



73<sup>rd</sup> Year

August 31, 2025

Pamphlet #35 (3770)

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## **THE SUNDAY EPISTLE (Hebrews 9:1-7)**

### **The old sanctuary, a prefiguration of the new**

*Brethren, the first covenant had regulations for worship and an earthly sanctuary. For a tent was prepared, the outer one, in which were the lampstand and the table and the bread of the Presence; it is called the Holy Place. Behind the second curtain stood a tent called the Holy of Holies, having the golden altar of incense and the ark of the covenant covered on all sides with gold, which contained a golden urn holding the manna, and Aaron's rod that budded, and the tables of the covenant; above it were the cherubim of glory overshadowing the mercy seat. Of these things we cannot now speak in detail. These preparations having thus been made, the priests go continually into the outer tent, performing their ritual duties; but into the second only the high priest goes, and he but once a year, and not without taking blood which he offers for himself and for the errors of the people.*

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## **ORTHODOX WORSHIP**

Today's Apostolic narrative concerns the Christians of Hebrew origin. The Apostle's aim is to clarify the differences between the worship of God in the Old Testament and the worship of the Incarnate Word within His Church. To this end, he proceeds with a detailed account of the handmade Tabernacle of Witness, which always constituted the holiest point of the Jewish religion. He refers to the liturgical regulations and the earthly altar, the first part of the Tabernacle, called the "Holy Place." He then describes the "Holy of

Holies" and mentions the priestly ministry, which was limited to the "Holy Place," as well as the ministry of the High Priest of the year, who, once a year, entered the "Holy of Holies" to offer a blood sacrifice for himself and for the sins of the people.

### **Christ, the One offered and sacrificed**

Next, the Apostle refers to the tent of God's worship not made by hands, where the Great High Priest, Christ, enters forever, offering a continual sacrifice, not the blood of goats and bulls, but His own Blood, which secures eternal redemption for people. This image of the eternally offered and sacrificed Christ for the love of people is the foundation of Orthodox Christian worship, the center of the liturgical life of our Church, where the Divine Liturgy and the mystery of the Holy Eucharist hold a dominant place.

In His conversation with the Samaritan woman in the well-known Gospel passage, Christ describes God as "Spirit," who is worshiped everywhere and always. That is, every Christian can express feelings of worship toward God through prayer, anywhere and at any time. At the same time, however, all Christians together form the Body of the Church and participate in the communal liturgical life, which unfolds daily in the sacred space of the church, where we collectively offer our worship to God. Though this worship is carried out with material elements, nevertheless, it transcends earthly boundaries and elevates the faithful to experience the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven. For this is precisely what Orthodox worship is: the icon and foretaste of the Kingdom of Heaven. This explains the brilliance of sacred churches and the vestments of the clergy. What might otherwise be considered unnecessary or even provocative luxury, or a remnant of glorious Byzantinism, reveals nothing other than the eschatological image of the glory and Kingdom of God.

### **Temples radiate the brilliance of heaven**

This is how we should perceive the radiant and dazzling image of divine worship, where our churches are transformed into palaces of heaven, and our clergy – often dressed in black in their

daily lives – become angels of light, glorifying the majesty of the heavenly God.

However, because voices unfamiliar with spiritual life and ecclesiastical experience often attempt to provoke scandal and to shake our faith, invoking the supposed luxury of divine worship, let us keep in mind the attitude of a contemporary Saint: “It is inconceivable to you why the Orthodox Church permits such inner brilliance: precious icons, silver oil lamps, golden chalices, expensive vestments, and other costly items. It is because all this dazzling radiance is meant to remind people of the eternal brilliance of heaven. To draw them, even if only for a moment, out of their earthly misery and to alert them to that other world, their heavenly homeland, the kingdom of eternal happiness and eternal joy. To present to them, as much as is possible on earth, in a material and symbolic way, that luxury and richness which fills the spiritual world and with which the soul of the Christian must be filled, the soul that is enclosed in the body, just as all that brilliance is enclosed within the stone walls of the church.”

Let us participate in the worship life of our Church with this understanding, with consistency and fervent inner disposition, tasting through this life the blessings of the Kingdom of Heaven. Amen!

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Archimandrite E. Oik.

August 31, 2025: 12th Sunday of Matthew

Deposition of the precious Belt of the Most Holy Theotokos in her church in Constantinople in the Chalkoprateia district.

3rd Tone – Eothinon: 1 – Epistle: Hebrews 9:1-7  
– Gospel: Matthew 19:16-26

NEXT SUNDAY: September 7, Sunday Before the Elevation of the Cross  
Epistle: Galatians 6:11-18 – Gospel: John 3:13-17

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By His All-Holiness Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew

The Patriarchal Declarations of His All-Holiness, Ecumenical Patriarch Bartholomew, for the feasts of Christmas and Holy Pascha, the Catechetical Homilies for Great and Holy Lent, and the messages for the Day of the Indiction (September 1st) – which is a day of prayer for the protection of the natural environment – have been published in this luxurious volume. This new edition by the Apostolic Ministry of the Church of Greece was presented to His All-Holiness by His Eminence Metropolitan Agathangelos of Fanarion, General Director of the Organization, on Saturday, June 1st. His All-Holiness received the edition with emotion and spiritual joy.

**ΦΩΝΗ ΕΞ ΟΡΟΥΣ ΚΑΤΑΣΚΙΟΥ: ΣΥΜΒΟΥΛΕΣ ΚΑΙ ΔΙΑΤΥΠΩΣΕΙΣ**  
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