

The Cloud of Witnesses

“Keep watch over yourselves and all the flock of which the Holy Spirit has made you overseers. Be shepherds of the church of God, which he bought with his own blood. I know that after I leave, savage wolves will come in among you and will not spare the flock. Even from your own number men will arise and distort the truth in order to draw away disciples after them. So be on your guard!”

- Acts 20:28-31a (Paul speaking to the elders of the Ephesian church)

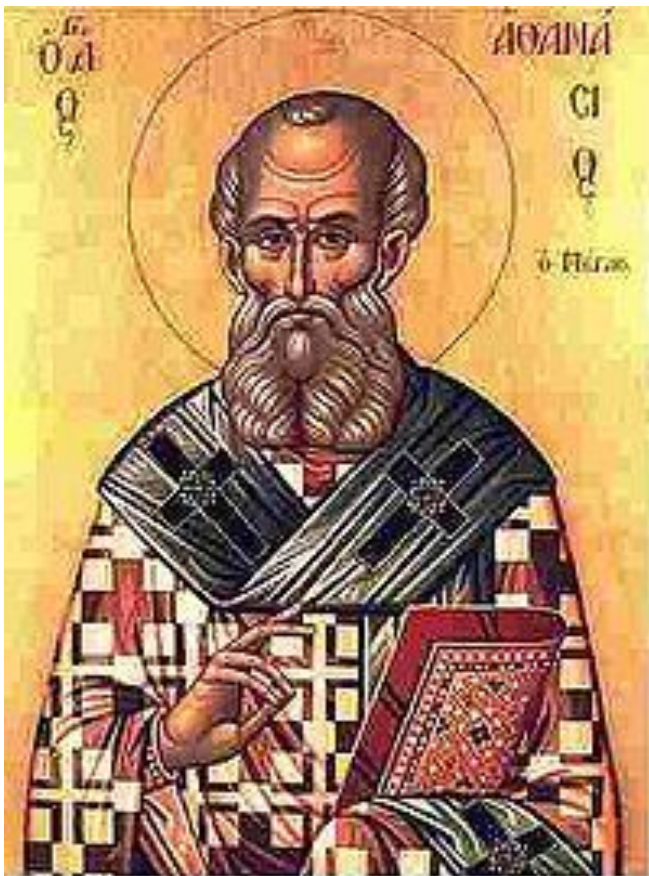
“As servants of God we commend ourselves in every way: in great endurance; in troubles, hardships, and distresses; in beatings, imprisonments, and riots; in hard work, sleepless nights, and hunger; in purity, understanding, patience, and kindness; in the Holy Spirit and in sincere love.”

- 2 Corinthians 6:4-6

“In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God.”

- John 1:1

Athanasius



- Athanasius (296-373 AD) served as the Bishop of Alexandria for 45 years, 17 of which were spent in five separate exiles.

- He was known as “Athanasius contra mundi” (“Athanasius against the world”) for his courage in standing up against the popular heresy of Arianism. (Arianism was the name for a system of belief which held that Jesus was simply a created being, not equal in Godhood with the Father—similar to what today’s Jehovah’s Witnesses believe.)

- He was one of the leading voices at the greatest of all church councils, the Council of Nicea (325 AD), which affirmed biblical doctrine about Jesus.

- He is regarded as one of the greatest leaders and theologians the Christian church has ever known.

- He was a key figure in popularizing monastic spirituality (as the author of *The Life of Antony*) and in the development of incarnation theology (the doctrine of Christ).

Athanasian theology provides us with a full-orbed vision of what Jesus did for us—not just saving us from sin and getting us into heaven, but re-creating humanity. Because of Jesus’ incarnation, death, and resurrection, we are now...

- free from sin, death, and Satan
- fully restored as human beings
- spiritually resurrected and awaiting the resurrection of the body
- able to share in the very life and nature of God



“Jesus, whom I know as my Redeemer, cannot be less than God.”

- Athanasius, spoken at the Council of Nicea

(Picture: Emperor Constantine and the church fathers at the Council of Nicea)

Quotes about what Jesus accomplished (from Athanasius' On the Incarnation):

“There were thus two things which the Savior did for us by becoming Man. He banished death from us and made us anew; and, invisible and imperceptible as in Himself He is, He became visible through His works.”

“The supreme object of His coming was to bring about the resurrection of the body.”

“For the solidarity of mankind is such that, by virtue of the Word’s indwelling in a single human body, the corruption which goes with death has lost its power over all...He has come into our country and dwelt in one body amidst the many, and in consequence the designs of the enemy against mankind have been foiled and the corruption of death, which formerly held them in its power, has simply ceased to be...Thus by His own power He restored the whole nature of man.”

“It is He Himself who brought death to nought and daily raises monuments to His victory in His own disciples.”

“Again, who has ever so rid men of their natural passions that fornicators become chaste and murderers no longer wield the sword and those who formerly were craven cowards boldly play the man? In a word, what persuaded the barbarians and heathen folk in every place to drop their madness and give heed to peace, save the faith of Christ and the sign of the cross?...For in truth the disciples of Christ, instead of fighting each other, stand arrayed against demons by their habits and virtuous actions, and chase them away and mock at their captain the devil. Even in youth they are chaste, they endure in times of testing and persevere in toils. When they are insulted, they are patient, when robbed they make light of it, and, marvelous to relate, they make light even of death itself, and become martyrs of Christ.”

“He, indeed, assumed humanity that we might become [sharers in] God.”

(see 2 Pet. 1:4—we can “participate in the divine nature”)