

SATURDAY OF LAZARUS & PALM SUNDAY: THE ANNOUNCEMENT OF PASCHA

The Purpose of Great & Holy Week: the founding and forming of the New Jerusalem

Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City: An Interpretation of the Great Week and Bright Week Cycle in the Orthodox Church*

²²But you have come to Mount Sion and *the* city of *the* living God, a heavenly Jerusalem, and to myriads of angels, ²³a festal assembly and Church of *the* firstborn *ones* (*baptized faithful*) who have been registered in *the* heavens, and to God *the* Judge of all, and to *the* spirits of *the* righteous who have been perfected, ²⁴and to Jesus, Mediator of a new covenant, and to *the* blood of sprinkling... [Heb. 12:22-24]

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- ❖ Saturday of Lazarus Vespers is conducted on the Last Friday of Great Lent at the Presanctified liturgy
- ❖ Catechumens were baptized on this day (and on Great & Holy Saturday evening) following the 40 day fast – All those who have been baptized into Christ is sung.
- ❖ The Saturday of Lazarus, from the liturgical point of view, is the pre-feast of Palm Sunday -- the Entrance of our Lord into Jerusalem.
- ❖ Both feasts have a common theme: triumph and victory
- ❖ Saturday reveals the Enemy, which is death
- ❖ Palm Sunday announces the meaning of victory as the triumph of the Kingdom of God, as the acceptance by the world of its only King, Jesus Christ.
- ❖ In the life of Jesus, the solemn entrance in the Holy City was the only visible triumph

“It is a Sunday, i.e., a Resurrection service on a Saturday, a day usually devoted to the liturgical commemoration of the dead. And the joy which permeates these services stresses one central theme: the forthcoming victory of Christ over Hades... In the early church Lazarus Saturday was called "announcement of Pascha": it announces and anticipates, indeed, the wonderful light and peace of the next -- the Great and Holy Saturday, the day of the Life-giving Tomb (Schmemmann, *A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week*).”

❖ THE WEEPING OF CHRIST AT THE TOMB – DEATH AS TRAGEDY

“And once there, "Jesus wept" (John 11:35). Why does He weep if He knows that in a moment He will call Lazarus back to life? ...the power of resurrection belongs to God in Him. But the Orthodox Church teaches that all actions of Christ are...Divine and human, are actions of the one and same God-man, the Incarnate Son of God. He who weeps is not only man, but also God and He who calls Lazarus from the grave is not God alone but also Man. But then His very tears are Divine. Jesus weeps because He contemplates the triumph of death and destruction in the world created by God (Schmemmann, *A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week*).”

IV. THE VICTORY AT BETHANY

...“the Church is primarily the gift and the power of that *remembrance* which transforms facts of the past into eternally meaningful events. Liturgical celebration is thus a re-entrance of the Church into the event, and this means not merely its ‘idea,’ but its joy or sadness, its living and concrete reality...The true confirmation comes from *celebration*, and precisely from those five days on which we witness the beginning of that mortal fight between life and death, and begin not so much to understand, as to witness Christ going to put death to death” (Schmemmann, *Great Lent* p. 82-83).

1. The Personal purification of Great Lent (i.e. fighting the passions) is the means not to self-perfection but at embracing the “Today” of Christ in worship. Great Lent has now led us to “Put aside all the cares of this Life so that we may receive the King of all.”

THE SAVIOR WOUNDS DEATH

“The day celebrates a General who has cornered his ultimate enemy: Implacable (unopposed) Hades. Christ destroys *the dark kingdom of hell*. This enemy holds the Lord’s entire people hostage, whether they have already died or must merely fear the future appointment with death. Christ, the great lover of mankind, is a great warrior when confronting the enemy of his friends. He *burst asunder the belly* of the ancient devourer of his children with a single slash, his commanding word. Hades has chosen the wrong victim – the friend of the one opponent capable of forcing it to return its plunder. Having swallowed Lazarus, hell already begins to suffer a painful indigestion,, the first sign of its impending disembowelment. (Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City*.”

...the title ‘Savior’ is used frequently...because he stuns the enemy and rescues its captives...Christ is ‘Savior’ because He is the only one strong (the sinless One) enough to kill the ancient killer (Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City*).”

The smell of Death

¹⁶“*For God so loved the world that He gave His only-begotten Son, that everyone who believeth in Him should not perish, but may have everlasting life. [Jn. 3:16]*

“*Lazarus already stank...*This is the smell of a battlefield. But at this battle, the odor of death comes not from decaying corpses, but from Death itself, interrupted in the act of digesting Lazarus (Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City*).”

“At the grave of Lazarus, God encounters Death, the reality of anti-life, of destruction and despair. He meets His enemy, who has taken away from Him His world and become its *prince*. And we who follow Jesus as He approaches the grave, we enter with Him into that *hour of His*, which He announced so often as the climax and the fulfillment of His whole work. The Cross, its necessity and universal meaning are announced in the shortest verse of the Gospel: "and Jesus wept"... We understand now that it is *because* He wept, i.e., loved His friend Lazarus that Jesus had the power of calling him back to life. The power of Resurrection is not a Divine "power in itself," but power of love, or rather love as power. God is love and Love is Life, Love creates Life... It is Love that weeps at the grave and it is Love that restores life. This is the meaning of the Divine tears of Jesus. In them, love is at work again -- recreating, redeeming, restoring the

darkened life of man: "Lazarus, come forth!..." And this is why Lazarus Saturday is the beginning of both: the Cross, as the Supreme sacrifice of love, the Resurrection, as the ultimate triumph of love (Schmemmann, *A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week*)."

The Founding of the New Jerusalem

"Bethany is the first city mentioned in Great Week – the victory of over death there prefigures the eventual defeat of death at Jerusalem and the joy of the New Jerusalem (Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City* pg. 56)."

EPISTLE ON SATURDAY OF LAZARUS (HEBREWS 12:28-13:8)

"In one of its original purposes, the Week confers the unshakable Kingdom upon catechumens by making them sharers in this new rite...In his royal entrance, Christ demonstrates the archetype of the humbleness of the ruler towards the ruled. He models the correct way to rule a city. At the same time, the earthly Jerusalem recognizes and receives the King promised her by the scriptures, the King for whom she was created...Heaven and Earth are unified when Jerusalem recognizes her King, as the two liturgies momentarily yet eternally coincide. When this coincidence does not hold, Christ proceeds to a re-founding of Jerusalem...now he builds His kingdom by building Christians into vessels of love. He establishes a new political order entirely based upon service, the new liturgy and humility (Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City* pg. 257-258,262)."

²⁸Wherefore, since we are receiving an unshakable kingdom, let us be having gratitude by which we may worship God well pleasingly with reverence and piety. (Heb. 12:28)

St Paul lays out the life-giving order of the New City of God Being

- ❖ ¹Let brotherly love abide.
- ❖ ²Cease being forgetful of hospitality, for by this some entertained angels unawares.
- ❖ ³Be mindful of those in bonds as bound with *them*, of those being ill-treated as being yourselves also in *the* body.
- ❖ ⁴Marriage *is* honorable in all, and the bed undefiled; but fornicators and adulterers God will judge.
- ❖ ⁵*Let your* manner of life *be* without covetousness, being satisfied with things at hand; for He hath said, "In no wise will I leave thee, nor in any wise will I abandon thee." ⁶So that being of good courage we may say, "The Lord *is* a helper to me, and I will not be afraid; what shall man do to me?"
- ❖ ⁷Be remembering those who lead you, who spoke to you the word of God, whose faith keep on imitating, observing attentively the end of *their* conduct:
- ❖ ⁸Jesus Christ, the same yesterday and today and to the ages. [Heb. 13:1-8]

V. PALM SUNDAY: THE INAUGURATION OF THE KINGDOM

"Great Week takes place between two entrances, the first into Jerusalem on Palm Sunday, the second, into the New Jerusalem on Easter.

"In the life of Jesus, the solemn entrance in the Holy City was the only visible triumph...six days before the Passover, He not only accepted to be glorified, He Himself provoked and arranged this

glorification. By doing what the prophet Zechariah announced: "behold, your king is coming, sitting on an ass' colt!" (Zechariah 9:9), He made it clear that He wanted to be acclaimed and acknowledged as the Messiah, the King and the Redeemer of Israel. And the Gospel narratives stress all these messianic features: the Palms (SIGNS OF VICTORY) and the Hosanna (SAVE US), the acclamation of Jesus as the Son of David and the King of Israel. The history of Israel is now coming to its end, such is the meaning of this event. For the purpose of that history was to announce and to prepare the kingdom of God, the advent of the Messiah. And now it is fulfilled. For the King enter His Holy City and in Him all prophecies, all expectations find their fulfillment. *He inaugurates His Kingdom* (Schmemmann, A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week)."

Citizens of the Kingdom

"We forget so often that the Kingdom of God has already been inaugurated and that on the day of our baptism we were made citizens of it, have promised to put our loyalty to it above all other loyalties... And when at the most solemn moment of our Liturgical celebration, we receive from the priest a palm branch, we renew our oath to our King, we confess His Kingdom as the ultimate meaning and content of our life. We confess that everything in our life and in the world belongs to Christ and nothing can be taken away from its sole real Owner, that there is no area of life in which He is not to rule, to save and to redeem. We proclaim the universal and total responsibility of the Church for human history and uphold her universal mission. (Schmemmann, A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week)."

The New Jerusalem

"...in this one city we acknowledge the mystical center of the world and indeed of the whole creation. For such is the Biblical meaning of Jerusalem, the focal point of the whole history of salvation and redemption, the holy city of God's advent. Therefore, the Kingdom inaugurated in Jerusalem is a universal Kingdom, embracing in its perspective all men and the totality of creation... (Schmemmann, A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week)."

Christ re-defines Kingship as Sovereignty through Sacrifice (Patitsas)

- ❖ The children proclaim him King with their mouths (Hosanna to the Son of David) and Sacrificial victim with the cutting of branches which was an ancient rite done when making a sacrifice. (Patitsas)
- ❖ His Coronation is on the Cross – "The King of Glory" is inscribed on the Cross
- ❖ Palm Crosses commemorate the sacrificial offering of branches (Patitsas)

"This duality (King & Crucified) of Christ's entry flows from the duality of His Kingship. Christ is a sacral King, meaning one who interprets His Kingship according to a priestly modality of self-sacrifice. As a priest, he sacrifices only Himself and reconfigures kingship as service...defined as the responsibility to suffer on behalf of the people. (Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City* pg. 257-258,262)."

"But we know that the King whom the Jews acclaimed then and whom we acclaim today, is on His way to Golgotha, to the Cross and to the grave. We know that this short triumph is but the prologue of His sacrifice. The branches in our hands signify, therefore, our readiness and willingness to follow Him on this sacrificial way, our acceptance of sacrifice and self-denial as the only royal way to the Kingdom (Schmemmann, A Liturgical Explanation of Holy Week)."

The Anointing of Christ heralds his sacrifice – Jerusalem fails to anoint Him King in the Temple and so it is Mary the sister of Lazarus who ritually proclaims Him King (Palm Sunday Gospel)

“Mary pours costly nard upon his feet, and the aroma of consecration fills the entire house. Her act confesses and affirms Christ’s sovereignty over life and death. Since it comes in response to his announcement that He is the Resurrection and the Life, and His proof of that announcement in the restoration of her brother to her...The Temple ignored Him, but she worships Him. The leaders refused to enthrone Him, but she ritually proclaims Him King...’Let her alone; she has kept this for the Day of my burial ((Dr. Timothy Patitsas, *The King returns to His City* pg. 257-258,262).”