

There is no... other road which leads to the glory of the Father. The “gospels” of comfortableness and secular prosperity, proved to be demonic traps and deviations of the genuine gospel message. The Christianity “of the armchair” is a bad version of the true Christian life, and a yielding to the three temptations of the devil, which “as potter’s vessels” Christ crushed in the desert. Finally, only gazing with faith at the Cross of Christ, are we able to be saved from the poisonous “snake” bites of pleasure-loving, glory-loving and possession-loving, and for us to freely crucify our own self “with the passions and the desires”, so that we can resurrect and live eternally “in Christ”.

Archim. B. L.

SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 9, 2018 SUNDAY BEFORE HOLY CROSS, *The Holy & Righteous Ancestors of God, Joachim and Anna, Severian the Martyr of Sebastia, Theophanes the Confessor.*

TONE OF THE WEEK : *Plagal of the Second Tone*

EOTHINON : *Fourth Orthros Gospel*

EPISTLE READING: *Galatians 6:11-18*

GOSPEL READING: *John 3:13 – 17*

NEXT SUNDAY, SEPTEMBER 16, 2018 SUNDAY AFTER HOLY CROSS, *Euphemia the Great Martyr, Sebastiana, Disciple of St. Paul the Apostle, Dorotheos the Hermit of Egypt, Melitina the Martyr, Edith the Nun of Wilton Abbey.*

EPISTLE READING: *Galatians 2:16-20*

GOSPEL READING: *Mark 8:34-38; 9:1*



66TH YEAR SEPTEMBER 9 2018 PAMPHLET #36 (3406)

A SAVING ELEVATION

Today's gospel passage is the continuation of Christ's conversation with Nikodemus. Christ has spoken to him about the greatest benefaction of baptism and that without this, one is not able to see the kingdom of God. And now he brings about "the cause of this, and not inferior to it" (sacred Chrysostom).

The Son of man coenthroned with the Father

However, before He speaks about the cause of baptism, His Cross, because Nicodemus seemed, in the beginning, to consider Him merely "a teacher from God", Christ reveals to him His identity better. He calls Him who descended from heaven, in other words, His own Self, "son of man", but He's not referring only to His human nature, but to His entire hypostasis. From the lesser substance, He named His entire self". It is noteworthy that of all the Messiah's names in the Old Testament, Christ often preferred to use this name, because it, par excellence, expressed His humility. So He tells Nicodemus (according to the interpretation of the Golden-tongued one): "don't think that I am a teacher like the many prophets, who descend from the earth. I descended from heaven. I live there". "And hearing that I descended" Saint Theophylactos adds,

THE GOSPEL ACCORDING TO JOHN 3:13-17

The Lord said, "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man who is in heaven. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life.

"For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, that whoever believes in him should not perish but have eternal life. For God sent the Son into the world, not to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him."

"Do not think that I'm not there also. Because, I am both here physically, and there, I am sitting together divinely with my Father". This revelation indicates also the entire majesty of the Son of God's kenosis and God the Father's love, who sent Him to be crucified for the world's salvation.

The copper snake and Cross

And in today's passage it is astounding that Christ calls the dishonorable hanging on the Cross, "elevation" juxtaposing it to the copper snake's elevation by Moses in the desert. Between however, the foreshadowing and the real event, there are important differences, which stress God's infinite love even more so, and – according to the Golden-tongued John – they are the following:

"There the Jews escaped temporal death, whereas here, those who believe, are saved from eternal death of the final separation from God. There, whoever looked with their physical eyes at the hanging copper snake, was healed from the snake bites, whereas here, looking with the eyes of faith at the crucified Christ, we heal the wounds from the noetic dragon devil, receiving forgiveness for our sins. And one similarity: just as there, the snake which bit,

had poison, whereas the snake which healed, did not have, thus here also, our soul's death is caused by the poison of sin, whereas its antidote, the Cross, is the death of the only sinless Christ".

This voluntary elevation of Christ on the Cross is the cause of our salvation through Baptism. Without the Cross of Christ, we would not be able to be saved. This is the will and the good favor of the heavenly Father, Who loved us so much, that "He gave" His Only Begotten Son to be sacrificed for us. The phrase "so loved" shows "the intensity of the great love". Because who is able to compare the Lover with the beloved one? The difference is infinite. He is unbegotten, immortal and His majesty is vast, whereas man is "earth and ash" and full of a myriad of sins. And in order for God to save this ash, He sends not a slave, or an angel, or an archangel, but His coessential Son and true God, our Lord Jesus Christ.

"I shall draw everyone" to the cross

The hopeful gospel passage concludes with the also full of love phrase that God did not send His Son in order to judge the world but in order to save the world. This first Coming of His, comprises a calling to salvation. Whoever freely responds to this calling, will not simply escape from the mortal bites of the poisonous dragon devil, but he will also obtain the capability of also being elevated himself there from where Christ descended, to the throne of the heavenly Father. Christ promised it to His disciples: "and I if I'm elevated from the earth, I shall draw everyone to myself" (Jn. 12:32). This elevating attraction of ours "passes" first from our personal saving cross, the cross of our own obedience, to the will of the Father. And the Savior Himself ascended to His Father, after He was first voluntarily "elevated from the earth", on the Cross for our own salvation.