

Sunday of the Last Judgment / Meatfare



The Last Judgment, Visoki Dečani Monastery; Kosovo, Serbia

Kontakion, Triodion, Last Judgement - Tone 1

When Thou, O God, shalt come to earth with glory,
all things shall tremble,
and the river of fire shall flow before Thy judgment seat;
the books shall be opened, and the hidden things disclosed;
then deliver me from the unquenchable fire, //
and make me worthy to stand at Thy right hand, O Righteous Judge!

The Prokeimenon

The Prokeimenon in the 3rd Tone: Great is our Lord, and Abundant in power, His understanding is beyond measure. *(Ps 146 [147]: 5)*

verse: Praise the Lord! For it is good to sing praises to our God! *(Ps 146 [147]: 1)*

The Epistle

§ 140: I Corinthians 8: 8 – 9: 2

The reading from the [first] Epistle of the Holy Apostle Paul to the Corinthians.

BRETHREN, meat does not commend us to God;

for neither if we eat are we the better, nor if we do not eat are we the worse.

But beware lest somehow this liberty of yours become a stumbling block to them that are weak.

For if any man see thee which hast knowledge eating in an idol's temple, shall not the conscience of him which is weak be emboldened

to eat those things offered to idols?

And through thy knowledge shall the weak brother perish, for whom Christ died?

Now when you thus sin against the brethren, and wound their weak conscience, you sin against Christ.

Therefore, if food makes my brother stumble, I will never again eat meat, lest I make my brother stumble.

Am I not an apostle? Am I not free? Have I not seen Jesus Christ our Lord?

Are you not my work in the Lord?

If I am not an apostle unto others, yet doubtless I am to you;

For you are the seal of my apostleship in the Lord.

The Alleluia – Tone 8

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

verse: Come, let us rejoice in the Lord! Let us make a joyful noise to God our Savior!
(Sunday) (Ps 94 [95]: 1)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

verse: Let us come before His face with thanksgiving; let us make a joyful noise to Him with songs of praise! (Ps 94 [95]: 2)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.

The Gospel

§ 106: Matthew 25: 31 – 36 (Sunday)

THE LORD SAID: When the Son of man shall come in his glory, and all the holy angels with him, then shall he sit upon the throne of his glory:

³² And before him shall be gathered all nations:

and he shall separate them one from another,

as a shepherd divideth his sheep from the goats:

³³ And he shall set the sheep on his right hand, but the goats on the left.

³⁴ Then shall the King say unto them on his right hand, Come, ye blessed of my Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:

³⁵ For I was an hungred, and ye gave me meat: I was thirsty, and ye gave me drink: I was a stranger, and ye took me in:

³⁶ Naked, and ye clothed me: I was sick, and ye visited me: I was in prison,

and ye came unto me.

³⁷ Then shall the righteous answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, and fed thee? or thirsty, and gave thee drink?

³⁸ When saw we thee a stranger, and took thee in? or naked, and clothed thee?

³⁹ Or when saw we thee sick, or in prison, and came unto thee?

⁴⁰ And the King shall answer and say unto them, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye have done it unto one of the least of these my brethren, ye have done it unto me.

⁴¹ Then shall he say also unto them on the left hand, Depart from me, ye cursed, into everlasting fire, prepared for the devil and his angels:

⁴² For I was an hungred, and ye gave me no meat:
I was thirsty, and ye gave me no drink:

⁴³ I was a stranger, and ye took me not in: naked, and ye clothed me not:
sick, and in prison, and ye visited me not.

⁴⁴ Then shall they also answer him, saying, Lord, when saw we thee an hungred, or athirst, or a stranger, or naked, or sick, or in prison, and did not minister unto thee?

⁴⁵ Then shall he answer them, saying, Verily I say unto you, Inasmuch as ye did it not to one of the least of these, ye did it not to me.

⁴⁶ And these shall go away into everlasting punishment:
but the righteous into life eternal.

Communion Hymns

Praise the Lord from the heavens! Praise Him in the highest! *(Sunday) (Ps 148: 1)*

Rejoice in the Lord, O you righteous; praise befits the just! *(Meatfare Sunday)*

(Ps 32 [33]: 1)

Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia.



*The Angel rolls up the heavens as a scroll, detail,
Last Judgment fresco, Church of the Savior at Chora, Constantinople.*

Psalm 136 [137]

By the waters of Babylon,
 there we sat down and wept,
 when we remembered Zion. **Alleluia!**
 On the willows there
 we hung up our lyres. **Alleluia!**
 For there our captors
 required of us songs,
 and our tormentors, mirth, saying,
 "Sing us one of the songs of Zion!" **Alleluia!**
 How shall we sing the Lord's song
 in a foreign land? **Alleluia!**
 If I forget thee, O Jerusalem,
 let my right hand wither! **Alleluia!**
 Let my tongue cleave to the roof of my mouth,
 if I do not remember thee,
 if I do not set Jerusalem
 above my highest joy! **Alleluia!**
 Remember, O Lord, against the Edomites
 the day of Jerusalem, **Alleluia!**
 how they said, "Down with it, down with it!
 Down to its foundations!" **Alleluia!**
 O daughter of Babylon, thou wretched one!
 Blessed shall he be who requites thee
 with what thou hast done to us! **Alleluia!**
 Blessed shall he be who takes thy little ones
 and dashes them against the rock! **Alleluia!**



*The Last Judgment,
 Sinai Icon, 12 C*

Stikhera of Repentance

Sung from the Triodion on the Sundays of Pre-Lent and Great Lent.

Tone 8

verse: **Glory to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit;**

Open to me the gates of repentance, O Giver of Life,
 For my spirit rises early to pray towards thy holy temple.
 Bearing the temple of my body all defiled;
 But in Thy compassion, //
 purify me by the loving kindness of Thy mercy.

verse: **Now and ever and unto ages of ages. Amen.**

Lead me on the paths of salvation, O Mother of God,
 For I have profaned my soul with shameful sins,
 and have wasted my life in laziness.
 But by thine intercessions, //
 deliver me from all impurity.

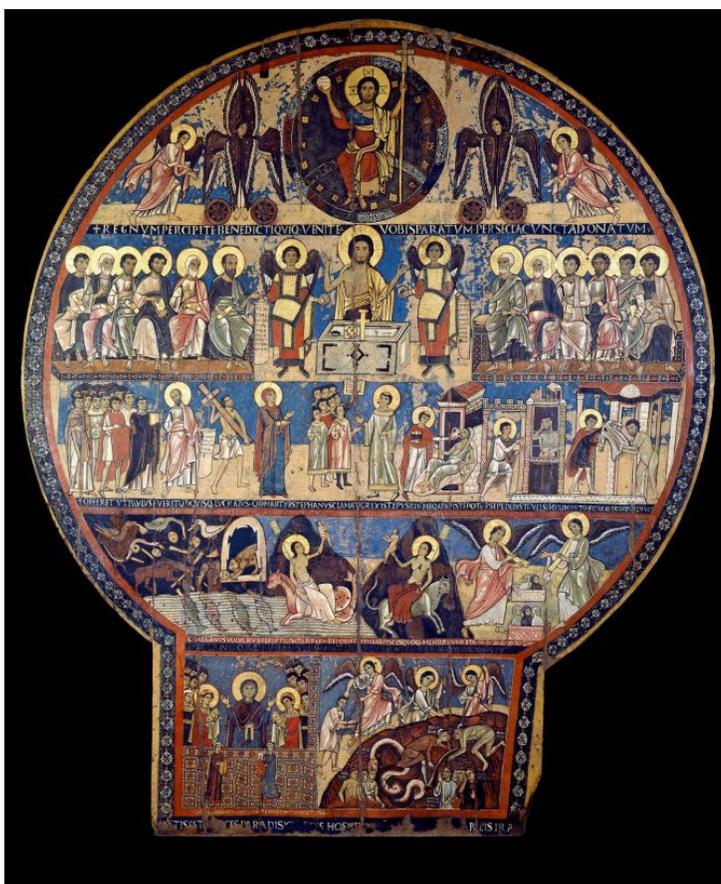
Tone 6

Have mercy on me, O God,
 according to Thy great mercy;
 according to Thine abundant mercy, //
 blot out my transgression!

When I think of the many evil things I have done,
wretch that I am,
 I tremble at the fearful day of judgement.
 But trusting in Thy living kindness,
 like David I cry to Thee:
 Have mercy on me, O God, //
 according to Thy great mercy.

Kontakion, Triodion, Last Judgement - Tone 1

When Thou, O God, shalt come
 to earth with glory, / all things
 shall tremble, / and the river of
 fire shall flow before Thy
 judgment seat; / the books
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 deliver me from the
 unquenchable fire, // and
 make me worthy to stand at
 Thy right hand, O Righteous
 Judge!



Lord, I call. Tone 6 – Podoben: *“Having placed all their hope ...”*

When Thou shalt come, O righteous Judge, / to execute just judgment, / seated on Thy throne of glory, / a river of fire will draw all men amazed before Thy judgment-seat; / the powers of heaven will stand beside Thee, / and in fear man kind will be judged / according to the deeds that each has done. / Then spare us, Christ, in Thy compassion / with faith we entreat Thee, / and count us worthy of Thy blessings, // with those that are saved.

The books will be opened / and the acts of men will be revealed before the unbearable judgment seat; / and the whole vale of sorrow shall echo with the fearful sound of lamentation, / as all the sinners, weeping in vain, / are sent by Thy just judgment to everlasting torment. / Therefore, we beseech Thee, O compassionate and loving Lord: / spare us who sing Thy praise, // for Thou alone art rich in mercy.

The trumpets shall sound and the tombs shall be emptied, / and all mankind in trembling shall be raised. / Those that have done good shall rejoice in gladness, / waiting their reward; / those that have sinned shall tremble and bitterly lament, / as they are sent to punishment / and parted from the chosen. / O Lord of glory, / take pity on us in Thy goodness, / and count us worthy of a place // with them that have loved Thee.

I lament and weep when I think of the eternal fire, / the outer darkness and the nether world, / the dread worm and the gnashing of teeth, / and the unceasing anguish that shall befall those who have sinned without measure, / by their wickedness arousing Thee to anger, O Supreme in love. / Among them in my misery, I am first, / but, O Judge compassionate, // in Thy mercy, save me.

Tone 8 When the thrones are set up and the books are opened / and God sits in judgment, / what fear there will be then! / When the angels stand trembling in Thy presence / and the river of fire flows before Thee, / what shall we do then, guilty of many sins? / When we hear Him call the blessed of His Father into the Kingdom / but send the sinners to their punishment, / who shall endure His fearful condemnation? / But Saviour who alone lovest mankind, / King of the ages, before the end comes // turn me back through repentance and have mercy on me.

The Apostikha – Tone 8

Alas, black soul! / How long wilt thou continue in evil? / How long wilt thou lie in idleness? / Why dost thou not think of the fearful hour of death? / Why dost thou not tremble at the dread judgment seat of the Savior? / What defense wilt thou make, or what wilt thou answer? / Thy works will be there to accuse thee; / thine actions will reproach thee and condemn thee. / O my soul, the time is near at hand; / make haste before it is too late, / and cry aloud in faith: / I have sinned, O Lord, / I have sinned against Thee; / but I know Thy love for man and Thy compassion. / O good Shepherd, // deprive me not of a place at Thy right hand in Thy great mercy.

On Sunday evening at the Aposticha, this Idiomelon. This opens Cheese-week. TONE 8

Through greed we underwent the first stripping, overcome by the bitter tasting of the fruit, and we became exiles from God. But let us turn back to repentance and, fasting from the food that gives us pleasure, let us cleanse our senses on which the enemy makes war. Let us strengthen our hearts with the hope of grace, and not with foods which brought no benefit to those who trusted in them. Our food shall be the Lamb of God, on the holy and radiant night of His Awakening: the Victim offered for us, given in communion to the disciples on the evening of the Mystery, who disperses the darkness of ignorance by the Light of His Resurrection. *cf Heb. 13: 10; John 1: 29; I Cor. 5: 7-8; 11: 24.*



Last Judgment fresco, Church of the Savior at Chora, Constantinople.

Sermon on the Sunday of the Last Judgement

Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh,

13th February 1972

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Ghost.

Today, on our preparation journey towards Lent, we have come to an ultimate stage: we are confronted with judgement. If we pay attention to it, next week our spiritual destiny will be in our own hands, because next week is the day of Forgiveness.

The link between these two days is too obvious. If we only could become aware that all and each of us stand before the judgement of God and the judgement of men, if we could remember and realise with depth, wholeheartedly, in earnest that we are, all of us, indebted to each other, all responsible to each other for some of the pain and the heaviness of life, then we would find it easy, when we are asked to forgive, not only to forgive, but, in response to this request, to ask for forgiveness ourselves.

It is not only by what we do, not only in a way by what we leave undone, it is by this extraordinary lack of awareness, of our responsibility, of all we could be to others, and to do to others, that we do not fulfil our human vocation. We could, and we should, on all levels and for all men, and beyond men for the whole world which is ours, be a blessing and a revelation of things great, of things so great, so deep that people, we first of all, could realise that we are on the scale of God Himself, that our vocation is not only to be morally good, but to be as great as God. A mystic of Germany said in one of his poems 'I am as great as God, God is as small as I.'

If we only could remember this, and this is why the judgement is not only a moment when we are confronted with a danger of condemnation; there is in the very notion of judgement something great and inspiring. We are not going to be judged according to human standards of behaviour of decency. We are going to be judged according to standards which are beyond human ordinary life. We are going to be judged on the scale of God, and the scale of God is love: not love felt, not an emotional love, but love lived and accomplished. The fact that we are going to be judged, that indeed we are being judged all the time, above our means, beyond all our smallness must, should reveal to us our potential greatness. And the parable which we have read today can be seen in those very terms: men are judged by Christ, in His parable, on humanity. Have these men been human or not? Have they known how to love in their hearts first, but also in action, in their very deeds because, as Saint John puts it, one who says that he loves God and does not love his neighbour actively, creatively is a liar. There is no love of God if it is not expressed in every detail of our relationship with men, with people and with each person.

And so, let us this week prepare ourselves for the final stage of our journey by asking ourselves in the face of this divine judgement, 'Am I human? Am I human within myself, in my behaviour - not my general attitude, but my ways: are they human? Is my life an expression of a fine, a thoughtful, a perceptive, a creative, and at times a generous and a sacrificial love?' As the object of love is the test of this love, it must be my neighbour; to love God who asks for nothing is too easy.

And if in the course of this week we find where we belong, we find both our shortcomings and the greatness of our vocation; if we make our peace with those to whom we are indebted, then, when the time comes to forgive, when someone else will have made the same discovery, we will be able with joy to give peace and forgiveness out of a sense of responsibility and of the creative joy of repentance. Amen.



On The Parable of the Last Judgment

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann

The “Parable of the Last Judgment,” as this passage has been known since ancient times, is read a week before the start of Great Lent, during which the Church calls us to examine ourselves, our conscience, and our life against the all the fullness of the Christian gospel, i.e., Christ’s teaching, and to return as much as possible to what is most important, to the very heart of this teaching. Many people often find religion’s most important aspect to be the rituals and customs, the beauty of services, the possibility of encountering the sacred, heavenly and divine. But Christ’s parable of the last judgment reveals that all of this, if it is not based on love and directed toward love, makes religion fruitless, needless, empty and dead.

In the end, Love will be our judge. No, not abstract love for humanity in general, but rather love toward a living and concrete human being. Today, Christian love has been horribly perverted by a society which, in the name of love for abstract humanity, calls us not to love, but to persecute other people, whom we are commanded to consider enemies, toward whom even pity and compassion become crimes. But in his parable of the last judgment Christ says in effect, “Dreams of happiness for abstract humanity not only will remain dreams, but will turn into nightmares of hatred and cruelty if our love and care are not first addressed to individual human persons – not theoretically, but in the most concrete way possible.” Christ says, “I was in prison, I was hungry, I was thirsty, I was sick.” What else can this mean, but that Christ once and for all identifies himself with each human being; and Christian love, therefore, is by definition the “impossible possibility” of seeing, of recognizing, of encountering Christ in each person. We are not commanded to question and analyze whether that person is worthy of our help or has earned our concern. We are not told to find out why they are in prison or hungry or naked. We are simply told to go to them with love – and only with love, never questioning merit, worthiness, views and opinions – to encounter a human being sent by God into our life, my life ...

Again and again we come to recognize that the most essential, joyful mystery of Christianity is the mystery of the person, of what makes each human being valuable to God, of what we can and must love in him or her. It is precisely this mystery which the world and its ruling ideologies have repudiated. To them, a human being is

defined by externals: class, race, nationality, utilitarian value, what he or she gives to the country or, on the contrary, their mistakes and crimes. Our people vs. strangers, allies vs. enemies, us vs. them ... Yet it seems that everyone is talking about liberation for human society, happiness for the world, prescriptions for humanity, the struggle for a bright, happy and liberated life. But in reality, all are united against someone else and everything is exclusively motivated by fear, suspicion and hatred. And it will be this way until people understand that to love humanity in general, to serve humanity in general, is not only a deception; it is also impossible if this love is not rooted in love for the person, for each person, a love which goes beyond any of our earthly, "human, all too human" standards and categories which we use to classify and evaluate people.

All of this has been judged once and for all by him who said, and continues to say, on behalf of each person: "I was in prison ..." This I is enough for us to know that each person is a brother or sister, that each person is the object of God's revelation and love, and that each person is given to me as the possibility of fulfilling my very self through divine, life-renewing and redeeming love.

The Celebration of Faith Volume 2: The Church Year ...

Fr. Alexander Schmemmann. SVS Press, 1994. pp. 87 - 90

