

The Good Word

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A VISION OF THE JUDGMENT AND HEAVENLY REWARDS GIVEN TO ST. NEPHON OF CONSTANTIA, 4TH CENTURY¹

One night after he finished his usual evening prayer, he laid down on the stones to sleep as always. It was midnight and he was still awake gazing at the moon and the stars in the sky.

As he was alone, he was thinking about his sins and was weeping mournfully, because he would bring to mind the fearful hour of Judgment. Suddenly he saw the firmament of the sky pull back like a sheet, and the LORD Jesus Christ appeared in huge dimensions. He was standing in the heavens surrounded by all the heavenly hosts: angels, archangels, outstanding fearful battalions diffidently lined up.

The LORD signaled to the commander of one of the battalions, and he approached bright, fearsome, but also reserved. “Michael, Michael, lord of the covenant, receive the fiery throne of My glory and with your battalion go to the valley of Josaphat [Kidron valley east of Jerusalem]. There you will install it as the first sign of My Parousia [My return], because the hour is approaching when each one will receive according to his deeds. Hurry, the time has come. I shall judge those who worshiped the idols and denied Me, their Creator; those who worshiped the stones and sticks that I gave them for their needs. All of them will be crushed *‘like a potter’s vessels.’* The same will happen to my enemies, the heretics, who cared to separate Me from My Father, who dared to reduce the Holy Spirit to a creature. Woe to them, what punishment awaits them!

“Now I shall also appear to the Jews who crucified Me and did not believe in My divinity. I was given authority, honor, and power. I am a righteous Judge. When I was on the Cross they said: *‘Aha! He who would destroy the temple...save Yourself.’* Now, vengeance is Mine, I will repay. I will judge, I will censure, and I will punish harshly this evil and perverse race, because they did not repent. I gave them opportunities to repent, but they ignored them. Well, now I will take revenge.

“I will do the same with the Sodomites who polluted

the earth and the air with their stench. I burned them then. And I will burn them again, because they despised the delight of the Holy Spirit and loved the pleasure of the devil.

“I will also punish the dumb and brainless adulterers, who resemble wild horses in heat. They didn’t confine themselves to their lawful mates but turned foolishly to immorality, and Satan bound them and threw them into the abyss of the fire. Didn’t they hear that *‘It is a fearful thing to fall into the hands of the living God?’* Are they not afraid that *‘I will pour out my indignation on them?’* I invited them to repent, and yet they did not repent.

“I will condemn also the thieves who committed a great deal of evil, even murders! And all who committed a multitude of sins. I granted them opportunities to change, but they paid no heed. Where are their good deeds? I showed them the prodigal as an example and a model, and many others -- so that they wouldn’t lose courage because of their sins. But they scorned My commandments and denied Me. They turned away from Me and embraced debauchery. They loathed Me and became enslaved to sin. Let them walk, then, in the fire that they themselves lit.

“But I will also surrender to a fearful tempest all those who died resentful, because they did not desire My peace, but throughout their lives they stayed hot-headed, bilious and wrathful.


“I will destroy and I will vent all My wrath on the greedy, the usurers and all who work in avarice -- which is a second idolatry -- because they fixed all their hope on gold and ignored Me as if I had not provided for them.

“I will melt like wax in Gehenna those false Christians who either allege there is no resurrection of the dead or that there is reincarnation. Then they will be convinced about the resurrection of the dead.

“The sorcerers, witch doctors, and as many as generally busy themselves with divinations will be crushed.

“Woe to those also who get drunk, who live riotously with guitars and drums, who sing, dance, use obscene language, and think evil. I invited them, but they did not hear Me; instead they mocked Me. Now the worm will eat up their heart. I granted mercy and

1. *Stories, Sermons, and Prayers of St. Nephon: An Ascetic Bishop*, Light and Life Publishing Co, Minneapolis, MN, 1989, pp. 58-76.



repentance to all, but no one would pay attention then.

“I will also submerge into darkness all those who disregarded the Holy Scriptures which My Spirit wrote through the saints.

“Furthermore, I will judge those who busy themselves in old wives’ tales and superstitions and fix their hopes on dolls and needles and black cats and other similar things. Then they will learn that they should have hoped in God and not in His creations. They will be shaking and will object then, but they will no longer have strength, because ‘*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay.*’

“I will also punish the kings and rulers who embittered Me ceaselessly with their injustices. They judged unjustly and proudly, scorning the people. Indeed, they could be bought. But My authority does not accept bribes. According to their injustices I will annihilate them. Then they will realize that I am the fearful One Who takes away the powers of the rulers. They will realize that I am more terrible than all the kings of the earth. Woe to them! What punishment awaits them! Because they gnashed their teeth and spilled innocent blood, the blood of their sons and daughters.

“But to wrath should I surrender the hirelings who were not true shepherds, who ruined My vineyard and scattered My sheep? Who tended gold and silver -- not souls -- and sought the priesthood for profit. How great will their punishment be! How great the lamentation! I shall pour out all My anger and wrath on them and I shall crush them. They tried to obtain corruptible sheep and oxen, but did not tend to My rational sheep. I will punish their iniquities with a rod and their injustices with a whip.

“But also the priests who laugh or quarrel in My holy churches, what shall I do to them? I will reform them in fire and brimstone.

“I am coming, and here I am. Whoever has the power let him confront Me. But woe and alas to him who is a sinner and falls into My hands! Because everyone will appear before Me ‘*open and laid bare.*’ Then, where will the impudence of the sinners dare to show its face? How will they face Me? Where will they put their shame? They will disgrace themselves before My Immaculate Powers.

“However, I will also condemn all those monks who neglected their duties and betrayed the vows they took before God, angels, and men. They promised one thing and did another. I will throw them down into the abyss from the height of the clouds. As if their own perdition was not enough, they also caused disastrous scandals in others. It would have been better for them if they had

not denied the world, instead, they denied it and lived shamefully in dissipation. ‘*Vengeance is Mine, I will repay*’ those who did not want to repent. I will judge them like a righteous Judge...”

These words, that the LORD thundered to Archangel Michael, filled the innumerable Powers of angels with awe.

Then He commanded that the Seven Eons of the formation of the world be brought to Him. Michael assumed the execution of this command also. So he immediately went to the House of the Covenant and brought them. They were like big books and he placed them before the Judge. Afterwards, he stood aside watching with respect how the LORD skimmed through the Registry of the Eons.

He took the first Eon, opened it and said: “Here it says, first of all, the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, One God in three persons. The Son was begotten of the Father; He is the Creator of the Eons. Because by the Word of the Father, the Son, the Eons were formed, the bodiless Powers were created, the heavens were made firm, the earth, the places under the earth, the sea, the rivers, ‘*and all that is therein.*’”

Then after He read a little further, He said: “Here it says, Image of the invisible God is the first man, Adam, with his wife Eve. To Adam was given a command by All-governing God and Creator of all things visible and invisible. It is a law that must be kept unerringly and with precision, so that he may remember his Creator, and not forget that there is a God over him.


Again He went on a little: “Transgression into which the image of God fell because of deceit or rather because of carelessness and negligence. Man fell and was driven away from Paradise with the righteous judgment and verdict of God. The vile transgressor should not be found in such good!”

Further down he read: “Cain fell on Abel and killed him, according to the will of the devil. He should be burned in the fire of Gehenna because he remained unrepented, while Abel will live forever.”

In the same way He skimmed through the six Books of Eons.

Finally, He took the seventh and read: “The beginning of the seventh Eon marks the end of Eons. Hatred, wickedness and cruelty become the norm. The people of the seventh Eon are wicked, envious, liars, with hypocritical love, power thirsty, enslaved in sodomitic sins.”

He went on a little, read something and immediately He looked up mournfully. He placed one hand on His knee, and with the other He covered His face and eyes and remained thoughtful in the position for a long time.



In a little while, He whispered: “Truly, this seventh Eon surpassed all the previous ones in wickedness and injustice.”

Further down He read: “The Greeks and their idols were thrown down with the wood of the Cross, the spear, and the nails which they drove into My life-giving Body.”

He was silent a few moments and again He bent over the book. “The twelve princes of the Great King, bright as the light, stirred up the sea, stopped the mouths of beasts, drowned the noetic dragons, gave light to the blind, fed the hungry and impoverished the rich. They caught many dead souls reviving them again. Great are their wages! ...”

And after a little: “I, the Beloved, chose also victorious martyrs for My sake. Their friendship reached up to Heaven and their love to My throne, their yearning up to My heart and their adoration inflames Me powerfully! My glory and dominion are with them.”

When He had turned several pages, He whispered with a smile of satisfaction: “The man who held the rudder of the Seven-Hilled City with piety and became its king was servant of My love. He is deserving of the Kingdom of Heaven, because he remained a zealot and imitator of his LORD.”

Then skipping a lot, He exclaimed: “O most beautiful and most honored Bride! How many shameful people tried hard to pollute you! But you did not betray Me your Bridegroom!...Innumerable heresies threatened you, but the rock on which you are founded did not move because *‘the gates of Hades shall not prevail against it.’*”

Further down were written all the sins of the people whose death found them not cleansed through repentance. And they were so many, like the sand of the sea!...The LORD read them displeased and shook His head sighing.

The countless number of angels were standing terrified with fear at the justified wrath of the LORD.

When the LORD reached the middle of the Eon, He observed: “This last one is full of the stench of sins, of the human deeds that are all false and filthy: hatred, murders, lies, enmities, resentments. Enough! I will stop it in the middle. Let the dominion of sin end.”

And saying these angry words, the LORD gave the signal for the Judgment to Archangel Michael. He and his battalion immediately took the resplendent and indescribable throne and departed. The battalion was so numerous, that it did not fit on earth. As they departed, they shouted: “Holy, holy, holy, fearsome and great, high and lifted up, wondrous and glorified is the

LORD unto ages of ages.”

Then Gabriel and his battalion withdrew chanting: “Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of His glory!” And with that fearful shout heaven and earth shook.

The third great commander-in-chief, Raphael, followed with his battalion offering the hymn, “One is holy, one is LORD, Jesus Christ, to the Glory of God the Father. Amen!”

Finally, the fourth one also started out. Its leader was pure white and shining like the snow with a sweet face. As he was leaving, he, too, began to chant loudly: “*The God of gods, the LORD, hath spoken, and He hath called the earth from the rising of the sun and unto the setting thereof. Out of Sion is the magnificence of His comeliness. God shall come visibly, yea, our God, and shall not keep silence. Fire shall blaze before Him and round about Him shall there be a mighty tempest.*”

And then the rest of the Psalm while his officers answered: “*Arise, O God, judge the earth, for Thou shalt have an inheritance among all the nations.*” The leader of that battalion was Uriel.

After a while they brought before the LORD His glorious Cross, which glittered like terrible lightning and exuded an ineffable fragrance. The Cross was accompanied with great honors by two battalions of Principalities and Powers. The spectacle was excitingly magnificent! The numerous powers chanted very harmoniously.


Others with great awe were saying: “*I will exalt Thee, O my God, my King, and I will bless Thy name forever.*”

But still others were saying: “*Exalt ye the LORD our God, and worship the footstool of His feet; for He is holy. Alleluia, alleluia, alleluia!*”

Then a divine command was given for the mighty leader, Michael, to come again to stand by the throne of the LORD. At that moment an angel holding a thunderous trumpet appeared. The Judge took it in His hands, blew three times and spoke three words. Then He gave it to Michael and said: “Go to Golgotha, where I stretched My immaculate hands, and sound the trumpet three times there also.”

As soon as Michael left, the LORD called the battalion of Authorities and turning to its leader He said: “I command you to take your divine battalion and disperse yourselves in all the world to transport the saints on top of clouds, from East and West, North and South. You will gather all of them so that they may welcome My presence, as soon as the trumpet sounds.”

After all this, the righteous Judge glanced at the earth and saw...fog and darkness, weeping and woes



and many lamentations from the fearful tyranny of Satan. The beast raged and raved.

He destroyed everything crushing them like grass, because He saw the angels of God preparing eternal fire for him.

As soon as the LORD saw all this He called a fiery angel with a strict and fearful appearance and without pity -- he was the leader of the angels that watch over the fire of Hell -- and said to him: "Take My staff that binds and crushes with you. Take innumerable angels from your battalion also, the most powerful and fearful, who were promised as avengers of the damned. You will go to the noetic sea to find the traces of the black leader. Grab him with force and strength and strike him unmercifully with the staff, until he surrenders the battalion of evil spirits. And after you tie all of them tightly with the force of My rod, according to My command, you will throw them in the most merciless and horrible punishments! ... "

Finally, then, when everything was ready, a sign was given to the archangel who was holding the trumpet to sound it loudly. Immediately dead silence spread out, as if the universe had become calm. With the first sound, all the bodies of the dead were raised. With the second, the Spirit of the LORD again restored the souls in the dead bodies. Awe and horror seized the universe. The celestial and the terrestrial trembled. And then the third and most horrible trumpet call resounded, which shook all the world. The dead were resurrected from their graves "*in the twinkling of an eye.*" What a frightful sight! They surpassed the sand of the sea in number. At the same time, like dense rain, the angelic armies were descending from heaven toward the "throne of preparation" shouting: "Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts, the whole earth is full of fear and trembling."

All the people and the countless armies of angels stood waiting. They were trembling and shuddering before the terrible divine authority which was descending on earth. However, while all were looking up high, suddenly earthquakes began to take place, thunder and lightening in the Valley of Judgment and in Heaven so that everyone was shocked. Then, the firmament rolled up like a scroll: the Holy Cross appeared glowing like the sun and scattering divine flashes. The angels were holding it before our LORD Jesus Christ and Judge of the universe, Who was coming.

In a little while a hymn was heard, a song never heard before: "*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD; God is the LORD,*' Judge, Sovereign, Prince of Peace."

As soon as that thunderous doxology ended, the Judge appeared in the clouds, seated on a fiery throne. He set heaven and earth afire with His very splendor.

Suddenly, in the midst of the masses of the resurrected dead some began to glow like the sun! Immediately they were snatched from the clouds in the air to meet their LORD. The majority, however, remained below. No one brought them to heaven!...They were weeping bitterly that they too weren't able to be snatched from the clouds and their grief and pain was like poison to their souls. They all fell on their knees before the Judge and rose up again.

The fearful Judge had finally sat on the throne of Judgment, and all the powers of the heavens gathered around Him with fear and trembling. Those who had been snatched from the clouds to be received by Him, were placed on His right. The rest were directed to the left of the Judge. The majority of them were Jews, nobles, Bishops, priests, kings, and a large number of monks and laymen. They stood very ashamed, deploring themselves and weeping for their loss. Their faces were wretched and they sighed deeply crushed. A deathly grief had spread over all and there was no comfort in sight anywhere.

But all those who were standing on the right of the LORD were cheerful, bright as the sun, reserved, glorified, white like the light, ablaze, as if by a flash of divine light. they resembled--if it isn't daring for one to say it--their LORD and God.


The fearful Judge immediately threw His gaze to the one side and to the other. On the right side He looked satisfied and smiled. However, when He turned to the left, He was troubled and very angry and turned His face away at once.

Then with a loud and solemn voice He said to those at His right hand: "*Come, O blessed of My Father, inherit the Kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world; for I was hungry and you gave Me food, I was thirsty and you gave Me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed Me, I was naked and you clothed Me, I was sick and you visited Me, I was in prison and you came to Me.*"

They were puzzled and asked: "*LORD, when did we see Thee hungry and feed Thee, or thirsty and give Thee drink? And when did we see Thee a stranger and welcome Thee, or naked and clothe Thee? And when did we see Thee sick or in prison and visit Thee?*"

"*Truly, I say to you as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.*"

He turned then toward the ones at His left hand also, and said to them harshly: "*Depart from Me, you cursed, into the eternal fire prepared for the devil and*



his angels; for I was hungry and you gave Me no food, I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink, I was a stranger and you did not welcome Me, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.”

“LORD,” they also asked Him puzzled, “*when did we see Thee sick or in prison, and did not minister to Thee?*”

“*Truly, I say to you,*” the LORD answered them, “*as you did it not to one of the least of these, you did it not to Me. Get out of My sight, you cursed of the earth! to Tartarus! to the gnashing of teeth! That’s where the endless weeping and wailing will be.*”

As soon as the Judge voiced that decision, at once an enormous fiery river spilt over from the east and went rolling violently toward the west. It was broad like a big sea. When the sinners on the left saw it they were very stunned and began to tremble frightfully in their despair. But the impartial Judge ordered everyone--just and unjust--to pass through the flaring river, so that the fire could try them.

The ones at His right hand started first. They crossed and came out gleaming like solid gold. Their deeds did not burn, but instead proved to be brighter and clearer with the test. That’s why they were filled with joy.

After these, the ones at His left hand come to pass through the fire, so that their deeds might be tried. But, because they were sinners, the flame began to consume them and kept them in the middle of the river. Their deeds were burned up like straw while their bodies remained unharmed to burn for years and endless ages along with the devil and the demons.

No one was able to come out of that fiery river! The fire imprisoned all of them, because they deserved condemnation and punishment.

After the sinners were surrendered to hell, the fearful Judge rose from His throne and with all His saints set out for the Divine Palace. All the heavenly powers surrounded Him with much fear and trembling, chanting: “*Lift up your gates, O ye princes; and be ye lifted up, ye everlasting gates, and the King of Glory shall enter in,* the LORD and God of gods with all His saints, who will enjoy His inheritance forever.”

Another army would answer and say: “*Blessed is He that cometh in the name of the LORD’* with all those that His grace enabled to be called the sons of God, “*God is the LORD, and’* along with the sons of New Sion, ‘*hath appeared unto us.*”

And the Archangels, who went before the LORD, glorified Him, chanting antiphonally a heavenly strain: “*Come let us rejoice in the LORD, let us shout with jubilation unto God our Savior. Let us come before His*

countenance with thanksgiving, and with psalms let us shout in jubilation unto Him.” While another army responded antiphonally: “*For the LORD is a great God and a great King over all the earth. For in His hand are the ends of the earth, and the heights of the mountains are His!*” The holy angels chanted these and many more harmonious songs, so that those who heard them might rejoice indescribably.

Chanting like this, the saints with the LORD Jesus Christ entered into the heavenly chamber of the Divine Palace with hearts that leaped with joy, and immediately the gates of the bridal chamber were closed.

Then the heavenly King called the leaders of the angels. The first to appear were Michael, Gabriel, Raphael, Uriel, and the commanders of the armies.


The twelve luminaries of the world, the apostles, followed. The LORD gave them shining glory and twelve fiery thrones so that with great honors they might sit close to their Teacher, Christ. Their faces radiated an indescribable eternal light and their clothing was glittering and transparent like amber. Even the leaders of the angels admired them. Finally, He also gave them twelve exquisite crystal crowns adorned with precious stones, which glistened blindingly, as glorious angels held them over their heads.

Then the seventy apostles were led before the LORD. They too received similar honors and glory, except that the crowns of the twelve were more wonderful.

Now it was the martyr’s turn. They took the place and glory of the great angelic army, which fell down from heaven along with Lucifer. In other words, the martyrs became the angels and leaders of the heavenly armies. Immediately they were brought a large number of crowns which were placed on their holy heads. They glowed as much as the sun glows. Thus the holy martyrs, deified, rejoiced and exalted ineffably. Then the divine chorus of hierarchs, priests, deacons and the remaining clergy entered. They, too, were crowned with eternal and unwithering crowns, according to their zeal, patience, and pastoral activity. Each crown was different according to the glory, just as each star differs from the other. Thus many priests and deacons were more glorious and brilliant than many bishops.

They even gave each one a church, so that they may offer holy and perfect sacrifice pleasing to God in the spiritual altar.

Then the holy chorus of the monks came in. Their faces exuded a mystical fragrance and they shimmered like suns. The LORD adorned them with six wings, and with the power of the Holy Spirit they became like the frightful Cherubim and Seraphim. They began to shout



loudly: “*Holy, holy, holy is the LORD of hosts; the whole earth is full of His glory.*” Their glory was great, unimaginable, and their crowns multifaceted and glistening. They received honors according to their struggles.

The chorus of the prophets followed. The King gave them the Song of Songs, the Psalter of David, timbrels and dances, immaterial, flashing light, ineffable delight, and the glorification of the Holy Spirit.

Then the LORD of the divine bridal chamber asked them to chant something. And they chanted such a melodious hymn that everyone leaped with joy.

After they received these gifts from the immaculate hands of the Savior, the saints still waited for “*what no eye had seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived.*”

Then entered the entire chorus of people who were saved in the world: the poor, leaders, kings, and private citizens, slaves and free men. They all stood before the LORD and He set apart from their midst the merciful and pure, and He gave them the bliss of the Paradise of Eden, heavenly and luminous palaces, luxurious crowns sanctification and exultation, thrones and scepters, and angels to wait on them.

Then came all those who for the love of Christ became “*poor in spirit.*” Now they were greatly exalted. A very brilliant crown was given to them by the hand of the LORD and they inherited the Kingdom of Heaven.

Then came those who were mourning for their sins, and received the great comfort of the Holy Trinity.

They were followed by the meek and guileless, who inherited the heavenly earth, where the Spirit of God lets fall sweetness and fragrance. They, too, experienced ineffable delight and pleasure when they saw the blessed earth given to them. Their rose-like crowns gave off flashes of light.

The hungry and thirsty for righteousness were next and were given the wages of righteousness, so that they might be satisfied. And their good will rejoiced when they saw Christ the King extolled and greatly glorified by the holy angels.

Then came those *persecuted for righteousness’ sake.* Divine praise and a very marvelous life was given to them. Indeed, for their sake even an ineffable throne was put up so that they might sit in the Kingdom of Heaven. Their crowns were of divine and immaterial gold which glowed so much that, due to their glory, the chorus of angels rejoiced.

Those reviled for Christ, the great God and Savior of our souls, entered next. He put them up on gilded

thrones, and they enjoyed the praise of God.

After them entered a large number of idolaters who did not know the law of Christ, but by nature observed it by obeying their conscience. Many glowed like the sun because of their purity and goodness, and the LORD gave them Paradise and radiant crowns braided with roses and lilies. However, they were blind since they had been denied Holy Baptism. They could not see the glory of God at all, because Holy Baptism is the light and eye of the soul. That’s why, he who does not receive it, even if he does an infinite amount of good, he certainly inherits the bliss of paradise and experiences something of its fragrance and sweetness, but he sees nothing.

After them, righteous Nephon saw a host of saints who were the children of the Christians. All of them appeared to be about 30 years old. The Bridegroom looked at them with a gladsome look and said: “Indeed your baptismal garment is spotless, but deeds nowhere! What shall I do with you then?” Then boldly they answered Him: “LORD, You denied us Your earthly goods, at least do not deny us the heavenly ones.”

The Bridegroom smiled and granted them heavenly goods. They also received the crowns of purity and goodness, and all the bodiless hosts admired them.

It was wonderful for one to hear the holy angels, who thoroughly pleased, sang sweet songs as they saw the hosts of the saints.


After all that, Nephon saw a Bride bathed in divine light approaching the Bridegroom. She dispersed heavenly fragrances and divine myrrh around her. On her very beautiful head she wore an incomparable, radiant, royal crown. The angels looked at her astonished and the saints dazzled. The Grace of the Holy Spirit held that heavenly diadem upon the immaculate head.

As she went into the divine bridal chamber, she was followed by a countless number of virgins who with doxologies and chants were praising the grandeur of God.

When she came close to the Bridegroom, the great Queen bowed down three times along with the holy virgins. Then the One “*comely in beauty*” saw her and rejoiced. He bowed His head and honored her as His immaculate Mother. She approached with great reverence and grace and kissed His deathless and sleepless eyes, as well as His merciful hands.

After the divine kiss, the LORD gave the virgins gleaming dresses and luminous crowns. Afterwards all the rational powers came praising, blessing and glorifying her.

Then the Bridegroom rose from His throne and, with



His Mother on His right, and His great and very admirable prophet and Forerunner on His left, He came out of the Bridal Chamber, and went into the divine chamber where “*what no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man conceived*” was prepared for all those who love God. All the saints followed also. As soon as they saw them, they were overwhelmed with ineffable joy and began to circulate festively in the spectacular chamber.

But the servant of God Nephon wasn’t able to describe them to me. Even though many times I pressured him, he didn’t tell me the slightest thing. “My son,” he could say with a sigh, “I can’t portray those there with my words, nor compare them with any earthly thing. They were beyond every thought and imagination, beyond everything visible and invisible.”

Therefore, when the LORD divided all the unutterable and unheard of goods amongst the saints, He commanded the Cherubim to surround the eternal chamber, as the wall surrounds a city. Then He commanded the Seraphim to surround the Cherubim, the Thrones the Seraphim, the Principalities the Thrones, the Authorities the Principalities, and finally the heavenly Powers the Authorities. The armies surrounded each other the same way that a wall surrounds a city.

To the right of the eternal chamber stood Michael and his battalion with every grandeur. Gabriel with his army stood on the left. Uriel established himself on the west, and Raphael in the east.

All of this took place with the command of the LORD Jesus Christ, the great God and Savior of all the saints. Those four ranks were very big. And with the host of the immaculate powers they girded the chamber of God with great splendor.

When all this had finally been carried out, then the God-Man Jesus Himself was “*also subjected to Him Who put all things under Him,*” and gave Him all the authority and sovereignty and dominion which He had received from Him; while He, along with all His saints and co-heirs, entered into the divine and inaccessible chamber, heir of the Father, King, and High Priest.

At the end of all the mysteries that Saint Nephon saw, he saw even the most frightful revelation: the Father of the only begotten Son, the Parent Himself, the inaccessible and incomprehensible Light, rose suddenly shining over that boundless chamber, over the immaculate Powers, over all their circles and ranks. He gave light to the most pure chamber like the sun gives light to the world. That is how the Father of mercies shone. And just like the sponge absorbs and retains wine, that’s how the saints were inundated by the

ineffable godhead of the Father and reigned increasingly with Him in all the ages.

From then on there was neither night nor day for them. There was only God, the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit, effulgence and bliss, life and light, delight and pleasure.

Then there was deep silence. Clear and pure light was given to righteous Nephon that he might see: a song like a continuous and endless inheritance was given to the first army that surrounded the Chamber. Its pleasure was incomparable and more than good. The divine and fearful army immediately started an inexpressible doxology. The hearts of the saints leaped with joy and pleasure.

From the first rank the superb hymn of doxology was passed on to the second rank of the Seraphim. It, too, then began to chant a very artful and incomprehensible hymn. Its doxology sounded like sweetest honey to the ears of the saints, and they rejoiced boundlessly with all their senses. Their eyes saw the inaccessible Light. Their nose smelled the fragrance of the Godhead. Their ears heard the divine hymn of the immaculate powers. Their mouths tasted the Body and Blood of the LORD Jesus Christ new in the Kingdom of Heaven. Their hands felt the eternal Good and their feet danced in the chamber. Therefore, in this way they were filled with ineffable exultation.

Shortly that divine hymn was passed from the second rank to the third and from the third to the fourth, down to the last one, causing enjoyment and pleasure in the hearts of the saints with that sweeter-than-honey melody. And it was amazing that one hymn was chanted unceasingly by the heavenly hosts, yet there was an indescribable variety and originality in that ode as they chanted it.

When the seven circles of the angelic armies completed their pure doxology, then the rank of the archangels also began the thrice-holy hymn: Michael chanted and Gabriel responded; and again, Raphael hymned and Uriel concluded. One would hear such harmonies as never heard before. The four fiery pillars, the archangels, stood out and their chanting was ardent and thunderous.

Incited then by that infinite bliss all the Saints started extolling the splendor of God from the heavenly chamber.

Thus a hymn resounded from within, a hymn from without, a hymn everywhere: most sacred songs that inflamed the holy hearts with blessed joy in the endless ages. When thrice-blessed Nephon had seen all this and was in ecstasy and contemplation, he heard the voice of God saying to him: “Nephon, Nephon, your prophetic



THE GOOD WORD

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vision was beautiful. Write in detail everything you saw and heard because that's how it will be. I revealed them to you because you are a true friend, My beloved son and heir to My Kingdom. Rest assured, therefore, now that I have enabled you to become an eye-witness to the dread mysteries of My great love towards all those who worship in humility My Kingdom and My authority, for I delight in looking to him who "is humble and meek, and trembles at My words.

After the LORD said this to him, He freed him from the dread and most marvelous vision, which had absorbed him for two weeks.

When he finally came to himself, he sat terrified and cried and wailed. His tears would run like a stream and he'd say: "Woe to me, the prodigal! What awaits my miserable soul! Woe to me, the wretch! I wonder in what condition I, the sinner, will find myself there! How will I defend myself to the Judge? How will I answer for my sins? And where will I hide the multitude of my iniquities? Oh the profane and miserable one!...I have neither sighs nor tears. But neither can I find repentance. Charity nowhere! Prayer, none! Love, zero! Guileless and meekness stand very far from me! Alas! What can I, the wretch and vile, do? From where can I be snatched that my soul may be saved? I soiled my garment, I polluted my Baptism, I plunged my soul into the mire. I clouded my mind, my heart is weighed down with dissipation and drunkenness. Ah! sinner that I am, I don't know what to do! My eyes see obscenities. My face is thoroughly ashamed. My ears delight in demonic songs. My nostrils seek sweet odors. My mouth inclines toward gluttony. Woe to me the wretch! My hands take pleasure in sin. My body desires to roll in the mire of immorality, seeking soft beds and

good food. Oh, the lawless, dark and foul one! I don't know where to go. Who will pull me out from the bitter fire? Who will rescue me from the outer darkness of frightful Tartarus? Who will deliver me from the gnashing of teeth? Woe, woe to me, the disgusting one! The lawless one! It would have been better if I had not been born! ... Oh, what glory I, the black one, am about to be denied! What honor, what crowns, how much joy, how much gaiety will I lose, because I became a slave to sin! Miserable soul! Where, then is your compunction? Where are your struggles? Where are your virtues? You'll go into the furnace. How will you stand the woes and lamentations? O miserable soul, that always desired to roll in corruption, that unceasingly served the stomach! ...

"Lawless and immoral one, what shame you will experience in the sight of Jesus! With what eyes will you look at His sweetest face? Tell me, tell me! You saw those marvelous visions which the LORD will one day fulfill. Tell me then, O my soul, do you have deeds worthy of that glory? How will you do in there, since you defiled your divine baptism? Woe to you then, my polluted soul! You deserve to inherit eternal fire; and where will sin and its father be to save you then? But, my LORD, LORD, save me from the fire, from the gnashing of teeth, from the furnace ... "

Often--when he would meditate about his vision more deeply and clearly--he would be beside himself. He was ablaze with the presence of the Holy Spirit and would cry out: "Oh, what joy, what glory, what splendor awaits the saints in Heaven! I'm so afraid that I may be denied them!" He would sigh deeply and add: "LORD, help and save my confused soul."

Correction to previous issue: in **Wisdom of Solomon**, p 7, 2nd sentence-should read: "Chapter 2 is only seen in concatenations for the 3rd reading of Great Vespers on Nov 13 for St. John Chrysostom and for the 2nd reading of Great Vespers on Feb 6 for St. Photios the Great." These readings importantly omit verses 16d (*and maketh His boast that God is His Father*) and 18 (*for if the just man be the Son of God, He will help Him and deliver Him from the hand of His enemies.*), so that the passages, as read there, apply better to these Saints and not to Christ Jesus.