

Introduction to the Greek Lectionary pt. 3

There is little that is more confusing concerning the text of the Greek lectionary to the West than the calendar and plan of the lectionary text. To the East, it is well known and has been for almost two thousand years for those in service and laity of the Church. In this last part to our study and overview of the Greek lectionary, we will touch on the calendar readings within the synaxarion and menologion sections of the lectionary.

As noted in part two of our study of the Greek lectionary, the synaxarion begins with the Gospel of St. John which contains pericopae from Easter (Pascha) until Pentecost with Johannine daily readings from through Saturday and Sunday as well. It could be described textually as the section most significant and complete in the lectionary with its continuous Johannine pericopae lections running for eight weeks. Textually important as well are the many variant readings in John contained in this section of the synaxarion which have significance for the overall development of the lectionary as a separate service book in the history of the Church.

The lection read for (Pascha) comes from St. John 1:1-17 and continues on through to Pentecost ending with John 7:37-52; 8:12. The PA or *pericopae adulterae* is added with some frequency in the manuscript tradition at the April 1 reading dedicated to Our Holy Mary Mother of Egypt reading in the menologion. The textual significance and variations that Prof. Antoniades saw in the two types of lectionary texts can readily be seen in this Johannine section. It should be remembered that the two differing textual profiles identified by Prof. Antoniades vary in textual profile from the synaxarion to the later section of the menologion. This is already found in the Gospel of John in the earlier type of Greek lectionary. Apparently over time, the synaxarion and menologion section added later unified the two textual profiles to a later traditional type of text.

The Matthean section follows the Johannine pericopae after Pentecost and continues on for seventeen weeks starting with the Monday reading called the Feast of the Holy Spirit with the lection pericope being taken from (Mt. 18:10-20). The section ends with the Sunday of the Canaanite Woman (Mt. 15:21-28). The lectionary manuscripts at the beginning of the Matthean section usually contain a headpiece and or icon for St. Matthew as is the case for the beginning of each gospel section in the lectionary. Continuous readings from St. Matthew continue on through the twelfth week after Pentecost with a Markan (Mk. 1:9-15) reading at Monday of the Twelfth week and with readings from St. Mark for the entire week. From the Twelfth through the seventeenth week the readings are divided between Matthean pericopae being more frequent earlier and those of Markan pericopae being more numerous towards the latter part nearing the seventeenth week.

The Gospel of St. Luke pericopae section begins on Monday with the Baptism of Christ (Lk. 3:19-22 and ends nineteen weeks later at the Great Feast of Lent. Markan lections as in the case of the Matthean section become more numerous later in the Lukan section nearing the Lenten season. There are also many important textual variations in both the Matthean and Lukan sections which can identify the two lectionary types, yet the number of variants in the

Johannine section clearly distinguishes the two more clearly in comparison to the later Menologion section of the lectionary.

At the end of the First Week of Lent the Markan section to the Lectionary begins with a lection from (Mk. 2:23-3:5) on Saturday of Clean Week. The Markan lections pericopae are then read for five weeks of Lent and end with Saturday of Lazarus (Jn. 11:1-45). Readings from St. Matthew and St. John follow for Palm Sunday. Following Palm Sunday, the readings for Holy and Great Week begin with lections coming mainly Matthean and Johannine pericopae. The Holy Week section ends with the Saturday, (Matthew 28:1-10).

Depending on each lectionary manuscript, the menologion may begin at this point or as in modern lectionaries give matin readings between the ending of the Holy Week and the beginning of the menologion section. The menologion or fixed calendar readings begin the year at September 1st. The textual profile of the lections changes in many manuscripts to a later traditional text form. In many it is like a switch that has been clicked that it is so evident. Clearly, the manuscript exemplars with the inclusion of the menologion was of a later type and at the same time both being from traditional texts origins as opposed to some mistakenly believing that the earlier type was of a Caesarean or even an Alexandrian extraction in textual origin. This has clearly been a common misunderstanding in modern textual critics when examining the textual profiles of lectionary manuscripts. Both types as Prof. Antoniadis found were clearly from the traditional text tradition.

The menologion section of the lectionary beginning at September 1st continues on through the year with various lections from all four gospels. Not all feast days for the saints were set throughout the churches. It is evident from the Greek manuscripts extant that the menologion pericopae varied from church to church with the particular feast day depending on the importance of one saint or another for a given day. There is some harmony throughout for the primary saints, but there was evidently some freedom to proclaim the dedicated saint with a feast day. The menologion ends at year end with the Feast to the Deposition of the Most Holy Theotokos with the reading either being from Luke or John.

Lectionary manuscripts also have ending sections dedicated to various other important feasts days dedicated to various events in the lives of the saints from Scripture or other another post-biblical saint of the Church. Many Greek lectionary manuscripts end with the lections from the resurrected Christ pericopae from all four gospels but usually end as they began in the manuscript with resurrected Christ lection from St. John chapter 21 this ending the lectionary manuscript.

It is hoped that this brief introduction was both informative and instructional to begin further study into the Greek lectionary. This form of manuscript cannot be ignored any longer. It's text being underemphasized for its importance in both the development and transmission of the traditional majority text of the New Testament.

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