



# Servants' Preparation Program



Coptic Orthodox  
Diocese of the  
Southern  
United States

*"For I have given you an example,  
that you should do as I have done to you"*  
John 13:15

**Coptic Orthodox  
Diocese of the Southern United States**

---

**HIS 101  
Apostolic Age**

---

**Servants' Preparation Program**

**2003**

**High School Boys (July 7 – 11)  
High School Girls (July 11 – 15)  
College (August 13 – 17)**

**San Antonio, TX**

---

## ✠ TABLE OF CONTENTS ✠

- **Introduction**
- **A Brief Look at the World during the Apostolic Age**
- **Birth of the Church**
- **Persecution of the Apostles by the Jews**
- **How Did Christianity Spread Throughout the World?**
- **Famous Apostolic Churches of the Apostolic Age**
- **Christian Life During the Apostolic Age**
- **Famous Persons in the Apostolic Age**
- **Heresies during the Apostolic Age**
- **Canonical Books of the New Testament**
- **Apocryphal Books**

# INTRODUCTION

## ✠ **Definition of Apostolic Age:**

The Apostolic Age is the time, in which the Apostles of our Lord Jesus Christ lived and preached the Christian faith. It accounts for approximately 70 years and extended from the foundation of the Church on the day of Pentecost on 30 AD to the departure of St. John the Apostle, 100 AD.

## ✠ **Importance of Study of the Apostolic Age:**

1. It is the origin of the Christian Church delineating its separatism from Judaism. It is the Age of the Holy Spirit, inspiration and constitution.
2. It is astounding evidence of the power of Christianity where its preaching and teaching reached almost every part of the world in a very short period of time as a result of the Mysterious Handiwork of God.
3. It reflects purity, effectiveness and the Divine power of Christianity and how by a Mysterious Godly Work could renew the creation of every nation, Jewish, Roman, Greek...etc.
4. It is well known that the Lord Jesus Christ taught his holy disciples many teachings and performed many miracles not recorded in the Holy Gospels (John 20:30). Also, the Lord spent 40 days after His Glorious Resurrection appearing to His disciples teaching them about the Kingdom of God (Acts 1:3) and this also was not recorded in the Holy Gospels. Therefore, the Christian teaching in the Apostolic Age, which is known as "Tradition," is the reflection of such teachings and arrangements that were given to the disciples by our Lord.
5. The Apostolic Age represents role models of great persons in preaching, teaching and service who were inspired by the Holy Spirit and supported by the power of the New Creation in baptism. Definitely this was an incentive for good deeds.

## ✠ **Historical Sources of the Apostolic Age:**

1. All the Holy Books of the New Testament in particular the Holy Book of Acts.
2. Teachings and laws that belong to the Apostles such as the Didache (Teaching of the Twelve Apostles) and Didascalia.
3. Writings of the Apostolic Fathers who are the disciples of the Apostles such as St. Clement the Roman, St. Polycarp, St. Ignatius, St. Hermas and St. Papias.
4. Pseudo-Canonical Books (Apocrypha) which can be used as historical sources of the Apostolic Age although the Church refused them as inspired books.
5. Jewish sources such as writings by Philo of Alexandria, Josephus the famous Jewish Historian who was contemporary of Jerusalem destruction and wrote "Influences of Jews" and "Wars of Jews", and Mishna which is the teachings of Rabbis in the First Century and provides good information about the Apostles,

their teachings, the rituals and worship in the early Church as a excommunicated group out of the Synagogue.

6. Latin writers and historians such as Tacitus, Suetonius and Pliny.
7. Writers of the Second Century who are the second successors of the Apostles such as Justin the Martyr, St. Irenaeus, and Hegesippus.
8. Christian Historians such as Eusebious, an early Christian writer, who wrote the church history since the Incarnation to 324 AD and was called the Father of Church history.
9. Ancient monuments such as scrolls of the Dead Sea.



## **A Brief Look at the World during the Apostolic Age**

At the time when the Church was born, the world was divided into two categories, from religious perspective, Jews and Pagans. However, from a political perspective, there were two powers, Roman which controlled most of the known world at that time including Jerusalem where the Church was born and Persia which controlled the Far East.

### **✦ Jews**

#### **▪ Political Situation:**

When the Roman General, Pompey conquered Jerusalem during 63 BC, Judea became a Roman state. The Romans set Herod as governor and a symbol for Caesar. From that time, all Jews were looking for the Savior and Messiah who would deliver them and conquer the Roman power and rebuild the Kingdom of David, of course anticipating with a materialistic perspective.

#### **▪ Social and Economical Situations:**

Were extremely bad and the parables that the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in the Holy Gospel, in addition to their spiritual meanings, express these bad situations. For example, midnight's friend (Luke 11:5-7), the lost coin (Luke 15:8-9), the poor in the parable of the Great Feast (Luke 14: 21-23) and the men doing nothing in the parable of the workers in the vineyard (Matthew 20:1-7). All these parables reflect the bad economical and social situations at that time. On the other hand, there was an elite rich class whom only thought about themselves and how they could increase their wealth without a care regarding the poor as the Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in the parable of rich fool (Luke 12:6-12).

In addition to this, high taxes were collected by tax collectors some for Rome and some for the Temple. Due to all of this, unemployment, robbery, and murdering were very common occurrence at that time. The parable of Good Samaritan, who rescued a Jew traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and attacked by robbers, (Luke 10:30) reflected such a situation.

#### **▪ Religious Situation:**

Most of the Jews of that time were morally corrupted and were labeled in the New Testament "children of serpents" (Matthew 3:7), "children of Satan" (John 8:44) and "hard necks" (Acts 7:51). Josephus mentioned about the people being corrupted and evil and deserving the judgment of God which was fulfilled by destruction of the Temple in 70 AD. They only cared about the Law literally not spiritually. However, they acquired treasures and many colonies in the most of the states comprising the Roman Empire. The Greek were very common in Judea. Since the First Century before the Lord Jesus Christ, the Jews began to preach in many regions and this is clear from the Lord Jesus Christ's speech to the Pharisees and Scribes "*How terrible for you, teachers of the Law and Pharisees! You hypocrites! You sail the sea*

*and cross whole countries to win one convert; and when you succeed, you make him twice as deserving of going to hell as you yourselves are” Matthew 23:15.* The Septuagint of the Old Testament from Hebrew to Greek attributed to the conversion of Gentiles to Judaism. The Jewish powers at that time were the Pharisees, Scribes, Sadducees, and Essenes.

## ✚ **Pagans**

In the First Century there were many philosophies, however, Epicurean and Stoic philosophies were the most widely accepted. Some philosophers were atheists and others believed in one god or many gods. The Epicurean and Stoic philosophers believed that fulfillment could be achieved in this life through emotional calm and impassivity. The Epicureans pursued pleasure in the life through the materialistic life denying the need for religion or god’s care and believed that gods lived away from people denying life after death. Epicureans’ motto was “let us eat and drink for tomorrow we die” and so St. Paul referred to this in the Holy Book of First Corinthians 15:32.

Stoics believed in one god and one spirit from which all creations exist and to which all creations end. They believed that mind and logic were the most important godly gifts to the man. Stoic philosophy entailed that all human beings are god’s children. It was a religion for those people who were seeking good at that time. They believed that the core of all creations is the LOGOS. Their philosophers especially Xenon called for renouncing and good deeds.

St. Paul described the state of moral corruption that was prevalent in that time in his Holy Epistle to Romans 1:18-32. Romans changed the glory of the incorruptible God into an image made like corruptible man and birds and four footed animals and creeping things. Human sacrifices for pagans were very common especially for Moloch as described by Pliny the Elder. The pagans’ rituals also involved adultery and sexual immoralities especially in the temples of Aphrodite the “god of beauty” of the Greeks in Corinth. St. Paul described in the Holy Book of Romans different types of moral and sexual corruption.

Romans and Greeks encouraged killing of their children for poverty or if they were ill with non-curable diseases. Aeschylus encouraged abortion to prevent overpopulation. Appleton called for killing of children if they are of evil parents, old parents, or illegal. Romans believed the same Greek ideas as described by their historian Suetonius.

Romans and Greeks disrespected woman and thought that a woman was just a servant for man and for his flesh’s pleasure. They didn’t respect marriage as Christianity was doing. Appleton called the main goal of marriage as getting healthy children for a good society. It was adulteresses for most of high ranked Greeks and Romans. Seneca mentioned at that time there were no woman of virtue and polygamy and divorce were commonplace. Adultery and moral corruption were prominent features of those times. The Royal family was example of this corruption

as mentioned by Seneca in his discourse concerning what Messalina, Kildee's' wife did to fulfill her immorality and sexual desires.

Homosexuality, gay and lesbianism, were main practices of Romans and Greeks as St. Paul mentioned in his Holy Epistle to the Romans. Slavery was another common practice of that time. In conclusion this era had multiple types of corruption and immoralities.

Politically, the Roman Empire was the only power of that time, its government and properties extended in all three continents of the Old World, Europe, Asia and Africa. Caesar assigned governors for all Roman states under a central authority in Rome. Although the Romans militarily controlled the world it was controlled culturally by the Greeks where Hellenistic culture was everywhere in the world at that time. Beside Rome there were Athens, Alexandria, Antioch, Azmer, and Tarsos. Some Roman states had their own government based on their culture yet still were under control of the Roman central authority. The peace and security found within the Roman empire at that time allowed for the free moving and traveling of the Apostles to preach and teach inside all Roman states.



## **Birth of the Church**

After His blessed Glorious Resurrection, our Lord Jesus Christ appeared to His holy Apostles for forty days to assure them of the Truth of His Glorious Resurrection (Acts 1:3). Also to comfort them (John 20:20) and to instruct them in the practical preaching and teaching that was difficult for them to comprehend prior to His Glorious Resurrection (John 16:25, Acts 1:3). St. Luke described in his Holy Gospel one of those such teaching session as happened with the Emmaus' disciples in which He walked with them approximately 7 miles for about 2 hours explaining the Holy Scriptures to them beginning with Moses and the prophets (Luke 24:13-27). In His third apparition at Lake of Galilee, the Lord Jesus Christ spent all night with His disciples to late morning (John 21:4-15).

After His Ascension, the Apostles returned back to the City of Jerusalem with great joy (Luke 24:52) because He ascended to The Father (John 14:28) and He would come back again (Acts 1:11). They stayed in the Upper Room fasting and praying as the Lord directed them while waiting for the descending of the Holy Spirit (Luke 24:49 and Acts 1:4). At that time they chose St. Matthias to take the vacancy left by the betrayer Judas Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). On the 50<sup>th</sup> day of the Lord's Glorious Resurrection (Day of Pentecost) at the third hour (9 am), all the Apostles and the brethren about 120 were gathered together in one accord praying and fasting, when suddenly there came a sound from Heaven, as of a rushing mighty wind, and it filled the whole house where they were sitting. Then there appeared to them divided tongues as of fire and one sat upon each of them and they were all filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak with other tongues as the Spirit gave them utterance (Acts 2:1-4).

The Day of Pentecost was a great Jewish feast sometimes called Feast of Harvest (Exodus 23:16), Feast of First Fruits (Number 28:26) or Feast of Weeks (Deuteronomy 16:9-10 and Leviticus 23:15). It is called Pentecost because it happens on the 50<sup>th</sup> day after the Jewish Passover. It began immediately following the Passover by offering the first sheaf of grain and ended by offering two loaves. It was one of the main three Jewish feasts in which every Jew should appear before the Lord (Deuteronomy 16). Josephus mentioned tens of thousands of Jews used to come to Jerusalem to attend this feast and that this was certainly a good opportunity for the Apostles to begin preaching and teaching about the Lord Jesus Christ.

In that day St. Peter stood up and gave his sermon and when the attendants heard his teachings they were cut to the heart and said to St. Peter and the rest of the Apostles what shall we do? Then St. Peter said to them (Repent and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins. Acts 2:14-36). In that day, three thousand souls were baptized and added to the Church. From that time the Lord began to add to the Church daily those who were being saved (Acts 2:47).

## **Persecution of the Apostles by Jews**

The Church was born on Day of Pentecost in Jerusalem and so the Church there became the mother Church of all the Christian churches. St. Luke described the purity and simple life of this growing Church (Acts 2:46). The Church grew rapidly by the power of the Holy Spirit Who worked through the Apostles. St. Peter had a leading role in that primitive Church as shown in the Holy Book of Acts. Priests and seven deacons helped the Apostles when the number of the believers rapidly increased from three thousand souls to five thousand souls (Acts 4:4). Performing of miracles, preaching with the Holy Gospel and the pure and the holy life of the believers were the growth factors of the Church. The believers under the Apostles' leadership would go to the Temple for prayers while their meetings were held in the believers' houses (Acts 2:46 and 5:42) and were in one accord in partaking of the Holy Communion. Likewise, work of God's hand was very clear and many believers, men and women, were added to the Church every day (Acts 5:14) including Pharisees and Scribes (Acts 6:7). The Lord was the worker in and by them and so the Lord added to the Church everyday those being saved (Acts 2:47).

The results of such success in the service sparked chains of persecutions and sufferings for the Apostles and the believers. Jews utilized every means to persecute the Apostles and the believers such as betrayal and overt plots against the growing Church. History is full of such betrayals against the Lord Jesus Christ (Matthew 27:20), St. Stephen (Acts 6:9-14), St. Paul (Acts 9:23-25), St. Paul and St. Barnabas in Antioch of Pasadena (Acts 13:50), in Thessalonica (Acts 17:6-8), Iconium (Acts 14:1-6), and Lystra (Acts 14:8-19). Truly, St. Paul described the Jews saying *"Who killed both the Lord Jesus and their own prophets, and have persecuted us; and they do not please God and are contrary to all men, forbidding us to speak to the Gentiles that they may be saved, so as always to fill up the measure of their sins, but wrath has come upon them to the uttermost (1 Thessalonians 2:15 &16).*

The first Jewish group that persecuted our Apostles was the Sadducees (Acts 4:1 and 5:17) mostly because the Apostles' preaching about the Lord Jesus Christ Glorious Resurrection from the dead as they denied resurrection of dead in general. This began after the miracle St. Peter performed for the paralyzed man at the Temple with 40 years of known paralysis. The Apostles continued in the performing of miracles and thus this resulted in imprisonment, however, the Lord's Angels appeared to them, opened a prison's gates and freed them (Acts 5:12-20) where they appeared the morning in the Temple preaching and teaching once again. After that many unbelievers desired to kill them but one of their Rabbi "Gamaliel" said to them (Men of Israel, take heed to yourselves what you intend to do regarding these men. For some time ago Theudas rose up, claiming to be somebody. A number of men about four hundred joined him. He was slain and all who obeyed him were scattered and came to nothing. After this a man, Judas of Galilee, rose up in the days of the census and drew away many people after him. He also perished and all who obeyed him were dispersed. And now I say to you keep these men and let them

alone, for if this plan or this work of men, it will come to nothing. But if it is of God, you cannot overthrow it-lest you even be found to fight against God.) Acts 5:35-39. And so they agreed him and called the Apostles and beat them commanding then they should not speak in the name of the Lord Jesus Christ and let them go (Acts 5:40). The Apostles departed with rejoicing because they were counted worthy to suffer shame for His Name and daily in the Temple and in every house they did not cease teaching and preaching Jesus as the Christ (Acts 5:41-42).

St. Stephen one of the seven deacons was full of the wisdom of the Holy Spirit, faith, power and good deeds. Because of his teaching, Jews stirred up the people, the elders, the scribes and they came upon him, seized him, and brought him to the Council. He had a great oratory defense in his dialogue in the Synagogue and not one could contradict his wisdom and the spirit by which he spoke, yet the crowd cited blasphemy and they stoned him (Acts 7:1-60). Therefore, young St. Stephen has the honor of being the first martyr in Christianity.

The first martyr among the Apostles was St. James as denoted in the Holy Book of Acts 12:1 & 2 (Now about that time Herod the king stretched out his hand to harass some of the Church. Then he killed James the brother of John with the sword). And when he saw that it pleased the Jews he seized and arrested St. Peter and intended to kill him after the Passover (Spring 44 AD) to please the Jews but the Angel of the Lord appeared to St. Peter and saved him (Acts 12: 4 -17). The just punishment of God to Herod was delivered as the Angel of the Lord struck him and he was eaten by worms and died (Acts 12:21-24).

Later in 62 AD, St. James the Just the Bishop of Jerusalem was martyred by stoning. He was acclaimed among the Jews for his holy life and piety. Josephus mentioned that the destruction of Jerusalem and its Temple was a just punishment for the Jews because of their killing to this Just Bishop.

These persecutions brought about many blessings as the believers were scattered and went everywhere preaching The Word. St. Philip one of the seven deacons went down to the city of Samaria and preached the Lord Jesus Christ to them (Acts 8:5). After that St. Peter and St. John went to where they prayed and laid their hand on the believers there who received the Holy Spirit (Acts 8:15-17). St Philip was led by the Holy Spirit to the desert between Jerusalem and Gaza where he preached and baptized the Ethiopian Eunuch, a minister of Candaca, the Queen of Ethiopia (Acts 8:26-40). After that St. Philip was found at Azotus and passing through he preached to all cities until he came to Caesarea (Acts 8:40). The widespread preaching and teaching by the scattered Christian believers reached Phoenicia, Cyprus and Antioch (Acts 11:19).

However, the greatest of blessings resulting from the Jewish persecutions for the Apostles was the conversion of Saul of Tarsus, St. Paul, in 37 AD from Judaism to Christianity on the road to Damascus to arrest and seize the believers and bring them to Jerusalem. The Lord appeared to Saul and ordered Ananias to go to him

whereas Ananias prayed and so St. Paul was converted, became baptized and was filled with the Holy Spirit (Acts 9: 1-18). According to Church Tradition Ananias was one of the seventy disciples and Bishop of Damascus.

The two most important churches outside Jerusalem during this early time were the Churches of Damascus and Antioch. In Damascus occurred the conversion of St. Paul (Acts 9:1-9) and preaching in Phoenicia (Acts 11:19). Bishop Ananias who baptized St. Paul was among the seventy disciples, a good just Jew and a Bishop of Damascus. Founding of Antioch's Church was a great event at that time where this particular Church became the gate through which Christianity reached all the states of the Roman Empire and at the same time she still maintained her connection with the mother Church in Jerusalem. The Church of Antioch was the first Christian Church for the gentiles and pagans (Acts 11:19-21). The mother Church in Jerusalem sent Barnabas to Antioch who was joined later by St. Paul where they stayed one year there teaching and preaching (Acts 11:22-26). One of the main features of Antioch's Church was the gifts of the Holy Spirit where she had many prophets (Acts 13:1-3). In Antioch the believers were called Christians for the first time (Acts 11:26).

Some Jews, who came from Judea to Antioch taught that unless every believer was circumcised according to the custom of Moses, they could not be saved. As a result St. Paul and St. Barnabas disputed this teaching and they went up to Jerusalem to ask the Apostles and the elders of the Church there. In Jerusalem the Apostles and brethren gathered together in the first Council around 50-51 AD under James, the Bishop of Jerusalem's leadership. The Council ended in what St. James said (For it seemed good to the Holy Spirit, and to us, to lay upon you no greater burden than these necessary things: that you abstain from things offered to idols, from blood, from things strangled, and from sexual immorality. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well) Acts 15:1-29. Also, at this Council St. Paul got legality of his apostolicity and his Holy Gospel (Galatians 2:2). Also, St. Paul and St. Barnabas were assigned by the Church to preach to Gentiles while the rest of the Apostles were assigned to preach to the Jews.

Finally, on the 10<sup>th</sup> of August 70 AD, the Temple and Jerusalem were completely destroyed by the Roman militaries under leadership of Titus, the son of the Roman emperor Vespasian. Josephus described the horrible events that happened during that time where famines were rampant in Jerusalem, mothers ate their own children, more than 2 million Jews were killed and so the Lord Jesus Christ's prophecy about the destruction of the great city and the Temple (Matthew 24) had been fulfilled. The disciples and the believers left the city four years prior to this as the Lord warned them (Matthew 24:15) and so they were saved and the Church grew and the Lord added everyday many believers to the Church.

## **How Did Christianity Spread Throughout the World?**

The time came to fulfill the prophecy of David the Prophet and the King about the miraculous spread of Christianity through the work of the Apostles supported by the Holy Spirit *"Yet their message goes out to all the world and is heard to the ends of the earth. Psalm 19:4"*. So Eusebious, the Historian, saw the spread of Christianity all over the world fulfilled this prophecy. All the Apostles sacrificed themselves to fulfill the Lord's request for them to go everywhere in the world preaching and teaching (Mark 16:15). The Holy Spirit was their leader and was working in and through them as mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts 13:1&2 and 16:6-10.

We can divide our Apostles into three groups in addition to St. Paul regarding their field of preaching.

### ✠ **The first group includes St. Peter, St. Andrew, St. Matthew and St. Bartholomew.**

St. Peter preached in Pontus, Galatia, Cappadocia, Asia and Bithynia (1 Peter 1:1). St. Andrew preached in Scythia (Russia and so he is the intercessor of the Russian Church), Besporan Kingdom and the Barbarian Lands to the east of the Black Sea (Now within Russia), Turkey and Sebastopolis, Colchis, Apsaros, Trebizond, Amasia, Nicea, Nikomidea to the south of the Black Sea and finally he attained the crown of martyrdom in Greece. St. Bartholomew preached in the Besporan Kingdom, India, Yemen, and Armenia. St. Matthew preached in Persia and Ethiopia.

### ✠ **The second group includes St. Thomas, St. Thaddeus, and St. Simon the Patriot.**

St Thomas preached in Odessa, and India. St. Thaddeus preached in Bakr Lands (Iraq) and Odessa where he healed her king Abgr. St. Simon preached in Babylonia, and Syria.

### ✠ **The third group includes St. John and St. Philip**

They preached in Asia Minor.

### ✠ **St. Paul**

Preached in Damascus, Syria, Tarsus, Antioch, Cyprus, Asia Minor in Antioch of Pasadena, Derba, Galatia, Ephesus, Greece in Philippi, Thessalonica, Corinth, and Peria, and in Western Europe in Italy and Spain and finally attained his crown of martyrdom in Rome (Romans 15:19-24, 1 Corinthians 15:10 and 2 Corinthians 11:32).

It is certainly true that the main factor in the spreading of Christianity was the work of the Holy Spirit. But there were some factors which facilitated the work of the Apostles in their preaching which included the Jews were everywhere with the same Old Testament, the same belief about the true living God, one international language "Greek", one international state "the Roman Empire", which offered peace and roads for traveling and security in sailing and finally the most common philosophy of that time that all peoples are one united.

The Apostles preached everywhere and all the time taking every opportunity for preaching the Holy Gospel. They preached in synagogues (Acts 9:20, 13:5, 14:1, 17:1, 18:4, 19, 19:8), in every house (Acts 18:7, 20:7, 20:20, 28:17-31), schools (Acts 19:9&10), courts and places of governors (Acts 13:7, 24:24&25, 26:28), in jail (Acts 16), markets and public places (Acts 17:17-19), on rivers banks (Acts 16:13), and on Roman campus (Acts 21:40 and 22:1-21). They preached at every opportunity as St Paul taught his disciple St. Timothy (2 Timothy 4:2).

✠ **The main factor in the success of the Apostles' preaching was the empowerment of the Holy Spirit who led them in every step.**

He was the One who called for preaching (Acts 13:2), He taught the servants and spoke using their tongues (Acts 4:7-12), He determined the field and places of preaching for them as He would lead them to certain places and stop before others (Acts 8:26-29, 10:19-20, 11:6-10), He used to move them from one place to another (Acts 8:39&40), performing miracles (Acts 5:9-10, 13: 19-11) and led them in every decision as in Council of Jerusalem (Acts 15:28).

✠ **Concerning the relation of the Church of the Apostles and the state can be summarized as follow:**

Christianity came from Judaism and in the beginning it was considered as one of the Jewish denominations. The Roman Empire considered Judaism as one of the official religions and so Christianity had advantages from this acceptance until Romans realized it was actually a new religion then they began to persecute Christianity. It is not commonly known the exact time that Christianity reached Rome; however, the Holy Book of Acts mentioned attendance of Romans in Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost when the Church was established and so it is most probable those were the founder of the Church in Rome. Also, St Paul stated that some of his relatives were converted to Christianity before him (Romans 16). The first non-biblical evidence of Christianity in Rome was mentioned by the pagan historian Suetonius (52 AD) in his discourse concerning the exile of Jews by the Emperor Kilodioc because of the argument with Christians about the nature of the Lord Jesus Christ. At the time of Nero, Christians were well known throughout the Roman Empire. Nero persecuted Christians and accused them of being responsible for burning and setting fire of Rome which began on July 18, 64 AD and continued for 7 days where 10 districts of its 14 districts were completely burned to the ground and destroyed. Following this burning, persecution began where thousands of believers were

martyred by fire, and beheaded after severe torture and pain. The most famous of the martyrs in Nero's time were St. Peter and St. Paul. Most historians attribute Nero was responsible for their deaths. Many waves of persecution began and continued throughout all the states of the Roman Empire. Following Nero's example, the emperors Galba, Otho, Vitellius, Vespasian and Titus continued persecution of Christians and thousands of believers were martyred in their times. At the end of the Apostolic Age was a great persecution by Domitian (81-96 AD) who killed thousands of believers, among them his counselor Flavius Clements and exiled others such as Domitilla, Clemens' wife. Domitian was the emperor who persecuted St. John and exiled him to Patmos where he saw his Revelation and wrote the Holy Book of Revelation (1:1). After, Domitian, Nerva came to the authority in Rome (96-98) and he refused considering Christianity as a political crime, and returned exiles but he did not consider Christianity as an official allowable religion for the Romans and the Roman Empire.

## **Famous Apostolic Churches of the Apostolic Age**

### **✠ Church of Jerusalem:**

It is the mother Church of all Christian churches during the Apostolic Age. Also, Jerusalem was the home of Judaism to which all Jews directed their visions and hopes. Jerusalem also was the first city sanctified by the Lord Jesus Christ in His flesh and His own precious blood.

In Jerusalem, the Christian church was born and from which the Gospel of Salvation spread outward, everywhere in the world and was further honored by the ministry of the Apostles and blessed by their miracles and the blood of the early martyrs, St. Stephen, St. James the son of Zebedee, St. James the Just and many martyrs whom we do not know their names.

In Jerusalem, the first Ecumenical Council was held and it is called the “Mother Church” in St. James’ Liturgy. When waves of persecution hit the church after the martyrdom of St. Stephen believers with the exception of the Apostles scattered in Judea, and Samaria (Acts 8:1). From Jerusalem, the Apostles oversaw the ministry throughout Samaria (Acts 8:14&15) and Antioch (Acts 11:22).

The believers in every Church would send gifts to the poor in Jerusalem (Acts 11:30). St. James the Just was the first bishop for this Church until his martyrdom in 62 AD, and was then succeeded by his brother St. Simon the son of Kolb who was martyred by crucifixion 106 AD. After the destruction of Jerusalem by the Roman commander Titus in 70 AD, this See lost its prestigious rank until the beginning of the 4<sup>th</sup> century when Christianity became the official religion of the state.

### **✠ Church of Antioch:**

Antioch was the 3<sup>rd</sup> famous city in the Roman Empire behind Rome and Alexandria and it was the political capital of Syria. Its population was a mixture of Greeks, Syrians and Jews. Antioch was the first Gentile Church and the first Church where the believers were called Christians. St. Paul and St. Barnabas ministered in Antioch first (Acts 11:22-26) and then St. Peter went to Antioch after Council of Jerusalem (Galatians 2:11). It was the base of St. Paul ministry’s trips.

### **✠ Church of Alexandria:**

Alexandria was the 2<sup>nd</sup> city in the Roman Empire after Rome, and was the 1<sup>st</sup> city for education, philosophy and science. Its population was a mixture of Egyptians, Greeks, Romans, Jews, Persian, and Syrians. Some Egyptians were in



Jerusalem on the Day of Pentecost (Acts 2:10) and of course some of them believed and ministered in Egypt even before St. Mark came to Egypt. The Holy Book of Acts mentioned Apollos from Alexandria who was a Jew converted to Christianity and was full of Holy Spirit, wisdom and knowledge (Acts 18:24&25). St. Luke presented his Holy Gospel to Theophilus a rich man from Alexandria (Luke 1:3 &4). It was mentioned that St. Simon the Cannite ministered in Upper Egypt. However, the See of Alexandria belonged to its founder St. Mark. St. Mark was one of the seventy disciples and founded the Church around 57-59 AD. The Christian life in Alexandria was characterized by holiness, purity, and asceticism as Philo, the Jewish philosopher specifically referred to in his book "Life of Meditation". St. Mark founded the Theological School of Alexandria to replace the pagan school.

✠ **Church of Rome:**

Rome was the 1<sup>st</sup> city in the world during the Apostolic Age and considered the political capital of the world. The first ministers to Rome were those who were in attendance the Day of Pentecost. However, Roman Church was founded by St. Paul (Romans 1:5, 13, Galatians 2:7-9, Acts 9:15, 22:18-21, 23:11, Galatians 2:7-9, Romans 15:20, Acts 28:30, 16:3-16, 1:7).

## **Christian Life during the Apostolic Age**

### **✦ The Spiritual Power of Christianity**

When Christianity appeared on the scene of history, it called for a continuing fruitful holy life completely different from all that had preceded it as a life of holiness, peace, and communion with God. It was an eternal life that started with heartfelt renewal and continued to the maximum resurrection. Christianity was superior to all religions in the practicing of virtues and presented the best supposition of God-man's love. No philosophy could renew and conquer the world as the Christianity did and is still doing by the Holy Gospel. The Christian life was led by her head, the Lord Jesus Christ, and it follows His Holy steps and so beyond count the number of murders, adulteresses, thieves, and evils who changed their life through practical Christian faith. Yes, indeed Christianity could change the wild wolves to humble lambs!

### **✦ Christianity and the individual:**

The Christian plan to change life usually starts internally, from the heart unlike all other philosophies. The main goal of Christianity is the individual life through and with the family and whole society will change to the betterment. Christianity considered the individual as the nucleus of the family and the community and so it cared about the individual's life and its renewal toward the perfection. The life of the Apostles and early believers reached a rank of holy life no one had attained before including the Jewish righteous. Their lives were daily communion with the Lord Jesus Christ. They presented through their lives role models for virtues which were not known before to anyone such as meekness, humbleness, and love of one's enemies. They were light and salt for the world keeping their Master's Words and showing His light to those who were sitting in darkness of sin. They were a non-written Gospel or you can say a living Gospel!

### **✦ Christianity and Women**

The effect of Christianity was not limited to men's life but extended to women. Christianity honored women unlike Judaism and paganism. Women inherited salvation as men had (1 Peter 3:7 and Galatians 3:28). Christianity honored women and presented her as a man's helper.

The Virgin St. Mary is the point of change in woman's history, through her, her gender has been honored and blessed attributed to her giving birth to the Lord Jesus Christ, the second Adam. She presented an exemplarily life of purity, meekness, humbleness, obedience, and submission to God. In addition to St. Mary, the Holy Gospel presented many women of honor as denoted through their holy lives, the Lord Jesus Christ's fellowship and ministry such as Mary

Magdalene, Salome; St. John and St. James' mother, Mary and Martha, Lazarus' sisters, and those who followed the Lord Jesus Christ to the Holy Cross (Luke 24:1-10).

In between the Glorious Resurrection and Pentecost, St. Mary and the other women joined the holy Apostles in prayer in the Upper Room (Acts 1:14). This high room which became the first Church in the world was in a woman's house; St. Mary the mother of St. Mark the Apostle (Acts 12:12). From the beginning women served in Church (1 Corinthians 11:11-12).

#### ✠ **Christianity and marriage:**

As Christianity honored woman, it honored and sanctified the family life and marriage. It prohibits polygamy and considered monogamy the Godly ideal model. Thus matrimony was holy and in which each member had responsibilities and rights. Marriage in Christianity is a Divine Sacrament and not just human developmental work (Matthew 19:4-6). Man-woman union in marriage is similar to the Christ-Church union (Ephesians 5:28-33). Aquila and Priscilla were good examples for the Christian marriage as they helped St. Paul in his ministry and their house became a Church (Acts 18:2 & 26). In the Christian family the children-parent relationship is based on Agape love not on authority and violence as was the case among Romans. It was a relation based on parents' love and children's obedience which brought about love. St. Paul presented the woman to be saved through her giving birth to Godly children that through them the world would be saved. One of the evidences of the holiness of marriage was that the Church prohibited divorce except for marital immorality, unlike among Jews and pagans where divorce was very common for almost every reason.

One of the problems that faced Christianity in the Apostolic Age was the mixed marriage such as one partner being Christian and the other being Jew or pagan. So one partner might convert to the Christian faith but the other partner might not and so the Christian partner might think his/her marriage was not holy according to the Holy Bible. However, the Church allowed for continuity of this kind of marriage and considered it holy but at the same time she did not allow for any Christian to initiate a mixed marriage and considered any Christian who began a new mixed marriage as a sinner and should be excommunicated (1 Corinthians 7:12-14, 7:39 and 1 Peter 3:1).

#### ✠ **Christianity and virginity**

Since the beginning of the Apostolic Age many Christians loved to live the life of virginity and asceticism encouraged by the praising of such life by the Lord (Matthew 19:10-12) and it looks like the life of angels (Matthew 22:30 and Luke 20:35). In a question directed to St. Paul by the Corinthians about virginity and marriage St. Paul praised the life of virginity (1 Corinthians 7:1-38). Life of sexual abstinence extended also to married people and so St. Paul wrote to the

Corinthians about marital life and how it should be (1 Corinthians 7:3-7). During this time “spiritual” marriage appeared where a man and woman would live in the same house as brother and sister without sexual relation.

The life of St. Mary and her giving birth to the Lord, life of St. John the Baptist and that of the Lord himself encouraged the life of virginity as the believers are the temple for the Holy Spirit (1 Corinthians 6:15-19). What St. John revealed about the rank of the virgin in the heavenly Jerusalem was another encouraging factor for life of virginity (Revelation 14:1-5). The Church and the Church’s fathers honored the life of virginity and thus allowed virgins to set in the first rows in the Church before other believers. Re-marriage prohibits ordination of priests, or bishops (1Timothy 3:2, 12 and Titus 1:6).

#### ✠ **Christianity and society**

Christianity called for Agape love for all people beyond the geographical or physical boundaries removing the barriers between different races Jews, Romans, Gentiles, Greeks, and Barbarians as all nations are created from one (Acts 17:26). The Christian spirit is universal beyond national spirit so all believers are one heart and one soul (Acts 4:32).

#### ✠ **Spiritual gifts**

The spiritual gifts in the Church during the Apostolic Age included: (1) Wisdom and Knowledge (1 Corinthians 14:8); (2) Teaching (Romans 12:6 & 7); (3) Prophecy (Acts 11:28, 1 Corinthians 14:25, Acts 13:1 & 2 and 1 Timothy 4:14); (4) Tongues (Acts 2:1-13, 10:46, 19:6 and 1 Corinthians 12-14); (5) Interpretation (1 Corinthians 12:4-10); (6) Administration (1 Corinthians 12:28); (7) Pasturing (Ephesians 4:11-12); and (8) Miracles (Hebrews 2:4, 1 Corinthians 12:4, 8-10, 2 Corinthians 12:12).

#### ✠ **Categories of servants in the Church**

Categories of servants in the church during Apostolic Age included: (1) The Apostles (2 Corinthians 8:23, Philippians 2:25, 1 Thessalonians 2:6, Galatians 4:14-15); (2) Prophets (Acts 13:1, 11;28, 21:11, 15:32, 21:9); (3) Teachers ((Romans 12:6 &7); (4) Bishops (1Timothy, 1:7, 3:2-13, 4:13, Titus 1:6-9, 1 Peter 5:2-3); (5) Priests / Presbyters (Acts 14:23, 20:17, 11:30, 15:4,&23, 16:4, 21:18, 1 Timothy 5:17 &22, Titus 1:5, James 5:14, 1 Peter 5:1); (6) Deacons (Acts 6:1-8, 8:5-8 & 26-40); and (7) Women servants / Deacons (Acts 9:36, 21:8-9, Philippians 4:2&3, Romans 16:1,2,4,6,12, 1 Timothy 3:11).

## **The Tradition of the Apostolic Age**

Tradition in the Church during the Apostolic Age was a very important issue because most of our rituals depend on this tradition. Tradition includes all teachings and religious rituals that the Apostles gave to their successors orally through discipleship and Christian life day by day and these teachings and rituals were transmitted generation after generation without any adding or deletion to the present day. It is not necessary to find for every teaching or ritual a verse or verses in the Holy Gospel as the Holy Gospel does not include whole disciplines of teachings and rituals but it offers us the faith that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Son of God to have the eternal life through His name (John 20:31). Therefore, the Church considers the tradition is the second source of Christian teaching after the Holy Bible. It is historically accepted that Christian teachings in the early Church were through tradition before writing of any Holy Gospel or Epistle.

The Lord Jesus Christ followed the oral discipline in teaching that was common among Jewish Rabbis during His time on earth. So the Lord instructed disciples through living teachings that means the teachings acquired during living discipleship and so He told his disciples to go everywhere in the world to disciple and teach what He taught them (Matthew 28:19&20). Likewise, St. John the Beloved said *“that which we have seen and heard we declare to you that you also may have fellowship with us and truly our fellowship is with the Father and His Son Jesus Christ”* (1 John 3 &4).

Our Apostles themselves when founding churches declared and ministered with the Holy Gospel orally. They set their successors and those set their successors and so on and each generation declared the Christian teachings orally in perfect honesty. And so St. Paul said to his disciple St. Timothy *“And the things that you have heard from me among many witnesses, commit these to faithful men who well be able to teach others also”* (2 Timothy 2:2). The three words (heard, commit, teach) mean tradition in its perfect meaning. Yousabious from Caesara said *“our apostles ministered with the mysteries of Kingdom of Heaven without writing many books but through the living fellowship and discipleship”*.

All believers accepted the faith through ministry and hearing of teachings of the Apostles and so we read about believing of Eunuch of Candace, the Queen of Ethiopia and Cornelius through hearing of teaching by St. Philip and St. Peter.

The evidences of tradition in the apostolic writings include

- St. John the Beloved said *“And truly Jesus did many other signs in the presence of his disciples which are not written in this book. But these are written that you may believe that Jesus is the Christ the Son of God and that believing you may have life in His name”* (John 20:30&31).

- Holy Books of the Gospel don't contain all teachings of the Lord Jesus Christ as St. John said *"I had many things to write but I do not wish to do so with pen and ink. But I hope to see you shortly, and we shall speak face to face"* (3 John 13 & 14).
- St. Luke said *"To whom he also presented Himself alive after His suffering by many infallible proofs, being seen by them during forty days and speaking of the things pertaining to the Kingdom"* (Act 1:3). But not one of the evangelists recorded these things.
- The Apostles sent St. Paul and St. Barnabas to declare the decision of the Council of Jerusalem to the believers *"It seemed good to us, being assembled with one accord to send chosen men to you with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, men who have risked their lives for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent Judas and Silas who will also report the same thing by word of mouth"* (Acts 15: 25-27).
- St. Paul said *"For I received from the Lord that which I also delivered to you that the Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread (1 Corinthians 11:23).*
- Also, St. Paul said *"And the rest I will set in order when I come"* (1 Corinthians 11:34).
- St. Paul ordered his disciple Titus bishop of Crete *"For this reason I left you in Crete that you should set in order the things that are lacking and appoint elders in every city as I commanded you"* (Titus 1:5).
- St. Paul said to the Philippians *"The things which you learned and received and heard and saw in me these do and the God of peace will be with you"* (Philippians 4:9).
- St. Paul encouraged his disciple St. Timothy saying *"Hold fast the pattern of sound words which you have heard from me, in faith and love which are in Christ Jesus"* (2 Timothy 1:13).
- Also, to the Thessalonians, St. Paul said *"Therefore, brethren stand fast and hold the traditions which you were taught whether by word or our epistle"* (2 Thessalonians 2:15). So traditions are equal to the writing books.
- *"But we command you, brethren, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ that you withdraw from every brother who walks disorderly and not according to the tradition which have received from us"* (2 Thessalonians 3:6).

- St. Paul praised the Corinthians because they kept the tradition *“Now I praise you, brethren, that you remember me in all things and keep the traditions just as I delivered them to you” (1 Corinthians 11:2).*
- St. Paul told the Ephesians priests *“I have shown you in every way, by laboring like this, that you must support the weak. And remember the words of the Lord Jesus, that He said, It is more blessed to give than to receive” (Acts 20:35).* You should note that these words were not mentioned in any Holy Book of the Holy Gospel so from where St. Paul obtain these words? And the word “remember” denotes that this saying was common.

Our Apostolic Fathers in their writings support traditions that they had from the Apostles:

- Eusabious the historian wrote that St. Ignatius during his trip to martyrdom used to support the Churches encouraging them to commit themselves to the traditions of the Apostles.
- Papias the disciple of St. John the beloved said “what was to be got from books was not so profitable to me as what came from the living and abiding voice”.
- St. Polycarp the Martyr commanded the Philippians to commit themselves to the traditions of the Apostles against the heretics.

## **Famous Persons in the Apostolic Age**

### **✠ The Twelve Disciples & Apostles ✠**

#### **✠ St. Peter:**

He is Simon the son of Jonah from Bethesda on the Lake of Galilee. He and his brother St. Andrew might have been former disciples of St. John the Baptist. They were fishermen. His first meeting with the Lord happened when St. Andrew informed him, upon advice of St. John the Baptist, we found the Messiah and they took him to the Lord Jesus Christ where the Lord told him (You are Simon the son of Jonah. You shall be called Cephas which is translated “a stone.” John 1:42). However, St. Peter followed the Lord Jesus Christ as a disciple after the miracle of catching an over abundance of fish (Luke 5:1-11) and the Lord called him Peter as a symbol of his apostolicity.

St. Peter was one of the two disciples who went to prepare the last Passover on Good Thursday and one of the three disciples who were witnesses to the miracle of raising the daughter of Jarius, Transfiguration of the Lord Jesus Christ, The Lord Jesus Christ’s Prayer in Gethsemane and was one of the four disciples which heard the Lord Jesus Christ’s prophecy about destruction of Jerusalem and its temple.

St. Peter was the first one who confessed the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ, the first one who preached with the Lord Jesus Christ on Pentecost and cut the ear of the servant of the high priest however, he denied the Lord Jesus Christ three times before servants and slaves. St. Peter repented and the Lord Jesus Christ returned him once again to his apostolicity and said to him feed My sheep. (Johns 21:15-17).

After the day of Pentecost, he preached among the Jews in Judea, Galilee, and Samaria. The Lord did many miracles through him such as healing of a lame man (Acts 3), healing of Aeneas, and raising of Tabitha from death (Acts 9). He began preaching to Gentiles starting with Cornelius and his house after seeing a vision (Acts 10). He preached in Antioch, Galatia, Pontus, Cappadocia, and Bithynia. He achieved the crown of martyrdom in Rome about 67 AD during Nero’s time.

#### **✠ St. Andrew:**

He is St. Peter’s brother, and a former disciple of St. John the Baptist. St. John the Baptist led him to the Lord Jesus Christ and so St. Andrew spent a day with the Lord Christ to see His wonders and teaching and when he became confident that the Lord Jesus Christ was the Messiah, he called



his brother St. Peter to meet the Lord Jesus Christ who called them to follow Him. He followed the Lord Jesus Christ as a disciple after the miracle of catching great numbers of fish.

The Holy Gospel mentioned St. Andrew in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:8 &9), when Greeks asked him to see the Lord Jesus Christ (John 12:22) and when he asked the Lord about the end of the ages and destruction of Jerusalem and its temple (Mark 13:3). He preached in Asia Minor and states north of the Black Sea and was martyred on a cross in Petras one of the Greek cities. He is the intercessor of Russian and Greek churches. His relics were transferred from Petras to Constantinople on 357 AD and then to Amalpaie City of Italy in the 11<sup>th</sup> century and the relics are still present in this cathedral at present time.

#### ✠ **St. James the Elder:**

He is John's brother from Bethesda. The Lord called him as a disciple with his brother John and so they left their father with the fishermen and followed him (Matthew 4:21 &22). He was one of the witnesses of the first miracle of the Lord Jesus Christ in Cana of Galilee (John 2:2). He was one of the witnesses to the rising of daughter of Jarius from death, Transfiguration, and prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ in Gethsemane. The Lord Jesus Christ called him with his brother John the "sons of thunder" (Mark 3:17). He preached in Judea and Samaria. He was beheaded by Herod Agrippa and attained the crown of martyrdom in 44 AD (Acts 12:1). While he was on his way to be beheaded he cured a lame man and so the soldier who led him to his death believed in the Lord Jesus Christ and was martyred at the same time along with him. He remained a virgin all his life. His relics were transferred to Compostella of Spain and have remained there until today.

#### ✠ **St. James, the Beloved:**

He is St. James' brother, the son of Zebedee. He was the disciple whom the Lord Jesus loved (John 19:26) and he laid on the Lord Jesus Christ's chest at the Last Supper. He is the Apostle who became known for his virginity, simple heart, and great love for the Lord Jesus Christ. He was the only disciple who followed the Lord Jesus Christ to the Holy Cross and so the Lord Jesus bequeathed him St. Mary as a mother and from that time she lived with him (John 19:25-27). Many believe that St. John's family was a well-to-do family and resided in Bethesda.

He might have been a former disciple of St. John the Baptist for sometime (John 1:35-42). His mother was one of women who followed the Lord Jesus Christ and served Him (Matthew 27:55, Mark 10:40 & 41). St. John recorded the Lord Jesus Christ's speech about Holy Communion (John 6),

the only one who mentioned the meeting of the Lord Jesus Christ with the Samaritan woman (John 4), story of the Lord Jesus Christ with the woman which committed adultery (John 8), healing of the blind man, blind since his birth (John 9) and the raising of Lazarus from the dead (John 11), and he is the only one who mentioned the last prayer of the Lord Jesus Christ before Crucifixion (John 17). He was one of the three disciples who were witnesses of the miracle of raising the daughter of Jarius, in Transfiguration, and in Gethsemane. He went very early with St. Peter to the Lord Jesus Christ's tomb on the Glorious Resurrection Sunday and even reached the tomb first before St. Peter. He was the only disciple who recognized the Lord Jesus Christ in his apparition on Lake of Galilee after His blessed Glorious Resurrection and said to St Peter (He is The Lord. John 21:7).

He was a leader of the early Church along with St. Peter and St. James, was with St. Peter in performing the miracle of healing of leman of the temple (Acts 3), witness for the Lord Jesus Christ before Synagogue (Acts 4) and laying their hands on the believers of Samaria to accept the Holy Spirit (Acts 8).

He stayed in Jerusalem until St. Mary's departure as he took care of her. He preached in Judea, Jerusalem, Samaria and after her departure he preached in Asia Minor completing the work of St. Paul and St. Appalls and set his center in Ephesus (Acts 18:24-82 & 19:1-12) where he oversaw the churches in Azmer, Philadelphia, Sardis, Bergamo, and Thyatira which were mentioned in the Holy Book of Revelation.

For his zealously in teaching and preaching, the Emperor Domitian seized him and brought him to Rome where he was thrown into a pot of oil but the Lord saved him and so the emperor exiled him to Patmos around 95 AD where he saw his revelation and wrote his Holy Book. After Domitian's death, he returned to Ephesus to continue his preaching.

One of the most common titles for St John is the Beloved and he mentioned this in John 13:23, 19:26, 20:2, 21:7 & 20. He was called the "love" Apostle where his Holy Gospel, his Holy Epistles and sermons were centered upon the Christian love. Also, he defended the orthodox faith against heretics. He departed in 100 AD.

#### ✠ **St. James the Just:**

He is James the son of Alphaeus, one of the twelve disciples. He was one of the 3 pillars of circumcision's church as St. Paul mentioned (Galatians 2:7-9). He was known as the Lord's brother as his mother was a sister to St. Mary the Virgin, the wife of Klopa which means Alphaeus in Aramaic. He was known also St. James the Young (Mark 15:40), the Just for his

holiness and Bishop of Jerusalem. He headed the Council of Jerusalem in 50 AD (Acts 15). He wrote his Holy Epistle where he focused on good deeds as necessary along with the faith. He had a Liturgy in the Syrian Church. He was ascetic and used to kneel during prayer until his knees became like those of camel. For his preaching, Jews threw him down of the mountain of the temple, and then stoned him, and then someone hit him on his head putting an end to his holy life and so had the crown of martyrdom about 62 AD. Josephus mentioned that destruction of Jerusalem and its temple was the God's punishment for the Jews because they killed St. James.

✠ **St. Philip:**

He was born in Bethesda (John 1:44). He studied the law and prophecies and so he said to Nathaniel *"We found the Messiah about him Moses wrote in the Law and the prophets, Jesus"* (John 1:45). He was mentioned in the miracle of feeding the five thousand when the Lord asked from where we can buy food for those to eat and St. Philip answered food with 200 coins is not enough for them (John 6:5-7). Also, so Greeks asked him to see the Lord Jesus Christ on the Monday following Palm Sunday (John 12:20-22). Mentioned also in the Last Supper and when he said to the Lord *"Lord, show us the Father, and it is sufficient for us"* and so the Lord answered him saying *"Have I been with you so long and yet you have not known me, Philip? He who has seen Me has seen the Father; so how can you say, show us the Father"* (John 14: 8-10).

He preached in Persia, Asia Minor and Hierapolis which was close to Colossi in Asia Minor where he martyred upon a cross.

✠ **St. Bartholomew:**

All scholars agree that Bartholomew is Nathaniel mentioned in John 1:45 where St. Philip brought him to the Lord Jesus Christ. He saw the Lord Jesus Christ on the Lake of Galilee after the Lord's Glorious Resurrection. He preached in Yemen and Armenia where he was martyred and so the Armenian Church considers him her intercessor.

✠ **St. Thomas:**

From Galilee and called the Twin (John 11:16 and 21:2). He loved the Lord greatly and so when the Lord intended to go to Bethany, St. Thomas said to the disciples we should go also to die with him (John 11:8-16). In the Last Supper he asked the Lord *"Lord, we don't know where you go so how we can know the way"* and so the Lord answered him saying *"I am the way, the truth and the life"* (John 14:1-6). Also, he didn't believe the Lord's Glorious Resurrection and appearance to the Apostles in the Upper

Room on Glorious Resurrection Sunday when St. Thomas was not present and so the Lord appeared again on the following Sunday and He said to *Thomas* “*Reach your finger here, and look at My hands, and reach your hand here and put it into my said. Do not be unbelieving, but believing. And Thomas answered and said to Him My Lord and my God. Jesus said to him Thomas because you have seen ME, you have believed, blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed*” (John 21:24-29).

He preached in Judea, Iraq, Ethiopia, Arabia, India and China. He is the intercessor of the Indian Church. He attained the crown of martyrdom in Malabar of India by the pagans’ priests.

✠ **St. Matthew:**

He was from Galilee and called Levi. He was a tax collector despised by his people. When the Lord called him for discipleship he left everything and followed him (Matthew 9:9-24). He preached in Judea, Ethiopia, and Persia. He wrote his Holy Gospel to Hebrews.

✠ **St. Judas:**

He is also called Thaddeus, Lebbaeus, and James’ brother for differentiation from the other Judas Iscariot who betrayed the Lord (Matthew 10:3, Mark 3:18, Luke 6:16 and Acts 1:13). He was one of the Lord Jesus Christ’s cousins. He was mentioned only in John 14:22 & 23 “*Judas not Iscariot said to him, Lord how is it that you will manifest Yourself to us, and not to the world. Jesus answered and said to him if anyone loves me he will keep my word and my Father will love him and we will come to him and make our home with him*”. He preached in Iraq, Arabia and Persia where he was martyred. He wrote the Holy Epistle that bears his name and in which he warned the believers against the heretics and false teachers and brothers.

✠ **St Simon, the Canaanite:**

He was mentioned as the Canaanite in Matthew 10:4 and Mark 3:18. St. Luke mentioned him as Zealot (Luke 6:15 and Acts 1:13). It is clear both Canaanite and Zealot were used interchangeably. He preached in Syria, Iraq and Persia where he was martyred.

### ✠ **St. Matthias:**

Was one of the seventy apostles and was chosen in the absent place of Judas the Iscariot (Acts 1:15-26). He preached in Judea, Samaria and Asia Minor where he was martyred.

### ✠ **St. Paul, the Apostle**

He was borne (5 AD) in Tarsus the capital of state of Cilicia in Asia Minor. His parents were Jews of the Benjamin tribe. He had Roman citizenship as his homeland was a Roman state. He was a disciple for Gamaliel, one of the famous Jewish scholars during his time. He spoke Greek, Hebrew, and Aramaic which allowed him to preach worldwide. Also, he worked as a tent-maker. The first mention of St. Paul was in the Holy Book of Acts at the stoning of St. Stephen where he guarded the clothes of those stoning the martyr. After that he carried letters from the chief priests to persecute more Christians in Damascus where the Lord appeared to him (Acts 9). He was baptized by Ananias the Bishop of Damascus and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He spent about three years in Arabia (Galatians 1:17&18) where he devoted himself to praying, fasting and studying of the Old Testament in the light of gifts of the New Testament (Galatians 1:11&12).

Three years after his conversion from 40 AD to his martyrdom in 67 AD, he made three missionary trips, in addition to visiting Jerusalem five times and spending about 4 years as a prisoner in Rome. Antioch of Syria was the base for his missionary trips because Church of Antioch was the Church of the Gentiles.

From 40 AD to 44 AD he began to preach in Damascus where the Jews convinced the governor to seize him but the believers helped him to flee out of the city (Acts 9:23-25, 2 Corinthians 11: 32& 33). Then he went to Jerusalem where he met St. Peter and St. James (Galatians 1:19). In Jerusalem the believers did not believe his conversion but St. Barnabas convinced them and so they glorified the Lord for His miracles (Acts 9:26 &27, Galatians 1:18-24). He had a vision of the Lord Jesus Christ in the temple where he ordered him to leave the city as they would not accept his teaching and the Lord then would send him to the Gentiles (Acts 22:17). The Jews tried to kill him but the believers helped him to flee to Caesara then to Tarsus where he met St. Barnabas and helped him in preaching in Antioch for one year (Acts 11:25&26). But because of famine St. Paul and St. Barnabas went to Jerusalem carrying the gifts of the believers in Antioch to the mother Church in Jerusalem, where at that time St. James the elder was martyred.

The first trip of preaching was from 45 AD to 50 AD. He began his trip with St. Barnabas and St. Mark where they sailed from Seleucia of Antioch to

Cyprus and Salamis then to Asia Minor but St. Mark left them in Berga of Bamphilia. During this trip Elymas the sorcerer was punished by blindness and the proconsul of Cyprus Sergius Paulus converted to Christianity (Acts 13: 1-12). Also they ministered in Antioch of Pisidia, where the Jews persecuted them. In Lystra the Lord used them to heal a paralyzed man since his birth and when the people there saw this miracle they thought that St Paul and St. Barnabas were god and tried to worship them and the Apostles prevented them from doing this (14: 8-18), however, the Jews who came from Iconium persuaded the multitudes and so they stoned them and they were dragged out of the city (Acts 14:19). This trip ended by joining the Council of Jerusalem 50 AD.

The second trip was from 51 AD to 54 AD where he began his ministry to the Greeks. He was joined by Silas and Timothy. They passed Phrygia and Galatia where the Holy Spirit prevented them to minister in Asia. Then passed to Troas where St. Paul had a vision of a man of Macedonia and pleaded him come over to Macedonia and help us and so St. Paul began his ministry to the Greeks (Acts 16:1-10). In Philippi, Lydia and the Philippian Jailer converted to Christianity (Acts 16:11-34). Then they went to Thessalonica and Berea (Acts 17) where they established the Churches there and were persecuted by the Jews. Then St. Paul and St. Silas went to Athens where he met the Epicurean and Stoic philosophers in Areopagus (Acts 17:16-34) where Dionysius the Areopagite, who became a Bishop of Athens later, and Damaris joined St. Paul and believed (Acts 17:34). Then St. Paul ministered in Corinth and founded the Church there. In spring of 54 AD he returned to Antioch passing through Ephesus, Caesara, and Jerusalem and wrote 2 Holy Epistles to the Thessalonians.

The third trip of ministry was from 54 AD to 58 AD where he ministered in Ephesus and spent there 3 years (Acts 20:31). He visited the Churches of Macedonia and Corinth where he wrote his Holy Epistles to the Galatians, Corinthians, and Romans.

In spring of 58 AD he visited Jerusalem for the fifth and last time carrying the gifts of the Greek believers to the poor of Jerusalem. He passed through Philippi, Taroas, and Meleetis where Jews tried to kill him but the commander Lassies sent him to Felix in Caesarea where he was imprisoned for 2 years (58-60 AD) (Acts 23) after that he was sent to Rome. He spent the winter in Malta and he arrived in Rome in March 61 AD in the 7<sup>th</sup> year of Nero. He spent 2 years in Rome in a house he rented bound with chains but he had the freedom to minister (Acts 28: 30 &31) where many believed including some in the royal court. He spent his life preaching the Kingdom of God (Acts 28:31). He wrote his Holy Epistles to the Hebrews, Titus, and Timothy. He attained the crown of martyrdom in Rome in 67 AD.

### ✠ **St. Barnabas the Apostle**

He was a Jew from the Levi tribe. His family had settled in Cyprus and had relatives in Jerusalem, of them, St. Mark's family and so St. Paul called St. Mark St. Barnabas's nephew "son of his sister" (Colossians 4:10). According to our Church's tradition St. Barnabas was one of the seventy disciples. His name was Joseph and the Apostles called him Barnabas, which is translated Son of Encouragement (Acts 4:36). St. Luke mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts that St. Barnabas sold his properties and brought the money and laid it at the Apostles' feet (Acts 4:36 & 37). Also, he mentioned concerning him "*For he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith*" (Acts 11:24).

The Apostles sent him to Antioch to minister with the Holy Gospel (Acts 11:22). He ministered in Antioch and brought St. Paul to minister with him for one year (Acts 11:22-26). In that year, they went to Jerusalem carrying the gifts of the believers in Antioch to the poor in Judea and in their return to Antioch they brought St Mark (Acts 12:25). Then, he ministered in Cyprus (Acts 15: 36-40) and joined the Council of Jerusalem. St. Paul appointed to him in his Epistles to the Corinthians and Colossians (1 Corinthians 9:6 and Colossians 4:10).

He was martyred in Salamina of Cyprus where Jews seized him, stoned and burned him about 61 AD but his body did not burn. In the 5<sup>th</sup> century, God revealed to the Bishop of Cyprus the site of his tomb. There is an epistle in his name which was very popular in the early centuries supported by many scholars and fathers in the church but others denied it.

### ✠ **St. Mark the Evangelist and Beholder of God**

St Mark authored the Gospel of St Mark and founded the Church of Alexandria and is considered the Church's first pope. St Mark was born in Adenapolis one of the five western cities in northern Africa (Adenapolis, Apollonia, Bitolmais, Toshira, and Birnis).

St Mark's parents were wealthy but as a result of barbarian tribes lost most of their wealth having to depart for the safety of Jerusalem. At that time this family was not aware of the plan of God waiting upon St Mark in Jerusalem. According to the book, "Lamp of Darkness" St Mark lived about 89 years and 5 months. St Mark was martyred on April 26, 68 AD. With this in perspective, it can be calculated that St Mark was approximately 21 years of age at the time of the Lord Jesus Christ's birth. The length of time in which St Mark spent upon the Alexandrian See was 7 years, 8 months, and 1 day.

St Mark was one of the seventy apostles and was the apostle whom was appointed by the Lord Jesus Christ to eat the Passover meal at his home. His home which was known as Zion's room was also the place where the apostles gathered together following the Crucifixion, the place where the Holy Spirit came upon the apostles as tongues of fire on the Pentecost, and also it is also considered the first church in the entire world.

The Holy Gospel recorded the following about our first pope, the apostle, St Mark:

- The Lord Jesus Christ celebrated the Passover with His holy disciples in St Mark's home (Matthew 26:18, Mark 14:13, and Luke 12:10-12).
- Appearance of the Lord after His Glorious Resurrection to the apostles happened in St Mark's home (John 20:19, Luke 24:33).
- The coming upon the disciples of the Holy Spirit happened in St Mark's home (Acts 1:13 and 2:1).
- St Mark was with St Barnabas and St Paul 47 AD (Acts 11:27-30).
- From 47 AD to 49 AD, the first preaching trip involving the apostles Paul, Barnabas, Mark, Seleucia, Salamis, Paphos and Perga in Pamphylia (Acts 13:1-13).
- 50-52 AD St Mark departed with St Barnabas to Cyprus (Acts 15:39).
- St Mark was with St Paul in Colossi (Colossians 4:10) in 61 AD.
- 64 AD-66 AD St Mark departed to Rome for St Paul (2 Timothy 4:11).
- When the first Council was held in Jerusalem under the leadership of St James the Bishop of Jerusalem, to discuss the acceptance of the Gentiles without circumcision, St Mark attended.
- After St Mark's preaching with St Barnabas and St Paul, the Holy Spirit led him to preach on his own which brought the saint to Egypt.

All Christians worldwide recognize St Mark as one of the four Evangelists who wrote a Holy Gospel. In addition, for our beloved Coptic Church, St Mark is also our preacher, our founder of the Coptic Church, and our first Pope of the See of St Mark. Through St Mark, the prophecy spoken of in the Holy Book of Isaiah the Prophet has been fulfilled, "**...there will be an altar for the Lord in Egypt and a pillar at its boundaries...**"

St Mark was also one of the seventy apostles; therefore our Coptic Church can be rightly termed "apostolic" as it was indisputably founded by one of the original apostles. Although the disciples and the apostles are considered ecumenical or universal bishops for the Church in general, every church refers to her initial preacher as her first bishop and as such, St Mark is the Coptic Church's first bishop of the See of Alexandria.

St Mark attended the first ecumenical council held in Jerusalem in 51 AD to discuss the topic of the relevance of circumcision prior to baptism. The holy apostles agreed at this ecumenical council to accept the Gentiles into the Church without circumcision before baptism (Acts 15:23-30).



Following the council held in Jerusalem, St Mark and St Barnabas journeyed to Cyprus (Acts 15:36-40) and there the Holy Spirit led St Mark to preach in the Five Western Cities in North Africa. Following St Mark's ministry in North Africa he then journeyed to Egypt. The date of this founding saints' arrival into Egypt was 55 AD.

When St Mark came to Egypt, many pagan gods were being worshipped by the Egyptians. Some of the gods were considered to be national gods and other idols originated from Greece, Rome, Persia, Syria, and Babylonia. These gods included: (1) Rue: The god of the sun. Rue was considered by the pagans to be the source of light and warmth. Heliopolis "Ainshams" was the center of its worship and from this center gradually its false teachings were spread throughout all of Egypt. (2) Amon: The invisible god. Tibha was the center of worship for this particular god. Later during the Egyptian state, Amon was combined with Rue and the combined worship came to be termed Amon Rua. (3) Osiris: The messenger god of love and peace among the people. This god of peace and love originated from Syria. (4) Diana or Artemis: The god of hunting. (5) Khnoum: The creator god. Tibha was also the center of worship for Khnoum. (6) Anhita: A popular god which came from Persia.

Also when St Mark journeyed to Egypt, Egypt was considered the second greatest city in the world. Second only to Rome, was Egypt. Egypt was widely accepted though as first in the world for science, art, philosophy, and architecture. Its school was recognized world-wide as well as the professors who taught within it. For all those seeking knowledge and philosophy Egypt was the place to come.

In Alexandria there were Greek philosophers and scholars, Jewish scholars and teachers of Scriptures, and Persian wise men. In addition to all this were the priests. In Alexandria, there was the famous Alexandrian Library considered as one of the Seven Wonders of the World. This famed library contained millions of volumes of books of the greatest philosophers and scholars in the world for that time frame.

The Alexandrian population was approximately 600,000. The most famous temple in Alexandria among the School and Library was Serabium. In this temple the idol Serabis was worshipped by most of the population.

The Holy Book of Acts 6:9 tells that St Stephen went in dialogue with a Jerusalem Council and that some of the council members were from the City of Alexandria. Also, Apollo, one of the greatest preachers in the early Church was from the City of Alexandria as denoted by the Holy Book of Acts 18:24. Not only was Alexandria the center of civilization for the world, it was also the center for moral corruption.

Politically, Egypt was a Roman state under the direct control of the Roman emperor. Alexandrians revolted against the Roman authority of Augustus Caesar. Caesar sent a Roman military army of 20,000 to Alexandria to put a halt to the revolution. The emperor was in dire need of Egypt's wheat. Putting an end to the revolution would not be the only act of Augustus Caesar. He also gave social and religious freedom to the Jews residing in Alexandria. This inequality gave rise to many disputes and fights among the Jews and Alexandrians.

This is the state of the wonderful City of Alexandria, founded by Alexander the Great in 331 BC, when St Mark arrived to preach and teach the message of salvation of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Upon the first day of his arrival, St Mark wandered about the streets of Alexandria until his worn shoes fell apart. St Mark stopped at the first shoemaker shop he approached to have his shoes repaired. The shoemaker's name was "Anianos" and this shoemaker would later become the second pope of Alexandria.

While Anianos was working to repair St Marks' worn shoes, the needle in which he was using to repair the soles of St Mark's shoes injured his hand and Anianos cried out, "Oh God, the only One!" At this exclamation, St Mark spit upon the ground, made mud, and placed the mixture upon Anianos finger and healed it immediately. Discussion ensued between St Mark and Anianos related to his One God. Anianos confessed to St Mark that he had only heard of such God but did not actually know of this One God.

St Mark begins to preach to Anianos about the One God, the Lord Jesus Christ. The message of salvation through the Holy Cross was taught and welcomed by Anianos and his family. Anianos home is considered the first Church in the land of Egypt.

Within a few short years Christianity had spread throughout the land of Egypt. Christianity not only spread and was accepted, through its teachings the behavior and morals of the Egyptian people would also change for the better.

Philon, the Jewish scholar, stated, "St Mark and his disciples did not care about worldly matters, but cared about God's Glory and His salvation to all people." The Egyptians became united in true "Agape" love and a heavenly peace. There was no rich or poor classification among the people. Everyone lived an economical life; the rich gave unto the poor so everyone could be considered rich with God. The people ate only one

time per day after sunset. Some would fast for three to five days without food.

There is disagreement among scholars about the possible visit of St Peter the apostle to St Mark in Babylon's fort where there was a great Jewish colony and from which St Peter wrote his first Holy Epistle which concludes with this verse, "...**she was in Babylon, elect together with you, greets you and so does Mark my son.**" (*I Peter 5:13*) Some scholars believe this means Rome. Regardless, there is nothing to contraindicate the possibility of St Peter's visit to Babylon. Further, some scholars suggest St Simeon the Cannite visited Egypt as well.

To establish the newly growing Church, St Mark, ordained Anianos as a bishop and along with this ordained twelve priests and seven deacons. St Mark at this particular time also wrote his Divine Liturgy, now referred to as the "Divine Liturgy of St Cyril." St Mark first wrote the Divine Liturgy in Greek then it was translated to the language of Behari Coptic. Three of Anianos assistants were Mlios, Kardanos, and Primos.

St Mark founded the School of Alexandria to counteract the idolatrous school in Alexandria which had become world famous for its philosophy, science, medicine, mathematics, and astronomy. St Mark wrote the Apostles Teachings, Rituals, and Traditions that were specific for the See of Alexandria. Following all of this, St Mark departed Alexandria in 65 AD to further his ministry in the Name of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Five Western Cities in Northern Africa.

After continuing to strengthen the churches in North Africa, St Mark at St Paul's request joined the apostle in Rome to help in preaching and teaching those there. St Paul stated in the two Holy Books, II Timothy 4:11 and Philemon 1:24 that St Mark was indeed useful for the ministry.

Bishop Anianos, his priests and deacons were known for their honesty, for their ministry, and taught through Egypt. They established the first church in Bokalia now known as "St Mark Church in Alexandria." St Mark returned to Alexandria around 67 AD, where he wrote his Holy Gospel in Greek for the believers in Alexandria.

The great success of St Mark's evangelism led to persecution and torture of Christians in Alexandria by the idolatrous governors and people of the city. St Mark was one of the ones who would ultimately be put to death because of his ardent belief in the Lord Jesus Christ.

On 29 Baramoudah (April 16) 68 AD, St Mark celebrated the Glorious Resurrection Feast with the believers which coincided with the Feast of Serabis, as previously mentioned, the most famous of idols worshipped in

the City of Alexandria. The idolaters angrily broke into the church and attacked St Mark while the saint was praying the Divine Liturgy of the Glorious Feast of the Resurrection at the altar. The crowds of idolaters tied up St Mark with a band around his neck and dragged him into the streets of Alexandria. From one street to another they inhumanely dragged the saint crying and screaming “Drag him to the bulls’ house.”

The “bulls’ house” refers to the Bokalia area where the Coptic Church was later built in his honor, known as “St Marks’ Church in Alexandria.” They continued to torture the bleeding St Mark until finally he was thrown into prison. The Lord Jesus Christ through a great Heavenly light appeared to St Mark and healed him saying, “Be strong My beloved apostle, your heart will be filled with joy. Be in peace as tomorrow you will have the crown of martyrdom and be with Me in the Heavenly Jerusalem.”

The following day, the idolaters tied up the apostle once again with a neck bond and dragged his body through the streets as they had done before. This time they drug his body until his head separated from his body. Upon this day, St Mark received three crowns, the crown of apostolicity, the crown of evangelism, and the crown of martyrdom. All the while during his torture, St Mark prayed, “Thank you Lord because you have allowed me to suffer persecution and torture for Your Holy Name.” St Mark near his death requested that the Lord forgive those who brought about his death and then departed from his earthly existence.

After St Mark’s martyrdom, the idolaters hurriedly brought firewood to burn his body. A great wind suddenly blew, a great rain suddenly fell and the idolaters in fear scattered. St Mark’s disciples came and affectionately carried his holy body and buried him in the Church which carries his name in Bokalia. St Mark’s blood became the first shed in Egypt and millions of martyrs would follow his example and chose earthly death rather than deny their Lord Jesus Christ.

This is written in the History of Patriarchs by Bishop Saouris; St Mark was martyred on the last day of Baramoudah the year 35 following the Lord Jesus Christ’s Glorious Resurrection on 24 of Nissan. The Coptic Church celebrates his martyrdom on Baramoudah.

A few centuries later, St Mark’s body was stolen by Italian traders and taken to Italy where it remained for hundreds of years. His Holiness Pope Cyril the Sixth succeeded in returning St Marks’ holy body to Egypt on 17 Baounah, June 24, 1969

## ✠ St. Luke the Apostle

He is the 3<sup>rd</sup> Evangelist, the writer of the Holy Book of Acts and the partner of St. Paul in his ministry trips. Ibevanios mentioned that St. Luke was one of the seventy disciples and one of Emmaus' disciples. Other scholars mentioned that he was a Gentile from Antioch and converted to Christianity very early around 36 AD by one of the disciples. He met St. Paul in his 2<sup>nd</sup> ministry trip on his way to Macedonia and accompanied St. Paul to Philippi (Acts 16:9, 16:6-8, 16:10). After the founding of the Philippian Church, St. Luke remained there to take care of it until he met again St. Paul on his last trip to Jerusalem. He accompanied St. Paul in his imprisonment in Caesara and Rome till the martyrdom of St. Paul.

In reality, St. Luke was a very humble person, although he wrote his Holy Gospel and the Holy Book of Acts he did not mention much about himself. He remained honest and faithful to St. Paul as he mentioned to St. Timothy "*Luke alone is with me*" (2 Timothy 4:11). He was martyred in his 84<sup>th</sup> year in Elaea in Greece and his relics with those of St. Andrew the Apostle were transferred to the Apostles' Church in Constantinople as mentioned by St. Jerome.

St. Luke wrote his Holy Gospel based on what he heard from witnesses as St. Mary the Virgin to a well-to-do-man from Alexandria, called Theophilus about 70 AD. He wrote the Holy Book of Acts recording the history of the Church beginning from the Ascension of the Lord to the 2<sup>nd</sup> year of Paul's imprisonment in Rome and so he is the true father of the history of the Christian Church. He was a physician (Colossians 4:14) and so he presented the Lord Jesus Christ in his Holy Gospel as the true physician for the human race and the true Savior of the world. Also, he was painter and to him it belongs the honor of painting the first portrait of St. Mary the Virgin.

## ✠ The Apostles' Assistants ✠

### ✠ St. Timothy

St. Timothy was a disciple to St. Paul and his companion in his trips of ministry. The first time to be mentioned was in the Holy Book of Acts at the beginning of the second ministry trip (Acts 16:1). He was from Lystra in Galatia of Asia Minor. His father was Greek and his mother and grandmother were righteous Jews (2 Timothy 1:5). And so since his childhood he grew in the way of righteousness and piety "*and that from childhood you have known the holy scriptures which are able to make you wise for salvation through faith which is in Christ Jesus*" (2 Timothy 3:15).

As he ardently believed in the ministry of St. Paul so St. Paul used to call him his son in the faith (1 Corinthians 4:17, 1 Timothy 1:2, and 2 Timothy 1:2). St. Paul chose him as his fellow in his trips and his helper in the ministry because of his righteousness and gifts. St. Paul circumcised him

to prepare him for the ministry among Jews. He went with St. Paul to Phrygia, Galatia, Taroas, Philippi, Ephesus, Macedonia, and Corinth (2 Corinthians 1:1, Romans 16:21, Acts 20:3-4). He followed St. Paul in his last trip to Jerusalem (1 Corinthians 16:3). He was with St. Paul in his imprisonment in Rome as he was mentioned in the Holy Epistles that St. Paul wrote from jail (Philippians 1:1, Colossians 1:1, and Philemon 1:1).

He was ordained a Bishop for Ephesus (1 Timothy 1:18) and so St. Paul wrote two Holy Epistles to him about the duties of the priests in the ministry. St. Paul praised him for his wisdom and righteousness (2 Timothy 1:4, 1 Timothy 5:23). St. Paul called him “my fellow worker (Romans 16:21)”, “Our brother and minister of God and our fellow laborer in the Gospel of Christ (1 Thessalonians 3:2)”, “A true son in the faith (1 Timothy 1:2)”, “the beloved son (2 Timothy 1:2)”, and “my beloved and faithful son in the Lord (1 Corinthians 4:17)”.

It is mentioned by tradition that St. Timothy lived to a very old age and was martyred in Ephesus 97 AD by pagans.

#### ✠ St. Titus

He was one of St. Paul’s faithful disciples and he was mentioned in the 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians, Galatians, and Titus Epistles. He was a Greek Gentile (Galatians 2: 1& 3) and converted to Christian faith by St. Paul’s ministry and so St. Paul called him his son in the faith (Titus 1:4). He joined the Council of Jerusalem 50 AD (Galatians 2:1). St. Paul sent him two times to Corinth (2 Corinthians 2:13) and (2 Corinthians 8: 16 & 17, 12:18). He joined St. Paul in his 2<sup>nd</sup> imprisonment in Rome (2 Timothy 4:10). St. Paul ordained him as a Bishop for Crete and called him fellow and the laborer with him (2 Corinthians 8:23). He lived to a very old age and departed and was buried in Crete and so he is their intercessor.

#### ✠ St. Silas

The Apostles in Jerusalem sent him with Barnabas and Paul to Antioch, Syria and Cilicia to declare the decisions of the Council (Acts 15:22). He was a prophet (Acts 15:22 & 23). He had the Roman citizenship. He was a fellow for St. Paul in his second ministry trip after Barnabas had left him (Acts 15:40, 15:18-22). He followed St Paul in Macedonia and Philippi (Acts 16:12-39) where they suffered persecution and imprisoned there and the Lord freed them and so the Philippian Jailer believed (Acts 16:25-34). He followed St. Paul to Thessalonica then to Athens (Acts 17:13-15), and Corinth (Acts 18:5). He was martyred in Macedonia.

## ✠ The Apostolic Fathers ✠

### ✠ St Clement the Roman

St Clement, the Roman, was the third Bishop of Rome as stated by St. Irenaeus. Eusebius the scholar further elaborates that St Clement became a Bishop of Rome in the 12<sup>th</sup> year of Domitian's regime. So his bishop years extended from 93AD to 101AD.

Tertullian, the scholar, and Ibevanios Bishop of Cyprus concur that St Peter the Apostle ordained St Clement, the Roman, a Bishop for Rome. In order to keep peace in the Roman Church, St Clement, left the Bishop's See to Linos, then to Anaklitos, and after Anaklitos he then returned to his See. Scholars agree that St Clement had a direct relationship with St Paul and St Peter the apostles. Origen the scholar and Eusebius from Caesara both concur that St Paul the Apostle eulogized St Clement in his Epistle to the Philippians *"And I urge you also, true companion, help these women who labored with me in the Gospel, with Clement also, and the rest of my fellow workers, whose names are in the Book of Life (Philippians 4:3)."*

### **Letter of St Clement, the Roman, to the Corinthian Churches:**

The Letter of St Clement, the Roman, to the Corinthian Church was accepted from the beginning as a document directly related to the Post Apostolic Era. Its style is similar to the style of the First Epistle to the Corinthians written by St Paul the Apostle.

Many problems developed in the Corinthian Church during the time of St Paul due to believers not submitting and obeying the ordained legal bishop there having exiled him and some priests. St Clement wrote his letter to this church focusing on the bond of love and Christian agape as mentioned by St Paul in his First Epistle chapter 8.

St Clement began his Epistle exactly as St Paul in his Epistles with this beautiful verse, *"Grace to you and peace from God our Father and the Lord Jesus Christ be with you (1 Corinthians 1:1) "from the Church of God in Rome to the Church of God in Corinth (1:2)."*

St Clement wrote, "Who can describe the blessed bond God is love? Who is capable of describing its glory? No one can talk about the glory of Agape. Agape unites us with God. Love sustains everything. Love suffers long and is kind. No bride is in love. Love doesn't allow envy. Love makes everything harmonious."

“When love rules, the good deeds will follow. Many of God’s gifts come to the believer who does good deeds before God.” “All the saints of the Old Testament became glorified before the Lord not by themselves, nor their good deeds, but by God’s will. Likewise, we are so called according to God’s will in the Lord Jesus Christ, we are holy not by ourselves, not by our wisdom, nor by our understanding, not by our good deeds that we did in a pure heart but by justification in the faith through our Lord Jesus Christ, through which all those saints were justified. Glory be to Him forever.

So what should we do our brethren? Do we become lazy? Do we neglect love? No but with zeal and courage we should complete every good deed as the Lord and Creator of everything rejoiced with what He did.”

Also St Clement in his teaching of eternal life and resurrection of bodies followed the same teachings as chapter 15 in the First Epistle of St Paul to the Corinthians.

### **The Dogmatic Importance of the Letter:**

St Clement’s Letter has great dogmatic importance as it clearly declares the dogma of apostolic succession. St Clement, the Roman, stated that the Christian priesthood was of great importance as it is clearly an extension of the priesthood of the Old Testament. St Clement further stated that the church’s Shepherd hood through her bishops and priests is through apostolic succession and hierarchy, and it is of utmost importance for the church’s witness and continuity.

“The apostles preached the Gospel which they received from the Lord Jesus Christ who Himself brought the teachings from God the Father. Therefore if the apostles brought their teachings from the Lord Jesus Christ both teachings originated from God’s will. Likewise, after they had received their teachings, believed in the Glorious Resurrection of our Lord Jesus Christ, and were justified by faith departed full of the Holy Spirit to all regions of the world to preach the Holy Gospel that the Kingdom would soon come. From province to province and city to city they preached and with the Holy Spirit they chose other men from among the new believers to be bishops, priests, and deacons for the church. The apostles knew the position of the bishop and priesthood might cause envy, which could develop into plots and conspiracies. The apostles taught that when a church leader died, another would be chosen who should be justified to follow them in the bishop’s position. So it is not a faithful church that will dismiss anyone ordained for the priesthood or bishophood by the apostles or upon approval of the entire church.



### **The Position of Bishop in St Clement's Letter:**

St Clement was the first to use the title "bishop" as the one who oversees. He also called bishop's priests. There was no distinction for the Roman Church as compared to the other churches, the letter was only a trial by St Clement to overcome the envy and conspiracies in the Corinthian Church and did not express any more dignity for the Roman Church versus the Corinthian Church. The concept of church meant the church as the body of the Lord Jesus Christ not limited by its locality and so St Ignatius, bishop of Antioch wrote many letters to different churches. All of those fathers understood the catholicity of the church as the true and precise understanding. They also understood it is not right for any bishop to interfere in another church's affairs in the scope of another bishop. With this in mind, one can understand why the Pope of Alexandria refused to accept Origen whom was ordained as a priest by another bishop outside his See. Therefore ensuring the dignity of the bishop's See was a respectable dogma in the primitive Church.

### **Conclusion of the Letter:**

St. Clement concluded his Epistle by Liturgical Prayer, which stated the Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ who is "the only beloved Son of God through whom God taught us, sanctified us and brought us to the Glory." The Lord Jesus Christ is the Supreme Pontiff and the Guard of our souls." Then, St Clement sang hymns that expressed the mercy and care of God. Finally St Clement concludes his letter with a prayer for the governor of the regime, which clearly declares the relationship between the church and state.

"O You our Master, Give them the Kingdom's authority by your supreme and ineffable power. So as we confess with dignity and glory which came upon them in obedience to Your will. Give them O Lord the health, the peace, the strength and the ability to practice their high leadership that you gave them. O You, our Master, the King of Kings and the Heavenly King of ages gave the man the power, the authority and the glory to rule over everything on the earth. O Lord, lead their thoughts with every good deed that is justified before You to practice in gentleness the power and authority you gave them in peace and humbleness so they can confess Your power and Your goodness. Amen."

This was a brief overview of St Clement's Letter to the Corinthian Church and you can find the entire manuscript in Ante Nicene Fathers, Vol.1.

## ✠ St. Polycarp Bishop of Smyrna

St. Polycarp was born in 70 A D to a Christian family who received its faith from the very Apostles of Lord Jesus. In these Apostolic times, the young Church lived and was strengthened by visits of the Apostles and their disciples. They had already warned of difficult times in their Epistles, calling the Christians too that *"you say also rejoice and be glad when His glory is revealed "* (1 Peter: 13).

St. Polycarp was chosen by the bishop as his personal secretary; and later, when he was forty years old became the Bishop of Smyrna. There, he remained for 86 years of his life, faithfully serving the Church.

St. Polycarp was one of the most illustrious of the Apostolic Fathers, who, being the immediate disciples of the apostles, received instructions from their mouths, and inherited of them the spirit of the Lord Jesus Christ in a degree so much the more eminent as they lived nearer the fountain head. He embraced Christianity very young, about the year 80, was a disciple of the Apostles, in particular of St. John the Evangelist, and was constituted by him Bishop of Smyrna, probably before his banishment to Patmos in 96 AD.

He seems to have been the angel or Bishop of Smyrna who was commended above all the bishops of Asia by the Lord Jesus Christ himself in the Apocalypse, and the only one without a reproach. Our Savior encouraged him under his poverty, tribulation, and persecutions, especially the calumnies of the Jews, called him rich in grace, and promised him the crown of life by martyrdom (Revelation 2:8-10).

This saint was respected by the faithful to a degree of veneration. He formed many holy disciples, among who were St. Irenaeus and Papias. When Florinus, who had often visited St. Polycarp, had broached certain heresies, St. Irenaeus wrote to him as follows: "These things were not taught you by the bishops who preceded us. I could tell you the place where the blessed Polycarp sat to preach the word of God. It is yet present to my mind with what gravity he everywhere came in and went out; what was the sanctity of his deportment, the majesty of his countenance and of his whole exterior, and what his holy exhortations to the people were. I seem to hear him now relate how he conversed with John and many others who had seen Jesus Christ; the words he had heard from their mouths. I can protest before God that if this holy bishop had heard of any error like yours, he would have immediately stopped his ears, and cried out, according to his custom, Good God! That I should be reserved to these times to hear such things! That very instant he would have fled out of the place in which he had heard such doctrine."

St. Jerome mentions that St. Polycarp met at Rome the heretic Marcion in the streets, who resenting that the holy bishop did not take that notice of him which he expected, said to him, "Do you not know me, Polycarp?" "Yes," answered the saint, "I know you to be the firstborn of Satan." He had learned this abhorrence of the authors of heresy, who knowingly and willingly adulterate the divine truths, from his master, St. John, who fled out of the bath in which he saw Cerinthus.

St. Polycarp kissed with respect the chains of St. Ignatius, who passed by Smyrna on the road to his martyrdom, and who recommended to our saint the care and comfort of his distant Church of Antioch, which he repeated to him in a letter from Troas, desiring him to write in his name to those churches of Asia to which he had not leisure to write himself. St. Polycarp wrote a letter to the Philippians shortly after, which is highly commended by St. Irenaeus, St. Jerome, Eusabius, Photius, and others, and is still extant. It is justly admired both for the excellent instructions it contains and for the simplicity and perspicuity of the style, and was publicly read in the church in Asia in St. Jerome's time. In it he calls a heretic, as above, the eldest son of Satan.

About the year 158 he undertook a journey of charity to Rome, to confer with Pope Anicetus about certain points of discipline, especially about the time of keeping Easter, for the Asiatic churches kept it on the fourteenth day of the vernal equinoctial moon, as the Jews did, on whatever day of the week it fell; whereas Rome, Egypt, and all the West observed it on the Sunday following. It was agreed that both might follow their custom without breaking the bands of charity. St. Anicetus, to testify his respect, yielded to him the honor of celebrating the Eucharist in his own church.

### **St. Polycarp's Martyrdom:**

St. Polycarp's martyrdom was mentioned in a letter, which was soon afterward written by the Christians at Smyrna to the Christians at Philomenius. This letter has come to be called the Acts of the Martyrdom of Saint Polycarp:

In the sixth year of Marcus Aurelius and Lucius Verus, Statius Quadratus being proconsul of Asia, a violent persecution broke out in that country, in which the faithful gave heroic proofs of their courage and love of God, to the astonishment of the infidels. When they were torn to pieces with scourges till their very bowels were laid bare, amidst the moans and tears of the spectators, who were moved with pity at the sight of their torments, not one of them gave so much as a single groan, so little regard had they for their own flesh in the cause of God. No kinds of torture, no inventions of cruelty, were forborne to force them to conformity to the pagan worship of the times.

The year Polycarp was martyred, there was a civil celebration in Smyrna, and games were being held at the local amphitheater. A well-known Christian boy named Aereanicus had been martyred, preferring to fight the beasts rather than to follow pagan practices, the alternative given to him. When he had been slain by the animals, the Christians were accused of having brain washed him into doing such a foolish thing as prefer death to a "simple sacrifice". The mob began shouting; "Bring us Polycarp!"

When St. Polycarp heard of these events, he was not disturbed, and desired to remain in the city. But the faithful were able to convince him to withdraw to a farm nearby with a few friends. St. Polycarp prayed night and day, for all men and for the churches throughout the world. One night while he was praying, St. Polycarp had a vision, seeing his pillow blazing with flames. He came to his friends and said, "I must be burned Alive."

Herod, the Irenarch, or keeper of the peace, whose office it was to prevent misdemeanors and apprehend malefactors, sent horsemen by night to arrest St. Polycarp. Now, the soldiers who were searching for him arrived at Polycarp's own house, and when they could not find him, they seized two young servant boys. One broke down under their torture and betrayed where the bishop had gone. And late in the evening of that Friday, they rode to the farm. They took the servant boy with them and found St. Polycarp in bed in the upper room of the small cottage. When he heard of their arrival he went downstairs and talked with them. St. Polycarp knew why they had come and greeted them. The soldiers became upset that there had been such an uproar and eagerness to arrest such an old man. St. Polycarp ordered a meal for the band of captors, and asked them to give him an hour or so in order that he might pray. This was granted. The soldiers were astonished to see the bishop pray intently for two hours, remembering the names and the needs of so many of his and the whole church with so much earnestness and devotion that several of those that were come to seize him repented they had undertaken the commission. They set him on an ass, and were conducting him towards the city when he was met on the road by Herod and his father Nicetes, who took him into their chariot, and endeavored to persuade him to a little compliance, saying, "What harm is there in saying Lord Caesar, or even in sacrificing, to escape death?" By the word Lord was meant nothing less than a kind of deity or godhead. The bishop at first was silent, in imitation of our Savoir, but being pressed, he gave them this resolute answer, "I shall never do what you desire of me." At these words, taking off the mask of friendship and compassion, they treated him with scorn and reproaches, and thrust him out of the chariot with such violence that his leg was bruised by the fall.

The holy man went forward cheerfully to the place where the people were assembled. Upon his entering it a voice from Heaven was heard by many, "Polycarp, be courageous, and act manfully." He was led directly to the tribunal of the proconsul, who exhorted him to respect his own age, to swear by the genius of Caesar, and to say, "Take away the impious," meaning the Christians. The saint, turning towards the people in the pit, said, with a stern countenance, "Exterminate the wicked," meaning by this expression either a wish that they might cease to be wicked by their conversion to the faith of the Lord Jesus Christ, or this was a prediction of the calamity which befell their city in 177, when Smyrna was overturned by an earthquake, as we read in Dion and Aristides. The proconsul repeated, "Swear by the genius of Caesar, and I discharge you; blaspheme Christ." St. Polycarp replied, "I have served him these fourscore and six years, and he never did me any harm, but much good, and how can I blaspheme my King and my Savoir? If you require of me to swear by the genius of Caesar, as you call it, hear my free confession- I am a Christian; but if you desire to learn the Christian religion, appoint a time, and hear me." The proconsul said, "Persuade the people." The martyr replied, "I addressed my discourse to you, for we are taught to give due honor to princes as far as is consistent with religion. But the populace is an incompetent judge to justify myself before." Indeed rage rendered them incapable of hearing him.

The proconsul then assuming a tone of severity, said: "I have wild beasts." "Call for them," replied the saint: "for we are unalterably resolved not to change from good to evil. It is only good to pass from evil to good." The proconsul said: "If you contemn the beasts, I will cause you to be burnt to ashes." Polycarp answered: "You threaten me with a fire which burns for a short time and then goes out, but are yourself ignorant of the judgment to come, and of the fire of everlasting torments which is prepared for the wicked. Why do you delay? Bring against me what you please." Whilst he said this and many other things, he appeared in a transport of joy and confidence, and his countenance shone with a certain heavenly grace and pleasant cheerfulness, insomuch that the proconsul himself was struck with admiration. However, he ordered a crier to make public proclamation three times in the middle of the Stadium (as was the Roman custom in capital cases): "Polycarp hath confessed himself a Christian." At this proclamation the whole multitude of Jews and Gentiles gave a great shout, the latter crying out, "This is the great teacher of Asia; the father of the Christians; the destroyer of our gods, who preaches to men not to sacrifice to or adore them." They applied to Philip the Asiarch to let loose a lion upon St. Polycarp. He told them that it was not in his power, because those shows had been closed. Then they unanimously demanded that he should be burnt alive.

Their request was no sooner granted but every one ran with all speed to fetch wood from the baths and shops. The pile being prepared, St. Polycarp put off his garments, untied his girdle, and began to take off his shoes, an office he had not been accustomed to, the Christians having always striven who should do these things for him, regarding it as a happiness to be admitted to touch him. The wood and other combustibles were heaped all round him.

The executioners would have nailed him to the stake; but he said to them: "Suffer me to be as I am. He who gives me grace to undergo this fire will enable me to stand still without that precaution." They therefore contented themselves with tying his hands behind his back, and in this posture looking up towards heaven, he prayed as follows: "O Almighty Lord God, Father of thy beloved and blessed Son Jesus Christ, by whom we have received the knowledge of thee, God of angels, powers, and every creature, and of all the race of the just that live in thy presence! I bless thee for having been pleased in thy goodness to bring me to this hour, that I may receive a portion in the number of thy martyrs, and partake of the chalice of thy Christ, for the resurrection to eternal life, in the incorruptibleness of the Holy Spirit. Amongst whom grant me to be received this day as a pleasing sacrifice, such a one as thou thyself hast prepared, that so thou majesty accomplish what thou, O true and faithful God! Hast foreshown. Wherefore, for all things I praise, bless, and glorify thee, through the eternal high priest Jesus Christ, thy beloved Son, with whom, to Thee and the Holy Spirit be glory now and for ever. Amen."

He had scarce said Amen when fire was set to the pile, which increased to a mighty flame. But behold a wonder, say the authors of these acts, seen by us reserved to attest it to others; the flames forming themselves into an arch, like the sails of a ship swelled with the wind, gently encircled the body of the martyr, which stood in the middle, resembling not roasted flesh, but purified gold or silver, appearing bright through the flames; and his body sending forth such a fragrance that we seemed to smell precious spices. The blind infidels were only exasperated to see his body could not be consumed, and ordered a spearman to pierce him through, which he did, and such a quantity of blood issued out of his left side as to quench the fire.

The malice of the devil ended not here: he endeavored to obstruct the relics of the martyr being carried off by the Christians; for many desired to do it, to show their respect to his body. Therefore, by the suggestion of Satan, Nicetes advised the proconsul not to bestow it on the Christians, lest, said he, abandoning the crucified man, they should adore Polycarp: the Jews suggested this, "Not knowing," say the authors of the acts of martyrs, "that we can never forsake Christ, nor adore any other, though we love the martyrs, as his disciples and imitators, for the great love they

bore their king and master." The centurion, seeing a contest raised by the Jews, placed the body in the middle, and burnt it to ashes. "We afterwards took up the bones," say they, "more precious than the richest jewels or gold, and deposited them decently in a place at which may God grant us to assemble with joy, to celebrate the birthday of the martyr." It was at two o'clock in the afternoon, which the authors of the acts of martyrs call the eighth hour, in the year 166, that St. Polycarp received his crown, according to Tillemont; but in 169, according to Basnage. His tomb is still shown with great veneration at Smyrna, in a small chapel. St. Irenaeus speaks of St. Polycarp as being of an uncommon age.

### **The Epistle of St. Polycarp to the Philippians**

The epistle of St. Polycarp to the Philippians, which is the only one among those which he wrote that has been preserved, is a standing proof of the apostolic spirit with which he was animated, and of that profound humility, perfect meekness, burning charity, and holy zeal, of which his life was so admirable an example. The beginning is an effusion of spiritual joy and charity with which he was transported at the happiness of their conversion to God, and their fervor in divine love. His extreme abhorrence of heresy makes him immediately fall upon that of the Docetae against which he arms the faithful, by clearly demonstrating that Christ was truly made man, died, and rose again: in which his terms admirably express his most humble and affectionate devotion to our divine Redeemer, under these great mysteries of love. Besides walking in truth, he takes notice, that to be raised with Christ in glory, we must also do his will, keep all his commandments, and love whatever he loved; refraining from all fraud, avarice, detraction, and rash judgment; repaying evil with good forgiving and showing mercy to others that we ourselves may find mercy. "These things," says he, "I write to you on justice, because you incited me; for neither I, nor any other like me, can attain to the wisdom of the blessed and glorious Paul, into whose epistles if you look, you may raise your spiritual fabric by strengthening faith, which is our mother, hope following, and charity towards God, Christ, and our neighbor preceding us. He who has charity is far from all sin." The saint gives short instructions to every particular state, then adds, "Every one who hath not confessed that Jesus Christ is come in the flesh, is antichrist; and who hath not confessed the suffering of the cross, is of the devil; and who hath drawn the oracles of the Lord to his passions, and hath said that there is no resurrection nor judgment, he is the oldest son of Satan." He exhorts to watching always in prayer, lest we be led into temptation; to be constant in fasting, persevering, joyful in hope, and in the pledge of our justice, which is Christ Jesus, imitating his patience; for, by suffering for his name, we glorify him. To encourage them to suffer, he reminds them of those who had suffered before their eyes: Ignatius, Zozimus, and Rufus, and some of their own

congregation, "who are now," says our saint, "in the place which is due to them with the Lord, with whom they also suffered."

## ✠ **Servant Women** ✠

### ✠ **Phoebe**

She is the most famous woman mentioned in the Holy Epistles of St. Paul. She came before men in the Holy Epistle to the Romans *"I commended to you Phoebe our sister who is a servant of the church in Cenchrea, that you may receive her in the Lord in a manner worthy of the saints, and assist her in whatever business she has need of you for indeed she has been a helper of many and of myself also (Romans 16:1&2)"*. She was a virgin and St. Paul mentioned her as a deacon serving women in the Church of Cenchrea in Corinth. She was the writer for St. Paul in the Holy Epistle to the Romans and also she carried that Holy Epistle to them.

### ✠ **Priscilla**

She and his husband Aquila were the perfect example of the true Christian marriage as St. John the Chrysostom said. They lived in Rome and left to Corinth when the emperor Claudius exiled all Jews from Rome and there St. Paul met them in his second trip of ministry (Acts 18:2). They hosted St. Paul in their house for one and a half years. They were like St. Paul tents makers. They followed St. Paul to Ephesus where they stayed there and their house became a Church. St. Paul met them again in Ephesus during his 3<sup>rd</sup> trip and so he wrote *"Aquila and Priscilla greet you heartily in the Lord with the church in their house (1 Corinthians 16:19)"*.

They returned to Rome and continued their ministry and so St. Paul sent his greetings to them in his Holy Epistle to Romans *"Greet Priscilla and Aquila my fellow workers in Christ Jesus who risked their own necks for my life to whom not only I give thanks but also all churches of the gentiles" (Romans 16:3-5)*.

Again they left Rome returning back to Asia Minor especially Ephesus to continue their ministry and so St. Paul wrote to Timothy *"Greet Priscilla and Aquila" (2 Timothy 4:19)*. It is clear that St. Priscilla and her husband were highly educated in addition to their righteousness as the Holy Book of Acts mentioned that they taught Apollos from Alexandria the Orthodox faith in the Lord although Apollos was fervent in spirit, he spoke and taught accurately the things of the Lord though he knew the baptism of John (Acts 18:24-26). She is a role model for the Christian married woman.



### ✠ **St. Thekla, the Martyr**

She was a virgin and a disciple of St. Paul from Iconium. She was rich, beautiful and engaged to one of the well-to-do men in Iconium (Acts 13:51). When St. Paul arrived at Iconium in his first ministry's trip she believed in his ministry and so vowed to be a virgin for the Lord. When her mother discovered her faith she went and betrayed her to the governor of Iconium who persecuted her with different sufferings and pains. He threw her in fire but the Lord sent heavy rain which extinguished the flames and so she was saved. She followed St. Paul to Antioch and ministered to pagan women there. In Antioch, the governor also persecuted her and threw her to the wild animals naked three times for three days but the Lord saved her. After that he threw her in a pit filled with snakes but the Lord saved her. She went after that to her home land in Iconium and ministered there, then went to Syria where she lived the hermitic life and the Lord granted her the gift of healing sickness. She departed at the age of 90 years and was buried in Solicaia of Syria. Because of her great sufferings and pains, the church called her martyr.

## Heresies during the Apostolic Age

### ✦ Heresies of that age had three varieties:

- Judaizers (Re-Judaism): Those who tried to practice Moses' Law in Christianity and mixed Judaism with Christianity and so the Holy Gospel would be the perfect law. They denied the divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and considered Him just a prophet or second Moses. They denied the Lord Jesus Christ as the highest priest and the king. They were apparently Christians but truly Jews and so they practiced Moses' Law ritually and literally and considered it necessary for salvation without it there was no saving.
- Gnostic Heresy: It was a philosophy that refused blind faith and declared that faith should be based on the logic and knowledge. They considered that logic was above faith, and philosophy above religion. They considered logic as superior to inspiration and logic is free to refuse what is against. Although Gnostic heresy appeared in the second century its roots go back to the Apostolic Age and there are many references to it in the Holy Epistles to the Colossians, First Timothy, Titus, Second Peter, First and Second John and the Book of Revelation. Gnostic heresy denied the Old Testament and glorifies logic above faith and so they considered faith is just logical knowledge of God. They believed there are 2 sources of creation the highest spirit and the material the first for good and the second for evil. They declared that spirit salvation is through either asceticism or more lusts (Hedonism - Licence) as they considered more lusts get victory on evil! They believed Christ is just phantom / apparition denying his incarnation. And so St. John said *"Every spirit that confesses that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is of God, and every spirit that does not confess that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is not of God. And this is the spirit of Antichrist which you have heard was coming and is now already in the world"* (1 John 4:2&3).
- Invasion by pagan philosophies especially Plato, and Pythagoras' philosophies, such trials were by Philo of Alexandria in the 1<sup>st</sup> century and some of Therapeutae and so a mixture of Judaism and paganism appeared at that time.

Whatever the differences were between these three varieties of heresies that appeared during the Apostolic Age they shared denying the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and His Incarnation for the salvation of the world. They considered the Lord Jesus Christ as just a man or apparition and did not confess unity between Divinity and humanity in the Lord Jesus Christ and this was the sign of the Antichrist as stated by St. John (1 John 4:1-3 and 2:23). By this they denied the pillar and the corner stone of Christianity without which Christianity will fall in paganism or Judaism.

✠ **The most famous heresies in the Apostolic Age were:**

▪ **Simon the Sorcerer:**

He was mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts where he used sorcery in Samaria and astonished people there saying that he was someone great (Acts 8:9). When St. Peter and St. John came to Samaria and laid their hands on the believers there to accept the Holy Spirit and did many miracles, Simon asked them to give him this authority by money but St. Peter said to him *“Your money perish with you because you thought that the gift of God could be purchased with money. You have neither part nor portion of this matter for your heart is not right in the sight of God”* (Acts 8:9-21).

Yousabious, Irenaeus and Youstinus considered Simon was a head of every heresy. Hoyostinos who was Samaritan also mentioned that Samaritans worshipped Simon as the first god as he called himself the first god and his logic incarnated from a woman called Helena who was a prostitute at that time! He declared that the highest god appeared as Jesus the Son among Jews, himself as the father among Samaritans and in other states as the Holy Spirit.

✠ **Ibionism:**

It is a heresy called by Judaizers referred by St. Paul as the liar brothers (2 Corinthians 11:26 and Galatians 2:4) where they distributed church's peace in Antioch and Galatia and denied St. Paul's apostleship. They declared that Moses' Law is necessary for salvation and every believer must follow this law literally. They celebrated the Sabbath and followed circumcision. They denied Divinity of the Lord Jesus Christ and considered Him just a prophet. They denied the Lord Jesus Christ's death and believed His Second Coming to set an earthly kingdom for the righteous believers especially righteous Jews. Some of them had Gnostic behavior in regard to asceticism.

✠ **Nicolaitans:**

They were mentioned in the Holy Book of Revelation 2:6 and 2:15-16. They belonged to Nicolas one of the seven appointed deacons. They encouraged pagan worship and sacrifices. They denied that God created the world but another power did. They called for sexual immoralities with women outside matrimony.

✠ **Cerinthus:**

He was a Jew converted to Christianity and lived in Ephesus the See of St. John the Beloved. He called for circumcision and keeping of the

Sabbath holy and an earthly kingdom for the Messiah. He taught that God did not create the world but other small god the god of Jews did and so he gave the Law and Torah. He taught that the Lord Jesus was born from St. Joseph and St. Mary and he was just a man and during baptism Christ came upon Jesus and left Him before Crucifixion and finally the Lord Jesus died and God resurrected him. He called that the Kingdom of God is just eating and sexual lust as he lived his life in these sins.

✠ **Menander:**

He was a Samaritan disciple for Simon the Sorcerer and he was sorcerer also. He taught that his fellows will not die and he is the savior of the world and through his baptism, every believer will be superior to the angels. He called for Gnostic heresy and through him Syria was an eminent center for Gnostic heresy between 70 AD and 100 AD.

## **Canonical Books of the New Testament**

### ✠ **Holy Gospel of St. Matthew:**

It was written for Jews who converted to Christianity and focuses on the Lord Jesus Christ as the Messiah, the Highest Priest and King of Israel. He referred to the prophecies about the Lord Jesus Christ in the Old Testament. And so he started his Holy Gospel by the genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ in flesh. His main focus is that the Lord Jesus Christ came to make the Law perfect and Christianity is superior to Judaism. Kingdom of Heaven reported 32 times in his Holy Gospel.

### ✠ **Holy Gospel of St. Mark:**

It was written for Romans and reported the miraculous personality of the Lord Jesus Christ. As it was written to Gentile, so it started with "Gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God". St. Mark translated the Jewish and Aramaic words and habits for Romans. He declared that the Lord Jesus Christ is the Lion of Judas and the Son of God who overcame the death by His death and granted life and victory for the believers.

### ✠ **Holy Gospel of St. Luke:**

It was written to Greeks and given to Theophilus one of the well-to-do-persons in Alexandria. His focus is on the Lord Jesus Christ the Savior and servant of humans and so St. Luke's genealogy of the Lord Jesus Christ dates back to Adam the father of humans (Luke 3:38). He presented the Lord Jesus Christ as a man without any sin, forgave sinners, healed sicknesses, comforted sorrows and cared for His followers.

### ✠ **Holy Gospel of St. John:**

It was written in Ephesus about 98 AD and focused mainly on the Divine nature of the Lord Jesus Christ and He was the Son of God. So it is the Holy Gospel of Incarnation. It is the Holy Gospel of Christian love (John 3:16, 13:34).

### ✠ **Holy Book of Acts:**

Written by St. Luke to Theophilus and reported the work of the Holy Spirit in the growing Church and so the most common words in this book is the Spirit or Holy Spirit. He recorded the history of the Church from the Day of Pentecost to the first imprisonment of St. Paul in Rome and before Nero's persecution in 64 AD.

### ✠ **Holy Epistles of St. Paul:**

He wrote 14 Holy Epistles between 52 AD and 66 AD. One Holy Epistle was written to the Roman believers around 55-57 AD about salvation through living faith in the Lord Jesus Christ and through love and focuses on God's righteousness revealed in the Lord Jesus Christ for our salvation. Two Holy Epistles were written to the Corinthians around 55 AD regarding some problems there and focused on the Christian life in the sight of God, communion with God vs. communion with darkness and reconciliation and communion. The Holy Epistle to the Galatians was written about 49 AD and it compares true Holy Gospel vs. the false gospel. The Holy Epistle to the Ephesians was written in between 61 AD and 63 AD. It focuses on riches of the Lord Jesus Christ in the Church. The Holy Epistle to the Philippians was written in between 61 AD and 63 AD and focuses on the dynamics of our life in the Lord Jesus Christ. The Holy Epistle to the Colossians focuses on living by the Will of God. The Holy First Epistle to the Thessalonians was written between 50 AD and 51 AD and focuses on the holy life which will lead to eternal life. The Holy Second Epistle to the Thessalonians was written about 51 AD and its theme is stand fast through Apostolic teachings. Two Holy Epistles were written to his disciple St. Timothy around 64-65 AD and focused on pastoral care of the faithful and overcoming hardship in the ministry. The Holy Epistle to Titus was written around 63 AD-65 AD and focused on overseeing the Church according to the true faith. The Holy Epistle to Philemon was written around 61-63 AD and focused on our brotherhood in the Lord Jesus Christ. Finally the Holy Epistle to the Hebrews was written around 66 AD and focused on preserving faith in the Incarnate Son, the Lord Jesus Christ was superior to Moses, New Testament was superior to Old Testament.

### ✠ **Catholic Epistles:**

St James wrote one Holy Epistle around 55-60 AD about the harmony of faith and good deeds and works. St. Peter wrote 2 Holy Epistles about 50-66 AD about rejoice in sharing the sufferings of the Lord Jesus Christ and true knowledge vs. false knowledge. St. John wrote three Holy Epistles around 90-95 AD and focused on tests of true Christian life, tests of true Christian care, and genuine leadership vs. false leadership. St. Jude wrote one Holy Epistle around 60 AD-80 AD and focused on contending earnestly for the faith.

### ✠ **The Holy Book of Revelation:**

It is a prophetic book written by St. John, the Beloved around 95 AD and focused on faithfulness in tribulations and the ends of ages.

## **Apocryphal Books**

### ✠ **Gospel of James:**

Recorded the events before the Lord Jesus Christ's birth such as the life of St. Mary, and the events of the Lord Jesus Christ's birth and end by martyrdom of Zachariah and death of Herod.

### ✠ **Gospel of Peter:**

Refereed by Yousabious in his speech about Docetic heresy but we do not have anything of it.

### ✠ **Gospel of Hebrews:**

Was common among Judaizers and Ibionians in the end of 1<sup>st</sup> century and the beginning of 2<sup>nd</sup> century.

### ✠ **Gospel of Thomas:**

Was common among Gnostics in the second century and reported the childhood of the Lord Jesus Christ, his miracles such as creation of birds of mud!

### ✠ **Gospel of Egyptians:**

It has Gnostics principles.

### ✠ **Gospel of Nicodemous:**

It focuses on suffering and death of the Lord by Pontius Pilate and his descend to Hades to save the souls of the fathers, His resurrection and ascension to heavens.

### ✠ **Gospel of Phillip:**

Was common among Gnostics in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

### ✠ **Gospel of the twelve apostles:** in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century.

### ✠ **Gospels of Heretics**

Such as Basilidis the Gnostic in the second century, Andrew the Gnostic, Cerinthus, Valntinos the Gnostic in the 3<sup>rd</sup> century and Marcion.

✠ **Works of the Apostles:**

Were common among Ibionians and Gnostics such as works of St. Peter, St. Paul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> century, St. John, St. Andrew, St. Matthew, St. Thomas, St. Phillip, St. Paul and St. Thekla and works of St. Barnabas.