



# 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**

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**DGM 101  
HOLY SACRAMENTS**

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**Servants' Preparation Program**

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**“Then God said, ‘Let there be light’; and there was light.” (Gen 1:3)**

**✠ PREFACE ✠**

A few months after his arrival to the U.S., the still-adapting servant was asked to talk to the youth of the Church. He decided to talk to them about the Sacrament of Baptism. On the set date he proceeded to explain the ritual of Baptism and said that Baptism should be performed by complete immersion in water and not by sprinkling like other denominations do. At this point he was interrupted by several of the youth and a couple of servants who were attending the meeting

“*The Bible says do not judge,*” cried a young man<sup>1</sup>.

“*We really need to avoid these controversial topics,*” one of the servants suggested.

A young lady seriously wondered, “*What difference does it make if someone baptizes by immersion, sprinkling, or even by spitting, as long as they are sincere in their beliefs?*”

The servant in the above true story was dealing with at least two fundamental problems. The first is obviously ignorance. The second is a result of a pre-commitment to relativism and pluralism in relation to questions of truth<sup>2</sup>.

Some people are willing to live with inherent contradictions because they have been told that pluralism, diversity, and tolerance demand it. Pluralists tell us that it doesn't matter what you believe about God, the Holy Bible, the Sacraments, etc... as long as you are sincere in your beliefs. Pluralists suggest that there are many ways to reach God; Christianity might be the right way, but it is **not the only** way. In the worldview of religious diversity, all religions are equal even if they are contradictory. No one religion is truer than any other religion; no one interpretation of Holy Scriptures is truer than any other interpretation.

While this makes for happy harmony on paper, in the real world it just doesn't work. Try to assert diversity in the following areas:

- It doesn't matter what you believe about *Biology* as long as you're sincere in your beliefs.
- It doesn't matter what you believe about *Nazism* as long as you're sincere in your beliefs.
- It doesn't matter what you believe about *Slavery* as long as you're sincere in your beliefs.

Something cannot be one thing (A) and another thing (non-A) at the same time and in the same sense. An object cannot be a triangle and a square at the same time. Can something be true and false at the same time and in the same way? Can the Eucharist be the true body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ and be a symbol at the same time?

**✠ Consider the following verses:**

- “How long will you falter between two opinions? If the Lord is God, follow Him; but if Baal, then follow him.” **(1Kings 18:21)**
- “No one can serve two masters; for he will hate the one and love the other, or else he will be loyal to the one and despise the other.” **(Mt 6:24)**
- “Either make the tree good and its fruit good, or else make the tree bad and its fruit bad.” **(Mt 12:33)**
- “He who is not with Me is against Me, and he who does not gather with Me scatters abroad.” **(Mt 12:30)**
- “A good tree cannot bear bad fruit, nor can a bad tree bear good fruit.” **(Mt 7:18)**
- “Out of the same mouth proceed blessing and cursing. My brethren, these things ought not to be so. Does a spring send forth fresh water and bitter from the same opening?” **(James 3:10-11)**

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<sup>1</sup> This issue will be discussed in the introduction.

<sup>2</sup> Servants are encouraged to view the lecture about Postmodernism that is posted on the Diocese's web site under literature at [www.susopticediocese.org](http://www.susopticediocese.org)

- “You are neither cold nor hot. I could wish you were cold or hot. So then because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth.” (Rev 3:15-16)

✠ **Conclusion:**

There is no gray zone as far as God is concerned; there is **only one** correct interpretation of Holy Scriptures in relation to Doctrinal issues and any other interpretation is heretical There is **only one** correct faith and any other belief is false. There is **only one** Holy Catholic Apostolic Church and any other establishment is not worthy to be called a Church.

“**Let there be light**” (Gen 1:3), these are the first Divine words uttered by God that Holy Scriptures documented. Indeed “Let there be light” in our hearts and minds, “Let there be light” among our youth who represent the future of the Church, and finally, “Let there be light” in our society.

If we are truly seeking light then we need to be prepared to confront darkness because “**God divided the light from the darkness**” (Gen 1:4) and St. Paul wondered, “**What communion has light with darkness?**” (2 Cor 6:14)



**“Build [O God] the walls of Jerusalem. Then You shall be pleased with the sacrifices of righteousness.”  
(Ps 51:18)**

## ✠ INTRODUCTION ✠

### ✠ The Builders:

Servants in the Church are like builders, as St. Paul called himself “a wise master builder.” (1 Cor 3:10) They are building themselves, “building yourselves upon your most holy faith” (Jud 20), and also building others, “comfort each other and build one another up.” (1 Thess 4:11) The true builder is God Himself as King David said, “Unless the Lord builds the house, they labor in vain who build it” (Ps.127: 1) also St. Paul called himself and St. Apollos “God’s fellow workers” and the people “God’s building” (1 Cor 3:9). Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ said it clearly: “I will build My Church.” (Mt 16:18)

- Therefore, always ask God to help and support you with His grace during your service and always attribute the success of the service to God’s grace, “If anyone ministers [serves], let him do it as with the ability which God supplies, that in all things God may be glorified through Jesus Christ, to whom belong glory and the dominion forever and ever. Amen.” (1 Pet 4:11)

### ✠ The Foundation:

St. Paul said, “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ.” (1 Cor 3:11) Our Lord Jesus Christ said that He would build His Church on the rock of the Sound Doctrine that St. Peter declared concerning Him (Mt 16:18). Finally, St. Paul said, “having been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ Himself being the chief corner-stone.” (Eph 2:20)

- The foundation that you are building yourself and others on is the Sound Apostolic Faith and Doctrine concerning the person of our Lord Jesus Christ **and His blessed teachings**, which is supported by both the New (apostles) and Old (prophets) Testaments.

### ✠ The Temple & The Wall:

The Old Testament provides us with two blessed examples of wise master builders. The first is Ezra who completed the building of the Temple of Jerusalem. The second is Nehemiah who built the wall of the city.  
(Please take time to read these Holy Books)

- Ezra represents the servant who concentrates on spiritual subjects in order to build the inner temple of the heart, while Nehemiah represents the servant who is building the walls around that temple; the walls of Sound Doctrine against heresies and false teachings in order to preserve and protect the temple (heart) and its inhabitants (virtues).

**So which one of them is more important?** Our Lord Jesus Christ said, “These you ought to have done, without leaving the others undone” (Mt 23:23). The Church needs servants who are **at the same time** ‘Ezra’ and ‘Nehemiah’ providing the youth with spiritual teachings and guidance based on personal experience and practice, and also providing them with sound theological understanding of our most holy faith based on the teachings of the Church fathers and **not** their own personal opinion. It is interesting to learn that both the Books of ‘Ezra’ and ‘Nehemiah’ were considered one Holy Book until the third century, and today many biblical scholars consider them one complementary unit.

- The following lectures will be about building the walls of Sound Doctrine. Other lectures about building the inner spiritual temple will be provided by God’s grace in the near future.

### ✠ Lessons from the Holy Book of Nehemiah:

- 1) Nehemiah was neither a Priest nor a Levite he was just an ordinary member of the congregation. His heart was filled with tremendous zeal and love to the Church (people of God). God used him to build the wall of Jerusalem and he became a role model for many generations of servants. Therefore, do not underestimate your position in the Church. Let Nehemiah be your role model in your service and let the following verse be your theme: **“The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.” (Neh 2:20)**
- 2) Nehemiah had a strong ‘personal’ relation with God. He always prayed and his prayers were straight forward and to the point. Sometimes, as he is telling the story of building the wall, we see him stop and pray to God **(Neh 4:3-6; 5:19; 6:8-14)**. The frequency and depth of your prayer reveals how much you depend on God’s help in your service.
- 3) It is written in the Holy Book of Nehemiah, “Everyone of the builders had his sword girded at his side as he built” **(Neh 4:18)**. St. Paul talked about the whole armor of God saying that the sword of the spirit is the word of God **(Eph 6:17)**. Now we can read the verse mentioned by Nehemiah as follows: “Everyone of the servants [builders] had his **Holy Bible** [sword] girded at his side as he **served** [built].” As a builder of the wall of Sound Doctrine, you will need to have a stronger than average relation with the Holy word of God.
- 4) Building the wall of Sound Doctrine will provoke Satan and he will fight you the same way he fought Nehemiah:
  - He will send you messengers to distract you and waist your time in foolish arguments **(Neh 6)**. Remember the advice of St. Paul to his disciple Titus: “Avoid foolish disputes, genealogies, contentions, and striving about the law; for they are unprofitable and useless” **(Tit 3:9)**. Repeat the words of Nehemiah: **“I am doing a great work, so that I cannot come down. Why should the work cease while I leave it and go down to you?”(Neh 6:3)**
  - He will try to intimidate you **(Neh 6:14-19)** by sending you messengers saying, ‘you are judging people, and you are committing a sin’. If explaining the sound faith to the Orthodox Youth and exposing the false teachings of the heretics is to be considered a sin, **then blessed be that sin!** Remember the words of St. Paul, “have no fellowship with the unfruitful works of darkness, **but rather expose (reprove) them.**” **(Eph 5:11)** Do they want to convince us that the Champions of Orthodoxy such as St. Cyril and St. Athanasius lived all their lives in the sin of judging others because they exposed the false teachings and excommunicated the heretics who lived during their time? Indeed Satan is a liar and the father of it. **(John 8:44)**

### ✠ To Judge or Not to Judge?

How many times have you called a sinful behavior into question and been told (with a self-righteous attitude), “Judge not, that you be not judged”? Or have you ever mentioned to another that the salvation of heretics and unbelievers is a myth to hear, “Who are we to judge? Don’t you know the Holy Bible says, ‘Judge not’?” As a builder trying to build the wall of sound faith, you will discover that this is the only verse some people can quote. It’s always intended to stop a conversation in its tracks, shift the subject, and outweigh any other biblical evidence. After all, it’s one part of Holy Scripture that lets people off the hook! Or so they think!

In some form or another, most of us have heard the debates over this well-known verse, haven’t we? Does the Holy Bible actually say, “Judge not, that you be not judged”? Yes, it does. The only problem is, so many who quote **(Mt 7:1)** rip it totally out of context. They forget or ignore the four verses that follow **(Mt 7:1)** – verses that explain just what our Lord Jesus Christ meant when He spoke on this matter of judging.

- Take a few minutes to read (Mt 7:1-6):  
“Judge not, that you be not judged. For with what judgment you judge, you will be judged; and with the same measure you use, it will be measured back to you. And why do you look at the speck in your brother’s eye, but

do not consider the plank in your own eye? Or how can you say to your brother, ‘Let me remove the speck out of your eye’; and look, a plank is in your own eye? Hypocrite! First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye. Do not give what is holy to the dogs; nor cast your pearls before swine, lest they trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you in pieces”.

Notice that we are in a succession of ‘do not’s’ at this point of the Sermon of the Mount:

- Do not judge.
- Do not give what is holy to dogs.
- Do not cast your pearls before swine.

If you stop and think about it, these three ‘do not’s’ seem inconsistent. One says not to judge, and the other two say neither to give what is holy to dogs nor to throw pearls before swine. **If you don’t judge, how are you going to know who are dogs and who are swine?** In the same chapter, our Lord Jesus Christ also tells us that we will know false prophets by their fruits (Mt 7:15-20). **If I am not allowed to judge, then how am I going to ‘inspect their fruits’ to know which prophets (teachers) are false?**

Moreover, it is written, “Blessed is the man who walks not in the counsel of the ungodly, nor stands in the path of sinners, nor sits in the seat of the scornful” (Ps 1:1). **How are you going to identify the ungodly, the sinners, and the scornful without some kind of judgment?** Also St. Paul said to the Corinthians, “put away from yourselves that wicked person” (1 Cor 5:13). **How on earth were they supposed to do that without judging?**

Do all these questions create a problem? What is the context of this “Judge not” verse really saying to us? Let’s go back to (Mt 7:1-5). According to this passage, there is a problem with your brother’s eye and your own eye. Does this passage actually forbid you to take the speck out of your brother’s eye? **No, it doesn’t.** This passage doesn’t forbid judging, it forbids a certain kind of judging. The judgment that our Lord Jesus Christ forbids in (Mt 7:1-5) is wrong because He referred to those who judge this way as hypocrites. They are hypocrites because they concern themselves with a speck in their brother’s eye while they are stumbling around with two-by-fours under their own eyelids!

There is another kind of judgment that our Lord Jesus Christ called for: He said, **“Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment” (Jn 7:24).** Therefore, when our Lord Jesus Christ said, “Judge not”, He was not calling us to a carefree blindness to the unrighteous behavior of others; He was not calling us to close our eyes to sin and to tolerate false doctrine and indiscriminately accept those who teach them. Irresponsible behavior, wrong doctrine, and sin must all be discerned, clearly identified, and dealt with; they are not to be swallowed, covered over, or overlooked. Do we have the right, then, to evaluate carefully a person’s message and to scrutinize someone’s teaching? **Yes, we do.** → Think about it, if **all** judgment were wrong, then how come we have a Holy Book called **“Judges”**?

#### ✠ **Righteous Judgment:**

It’s all right to judge as long as we judge with a righteous judgment; a judgment that is in accordance with the word of God. We may judge dogs and swine, false teachers, sin, wrong behavior and wrong doctrine, **but we cannot judge the motives of another person’s heart.** The motivation of that judgment is the love of God and the love of the neighbor. The goal is not to condemn but to restore. **We need to exercise judgment in order to discern false teachers.**



✠ **How to judge with Righteous Judgment?** (*Examples will be limited to doctrine & theology*)

- “First remove the plank from your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck out of your brother’s eye.” (**Mt 7:5**)  
✠ An Orthodox Christian who doesn’t know the theological basis of his faith and yet judges non-Orthodox for their heresies needs to remove the plank of ignorance first from his own eye so that he can see clearly and guide heretics to Orthodoxy.
- “Do not judge according to appearance, but judge with righteous judgment.” (**Jn 7:24**)  
✠ People are under the impression that judging others is only concerned with their negative aspects. But when you **praise** the heretics and unbelievers and defend their salvation (contrary to the word of God) based on their outer appearance and moral conduct, then you are not judging with righteous judgment.
- “Therefore you are inexcusable, O man, whoever you are who judge, for in whatever you judge another you condemn yourself: for you who judge practice the same things.” (**Rom 2:1**)  
✠ An Orthodox Christian is defending the belief that communion is the true body and blood of our Lord; he is refuting the Protestants’ heretical teachings concerning this doctrine. Yet this same person doesn’t approach communion with the due respect and preparation. This person is actually condemning himself, for his actions do not support of the faith that he is preaching.
- “Therefore judge nothing before the time, until the Lord comes, who will both bring to light the hidden things of darkness and reveal the counsels of the hearts.” (**1 Cor 4:5**)  
✠ We cannot judge the inner motives and feelings of heretics; we cannot say they are sincere in their faith or that they have tremendous love to God. **We simply don’t know!** It’s actually not our job to be concerned with this issue. Our job (*in these lectures*) is to explain our Orthodox faith and refute their heretical teachings.

✠ **“He who wins souls is wise”**(**Prov 11:30**):

The following lectures are intended for Orthodox Youth and the concept of Righteous Judgment should be applied when these topics are explained. A different approach should be used when addressing non-Orthodox and non-Christians. St. Paul said, “**walk in wisdom toward those who are outside**” (**Col 4:5**); one should be wise enough not to offend them with what we know and believe. Here is an example: St Paul taught that idol worshipers will perish and will not enter the kingdom of God, “Do not be deceived, neither fornicators, nor idolaters... will inherit the Kingdom of God” (**1 Cor 6:9-10**); “Now the works of the flesh are evident, which are... idolatry.... Those who practice such things will not inherit the kingdom of God” (**Gal 5:19-21**). This same St. Paul stood in the midst of idol worshipers saying, “I perceive that in all things you are **very religious**” (**Acts 17:22**). St. Paul knew very well that those ‘religious’ people would perish if they refused his message, yet this was not a reason to offend them!

There is a similar story mentioned in the biography St. Macarius: “One day the saint was traveling with his disciple who out walked him. On the way the disciple saw a pagan priest carrying wood and running to the idols’ temple. He said to the pagan, “To where are you running you servant of the devil?” The priest put the wood down and started beating the disciple then carried his wood and went on his way. Further along the road, St. Macarius saw the pagan running with his wood and said, “May strength be with you, O man full of energy!” The pagan was astonished and said, “What good thing about me did you see in order to greet me with such greeting?” St. Macarius replied, “You are toiling and working with all enthusiasm in vain”. He then explained to him the Christian faith and the pagan believed and became a monk!” (The Arabic ‘*Paradise Of The Monks*’ Page 33).

- The moral of this story is “**The tongue of the wise uses knowledge rightly, but the mouth of the fools pours forth foolishness.**” (**Prov 15:2**). Therefore, “walk in wisdom towards those who are outside” (**Col 4:5**) for “he who wins souls is wise.” (**Prov 11:30**)

✠ **A Final Word:**

In an interview with the Daily Texan, H.G. Bishop Youssef said, “We will not build a new foundation; it’s a high-rise building of 20 centuries and on the 21<sup>st</sup> floor we have the American culture and we are building it on what we have of Traditions for these 20 centuries” (Daily Texan, October 24, 2001). Indeed, it is written, **“Do not remove the ancient landmark which your fathers have set.” (Prov 22:28)**

- As a servant you are involved in building this 21<sup>st</sup> floor, this is both a great responsibility and honor. St. Paul said, “No other foundation can anyone lay than that which is laid, which is Jesus Christ. Now if anyone builds on this foundation with gold, silver, precious stones, wood, hay, straw, **each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.** If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, **yet so as through fire.” (1 Cor 3:11-15)**
- Are you building with gold and silver or hay and straw? Are you properly preparing for your lectures and meetings with the youth? Are you avoiding or neglecting theological and doctrinal topics? Each one’s work will be tested with the fire of false teachings, temptation and sin. If the youth that you are serving endure these fires, blessed are you, you shall receive a reward. But if they don’t, then you have lost your reward and you yourself will be **scarcely saved!**
- Therefore, don’t depend on your personal abilities in your service but ask God to support you. Have faith, let your hands be strong and do a good job.

Say with Nehemiah, **“Let us build the wall of Jerusalem, that we may no longer be a reproach.” (Neh 2:17)**  
And don’t forget your theme: **“The God of heaven Himself will prosper us; therefore we His servants will arise and build.” (Neh 2:20)**



**“Wisdom [our Lord Jesus Christ] has built her house [the Church], She has hewn out her seven pillars [the seven Sacraments].” (Prov 9:1)**

✠ **Lecture I: What is a Sacrament?** ✠

✠ **Introduction:**

To materialists, this world is opaque like a curtain; nothing can be seen through it. A mountain is just a mountain, a sunset just a sunset; but to poets, artists and saints, the world is transparent like a windowpane – it tells of something beyond. For example, a mountain tells of the power of God, the sunset of His beauty, and the snowflake of His purity. A Sacrament, **in a very broad sense of the term**, combines two elements: one visible, the other invisible – one can be seen, or tasted, or touched, or heard while the other remains unseen to the eyes of the flesh. There is, however, some kind of relation or significance between the two. A spoken word is a kind of sacrament because there is something material or audible about it; there is also something spiritual about it, namely, its meaning. A horse can hear a funny story just as well as a man. It is conceivable that the horse may even hear the words better than the man and at the end of the story the man may laugh, but the horse will never give a horselaugh. The reason is that the horse gets the material side of the ‘sacrament’ namely the sound, but man gets the invisible or the spiritual side, namely, the meaning. A handshake is a kind of sacrament, because there is something seen and felt, namely the clasping of the hands, but there is something mysterious and unseen, namely, the communication of friendship. A kiss is a kind of sacrament, the physical side of it is present if one kisses one’s own hand, but the spiritual side of it is missing because there is no sign of affection for another. No wonder our Lord said to Judas, “are you betraying the son of Man with a kiss?” (**Jn 22:48**)

Take the brazen serpent in the desert. When the Jewish people were bitten by poisonous serpents, God commanded Moses to make a brazen serpent, and to hang it over the crotch of a tree (**Num 21:8-9**); all who would look upon that serpent of brass would be healed of the serpent’s sting. This apparently was a rather ridiculous remedy for poison and not everyone looked at it. If one could discern or guess their reason, it would probably be because they concentrated on only one side of the symbol, namely, the shiny, lifeless brass thing hanging on a pole. But it proved to be a symbol of faith; God used that material thing as a symbol of trust or faith in Him. The symbolism goes still further, the Old Testament is fulfilled in our Lord Jesus Christ who revealed the full **mystery** of the brazen serpent. Our Lord told Nicodemus that the brass serpent was lifted up in the desert so that He would have to be lifted up on the cross (**Jn 3:14**). The meaning now becomes clear; the brass serpent in the desert looked like the serpent that bit the people, but though it seemed to be the same, it was actually without any poison. Our Blessed Lord now says that He is like that brazen serpent. He, too, would be lifted up on the crotch of a tree, a cross. He would look as if He Himself was filled with the poison of sin, for His body would bear the marks, and the stings, and the piercing of sin; and yet as the brass serpent was without poison so He would be without sin. As those who looked upon that brass serpent in the desert in faith were healed of the bite of the serpent, so all who would look upon Him on His cross bearing the sins and poisons of the world would also be healed of the poison of the serpent, Satan.

The word “sacrament” in Greek means “mystery”, and our Lord Jesus Christ has been called by St. Paul **“a great mystery” (1 Tim 3:16)**. In Him is something divine, something human, something eternal, something temporal, something invisible, something visible. The Human Nature of our Blessed Lord had no power to sanctify of and by itself; that is to say, apart from its union with the Divinity, but because of that union, the Humanity of the Lord became the efficient cause of our justification and sanctification and will be until the end of the world. Herein is hidden **a hint** of the Sacraments. The Humanity of the Lord was the bearer of Divine life and the means of making men holy, the Sacraments were also to become the **effective means** of the sanctification purchased by his death. As our Blessed Lord was the sensible sign of God (He is truly God), so the Sacraments were to become the sensible signs of the grace (they are truly grace), which our Lord had won for us.

If men were angels or pure spirits, there would have been no need of our Lord Jesus Christ using human nature or material things for the communication of the divine, but because man is composed of matter and spirit, body and soul, man functions best when he sees the material as the revealer of the spiritual. From the very beginning of man’s life, his mother’s fondling is not merely to leave an impress upon his infant body, but rather

to communicate the sublimely beautiful and **invisible** love of the mother. It is not the material thing that man values, but rather what is signified by it.

### ✠ Sacraments & Salvation:

One often sees signs painted on roadways, “Jesus saves”. Now this indeed is true, but the important question is how does He save? What relation do we have in the twenty-first century to our Lord Jesus Christ in the first? Do we establish contact with Him only by reading about Him? If that were all, our relationship is not much closer than that which we can have with Plato. If the Lord Jesus Christ is only a memory of someone who lived centuries ago, then it is rather difficult to see that His influence will be any different than that of Socrates or Buddha. The answer to the question of how our Lord Jesus Christ saves is to be found in the Sacraments. The Divine life of the Lord is communicated through His Church or His mystical body in exactly the same way that His divine life was communicated when He walked on earth. As He then used His human nature as the instrument of divinity and used material things as means to confer His grace; clay and water in the case of the born blind (**Jn 9:11**). He now uses other human natures (priests) and material things (water, bread and wine, oil) as instruments for the communication of the same divine life (grace).

Every Sacrament has an outward or visible sign. For example, in Baptism it is water, in the Eucharist it is bread and wine, but the Sacrament also has a form or formula, words of spiritual significance given to the matter when it is conferred. Three things then are absolutely required for a Sacrament: (1) Its institution by the Lord Jesus Christ, (2) an outward sign, and (3) the power of conferring the grace purchased for us by the Passion, Death, and Resurrection of the Lord.

Calvary is like a reservoir of divine life or grace. From it, there flows seven different kinds of sanctification for man in different stages in his spiritual existence. Each of these seven channels is a Sacrament by which the power of the Risen Christ is bestowed on souls by a spiritual and effective contact. This divine grace pours into the soul when we receive the Sacraments, unless we put an obstacle in the way, just as water will not flow out of a faucet if we put our hand in front of the faucet. But the faucet in a house has no power to quench thirst unless there is a reservoir and a pipeline. So the Sacraments do not confer grace as magical signs, they communicate it only because they are in contact with the Risen Christ through the work of the Holy Spirit about Whom the Lord said, “He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (**Jn 17:14**).

### ✠ The Seven Holy Sacraments:

1. The Sacrament of Holy Orders (Priesthood)
2. The Sacrament of Baptism
3. The Sacrament of Confirmation
4. The Sacrament of the Eucharist
5. The Sacrament of Repentance & Confession
6. The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick
7. The Sacrament of Matrimony

(Adapted from *‘These are the Sacraments’* by Fulton J. Sheen & Yousuf Karsh.)

**Q: The word “mystery” occurred in Holy Scripture with many meanings, how are these meanings different from the “Sacraments” of the Church?**

**A:** The word “mystery” in Holy Scripture has two meanings:

1. Mysteries of knowledge that God reveals (Secrets or Hidden Truths).
2. Mysteries of grace where the Holy Spirit grants invisible gifts (Sacraments).

#### **1. Mysteries of Knowledge:**

- “The secret of the Lord is with those who fear Him.” (**Ps 25:14**)

- “Surely the Lord God does nothing unless He reveals His secret to His servants the prophets.” (**Amos 3:7**)
- “Then the secret was revealed to Daniel.” (**An 2:19**)
- “To you it has been given to know the mysteries (secrets or hidden truths) of the Kingdom of God.” (**Lk 8:10**)
- “We speak the wisdom of God in a mystery, the hidden wisdom which God ordained before the ages for our glory.” (**1 Cor 2:7**)
- “Though I have the gift of prophecy, and understand all mysteries and all knowledge ... but have not love, I am nothing.” (**1 Cor 13:2**)
- “Having made known to us the mystery of His will.” (**Eph 1:9**)
- “That I may open my mouth boldly to make known the mystery of the gospel.” (**Eph 6:19**)
- “The mystery [secret or hidden truth] which has been hidden from ages and from generations, but now has been revealed to His saints.” (**Col 1:26**)
- “Meanwhile praying also for us, that God would open to us a door for the word, to speak the mystery [hidden truth] of Christ.” (**Col 4:3**)
- “The knowledge of the mystery of God, both of the Father and of Christ.” (**Col 2:2**)
- “Great is the mystery [hidden truth] of godliness: God was manifested in the flesh.” (**1 Tim 3:16**)

## **2. Mysteries of Grace:**

The word Sacrament is the conjunction of the Latin word *sacer* (holy) with the Greek word *mysterion* (secret rite). Sacrament was thus given a sacred mysterious significance that indicated a spiritual potency. The power was transmitted through material instruments and vehicles viewed as channels of divine grace and as benefits in ritual observance instituted by Christ. St. Augustine defines Sacraments as ‘The visible form of an invisible grace’ (Encyclopedia Britannica; Volume 26, Page 834)

- “A man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh. This is a great mystery [Sacrament] but I speak concerning Christ and the Church” (**Eph 5:31-32**)

**“Around the throne were twenty-four thrones, and on the thrones I saw twenty-four elders [priests] sitting, clothed in white robes; and they had crowns of gold on their heads” (Rev 4:4)**

## **✠ Lecture II: The Sacrament of Priesthood ✠**

The Sacrament of Priesthood is the Holy Sacrament by which the Bishop lays his hand on the elected candidate in order for the Holy Spirit to descend on this person to grant him one of the priestly ranks. As a result, the ordained person is granted the authority to perform the ministry of the Church, whether the Holy Sacraments, teaching or others. This is called “Laying of hands” or “Ordination”.

### **✠ Institution of the Sacrament:**

Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when He chose the twelve of His followers and consecrated them for ministry, “He called His disciples to Him, **and from them He chose twelve** whom He also named apostles” (Lk 6:13). He gave them the authority of absolution and binding, “**He breathed on them**, and said to them, ‘**Receive the Holy Spirit**’. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained” (Jn 20:22-23). Notice that this took place before the Pentecost and the gift of the Holy Spirit here is the gift of ordination. Only to them He said, “Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:19) and only to them He delivered the mystery of His Body and Blood (The Eucharist).

### **✠ Honor of Priesthood:**

St. Paul said, “No man takes **this honor** to himself, but he who is called by God, just as Aaron was” (Heb 5:4) and “Let the elders [priests] who rule well be counted worthy of **double honor**, especially those who labor in the word and doctrine” (1 Tim 5:17), for the Priesthood is:

#### a) A divine choice, call and appointment

- “And He went up on the mountain and called to Him those He Himself wanted and they came to Him. Then He appointed twelve, that they might be with Him and that He might send them out to preach and to have power to heal sicknesses and to cast out demons.” (Mk 3:13-15)
- “Now it came to pass in those days that He went out to the mountain to pray, and continued all night in prayer to God. And when it was day, He called His disciples to Himself; and from them He chose twelve whom He also named apostles.” (Lk 6:12-13)
- “You did not choose Me, but I chose you and appointed you that you should go and bear fruit and that your fruit should remain.” (Jn 15:16)
- “After these things the Lord appointed seventy others also, and sent them two by two before His face into every city and place where He Himself was about to go.” (Lk 10:1)
- “As they ministered to the Lord and fasted, the Holy Spirit said, ‘Now separate to Me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them.’ Then, having fasted and prayed, and laid hands on them, they sent them away.” (Acts 13:2-3)

#### b) Faithfulness and Stewardship

- “Who then is that faithful and wise steward, whom his master will make ruler over his household, to give them their portion in due season? Blessed is that servant whom his master will find so doing when he comes.” (Lk 12:42-43)
- “Let a man so consider us, as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries (Sacraments) of God. Moreover it is required in stewards that one be found faithful” (1 Cor 4:1-2)

#### c) Consecration or Sanctification

- Lord Jesus Christ said, “for their sakes I sanctify Myself, that they also may be sanctified by the truth” (Jn 17:19). To sanctify means to consecrate; our Lord has consecrated Himself for the ministry and redemption. Likewise, all ranks of the Priesthood are consecrated for the ministry according to the example of Lord Jesus Christ, the Great High Priest.

## ✠ The Order of Deacons ✠

### **1. Epsaltos (Hymnist, Cantor):**

The work of the Epsaltos is obvious from his name that is to learn and sing Church hymns and praises. This rank is mentioned in some of the early Church canons, “Chanters also must be blessed by the Bishop”. Children are usually ordained in this rank as the Psalm says, “Out of the mouth of babes and infants You have ordained strength” (Ps 8:2), the wisdom of children’s ordination is attaching them to the Church in order to grow up being nourished by the Orthodox faith and rites, so that they become steadfast in the faith, clinging to it with a high level of spirituality and holiness, as the Psalm says, “But I am like a green olive tree in the house of God ... I will praise You forever” (Ps 52:8-9).

### **2. Anagnostis (Reader, Lector):**

His work is the daily readings in Church especially the Holy Epistles; he must read without mistakes so that the congregation may understand what is read. After the Commemoration of the Saints, readers recite the names of the Patriarchs who passed away in the Lord as the deacon says, “Let those who read recite the names of our fathers the Patriarchs who have fallen asleep; O Lord repose their souls and forgive us our sins”. Readers also can give sermons to the congregation as mentioned in the rite of their ordination, “Lord show Your face to Your servant standing before You to know by Your Holy Words to preach Your laws to Your people, teach them Your pure words for their rescue and salvation”, this is done by the permission from the Bishop or Priest. Readers are required to receive the Church Psalmody (Praises) and receipt it with the chorus during Liturgy and other occasions.

### **3. Epideacon (Sub-deacon):**

His work is to prevent heretics and false teachers from entering the Church, to light the Church’s lamps, to maintain the books of the Church, to prepare the censor, to organize the worshipers and to help the deacon and replace him if necessary. These responsibilities are added to the previous ones of the reader.

### **4. Deacon (Servant):**

His work is to recite all the liturgical responses. In the past no one was allowed to enter to the Sanctuary except the Bishop, Priest and the Deacon or Archdeacon, also kings who were believers and anointed by Chrism. The deacon may carry the chalice and give the congregation from the precious blood of the Lord during communion. He reads the Holy Gospel of the Liturgy and may teach or preach by the permission of the Bishop or Priest. The deacon helps the priest in the service by visiting the congregation, widows and orphans, sick, etc. If he was ordained before marriage, he does not marry. If he had a wife and was ordained then his wife died, he remains without marriage like the case of Priests. If he elects to marry, he loses his rank.

### **5. Archdeacon (Leader of Deacons):**

The Archdeacon leads all the ranks of deacons, manages their needs, and specifies their deeds.

## ✠ Qualifications of Deacons:

St. Paul said, “Deacons must be reverent, not double-tongued, not given to much wine, not greedy for money, holding the mystery of faith with a pure conscience. But let these also first be proved; then let them serve as deacons, being found blameless... Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well” (1 Tim 3:8-9,12). The twelve apostles set the criteria of ordination of the seven deacons as being “of good reputation, full of the Holy Spirit and wisdom” (Acts 6:3). Although this rank is the smallest of the priestly ranks, St. Paul praised it saying, “Those who have served well as deacons obtain for themselves a good standing and great boldness in the faith which is in Christ Jesus” (1 Tim 3:13). It is also noteworthy to mention that the first Christian martyr was St. Steven the deacon who saw heaven opened and Lord Jesus standing at the right hand of God (Acts 7:56).

## ✠ The Order of Priests ✠

### **1. Priest, Elder, Presbyter:**

This is the first and essential priestly rank. The priest has the right to administer all the Church Sacraments except the laying of hands and ordination, which is reserved to the Bishop or someone above him. He teaches the people the word of God, explains to them the dogmas and rites, and leads them to the way of righteousness “For the lips of a priest should keep knowledge, and people should seek the law from his mouth; for he is the messenger of the Lord of hosts” (Mal 2:7). He is a father who pastors his children compassionately, visits them with tenderness care and love, as he is zealous for their salvation. He humbly serves them as Lord Jesus washed the feet of His disciples

## **2. Hegomen, Senior Priest, Archpriest:**

This is only a promotional rank from a priest and is not considered as a new ordination. If there were more than one priest serving in the same Church, the oldest in ordination or the most active and knowledgeable is promoted to the rank of hegomen. The rest of the priests submit to him and consider him the primary responsible person in the Church.

## **3. Khoori-Episcopos (Bishop of a village):**

This rank came to existence by the end of the third century in Asia Minor when the dioceses extended and their division to smaller ones was not preferred. Members of the Nicene Council included 15 Khoori-Episcopos from Asia Minor and Syria. This rank disappeared from our Coptic Church and was revived by H.H. Pope Shenouda III when His Holiness ordained several monks as Khoori-Episcopos in order to assist some Bishops and Metropolitans in the service of their wide dioceses. His Holiness promoted most of them later on to general Bishops or Bishops of Dioceses. This rank is closer to the Bishopric rank for the candidate is a monk, holds the title of “Anba”, his turban is very similar to the Bishop’s, has the authority to ordain the various ranks of Deacons, is a member of the Holy Synod, and his name is mentioned like the Bishop in all liturgical prayers and hymns.

## **✠ The Order of Bishops ✠**

### **1. Bishop, Overseer, Episcopos:**

This is the highest rank of the Priesthood. Bishops are distinguished from Priests by having the perfection of the Priesthood and the authority to lay their hands and ordain all the deaconry and priestly ranks in their dioceses.

### **2. Metropolitan (Bishop of a large city):**

This is a promotional rank from the Bishop, and the Metropolitan is mentioned before the Bishop in all the Church rites.

### **3. Patriarch, Pope, Archbishop:**

The Patriarch is the highest rank in the Bishopric level and has the greatest ruling of Priesthood; he is the leader of the Church, Bishops and Metropolitans. The Patriarch is the successor of our fathers the Apostles and is the symbol of the unity of the Church. He has the right to ordain Bishops (at least one Bishop accompany him) and promote them to Metropolitans. He also has the right to make the Holy oil (Mayron). He heads the sessions of the Holy Synod, which is the highest authority in the Church.

### **✠ Qualification of Bishops:**

→ “A bishop must be blameless, as a steward of God, not self-willed, not quick-tempered, not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but hospitable, a lover of what is good, sober minded, just, holy, self-controlled, holding fast the faithful word as he has been taught, that he may be able, by sound doctrine, both to exhort and convict those who contradict.” (Titus 1: 7-9)

→ “A bishop then must be blameless, the husband of one wife, temperate, sober-minded, of good behavior, hospitable, able to teach; not given to wine, not violent, not greedy for money, but gentle, not quarrelsome, not covetous... not a novice, lest being puffed up with pride he fall into the same condemnation as



the devil. Moreover he must have a good testimony among those who are outside, lest he fall into reproach and the snare of the devil” (1 Tim 3:2-3,6-7)

**Q: The Holy Bible said that the Bishop should be “the husband of one wife” (1Tim 3:2). Why then do we ordain the Bishops from the celibate monks?**

**A:** First of all, “we” don’t ordain anybody; the Pope does, “we” merely recommend the ordination. Secondly, St. John Chrysostom said, “The apostle did not place this order as a basis that he (the Bishop) must be a husband of a wife, but he forbids from this rank the individual who married more than one wife, as he wanted to choose the most pure and modest, but since the door of celibacy and monasticism is opened so the Bishops are ordained from the celibate monks who never married at all.” Moreover, The Holy Book of Revelation (the only **Prophetic** Book of the New Testament) called the Bishops “Angels” and our Lord said that the angels “neither marry nor are given in marriage” (Mt 22:30). In the Nicene Council 325 AD, a decision was made that priests must be married because of the nature of their service since they enter houses and solve family problems. Nevertheless, if the priest is widowed, he does not remarry another woman since he is the father of all women and a father cannot marry one of his daughters.

### ✠ Lord Jesus Christ & the Ranks of Priesthood ✠

Our Lord Jesus Christ practiced certain services that became the essence of the Church ranks:

- a) The Epsaltos: The person who holds this rank is required to learn and sing the Church hymns. Lord Jesus Christ sung a hymn with His disciples before going to Gethsemane, “And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives” (Mt 26:30).
- b) The Anagnostis: The most important work of this rank is reading the Holy Scriptures in Church during the Liturgy. Our Lord practiced the work of the reader when He went in the synagogue and stood up to read (Lk 4:16).
- c) The Epideacon: The most important work is keeping the Church organized. The Lord did the same when He drove out all those who bought and sold in the temple (Mt 21:12).
- d) The Deacon: One of the duties of the Deacon is to pour water for the priest to wash his hands upon the start of the Mass. Our Lord poured water into a basin and washed the disciples’ feet (Jn 13:5).
- e) The Priest: The main work of the priest is to sanctify the bread and wine during the Holy Liturgy and to give communion to the congregation. The Lord did the same on Covenant Thursday (Mk 14:22-26).
- f) The Hegomen: The role of the Hegomen is to provide for the Church services. It is obvious that our Lord did the same for when He said to Judas “What you do, do quickly” (Jn 13:27) the disciples thought that since Judas had the money box, the Lord had asked him to buy what they need for the feast or to give to the poor (Jn 13:29).
- g) The Bishop: The bishop is the shepherd of the flock. St. Peter refers to Lord Jesus as the shepherd and overseer of our souls (1 Pet 2:25) and the Lord said about Himself, “I am the good Shepherd” (Jn 10:14).
- h) The Patriarch: Only the Pope can ordain Bishops and our Lord breathed on His apostles and gave them the authority to bind and loose sins (Jn 20:22-23).

Therefore, we find Lord Jesus Christ practicing most of the priestly ranks despite their variation so that every person may find in Him a good example to follow and to know that however small his rank may seem it is not lowly since the Lord Himself practiced and blessed it.

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\* This lecture is adapted from ‘*The Sacrament of Priesthood*’ by H.G. Bishop Mettaous.

**“The Lord has sworn and will not relent, You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek.” (Ps 110:4)**

### **✠ Lecture III: The Order of Melchizedek ✠**

The first time the word “priest” was mentioned in Holy Scripture was when Melchizedek was mentioned, “Then Melchizedek king of Salem brought out **bread and wine**; he was the **priest** of God Most high” (**Gen 14:18**). He blessed our father Abraham (**Gen 14:19**) who gave him a title of all (**Gen 14:20**). A major theme of the Holy Book of Hebrews is the contrast between the Levitical Priesthood of the Old Testament and the Priesthood that our Lord Jesus Christ established, which is according to the order of Melchizedek, the following points are noteworthy:

1. Melchizedek is given no genealogy, and nothing is said of his death, he is “without father, without mother, without genealogy, having neither beginning of days nor end of life, but made like the Son of God, remains a priest continually” (**Heb 7:3**).
  2. His name is translated “King of Righteousness” meaning “King of Peace” (**Heb 7:2**).
  3. He receives tithes from our father Abraham, implying he is superior to Abraham in rank – and by extension, superior to Abraham’s descendants, the Levites. (**Heb 7:4,9**)
  4. Note the link between the Priesthood of Melchizedek and the bread and wine (The Eucharist).
  5. St. Paul explicitly declares that our Lord Jesus Christ is a Priest according to the order of Melchizedek (bread & wine) even though He was born from the tribe of Judah and not Levi (**Heb 7:14-17**). The Apostle explains saying, “If perfection were through the Levitical priesthood (for under it the people received the law), what further need was there that another priest should rise according to the order of Melchizedek, and not be called according to the order of Aaron? **For the priesthood being changed**, of necessity there is also a change of the law” (**Heb 7:11-12**)
- This was symbolized when the high priest tore his clothes (**Mk 14:63**) during the Lord’s trial and when the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom when the Lord breathed His last (**Mk 15:38**).

### **✠ The Priesthood of the New Testament:**

When was our Lord a priest according to the order of Melchizedek? This took place when He took the bread and wine, blessed them, and gave them to His disciples saying, “This is My body and My blood.” Our Lord was called a **High Priest** according to the order of Melchizedek (**Heb 3:1; 5:10; 6:20; 4:15**); the word “High priest” implies that there are other priests also according to this order (bread & wine) among whom He is the Chief High Priest. This is obvious since our Lord said to His disciples, “do this [the Eucharist] in remembrance of Me” (**Lk 22:19**). This is the New Testament Priesthood of the Gentiles about which prophecies in the Old Testament exist:

- “For from the rising of the sun, even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; in every place **incense shall be offered in My name.**” (**Mal 1:11**)
  - “Then they shall bring all your brethren for an offering to the Lord **out of all nations ... And I will also take some of them for priests and Levites**, says the Lord.” (**Is 66:19,21**)
  - “In that day there will be **an altar** to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt.” (**Is 19:19**)
- This altar is obviously not a pagan altar since it is an altar “to the Lord”, and it cannot be a prophecy about a Jewish altar since it is unlawful to the Jews to have an altar outside Jerusalem; the Holy Book of Exodus is about the Jews trying to go out of Egypt because they cannot offer a sacrifice to the Lord in a foreign land. Even today Jews have synagogues all over the world but still no altar because where the Temple should be in Jerusalem is standing a Muslim Mosque (no wonder the Middle East conflict is complicated)! Moreover, St. Paul affirms, “We [Christians] have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle [the Jews] have no right to eat [the Eucharist]” (**Heb 13:10**). Our Lord also gave us instructions concerning this altar, “Leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled with your brother, and then come and offer your gift” (**Mt 5:24**).

### **✠ The Universal Spiritual Priesthood of All Believers:**

King David said, “Let my prayer be set before You as **incense**, the lifting up of my hands as the evening **sacrifice**” (Ps 141:2), “I will offer to You the **sacrifice** of thanksgiving” (Ps 116:17). King David was not a priest like the sons of Aaron but his worship is considered as spiritual incense and sacrifice. This is what the spiritual priesthood of all believers means. St. Paul describes the Philippians’ gift as “**a sweet-smelling aroma, an acceptable sacrifice**, well pleasing to God.” (Phil 4:18)

Therefore, St. Paul exhorts us saying:

- “I beseech you therefore, brethren, by the mercies of God, that you present your bodies **a living sacrifice**, holy, acceptable to God, **which is your reasonable service**” (Rom 12:1).
- “Let us continually offer **the sacrifice of praise** to God, that is the fruit of our lips, giving thanks to His name. But do not forget to do good and to share, for with such **sacrifices** God is well pleased” (Heb 13:15-16).

No wonder we read in the Holy Book of Revelation that Lord Jesus Christ “has made us kings and priests” (Rev 1:6). Obviously we are not literally kings with crowns and thrones to sit on and likewise, we are not priests literally but in a spiritual sense as explained above.

Notice that this spiritual priesthood is available to both genders and it does not cancel the New Testament Priesthood according to the order of Melchizedek. The same happened in the Old Testament for the spiritual priesthood of the congregation did not abolish the Levitical Priesthood. Therefore, St. Peter said, “You are a chosen generation, **a royal priesthood, a holy nation**, His own special people, that you may **proclaim the praises** of Him who called you out of darkness into His marvelous light” (1 Pet 2:9), the Lord said the same to the children of Israel, “You shall be to Me **a kingdom of priests and a holy nation**” (Ex 19:6).

#### ✠ The Rebellion:

St. Peter said, “There were also false prophets among the people, even as there will be false teachers among you, who will secretly bring in destructive heresies... and bring on themselves swift destruction” (2 Pet 2:1). This applies to the issue of Priesthood for the Holy Book of Numbers tells us a story about Korah, Dathan and Abiram with 250 leaders of the congregation rising against Moses and Aaron and saying, “all the congregation is holy, every one of them, and the Lord is among them. Why then do you exalt yourselves above the congregation of the Lord?” (Num 16:3). They rebelled against the Levitical Priesthood and wanted to generalize this honor. As a result “the earth opened its mouth and swallowed them up, with their households and all the men with Korah, with all their goods” (Num 16:32). In the New Testament, St. Jude describes the heretics and says that they “perished in the rebellion of Korah” (Jude 11). This applies to the Protestants who rejected the New Testament Priesthood and the Eucharist (They claim its symbolic with no spiritual efficacy).

**Q: Our Lord said, “Do not call anyone on earth your father; for One is your Father, He who is in heaven” (Mt 23:9). Why then do we call the priest ‘father’?**

**A:** These words were spoken to the disciples only and not to the whole congregation. Our Lord spoke certain things just for the disciples therefore St. Peter once asked Him, “Lord, do You speak this parable **only to us, or to all people?**” (Lk 12:41) The spiritual fatherhood is supported by many biblical examples:

#### 1. The Old Testament:

- Elisha the Prophet called Elijah, his teacher, “My father, my father, the chariot of Israel and its horsemen.” (2 Kings 2:12)
- King Joash called Elisha the same, “O my father, my father, the chariots of Israel and their horsemen!” (2 Kings 13: 14)
- King David said to Saul, “my father” (1 Sam 24:11) out of respect to the age difference and because Saul was the Lord’s anointed.
- Job the righteous said, “I was a father to the poor.” (Job 29:16)

#### 2. The New Testament:

- St. Paul said, “To Timothy, my true son in the faith” (1Tim 1:2), “To Timothy, my beloved son” (2Tim 1:2), “You therefore, my son, be strong in the grace that is in Christ Jesus” (2Tim 2:1), “To Titus, my true son in our common faith” (Titus 1:4), “I appeal to you for my son Onesimus, whom I have begotten

while in my chains” (**Phil 10**). Now should Timothy, Titus, and Onesimus tell St. Paul, “you’re not our father since we do not call anyone on earth our father.”

- St. Paul also said that St. Timothy served the gospel with him “As a son with his father” (**Phil 2:22**).
- St. Paul also said to St. Timothy, “Do not rebuke an older man, but exhort him as a father” (**1Tim 5:1**), here the Bishop respects the age difference and considers the older man as a father. St. Stephen actually addressed his accusers saying, “Men and brethren and fathers” (**Acts 7:2**).
- St. Paul said to the Galatians, “My little children, for whom I labor in birth again until Christ is formed in you” (**Gal 4:19**).
- To the Corinthians he said, “As my beloved children I warn you. For though you might have ten thousand instructors in Christ, yet you do not have many fathers; for in Christ Jesus I have begotten you through the gospel...For this reason I have sent Timothy to you, who is my beloved and faithful son in the Lord” (**1 Cor 4:14-15,17**).
- St. John said, “My little children, these things I write to you, that you may not sin” (**1 Jn 2:1**).
- St John said, “I have no greater joy than to hear that my children walk in truth” (**3 Jn 4**).

**Q: How come we take a blessing from a human being (the priest) isn’t God the source of blessing?**

**A:** Absolutely, God is the source of all blessings as St. James said, “Every good gift and every perfect gift is from above, and comes down from the Father of lights” (**James 1:17**) but God used human beings as channels for His blessings, examples:

- Our father Noah blessed his sons (**Gen 9:26-27**)
- Our father Isaac blessed his sons (**Gen 28:3**), St. Paul said, “By faith Isaac blessed Jacob and Esau concerning things to come” (**Heb 11:20**).
- Likewise, Jacob blessed Joseph’s sons (**Gen 48:20; Heb 11:21**)
- God said to our father Abraham, “You shall be a blessing” (**Gen 12:2**), Elijah was a blessing in the house of the widow (**1 Kings 17**), Elisha blessed the house of the Shunammite (**2 Kings 4**), it was written, “The Lord blessed the Egyptian’s house for Joseph’s sake” (**Gen 39:5**).
- St. Simeon the elder blessed Virgin Mary and St. Joseph (**Lk 2:34**)
- St. Paul said, “The cup of blessing **that we bless**, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ?” (**1 Cor 10:16**)

→ Actually, we, as Christians, are required to bless others:

- “Love your enemies, bless those who curse you” (**Mt 5:44**).
- “Bless those who persecute you; bless and do not curse” (**Rom 12:14**).
- “Not returning evil for evil or reviling for reviling, but on the contrary blessing” (**1 Pet 3:9**).

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\* This lecture is adapted from *‘The Priesthood’* by H.H. Pope Shenouda III.

**“A woman shall not wear anything that pertains to a man, nor shall a man put on a woman’s garment, for all who do so are an abomination to the Lord your God.” (Deut 22:5)**

#### ✠ Lecture IV: The Question of Women’s Ordination ✠

##### ✠ In the Beginning:

In the creation account it is written, “God created man in His own image; in the image of God He created him; **male and female He created them**” (**Gen 1:27**) both Adam and Eve were equally created in the image of God. Neither received more of the image of God than the other. So Holy Scriptures begins with the equality of the sexes. As persons, as human beings, as spiritual beings, standing before God, men and women are absolutely equal. Despite this equality, there is in the second chapter of the Holy Book of Genesis a more detailed account of the creation of the two humans, which shows some differences in their God-given responsibilities. God did not create the man and woman spontaneously at the same time, but rather He created Adam first and Eve later for a specific purpose. God established and designed patriarchy as His ideal form of government by creating Adam first (**Gen 2:20**). Had He intended democracy, He could just as easily have formed Eve and Adam at the same time and have said, “it is not good that man or woman should be alone, I will make them to be helpers comparable to each other.” Had He intended a matriarchy, He would have created Eve first then Adam as a suitable helper to her, but this did not happen and God created a patriarchy in which the male has authority. God also prepared the man for leadership before giving him the woman by having Adam name the living creatures (**Gen 2:19-20**). Naming is a form of leadership, for example, when the Israelites conquered Trans-Jordan, they asserted their authority by renaming the rebuilt cities (**Num 32:38**), Pharaoh Necho asserted his rule over Eliakim by renaming him Jehoiakim (**2 Kings 23: 34**), and the chief of the eunuchs renamed Daniel and his three friends (**Daniel 1:7**). Notice that after the Lord gave Adam his bride, Adam gave her the generic name “woman” (**Gen 2:23**). Even the source of the woman’s creation symbolizes this leadership-follower creational principle. Woman was created from a rib taken from man’s side, which suggests a dependent relationship. Man’s creation involved the endowment of leadership; the woman’s creation involved the endowment of support to that leadership. Accordingly, the original creation, **prior to the fall**, provides the basis for the patriarchal system of government, which God deemed “**very good**”.

##### ✠ The Fall of Humanity:

When craftily tempted and deceived in the Garden of Eden, Eve, rather than seeking Adam’s counsel and leadership, took the lead herself, eating of the forbidden fruit and then leading her husband into sin (**Gen 3:6**). The whole creation, through Eve’s lead, became corrupt, though the structure and inherent principles of the creation remained intact. Yet, the man (Adam), as the natural head, was held ultimately responsible. It was only when he ate of the forbidden fruit that “the eyes of both of them were opened” (**Gen 3: 7**). Both the man and the woman received Divine judgment for their rebellion. In addition to death, they were destined to live out their lives in suffering and pain. Part of the Divine pronouncement of judgment for Eve (and thus for all women) was a tension in the authority-submission relationship with man, “Your **desire** shall be for your husband, and he shall rule over you” (**Gen 3:16**). The same word “desire” is used by God to mean “excessive control over”

→ “Sin lies at the door and its **desire** is for you, but you should rule over it” (**Gen 4:7**). Thus, the words of God to Eve refer to a new desire on the part of woman to exercise control over man, but he will in fact rule or exert authority over her. The result down through history has been an ongoing struggle between the sexes with women seeking control and men ruling instead, often harshly. Before the fall, there was true harmony in the man-woman relationship, but through sin a new element of tension and dissention entered in this relationship, they lost a relationship both with God, symbolized by hiding among the trees, and with one another, symbolized by putting a barrier of clothing between them. Through the cross, women’s submission is not erased but rather harmony is restored to her relationship with man.

##### ✠ Was Patriarchy a Cultural Accommodation of the Old Testament?

To argue that in Old Testament times woman could not be admitted in the priesthood because their cultures would not have allowed it fails to recognize that most of Israel’s neighbors had both men and women

serving as priests in their religion, and to argue that the reason why Israelite women were prohibited from serving as priests was that God did not want them to engage in the kind of immorality that the pagan priestesses engaged in is lacking any biblical basis in addition to implying that women are more prone to sexual immorality than men, which is a sexist argument that is yet to be proven. Thus the culture of Old Testament times would have welcomed women priests in Israel. The reason women in Israel were not ordained as priests was not because of their culture, but rather because of the pre-fall headship principle that permitted only men to be spiritual leaders within the worshiping community. Deborah, however, who was married, is one clear exception to patriarchy (**Judges 4:4**), but it is the exception that proves the rule. In addition to being a prophetess, Deborah was “judging” (i.e. ruling) Israel. The narrator, however, makes his intention clear by carefully shaming the Israelite men at that time for their fear so that none dared to assume leadership. Note, for example, how Deborah shames Barak, the military commander of Israel’s army, for his failure to assume leadership. After she had mediated God’s command to him to join battle with Sisera, commander of the Canaanite army, Barak replies, “If you will go with me, then I will go; but if you will not go with me, I will not go!” (**Judges 4:8**) To which Deborah responds, “I will surely go with you; nevertheless there will be no glory for you in the journey you are taking, for the Lord will sell Sisera into the hand of a woman” (**Judges 4:9**). Apparently, the Lord raised up this exceptional woman, who was full of faith, to disgrace the men of Israel for their lack of faith, which is essential to leadership in the holy nation. Therefore, the story aims to reprove unfaithful men for not taking leadership, not to present an alternative norm to male authority. Holy Scripture interprets the rule of women as God’s judgment against the sinful nation, God ridicules it saying, “As for My people, Children are their oppressors, and **women rule over them**. O My people! Those who lead you cause you to err, and destroy the way of your paths” (**Is 3:12**).

#### ✦ Was Patriarchy a Cultural Accommodation of the New Testament?

Some argue that Lord Jesus Christ could not ordain women as apostles because the culture of His time would not have permitted Him to do so without prematurely jeopardizing His ministry. Are they, in effect, charging our Lord with insensitivity or accommodation to the injustice women suffered in His days? How could this be, when our Lord clearly said, “Which of you convicts Me of sin?” (**Jn 8:46**) “Sin” surely includes the sin of gender injustice. To suggest, as proponents of women’s ordination do, that Lord Jesus Christ’s choice of male apostles was a mere concession to the “male-dominated” social structure of His time is completely flawed. The Holy Gospels reveal that Lord Jesus Christ was not afraid to break social customs when they conflicted with the Truth and Holy Scriptures. Against custom, he ministered to Gentiles, spoke to a Samaritan women, worked good on the Sabbath, and ate with tax collectors and sinners. He condemned the social injustices of His time when He spoke against divorce and remarriage, when He drove from the temple those who were profaning it and exploiting others, and when He criticized religious leaders to their faces for their hypocrisy. While the Jewish Talmud said it was better to burn the Torah than teach it to a woman, Lord Jesus Christ taught women freely not only by including them in His audiences but by using illustrations and images in His blessed teaching, which would be familiar to them (**Mt 13:33; Lk 15:8-10**). Though men in our Lord’s day normally would not allow women to count change into their hands for fear of physical contact, Lord Jesus Christ touched women to heal them and allowed women to touch Him (**Lk 7:38**). He even allowed a small group of women to travel with Him and His disciples (**Lk 8:1-3**). Lord Jesus Christ’s own life as well as the thrust of His teaching reveal that He would not bow to any cultural pressure when moral issues were at stake. He denounced the scribes and Pharisees and all those who accommodated Scriptural principle to their cultural norms calling them “hypocrites” (**Mt 15:7**). The “cultural argument” is a futile attempt to explain the lack of Scriptural precedent for ordaining women to headship roles in both the Old and New Testament worshiping communities.

In our Lord’s treatment of women, we see how He raised their station in life and how He showed them compassion and respect in a way that they had never known before, but Lord Jesus Christ still did not exalt women to a place of leadership over men. None of the twelve He selected were women. Lord Jesus Christ could easily have chosen and ordained six men and their wives as apostles, since the wives of the Apostles frequently accompanied them (**1 Cor 9:5**). But He did not. Lord Jesus Christ could have chosen and ordained at least one of the women who were actively involved in His ministry, traveling to places with Him and supporting Him and

His disciples with their own money (**Lk 8:1-3**). But He did not. He could have ordained His own blessed mother since she already had the divine certification as being “blessed among women” (**Lk 1: 28**). But He did not. He could have chosen and ordained Mary Magdalene, just as He commissioned her to bear witness to His Resurrection (**Jn 20: 1-18**). But He did not. Lord Jesus Christ could have ordained the Samaritan women as an apostle, since she defied several “cultural” stigmas (a woman five times divorced, living unlawfully with a man, and a Samaritan) to become a powerful and successful evangelist. But He did not. Lord Jesus Christ implicitly confirmed the Old Testament patriarchy by not appointing a woman as an apostle though He made a radical break with His culture in so many ways that surely He would have done it in this manner also if it had been beneficial. It is nonsense to argue that the counter-cultural Lord Jesus Christ appointed only male apostles because He was culturally conditioned.

Furthermore, to suggest that St. Paul’s statements prohibiting women from having authority over men were concessions he had to make to accommodate the anti-women cultural practices of his times is to ignore St. Paul’s own clear explanation of his reasons and to charge him with theological inconsistency and hypocrisy. St. Paul said:

- “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”

(**1 Tim 2:12**)

**Why??** → “For Adam was formed first, then Eve, and Adam was not deceived but the woman being deceived, fell into transgression.” (**1 Tim 2:13-14**).

The Apostle Paul, in forbidding women to rule and teach, provides the rationale for such prohibition. He did not give cultural or sociological factors in Ephesus (St. Timothy was the Bishop of Ephesus) or in the New Testament times as the reason he prohibited women from exercising the role of authoritative teaching. Whatever the cultural or sociological situation may have been in Ephesus – Gnosticism, witchcraft, worship of mother-goddess Diana, mysticism, feminism, etc. – St. Paul employed a theological reason to address the specific problem that occasioned his statement. His stated reason was that Adam was created first and that he was not deceived but the woman was. St. Paul points back to the pre-fall creation ordinance of headship, reiterated after the fall. By appealing to the Divine arrangement from creation as the reason why the woman is not to have authority over the man, the apostle dispelled any suggestion that his instruction was culturally conditioned or time-bound. Those who attempt to explain St. Paul’s statement on the basis of cultural accommodation are in effect saying that he misconstrued or misapplied the Old Testament in order to justify his lack of moral courage to stand against unjust cultural norms. How can St. Paul who said, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither **male nor female**; for you are all one in Christ Jesus” (**Gal 3:28**), be so characterized by proponents of women’s ordination? Only a few verses before the one in question St. Paul affirms, “I am speaking the truth in Christ and not lying” (**1 Tim 2:7**). Additionally, St. Paul said, “Let your women keep silent in the Churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, **as the law also says**” (**1 Cor 14:34**). → Thus St. Paul’s reason for prohibiting headship authority to women was not cultural but rather he understood clearly the permanent validity of the creation principle of man headship. St. Paul employed the same reasoning when he addressed the issue of head covering, he said, “For a man indeed ought not to cover his head, since he is the image and glory of God; but woman is the glory of man. For man is not from woman, but woman from man. Nor was man created for the woman, but woman for the man. **For this reason** the woman ought to have a symbol of authority on her head, because of the angels. Nevertheless, neither is man independent of woman, nor woman independent of man, in the Lord.”

(**1 Cor 11:7-11**).

This prohibition is neither undermined nor contradicted when St. Paul suggests that women do prophecy (**1 Cor 11:5**). In response, Holy Scripture distinguishes between the office of pastors and the office of a prophet(ess), “He Himself gave some to be apostles, some prophets, some evangelists, and some pastors and teachers” (**Eph 4:11**). The gift of teaching and the gift of prophecy are essentially different (**Rom 12:6-7**). Prophesying was the direct communication of Divine revelation (**1 Cor 14:30-31**). Therefore, the actual content of communication was predetermined. The prophet or prophetess never spoke independently, but was directly “moved by the Holy Spirit” (**2 Pet 1:21**). Personal freedom in actual communication of the truth was precluded. The analytical and reflective powers of the mind became virtually obsolete. So, for instance, the injunction for

the early Church was “Let two or three prophets speak, and let the other judge. But if anything is revealed to another who sits by, let the first keep silent” (1 Cor 14:29-30). The elder or priest, on the other hand, has a degree of personal freedom in actual communication, though the essential content must remain unalterable. He must harness and direct his analytical and reflective powers of mind. Furthermore, in accordance with the progressive revelation of God, this gift of prophecy was initially an extraordinary and temporary spiritual gift associated with the inauguration of the dispensation of the Holy Spirit and the universal thrust of the Holy Gospel. Both men and women were to participate in the initiation of the new era in fulfillment of the Old Testament prophecy (Joel 2:28-32; Acts 2:17-21). The appearance of extraordinary spiritual gifts was a unique phenomenon, which marked the commencement of the new spiritual age; such gifts are not now a part of normative Church practice and ministry. The charge that St. Paul is contradicting himself when he states, on the one hand, that women do prophecy (1 Cor 11:5) and, on the other hand, that women are to keep silent in Church (1 Cor 14: 34-35) is virtually unfounded. There is no clear evidence to suggest that women prophesied inside the Church itself. St. Paul directive is that prophets (not prophetesses) are to speak in the Church (1 Cor 14:29-33). Having issued this specific directive, St. Paul immediately commands that women are to keep silent in the Churches (1 Cor 14: 34-35). It seems highly unthinkable that a man of St. Paul’s stature would glaringly contradict himself within the space of three to five sentences of the text.

#### ✠ **Biblical Obstacles to Women’s Ordination:**

Holy Scripture unquestionably teaches that women are not to be ordained elders (priests). At least three reasons support this contention. The first reason concerns the matter of the specific qualifications outlined for entering the office of a priest or bishop; the second reason concerns the replacement of Judas; and the third reason concerns the direct prohibition against women becoming pastors.

##### **1. Eldership Qualifications:**

The specific qualifications outlined for those aspiring to the pastorate or eldership strongly imply that such candidates are to be men (1Tim 3:1-7; Titus 1:5-9). The bishop is required to be the “husband of one wife” (1Tim 3:2; Titus 1:6). Furthermore, he must be a person who “rules his own household well” which is a prerequisite for taking care of the Church, “For if a man does not know how to rule his own house, how will he take care of the Church of God?” (1Tim 3:4-5). The management of the household, according to Holy Scripture, is primarily the man’s rather than the woman’s responsibility. The man is considered the head under Lord Jesus Christ “the head of woman is man” (1Cor 11:3). This fact that the man is to manage the household is further substantiated when the statement of similar qualification for deacons is examined, “Let deacons be the husbands of one wife, ruling their children and their own houses well” (1Tim 3:12). This statement leaves no doubt as to who is to manage the household. Consistency, therefore, demands that the similar qualification for those aspiring to be pastors must also refer to men and not women.



## **2. The Replacement of Judas:**

The Holy Book of Acts records that the 120 male and female disciples who were gathered in the upper room sought guidance to find a replacement for Judas. Significantly, they sought Scriptural guidance on whether to fill the vacancy. They appealed to the Holy Book of Psalms where it is written, “Let another take his office (Gr. *Episkopen*; position of overseer)” (**Acts 1:20; Ps 109:8**). Now notice the qualification of the candidates, “Therefore, of these **men** who have accompanied us all the time that the Lord Jesus went in and out among us, beginning from the baptism of John to that day when He was taken up from us, one of these must become a witness with us of His resurrection” (**Acts 1:21-22**). Why did the 120 men and women in the upper room appoint two men and no women as candidates? Were there no qualified women? Was there no woman with a heart (**Acts 1: 24**) acceptable enough to God to take over this apostolic ministry? Certainly not. Obviously there were capable women among the 120 disciples, since all of them – male and female – were filled with the Holy Spirit on Pentecost. The absence of a woman candidate (including Virgin Mary) is no coincidence, the reason why women were excluded as candidates for the apostleship, even though some of them undoubtedly met the requirements set forth in verse 21-22, is clearly the gender. The disciples in the upper room were “with one accord” (**Acts 1:14**) in their choice of a male replacement.

## **3. Women Prohibited:**

The third reason why women are not to be priests or bishops is because Holy Scripture specifically prohibits such action. St. Paul, in communicating to St. Timothy the policies, practices, and principles that are to govern how one ought to conduct himself “in the house of God, which is the Church of the living God” (**1 Tim 3:15**) said:

- “I do not permit a woman to teach or to have authority over a man, but to be in silence.”  
(**1 Tim 2:12**)
- “Let your women keep silent in the churches, for they are not permitted to speak; but they are to be submissive, as the law also says... for it is shameful for women to speak in church.”  
(**1 Cor 14:34-35**)

## **✠ Deaconesses in the Church:**

In the early Church, there were deaconesses helping the Apostles and later the bishops and priests with some service matters. Deaconesses were selected from among elderly women and most probably widows who were married once. St. Paul said, “Do not let a widow under sixty years old be taken into the number, and not unless she has been the wife of one man, well reported for good works; if she has brought up children, if she has washed the saint’s feet, if she has relieved the afflicted, if she has diligently followed every good work” (**1 Tim 5:9**). An example of a successful deaconess is Phoebe about whom St. Paul wrote to the Romans saying, “I commend 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” (**Rom 16:1-2**). Since the 13<sup>th</sup> century, the service of the consecrated deaconesses has been neglected in our Coptic Church, but due to the urgent need for the service of women in the church, H.H. Pope Shenouda III revived this rite by consecrating a large number of deaconesses for the service of Cairo Churches on the Pentecost Feast of 1981. This consecration **does not** include laying of hands or ordination.

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**“Purge me with hyssop, and I shall be clean; wash me and I shall be whiter than snow.”**  
(Ps 51:7)

### ✠ Lecture V: The Sacrament of Baptism ✠

Baptism is the Holy Sacrament through which we are born again by being immersed in water three times in the name of the Holy Trinity: the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. The Sacrament of Baptism has the primacy among the Seven Holy Sacraments for it is the door through which the individual enters the Church (as a congregation) and is given the right to partake of the rest of the Sacraments.

#### ✠ Institution of the Sacrament:

Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament **after** His blessed resurrection, having completed our redemption and having made salvation available, He said to His disciples, “All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth. Go therefore and make disciples of all nations, **baptizing** them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit” (Mt 28:18-19), and “He who believes **and is baptized** will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned” (Mk 16:16). Thus baptism is necessary for salvation as the Lord indicated, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is **born of water** and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (Jn 3:5).

#### ✠ How Exactly Does Baptism Save Us?

Salvation simply means remission of sins and it is written, “Without shedding of blood [death] there is no remission” (Heb 9:22). Salvation is made available through the redemptive death of Lord Jesus Christ on the cross. In order to have a share in this salvation, we must share the death and resurrection of the Lord. Therefore, St. Paul said, “That I may know Him and the power of His resurrection and the fellowship of His suffering being conformed to His death” (Phil 3:10). Unless a person undergoes such death, he/she will not be saved! Now how can we undergo such death? How can we share the death of the Lord? The answer is “Through Baptism”. St. Paul said, “Or do you not know that as many of you were baptized into Christ Jesus were **baptized into His death**? Therefore **we were buried with Him through baptism into death**” (Rom 6:3-4). It is our death and burial with the Lord through baptism that saves us and makes us share the glories of His Resurrection. St. Paul affirms, “For if we have been united together **in the likeness of His death** [baptism], certainly we shall be in the likeness of His resurrection... now if we died with Christ, we believe that we shall also live with Him” (Rom 6:5-8). The salvation that began with our death and burial with Lord Jesus through baptism continues to be effective in us also through death. We obtain salvation through death and our bodies must always remain dead in relation to worldly lusts. For as long as the body is dead to sin, salvation lives in it, but when carnal lusts rise from this death, we become liable to lose our salvation since salvation is only attained through death. Hence St. Paul exhorts us saying:

- “Reckon yourselves to be dead indeed to sin, but alive to God in Christ our Lord. Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body that you should obey it in its lusts.” (Rom 6:11-12).
- “If by the Spirit you put to death the deeds of the body, you will live.” (Rom 8:13)
- “Those who are Christ’s have crucified the flesh and its passions and desires.” (Gal 5:24)
- “I have been crucified with Christ; it is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me.” (Gal 2:20) - “For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God.” (Col 3:3)
- “Always carrying about in the body the dying of the Lord Jesus.” (2 Cor 4:10)
- “Put to death your members which are on earth: fornication, uncleanness...” (Col 3:5) - “He who has died has been freed from sin.” (Rom 6:7)

→ The salvation that we obtained through baptism continues with us through death. Thus we pray saying, “O, who tasted death in the flesh in the ninth hour for our sake, we sinners, **put to death our carnal lusts**, O Christ, our God, and deliver us” (From the prayer of the 9<sup>th</sup> hour – Coptic Book of Hours).

#### ✠ Symbols of Baptism in the Old Testament:

1. It is written in the Holy Book of Genesis, “The Spirit of God was hovering over the face of the waters” (**Gen 1:2**). This is both a symbol and a prophecy about the work of the Holy Spirit in baptismal water to give it its saving efficacy.
2. St. Peter interpreted the story of Noah’s ark and the flood (**Gen 7**) as a symbol of baptism, he said, “The divine longsuffering waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were **saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us** – baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ” (**1 Pet 3:20-21**)  
→ Notice the link between baptism and salvation through the resurrection of the Lord.
3. St. Paul interprets the commandment of circumcision (**Gen 17**) as a symbol of baptism, he said, “You were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, **by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism**, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God who raised Him from the dead” (**Col 2:11-12**) → Notice the link between baptism and salvation (through the resurrection of the Lord) for God said about the child who is not circumcised that he will be “cut off from his people, he has broken My covenant” (**Gen 17:14**). Likewise, a child who is not baptized cannot enter the Kingdom of God (**Jn 3:5**).
4. The relation between the ark, the circumcision, the saving resurrection of the Lord, and baptism goes even further. Notice that St. Peter emphasizes that only **eight** souls were saved from the evil world through the water of the flood. Also notice that God ordered that children must be circumcised on the **eighth** day. Now the Lord’s resurrection took place on the first day of the week (**Jn 20:1**) that is the **eighth** day from the previous week. The number eight represents the new life and eternity. In fact number **eight** is the only number (**from 1-10**) that does not have a beginning and end (**8**), which is basically the definition of eternity.
5. St. Paul interpreted the story of crossing the sea (**Ex 14**) as a symbol of baptism, he said, “All our fathers were under the cloud, all passed through the sea, all **were baptized** into Moses in the cloud and in the sea” (**1 Cor 10:1-2**). The sea was a symbol of the baptismal water that draws its saving efficacy from the precious blood of our Lord (no wonder its called the **Red Sea**), the cloud was a symbol of the Holy Spirit who works through the baptismal water, and Pharaoh was a symbol of the devil who is destroyed by the cross of Lord Jesus through the water of baptism.
6. The Priesthood was not given to Aaron and his sons except after being washed with water (**Ex 29:4**), also the laver of bronze and it’s water set between the tabernacle of meeting and the alter (**Ex 30:18**) was a symbol of the spiritual cleansing effect of baptismal water.
7. The sacrifice of Elijah the Prophet was accepted after pouring water on it three times (**1 Kings 18:34**). Moreover, Elijah himself was not taken up to heaven until he crossed the waters of the Jordan river (**2Kings 2:8**). The same happened with the Israelites who went into the promised land after going through the waters of the Jordan (**Joshua 3**). In the Holy Book of Revelation we read about “a sea of glass” (**Rev 4:6**) before the throne of God. The point is that we must go through the waters of baptism to reach heavenly Promised Land and enjoy the company of God.

#### ✠ The Baptism of St. John the Baptist:

No pre-Pentecostal baptism can be equated with Christian baptism. This not only includes St. John the Baptist’s but also the disciples’ baptisms during the life of the Lord on earth (**Jn 4:2**). These baptisms were preparatory ones, just for repentance, as St. John said, “I indeed baptize you with water unto repentance, but He who is coming after me is mightier than I ... He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit and fire” (**Mt 3:11**). The redemption had not yet been accomplished; the specific relationship of baptism with the cross and the blood of the Lord had not yet been established. Moreover, the gift of the Holy Spirit was not yet available (**Jn 7:37-39**). On the day of Pentecost no exceptions were allowed for those who may have received St. John’s baptism, St. Peter said, “Let **every one of you** be baptized” (**Acts 2:38**).

The Holy Book of Acts tells us of a specific incidence where some believers at Ephesus were only baptized with St. John’s baptism so St. Paul asked, “Did you receive the Holy Spirit when you believed?” They

replied, “We have not so much as heard whether there is a Holy Spirit.” He wondered, “Into what then were you baptized?” So they said, “Into John’s baptism” Then St. Paul explained, “John indeed baptized with a baptism of repentance, saying to the people that they should believe on Him who would come after him, that is on Christ Jesus.” So when they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. (**Acts 19:1-5**)

#### ✠ The Effectiveness of Baptismal Water:

It may be objected, “What does mere water do when a person is immersed in it?” One might just as well ask, what does water do when poured into the boiler? The water in the boiler can do nothing of and by itself, nor can the water in the baptistery, but when the water in the boiler is united with the mind of an engineer, it can drive an engine across a continent or a ship across the sea. So too, when water is united with the power of the Holy Spirit, it can give regeneration and spiritual cleansing. Those who think that the effectiveness of baptism depends on the water alone bring to mind the story of Naaman (**2 Kings 5**), the commander of the Syrian army, who was a leper. This man came to Elisha the Prophet to be healed from leprosy so he told him, “Go and wash in the Jordan seven times, and your flesh shall be restored to you, and you shall be clean” (**2 Kings 5:10**). Naaman was insulted and became furious; he said angrily, “Are not the Abanah and the Pharpar, the rivers of Damascus, better than all the waters of Israel? Could I not wash in them and be clean?” (**2 Kings 5:12**). His servants, however, said to him, “My father, if the prophet had told you to do something great, would you not have done it? How much more then, when he says to you, ‘Wash and be clean’?” (**2 Kings 5:13**). So Naaman went down and dipped in the Jordan and he was healed! Likewise, if the blind man from birth had questioned the words of Lord Jesus about washing in the pool of Siloam (**Jn 9:11**), he would have remained blind. Our Lord emphasized the relation between the water and the Spirit (**Jn 3:5-6**) thus baptismal water is not to be considered mere water for “There are three that bear witness on earth: The Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one” (**1 Jn 5:7**).

#### ✠ Immersion vs Sprinkling:

To baptize (Gr. *Baptizo*) literally means to immerse or to put into. Therefore, the Orthodox Church baptizes by triple immersion, “in the name of the Father, and the Son, and the Holy Spirit” (**Mt 28:19**). Baptism by immersion is supported also by the following biblical examples:

- “Both Philip and the eunuch **went down into the water**, and he baptized him. Now when they **came out of the water**, the Spirit of the Lord caught Philip away” (**Acts 8:38-39**). If baptism were by sprinkling, St. Philip could have just brought water to the chariot and sprinkled it on the eunuch.
- St. Paul said, “We were **buried** with Him through baptism” (**Rom 6:4**), and “**Buried** with Him in baptism” (**Col 2:12**). The only way a person is buried in baptism is through immersion.
- St. Paul said, “According to His mercy He saved us, through the **washing** of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit” (**Titus 3:5**), St. Ananias said to St. Paul (Saul), “Be baptized, and **wash** away your sins” (**Acts 22:16**). Baptism is also called “washing” in (**1 Pet 3:18-21; Eph 5:26**). To wash a piece of cloth you need to completely immerse it in water.

→ Because baptism is a very important condition for salvation (**Mk 16:16; Jn 3:5**) the Church allows baptism by sprinkling only in the case where immersion is prevented by a medical condition and there is a risk that the person would die without being baptized. For example, a newborn with a fatal health condition that is kept in an incubator cannot be immersed three times in water, so the Church allows sprinkling in this instance. Moreover, if there was no priest available, any Orthodox Christian (male or female) can perform the baptism by anointing the baby with water three times saying, “I baptize you in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit”. If the baby lives, baptism is not repeated and the child just needs to be anointed with the Holy oil.

#### ✠ Why Do We Baptize Infants?

1. Baptism is essential for salvation and without it a person cannot enter the Kingdom of God, “Most assuredly I say to you, unless a person is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God” (**Jn 3:5**). Infants are no exception since they are born with the corrupt nature due to the original sin. Therefore, infants are baptized to insure their salvation.

2. Circumcision was a symbol of baptism (**Col 2:11-13**). Now if God commanded that infants enter in the Old Covenant with Him, should we prevent them from entering in the New Covenant?
3. Crossing the Red Sea was also a symbol of baptism (**1 Cor 10:1-2**). Undoubtedly, infants crossed the sea with their parents so why should infants be prevented from being baptized?
4. St. Peter said to the people on Pentecost, “Be baptized... and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit. For the promise is to you and to **your children**” (**Acts 2:38-39**).
5. Holy Scripture records several occasions where families and entire households were baptized together (**Acts 16:14-15, 33; 1 Cor 1:16**). This is an implication that children were baptized.
6. There is not a single biblical verse that supports the prevention of infants’ baptism. On the contrary, our Lord said, “Let the little children come to Me, and **do not forbid them**, for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (**Mt 19:14**), and “Take heed that you do not despise one of these little ones” (**Mt 18:10**).

### ✠ One Baptism:

The Sacrament of Baptism is performed once and is not repeated as we say in the creed, “we confess **one** baptism for the remission of sins”. Since baptism is a spiritual birth so a person is born (baptized) once and since baptism is death with the Lord and the Lord died once so a person dies with the Lord (baptized) once. Thus St. Paul said, “one Lord, one faith, one baptism” (**Eph 4:5**).

### ✠ FAQ:

#### **Q1: If baptism is necessary for salvation, were the people of the Old Testament baptized?**

**A1:** Baptism was not a condition for salvation in the Old Testament, but it was only instituted as a condition in the New Testament, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (**Mk 16:16**). The reason is that baptism’s saving efficacy is linked to the death of Lord Jesus Christ and the Lord had not yet died in the Old Testament. Had baptism existed in the Old Testament, people would have had to be baptized in order to be saved. Nevertheless, the people of the Old Testament practiced the symbol of baptism available to them at such time, namely circumcision (**Col 2:11-13**). They also kept the Passover, which was a symbol of our Lord (**1 Cor 5:7**).

#### **Q2: What is the fate of infants who die without being baptized?**

**A2:** Lord Jesus Christ said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born again, he cannot see the Kingdom of God” (**Jn 3:3**), and “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God” (**Jn 3:5**). These infants inherited the corrupt nature due to the original sin, “we were by nature children of wrath” (**Eph 2:3**) and St. Paul affirms that corruption does not inherit incorruption (**1 Cor 15:50**). Therefore, these infants cannot enter nor see the Kingdom of God. One may object, “They didn’t do anything wrong!” Well, they didn’t do anything right either. The early Church fathers agree that these infants will not enter the Kingdom of God (based on the words of the Lord) but concerning suffering and punishment the most probable and most acceptable opinion is that they will not suffer since they did not commit any personal sin (St. Gregory the Theologian).

God said, “the uncircumcised male child, who is not circumcised in the flesh of his foreskin, that person [that child] shall be cut off from his people; he has broken My covenant” (**Gen 17:14**). Someone may ask, “What about God’s mercy?” God’s mercy is full of justice and His Justice is full of mercy. So trust in the merciful justice of our God and don’t worry about this subject.

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\* This lecture is adapted from *‘The Church Sacraments’* by Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“The voice of the Lord is over the waters; the God of glory thunders; the Lord is over many waters.” (Ps 29:3)**

**✠ Lecture VI: Baptism in the Holy Gospels ✠**

The Holy Bible is far from silent on the subject of baptism. Many clear and straightforward verses are spread over the whole range of the New Testament from the Holy Gospels to the Holy Epistles. In what follows we shall, by the grace of God, examine the meaning of baptism as recorded in the Holy Gospels.

**“Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you.” (Mt 28:19-20)**

The key term in this commission is “make disciples”. “Going” is the prerequisite for making disciples, “baptizing” and “teaching” are the means of making disciples. It is very significant that baptism is distinguished from the category of “all things” that the believers must be taught to observe. This is especially important in view of the common Protestant heresy that baptism is just one of the “good works” of Christian life and that it is a mere act of obedience comparable to the many other acts of obedience that we are to perform simply because God has commanded them. If this is so, why is baptism alone singled out for specific mention, and why is it separated from “all that I have commanded you”? The way the commission is worded suggests that baptism has a unique importance in the process of disciple making. We can agree that the term “all things” does refer to the good works belonging to Christian life, but the term is comprehensive “all things” and baptism is not included in it. The clear implication is that baptism is not meant to be placed in the category of good works; it has a meaning distinct from any act of obedience expected of a Christian and an importance far beyond that of any of these acts. This unique importance of baptism is revealed by the following passage where baptism is mentioned but where it would be out of place if it were just another good work, “There is one body and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (**Eph 4:4-6**). This passage lists the seven fundamental bases for Christian unity. Isn’t it striking the company that baptism keeps? If baptism is relatively insignificant or even if it has equal significance with other Christian commands and duties, then of all such duties why should it be singled out and ranged here alongside items that occupy a much more lofty sphere of importance? Its companions are the three Persons of the Trinity, the Church (one body), heaven (one hope), and faith (the one body of doctrines which are believed). How can Protestants fail to see the significance of baptism being included here in some sense comparable in importance at least to faith itself? (See **Heb 6:1-2** for a similar listing). More light is shed on the nature of this uniqueness in the record of one divinely directed instance of implementing the commission; St. Philip & the eunuch (**Acts 8:26-40**). It is written that St. Philip “preached **Jesus** to him” (**v.35**). This is the one word summary of his preaching “Jesus”. The only recorded response is the eunuch’s cry “Look! Water! What prevents me from being baptized?” (**v.36**). We cannot avoid the conclusion that the evangelistic preaching of Lord Jesus Christ includes the imperative of baptism. In terms of the commission in (**Mt 28:18-19**), baptism is something taught **before** conversion with view to becoming a disciple, while “teaching them to observe all that I have commanded you” **follows** conversion and deals with the details of Christian life. The element in the text itself that confirms the unique importance of baptism is the expression “in the name” (Gr. *eis to onoma*). In the biblical world, a person’s name was not just an arbitrary means of identification but was considered to be intrinsically related to the person himself, representing his qualities, his character, and his very nature. Thus “the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit” represents the very Persons of The Holy Trinity. So the Lord Jesus Christ commissioned His apostles to baptize people into a specific relation with the Holy Trinity. The phrase “*eis to onoma*” was a technical term used in the world of Greek business and commerce. It indicates the entry of a sum of money or an item of property into the account bearing the name of its owner. (Albrecht Opeke, *Theological Dictionary of the New Testament*) The use of this phrase in (**Mt 28:19**) indicates that the purpose of baptism is to unite us with the Triune God in an **ownership** relation. Thus the person being baptized passes into the possession of the Triune God. Such a relationship prepares him/her for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit after baptism

(Chrismation). St. Paul said, “Or do you not know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit who is in you, whom you have from God, **and you are not your own?** For we were **bought at a price**; therefore glorify God in your body and in your spirit, **which are God’s**” (1Cor 6:19-20). The price that St. Paul is talking about is the redemptive death of our Lord Jesus Christ and the strong relation between baptism and the death of the Lord is revealed in (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:11-13). Thus when we are baptized “in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit” we become God’s own special possession. No wonder baptism is singled out in the commission as having a unique importance. What we know just from this one passage (Mt 28:18-19) warrants the assessment that baptism has a **saving** significance – a conclusion that will be even more inescapable in view of the other verses to be discussed below.

**“Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned.” (Mk 16:16)**

It is universally accepted that faith is and has always been an essential condition for salvation (Jn 3:16,18,36). What is striking about (Mk 16:16) is that faith and baptism are linked together in this context. If anything at all were going to be put into such a relationship with faith, there are other things that might at first seem to the non-Orthodox Christian more appropriate than baptism. For example, a Protestant would not have been surprised at, “He who believes and calls on the name of the Lord will be saved” (Acts 2:21) or “He who believes and confesses Christ will be saved” (Rom 10:9-10). Actions such as praying and confessing Lord Jesus Christ would appear to have a kind of family resemblance to faith, whereas baptism seems to be a different kind of act all together. This is why it is important to note the close conjunction of faith and baptism in this commission. It should cause our brethren the Protestants to reexamine their wrong preconceptions about the role of baptism in the issue of salvation and to realize that it is not so different from that of faith after all. This is borne by other passages that bring the two together, we have commented on (Eph 4:5) above and will comment on (Gal 3:26; Col 2:12) later. The saving faith must be directed specifically toward Lord Jesus Christ and His saving work of atonement and resurrection. This is one reason why faith has a natural affinity with baptism, namely, because baptism in its very action symbolizes the death, burial, and resurrection of the Lord. Thus not only is the saving faith believing in the saving work of Lord Jesus Christ, but also it is believing what God has promised to do in baptism, namely, to apply the atoning blood of Lord Jesus to us personally and to raise us from spiritual death (Rom 6:3-4; Col 2:11-13). Therefore, we may conclude that it is most appropriate that faith and baptism be listed together as **co-conditions** for salvation. This is supported by the straightforward and unequivocal connection between baptism and salvation, “He who believes **and is baptized** will be saved”. Such a statement is consistent with the conclusion drawn from the discussion of (Mt 28:18-19) above and is also in agreement with “There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism” (1 Pet 3:21). The same question arises here as with (Mt 28:18-19); if baptism does not have this special saving efficacy, why should it be mentioned here at all? Some Protestants may be reluctant to draw the obvious conclusion from this passage because the second negative part of the verse omits baptism. This omission cannot legitimately be used to negate the force of the first clause. If there is not an intimate relation between baptism and salvation, then the inclusion of baptism in the verse at all is unnecessary and even misleading. Why then the omission? Because when compared with anything else the sinner can or must do to receive salvation, faith is basic in the sense that it has a fundamental **chronological** priority. The person who does not believe will not even seek baptism in the first place. Thus there is no need to mention both faith and baptism in the negative clause. The following statement is comparable: “He who turns on his TV and tune in to channel 5 will see the program; he who refuses to turn on his TV will miss the program”. Since turning on the TV is basic to everything else, there is no need to mention the channel in the second clause.

**“Most assuredly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the Kingdom of God.” (Jn 3:5)**

This is part of the Lord’s conversation with Nicodemus about the necessity of the new birth. Do any other New Testament passages specifically speak of baptism as a birth? No, but two important texts speak of it

as a resurrection from spiritual death (**Rom 6:4-5; Col 2:12**). This is significant because resurrection and birth are figuratively intertwined in Holy Scripture:

- “Blessed be the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who according to His abundant mercy has begotten us again to a living hope through the resurrection of Jesus Christ from the dead.” (**1 Pet 1:3**)
- **Col 1:18** and **Rev 1:5** speak of our Lord as the “first born from the dead.”

Thus “raised up in baptism” & “born of water” are equivalent concepts and we are justified in taking (**Jn 3:5**) as reference to baptism. This verse is without question dealing with salvation with an essential condition thereof in the Christian age. The condition is baptism, “being born of water and Spirit”. This is in full agreement with the teaching of **Mk 16:16** and **1 Pet 3:21**.

#### ✦ **FAQ:**

**Q3: The word “water” is used figuratively as a symbol of the Holy Spirit In Jn 4:10-14 and Jn 7:37-39.**

**How do we know that the same word “water” in Jn 3:5 is not also a symbol of the Holy Spirit?**

**A3:** Counting against this view is the straightforward nature of the Lord’s statement in **Jn 3:5** and the lack of any contextual indication of a figurative intention for the term. For example, here the bare and unqualified term “water” is used, whereas in both **Jn 4:10-14** and **Jn 7:37-39** the term “living water” is used.

Moreover, in these latter two passages, there is contextual contrast between ordinary water and living water offered by the Lord (Holy Spirit) such contrast is absent in **Jn 3:5**. Finally, in **Jn 3:5**, the expression “born of water and the Spirit” is so tight that there is really no room for symbolic maneuvering. There are simply two nouns, both of which are objects of the one preposition “of” and are joined by the simple conjunction “and”. If the term “water meant the Spirit, there would have been no need for such repetition.

**Q4: What is the efficacy of the Protestants’ baptisms?**

**A4:** These baptisms have no saving or spiritual efficacy whatsoever. In fact, this is what the Protestants themselves believe and confess. Here is what the Baptists for example confess about their Baptism and Eucharist: “These ordinances have no saving efficacy and possess no power of themselves to impart a blessing. They are symbols of important truths and are to be observed in obedience to the command of our Lord” (J. Clyde Turner, *The Things We Believe*). To them, “being born again,” means a mental acceptance of Lord Jesus Christ as a personal savior. They believe that this mere acceptance of the Lord will grant them the second birth, justification, regeneration, and the forgiveness of sins! Thus their baptism is a mere sign or symbol, a declaration of the faith and salvation, which, according to them, they had already obtained. In other words, the saving efficacy of the Protestants’ baptisms is the same as the saving efficacy of the shower you took this morning.

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\* This lecture is adapted from, *Baptism A Biblical Study* by Jack Cottrell.



**“Then I will sprinkle clean water on you, and you shall be clean.” (Ezek 36:25)**

**✠ Lecture VII: Baptism in the Holy Book of Acts ✠**

The Holy Bible is far from silent on the subject of baptism. Many clear and straightforward verses are spread over the whole range of the New Testament, from the Holy Gospels to the Holy Epistles. In what follows, we shall, by the grace of God, examine the meaning of baptism as recorded in the Holy Book of Acts.

**“And Peter said to them, repent and let each one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the forgiveness of your sins, and you shall receive the gift of the Holy Spirit.” (Acts 2:38-39)**

This passage is important because it describes the function of Christian baptism at the point of its very inauguration on the day of Pentecost. It is part of the apostolic instruction to sinners who are asking how they might be saved. It states quite clearly that baptism is the focal point of God’s promises of forgiveness and is a prerequisite for the gift of the Holy Spirit. The audience that heard St. Peter’s sermon was a large group of devout Jews who worshipped God according to the Old Covenant. Undoubtedly, many of them had encountered Lord Jesus and rejected Him thinking they were defending the Law. What they heard from St. Peter, as confirmed by the miraculous manifestation of the Spirit, shook them to the very foundation of their faith. Lord Jesus Christ – whom they sent to His death – was their God-sent, God-exalted Messiah! When this realization dawned upon them, they sensed themselves as sinners exposed to the wrath of God; “They were cut to the heart, and said to St. Peter and the rest of the apostles, men and brethren what shall we do?” (**Acts 2:37**). What shall we do about what? About their burden of sin. St. Peter’s audience now felt a state of lostness and cried for help “what shall we do” to be saved? St. Peter’s statement concerning baptism in **Acts 2:38-39** must be understood against this background. Baptism is at the very heart of his answer to the question about what must be done to be saved. St. Peter’s first instruction was that they should repent and the only other condition given is baptism. Since **Mk 16:16** lists baptism as a condition for salvation and **Jn 3:5** gives it as a condition for entrance into the Kingdom of God, we should not be surprised that it is presented in **Acts 2:38-39** as a condition for the forgiveness of sins as well as for receiving the Holy Spirit. In fact it would have been surprising if St. Peter had not mentioned water baptism in his answer. This leads to a final consideration relative to the conditions specified in **Acts 2:38**, namely, why is **faith** not included here. We could infer from the question in (**v 37**) and the reply in (**v 38**) that it was not necessary to specify faith since those who heard the message and were cut to the heart by it already believed. This is why they asked for further instructions on what to do next. This may be compared with a similar situation when the Philippian jailer asked basically the same question to St. Paul, “What must I do to be saved?” (**Acts 16:30**). This man, a pagan, had not as yet had the benefit of hearing a message about Lord Jesus Christ. Thus St. Paul’s reply focused on the foundational requirement, “Believe on the Lord Jesus Christ and you will be saved” (**Acts 16:31**). This instruction was not meant to be comprehensive and all-inclusive, it was just an opening statement immediately followed by more teaching; “Then they spoke the word of the Lord to him” (**Acts 16:32**). Though neither repentance nor baptism is specifically mentioned, we can infer that they were included in this “word of the Lord”. This is surely the case with baptism, since “immediately he and all his family were baptized” (**Acts 16:33**). Similarly, we can consider St. Peter’s instruction in **Acts 2:38** to have been determined by the level of response already achieved by his hearer. Since a measure of faith was already evidenced by their question, there was no need to mention it specifically. In this connection, one other point may be noted; if salvation were by faith alone, what was the need then for further instructions? What was the need to baptize 3000 persons on one day? Why didn’t St. Peter say to them, “since you have believed and were cut to your hearts, the matter is over, you have been saved”? In summary, then, the conditions for receiving salvation as mentioned in **Acts 2:38-39** are **Repentance** and **Baptism**, plus an **implied faith**.

**“And now why are you waiting? Arise and be baptized, and wash away your sins calling on the name of the Lord.” (Acts 22:16)**

Ananias' instruction to Saul includes two imperatives, "be baptized" & "wash away your sins". This last item is the crucial one. What does it mean to wash away sins? It is equivalent to the forgiveness of sins as discussed in **Acts 2:38** above. This is accomplished only by the application of the blood of Lord Jesus Christ to our souls, "The blood of Jesus His Son cleanses us from all sin" (**1 Jn 1:7**). When Ananias says, "Get your sins washed away", he is simply saying, "Get your sins forgiven". The significant point for our purpose is the close connection between baptism and the washing away of sins. The most natural understanding is that the former is somehow the occasion or the condition of the latter. This is true for several reasons. First, this view is consistent with other New Testament teaching about baptism and salvation in general and with its teaching about baptism and forgiveness in particular. It is in effect the exact equivalent of St. Peter's instructions above. "Be baptized for the forgiveness of your sins," (**Acts 2:38**) means the very same thing as "be baptized and wash away your sins" (**Acts 22:16**). Second, the very fact that Saul is instructed with an **imperative** to wash away his sins shows that it must be the result of baptism. As noted above, the only means of washing sins away is the blood of Lord Jesus Christ. All would surely agree that only the Lord Himself could apply His blood to our souls. That is to say, the act of washing away of sins is an act of God and not the act of any human being; it is a spiritual act accomplished by divine power alone. It is impossible for Saul or anyone else literally to wash away his own sins. What sense does it make, then, for Saul to be told, "wash away your sins"? How could he possibly do such a thing? Here is the answer: There was no way that he could do this himself unless the washing away of sins was dependant on something he could do, namely, submit to Christian baptism. This shows that baptism is a vital part of the grace system itself and should not be regarded as just a human work of obedience. The close connection between baptism and washing helps us understand the baptismal content of other New Testament references to washing:

- "But you were washed, but you were sanctified, but you were justified in the name of the Lord Jesus and by the Spirit of God." (**1 Cor 6:11**)
- "Our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water." (**Heb 10:22**)
- "As Christ also loved the Church and gave Himself for her, that He may sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word." (**Eph 5:25-26**)
- "According to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (**Titus 3:5**)

‡ **FAQ:**

**Q5: Is there contradiction between the baptismal references in the Holy Book of Acts and Mt 28:19 since they do not mention that baptism was in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit?**

**A5:** There is no contradiction because when the Holy Book of Acts mentions that someone was baptized "in the name of Jesus Christ" (**Acts 2:38**), "in the name of the Lord Jesus" (**Acts 8:16**) or "in the name of the Lord" (**Acts 10:48**), it simply means that these people were baptized with the baptism that Lord Jesus Christ instituted which is basically "in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Spirit" (**Mt 28:19**).

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\* This lecture is adapted from 'Baptism A Biblical Study' by Jack Cottrell.

**“O Jerusalem, wash your heart from wickedness, that you may be saved.” (Jer 4:14)**

**✠ Lecture VIII: Baptism in the Holy Pauline Epistles ✠**

Thus far we have considered three passages in the Holy Gospels and two in the Holy Book of Acts that tell us something about the meaning of baptism. All of these passages are anticipatory of baptism, that is, they are statements and exhortations recorded prior to baptism itself. The rest of the passages to be considered are taken from the Holy Epistles, and they all deal with baptism as an accomplished fact. They are statements made primarily to Christians who have already been baptized. They are meant to increase our understanding of the meaning of our own baptism. They tell us more about what actually happened when we were baptized.

**“Or do you not know that as many of us as were baptized into Christ Jesus were baptized into His death? Therefore we were buried with Him through baptism into death, that just as Christ was raised from the dead by the glory of the Father, even so we also should walk in the newness of life. For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection.”**  
**(Rom 6:3-4)**

The basic point of the passage is that we are “baptized into Christ Jesus,” namely, into a saving union with Lord Jesus Christ our Redeemer. What are the results of our being united with Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection? This union provides us with our regeneration or rebirth to new life, “Therefore, if anyone is **in** Christ, he is a new creation; old things have passed away; behold, all things have become new” (**2 Cor 5:17**). We can see, then, how crucially important our union with the Lord is. It is the key to our salvation. In view of this importance, we should be vitally interested in the time when this union with the Lord begins. Exactly when does our death to sin occur, and exactly when do we receive “newness of life”? In a very clear and straightforward manner **Rom 6:3-4** affirms that baptism is the time when we are united with Lord Jesus Christ in His death and resurrection, and thus the time when we experience our own death to sin and resurrection to new life. There is absolutely no indication that this union with the Lord in His death happened as soon as we believed or repented. We did not believe into His death; we did not repent into His death. St. Paul explicitly says we “were baptized into His death” (v 3). If this is not plain enough, he repeats the idea in verse 4: “we were buried with Him through baptism into death.” What is true of our union with Lord Jesus Christ in His death is true also of our union with Him in His resurrection. In verse 5, St. Paul said, “For if we have been united together in the likeness of His death, certainly we also shall be in the likeness of His resurrection”. Moreover, St. Paul also said, “Buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God” (**Col 2:12**). The Lord’s crucifixion and resurrection are the events, which save us, but the power of these saving acts is applied to us in baptism.

In the first five chapters of Romans, St. Paul has established the fact that we are justified by faith in Lord Jesus’ saving work rather than the obedience to the Old Testament Law. Such is the essence of salvation by grace. In chapter 6 & 7 he is dealing with possible objections that might be raised in opposition to his teaching. The first is that such an idea would seem to encourage people to sin all the more. “What shall we say then? Shall we continue in sin that grace may abound? (**Rom 6:1**). In response to this objection St. Paul wants to emphasize the unthinkable nature of sin and the possibility and expectation of holy living in the Christian life, so he appeals to what happened in our baptism. He does not say, “Remember when you first believed” or “Think about the time you bowed your head and received the Lord into your heart”. He says, “Remember your Baptism!” Why should he so magnify baptism if this were not the specific point where the life-changing and heart-renewing work of God was actually accomplished?

**“For by one Spirit we were all baptized into one body – whether Jews or Greeks, whether slaves or free – and have been all made to drink into one Spirit.” (1 Cor 12:13)**

This verse shows the relation between baptism and membership in the Church, it also emphasizes the unity of the Church since we all share the common origin of our membership in the Church. That is, the Church (body) is united because we all came into it by the same doorway; the one Holy Spirit acting in the one baptism. Thus baptism itself is one basis of the unity of the Church. This agrees with “There is one body (Church) and one Spirit, just as you were called in one hope of your calling; one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all” (Eph 4:4-5).

**“For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus. For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ.” (Gal 3:26-27)**

To understand the point of the above verse we must understand the point of the whole context of **Gal 3:1-4:7**. The central idea here is the significance of our father Abraham and our role as his **sons**. St. Paul affirms that the gospel itself was preached to Abraham when God promised that through him “all the nations shall be blessed” (Gen 12:3; Gal 3:8). That is through Abraham the full contents of the gospel offer would be made possible for all families and nations of the earth. These gospel gifts are described as “the blessing of Abraham” (Gal 3:14), as “the promises” (Gal 3:16) spoken to Abraham, and especially as “the inheritance” (Gal 3:18) which Abraham was given the privilege of leaving to his offspring or heirs. Now, the main question that arises at this point is this: who are Abraham’s heirs? Who will inherit these gospel blessings? To put it another way, who is considered to be a **son** of Abraham? In this context there seem to be no difference between a “son of Abraham” (Gal 3:7) and a “son of God” (Gal 3:26). Sonship is the crucial idea. It is essential to have the status of a **son**, since in the Old Testament economy ordinarily only sons could inherit the family assets. As long as any sons were living, women and slaves did not receive an inheritance. Only if there were no sons could the daughters be heirs (Num 27:1-11; 36:1-12), and only if there were no natural heirs at all could slaves be designated to inherit the property (Gen 15:3). Thus to be an **heir** of Abraham, one must be a **son** of Abraham. Until we are sons, our status is no different from that of slaves (Gal 4:1-7); we have no claim to the inheritance. At this stage in the argument, St. Paul makes the very unexpected point that Abraham has **only one true son and heir**, namely, Lord Jesus Christ (Gal 3:16). He notes that the promises were given to Abraham and to his **seed, singular**. They are not given to many seeds, plural, but just to the one seed or offspring, which is Lord Jesus Christ. Technically speaking He is the only seed “to whom the promise had been made” (Gal 3:19). Thus He is the only true son and heir of Abraham. The rest of us, whether Jews or Gentiles, slave or free, male or female, all seem to be left out!

Nevertheless, though Lord Jesus Christ is the only true son and heir, anyone who is “in Christ Jesus” (Gal 3:14) or united with the Lord is counted as part of Lord Jesus Christ Himself and therefore as a son and therefore as an heir! This is the main point of **Gal 3: 26-29**. Of course Lord Jesus Christ is still the only natural son; the rest of us are sons by adoption (Gal 4:5). Now, how can we become one with Lord Jesus Christ? Since we are baptized “**into Christ**” (Rom 6:3; Gal 3:27) and we “**have put on Christ**”(Gal 3:27) therefore, we are all “**one in Christ Jesus**” (Gal 3:28). Thus, what is true of Lord Jesus Christ in a sense becomes true of us too. The whole point of this is that because we are one with Lord Jesus Christ, we share His sonship and heirship with regard to the blessing of Abraham. It does not matter if you are a Gentile, or a woman, or a slave. If you are “in Christ” you will be treated like a son and therefore will receive the inheritance anyway, “There is neither Jew nor Greek, there is neither slave nor free, there is neither male nor female; for you are all one in Christ Jesus. And if you are Christ’s, then you are Abraham’s seed, and heirs according to the promise” (Gal 3:28-29).

Now according to the above passage, how does anyone “put on Christ” and thus share in His sonship and inheritance? The two conditions specified by St. Paul are **Faith and Baptism**. The primary requirement for sharing in the Abrahamic inheritance is faith. This is one of the main themes of the Holy Epistle to the Galatians since the Churches of Galatia were under pressure from a group known as the Judaizers to include circumcision in the list of requirements for becoming a Christian. Since circumcision was the primary symbol of the whole Mosaic Law, this was equivalent to requiring obedience to the Old Testament Law as a condition for receiving

the saving grace – an impossible contradiction. This is the background for the crucial statement “For you are all sons of God through faith in Christ Jesus” (**Gal 3:26**). Here “sons of God” is no different from “sons of Abraham” (**Gal 3:7**); the inheritance is through Abraham but is ultimately from God. The important point is sonship itself, since only sons could be heirs. “Therefore know that only those who are of faith are sons of Abraham” (**Gal 3:7**), “So then those who are of faith are blessed with believing Abraham” (**Gal 3:9**). Verse 26 is very clear that faith is necessary for the status of sonship but verse 27 is just as clear that baptism is the action that unites us with Lord Jesus Christ, thus making our sonship possible, “For as many of you as were baptized into Christ have put on Christ” (**Gal 3:27**). We may remember that the common Protestant understanding of baptism is that it is an act that **follows** the reception of salvation in order to symbolize the fact that one has **already** become one with Lord Jesus Christ, But if this were true, the order of **Gal 3:27 would have to be just the opposite**, “as many of you as have put on Christ were baptized into Christ”, but this is not what it says, because this is not how it happens. It is the other way around, as the verse indicates. We are sons of God through faith, but this sonship is not acquired **as soon as** we have faith. Rather, it is acquired when this faith leads us into the baptism, which unites us with the Lord. This should serve as a caution against the common error of equating the biblical expression “through faith” with the quite different concept “as soon as we have faith”. As an analogy, having ten dollars may be a necessary prerequisite for getting into the ballpark and seeing the ball game, but this does not mean that one will see the ball game as soon as he has the ten dollars. He still has to go to the place where the ball game is being played. Likewise, having faith is a necessary prerequisite for sonship and thus heirship, but we still have to go to the place where this sonship is bestowed, which is baptism.

**“Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for her, that He might sanctify and cleanse her with the washing of water by the word, that He might present her to Himself a glorious church, not having spot or wrinkle or any such thing, but that she should be holy and without blemish.” (Eph 5:25-26)**

This passage shows that baptism is part of the very foundation of the Church’s experience of salvation. The only “washing of water” in Christian experience is baptism. Notice that all the saving actions in this passage are the actions of Lord Jesus Christ and not any human agent. Lord Jesus Christ loved the Church; He gave Himself for the Church; He sanctified the Church; He cleansed the Church; He presented the Church to Himself in glorious holiness. The saving activity that happens in baptism is not the work of the baptizer or the one baptized, but the work of Lord Jesus Christ Himself through the Holy Spirit, “He will glorify Me, for He will take of what is Mine and declare it to you” (**Jn 16:14**). H.H. Pope Shenouda III said, “Those who deny the saving efficacy of baptism deny God’s work.”

The ministry of the word is very important for “How then shall they call on Him in whom they have not believed? And how shall they believe in Him of whom they have not heard? And how shall they hear without a preacher?” (**Rom 10:14**). Therefore, “washing of water by the word” means that cleansing is achieved in baptismal water as a result of preaching the word of the gospel. It can also refer to the word of promise spoken by God rather than man, “He who believes and is baptized will be saved” (**Mk 16:16**).

**“In Him you were also circumcised with the circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of the sins of the flesh, by the circumcision of Christ, buried with Him in baptism, in which you also were raised with Him through faith in the working of God, who raised Him from the dead.” (Col 2:11-12)**

In many ways the content of this passage echoes that of **Rom 6:3-6**. The most explicit parallel is the concept of being buried with the Lord in baptism. Thus Colossians, Like Romans, affirms that baptism is a burial with Lord Jesus Christ. Because of the similarity with Romans we can readily infer that this means baptism is a burial with Lord Jesus Christ into His death. What is the significance of this? What is the result of it? We might conclude that it results in the forgiveness of sins, since burial into Lord Jesus Christ’s death would

bring us into saving contact with His justifying blood. Verse 13 specifically relates forgiveness to this event when it refers to God's having forgiven us all our trespasses. This understanding of baptism as the time of forgiveness certainly agrees with passages such as **Acts 2:38** and **Acts 22:16**.

Verse 11 says we have been circumcised in a non-physical sense "without hands", that is, we have experienced a **spiritual** circumcision. This is called "putting off the body of the sins of the flesh". It is similar to physical circumcision, which is the removal of a piece of the physical body, but in spiritual circumcision "the body of the sins of the flesh" refers to our old way of life or our old sinful nature, not the physical body as such or any part of it. In baptism this old sinful aspect of our being is circumcised away; it dies and is disposed of. Herein lies the identification with **Rom 6**, where dying with Lord Jesus to sin means "that our old man was crucified with Him, that the body of sin might be done away with" (**Rom 6:6**). The "old man" and the "body of sin" in Romans are the same as "the body of the sins of the flesh" in Colossians. In baptism, by the power of the death of Lord Jesus Christ with which we are thus united, this old man is put to death and put off (removed) in a spiritual act analogous to physical circumcision, then left buried in the waters of baptism. When **Col 2:12** says this takes place "in baptism," it is affirming what the whole New Testament teaches, namely, that baptism is an act of salvation.

→ This verse bring to mind the following Old Testament passages:

- "Therefore circumcise the foreskin of your heart, and be stiff-necked no longer." (**Deut 10:16**)
- "And the Lord your God will circumcise your heart and the heart of your descendants, to love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul that you may live." (**Deut 30:6**)
- "Circumcise yourself to the Lord, and take away the foreskins of your hearts." (**Jer 4:4**)

**"Not by works of righteousness which we have done, but according to His mercy He saved us, through the washing of regeneration and renewing of the Holy Spirit." (Titus 3:5)**

The main theme of this passage is salvation. What exactly was that point in time when this salvation occurred? None other than the event called the washing. God saved us, says St. Paul, through the washing that brings regeneration and renewing. In this passage, baptism is connected to salvation by a very strong term, "He saved us... through the washing." This passage also emphasizes the specific work of the Holy Spirit, who is the source of the power that works the regeneration or renewing that takes place in baptism, a point already seen in connection with **Jn 3:5**, **Acts 2:38**, and **1 Cor 12:13**. Therefore, baptism is not to be considered as a mere human work but rather a divine work of grace. Nothing is more consistent with salvation by grace than salvation in baptism (especially in case of infant baptism).

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\* This lecture is adapted from '*Baptism A Biblical Study*' by Jack Cottrell.

**“Therefore with joy you will draw water from the wells of salvation” (Is 12:3)**

**✠ Lecture IX: Baptism in the Holy Catholic Epistles ✠**

**“The longsuffering of God waited in the days of Noah, while the ark was being prepared, in which a few, that is, eight souls, were saved through water. There is also an antitype which now saves us, namely baptism (not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God), through the resurrection of Jesus Christ.” (1 Pet 3:20-21)**

Next to **Mk 16:16** this is most straightforward and unequivocal statement in the New Testament concerning the relation between baptism and salvation. In plain words St. Peter is simply saying, “Baptism now saves you.” This passage brings to mind what St. Paul said, “having our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience and our bodies washed with pure water” (**Heb 10:22**). These two passages combine the outer physical aspect and the inner spiritual effect of baptism. We must be careful not to draw the false conclusion that the outward side of baptism or the actual immersion in water is not important for St. Paul called it, “pure water”. It is still baptism that saves. This cannot be limited to an alleged spiritual baptism not involving water, since there is only one baptism in our Christian experience (**Eph 4:5**). Besides this, water is prominent in the context of **1 Pet 3:21**. The fact that baptism involves water is what links it with the flood in the first place.

→ One time H.G. Bishop Antonios Marcos, Bishop of Africa, was invited to attend a baptism of one of the many Protestants denominations in Africa. They had the person to be baptized sitting on a chair and they were praying and waving a red flag above his head. After a while the ceremony ended and they asked His Grace what he thought. So His Grace exclaimed, “Where is the water? You didn’t even use water!” They said, “Oh, water is just the outward aspect, but we are more interested in the inner spiritual aspect of baptism and this red flag represents the Holy Spirit that works in us”. His Grace smiled and said, “My friends, this is not a baptism, this is dry cleaning.”

We have pointed out that baptism is a divine work of grace (**Titus 3:5**) through which we have “our hearts sprinkled from an evil conscience” (**Heb 10:22**), it is “not the removal of the filth of the flesh, but the answer of a good conscience toward God” (**1 Pet 3:21**). In St. Paul’s defense before Felix the governor, he said, “I myself always **strive** to have a conscience without offense toward God and men” (**Acts 24:16**). St. Paul strived to have a good conscience even though he was baptized which is a good example of the Orthodox understanding of grace and works. (More examples available in lecture IV of Soteriology)

**“This is He who came by water and blood – Jesus Christ; not only by water, but by water and blood. And it is the Spirit who bears witness, because the Spirit is truth... For there are three that bear witness on earth: the Spirit, the water, and the blood; and these three agree as one.”**  
**(1 Jn 5:6,8)**

This passage shows the relation between water of baptism, the blood of Lord Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit. The saving efficacy of baptismal water is attributed to the precious blood of our Lord, and it is the Holy Spirit who works in the water and gives it the saving power of the blood of Lord Jesus Christ. It is written:

- “Without shedding of blood there is no remission.” (**Heb 9:22**)
- Lord Jesus Christ said about the Holy Spirit, “He will take of what is Mine [saving efficacy of My blood] and declare it to you (in the saving sacraments)” (**Jn 16:14**).
- It is written, “But one of the soldiers pierced His aide with a spear, and immediately blood and water came out” (**Jn 19:34**).
- Our Lord affirms that we must be born again of water and Spirit in order to enter the Kingdom of God (**Jn 3:5**).

✠ **FAQ:**

**Q6: St. Paul said, “Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the Gospel” (1Cor 1:17). Does this mean that St. Paul’s commission was different from that mentioned in Mt 28:19-20?**

**A6:** Our Lord sent His apostles two by two (**Lk 10:1**), and the Holy Spirit chose St. Paul and St. Barnabas to preach together (**Acts 13:2**). The Holy Book of Acts tells us that St. Paul was the chief speaker among the two (**Acts 14:12**). St. Paul’s commission could not have been materially different from that spoken by Lord Jesus Christ in **Mt 28:19-20**. Though St. Paul’s own **specific** task was to preach verbally, this was not to be separated from baptism. It simply means that he did not have to do the baptizing **personally**. St. Paul emphasizes the priority of his preaching since preaching takes precedence over baptizing in the sense that it must come first. Without preaching there would not even be any faith (**Rom 10:14**) and without faith there would be no baptism in the first place. In fact, **1 Cor 1:12-17** reveals the importance of baptism. Here is what it says:

“Now I say this, that each of you says, ‘I am of Paul’, or ‘I am of Apollos’, or ‘I am of Cephas’, or ‘I am of Christ’. Is Christ divided? Was Paul crucified for you? Or were you baptized in the name of Paul? I thank God that I baptized none of you except Crispus and Gaius, lest anyone should say that I baptized in my own name. Yes, I also baptized the household of Stephanas. Besides, I do not know if I baptized any other. For Christ did not send me to baptize, but to preach the gospel...” (**1 Cor 1:12-17**)

At first glance one might think that St. Paul is demoting baptism to the ranks of insignificant duties or even optional acts. After all, he thanks God he only baptized few people, but this is an incomplete and distorted reading of the passage because it ignores the **reason** why St. Paul is glad he baptized only a few. Verse 15 says, “Lest anyone should say that I baptized in my name”. He is glad he baptized only a few so that the circle of his converts could not use this as a means of setting themselves apart from other Christians. His reasoning presupposes the importance of baptism, not its unimportance. Moreover, St. Paul’s extensive teaching in other passages on the important meaning of baptism would not be consistent with the view that he is denigrating baptism in this passage. Finally, why would he bring up the subject of baptism **at all**, especially in conjunction with the crucifixion of the Lord and the potential division of the Church, if it were not among the most vital and serious aspects of the very existence and life of the Church? How could he so forcefully and in the same breath remind them of who was crucified for them and of the name in which they were baptized, if baptism were not in some sense worthy of such a conjunction?

**Q7: Why does the Church baptize boys after 40 days and girls after 80 days of their birth?**

**A 7:** The Church can baptize any newborn boy or girl at any day without waiting 40 or 80 days. This period is the required period before the mother can participate in her child’s baptism as Godmother. Holy Scripture says, “If a woman has conceived, and borne a male child, then she shall be unclean seven days; as in the days of her customary impurity she shall be unclean. And on the eighth day the flesh of his foreskin shall be circumcised. She shall then continue in the blood of her purification thirty-three days [total of 40]. She shall not touch any hallowed thing, nor come into the sanctuary until the days of her purification are fulfilled. But if she bears a female child then she shall be unclean two weeks, as in her customary impurity, and she shall continue in the blood of her purification sixty-six days [total of 80].” (**Lev 12:2-5**)

The doubling of the period when a female child is born reminds us of the fact that the woman was the first to be deceived and fall bringing sin into the world (**1 Tim 2:14-15; 1 Pet 3:7**)

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\* This lecture is adapted from ‘*Baptism A Biblical Study*’ by Jack Cottrell.



**“I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit within you; I will take the heart of stone out of your flesh and give you a heart of flesh. I will put My Spirit within you and cause you to walk in My statutes.”  
(Ezek 36:26-27)**

### **✠ Lecture X: The Sacrament of Confirmation ✠**

In the biological order, a creature must first be born, and then it must grow. Likewise, in the spiritual order of grace, we are born again in Baptism and then we must grow in the spiritual life and bear the fruits of the Spirit (**Gal 5:22-23**). We also need to acquire the spiritual power that will enable us to overcome Satan and his army “for we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against principalities, against powers, against the rulers of the darkness of this age, against spiritual hosts of wickedness in the heavenly places” (**Eph 6:12**). The Holy Sacrament of Confirmation induces us into God’s spiritual army and the lay priesthood of believers. Our body becomes a temple of the Holy Spirit (**1 Cor 6:19**) who helps us grow in the spiritual life. Confirmation is a kind of Pentecost to the baptized person.

#### **✠ Institution of the Sacrament:**

The roots of this Sacrament are clear in both the Old and New Testaments. In his sermon on Pentecost, St. Peter quotes the famous words of Joel the Prophet; “I will pour out My Spirit on all flesh” (**Acts 2:17; Joel 2:28**). Other Old Testament prophets who speak of this same promise of the Spirit include Ezekiel (**Ezek 16:9; 36:26-27**). Moreover, our Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Holy Sacrament through His various promises for granting the Holy Spirit:

- “If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water. But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive; for the Holy Spirit was not yet given, because Jesus was not yet glorified.” (**Jn 7:37-38**)
- “And I will pray the Father, and He will give you another Helper, that He may abide with you forever – the Spirit of truth, whom the world cannot receive, because it neither sees Him nor knows Him; but you know Him, for He dwells with you and will be in you.” (**Jn 14:16-17**)
- “But the Helper, the Holy Spirit, whom the Father will send in My name, He will teach you all things, and bring to your remembrance all things that I said to you.” (**Jn 14:26**)
- “But when the Helper comes, whom I shall send to you from the Father, the Spirit of truth who proceeds from the Father, He will testify of Me.” (**Jn 15:26**)
- “Nevertheless I tell you the truth. It is to your advantage that I go away; for if I do not go away, the Helper will not come to you; but if I depart I will send Him to you.” (**Jn 16:7**)
- “And being assembled together with them, He commanded them not to depart from Jerusalem, but to wait for the promise of the Father, ‘which,’ He said, ‘you have heard from Me; for John truly baptized with water, but you shall be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now.’” (**Acts 1:4-5**)

#### **✠ Independence From Baptism:**

- “Now when the apostles who were at Jerusalem heard that Samaria had received the word of God, they sent Peter and John to them, who, when they had come down, prayed for them that they might receive the Holy Spirit. For as yet He had fallen upon none of them. **They had only been baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus**. Then they laid hands on them, and they received the Holy Spirit.” (**Acts 8:14-17**)
- “When they heard this, they were baptized in the name of the Lord Jesus. **And when Paul had laid hands on them, the Holy Spirit came upon them.**” (**Acts 19:5-6**)
- The independence of Confirmation (laying of hands) from Baptism is explicit in **Heb 6:2** where the apostle distinguishes “the doctrine of baptisms” from the doctrine “of laying on of hands”.

#### **✠ Administration of the Sacrament:**

Our fathers the Apostles administered this Sacrament by laying on of hands directly after Baptism as mentioned in the Holy Book of Acts (**Acts 8:14-17; 19:5-6**). Laying on of hands for the dwelling of the Holy Spirit is a specific rite of the Apostles (and their successors the Bishops). In **Acts 8**, Philip, the deacon and

evangelist, preached and baptized the people of Samaria but did not grant them the gift of the Holy Spirit. The Apostles came and later confirmed these new believers with the gift of the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands (**Acts 8:14-17**). As the number of believers increased, it was not possible for the Apostles to wander all countries and cities to lay hands on the baptized. So they established Chrismation (Gr. *chrismatis*, “anointing”) in addition to the laying on of hands:

- “You have an **anointing** from the Holy One.” (**1 Jn 2:20**)
- “The **anointing** which you have received from Him abides in you ... the same **anointing** teaches you concerning all things.” (**1 Jn 2:27**)
- “He who establishes us with you in Christ and has **anointed** us is God, who also has **sealed** us and given us the Spirit in our hearts as a guarantee.” (**2 Cor 1:21-22**)
- “And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were **sealed** for the day of redemption.” (**Eph 4:30**)

#### ✠ **History of the Holy Oil (Myron):**

Our fathers the Apostles took the spices that were on our Lord’s body in the tomb and the spices that the women had prepared (**Lk 24:1**), melted all in pure olive oil, and prayed on it. They decreed that this holy oil be used as means of anointing the baptized in order to confirm and give them the gift of the Holy Spirit. They also decided that their successors, the Bishops, renew the holy oil by adding to the original so that the Churches never run out. When St. Mark came to Alexandria, he brought with him some of that holy oil. In the beginning of the fourth century, H.H. Pope Athanasius the Apostolic, the 20<sup>th</sup> Pope of Alexandria, decided to renew the holy oil. So he gathered all the spices and perfumes that God had ordered Moses the Prophet to use in making the holy ointment (**Ex 30**) and added them to the remainder of the holy oil that St. Mark had brought with him to Egypt. St. Athanasius sent some of the holy oil to the Bishops of Rome, Antioch, and Constantinople with the recipe that he used in manufacturing it and they all received it with rejoicing. The holy oil was manufactured 29 times in the Coptic Orthodox Church (thus far).

#### ✠ **Chrismation of Infants:**

The Orthodox Churches administer Chrismation immediately following baptism in accordance with the teachings of the Holy Bible and the Apostolic Tradition, but the Roman Catholic Church has started since the 13<sup>th</sup> century to delay the confirmation of infants until they are 7 or 12 years old and consequently delays their participation in the Holy Eucharist. This delay is totally unjustified, wasn’t St. John the Baptist filled with the Holy Spirit while still in his mother’s womb (**Lk 1:15**)?

#### ✠ **Chrismation & Our Salvation:**

H.H. Pope Shenouda III said, “We can never be saved without this gift of the Holy Spirit because our whole spiritual life is the response of our will to the work of the Holy Spirit within us. Unless we receive the gift of the Holy Spirit, all our life will be futile and subject to perdition. It is a gift that we receive through the Sacrament of the Holy Unction and for which we pray continually saying ‘Do not take Your Holy Spirit from me’ (**Ps 51:11**) otherwise we shall perish.”

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\* This lecture is adapted from “*The Sacraments of the Church*” by Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“You prepare a table before me in the presence of my enemies.” (Ps 23:5)**

**✠ Lecture XI: The Sacrament of the Eucharist ✠**

In the Sacrament of the Eucharist, believers eat Lord Jesus Christ’s Holy Body and drink His precious Blood under the physical appearance of bread and wine. This Sacrament is called the Sacrament of all Sacraments and/or the crown of the Sacraments. In the Coptic Orthodox Church, no Sacrament is to be administered (on the same day) after the person has partaken from Holy Communion.

**✠ Institution of the Sacrament:**

Our Lord instituted this Sacrament on Covenant Thursday, just a few hours before His arrest and trial. After He had washed the feet of the disciples as a sign of their repentance and preparation, “He took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink from it all of you. For this is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins’” (**Mt 26:26-28**). St. Paul said, “The Lord Jesus on the same night in which He was betrayed took bread; and when He had given thanks, He broke it and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body which is broken for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ In the same manner He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘This cup is the new covenant in My blood. This do, as often as you drink it, in remembrance of Me.’ For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (**1 Cor 11:23-26**).

**✠ Symbols of the Eucharist in the Old Testament:**

- The offering of Melchizedek (bread & wine) was a symbol of this Holy Sacrament, “Melchizedek king of Salem brought out bread and wine; he was the priest of God Most High” (**Gen 14:18**). This is the first verse in Holy Scripture where the word “priest” was used and it is interesting to notice the connection between the priesthood of Melchizedek and the offering of bread and wine. Therefore, it was said about our Lord, “You are a priest forever according to the order of Melchizedek” (**Ps 110:4; Heb 5:6**).
- The Passover lamb that the children of Israel offered on the night of their exodus from Egypt, and which they used to offer every year thereafter was a symbol of this Sacrament “For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (**1 Cor 5:7**).
- The manna that the children of Israel ate in the wilderness of Sinai for forty years was a symbol of the Sacrament of Eucharist. Our Lord said, “This is the bread which came down from heaven – not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever” (**Jn 6:58**) – “I am the living bread which came down from heaven. If anyone eats of this bread, he will live forever and the bread that I shall give is My flesh” (**Jn 6:51**).

**✠ The Question of the Real Presence:**

Our Lord spoke about this Sacrament openly to the Jews but they “quarreled among themselves saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’” (**Jn 6:52**). Moreover, **many** of the disciples protested saying, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” (**Jn 6:60**). When Lord Jesus explicitly emphasized His real presence in the Sacrament, it was written, “many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (**Jn 6:66**). → The question of the real presence is of considerable importance in relation to the differences, which have emerged within Christianity since the time of the so-called ‘Reformation’. A particularly important witness to the early Christian understanding of this Sacrament is provided by the ‘Catechetical lectures’ of St. Cyril of Jerusalem. This series of 24 lectures of instruction on the beliefs and practices of the Christian Church, given at some point around 350 to those preparing for baptism, are an important witness to the ideas that prevailed in the Jerusalem Church around this point. It is clear that St. Cyril regarded the bread and wine as becoming the real body and blood of our Lord Jesus Christ:

- “[Jesus Christ], by his own will, once changed water into wine at Cana of Galilee. So why should we not believe that he can change wine into blood? ... We should therefore have full assurance that we are sharing in the body and blood of Christ. For in the type of bread, his body is given to you, and in the

type of wine, his blood is given to you, so that by partaking of the body and blood of Christ you may become of one body and one blood with Him.” (St. Cyril of Jerusalem)

St. John of Damascus wrote the following about the question of how this transformation of the bread and wine takes place:

- “And now you ask how the bread becomes the body of Christ, and the wine and the water become the blood of Christ. I shall tell you. The Holy Spirit comes upon them, and achieves things which surpass every word and thought ... Let it be enough for you to understand that this takes place by the Holy Spirit” (St. John of Damascus).

#### ✠ Benefits of the Sacrament:

- **Abiding in Lord Jesus Christ:** “He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (Jn 6:56). Consequently we bear the fruits of the spirit, “He who abides in Me, and I in him, bears much fruit; for without Me you can do nothing” (Jn 15:5).
- **Obtaining Eternal Life:** “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day... He who eats this bread will live forever” (Jn 6:54,58).
- **Growth & Maintenance of Our Spiritual Life:** “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you... For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed... he who feeds on Me will live because of Me” (Jn 6:53,55,57).
- **Salvation & Remission of Sins:** “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt 26:28).
- **Unification of Believers:** “For we, being many, are one bread and one body; for we all partake of that one bread” (1 Cor 10:17).

#### ✠ Consequences of Unworthy Communion:

- St. Paul said, “Whoever eats this bread or drinks this cup of the Lord in an unworthy manner will be guilty of the body and blood of the Lord. But let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of that bread and drink of that cup. For he who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, not discerning [recognizing clearly] the Lord’s body. For this reason many are weak and sick among you, and many sleep [die]. For if we would judge ourselves, we would not be judged.” (1 Cor 11:27-31)

#### ✠ The Meaning of Worthiness:

- **Orthodox Faith:** The person who approaches the Eucharist must be an Orthodox Christian having no doubt concerning the bread & wine being the true body and precious blood of Lord Jesus Christ.
- **Repentance & Confession:** The person must be practicing the Sacrament of Repentance and Confession on regular basis as St. Paul said, “let a man examine himself” (1 Cor 11:28).
- **Reconciliation With Others:** Lord Jesus Christ said, “If you bring your gift to the altar, and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your gift there before the altar, and go your way. First be reconciled to your brother, and then come offer your gift” (Mt 5:23-24).
- **True Worthiness is Feeling Unworthy:** St. Paul, the meek and humble apostle said, “I know nothing against myself, yet I am not justified by this” (1 Cor 4:4).
- **Obedying The Church Rules:** concerning food abstinence before communion, physical cleanliness, and early attendance of the liturgy.

### ✠ The Eucharist as a Sacrifice:

The Orthodox Church believes and confesses that the Eucharist is a sacrifice and an offering to God in addition to being a Sacrament. The following supports this belief:

- The words of Lord Jesus Christ Himself, “This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many” (**Mt 26:28; Mk 14:24**) – “This cup is the new covenant in My blood, which is shed for you” (**Lk 22:20**) – “This is My body which is broken for you” (**1Cor 11:24**) – “This is My body which is given for you” (**Lk 22:19**). Undoubtedly, the terms “broken body” and “shed blood” refer to a sacrifice.
- The presence of an altar in the Church confirms that the Eucharist is a sacrifice. St. Paul said, “We have an altar from which those who serve the tabernacle [Jews] have no right to eat” (**Heb 13:10**). Isaiah the Prophet said, “In that day there will be an altar to the Lord in the midst of the land of Egypt” (**Is 19:19**), this is a specific prophecy about the Coptic (Egyptian) Church which proves the presence of altars in the Christian era and consequently the presence of a sacrifice (the Eucharist).
- Malachi the Prophet prophesied about the New Testament offering saying, “I have no pleasure in you, says the Lord of hosts, nor will I accept an offering from your hands. For from the rising of the sun even to its going down, My name shall be great among the Gentiles; In every place incense shall be offered to My name, **and a pure offering**; For My name shall be great among the nations, says the Lord of hosts” (**Mal 1:10-11**). This “pure offering” is nothing but the Eucharistic offering that Christians offer on their altars, for at which point in history did the Gentiles “in every place” offer an offering to the Lord?
- St. Paul said, “Observe Israel after the flesh: Are not those who eat of the sacrifices partakers of the altar? What am I saying then? That an idol is anything, or what is offered to idol is anything [else]? Rather, that the things which the Gentiles sacrifice they sacrifice to demons and not to God, and I do not want you to have fellowship with demons. You cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord’s table and the table of demons” (**1 Cor 10:18-21**). The apostle is comparing the table (altar) of the Lord to the altar of the pagans upon which unacceptable demonic sacrifices were offered, which proves that the Eucharist that is offered on the Christian altar is indeed a sacrifice.

### ✠ The Sacrifice of the Cross & the Sacrifice of the Eucharist:

- **The Cross:** -The Holy Body & Precious Blood were offered visibly.
- **The Eucharist:** -The Holy Body & Precious Blood are offered Sacramentally as bread & wine.
- **The Cross:** -Offered by Lord Jesus Christ as the Chief High Priest.
- **The Eucharist:** -Offered by the New Testament Priests (according to the order of Melchizedek)
- **The Cross:** -The lamb (Lord Jesus Christ) was slain, His blood was shed, and He died.
- **The Eucharist:** -No shedding of blood and no death. Hence is called “bloodless sacrifice.”
- **The Cross:** -Offered once on Good Friday.
- **The Eucharist:** -Offered several times from its institution till the second coming of the Lord.

### ✠ FAQ:

#### **Q1: Why don’t we allow Protestants to take communion in our Churches?**

**A1:** The Didache or “the teaching of the 12 apostles” is a manuscript, which was used by 2<sup>nd</sup> century bishops and priests for the instruction of the catechumens. Many early Church Fathers have referenced it making this document relatively easy to date. It states: “Let no one eat or drink of your Eucharist but those baptized in the name of the Lord; to this, too the saying of the Lord is applicable, ‘Do not give what is holy to the dogs’” (**Mt 7:6**). St. Paul forbade the Jews from taking communion (**Heb 13:10**). The Church is actually **protecting** those groups from the judgment of taking communion in an unworthy manner. How can the Church allow a protestant, who denies the real presence of the Lord in the Eucharist, to take communion?

#### **Q2: Why don’t we allow Roman Catholics to take communion in our Churches?**

**A2:** There are many theological and dogmatic differences between us and the Roman Catholic Church and we are not in full communion with them until these issues are resolved. Allowing a Roman Catholic to receive

the Eucharist would imply a oneness which does not yet exist and for which we must all pray. Moreover, this person has access to the Holy Body and Precious Blood in his/her Roman Catholic Church.

**Q3: Why doesn't the Church allow us to take communion in a Protestant service?**

**A3:** Believe it or not, Protestants are heretics. St. Paul explained that the devil is the author of all heresies, he said, "For such are false apostles [heretics], deceitful workers, transforming themselves into apostles of Christ. And no wonder! For Satan himself transforms himself into an angel of light. Therefore it is no great thing if his ministers [the heretics] transform themselves into ministers of righteousness, whose end will be according to their works" (2 Cor 11:13-15). He also called the heresies "**doctrines of demons**" (1 Tim 4:1) Now, with this in mind, "you cannot drink the cup of the Lord and the cup of demons; you cannot partake of the Lord's table and of the table of demons." (1 Cor 10:21)

**Q4: Are we repeating the sacrifice of the cross during the Eucharist?**

**A4:** Absolutely not. The sacrifice of the cross cannot be repeated, "Christ was offered **once** to bear the sins of many" (Heb 9:28). Therefore, we said that in the Eucharist there is no death and hence it is called "bloodless sacrifice". We do not repeat the sacrifice of the cross but we **recall** it. The Eucharist takes us through the time to Calvary where we actually come in contact with the true body that was offered and precious blood that was shed on our behalf, it is **the same sacrifice not a repetition**. In fact this is the meaning of the Lord's words, "Do this in remembrance of Me". For example, the children of Israel celebrated the Passover every year but the exodus from Egypt took place once; they did not repeat the exodus but rather recalled it.

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\* This lecture is adapted from '*The Church Sacraments*' by Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“A servant is not greater than his master. If they persecuted Me, they will also persecute you. If they kept My word, they will keep yours also.” (Jn 15:20)**

✠ **Lecture XII: The Question of the Real Presence** ✠

✠ **Definitions:**

1. **Transubstantiation:** The Roman Church was pressed by rationalists to define *how* the transformation of the bread and wine takes place. They answered with *transubstantiation*, meaning a change of substance. The elements are no longer bread and wine; they are physically changed into flesh and blood. The Sacrament that only faith can comprehend was subject to a philosophical definition. This view of the Eucharist was unknown in the ancient Church.
2. **Consubstantiation:** This view, especially associated with Martin Luther, insists upon the simultaneous presence of both bread and the body of Lord Jesus Christ at one and the same time. There is no change in substance; the substance of both bread and the body are present together.
3. **Memorialism or Real Absence:** This understanding of the nature of the Eucharist is especially associated with Zwingli. The Eucharist is nothing but a memorial of the suffering of the Lord, and not a sacrifice. The bread and wine are mere symbols of the body and blood.

✠ **Why Do We Believe in the Real Presence?**

Generally speaking, there are three reasons why we believe in the real presence of Lord Jesus Christ in the Sacrament of the Eucharist:

- I) **Biblical Reasons**
- II) **Logical Reasons**
- III) **Historical Reasons**

✠ **Biblical Reasons** ✠

1. Whenever our Lord Jesus Christ would speak **symbolically** and yet the Jews would understand His blessed words **literally**, St. John would point their mistake out:
  - a) “Jesus answered and said to them, ‘Destroy this temple, and in three days I will raise it up.’ So the Jews answered and said to Him, ‘It has taken forty-six years to build this temple, and will You raise it up in three days?’ **But He was speaking of the temple of His body.” (Jn 2:19-21)**
  - b) “On the last day, that great day of the feast, Jesus stood and cried out, saying, ‘If anyone thirsts, let him come to Me and drink. He who believes in Me, as the Scripture has said, out of his heart will flow rivers of living water.’ **But this He spoke concerning the Spirit, whom those believing in Him would receive.” (Jn 7:37-39)**
  - c) “Then they said to Him, ‘Who are you?’ And Jesus said to them, ‘Just as I have been saying to you from the beginning. I have many things to say and to judge concerning you, but He who sent Me is true; and I speak to the world those things which I heard from Him.’ **They did not understand that He spoke to them of the Father.” (Jn 8:25-27)**

→ Lord Jesus Christ said, “The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (Jn 6:51) but “The Jews therefore quarreled among themselves, saying, ‘How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?’” (Jn 6:52)

→ Now, if Lord Jesus Christ was speaking symbolically and the Jews misunderstood Him, why didn’t St. John point their mistake out as he did previously? The fact that St. John didn’t do that means that Lord Jesus Christ was indeed speaking literally.

→ The reply of the Lord reinforces the fact that His words were literal, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you ... For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:53,55).

2. When Lord Jesus said, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drink My blood abides in Me, and I in him” (**Jn 6:53-56**), many of His disciples took Him literally and said, “This is a hard saying; who can understand it?” (**Jn 6:60**)

→ Now our Lord Jesus Christ was fully aware that **many** of His disciples understood His words literally and were offended, He even said to them, “Does this offend you?” (**Jn 6:61**) Moreover, St. John said, “From that time many of His disciples went back and walked with Him no more” (**Jn 6:66**).

→ Obviously, if Lord Jesus Christ had only meant that they would eat His flesh and drink His blood figuratively or symbolically, He would have said so before they walked away for it is written that “He explained all things to His disciples” (**Mk 4:34**) But the Lord did not explain and let them go. Therefore, He meant His words literally and of course not visually or cannibalistically but miraculously and Sacramentally.

→ Some people become confused by what Lord Jesus Christ said after the disciples complained. He said, “It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing. The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (**Jn 6:63**). They mistakenly think that this is proof that Lord Jesus Christ is saying that He only means that the disciples will eat His Flesh and drink His Blood spiritually and not literally. But it is illogical that the Lord would say that His Flesh “profits nothing” (useless) after saying that it gives life (**v 53**). Rather, Lord Jesus Christ is not talking about His Flesh, but about their flesh. He is telling the unbelieving disciples that they cannot grasp or come to His blessed teaching on the Eucharist by their senses or their flesh which “profits nothing” for this purpose, but only through faith or Spirit.

3. St. Paul said that our Lord said, “Take, eat; this is My body which is **broken** for you” (**1 Cor 11:24**). But we all know that the Body of our Lord was never broken, “when they came to Jesus and saw that He was already dead, they did not break His legs ... these things were done that the Scripture should be fulfilled, Not one of His bones shall be broken” (**Jn 19:33,36**).

→ The fact that the Lord said that this is His Body “**which is broken**” affirms that it is not a symbol but rather the true body because if the bread were a mere symbol, then it shouldn’t be broken for the body on the cross was never broken.

4. Whenever the term “eating flesh” occurs in symbolically Holy Scripture, it refers to slander, hate, and back stabbing:

- a) “When the wicked came against me to eat up my flesh, my enemies and foes, they stumbled and fell.” (**Ps 27:2**)
- b) “You who hate good and love evil; Who strip the skin from My people, and the flesh from their bones; Who also eat the flesh of y people, flay their skin from them.” (**Mi 3:2-3**)
- c) “If you bite and devour one another, beware lest you be consumed by one another.” (**Gal 5:15**)

→ If we interpret the Lord’s words symbolically, we fall in the worst interpretation.

5. St. Paul said, “He who eats and drinks in an unworthy manner eats and drinks judgment to himself, **not discerning the Lord’s body**” (**1 Cor 11:29**).

→ To discern means, “To perceive or recognize clearly. To distinguish”

→ This verse clearly proves the transformation of the bread to the real body of the Lord and whoever takes communion without this faith eats and drinks judgment to himself.

6. The words of the Lord about this Sacrament are straightforward and clear:

- a) “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to the disciples and said, ‘Take, eat; **this is My body**.’ Then He took the cup, and gave thanks, and gave it to them, saying, ‘Drink



from it, all of you. For **this is My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many for the remission of sins” (Mt 26:26-28).

- b) “And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it and broke it, and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, eat; **this is My body.**’ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘**This is My blood** of the new covenant, which is shed for many” (Mk 14:22-24).
- c) “And He took bread, gave thanks and broke it, and gave it to them, saying ‘**This is My body** which is given for you; do this in remembrance of Me.’ Likewise He also took the cup after supper, saying, ‘**This cup is the new covenant in My blood**, which is shed for you” (Lk 22:29-20).

→ Lord Jesus Christ said clearly, “This is My Body – This is My Blood” who can tell Him “No it is not!” Indeed, “Let God be true but every man a liar” (Rom 3:4).

7. St. Paul said, “I speak as to wise men; judge for yourselves what I say. The cup of blessing which we bless, is it not the communion of the blood of Christ? The bread which we break, is it not the communion of the body of Christ?” (1 Cor 10:15-16).

→ How can we possibly have communion with the Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ if the bread and wine were mere symbols?

#### ✠ Logical Reasons ✠

1. The words of Lord Jesus Christ about this Sacrament constitute a **testimony**, “This is My Body, This is My Blood” also the Lord **testified** that His Body is food indeed and His Blood is drink indeed (Jn 6:56).  
→ A testimony must be literal without figurative or symbolic language.
2. The words of Lord Jesus Christ about this Sacrament constitute a **covenant**, “This cup is the new covenant” (Lk 22:20) – “Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life” (Jn 6:54).  
→ The words of a covenant must be literal. (Can you write a contract in symbolic words?)
3. Symbols and analogies must have a kind of resemblance to what they symbolize. For example, the brazen serpent and the crucifixion of the Lord, Jonah in the belly of the fish and the burial of the Lord, the story of offering Isaac the beloved son of his Father, and the offering of the only Begotten Son, etc.  
→ The bread, which is broken, cannot be a symbol of the intact body of our Lord. Notice that because the Passover lamb was a symbol of the Lord, no bone was broken from it (Ex 12:46).
4. The saving spiritual blessings that are associated with this Sacrament (Jn 6: 51-59) cannot be attributed to eating mere bread unless this bread is truly transformed into the true body of the Savior.
5. The severe punishments that reach death (1 Cor 11:31) cannot be associated with eating mere bread and drinking mere wine unless they are truly transformed to the Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ.
6. It is written about the cup that it is for the remission of sins (Mt 26:26-27). The only way this can be true is for the mixture in this cup to be transformed to the real blood of the Savior for “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (Heb 9:22).

#### ✠ Historical Reasons ✠

1. All apostolic Churches universally agree about the real presence of the Lord in the Sacrament of the Eucharist in spite of their disagreements on many other issues.
2. All Eastern and Western Church Fathers have agreed, without exception, that the words of the Lord about this Holy Sacrament are to be understood literally.

3. Martin Luther himself could not dare to deny the presence of the Lord in the Eucharist (although his view was still heretical) and it wasn't until later that Zwingli came up with the heresy of real absence which most of the Protestants believe today.

✦ **FAQ:**

**Q5: What are the differences with the Roman Catholic Church concerning the Eucharist?**

**A5:** There are no differences concerning the belief that the Eucharist is the true Body and Blood of Lord Jesus Christ. Nevertheless, there are some differences concerning the administration of the Sacrament:

- a) They consecrate unleavened bread (wafers) even though the very word “artos”, which is used in the Greek text of the gospel in the narration on the institution of the Sacrament, signifies precisely leavened, fermented, risen bread.
- b) They forbid infants and small children from taking communion. → Lord Jesus Christ said about the children, “Let the little children come to Me, **and do not forbid them**; for of such is the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 19:14). In fact the little children are the most worthy individuals to take communion and the adults need to take them as examples for indeed, “unless you are converted and become as little children, you will by no means enter the kingdom of heaven” (Mt 18:3)
- c) They allow people to partake of the Holy Body without partaking of the Holy Blood. → Lord Jesus Christ administered both His Body and His Blood to His disciples and He said about the cup “Drink from it, **all of you**” (Mt 26:27). He also said, “Unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man **and drink His blood**, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh **and drinks My blood** has eternal life” (Jn 6:53-54). St. Paul said, “As often as you eat this bread **and drink this cup**, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor 11:26) – “Let a man examine himself, and so let him eat of the bread **and drink of that cup**” (1 Cor 11:28).
- d) When communion of the laity takes place at the Roman Mass, the priest, besides the main unleavened wafer, from which he himself communes, consecrates others as well, little ones, one for each communicant. This custom contradicts the very concept of the unity of the Eucharistic Sacrifice. Communion from ‘**one bread**’ has, according to the teaching of the word of God, a profound significance, “For we, being many, are **one bread** and one body; for we all partake of that **one bread.**” (1Cor 10:17)

**Q6: St. Paul said, “Purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us” (1 Cor 5:7). Is the apostle talking about the consecrating unleavened bread in the Eucharist?**

**A6:** Leaven is a symbol of sin and evil, and St. Paul says in the verse that follows, “Let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with **the leaven of malice and wickedness**, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (1 Cor 5:8). St. Paul is not talking about the Eucharist but he is talking about the sinner that he mentioned in the beginning of this chapter about whom he also said, “a little leaven leavens the whole lump” (1 Cor 5:6). In fact, since the leaven symbolizes sin and our Lord indeed carried our sins, therefore it is more fitting to consecrate leavened bread in the Eucharist.

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\* This lecture is adapted from ‘*The Sacraments of The Church*’ By Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“Blessed are those who have not seen and yet have believed.” (Jn 20:29)**

**✠ Lecture XIII: Orthodox Reply to Protestant Objections ✠**

The basic Protestant objection to the doctrine of real presence is not that it is against Holy Scripture, but that it is **against reason**. Protestants do not interpret our Lord’s straightforward words about the Eucharist symbolically because that is the obvious way to interpret them, but because a literal interpretation seems to be contrary to reason. The conservative Protestant theologian Louis Berkhof, in his famous work ‘*Systematic Theology*’, insists that the doctrine of the real presence “... violates the human senses, where it asks us to believe that what tastes and looks like bread and wine, is really flesh and blood; and human reason, where it requires belief in the separation of a substance and its properties and in the presence of a material body in several places at the same time, both of which are contrary to reason.” (Louis Berkhof, *Systematic Theology*, Banner of Truth Trust, Edinburg, 1958, p. 652)

Holy Scripture defines faith as “the substance of things hoped for, the evidence of things **not seen**” (**Heb 11:1**). St. Paul said “hope that is seen is not hope” (**Rom 8:24**). Indeed, we as Orthodox “walk by faith, not by sight” (**2 Cor 5:7**). It is ironic that our brethren the Protestants, who insist that faith is the *only* requirement for salvation, do not have faith in Lord Jesus Christ’s words concerning the Eucharist.

→ In what follows, we shall, by the grace of God, provide replies to their most common objections:

**✠ Objection # 1: The Lord said, “The words that I speak to you are spirit, and they are life” (Jn 6:63). This means that His words about eating His flesh and drinking His blood are symbolic.**

→ **Reply:** There is a difference between “spiritual” and “spirit”. There is not a single time in the Holy Bible where the word “spirit” means symbolic. God is Spirit; He is obviously real and not symbolic. Also, since when does the word “life” mean symbolic? Right before saying that His words are “spirit and life”, our Lord said that He would ascend into heaven (**Jn 6:62**). Now, do those Protestants who deny the real presence actually believe that the Lord ascended symbolically or figuratively to heaven? Or do they believe, like we do, that He literally ascended to heaven after His Resurrection? So they take part of Lord Jesus Christ’s words literally and the other part they take symbolically to support their false teaching concerning the Eucharist. Likewise, Lord Jesus Christ said, “The bread that I shall give is My flesh, which I shall give for the life of the world” (**Jn 6:51**). If indeed the flesh that we eat for eternal life is meant in only a figurative way, then so is the flesh of the crucifixion. Either they are both literal, or they are both figurative.

**✠ Objection # 2: The Lord said, “Do this in remembrance of Me” (Lk 22:19). Therefore, it is a mere memorial of the crucifixion and death of the Lord.**

→ **Reply:** A memorial, in Holy Scripture, is through one of 4 ways:

- a) **Substantial (real – true) Memorial:** Like the real manna that was kept in the Arc of the Covenant as a memorial (**Ex 16:33-34**).
- b) **Archaic Memorial:** Like the stones that Joshua the Prophet ordered to be taken from the midst of the Jordan river (**Josh 4:9**).
- c) **Pictorial Memorial:** Like the two Cherubim that God ordered Moses the Prophet to make as a memorial of the heavenly things (**Ex 25: 17-22**).
- d) **Documental (written) Memorial:** As God ordered Moses the Prophet concerning the defeat of Amalek (**Ex 17:14**).

The bread and wine are not ‘archaic memorials’ since they are not the tools with which the Lord died, they are not ‘pictorial memorials’ because they do not depict the Lord’s crucifixion, and they are not ‘documental memorials’ for this is what the four Holy Gospels are. Therefore, in order for the bread and wine to be for the remembrance of the Lord’s death, as He ordered, they must change to the real body and blood. The same way the real manna was a memorial for itself.

**✠ Objection # 3: They wonder, “How could the material bread be a spiritual food?”**

→ **Reply:** The term “spiritual food” is a biblical term used to describe the manna, which was a symbol of the Lord and the Eucharist, “All ate the same spiritual food” (1 Cor 10:3-4). Now if the manna that the Israelites ate and died (Jn 6:49) was called “spiritual food”, shouldn’t the living bread (Jn 6:51) of the Eucharist be called “spiritual food” as well? This term means that it is a food beneficial to our spirits.

✧ **Objection # 4: St. Paul said, “For as often as you eat this bread and drink this cup, you proclaim the Lord’s death till He comes” (1 Cor 11:26). Since the apostle calls it “bread” then it is not literally changed to the body of the Lord.**

→ **Reply:** St. Paul calls it “bread” because to our eyes it is still bread and also because it was actually bread before the consecration. This doesn’t compromise the fact that it is changed to the real body. For example, it is written, “For every man threw down his rod, and they became serpents. But Aaron’s rod swallowed up their rods” (Ex 7:12). Holy Scripture still called them “rods” even though they *literally* changed to serpents. This objection brings to mind the Arian heresy, which neglects the clear verses about the Divinity of Lord Jesus Christ and focus on the verses that speak of His Humanity. Likewise, Protestants neglect the many clear verses that speak about the real presence of the Lord in the Eucharist and focus on one single verse, which they misunderstand and misinterpret.

✧ **Objection # 5: How could the Lord give His disciples His body to eat while He was actually sitting among them?**

→ **Reply:** This objection brings to mind the words of the unbelieving Jews who said, “How can this Man give us His flesh to eat?” (Jn 6:52) Therefore, we shall just quote back the words of our Lord, “Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you ... My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed” (Jn 6:53,55).

✧ **Objection # 6: How could the Lord give us His blood to drink, while it is forbidden to drink blood?**

→ **Reply:** Lord Jesus Christ gives us His blood to drink Sacramentally, without the involvement of the senses and consequently we don’t break the law that forbade drinking blood because the physical appearance of the wine remains without change. For example, Lord Jesus Christ said to His disciples that He is not going up to the feast of the tabernacles (Jn 7:8) yet it is written, “He also went up to the feast, **not openly, but as it were in secret**” (Jn 7:10). Now our Lord did not lie to His disciple since His going up to the feast was “not openly, but as it were in secret.” Likewise since we drink the Lord’s Blood “not openly, but as it were in secret” we are not breaking the law that forbids the drinking of blood.

✧ **Objection # 7: How could the real body be present in many places at the same time?**

→ **Reply:** The same way this real body went through the birth canal of Virgin Mary without affecting her virginity, walked on the water, entered the upper room while the doors were closed, and ascended into heaven against the earth’s gravity; *miraculously*.

✧ **Objection # 8: How do you know that the words about the Eucharist are not just another parable?**

→ **Reply:** The same night of the institution of this Sacrament, the Lord explicitly said, “I will no longer speak to you in figurative language” (Jn 16:25). Therefore, the disciples said to Him, “See, now You are speaking plainly, and using no figure of speech!” (Jn 16:29). Moreover, the Holy Gospel of St. John, where the Lord speaks in length about the Eucharist (Jn 6), does not contain a single parable!

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\* This lecture is adapted from ‘*The Sacraments of The Church*’ by Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“I acknowledged my sin to You, and my iniquity I have not hidden. I said, ‘I will confess my transgression to the Lord,’ and You forgave the iniquity of my sin.” (Ps 32:5)**

#### ✠ Lecture XIV: The Sacrament of Repentance & Confession ✠

In the biological order, when a baby is born, it is generally healthy, but as time goes on, it becomes subject to diseases that oppress and torment life. In the spiritual order, too, though the soul is made clean and free from all sin by baptism, it nevertheless contracts stains and spiritual diseases during life. The Sacrament of Repentance and Confession is for spiritual wounds received after baptism. Original Sin was washed from the infant in baptism and from the adult, personal sins as well. Fortunately, the Lord is Practical, “For He knows our frame; He remembers that we are dust” (Ps 103:14). He also knows that the white robe given to us in baptism is not always kept immaculate. Hence, in His mercy, He instituted this Sacrament for spiritual guidance, healing, and reconciliation with Him.

#### ✠ Institution of the Sacrament:

Lord Jesus Christ instituted this Sacrament when He said to His disciples:

- “Assuredly, I say to you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.” (Mt 18:18)
- “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any, they are forgiven them; if you retain the sins of any, they are retained.” (Jn 20:22-23)

→ The above words imply “hearing confessions” because how would the disciples know which sins to forgive and which sins not to forgive if they did not hear them? Therefore it was written:

- “Many who had believed came **confessing and telling** their deeds.” (Acts 19:18)

#### ✠ Roots of the Sacrament in the Old Testament:

All through the Old Testament, there was a preparation for this Sacrament, in as much as God strove to induce men to acknowledge their sins before Him:

- To elicit a confession, God asked Adam, “Have you eaten from the tree of which I commanded you that you should not eat?” (Gen 3:11) Likewise, He asked Cain after killing his brother Abel, “Where is Abel your brother?” (Gen 4:9)
- God ordered the children of Israel to confess their sins:
  - a) “And it shall be, when he is guilty in any of these matters, that he shall **confess** that he has sinned in that thing ... So the priest shall make atonement for him concerning his sin.” (Lev 5:5-6)
  - b) “When a man or woman commits any sin ... that person is guilty, then he shall **confess** the sin that he has done. He shall make restitution for his trespass in full value.” (Num 5:6-7)
  - c) “If they **confess** their iniquity ... then I will remember My covenant...” (Lev 26:40,42)
- King Solomon said, “He who covers his sins will not prosper, but whoever **confesses** and forsakes them will have mercy” (Prov 28:13).
- Joshua said to Achan, “Give glory to the Lord God of Israel, and make confession **to Him**, and **tell me** now what you have done; **do not hide it from me**” (Josh 7:19).
- King David confessed to Nathan the Prophet saying, “I have sinned against the Lord.” (2 Sam 12:13)

→ It is no surprise then to read that Jerusalem, all Judea, and the entire region around the Jordan went out to St. John the Baptist and “were baptized by him in the Jordan, **confessing their sins**” (Mt 3:6). All these were only types and figures of the Sacrament that was to come because forgiveness became possible only through the merits of our Lord’s passion.

#### ✠ Stages (Types) of Confession:

1. **Confession to one’s self:** This is the first thing one needs to do as Lord Jesus Christ mentioned in His parable of the Prodigal Son that “he came to himself” (Lk 15:17).

2. **Confession to God:** Once a person acknowledges the sin, he/she should lift up his/her heart and confess this sin to God as King David said, “Against You, You only, have I sinned, and done this evil in Your sight” (**Ps 51:4**).
3. **Confession to the priest:** This is the practice of the Sacrament of Repentance & Confession where the confessor receives spiritual guidance and forgiveness as St. James said, “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the Church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord ... Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed” (**Jam 5:14,16**). When St. James says “pray for one another,” he is referring to the priests praying for the sick and when he says, “confess to one another,” he means the sick confessing to the priests.
4. **Confession to the person against whom the trespass was committed:** With the guidance and advice of the father of confession, the confessor may be required to confess to the person against whom he/she sinned with the willingness to restore genuine Christian fellowship with that person.

✠ **The Unacceptable Confession:**

Confession without repentance and without hope is not acceptable to God and will not benefit the person anything. For example, Pharaoh confessed his sin to Moses the Prophet several times and Judas confessed saying, “I have sinned by betraying innocent blood” (**Mt 27:4**), but both of them perished.

✠ **The Acceptable Confession:**

1. The acceptable Confession must be accompanied by Repentance which is characterized by:
  - a) Contrite heart and regret, “Now, therefore, says the Lord, turn to Me with all your heart, with fasting, with weeping, and with mourning” (**Joel 2:12**). – “For godly sorrow produces repentance to salvation, not to be regretted; but the sorrow of the world produces death” (**2 Cor 7:10**).
  - b) Steadfast intention to never go back to sin, “See, you have been made well. Sin no more, lest a worse thing come upon you” (**Jn 5:14**). – “We are not of those who draw back to perdition” (**Heb 10:39**). – “It would have been better for them not to have known the way of righteousness, than having known it, to turn from the holy commandment delivered to them. But it has happened to them according to the true proverb: A dog returns to his own vomit, and, a sow, having washed, to her wallowing in the mire” (**2 Pet 2:21-22**).
  - c) Steadfast faith in Lord Jesus Christ and His grace, “Do not rejoice over me, my enemy; when I fall, I will arise; when I sit in darkness, the Lord will be a light to me.” (**Mi 7:8**)
2. The acceptable Confession must be preceded by self-examination.
3. The confessor must:
  - a) Not excuse his/her self, “Do not let your mouth cause your flesh to sin, nor say before the messenger of God that it was an error. Why should God be angry at your excuse and destroy the work of your hands?” (**Ecc 5:6**)
  - b) Not hide anything from the father of confession, “Pour out your heart like water before the face of the Lord” (**Lament 2:19**).
  - c) Be truthful in his/her confession, remember Sapphira who lied to St. Peter in her confession (**Acts 5**).
  - d) Not have any bias toward his/her self, “He who loves his life will lose it” (**Jn 12:25**).

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\* This lecture is adapted from, *‘The Church Sacraments’* By Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“There will be more joy in heaven over one sinner who repents than over ninety-nine just persons who need no repentance.” (Lk 15:7)**

### **✠ Lecture XV: The Saving Repentance ✠**

There are many differences between the Orthodox Church and the Protestant denominations concerning repentance. The following is a summary of these differences:

- Many Protestant denominations emphasize the role of grace in repentance and neglect the human free will and striving. They claim that grace *alone* will save the person.
- Others consider repentance a mere human work and hence say that it plays no role in salvation since, in their minds, salvation is through faith *alone* without any human work.
- The practice of repentance itself is different because Protestants concentrate on happiness and joy without giving the spirit an opportunity to regret and feel sorry for the sin.

#### **✠ Symbol of Repentance in the Old Testament:**

- Salvation in the Orthodox concept is available only through the precious blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ. The Passover lamb was a symbol of our Lord Jesus Christ, “...For indeed Christ, our Passover, was sacrificed for us” (**1 Cor 5:7**). Through the blood of the lamb, the children of Israel were saved from the fatal plague, “For the Lord will pass through to strike the Egyptians; and when He sees the blood on the lintel and on the two doorposts, the Lord will pass over the door and not allow the destroyer to come into your houses to strike you” (**Ex 12:23**).
- In this example of the Passover lamb and the doors stricken with blood, we notice a very significant symbolism that highlights the role of repentance in salvation. The Passover lamb must be eaten with unleavened bread (**Ex 12:8**) and no leaven would be kept in all the quarters for seven days.  
→ “Seven days you shall eat unleavened bread, and on the seventh day there shall be a feast to the Lord. Unleavened bread shall be eaten seven days, and no leavened bread shall be among you, nor shall leaven be seen among you in all your quarters.” (**Ex 13:6-7**)
- The Lord emphasized strongly the removal of leaven from the houses and set a severe punishment of cutting off anyone who would dare to eat leavened bread.  
→ “For whoever eats leavened bread from the first day until the seventh day, that person shall be cut off from Israel.” (**Ex 12:15**)  
→ “... You shall eat unleavened bread ... For seven days no leaven shall be found in your houses, since whoever eats what is leavened, that same person shall be cut off from the congregation of Israel, whether he is a stranger or native of the land. You shall eat nothing leavened; in all your dwellings you shall eat unleavened bread.” (**Ex 12:18,20**)
- Leaven is a symbol of evil and sin while unleavened bread is a symbol of righteousness and purity. St. Paul said, “Therefore purge out the old leaven, that you may be a new lump, since you truly are unleavened. For indeed Christ, our Passover was sacrificed for us. Therefore let us keep the feast, not with old leaven, nor with the leaven of malice and wickedness, but with the unleavened bread of sincerity and truth” (**1 Cor 5:7-8**).
- The removal of leaven (sin) was a symbol of repentance and the seven days represent the whole life because the number (7) is a symbol of perfection. Therefore, though a person may escape the death by the plague through the blood of the lamb, this person will be cut off the congregation if he/she eats leaven, “...unless you repent, you will all likewise perish” (**Lk 13:3**). Also the Passover lamb was to be eaten with **bitter herbs** (**Ex 12:8**) that represents the role of regret and sorrow associated with repentance, “For godly sorrow produces repentance leading to salvation” (**2 Cor 7:10**). So even though the Passover lamb reminded the Israelites with the joy of salvation, it had to be eaten with bitter herbs. Indeed, “Blessed are those who mourn, for they shall be comforted” (**Mt 5:4**).

#### **✠ Biblical Verses About the Importance of Repentance:**

- “Thus says the Lord God: Repent, turn away from your idols, and turn your faces away from all your abominations” (**Ezek 14:6**). “Repent, and turn from all your transgressions, so that iniquity will not be your ruin... I have no pleasure in the death of one who dies, says the Lord God. Therefore turn and live” (**Ezek 18:32**).
- “From that time Jesus began to preach and to say: Repent for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.” (**Mt 4:17; Mk 1:15**)
- “...I did not come to call the righteous, but sinners to repentance.” (**Mt 9:13; Mk 2:17; Lk 5:32**)
- “Then He began to rebuke the cities in which most of His mighty works had been done, because they did not repent.” (**Mt 11:20; Lk 10:13**)
- “John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins” (**Lk 3:3; Mk 1:4**). “Therefore bear fruit worthy of repentance” (**Mt 3:8**).  
→ We know that “without shedding of blood there is no remission” (**Rom 6:23**). The above verse means that the blood of Lord Jesus Christ will remit **only** the sins that we repent about.
- When the Lord sent His disciples, it was written, “So they went out and preached that people should repent” (**Mk 6:12**).
- “...Unless you repent, you will likewise perish.” (**Lk 13:3,5**)
- “Thus it was written, and thus it was necessary for the Christ to suffer and to rise from the dead the third day, and that repentance and remission of sins should be preached in His name to all nations.” (**Lk 24:46-47**)
- “Repent, and let every one of you be baptized in the name of Jesus Christ for the remission of sins.” (**Acts 2:38**)
- “Repent therefore and be converted, that your sins may be blotted out.” (**Acts 3:19**)
- “The God of our fathers raised up Jesus whom you murdered by hanging on a tree. Him God has exalted to His right hand to be Prince and Savior, to give repentance to Israel.” (**Acts 5:30-31**)
- “Then God has also granted to the Gentiles repentance to life.” (**Acts 11:18**)
- “Truly, these times of ignorance God overlooked, but now commands all men everywhere to repent.” (**Acts 17:30**)
- “...I was not disobedient to the heavenly vision but declared ... that they should repent, turn to God, and do works befitting repentance.” (**Acts 26:19-20**)
- “The Lord is not slack concerning His Promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not willing that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.” (**2 Pet 3:9**)
- “Or do you despise the riches of His goodness forbearance, and longsuffering, not knowing that the goodness of God leads you to repentance? But in accordance with your hardness and your impenitent heart you are treasuring up for yourself wrath in the day of wrath.” (**Rom 2:4-5**) In the Holy Book of Revelation, it was written twice, “Repent, ... or else” (**Rev 2:5,16**) also, “As many as I love, I rebuke and chasten. Therefore, be zealous and repent” (**Rev 3:19**).

### ✚ What Exactly is Repentance?

Repentance: “To feel regret over (an action, intention, etc.) **As to change one’s mind** (Webster’s New World Dictionary). St. Paul said, “... be transformed by the renewing of your mind” (**Rom 12:2**) – “Be renewed in the spirit of your mind” (**Eph 4:23**) - “For to be carnally minded is death but to be spiritually minded is life and piece” (**Rom 8:6**). This change in one’s mind must be accompanied by change in one’s actions, “Do not lie to one another, since you have put off the old man with his deeds, and have put on the new man who is renewed in knowledge according to the image of Him who created him” (**Col 3:9-10**) – “Let him who stole steal no longer, but rather let him labor working with his hands what is good that he may have something to give to him who has need” (**Eph 4:28**).

### ✚ FAQ:

**Q1: What is the sin that will never be forgiven?**



**A1:** There is no sin without forgiveness except the one without repentance. Our Lord said, “Therefore I say to you, every sin and blasphemy will be forgiven men, but the blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven men” (**Mt 12:31**). The Holy Spirit convicts us of sin (**Jn 16:8**) if we refuse the work of the Spirit within us, we will not repent and this is considered blasphemy against the Spirit and consequently it is not forgiven. So blasphemy against the Spirit means refusing repentance.

**Q2: Why do we have to confess to a priest? Why not burry one’s head in one’s handkerchief and tell God that one is sorry?**

**A2:** First of all, confessing to a priest doesn’t mean that you cannot burry your head in your handkerchief and tell God that you’re sorry. Second, if this method of being sorry is not effective when you are caught by a traffic policeman, why then should it be effective with God? Since sin is a result of pride “Pride goes before destruction and a haughty spirit before a fall” (**Prov 16:18**), it requires humiliation and mortification of the ego, which is available when one exposes one’s faults to a fellow man. Finally, confessing to a priest gives you an opportunity to receive guidance and to hear advice, which helps you to resist sin and grow spiritually.

**Q3: Why confess to a priest? May be he is not as holy as the penitent!**

**A3:** That indeed could be, but though he is not holier in his person, he is holier in his power because our Lord gave this power to His Church – only the Church claims it and only the Church exercises it. The mayor of a town may not be as good as some of the citizens, but he has the power that the citizens do not have; so it is with the priest who is an instrument of the Lord. Nevertheless, a confessor should be wise in selecting the father of confession.

**Q4: How can a human being forgive sins? Isn’t forgiveness for God alone?**

**A4:** There are three types of forgiveness:

- a) God’s Forgiveness
- b) Peoples’ Forgiveness
- c) The Priests’ Forgiveness

→ God’s forgiveness means that He is the Judge of all the earth (**Gen 18:25**).

→ People’s forgiveness means their acceptance of other peoples’ apologies and confessions, reconciling with them and not holding any grudges. As we pray saying, “Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us”, here the first two types of forgiveness are combined; God’s & Peoples’.

→ The priests’ forgiveness is basically the declaration, through the Holy Spirit, of God’s forgiveness. During our Lord’s incarnation, He was forgiving sins; that is to say that through the instrumentality of the human nature He was forgiving sins. Here is an anticipation of the fact that it is through humanity that God will continue to forgive sins; i.e. through those who are endowed with the Sacramental power of ordination to do so, “Receive the Holy Spirit. If you forgive the sins of any they are forgiven them” (**Jn 20:22-23**). Man cannot forgive sins, but God can forgive sins through man as St. Paul explains, “All things are of God, who has reconciled us to Himself through Jesus Christ, and **has given us the ministry of reconciliation ... as though God were pleading through us:** we implore you on Christ’s behalf, be reconciled to God.” (**2 Cor 5:18,20**).

✦ **Comment:** Notice the difference between the result of the forgiveness of lay people and the forgiveness of the priests:

→ When someone sins against you, repents and then confesses to you and you forgive their sin, God will forgive YOU not the confessor (**Mt 6:14-15; Mk 11:25-26; Lk 6:37**).

→ When someone repents and confesses to the priest and he forgives their sin, God will forgive the confessor NOT the priest (**Mt 18:18; Jn 20: 23**).

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**“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness.” (1 Jn 1:9)**

**✠ Lecture XVI: Penance & Indulgence ✠**

**✠ Penance in the Orthodox Concept:**

Although penance would seem to be a punishment, its purpose is not to make retribution for sins, to pay back a debt, but is rather corrective, medicinal, and instructive to cure the sinner from his sinful habits, to instruct him regarding both the harmful nature of what he has been doing, and ways to change his life, so that he should not repeat his sin. Examples of penance are additional fasting periods, prostrations, and /or delaying the participation in communion.

- “If you endure chastening, God deals with you as with sons; for what son is there whom a father does not chasten?” (**Heb 12:7**)
- “When we are judged, we are chastened by the Lord, that we may not be condemned with the world.” (**1 Cor 11:32**)

**✠ A Biblical Example:**

St. Paul judged that the person who committed sexual immorality should be put away from the Church of Corinth, “For I indeed, as absent in body but present in spirit, have already judged (as though I were present) him who has done this deed ... put away from yourselves the evil person” (**1 Cor 5:3,13**) and when this person’s repentance was complete St. Paul wrote to them saying, “This punishment which was inflicted by the majority is sufficient for such a man, so that, on the contrary, you ought rather to forgive and comfort him, lest perhaps such a one be swallowed up with too much sorrow. Therefore I urge you to reaffirm your love to him” (**2 Cor 2:6-8**).

**✠ Penance & the Divine Justice:**

The purpose of penances is NOT to satisfy the Divine Justice for the following reasons:

- In the above biblical example we notice that St. Paul recommended the return of the repentant sinner to the Church that shows that the reason for the penance was merely to instruct and correct the person’s behavior.
- All the Church fathers have agreed that these penances are mere spiritual medicines and exercises and hence discontinued them once the desired result was obtained. Now if these practices were to satisfy the divine justice, why discontinue them before completion?
- If the purpose of penances were to satisfy the divine justice, they should have been applied to every single sin, but we notice that the Church reserves these practices for major sins only.
- Holy Scripture teaches us that our Lord Jesus Christ is the unlimited sacrifice that forgives our sins and satisfies the unlimited divine justice.

**✠ Indulgences:**

The Roman Catholic Church teaches that for the satisfaction of God’s justice, a man, even though forgiven in Repentance and Confession, must bear temporal punishments for his sin here on earth. They claim that the Sacrament of Repentance & Confession removes only the eternal punishment of our sins – we must do penance in order to remit the temporal punishment for our sins. If we fail to do that, we will have to do it in purgatory after we die (if we die in a state of grace). But since man is weak and infirm, in condescension to him, it is possible to free him from these temporal punishments by virtue of the superabundant merits of the Savior and saints, which constitute the treasury of the Church and to which the Pope of Rome has access. These indulgences are not usually given for free but are often sold for money! They claim that since the Church is one body, and each organ shares in the life of the whole body, so does each of the faithful can profit from the good works of the saints to make up for his/her sins.

### ✠ Orthodox Reply:

- This teaching has no basis whatsoever in Holy Scripture or Holy Church Tradition which teaches that the only way to forgive sin is through the Blood of our Lord and Savior Jesus Christ not the merits of saints and angels.
- The merits of the Blood of our Lord are not to be bought with money but received through faith and good works.
- The good works and virtues of saints, even though abundant, cannot be overabundant to be distributed among people for the following reasons:
  1. We and all the saints are required to be perfect as our heavenly Father is perfect, “You shall be perfect, just as your Father in heaven is perfect” (**Mt 5:48**). Now since this requirement is unlimited, no saint can be said to have reached this perfection let alone share his/her virtues with others.
  2. Lord Jesus Christ said, “When you have done **all** those things which are commanded, say, ‘we are unprofitable servants. We have done what was our duty to do’” (**Lk 17:10**). Where, then, are the overabundant good works?
  3. St. Paul said, “Brethren, I do not count myself to have apprehended; but one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead, I press toward the goal for the prize of the upward call of God in Christ Jesus. Therefore let us, as many as are mature, have this mind; and if in anything you think otherwise, God will reveal even this to you” (**Phil 3:13-15**). This verse shows that a great saint like St. Paul is not considering himself to have reached the goal, which refutes any talk about overabundance of good works.
- This false teaching has caused the most harm to the Christians, as it was the main reason for the Protestant so-called Reformation and the scattering of the Christians into so many different denominations.

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\* This lecture is adapted from ‘*The Church Sacraments*’ by Archdeacon Habib Guirgess.

**“But to you who fear My name The Sun of Righteousness shall arise with healing in His wings.”  
(Mal 4:2)**

**✠ Lecture XVII: The Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick ✠**

There are two Sacraments for ‘healing’; one for spiritual illness, which is the Sacrament of Repentance & Confession, the other for physical and psychological illness, which is the Sacrament of the Anointing of the Sick.

**✠ Institution of the Sacrament:**

We do not know the exact time or occasion when our Lord instituted this Sacrament, which is no surprise for there are many things that the Lord did that were not written one by one (**Jn 21:25**), but we know that the Lord said:

- “Heal the sick, cleanse the leper.” (**Mt 10:8**)
- “Whatever city you enter, and they received you ... heal the sick who are there.” (**Lk 10:8-9**)

We also know that the disciples:

- “Anointed with oil many who were sick, and healed them.” (**Mk 6:13**)

→ It is understood that the apostles, having been sent by the Lord, were instructed to do so.

St. James also said:

- “Is anyone among you sick? Let him call for the elders (priests) of the church, and let them pray over him, anointing him with oil in the name of the Lord. And the prayer of faith will save the sick, and the Lord will raise him up. And if he has committed sins, he will be forgiven. Confess your trespasses to one another, and pray for one another, that you may be healed.” (**Jam 5:14-16**)

→ Here St. James is talking about both the Sacraments of Confession and Anointing of the Sick. This is not an ordinary means of healing sickness because it is administered by the priests and not by any person. Since the apostles did not preach their own gospel but delivered to us what they had previously received from the Lord, Therefore, St. James must have received this teaching directly from the Lord.

**✠ FAQ:**

**Q1: Why do people sometimes receive this Sacrament and yet are not healed?**

**A1:** It could be because of their lack of faith, “He did not do many mighty works there because of their unbelief” (**Mt 13:58**) or it could be that God in His wisdom sees that this illness is beneficial to the person’s spiritual life as the case with St. Paul who prayed three times to be healed but God said to him, “My strength is made perfect in weakness” (**2 Cor 12:9**). We need to understand that in this Sacrament we do not dictate to God what to do but rather ask for his mercies.

**Q2: Why does the Church perform this Sacrament to the whole congregation on the last Friday of the Lent?**

**A2:** During the Holy Week of Pascha, the Church does not perform this Sacrament and therefore performs it and anoints the entire congregation on the last Friday of the Lent. Moreover, many are weak from fasting and this anointing helps them to continue with the scheduled prayers and food abstinence of the Pascha.

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**“It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.” (Gen 2:18)**

### **✠ Lecture XVIII: The Sacrament of Matrimony ✠**

Marriage, as a Sacrament, belongs to an entirely different order than the mere union of man and woman through civil contract. It basically regards a husband and wife as symbols of another marriage; namely, the marriage of Lord Jesus and the Church:

- “Wives, submit to your own husbands, as to the Lord ... therefore, just as the church is subject to Christ, so let the wives be to their own husbands in everything.” **(Eph 5:22,24)**
- “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself for it ... so husbands ought to love their own wives as their own bodies; he who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as the Lord does the church.” **(Eph 5:25,28-29)**

#### **✠ Institution of the Sacrament:**

Holy Scripture does not explicitly mention when our Lord instituted this Sacrament. Nevertheless, some fathers have said that He instituted it when He attended and blessed the wedding at Cana of Galilee (**Jn 2:1-11**) others have said that the Lord instituted it during His discussion with the Pharisees about divorce when He said, “What God has joined together, let no man separate” (**Mt 19:6**). In any case, St. Paul explicitly calls marriage “a great mystery [Sacrament]” (**Eph 5:32**).

#### **✠ Characteristics of an Orthodox Marriage:**

- Both husband and wife **must** be Orthodox Christians, “Do not be equally yoked together with unbelievers. For what fellowship has righteousness with lawlessness? And what communion has light with darkness? And what accord has Christ with Belial? Or what part has a believer with an unbeliever? And what agreement has the temple of God with idols? For you are the temple of the living God.” (**2 Cor 6:14-16**)
- Monogamy: “Let each man have his own wife, and let each woman have her own husband.” (**1 Cor 7:2**)
- Divorce is allowed **only** for sexual immorality reasons, “Whoever divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality and marries another, commits adultery; and whoever marries her who is divorced commits adultery” (**Mt 19:9**).

#### **✠ The Goal of an Orthodox Marriage:**

Very often couples get married for the purpose of filling certain needs that they have in their own personal lives. Therefore, they come to marriage expecting happiness, emotional well-being, personal satisfaction – without even having to work for them. When they don’t get these things, they feel cheated or blame their spouse. As Orthodox Christians, we approach marriage very differently. The goal of marriage is not the fulfillment of one’s needs; rather, the goal of marriage is heaven.

#### **✠ FAQ:**

**Q1:** St. Paul said, “The unbelieving husband is sanctified by the wife, and the unbelieving wife is sanctified by the husband” (**1 Cor 7:14**). **Is St. Paul permitting the marriage to unbelievers?**

**A1:** St. Paul is talking to people who believed and were already married yet their spouses did not accept the faith. He said before the above verse, “If any brother has a wife who does not believe, and she is willing to live with him, let him not divorce her. And a woman who has a husband who does not believe, if he is willing to live with her, let her not divorce him” (**1 Cor 7: 12-13**) then he said, “if the unbeliever departs, let him depart; a brother or a sister is not under bondage in such cases” (**1 Cor 7:15**).

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\* This lecture is adapted from ‘*The Church Sacraments*’ by Habib Guirgess.