

“НАШ ПРИХОД”

“Our Parish”

Русская Православная Церковь Сретения Господна

Приходъ Русской Православной Церкви Заграницей
Russian Orthodox Church of the Presentation of Christ in the Temple
5 Wheeler Terrace, Stratford Connecticut 06614 USA

Телефон: 203-375-8342

свят. Константинъ Семянко, *Настоятель, сотовый телефонъ*: 860-836-1271 *email*: semyankoc@yahoo.com

Двадцать третий год издания.

№ 2023-5

Май 2023

РАСПИСАНИЕ БОГОСЛУЖЕНИЙ			Май	SCHEDULE OF THE SERVICES			May
Неделя 4-я по Пасхе, о расслабленном.				Fourth Sunday after Pascha, about the paralytic.			
6 Суб	Всенощная Лк. 24:1-12.	6:30 ч.в.	6 Sat	Vigil. Luke 24:1-12	6:30 PM		
7 Вск	Литургия. Деян. 9:32-42, Ин. 5:1-15	9:30 ч.у.	7 Sun	Divine Liturgy Acts 9:32-42, John 5:1-15	9:30 AM		
Неделя 5-я по Пасхе, о самаряныне.				Fifth Sunday after Pascha about the Samaritan woman.			
13 Суб	Всенощная Ин. 20:1-10.	6:30 ч.в.	13 Sat	Vigil. John 20:1-10	6:30 PM		
14 Вск	Литургия. Деян.11:19-26,29-30, Ин.4:5-42	9:30 ч.у.	14 Sun	Divine Liturgy Acts 11:19-26,29-30,John 4:5-42	9:30 AM		
Неделя 6-я по Пасхе, о слепом. Апостола и евангелиста Иоанна Богослова				Sixth Sunday after Pascha, about the blind man. Saint Apostle & Evangelist John the Theologian			
20 Суб	Всенощная Ин. 20:1-10.	6:30 ч.в.	20 Sat	Vigil. John 20:1-10	6:30 PM		
21 Вск	Литургия. Деян.11:19-26,29-30, Ин.4:5-42; 1Ин 1:1-7, Ин 19:25-27,21:24-25	9:30 ч.у.	21 Sun	Divine Liturgy Acts 11:19-26,29-30, Jn 4:5-42; 1 Jn 1:1-7, Jn 19:25-27,21:24-25	9:30 AM		
Вознесение Господне.				Ascension of the Lord.			
24 срд	Всенощная. Марк 15:16:9-20.	7:00 ч.в.	24 Wed	Vigil. Mark 15:16:9-20	7:00 PM		
25 чтв	Литургия. Деян.1:1-12, Лк. 24:36-53	8:00 ч.у.	25 Thu	Divine Liturgy Acts 1:1-12, Luke. 24:36-53	8:00 AM		
Неделя 7-я по Пасхе Св. Отцов Первого Вселенского Собора.				Seventh Sunday after Pascha, Fathers of the 1st Ecumenical Council.			
27 Суб	Всенощная. Ин. 21:1-14	6:30 ч.в.	27 Sat	Vigil. John 21:1-14	6:30 PM		
28 Вск	Литургия. Деян.20: 16-18,28-36, Ин.17: 1-13	9:30 ч.у.	28 Sun	Divine Liturgy Acts 20:16-18,28-36, John 17: 1-13	9:30 AM		

Христосъ Воскресе!

Christ is Risen!

Следите за Сретенским приходом на Facebook

Follow us on Facebook:



<https://www.facebook.com/orthodoxchurchstrafordct>

Итнернет страница прихода – See our web-page: <http://www.presentationofchrist.org/>

Жизнь после смерти согласно Православной Традиции

Жан-Клод Парше

Глава IV С третьего по девятый день: прохождение воздушных мытарств

3. Прохождение Воздушных Мытарств /продолжение/

(Мытарство 5-е) В такой беседе мы достигли мытарства лености, где истязуются грешники за все дни и часы, проведенные в праздности. Тут же задерживаются тунеядцы, жившие чужими трудами, а сами не хотевшие трудиться, и наемники, бравшие плату, но не исполнявшие обязанности, принятых на себя. Там же истязуются и те, кои нерадят о прославлении Бога, ленятся в праздничные и воскресные дни ходить в храм на утреннее богослужение, на Божественную литургию и друные священные службы. Там же испытывается вообще уныние и небрежение как мирских, так и духовных людей и небрежение каждого о душе своей, и многие оттуда низводятся в пропасть. И я была там много испытываема, и нельзя бы мне было освободиться от долгов, если бы святые Ангелы не восполнили моих недостатков дарами преподобного Василия.

(Мытарство 6-е) Оттуда пришли мы к мытарству воровства, где хоть и были остановлены на некоторое время, но, дав немного выкупа, пошли далее, потому что не обрелось на мне воровства, кроме весьма мало важных случаев в моем детстве, происшедших от неразумения.

(Мытарство 7-е) Мытарство сребролюбия и скупости прошли мы без задержки, потому что я, по милости Божией, никогда в жизни моей не заботилась о многом приобретении и не была сребролюбивая, довольствовалась тем, что Бог давал, и не была скупой, но, что имела, усердно раздавала нуждающимся.

(Мытарство 8-е) Поднявшись выше, мы встретили мытарство лихоимания, где истязают дающих деньги за противозаконные проценты и всех других, наживающихся за счет своих ближних, взяточников и присвоителей чужого. Истязатели, не сыскав на мне лихоимства, скрежетали зубами от досады, а мы, благодаря Бога, пошли выше.

(Мытарство 9-е) Перед нами открылось мытарство неправды, где истязуются несправедливые судьи, из корысти оправдывавшие виновных и осуждавшие невинных, также люди, не дающие наемникам условленной платы или в торговле употребляющие неправильный вес или меру, и вообще все, делающие какую-нибудь несправедливость. Но мы, по милости Божией, прошли это мытарство безбедно и очень мало дали для искупления моих грехов.

(Мытарство 10-е) Мытарство зависти мы прошли, ничего не заплатив, потому что я никогда на завидовала. Тут же истязуют за нелюбовь, братоненавидение, недружелюбие и ненависть; но, по милости Христа, Бога нашего, я оказалась невинною в этих грехах, и хоть видела ярость бесов, но уже не боялась их, и мы, радуясь, пошли выше.

(Мытарство 11-е) Прошли мы и мытарство гордости, где надменные духи истязуют за тщеславие, самонадеянность, презрение к другим и величание; тут истязуются души людей и за невоздаяние должной чести родителям, правительству и начальству, поставленным от Бога, и неповиновение им. Мы тут очень мало положили для моего искупления, и я была свободна.

(Мытарство 12-е) Восходя дальше к небу, мы встретили мытарства гнева и ярости. Счастлив человек, который, живя, не испытывал гнева. И вот опять старейший из злых духов находился здесь и сидел на престоле, исполненный гнева, ярости и гордости. Он с яростью и гневом приказал находящимся тут слугам своим мучить и истязать меня. Последние, облизываясь как псы, начали доносить на меня не только все то, что я действительно когда-нибудь с яростью или гневом сказала или кому словом повредила, но и то, что я когда-то с гневом посмотрела на своих детей или строго наказала их. Все что они представили очень живо, указав даже время, когда что происходило, на тех лиц, на которых я когда-то свой гнев изливала, и повторив даже подлинные мои слова, было мною произнесено. На все это Ангелы отвечали, дав из ковчежца, и мы отправились выше.

(Мытарство 13-е) За сим открылось пред нами мытарство злопамятства, где без милосердия испытуются те, которые в сердцах своих питают злобу на ближнего и воздают злом за зло. Милосердие Господне и здесь спасло меня, потому что ни против кого не злобствовала и не помнила нанесенных мне обид, а, напротив, всегда по силе оказывала любовь и незлобие к обижавшим меня, побеждая зло добром. Мы здесь ничего не заплатили и, радуясь о Господе, пошли далее.

Тогда я осмелилась спросить ведших меня Ангелов: "Скажите мне, откуда эти страшные властители воздушные знают так подробно все злые дела людей, и не только явные, но и тайные?" Ангелы отвечали мне так: "Всякий христианин после Святого Крещения получает от Бога приставленного к нему Ангела-хранителя, который, невидимо храня человека, натавляет его днем и ночью на всякое доброе дело и записывает все добрые дела его, за которые человек мог бы получить от Господа милость и вечное воздаяние в Царствии Небесном. И князь тьмы, желающий привлечь к гибели весь род человеческий, также назначает одного из лукавых духов, [чтобы] он, ходя вслед за человеком, замечал все злые дела его и, поощряя его своими кознями к таким делам, записывал все худое, что человек сделает. Такой лукавый дух разносит по мытарствам все грехи человека, и оттого они известны воздушным князьям. Когда же душа разлучается и хочет идти к Создателю своему на небо, то лукавые духи возбраняют это, показывая ей содеянные ею грехи, и если душа имеет более добрых дел, чем грехов, то они не могут удержать ее; а если грехов найдется больше, чем добрых дел, то они удерживают душу на некоторое время, затворяют ее в темнице неведения Бога и мучат, сколько сила Божия позволит им мучить ее, пока та душа посредством молитв Церкви и милостыни ближних не получит прощения.

Люди, верующие в Святую Троицу, приобщающиеся как можно чаще Святым Таин Тела и Крови Христа Спасителя, прямо восходят на небо, без всяких препятствий, а святые Ангелы являются защитниками, и святые угодники Божии молятся о спасении душ таких праведно поживших людей. О злочестивых же и зловерных еретиках, которые не совершают в жизни своей ничего полезного, которые живут одним неверием и ересью, никто не заботится, и в защиту их ничего Ангелы не могут сказать.

Если же какая душа окажется такою грешною и нечистою пред Богом, что не будет для нее никакой надежды спасения, то злые души тотчас низводят ее в бездну, где и для них самих уготовано место вечного мучения. Там погибшие души содержатся до Второго Пришествия Господня, а потом, по соединении со своими телами, будут с дьяволами мучаться в геенне огненной. И то еще заметь, – сказали Ангелы, – что этим путем восходят и подвергаются испытанию в мытарствах только те, которые просвещены верою и Святым Крещением, а неверующие сюда не приходят, потому что еще до разлучения от тела душами своими принадлежат аду, и когда умирают, то бесы без всякого испытания берут их души, как свою надлежащую добычу, и низводят в пропасть".

(Мытарство 14-е) Беседуя так, мы достигли мытарства убийства, на котором истязуют не только за разбой, но и за всякую рану, за всякий удар, нанесенный ближнему, за пихание со гневом и толчки. Мало дав тут, мы пошли далее.

(Мытарство 15-е) Прошли мимо мытарства чародейства, обаяния, отравления, призывания бесов. Здешние духи видом похожи на гадин, змей и жаб, страшны и отвратительны. По милости Божией, во мне не нашли они ничего, и мы пошли далее, провожаемые криком демонов: "Вот, придешь в мытарство блуда, увидим, как освободишься оттуда!"

Когда мы поднимались выше, я осмелилась спросить святых Ангелов, все ли христиане проходят через эти мытарства, и нет ли возможности пройти мытарства без истязания и испытания? Ангелы отвечали: "Нет иного пути для душ, восходящих на небо; все идут этою дорогою, но не все бывают истязуемы, как ты, а только подобные тебе грешники, которые творили неполное исповедание грехов своих, из ложного стыда утаивая перед отцем духовным срамные дела свои. Ибо кто чистосердечно рассказывает на исповеди все свои худые дела и жалеет и кается о сделанном, того грехи невидимо заглаживаются Божиим милосердием. И когда такая покаявшаяся душа приходит сюда, воздушные истязатели разогнув свои книги, не находят в них ничего записанного, и такая душа, радуясь, восходит к Престолу Божию.

Души злые, которые тоже находятся в мытарствах, раскрыв свои писания, ничего в них не находят, ибо Святой Дух делает невидимым все написанное. Духи злые видят это, они знают, что все записанное ими изглажено благодаря исповеди, и очень скорбят тогда. Если человек еще жив, то они стараются снова на этом месте вписать какие-нибудь другие грехи.

Поистине велико спасение человека в исповеди!.. Она спасает его от многих бед и несчастий, дает возможность беспрепятственно пройти все мытарства и приблизиться к Богу. Иные не исповедуются в надежде, что будет еще время и для спасения, и для оставления грехов, иные просто стыдятся на исповеди высказать духовнику свои грехи, – вот такие-то люди будут испытаны в мытарствах строго. Есть и такие которые стыдятся все высказать одному духовному отцу, а избирают нескольких, и одни грехи одному духовному отцу открывают, другие – другому и так далее; за такую исповедь они будут наказаны и немало претерпят при переходе из мытарства в мытарство.

Если б и ты сотворила совершенную исповедь о твоих грехах и получила в них разрешение, стараясь потом сделать возможное за них удовлетворение добрыми делами, то не подверглась бы этим грозным истязаниям в мытарствах. Впрочем, тебе много помогло то, что ты давно уже перестала грешить смертно и прочие лета жизни своей проводила добродетельно, а особенно помогли тебе молитвы преподобного Василия, которому ты много и усердно послужила".

(Мытарство 16-е) Беседуя таким образом, мы подошли к мытарству блуда, на котором истязуется не только всякое любодеяние, но и будные мечты, мысленное услаждение, блудные воззрения, порочные осязания и страстные прикосновения. Князь этого мытарства был облечен в нечистую и смрадную одежду, запачканную кровавой пеной, и множество бесов стояло около него. Увидев меня, они удивились, что я успела уже пройти столько мытарств, и вынесли записи о всех моих блудных делах. Бесы обличали меня, указывая на лица, на места, на время – с кем, когда и где я грешила в юности моей. Я молчала и трепетала от стыда и страха; но святые Ангелы сказали бесам: "Она давно уже оставила блудные дела и последнее время жизни своей провела в чистоте, воздержании и посте". А бесы отвечали: "И мы знаем, что она давно уже перестала грешить, но не искренно исповедовалась пред своим духовным отцем и не получила от него надлежащей заповеди об удовлетворении за грехи, потому она наша! Или оставьте ее нам, или выкупите добрыми делами". Ангелы положили много из моих добрых дел, а еще больше от дарования преподобного Василия, и едва я избавилась от лютой беды.

(Мытарство 17-е) Дошли мы до мытарства прелюбодеяния, где истязуют грехи людей, живших в супружестве, но не хранивших супружеской верности друг другу и не соблюдавших ложа своего нескверным, а также блудные похощения и насилия. Здесь же строго истязуются блудные грехопадения лиц, посвятивших себя Богу и обещавших жить для Христа, но не соблюдавших чистоты. И я много должна была на этом мытарстве; лукавые духи уже обличили меня и хотели вырвать из рук Ангелов, но Ангелы долго спорили с ними, представляя меня – на столько моими добрыми делами, которые положили тут все до последнего, сколько сокровищем отца моего Василия, из которого также очень много положили на весы против моих беззаконий, и, взяв меня, пошли далее.

(Мытарство 18-е) Приблизились мы к мытарству содомских грехов, на котором истязуются всякие противоестественные грехи, кровосмешения и другие скверные дела, совершаемые тайно, о коих даже и вспомнить стыдно и страшно. Князь этого мытарства был мерзостнее всех бесов, выпачкан гноем и смрадом, таковы же были и слуги его; смрад от них был нестерпим, злообразие невообразимо, ярость и лютость невыразима. Они окружили нас, но, по милости Божией, ничего не найдя во мне, побежали от нас со стыдом, а мы пошли дальше.

И сказали мне святые Ангелы: "Ты видела, Феодора, страшные и мерзкие мытарства блудные! Знай же, что мало какая душа проходит их без остановки и выкупа, потому что весь мир лежит во зле соблазнов и свкерны и все люди сластолюбивы. Мало кто бережет себя от нечистот блудных и умерщвляет в себе похоть плотскую. Потому и мало кто проходит тут свободно: весьма многие, достигнув блудных мытарств, здесь погибают. Начальники блудных мытарств хвалятся, что они более всех здешних истязателей наполняют душами людей огненную пропасть ада. А ты, Феодора, благодари Бога, что уже прошла блудные истязания, по молитвам преподобного Василия, отца твоего, и более не увидишь страха".

(Мытарство 19-е) После сего мы подошли к мытарству ересей, где истязуются неправые мудрования о вере, отступничество от православного исповедания веры, неверие, сомнения в вере, порицание святых и прочее тому подобное. Я прошла это мытарство без испытания, и вот мы уже были недалеко от врат небесных.

(Мытарство 20-е) Но нас встретили злобные духи последнего мытарства – немилосердия и жестокосердия. Жестоки тут истязатели, и князь их лют, с виду сухой и унылый. Тут без милости истязуются души немилосердые. Если бы ты и самые великие подвиги нес, изнурял себя постами, непрестанно молился и сохранял чистоту телесную, но был немилостив, таковой из этого мытарства низвергается в адскую бездну и не получит милости вовеки. Но мы, благодатию Христовою, прошли безбедно через это место, при помощи молитв преподобного Василия.

И вот приблизились к вратам небесным; вошли в них, радуясь, что благополучно прошли горькие испытания в мытарствах»¹.

/Продолжение следует/

Ж.-Кл. Ларше, **Жизнь после смерти согласно Православной Традиции**. Сретенский монастырь. М., 2019.

Life After Death According to the Orthodox Tradition

Jean-Claude Larchet

Chapter 4: From the Third to the Ninth Day: The passage through the Aerial Toll House

3. The Passage through the Aerial Toll-houses or 'Telonies'. /continuation/

FOURTH TORMENT "We reached the station where gluttony is punished, and evil spirits immediately rushed out to meet us, for they hoped to find a victim. Their faces resembled those of sensuous gluttons and despicable drunkards. They walked around us like dogs immediately showed their count of all the instances when I ate secretly from others, or without need, or when I ate in the morning before I had even prayed and signed myself with the mark of the cross; or when, during the holy fasts, I ate before the church service was over. They also revealed all the instances when I was drunk and even showed us those very cups, goblets, and other vessels from which I became intoxicated at such and such a time, during such and such a feast, with such and such companions. And every other instance of my gluttony was pointed out to me, and the demons already rejoiced, as if they had put their hands on me. I was trembling at the sight of such accusations and did not know how to object. But the holy angels took out enough from what was given to us by the holy man Basil, balanced my sins with this and set me free. When the spirits saw the ransom, they cried out, 'Woe! our labors and hopes have perished!' and threw their records of my gluttony into the air. I, however, rejoiced, and we went on."

"As we were ascending, the holy angels talked among themselves and said words to this effect: 'Truly does this soul have great help from Basil, a man who has pleased God. If it had not been for his prayers, she would have suffered a great deal in those stations of the air.' I took courage and said to them: 'It seems, holy angels, that none of the earth dwellers knows what happens here and what the soul can expect after death.' But the angels replied: 'Does not the divine Scripture testify concerning all of this? It is read in churches and preached by priests. Only those people who are passionately devoted to the vanities of earth take no heed of what they are told, and since they consider daily gluttony and drunkenness to be the greatest pleasure, they eat beyond measure and drink without thinking of the fear of God. Their belly is their God. They have no thought of future life and do not remember what is said in scripture: "Woe to you who are full, for you shall hunger" (Luke 6:25). "Still, even the gluttonous can be saved. Those who are merciful and kindhearted to the needy and beggars and help those who ask for help- such men can easily obtain from God forgiveness of their sins, and because of their kindheartedness toward their neighbors, pass the stations of torment without stopping. It is said in Scripture that alms save us from death and cleanse every kind of sin; those who give alms and do justice will be filled with life (Tob 12:9). But he who does not strive to cleanse his sins by good deeds cannot escape the dark tormentors who lead the sinners down to hell and hold them bound until the terrible judgment at Christ's second coming. You too, would not have escaped here your evil lot, were it not that you received the treasure of holy Basil's prayers."

¹ Рассказ блж Феодоры о мытарствах из Жизни святого Василия Нового цит. По Тайны загробного мира / Сост. архим. Пантелеимон [Нижник]. С. 148-157.

FIFTH TORMENT "During this conversation we reached the station of sloth, where sinners are accused of all those days and hours which they spent in idleness. Here, too, are detained those who did not work themselves but lived by the labor of others; and those who were hired to work, took their wages, but did not fulfill the duties which they had taken upon themselves. And also are stopped here those who do not care to praise God and are too lazy to go to church on holidays and Sundays, either in the morning or to the Divine Liturgy, or to other church services. And here too people are accused of despondency and general carelessness about things that have to do with the salvation of their souls; this happens to both laymen and those who are ordained. Many are thence led into the abyss. I, too, was accused there of much and could not have freed myself if the holy angels had not balanced my deficiencies by the gifts of the holy man Basil."

SIXTH TORMENT "Thence we came to the torment of stealing, and although we were briefly stopped there, we went on after we had given a small ransom only: for no stealing was found on my record, except some very unimportant occurrences in my childhood, and those stemmed from lack of reason."

SEVENTH TORMENT "We passed without stopping through the station of avarice and love of money. By God's grace I never loved riches. I was content with what God gave me and never was avaricious; on the contrary, I diligently gave to the needy that which I had."

EIGHTH TORMENT "When we rose still higher, we came to the station of usury, where those are accused who lend money for illegal interest. Here, too, are stopped those who gain riches by exploiting their neighbors, those who take bribes, or who by some other way steal indirectly, acquiring what really belongs to others. The tormentors, when they did not find me guilty of such sins, gnashed their teeth with annoyance, but we went on, praising God in the meanwhile."

NINTH TORMENT "Now there lay before us the torment of injustice here are punished the unjust judges who acquit the guilty and condemn the innocent, all for the sake of gain; and also those who do not give the appointed wages to those whom they have hired, and the merchants who use false weights and measures, and all the others who are in some way unjust. We, however, by God's grace, passed this station without incurring any grief after we had given only a little bit for my sins in this regard."

TENTH TORMENT "As for the torment of envy, we passed it without giving anything at all in payment, for I never had been envious. Here also people have to face the accusations of lack of love, hatred toward their brethren, unfriendliness, and other manifestations of hatred. Through the mercy of Christ our God, I was found innocent of all these sins; and although I saw the savagery of the demons, I was no longer afraid of them. Joyfully we went on."

ELEVENTH TORMENT "Then we passed the station of pride, where arrogant spirits make accusations of vanity, absolute reliance on oneself rather than on God, disdain of others, and bragging; and here too the souls are tormented for their failure to give proper honor to their parents, their government, or their other superiors appointed by God, and for failure to obey them. Here we put down very little for my sins, and I was free."

TWELFTH TORMENT "As we continued rising toward heaven, we encountered the torment of anger and ruthlessness. Happy is the man who never in his life felt anger. The eldest of the evil spirits was sitting here on a throne, and he was full of anger, ruthlessness, and pride. Ruthlessly and angrily he ordered his servants to torment and accuse me. They licked their chops like dogs and began to point out not only all those occasions when I actually said something angry or unfeeling to anyone, or harmed anyone by my words, but even those instances when I merely looked angrily at my children or punished them severely. All these cases they represented vividly and even indicated the time when everything happened, the persons on whom I poured out my anger, the very words which I then used, and in whose presence I used them. The angels replied to all this by offering part of the treasure, and we went on."

THIRTEENTH TORMENT "After this, the torment of bearing grudges lay before us. Here merciless accusations await those who nurture in their hearts evil thoughts against their neighbors and return evil for evil. God's mercy saved me here too, for I did not tend to have such wicked designs and did not keep in mind offenses of others toward me; on the contrary, whenever I could, I displayed love and meekness toward those who offended me, and thus overcame their evil by my goodness. Here we paid nothing. Joyful in the Lord, we went on." "Here I dared to ask my angel leaders: 'Tell me how can these terrible rulers of the air know in such detail all the evil deeds of men, and not only the open ones but even those that are secret?' The angels replied: 'Every Christian, as soon as he is baptized, receives from God an appointed guardian angel who guards him invisibly and inspires him night and day to every kind of good deed; he also records all his good deeds, for which that man later can hope to receive from the Lord grace and eternal recompense in the heavenly kingdom. The prince of darkness, who desires to draw into his own destruction the whole race of men as well, also appoints one of his evil spirits to walk in the man's steps and record all his evil deeds. It is his duty to inspire man to such deeds by any vile trickery in his power; and when he succeeds in his designs, he records all the wickedness of which the man has made himself guilty. Such an evil spirit spreads the report of every man's sins to all the stations of torment, and this is how the sins become known to the princes of the air. When the soul parts from its body and desires to go to its Creator in heaven, the evil spirits

prevent the soul and show to it its sins. If the soul has done more good deeds than evil, they cannot keep it; but if the sins outweigh the good deeds, they keep the soul for some time, shut it up in the prison where it cannot know God, and torment it as much as God's power allows them, until that soul, by means of prayers of the Church and good deeds done for its sake by those who are still on earth, should be granted forgiveness."

"Those who believe in the Holy Trinity and take as frequently as possible the holy communion of the Holy Mysteries of Christ our Savior's Body and Blood-such people can rise to heaven directly, with no hindrances, and the holy angels defend them, and the holy saints of God pray for their salvation, since they have lived righteously. No one, however, takes care of the wicked and depraved heretics, who do nothing useful during their lives, and live in disbelief and heresy. The angels can say nothing in their defense."

"When a soul proves to be so sinful and impure before God that it has no hope of salvation, the evil spirits immediately bring it down into the abyss, where their own place of eternal torment is also. There the lost souls are kept until the time of the Lord's second coming. Then they will unite with their bodies and will incur torment in fiery hell together with the devils. Note also,' said the angels, 'that this is the way by which only those who are enlightened by faith and holy baptism can rise and be tested in the stations of torment. The unbelievers do not come here. Their souls belong to hell even before they part from their bodies. When they die the devils take their souls with no need to test them. Such souls are their proper prey, and they take them down to the abyss."

FOURTEENTH TORMENT "During our conversation we reached the torment of murder, where are accused not only men such as robbers, but even those who have in some way wounded another man, or given him a blow, or pushed him angrily, or shoved him. We gave a little and went on."

FIFTEENTH TORMENT "We passed the torment of magic, sorcery, poisoning, and incantations. The spirits of this station resemble serpents, snakes, and toads. They are frightening and repulsive. By the grace of God, they found nothing of the kind in me, and we went on, accompanied by the shouts of the demons: 'Soon you will come to the torment of fornication; let us see how you will free yourself from it!'"

"As we were rising, I dared to question the holy angels once more: 'Do all Christians pass these torments? Is there no possibility to pass by the torments and not be tested in any of the stations?' The angels replied, 'There is no other way for the souls that rise toward heaven. Every one goes this way, but not everyone is tormented like you; only sinners like you incur the torments, for they have not confessed their sins fully, and moved by a false sense of shame, have kept their really shameful deeds secret from their spiritual fathers. When a man wholeheartedly confesses his evil deeds and repents and regrets them, his sins are invisibly wiped out by God's mercy. When a repentant soul comes here, the tormentors of the air open their books but find nothing written there; the soul, then, joyfully ascends to the throne of God."

"The evil spirits open their records but find nothing written there, for the Holy Spirit has made invisible all the writing. The spirits see this and know that what they have recorded has all been obliterated because of the soul's confession, and they are very much saddened by this. If the man is still alive when his confession has wiped out his sins, the spirits once again try to have an occasion to record some new sins of his."

"Indeed, there is a great source of salvation for man in his confession! Confession saves him from many misfortunes and much unhappiness and gives him the opportunity to pass all the torments with no hindrance and to approach God. Some people do not confess their sins because they hope to have time for salvation and for a remittance of their sins; others are simply ashamed of telling their spiritual father about their sins. They will, however, be severely tested when they pass the stations of torment. There are still other people, who are ashamed of telling everything to one spiritual father. Therefore they choose several and reveal some of their sins to one and others to another, and so on; they will be punished for this kind of confession and will suffer a great deal as they pass from one torment into another."

"If you, too, had made a complete confession of your sins and had been granted remission of them, and had then done all you could to make up for them by good deeds - if you had done all this, you would not have been subjected to such terrible torments in the stations. You were, however, greatly helped by the fact that you have long ago ceased to commit deadly sins and have spent the rest of your life in virtue. You have been helped especially by the prayers of God's holy man Basil, whom you have served greatly and diligently."

SIXTEENTH TORMENT "During our conversation, we approached the torment of fornication, where souls are accused not only of actual fornication but also of amorous daydreaming, of finding such thoughts sweet, of impure glances, lustful touches, and passionate strokings. The prince of this torment was clothed in a dirty and stenchful garment befouled by a bloody foam, and there was a multitude of demons standing around him. When they saw me, they marveled that I had already passed so many torments. They brought out the records of all my deeds of fornication and accused me by pointing out the persons, the places, and the times: with whom, when, and where I sinned in my youth. I kept silent and was trembling with shame and fear. The holy angels, however, said to the devils, 'Long ago has she left her deeds of fornication and has

spent the remainder of her life in purity, abstinence, and fasting.' But the demons replied, 'We, too, know that she has long ago ceased sinning, but she has not sincerely confessed to her spiritual father and has not received from him proper directions for the penance she should make for her sins. Therefore she is ours! Either leave her to us or ransom her with good deeds.' The angels put down many of my good deeds but even more did they take from the gift given us by the holy man Basil; barely did I save myself from great grief."

SEVENTEENTH TORMENT "We reached the torment of adultery, where are accused of their sins those who are married but do not observe marital fidelity toward each other and do not keep their marriage bed undefiled; here, too, rapes are punished. Besides, here are strictly punished those who have devoted themselves to God and promised to live for Christ alone, but have fallen and failed to keep their purity. I, too, had a great debt here; the evil spirits already had accused me and were about to tear me from the arms of the angels, but the angels began to argue with them and show them all my later labors and good deeds. After some time they rescued me, but with difficulty, and not so much by my good deeds -all of which, down to the last, they deposited here- but rather by the treasure of my father Basil, from which they also took very much to put on the scale to balance my iniquities. Then they took me and we went on."

EIGHTEENTH TORMENT "We approached the station of the Sodomite sins; here souls are accused of all unnatural sins, incest, and other revolting deeds performed in secret- shameful and frightening even to think about. The prince of this torment was more disgusting than any other devil; he was befouled by pus and full of stench. His servants were just like him. The stench that came from them was not to be endured, their ugliness was unimaginable, their cruelty and ruthlessness not to be expressed. They surrounded us but by the grace of God found nothing in me and ran away from us in their shame. We went on."

"The holy angels said to me: 'You have seen, Theodora, the frightening and disgusting torments of fornication! Know then that few are the souls that pass them without stopping and paying their ransom, for the whole world lies immersed in the evils of seductive foulness, and all mankind is sensuous. Few guard against the impurities of fornication and deaden the desire of their own flesh. And this is the reason why few pass here freely; many come as far as this place but perish here. The rulers of the torments of fornication boast that they, more than any of the others, fill the fiery abyss of hell with the souls of men. But you, Theodora, must thank God that you have already passed the torments of fornication by the prayers of the holy man Basil, your father. Now you will no longer fear.'"

NINETEENTH TORMENT "Thereafter we came to the torment of heresies, where are punished those whose reasonings about faith are not right, and also those who turn away from the Orthodox confession of faith, who lack faith, have doubts about it, deny holy things or show a negative attitude toward them, and other sins of this kind. I passed this torment without being tested; we were no longer far from the gates of heaven."

TWENTIETH TORMENT "But here we were met by the evil spirits of the last torment, the station that tests lack of compassion and cruelty of heart. Cruel are the tormentors of this place, and their prince is terrible; dried-up and depressed is his appearance. Here the souls of the unmerciful are tormented without mercy. Even if a man performs the most outstanding deeds, mortifies himself by fasting, prays ceaselessly, and guards and keeps the purity of his body, but is merciless-from this station he is cast down into the abyss of hell and will receive no mercy in all eternity. We, however, by the grace of Christ, passed this place without trouble, for we were helped by the prayers of the holy man Basil"

"Now we approached the gates of heaven. We entered joyfully, for we had passed unharmed through the bitter tests of the torments. The gates resembled crystal, and the buildings that stood there glistened like stars. The youths who stood there were wearing golden garments. They joyfully received us, for they saw that a soul had escaped from the bitter tests of the torments of the air."⁷⁷

This teaching on the 'telonies' is not the monopoly of the east, but is also found, although in a more discrete manner, among the ancient Fathers of the west.⁷⁸ We have seen St Gregory the Great refer to evil spirits examining the soul departed from its body. St Boniface, the Anglo-Saxon apostle to the Germans (eighth century) in one of his letters relates this account of an out-of-body experience undergone by a monk of the monastery of Wenlock:

Angels of such pure splendor bore him up as he came forth from the body that he could not bear to gaze on them... "They carried me up," he said, "high into the air..." He reported further that in the space of time while he was out of the body a greater multitude of souls left their bodies and gathered in the place where he was than he had thought to form the whole race of mankind on earth. He said also that there was a crowd of evil spirits and a glorious choir of higher angels. And he said that the wretched spirits and the holy angels had a violent dispute concerning the souls that had come forth from their bodies, the demons bringing charges against them and aggravating the burden of their sins, the angels lightening the burden and making excuses for them.

He heard all his own sins, which he had committed from his youth on and had failed to confess or had forgotten or had not recognized as sins, crying out against him, each in its own voice,⁷⁹ and accusing him grievously... Everything he had done in all the days of his life and had neglected to confess and many which he had not known to be sinful, all these were

now shouted at him in terrifying words. In the same way the evil spirits, chiming in with the vices, accusing and bearing witness, naming the very times and places, brought proofs of his evil deeds... And so, with his sins all piled up and reckoned out, those ancient enemies declared him guilty and unquestionably subject to their jurisdiction.

"On the other hand," he said, "the poor little virtues which I had displayed unworthily and imperfectly spoke out in my defense... And those angelic spirits in their boundless love defended and supported me, while the virtues, greatly magnified as they were, seemed to me far greater and more excellent than could have been practiced by my own strength."⁸⁰

Although the west seems to have forgotten this teaching on the heavenly customs houses, it is still found, on the other hand, in a certain number of by no means minor Orthodox authors, and bears witness to the preservation, in the bosom of the Orthodox Church, of a tradition dating back to the early centuries. It was strongly upheld at the end of the nineteenth century by St Ignatius Brianchaninov, who summarizes it in these simple terms:

For the testing of souls as they pass through the spaces of the air there have been established by the dark powers separate judgment places and guards in a remarkable order. In the layers of the under-heaven, from earth to heaven itself, stand guarding legions of fallen spirits. Each division is in charge of a special form of sin and tests the soul in it when the soul reaches this division. The aerial demonic guards and judgment places are called in the patristic writing the toll-houses, and the spirits who serve in them are called tax-collectors (Brianchaninov, vol. III, p. 136).⁸¹

^{77.} Gregory of Thrace, *Life of St Basil the Young*, Account of Theodora from: *Eternal Mysteries Beyond the Grave*; Archimandrite Panteleimon (Jordanville NY: Holy Trinity Publications, 2012) pp. 96-105.

^{78.} See J. Riviere, 'Rôle de démon au jugement particulier chez les Pères', *Revue des sciences religieuses*, 4, 1924, pp. 57-63.

^{79.} Here we have again the identity between sins (or passions) and demons.

^{80.} Cited by Archimandrite Seraphim Rose, *The Soul after Death*, pp. 85-86.

^{81.} Discourse on Death, *Collected Works*, vol. III, Saint Petersburg, 1886, p. 136.

/To be continued/

Larchet, Jean-Claude., *Life After Death According to the Orthodox Tradition*. Holy Trinity Publications, Jordanville, NY 2021

Christ is Risen!

May 2023

Stratford, CT 06614

5 Wheeler Terrace

Russian Orthodox Church

Presentation of Christ in the Temple