

# Defending the Faith

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June 2019

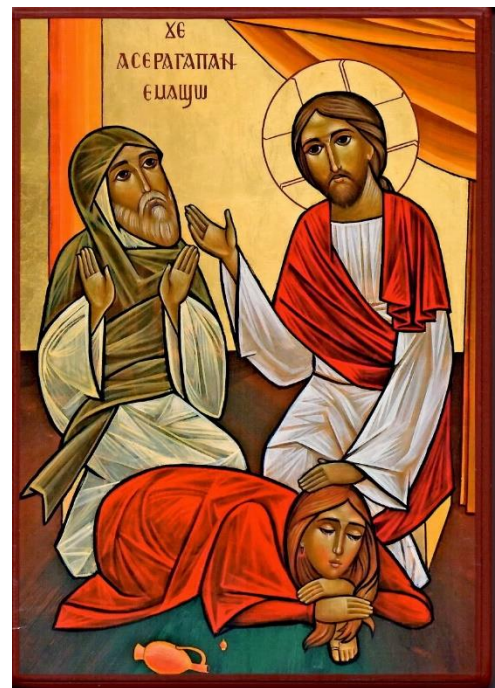
## What's in a Name?

Have you ever run across the genealogies in the Bible? They go on and on and on. There are genealogies listed in Genesis, Exodus, an extensive list in 1 Chronicles, and of course, the genealogies of Jesus in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. In reading any passage in scripture, I am often struck by how many people are named and that does not count how many stories are told of those who are not named, such as the “paralytic” or the “Samaritan women at the well.” I could not locate a total of how many people are listed in the Bible, but one source said there are possibly over 3000 individuals, and about 1,300 who are named. I think there may be even more!

The use of specific names of individuals underscores the historicity of the Bible accounts, which are often detailed accounts about various people and also include definite names of places. Every day, archaeologists uncover more evidence to support the historical accuracy of the Bible through the names of people and places which appear among their discoveries. However, it seems to me that the plethora of people in scripture indicates how precious we are to God. He knows every single person intimately, and He loves us all! Because of the accounts in scripture, many of these individuals are now remembered even thousands of years later.

One day when Jesus was having dinner, a woman came with an alabaster jar filled with expensive ointment. She used it to anoint Jesus by pouring it over His head and then proceeded to bathe His feet with her tears and dried them with her hair. This was such a beautiful act of love that Jesus proclaimed, *“Truly I tell you, wherever this good news is proclaimed in the whole world, what she has done will be told in remembrance of her”* (Matthew 26:13). We do not know her name, but we know what she did. We remember her. In our Orthodox tradition, when a loved one passes away, we say “May his/her memory be eternal.” We keep them alive in our hearts by remembering them.

We are frequently told how precious many of God's people were to Him. For example, we are told that David was



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## What's in a Name? (cont'd)

a man after God's heart (1 Samuel 13:14). Moses "*considered abuse suffered for the Christ to be greater wealth than the treasures of Egypt, for he was looking ahead to the reward*" (Hebrews 11:26). According to Jesus, "*Truly I tell you, among those born of women no one has arisen greater than John the Baptist*" (Matthew 11:11). God told Jeremiah, "*Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, and before you were born I consecrated you; I appointed you a prophet to the nations*" (Jeremiah 1:5). More often, scriptures reveal the characteristics of many through the stories told about them.

Names have a specific significance to God. Names have meanings which, especially in ancient times, reflected something about the individual. For example, Adam means "earth," having been made from the earth, and Eve means "living." David means "beloved," Moses means "drawn from the water" and John means "God has been gracious." What does your name mean?

The first thing that God told Adam to do was to name all the animals. Presumably, Adam was being asked to assign a name that was descriptive and meaningful for each animal. It must have been an arduous task, considering the vast number of animals that exist. However, human beings were God's greatest creation, made in His own image! David declared, "*I praise you, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made*" (Psalms 139:14). In reading scripture, it is difficult to escape the conclusion that every person is important to God. Every person is remembered. Even those of ill-repute are

remembered, such as Judas Iscariot who betrayed Jesus, Caiaphas the high priest who manipulated the arrest and execution of Christ, and Jezebel the idolatress who murdered God's prophets and sacrificed babies to her pagan gods.

In a few cases, God changed the names of a few, such as Abram, meaning "high father," became Abraham, "the father of many nations." Sarai, meaning "quarrelsome," became Sarah or "princess." Jacob's name is translated as "supplanter" because Jacob stole the birthright of his older twin brother Esau by deceiving his father (Genesis 27). It was changed to Israel, meaning he "who struggles with God" because Jacob wrestled with God's angel to obtain a blessing (Genesis 32). It is also meaningful as the name of the nation, which struggled in being faithful to God throughout its existence. Jesus changed the name of His disciple, Simon, meaning he "who hears," to Peter the "rock." For God, names signify something about the person, so when He changes someone's name, it signifies a crucial transformation. Peter's transformation began when he recognized Jesus as the Son of God.





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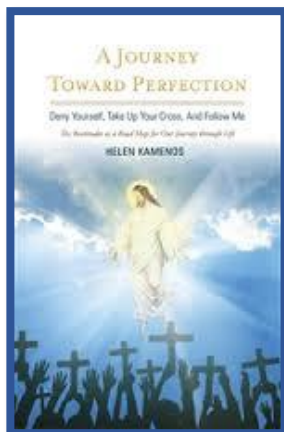
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When early Christians were baptized, they often changed their pagan names to the names of saints to reflect their transformation to the faith. In following this ancient Orthodox tradition, there have been many named Mary, Nicholas, Constantine, or Demetrious. These were very popular saints. Even today, Orthodox monks often change their names to symbolize their rebirth upon taking their vows to live a monastic life. When Orthodox converts are baptized, they may change their name, if they are not already named after a recognized Orthodox saint. It becomes our baptismal name and signifies our commitment to our faith. In Orthodox countries, name days, which are celebrated on each saint's feast day, are more important than birthdays. They symbolize our spiritual rebirth into the Christian life.

Christ admonishes the seven churches in Revelation, *"To everyone who conquers...I will give a white stone, and on the white stone is written a new name that no one knows except the one who receives it"* (Revelation 2:17). Perhaps when we become a "new creation" in Christ, we shall also *"be called by a new name that the mouth of the LORD will give"* (Isaiah 62:2). God also maintains the "Book of Life," which contains all the names of those who will be victorious and receive salvation. Christ warns, *"If you conquer, you will be clothed like them in white robes, and I will not blot your name out of the book of life; I will confess your name before my Father and before his angels"* (Revelation 3:5). Our names are significant.

*"A good name is to be chosen rather than great riches"* (Proverbs 22:1). This verse in Proverbs teaches us that a good name is synonymous with our reputation. It is who we are. When one thinks of us, our name and reputation is attached to all the memories, experiences, feelings and emotions which are evoked in remembering us. This is why our name is more cherished than great riches. It is how we are remembered. What's in a name? Everything that we are!

Helen Kamenos  
Readers' Favorite Author



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## Ascension - June 6

### Acts 1:3-11

*“After his suffering he presented himself alive to them by many convincing proofs, appearing to them during forty days and speaking about the kingdom of God. While staying with them, he ordered them not to leave Jerusalem, but to wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with<sup>bl</sup> the Holy Spirit not many days from now.”*

*So when they had come together, they asked him, “Lord, is this the time when you will restore the kingdom to Israel?” He replied, “It is not for you to know the times or periods that the Father has set by his own authority. But you will receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you will be my witnesses in Jerusalem, in all Judea and Samaria, and to the ends of the earth.” When he had said this, as they were watching, he was lifted up, and a cloud took him out of their sight. While he was going and they were gazing up toward heaven, suddenly two men in white robes stood by them. They said, “Men of Galilee, why do you stand looking up toward heaven? This Jesus, who has been taken up from you into heaven, will come in the same way as you saw him go into heaven.”*

## Pentacost - June 16

On Sunday, June 16, we will celebrate the birth of the Church. Christ’s Church was founded on Pentecost, 50 days after the resurrection of Christ. Before ascending into heaven, Christ had given the eleven disciples instructions to remain in Jerusalem and “wait there for the promise of the Father. “This,” he said, “is what you have heard from me; for John baptized with water, but you will be baptized with the Holy Spirit not many days from now” (Acts 1 4-5). They were to wait until they were baptized by the Holy Spirit. The disciples chose Matthias to replace Judas Iscariot. On the day of Pentecost, the twelve Apostles were gathered.

*“And suddenly from heaven there came a sound like the rush of a violent wind, and it filled the entire house where they were sitting. Divided tongues, as of fire, appeared among them, and a tongue rested on each of them. All of them were filled with the Holy Spirit and began to speak in other languages, as the Spirit gave them ability” (Acts 2:3-4).*



According to Acts, after witnessing this event and hearing Peter and the other Apostles speaking in all of their own languages, languages that the Apostles did not know prior to receiving the Holy Spirit, those in the crowd “were cut to the heart” (Acts 2:37), repented, and about three thousand were baptized and became followers of Christ. From these humble beginnings, Christianity spread across the globe to include billions who call themselves Christians today. We are grateful for the twelve Apostles and Paul of Tarsus, who began a ministry of spreading the gospel or “Good News” throughout the known world.

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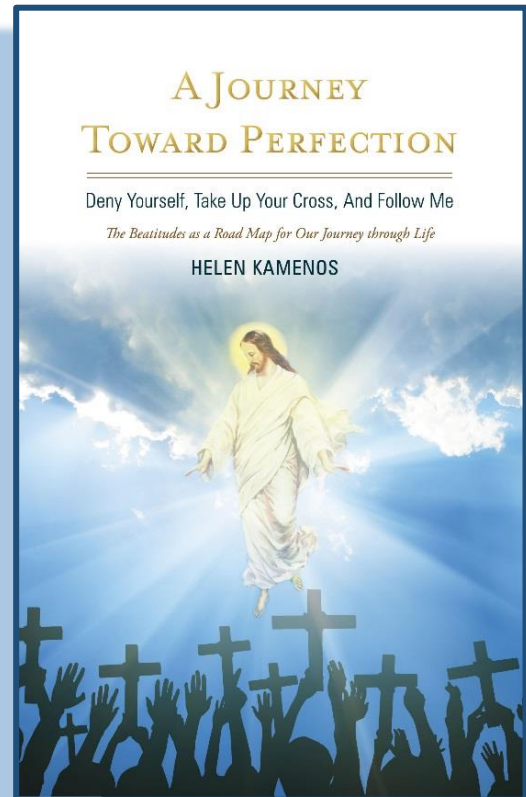
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## A Journey Toward Perfection

A *Journey Toward Perfection* reveals a path toward developing an intimate experiential relationship with God. It is an in-depth study of the attributes of the Beatitudes in Matthew 5, bestowed upon us by God when He created us in His image. He created us to love. These are the traits necessary to love others as God loves us and are central to our Christian spiritual growth. Discover how these attributes can sustain you through the many trials and tribulations of your life. Comprehend how love truly conquers all. Experience God's true presence in your life. Choose to be transformed "into the image of Christ."

### The Beatitudes from Matthew 5:

- <sup>3</sup> *Blessed are the poor in spirit,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- <sup>4</sup> *Blessed are those who mourn,  
For they shall be comforted.*
- <sup>5</sup> *Blessed are the meek,  
For they shall inherit the earth.*
- <sup>6</sup> *Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness,  
For they shall be filled.*
- <sup>7</sup> *Blessed are the merciful,  
For they shall obtain mercy.*
- <sup>8</sup> *Blessed are the pure in heart,  
For they shall see God.*
- <sup>9</sup> *Blessed are the peacemakers,  
For they shall be called sons of God.*
- <sup>10</sup> *Blessed are those who are persecuted for righteousness' sake,  
For theirs is the kingdom of heaven.*
- <sup>11</sup> *"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.*
- <sup>12</sup> *Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven, for so they persecuted the prophets who were before you.*



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