

# **THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES**

THE TEACHING OF THE APOSTLES

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AT that time Christ was taken up to His Father; and how the apostles received the gift of the Spirit; and the Ordinances and Laws of the Church; and whither each one of the apostles went; and from whence the countries in the territory of the Romans received the ordination to the priesthood.

In the year three hundred and(2) thirty–nine of the kingdom of the Greeks, in the month Heziran,(3) on the fourth(4) day of the same, which is the first day of the week, and the end of Pentecost(5) on the selfsame day came the disciples from Nazareth of Galilee, where the conception of our Lord was announced, to the mount which is called that of the Place of Olives,(6) our Lord being with them, but not being visible to them. And at the time of early dawn our Lord lifted up His hands, and laid them upon the heads of the eleven disciples, and gave to them the gift of the priesthood. And suddenly a bright cloud received Him. And they saw Him as He was going up to heaven. And He sat down on the right hand of His Father. And they praised God because they saw His ascension according as He had told them; and they rejoiced because they had received the Right Hand conferring on them the priesthood of the house of Moses and Aaron.

And from thence they went up to the city, and(7) proceeded to an upper room that in which our Lord had observed the passover with them, and the place where the inquiries had been made: Who it was that should betray our Lord to the crucifiers? There also were made the inquiries:(8) How they should preach His Gospel in the world? And, as within the upper room the mystery of the body and of the blood of our Lord began to prevail in the world, so also from thence did the teaching of His preaching begin to have authority in the world.

And, when the disciples were cast into this perplexity, how they should preach His Gospel to men of strange tongues(8) which were unknown to them, and were speaking thus to one another: Although we are confident that Christ will perform by our hands mighty works and miracles in the presence of strange peoples whose tongues we know not, and who themselves also are unversed in our tongue, yet who shall teach them and make them understand that it is by the name of Christ who was crucified that these mighty works and miracles are done? while, I say, the disciples were occupied with these thoughts, Simon Cephas rose up, and said to them: My brethren, this matter, how we shall preach His Gospel, pertaineth not to us, but to our Lord; for He knoweth how it is possible for us to preach His Gospel in the world; and we rely on His care for us, which He promised us, saying: "When I am ascended to my Father I will send you the Spirit, the Paraclete, that He may teach you everything which it is meet for you to know, and to make known."

And, whilst Simon Cephas was saying these things to his fellow–apostles, and putting them in remembrance, a mysterious voice was heard by them, and a sweet odour, which was strange to the world, breathed upon them;(9) and tongues of fire, between the voice and the odour, came down from heaven(10) towards them, and alighted and sat on every one of them; and, according to the tongue which every one of them had severally received, so did he prepare himself to go to the country in which that tongue was spoken and heard. And, by the same gift of the Spirit which was given to them on that day, they appointed Ordinances and Laws such as were in accordance with the Gospel of their preaching, and with the true and faithful doctrine of their teaching: 1. The apostles therefore appointed: Pray ye towards the east:(1) because, "as the lightning which lighteneth from the east and is seen even to the west, so shall the coming of the Son of man be:"(2) that

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by this we might know and understand that He will appear from the east suddenly.(3) 2. The apostles further appointed: On the first day of the week let there be service, and the reading of the Holy Scriptures, and the oblation:(4) because on the first day of the week our Lord rose from the lace of the dead and on the first day of the week He arose upon the world, and on the first day of the week He ascended up to heaven, and on the first day of the week He will appear at last with the angels of heaven.(5)

3. The apostles further appointed: On the fourth(6) day of the week let there be service: because on that day our Lord made the disclosure to them about His trial,(7) and His suffering, and His crucifixion, and His death, and His resurrection; and the disciples were on account of this in sorrow.(8)

4. The apostles further appointed: On the eve of the Sabbath,(9) at the ninth hour, let there be service: because that which had been spoken on the fourth day of the week about the suffering of the Saviour was brought to pass on the same eve; the worlds and creatures trembling, and the luminaries in the heavens being darkened.

5. The apostles further appointed: Let there be elders and deacons, like the Levites;(10) and subdeacons,(11) like those who carried the vessels of the court of the sanctuary of the Lord; and an overseer,(12) who shall likewise be the Guide of all the people,(13) like Aaron, the head and chief of all the priests and Levites of the whole city.(14) 6. The apostles further appointed: Celebrate the day of the Epiphany(15) of our Saviour, which is the chief of the festivals of the Church, on the sixth day of the latter Canun,(16) in the long number of the Greeks.(17)

7. The apostles further appointed: Forty(18) days before the day of the passion of our Saviour fast ye, and then celebrate the day of the passion, and the day of the resurrection: because our Lord Himself also, the Lord of the festival, fasted forty days; and Moses and Elijah, who were endued with this mystery, likewise each fasted forty days, and then were glorified.

8. The apostles further appointed: At the conclusion of all the Scriptures other let the Gospel be read, as being the seal(19) of all the Scriptures; and let the people listen to it standing upon their feet: because it is the Gospel of the redemption of all men.

9. The apostles further appointed: At the completion of fifty(20) days after His resurrection make yea commemoration of His ascension to His glorious Father.

10. The apostles appointed: That, beside the Old Testament, and the Prophets, and the Gospel, and the Acts (of their exploits), nothing should be read on the pulpit in the church.(21)

11. The apostles further appointed: Whosoever is unacquainted with the faith of the Church and the ordinances and laws which are appointed in it, let him not be a guide and ruler; and whosoever is acquainted with them and departs from them, let him not minister again: because, not being true in his ministry, he has lied.

12. The apostles further appointed: Whosoever sweareth, or (22) lieth, or beareth false witness, or hath recourse to magicians and soothsayers and Chaldeans, and putteth confidence in fates and nativities, which they hold fast who know not God, let him also, as a man that knoweth not God, be dismissed from the ministry, and not minister again. 13. The apostles further appointed: If there be any man that is divided in mind touching the ministry, and who follows it not with a steadfast will(1), let not this man minister again: because the Lord of the ministry is not served by him with a stedfast will; and he deceiveth man only, and not God, "before whom crafty devices avail not,"(2)

14. The apostles further appointed: Whosoever lendeth and receiveth usury,(3) and is occupied in

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merchandise and covetousness, let not this man minister again, nor continue in the ministry.

15. The apostles further appointed: That whosoever loveth the Jews,(4) like Iscariot, who was their friend, or the pagans, who worship creatures instead of the Creator, should not enter in amongst them and minister; and moreover, that if he be already amongst them, they should not suffer him to remain, but that he should be separated from amongst them, and not minister with them again.

16. The apostles further appointed: That, if any one from the Jews or from the pagans come and join himself with them, and if after he has joined himself with them he turn and go back again to the side on which he stood before, and if he again return and come to them a second time, he should not be received again; but that, according to the side on which he was before, so those who know him should look upon him.

17. The apostles further appointed: That it should not be permitted to the Guide to transact the matters which pertain to the Church apart from those who minister with him; but that he should issue commands with the counsel of them all, and that that only should be done which all of them should concur in and not disapprove.(5)

18. The apostles further appointed: Whenever any shall depart out of this world with a good testimony to the faith of Christ, and with affliction borne for His name's sake, make ye a commemoration of them on the day on which they were put to death.(6)

19. The apostles further appointed: In the service of the Church repeat ye the praises of David day by day: because of this saying: "I will bless the Lord at all times, and at all times His praises shall be in my mouth;"(7) and this: "By day and by night will I meditate and speak, and cause my voice to be heard before Thee."

20. The apostles further appointed: If any divest themselves of mammon and run not after the gain of money, let these men be chosen and admitted to the ministry of the altar.

21. The apostles further appointed: Let any priest who accidentally puts another in bonds contrary to justice receive the punishment that is right; and let him that has been bound receive the bonds as if he had been equitably bound.

22. The apostles further appointed: If it be seen that those who are accustomed to hear causes show partiality, and pronounce the innocent guilty and the guilty innocent, let them never again hear another cause: thus receiving the rebuke of their partiality, as it is fit.(9)

23. The apostles further ordained: Let not those that are high-minded and lifted up with the arrogance of boasting be admitted to the ministry: because of this text: "That which is exalted among men is abominable before God;" and because concerning them it is said: "I will return a recompense upon those that vaunt themselves."

24. The apostles further appointed: Let there be a Ruler over the elders who are in the villages, and let him be recognised as head of them all, at whose hand all of them shall be required: for Samuel also thus made visits from place to place and ruled.(10)

25. The apostles further appointed: That those kings who shall hereafter believe in Christ should be permitted to go up and stand before the altar along with the Guides of the Church: because David also, and those who were like him, went up and stood before the altar.(11)

26. The apostles further appointed: Let no man dare to do anything by the authority of the priesthood which is

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not in accordance with justice and equity, but in accordance with justice, and free from the blame of partiality, let all things be done.

27. The apostles further appointed: Let the bread of the Oblation be placed upon the altar on the day on which it is baked, and not some days after a thing which is not permitted. All these things did the apostles appoint, not for themselves, but for those who should come after them for they were apprehensive that in time to come wolves would put on sheep's clothing: since for themselves the Spirit, the Paraclete, which was in them, was sufficient: that, even as He had appointed these laws by their hands, so He would guide them lawfully. For they, who had received from our Lord power and authority, had no need that laws should be appointed for them by others. For Paul also, and Timothy,(1) while they were going from place to place in the country of Syria and Cilicia, committed these same Commands and Laws of the apostles and elders to those who were under the hand of the apostles, for the churches of the countries in which they were preaching and publishing the Gospel.

The disciples, moreover, after they had appointed these Ordinances and Laws, ceased not from the preaching of the Gospel, or from the wonderful mighty-works which our Lord did by their hands. For much people was gathered about them every day, who believed in Christ; and they came to them from other cities, and heard their words and received them. Nicodemus also, and Gamaliel, chiefs of the synagogue of the Jews, used to come to the apostles in secret, agreeing with their teaching. Judas, moreover, and Levi, and Peri, and Joseph, and Justus, sons of Hananias, and Caiaphas(2) and Alexander the priests they too used to come to the apostles by night, confessing Christ that He is the Son of God; but they were afraid of the people of their own nation, so that they did not disclose their mind toward the disciples.

And the apostles received them affectionately, saying to them: Do not, by reason of the shame and fear of men, forfeit your salvation before God, nor have the blood of Christ required of yoU; even as your fathers, who took it upon them: for it is not acceptable before God, that, while ye are, in secret, with His worshippers, ye should go and associate with the murderers of His adorable Son. How do ye expect that your faith should be accepted with those that are true, whilst ye are with those that are false? But it becomes you, as men who believe in Christ, to confess openly this faith which we preach.(3)

And, when they heard these things from the Disciples, those sons of the priests, all of them alike, cried out before the whole company of the apostles: We confess and believe in Christ who was crucified, and we confess that He is from everlasting the Son of God; and those who dared to crucify Him do we renounce. For even the priests of the people in secret confess Christ; but, for the sake of the headship among the people which they love, they are not willing to confess openly; and they have forgotten that which is written:(4) "Of knowledge is He the Lord, and before Him avail not crafty devices."

And, when their fathers heard these things from their sons, they became exceedingly hostile to them: not indeed because they had believed in Christ, but because they had declared and spoken openly of the mind of their fathers before the sons of their people.

But those who believed clove to the disciples, and departed not from them, because they saw that, whatsoever they taught the multitude, they themselves carried into practice before all men; and, when affliction and persecution arose against the disciples, they rejoiced to be afflicted with them, and received with gladness stripes and imprisonment for the confession of their faith in Christ; and all the days of their life they preached Christ before the Jews and the Samaritans.

And after the death of the apostles there were Guides and Rulers(5) in the churches; and, whatsoever the apostles had committed to them and they had received from them, they continued to teach to the multitude through the whole space of their lives. They too, again, at their deaths committed and delivered to their disciples after them whatsoever they had received from the apostles; also what James had written from

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Jerusalem, and Simon from the city of Rome, and John from Ephesus, and Mark from Alexandria the Great, and Andrew from Phrygia, and Luke from Macedonia, and Judas Thomas from India: (6) that the epistles of an apostle(7) might be received and read in the churches that were in every place, just as the achievements of their Acts, which Luke wrote, are read; that hereby the apostles might be known, and the prophets, and the Old Testament and the New;(8) that so might be seen one truth was proclaimed in them all: that one Spirit spoke in them all, from one God whom they had all worshipped and had all preached. And the divers countries received their teaching. Everything, therefore, which had been spoken by our Lord by means of the apostles, and which the apostles had delivered to their disciples, was believed and received in every country, by the operation(1) of our Lord, who said to them: "I am with you, even until the world shall end;" the Guides disputing with the Jews from the books of the prophets, and contending also against the deluded pagans with the terrible mighty-works which they did in the name of Christ. For all the peoples, even those that dwell in other countries, quietly and silently received(2) the Gospel of Christ; and those who became confessors cried out under their persecution: This our persecution to-day shall plead(3) on our behalf, lest we be punished, for having been formerly persecutors ourselves. For there were some of them against whom death by the sword was ordered; and there were some of them from whom they took away whatsoever they possessed, and let them go.(4) And the more affliction arose against them, the richer and larger did their congregations become; and with gladness in their hearts did they receive death of every kind. And by ordination to the priesthood, which the apostles themselves had received from our Lord, did their Gospel wing its way rapidly into the four quarters of the world. And by mutual visitation they ministered to one another.

1. Jerusalem received the ordination to the priesthood, as did all the country of Palestine, and the parts occupied by the Samaritans, and the parts occupied by the Philistines, and the country of the Arabians, and of Phoenicia, and the people of Caesarea, from James, who was ruler and guide in the church of the apostles which was built in Zion.

2. Alexandria the Great, and Thebais, and the whole of Inner Egypt, and all the country of Pelusium,(5) and extending as far as the borders of the Indians, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Mark the evangelist, who was ruler and guide there in the church which he had built, in which he also ministered.

3. India,(6) and all the countries belonging to it and round about it, even to the farthest sea, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Judas Thomas, who was guide and ruler in the church which he had built there, in which he also ministered there.

4. Antioch, and Syria, and Cilicia, and Galatia, even to Pontus, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Simon Cephas, who himself laid the foundation of the church there,(7) and was priest and ministered there up to the time when he went up from thence to Rome on account of Simon the sorcerer, who was deluding the people of Rome with his sorceries.(8)

5. The city of Rome, and all Italy, and Spain, and Britain, and Gaul, together with all the rest of the countries round about them, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Simon Cephas, who went up from Antioch; and he was ruler and guide there, in the church which he had built there, and in the places round about it.(9)

6. Ephesus, and Thessalonica, and all Asia, and all the country of the Corinthians, and of all Achaia and the parts round about it, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from John the evangelist, who had leaned upon the bosom of our Lord; who himself built a church there, and ministered in his office of Guide which he held there.

7. Nicaea, and Nicomedia, and all the country of Bithynia, and of Inner Galatia,(10) and of the regions round about it, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Andrew, the brother of Simon Cephas, who

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was himself Guide and Ruler in the church which he had built there, and was priest and ministered there.

8. Byzantium, and all the country of Thrace, and of the parts about it as far as the great river,(11) the boundary which separates from the barbarians, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Luke the apostle, who himself built a church there, and ministered there in his office of Ruler and Guide which he held there.

9. Edessa, and all the countries round about it which were on all sides of it, and Zoba,(12) and Arabia, and all the north, and the regions round about it, and the south, and all the regions on the borders of Mesopotamia, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Addaeus the apostle, one of the seventy-two apostles,(13) who himself made disciples there, and built a church there, and was priest and ministered there in his office of Guide which he held there.

10. The whole of Persia, of the Assyrians, and of the Armenians, and of the Medians, and of the countries round about Babylon, the Huzites and the Gelae, as far as the borders of the Indians, and as far as the land(14) of Gog and Magog, and moreover all the countries on all sides, received the apostles' ordination to the priesthood from Aggaeus, a maker of silks,(1) the disciple of Addaeus the apostle.

The other remaining companions of the apostles, moreover went to the distant countries of the barbarians; and they made disciples from place to place and passed on; and there they ministered by their preaching; and there occurred their departure out of this world, their disciples after them going on with the work down to the present day, nor was any change or addition made by them in their preaching.

Luke, moreover, the evangelist had such diligence that he wrote the exploits of the Acts of the Apostles, and the ordinances and laws of the ministry of their priesthood, and whither each one of them went. By his diligence, I say, did Luke write these things, and more than these; and he placed them in the hand of Priscus(2) and Aquilus, his disciples; and they accompanied him up to the day of his death, just as Timothy and Erastus of Lystra, and Menaus,(3) the first disciples of the apostles, accompanied Paul until he was taken up to the city of Rome because he had withstood Tertullus the orator.(4)

And Nero Caesar despatched with the sword Simon Cephas in the city of Rome.(5) ANCIENT SYRIAC DOCUMENTS