God and his pleasing God caused his translation.

While Abel offered the proper sacrifice and Enoch preached Judgment Day, Noah went one step further in building an ark. It is often inferred that it took Noah about 100 years to build the ark[41]. The ark itself was 450 feet long (Genesis 6:15), had three decks (Genesis 6:16) and rode low in the water (half above, half below (Genesis 6:15, 7:20). For one family to build something this large had to have been a monumental undertaking. Modern Shipyards build ocean liners this big and bigger, but they employ thousands of people and take several years to do so. In addition to that, Noah had to get his own raw materials (fell trees) and cut them into planks for the hull and super structure of the ark as well as the interior rooms (Genesis 6:14). Modern science has prepared[42] a very interesting treatise on how eight people could have cared for all the animals in the ark, and how they could have carried adequate food and water.

Noah is referred to as a preacher of righteousness (2 Peter 2:5) and God warned him of things not yet seen. This was especially difficult for Noah: God told Noah to build a huge boat to survive a flood when it had never rained[43] in the history of mankind! Clouds and rainbows mean rain; if that didn't happen until after the Flood, it must have taken a lot of faith to prepare a boat. Not only did Noah spend 100 years building a boat to protect his family against something that had never happened, but also the means of causing the Flood had never happened either. This was truly a warning of things not yet seen. Even the positioning of the ark in dry-dock prior to the Flood was crucial. One of the causes of the Flood was the "fountains of the great deep" (Genesis 7:11, 8:2), which sounds like undersea volcanic activity. Undersea volcanoes produce huge waves (*tsunamis*), which can turn a dry-docked, wooden boat into splinters unless the boat is positioned to receive the wave properly.

Just as Enoch preached of Judgment Day (Jude 1:14), so did Noah. The Lord, Himself, used Noah as an example of Judgment Day, illustrating the suddenness and finality of the Second Coming (Matthew 24:37-39, Luke 17:26-27).

Abraham, Isaac and Jacob

John Chrysostom stated[44] that Abraham's task was more difficult than Abel's, Enoch's and Noah's. They had to go beyond human reasoning, but Abraham was asked to obey the Lord's commands even though the commands seemed to oppose the Lord's promises. For example, "By faith Abraham obeyed when he was called to go out to the place which he would

[39] By adding up the ages of the Patriarchs in the Septuagint, Enoch was about 20 years old when Seth died

[40] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXII, 4.

[41] Compare Genesis 5:32, 6:10 and 7:6.

[42] Woodmorappe, Noah's Ark: A Feasibility Study, Institute for Creation Research, 1996

[43] Compare Genesis 9:13-14 with Genesis 2:6

[44] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXV, 1.

receive as an inheritance. And he went out, not knowing where he was going. By faith he dwelt in the land of promise as in a foreign country" (Hebrews 11:8-9). He was told he was going to inherit this land; yet he lived in it and never received it. This is because "he waited for the city which has foundations whose craftsman and maker is God" (Hebrews 11:10).

In addition, the Lord had told him that his descendants would be as numberless as the dust on the earth (Genesis 13:16), yet it would be through Sarah that they would be numbered (Genesis 17:16-19). The Lord first mentioned how numerous Abraham's posterity could be when Abraham was 75 years old and Sarah was 66 years old (Genesis 12:1-3). It wasn't until 25 years later that Isaac was born (Genesis 21:5, 17:17). This required considerable patience on the part of Abraham. It taught Abraham to expect the miraculous in his dealings with God, since Sarah was at least 40 years past the age of child bearing when Isaac was born.

When Isaac was young, the Lord told Abraham to offer Isaac as a burnt offering on a mountaintop (Genesis 22:1-2). Hebrew tradition places[45] this mountaintop as the site where the Temple in Jerusalem was later built. However this was contrary to the Lord's Law (which forbade human sacrifice) and was seemingly contrary to the Lord's promise that his posterity would be numbered through Isaac (Genesis 17:16-19). This did not deter Abraham; he told his two servants that he and Isaac were going to worship the Lord on the mountaintop and then return (Genesis 22:5). Isaac asked his father: "Where was the lamb for the burnt offering?" They brought wood and fire, but no animal. Abraham replied, "God will provide for Himself the lamb for the burnt offering" (Genesis 22:8). In saying this, Abraham seems to have understood the coming of the Son of God as "the Lamb of God who takes away the sin of the world" (John 1:29, 36). From our Epistle text, Abraham concluded that God was able to raise Isaac up from the dead if that was His plan (Hebrews 11:17-19).

Commenting on the contrary signals Abraham received and comparing them to our own, John Chrysostom said[46] that God accomplishes His purposes by contraries of contraries.

> "What are you saying? If I give drink to my enemy, do I then punish him? (Proverbs 25:21-22, Romans 12:20). If I give up my goods, do I then possess them? (Matthew 19:29). If I humble myself, shall I then be exalted? (Matthew 20:26, 23:12). Yes, He says, for such is My power to give contraries by means of contraries. I abound in resources and in stratagems: do not be afraid. The nature of things follows My Will; I don't wait for nature. I do all things; I am not controlled by them; wherefore also I am able to change their form and order". "He then who admires the things here slights those yonder, since he judges these worthy of exertion, even though they're so far inferior to the other".

John Chrysostom pointed out[47] what was the real city that Abraham sought, and that virtue alone is the ornament of the inhabitants of the City of God. This does not compare to the beautiful, but material city of Sodom.

> "Would you learn the truth respecting cities? What could be more illustrious than the cities of Sodom? For the houses and the buildings were

[45] Gower, Manners and Customs of Bible Times 1987, p. 203

[46] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXV, 4.

[47] John Chrysostom, Homilies on the Statues, XVII, 12.

> splendid, and so were their walls; and the country was fat and fertile, and 'like the Paradise of God' (Genesis 13:10). But the tent of Abraham was humble and small, and had no fortification. Yet when a war took place, the invaders broke down and took the walled cities, and departed, carrying away their inhabitants captive. Abraham, however, the citizen of the desert, they could not resist when he attacked them! And so it was for he had true piety and a power much greater than numbers and the defense of walls. If you are a Christian, no earthly city is yours. Of our City 'the Builder and Maker is God' (Hebrews 11:10). Though we may gain possession of the whole world, we are but strangers and sojourners in it all! We are enrolled in heaven; our citizenship is there! Let us not, after the manner of little children, despise things that are great, and admire those which are little! Not our city's greatness, but virtue of soul is our ornament and defense. If you suppose dignity to belong to a city, think how many persons must partake in this dignity, who are whoremongers, effeminate, depraved and full of ten thousand evil things; let us despise such honor! But that City above is not of this kind; for it is impossible that he can be a partaker of it, who has not exhibited every virtue".

"Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning the things to come" (Hebrews 11:20). This implies that Isaac knew the things to come (Compare Genesis 27:27-40). Chrysostom wondered[48] about this, and noted that many righteous men waited to see what we see.

> "How, except by faith, could a man sojourning in a strange land give such blessings? Many prophets and righteous men have desired to see what we see and did not see it, and to hear what we hear and did not hear it (Matthew 13:17). "The Son of God was, with good reason, revealed to those conspicuous in virtue".

How then does this fit Jacob, who bought the birthright from Esau (Genesis 25:29-34) and then stole Esau's blessing (Genesis 27)? Jacob's virtue is that he wanted the things of God more than anything else, while Esau trivialized the things of God (Genesis 25:34). To Jacob, the birthright and the blessing of his father -- which included the promises God made to Abraham -- were like the treasure buried in a field and the pearl of great price (Matthew 13:44-46).

John Chrysostom noted[49] that Abraham, Isaac and Jacob all had barren wives. This was not because of sin in their lives, but indicates the hand of God leading us to an appreciation of the Virgin birth of Christ.

> "'Isaac continued in prayer (Matthew 7:7-8) concerning Rebecca his wife, because she was barren. This first is worth inquiring into, for what cause she was barren. She lived admirably and with much chastity — both herself and her husband. We cannot say that the barrenness was the work of sin. And not only was she herself barren, but also his mother Sarah, who gave birth to him; not only was his mother barren and his wife, but also his daughter-in-law, Rachel, the wife of Jacob. What is the meaning of this band of barren ones? All were righteous; all lived in virtue; God witnessed to all of them. For it was of them that He said, 'I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac, and the God of Jacob' (Luke

[48] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVI, 1.

[49] John Chrysostom, Homily on Not Publishing the Errors of the Brethren, 6-7.

20:37). Of the same persons Paul also speaks. 'For which cause God is not ashamed to call himself their God' (Hebrew 11:16). Many are the commendations of them in the New Testament; many the praises of them in the Old Testament. On all sides they were bright and illustrious, and yet they all had barren wives, and continued in childlessness until an advanced period. When therefore you see man and wife living with virtue; when you see them beloved of God, caring for piety, and yet suffering the malady of childlessness; do not suppose that the childlessness is at all a retribution for sins. For many are God's reasons for the dispensation, and to us inexplicable; and for all we must be heartily thankful, and think that only those who live in wickedness are wretched, not those who are childless. Often God does it expediently, though we don't know the cause of events. On this account in every case it is our duty to admire His wisdom and to glorify His unspeakable love of man".

"This consideration is able to school us in moral character, but it is necessary to state the cause for which those women were barren. It was in order that when you have seen the Virgin bringing forth our common Master, you might believe. Exercise your mind in the womb of the barren. When you have seen the womb, disabled and bound as it is, being opened to the bearing of children from the grace of God, you might not marvel at hearing that a virgin has brought forth".

Moses and His Parents

Moses, the brother of Aaron, was also an ancestor of Christ, although that aspect is not included in either Matthew's or Luke's genealogy. According to tradition[50], the Virgin Mary's grandfather, Matthan, was a priest. Luke records Matthan's grandson-in-law, Zachariah, as being a priest of the order of Abijah, the 8th Lot (1 Chronicles 24:10) and Elizabeth as being a daughter of Aaron (Luke 1:5). Since the Virgin Mary was Elizabeth's cousin, Mary was also among the daughters of Aaron as well as being descended from David and Judah. This means that Christ, in His earthly parentage, was descended from both a Priest and a King[51].

Moses' parents, Amram and his wife Jochebed (Exodus 6:20), had three children: Miriam, the oldest, Aaron and Moses. By faith, they disregarded Pharaoh's command to drown male Hebrew children (Exodus 1:22) and hid Moses for three months (Exodus 2:2, Hebrews 11:23).

When Jochebed couldn't hide Moses any longer, she made a floating cradle and hid it among the reeds by the Nile. Miriam stood at a distance to find out what would happen. When Pharaoh's daughter came to bathe in the Nile and found Moses, she had pity on him since he was such a beautiful baby. In rushed Miriam and asked Pharaoh's daughter if she should go find a nurse. Of course, the nurse she found was Jochebed. Pharaoh's daughter then paid Jochebed to nurse her own son until he was weaned, at which point Pharaoh's daughter adopted Moses (Exodus 2:3-10). Thus Moses' parents gave their son up to the Lord's discretion twice: once to the Nile, which was infested with crocodiles, and once to the daughter of the evil tyrant.

[50] Nickolai Velimirovic, Prologue From Ochrid, Lazarica Press, Birmingham, 1986, September 9.

[51] See Hebrews 3:1-3, 4:14-15, 5:6-10, 7:1-3, 8:1-5, 1 Timothy 6:15, Revelation 19:16.

Josephus, the 1st Century Jewish historian, adds[52] some details to the above account. One of the Egyptian magicians, perhaps Jannes or Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8) or their predecessors had foretold to Pharaoh that a Hebrew child to be born soon would bring down the Egyptian kingdom, would free the Hebrews, would excel all men in virtue and would be remembered through all ages. This was why Pharaoh ordered the drowning of all male Hebrews. To enforce the decree, Pharaoh ordered the execution of the entire family of anyone who disobeyed. Paraphrasing Josephus,

> "Amram spent a lot of time in prayer over this and the Lord spoke to him in a dream. The Lord reminded Amram how He provided for Abraham, Isaac and Jacob and told him the same prophesy that the Egyptian magicians had told Pharaoh. In addition, He also told Amram that his child will be concealed from the Egyptians and would be brought up in a surprising way".
>
> "Jochebed sent the floating cradle down the Nile where Pharaoh's daughter, Thermuthis, saw it coming and saw it come to rest in some reeds. Miriam followed Moses from the riverbank and watched as Thermuthis found him. At first, Thermuthis tried to get some Egyptian women to nurse Moses, but baby Moses wouldn't accept them. It was then that Miriam offered her solution: a Hebrew nursemaid".

Moses, the Young Man

Moses spent his first forty years being schooled in all the wisdom of Egypt (Acts 7:22). At the age of forty, he chose to suffer affliction with the people of God rather than to be called the son of Pharaoh's daughter and enjoy the passing pleasures of sin. Thus, he esteemed the reproach or reviling of Christ to be greater riches than the treasures of Egypt (Hebrews 11:24-26).

Josephus wrote[53] about this also. The Egyptians had grown delicate and lazy, and had given themselves up to the pleasures of life, especially the love of wealth. As the Hebrew nation was blessed by God and grew numerous and wealthy by hard work, the Egyptians grew jealous and forced them into slave labor: digging canals, building city walls and building pyramids.

In the same section, Josephus also mentioned some royal intrigue in Pharaoh's house, where the magicians recognized Moses as the threat that they had predicted. But Thermuthis was Pharaoh's only child, and she was barren. Therefore Moses also represented Pharaoh's only heir. As a result, Pharaoh disregarded the advice of his magicians to kill Moses and instead protected him and raised him as the heir to the throne.

Josephus mentioned[54] another account of Moses' early life, which is also quoted by Irenaeus[55]. The Ethiopians, who were Southern neighbors to Egypt, began marching into Egypt, conquering Egyptian territory at will. The Egyptian magicians consulted their oracles, which

[52] Josephus, Antiquities II, ix, 2-5.

[53] Josephus, Antiquities, II, ix. 1, 7.

[54] Josephus, Antiquities, II, x, 1-2.

[55] Irenaeus, "Fragments from the Lost Writings of Irenaeus", 32, in Roberts and Donaldson, Ante-Nicene Fathers, Volume 1.

told them to set Moses as commander of the army to stop the Ethiopian advance. Their plan was both to save Egypt and to kill Moses in the same process.

Moses, with the backing of Pharaoh and Thermuthis undertook this task with keen insight and clever strategy. The Ethiopians were expecting the Egyptians to advance on them by way of the Nile, since the route over the desert was difficult due to the multitude of poisonous snakes. Moses chose the desert route and brought along many wicker baskets full of a certain bird that is the natural enemy of the snakes. The birds cleared the way for the army and enabled Moses to take the Ethiopians by surprise and defeat them. This early activity of Moses may be what Stephen, the Protomartyr, referred to saying that Moses "was mighty in words and deeds" (Acts 7:22) before he left Egypt at age forty.

After Moses returned as a conquering hero, the magicians entertained a greater hatred of him than before[56], and were able to sway Pharaoh to beware of him as a military force to be reckoned with. At this same time, the incident occurred where Moses saw an Egyptian taskmaster unjustly beating a Hebrew. Moses struck down the Egyptian and killed him, and buried him in the sand. (From the above accounts, it is apparent that Moses was strong and skilled with military weapons and movements!). The next day, he came upon two Hebrews fighting. Trying to act as a peacemaker, Moses spoke to them. But one of them replied, "Who made you a prince or a judge over us? Are you going to kill me as you killed the Egyptian?" Then Moses realized that the event had become known. When Pharaoh heard of this, he tried to kill Moses, knowing that his general had now identified with the Hebrews as his magicians said he would. However, Moses left Egypt before Pharaoh could find him (Exodus 2:11-15).

John Chrysostom stated[57] that the "reproach of Christ" that Moses received was that spoken by his own people: "Who made you a prince or a judge over us?" (Exodus 2:14). By his rank (heir to the throne, general in the Egyptian army), they should have welcomed him with open arms as a prince and a judge. Chrysostom compared this to the reproach Christ received from His own: "He came to His own and His own did not receive Him" (John 1:11). After they crucified Him, "those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads, saying, 'if You are the Son of God, come down from the Cross'" (Matthew 27:39-40). Thus Moses and Christ suffered alike. Moses and Christ alike looked to the reward mentioned in our Epistle text (Hebrews 11:26, 12:2).

Our Epistle text states that "by faith Moses left Egypt, not fearing the wrath of the Pharaoh" (Hebrews 11:2; 7). Yet Exodus 2:14 states that Moses was afraid when the event of his killing the Egyptian taskmaster became known. John Chrysostom stated[58] that if Moses was truly afraid of Pharaoh, he would never have come back to lead Israel out of Egypt. Thus, even flight was an act of faith. To stay in Egypt, Chrysostom said, and to be a champion of the Hebrews, who were so ungrateful, would have been a foolish and senseless thing. It would have been equivalent to the devil's temptation of Christ to cast Himself down from the pinnacle of the Temple, depending on angels to break His fall (Matthew 4:6). Our Epistle text gives the reason he left Egypt: "for he endured as seeing Him who is invisible" (Hebrews 11:27). Sometimes we

[56] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xi, 1.

[57] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVI, 4.

[58] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVI, 5.

also need to have the insight to leave a bad situation behind us rather than to stand and fight for justice that isn't attainable and only results in blasphemy.

Moses and the Exodus

Our Epistle text states that by faith, Moses kept the Passover and the sprinkling of blood, lest He who destroyed the firstborn should touch them (Hebrews 11:28). This was the climax of Moses' duel with Pharaoh in the course of the ten plagues.

The story of the Exodus began with Moses' conversation with the Lord at the burning bush. Moses was pasturing the flock of his father-in-law Jethro in the neighborhood of Mt. Sinai, which is one of the peaks of Mt. Horeb. The Lord appeared to him in a blazing fire from the middle of a bush where the bush was burning but was not consumed (Exodus 3:1-2). Josephus adds[59] that the green leaves of the thorn bush and its flowers continued untouched as did its fruit branches even though the flame was great and fierce. St. Catherine's Monastery was built on the spot of the burning bush in the 4th Century; the current residents continue to cultivate the "burning bush" which is a raspberry bush[60].

At the burning bush, the Lord sent Moses back to Egypt and told him what to expect. He told Moses what to say to the Hebrews and what to say to Pharaoh. He also gave Moses three signs to use in order that the Hebrews and Pharaoh might know God sent him. These were (1) his staff becoming a snake, (2) his hand becoming leprous, and (3) water turning into blood (Exodus 4:1-9). When Moses showed these signs to Pharaoh, the Egyptian magicians were able to duplicate each of them (Exodus 7:11, 22, 8:7). After some of the ten plagues, however, the Egyptian magicians, Jannes and Jambres (2 Timothy 3:8) recognized Moses' miracles as "the finger of God" (Exodus 8:19).

Before each of the ten plagues, Moses' request of Pharaoh was that the Hebrews might take a three-day journey into the wilderness to celebrate a feast to the Lord (Exodus 5:1-3, 7:16, 8:1, 8:20, etc.). After each plague struck, Pharaoh said that the Hebrews could go do this; but when Moses ended the plague, Pharaoh reneged. Each of the plagues was increasingly severe such that after the hail (Exodus 9:23-32) and the locusts (Exodus 10:12-15) nothing green was left on tree or plant anywhere but in Goshen where the Hebrews lived. Egypt's crops were ruined and her economy was decimated, leaving nothing to feed what livestock remained.

The 10th and final plague was on the first-born of everyone in Egypt, from Pharaoh to his lowest servants to all their livestock (Exodus 11:4-5). At midnight, the Lord went through the land of Egypt and executed judgment on man, beast and on all the gods of Egypt (Exodus 12:12). To avoid being judged with the gods of Egypt, the Hebrews (by faith) kept the Pascha (Greek for Passover); that is, the sprinkling on their door posts of the blood of the lamb that was sacrificed that evening. This Paschal celebration was to be done every year in remembrance of this event on the 14th day of Nisan, the first month of the year (Exodus 12:14-20). In 30 AD, on the 14th of Nisan, Jesus was crucified as the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world (John 1:29).

[59] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xii, 1.

[60] Biblical Archaeology Review, July/August 1985, p. 27.

After Israel left Egypt, Pharaoh changed his mind again and went after them (Exodus 14:5-9). Led by 600 select chariots (plus 50,000 cavalry and 200,000 foot soldiers according to Josephus[61], the Egyptians overtook the Hebrews at the Red Sea. Most maps of the Exodus place the Red Sea crossing at the Northwest tip where the Southern end of the Suez Canal now exists. At that time, the Red Sea narrowed down to about a 5-8 mile wide body of water. According to Josephus[62], Israel was then trapped between the Red Sea, the mountains and the Egyptian army.

According to our Epistle text, by faith, they passed through the Red Sea as on dry land (Hebrews 11:29). Moses stretched out his hand over the Red Sea and the Lord swept the sea back by a strong East wind all night so that the waters were a wall on their right and left (Exodus 14:21-22). Earlier that day, the pillar of cloud moved through their midst from in front of them to behind them to block the path of the Egyptian army (Exodus 14:19-20). Paul stated that because the Hebrews passed through the cloud and the sea, "all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea" (1 Corinthians 10:2).

In looking at the geography of this region, the Red Sea runs almost North-South at every potential crossing site. Therefore, a wind blowing from the East (compare Exodus 10:19) could not, by itself, push the waters back. However, it would have helped considerably in drying out the ocean bottom to allow people to cross on "dry land". The dividing of the waters had to have had supernatural help.

After the Hebrews crossed, the entire Egyptian army, led by Pharaoh, went in after them. However, "the Lord looked down on the army of the Egyptians through the pillar of fire and cloud and brought the army of the Egyptians into confusion. That is, the Egyptians attempted to be baptized in the cloud and in the sea, but in their unbelief. And He caused their chariot wheels to swerve and He made them drive with difficulty so the Egyptians said 'let us flee from Israel, for the Lord is fighting for them against us'" (Exodus 14:24-25). Too late! Just then Moses stretched his hand over the sea again and the waters returned to their normal state.

The waters returning to normal had the effect of a major tsunami. Josephus added[63] that there was a tremendous electrical storm that occurred as the Egyptian army was on the dry seabed.

> "As soon as the whole Egyptian army was within it, the sea flowed to its own place and came down with a torrent raised by storms of wind. Showers of rain also came down from the sky and dreadful thunder and lightning with flashes of fire. Thunder bolts also darted upon them; everything that used to be sent by God upon men as indications of His wrath happened at this time".

Thus the Egyptian army was electrocuted as well as drowned. As John Chrysostom wrote[64], the faith of Moses went beyond human reasoning, weakness and lowliness.

[61] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xv, 3.

[62] Josephus, Antiquities, II, xv, 3.

[63] Jisephus, Antiquities, II, xvi, 3.

[64] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 2.

As a result of the Exodus, Egypt was ruined. Her crops were non-existent because of the plagues and her livestock were decimated. Her army was totally eliminated and all the surrounding nations knew it (Joshua 2:9-10). This left Egypt vulnerable to be conquered; some conquering nation could now enslave them as they had enslaved the Hebrews.

Sometimes we also find ourselves in predicaments from which there appears to be no escape: such as Moses was trapped between the sea, the mountains and a powerful army. Sometimes the only solution may be the resolve of Shadrach, Meshach and Abed-nego as they were about to be thrown into the furnace, "The Lord can save us if He wills; but even if He does not, we will not bow to idolatry" (Daniel 3:13-27 paraphrase).

The Conquest of Jericho

Before crossing the Jordan River into Canaan, Joshua sent spies in to view the land, especially Jericho, its forces and its morale (Joshua 2:1). Josephus wrote[65] that when they entered Jericho they were presumed to be harmless strangers who were curious about their city, and people took no notice. At evening, they retired to an inn kept by Rahab to eat supper. After eating, the king of Jericho got wind who they were and desired to examine them under torture to find out what their business was. Rahab heard of this and hid the spies under the stalks of flax on her roof. When the king's soldiers came, she lied to them about the spies' whereabouts (Joshua 2:2-7), even though it meant death for her and her family if she were discovered.

After the king's soldiers left on a wild goose chase, she said to the spies that:

- She knew that the Lord had given them the land of Canaan (Joshua 2:9)
- The terror of you had fallen on everyone and everyone was completely demoralized (Joshua 2:9, 11)
- She had heard how the Lord dried up the Red Sea before them and wiped out Pharaoh's army (Joshua 2:10)
- She had heard what the Hebrews did to Sihon and Og and utterly destroyed them (Joshua 2:10, Numbers 21:21-39, Deuteronomy 3:1-11). This was very impressive since Og was a giant like Goliath (Deuteronomy 3:11)
- She recognized the Hebrews' God as the only God of heaven above and earth beneath (Joshua 2:11).

Therefore, she asked them to swear that they would treat her and her family kindly when they conquered Jericho in return for her treating them kindly. This they swore and gave her a scarlet rope to hang in her window when the city was taken in order to identify her house. Then she let them down by a rope through the window of her inn, since her inn was on the wall of the city, and they returned to the Hebrew camp (Joshua 2:12-24).

Following the destruction of Jericho, Rahab and her family were spared and lived in Israel with the Hebrews. Josephus wrote[66] that Joshua held Rahab in great esteem afterwards and gave her and her family certain land as part of the division of the land among the twelve tribes.

[65] Josephus, Antiquities, V, 1, 2.

[66] Josephus, Antiquities, V, i, 7.

From today's Gospel lesson, Rahab married Salmon, an Israeli, and was the mother of Boaz who married Ruth, also a foreigner. Ruth was the grandmother of King David (Matthew 1:5-6).

Rahab's example of faith is unusual; James, the Lord's brother used her faith as an example of faith justified by works (James 2:25). We don't usually associate intentional falsehood with faith. But yet we would also be hard pressed to state what Rahab "should have done" in order to do the Lord's will to a fuller extent. She recognized the Kingdom of God and risked her life to be part of it.

Summary

The foregoing examples of faith from some of the better-known figures in the genealogy of Christ serve as examples for us regarding courage, faithfulness, perseverance and insight regarding the things of God. For discussion on other Old Testament figures mentioned in Hebrews 11, see the Sunday of All Saints and the 1st Sunday of Lent. The Epistle lesson concludes: "God has provided something better for us that they should not be made perfect apart from us" (Hebrews 11:40). The something better is the Body of Christ and access to the mysteries of God at the Lord's Table. Just as our forebears in the faith did not take lightly the things of God that were revealed to them, we dare not do so either.

John Chrysostom wrote[67], "Consider the virtue of the saints: if here in this life they do as angels do (in partaking and acting upon the mysteries of God), what then will they do above?" The same can be said of us as we partake in faith of the mysteries of God.

Basil the Great spoke[68] of his early life acquiring wisdom, and his journey to perfection by imitating some of the holy men that he met. These people he met were to him living examples of the saints that Paul referred to.

> I had spent much time in vanity, and had wasted nearly all my youth in the vain labor of acquiring the wisdom made foolish by God. Then like a man roused from deep sleep, I turned my eyes to the marvelous light of the truth of the Gospel, and I perceived the uselessness of 'the wisdom of the princes of this world, that comes to nothing' (1 Corinthians 2:6). I wept many tears over my miserable life and I prayed that guidance might be granted me to admit me to the doctrines of the true Faith. First of all I was minded to make some mending of my ways, long perverted as they were by my intimacy with wicked men. Then I read the Gospel, and I saw there that a great means of reaching perfection was the selling of one's goods, the sharing them with the poor, the giving up of all care for this life, and the refusal to allow the soul to be turned by any sympathy to things of earth. And I prayed that I might find someone of the brethren who had chosen this way of life, that with him I might cross life's troubled strait. And many did I find in Alexandria, and in the rest of Egypt, others in Palestine, and in Syria, and in Mesopotamia. I admired their continence in living, and their endurance in toil; I was amazed at their persistency in prayer, and at their triumphing over sleep. Subdued by no natural necessity, ever keeping their souls' purpose high and free,

[67] John Chrysostom, Homilies on Hebrews, XXVII, 7.

[68] Basil the Great, Letter Against Eustathius of Sebasteia, CCXXIII, 2.

in hunger, in thirst, in cold, in nakedness (2 Corinthians 11:27), they never yielded to the body. They were never willing to waste attention on it; always, as though living in a flesh that was not theirs, they showed in deed what it is to sojourn for a while in this life (Hebrews 11:13), and what it is to have one's citizenship and home in heaven (Philippians 3:20). All this moved my admiration. I called these men's lives blessed, in that they showed in deed that they 'bear about in their body the dying of Jesus' (2 Corinthians 4:10). And I prayed that I, too, as far as in me lay, might imitate them.

Basil also spoke[69] of how the Church has guarded the dignity[70] of the mysteries (*dogma*), while proclaiming the Gospel (*kerugma*). We pray standing and facing East toward Paradise on the first day of the week, as we look for the Resurrection. The first day of the week is the 8th day, which is the same as the 1st day before the Fall. Pentecost also speaks toward this.

> "The Apostles and Fathers, who laid down laws for the Church from the beginning, guarded the awesome dignity of the mysteries in secrecy and silence; for what is clamored randomly among the common folk is no mystery at all. This is the reason for our tradition of unwritten precepts and practices, that the knowledge of our teachings may not become neglected and despised by the multitude through familiarity. 'Dogma' and 'Kerugma' are two distinct things; dogma is observed in silence; kerugma is proclaimed to the entire world. One form of this silence is the obscurity employed in Scripture, which makes the meaning of 'dogmas' difficult to be understood for the advantage of the reader. Thus we all look to the East at our prayers, but few of us know that we are seeking our own old country (Hebrews 11:14), Paradise, which God planted Eastward in Eden (Genesis 2:8). We pray standing, on the first day of the week, but we do not all know the reason. On the day of the resurrection[71], we remind ourselves of the grace given to us by standing at prayer. This is not only because we rose with Christ, and are bound to 'seek those things which are above' (Colossians 3:1), but because the day seems to us to be in some sense an image of the age which we expect. Therefore, though it is the beginning of days, it is not called by Moses 'the first day', but 'one[72] day' (Genesis 1:5). For he says, 'There was evening, and there was morning, one day', as though the same day often recurred. Now 'one' and 'eighth' are the same, the state which follows after this present time, the day which knows no evening, and no successor, that age which doesn't end or grow old. Of necessity, the Church teaches her own foster children to offer their prayers on that day standing, that through continual reminder of the endless life we may not neglect to make provision for our departure there. Moreover the whole of Pentecost is a reminder of the resurrection expected in the age to come. That one and first day, seven multiplied by seven, completes the seven weeks of the holy Pentecost. Beginning at the first, Pentecost ends with the same, making fifty revolutions through the intervening days. And so it is a

[69] Basil, On the Spirit, XXVII, 66.

[70] *Kerugma* means "proclamation"; *dogma* means "decree". Examples are for kerugma: Romans 16:25; for dogma: Acts 16:4.

[71] or "standing again"

[72] Many English translations phrase Genesis 1:5 "the first day", but Basil is correct and the English translations are wrong.

likeness of eternity, beginning as it does and ending, as in a circling course, at the same point. On this day the rules of the Church have educated us to prefer the upright attitude of prayer, for by their plain reminder they make our mind to dwell no longer in the present but in the future. Moreover every time we fall upon our knees and rise up, we show by deed that by our sin we fell down to earth, and by the loving kindness of our Creator, we were called back to heaven".

John Cassian connected[73] the City that God prepares for us to our participation in this City after we pass from this life. The life in our souls begins to taste beforehand something of what is reserved for them at the Last Judgment. This contrasts with the heretics, who claim that we are deprived of perception after our departure.

"There are then many who while still living in this body are dead, lying in the grave, and cannot praise God. On the contrary there are many who though they are dead in the body yet bless God in the spirit, and praise Him, according to this[74], 'O you spirits and souls of the righteous, bless the Lord', and 'every spirit shall praise the Lord' (Philippians 2:10; Psalm 150:6). The souls of those that are slain are not only said to praise God but to address Him also (Revelation 6:9-10). The Lord said with still greater clearness to the Sadducees, 'Have you not read that which was spoken by God, I am the God of Abraham, and the God of Isaac and the God of Jacob. He is not the God of the dead but of the living: for all live to Him'. Of whom Paul said, 'wherefore God is not ashamed to be called their God, for He has prepared for them a city' (Hebrews 11:16). That they are not idle after the separation from this body, and are capable of feeling, the parable in the Gospel shows, which tells us of the beggar Lazarus and Dives clothed in purple. One of these obtained a position of bliss, i.e., Abraham's bosom; the other was consumed with the dreadful heat of eternal fire (Luke 16:19-25). But if you care to understand the words spoken to the thief, 'Today you shall be with Me in Paradise' (Luke 23:43), this clearly shows that not only does their former intelligence continue with the souls, but also that in their changed condition they partake of some state which corresponds to their actions and deserts! For the Lord would certainly never have promised him this, if He had known that his soul, after being separated from the flesh, would either have been deprived of perception or have been resolved into nothing. It was not his flesh but his soul, which entered Paradise with Christ. We must avoid, and shun with the utmost horror, that wicked punctuation of the heretics, who do not believe that Christ could be found in Paradise on the same day on which He descended into hell. They thus punctuate 'Truly, I say to you today', and making a stop apply, 'you shall be with Me in Paradise' (Luke 23:43). They imagine that this promise was not fulfilled at once after he departed from this life, but that it will be fulfilled after the resurrection. They do not understand what He declared to the Jews before His resurrection, where they fancied that He was hampered by human difficulties and weakness of the flesh as they were. 'No man has ascended into heaven, but He who came down from heaven, even the Son of man who is in heaven' (John 3:13), by which He clearly shows that the souls of the departed are

[73] John Cassian, 1st Conference of Abbot Moses, I, 14.

[74] "Song of the Three Children", 63 in Brenton, Lancelot, The Septuagint with Apocrypha, Hendrickson Publishers, Peabody MA, 1990.

not deprived of their reason, and they have such feelings as hope and sorrow, joy and fear. They already are beginning to taste beforehand something of what is reserved for them at the last judgment, and that they are not, as some unbelievers hold, resolved into nothing after their departure from this life. They live a more real life, and are still more eager in waiting on the praises of God".