

## 6.4 The Second Coming / Return of Christ

### I. Christ's Return Will Be the Glory, Fire and Illumination of the Light of Tabor

*Luke 9:28-34* Now it came to pass, about eight days after these sayings, that He took Peter, John, and James and went up on the mountain to pray. As He prayed, the appearance of His face was altered, and His robe became white and glistening. And behold, two men talked with Him, who were Moses and Elijah, who appeared in glory and spoke of His decease which He was about to accomplish at Jerusalem. But Peter and those with him were heavy with sleep; and when they were fully awake, they saw His glory and the two men who stood with Him. Then it happened, as they were parting from Him, that Peter said to Jesus, "Master, it is good for us to be here; and let us make three tabernacles: one for You, one for Moses, and one for Elijah"—not knowing what he said. While he was saying this, a cloud came and overshadowed them; and they were fearful as they entered the cloud. And a voice came out of the cloud, saying, "This is My beloved Son. Hear Him!" When the voice had ceased, Jesus was found alone.

As we saw in detail when we studied the uncreated light, love, grace, energy/ies of God near the beginning of our study, particularly with St. Gregory Palamas. This is the Light of Tabor This was also the light of the Old Testament.

The light of God that shone on and in Moses. The Shekinah glory or fire of the burning bush. The pillar during the day and fire by night that guided Israel in the wilderness. The fiery chariot of Elijah and the vision of Ezekiel's wheel. This is the. Light of the Prophets and the Light of Creation...but it is also the Light of the Last Judgment.

#### **Chrysostom connects Tabor with the Second Coming:**

*"For He shall not return hereafter as He came before. For then, so as to spare His disciples, He disclosed only as much of His brightness as they were able to endure; whereas later He shall come **in the very glory of the Father**, not only with Moses and Elias, but also with the infinite angelic hosts, with archangels, with Cherubim, with those infinite heavenly companies."*<sup>1</sup>

### II. Our response to the Glory of Christ's Presence of Fire and Illumination that IS the Judgement in His Return

---

<sup>1</sup> In *Eutropium eunuchum* (CPG 2:4528; PG 52:395-414), *Homilia in Galatas* 2:11, in *Illud*. Pg. 4 (554).

## 2 Thessalonians 1 – at the Second Coming

*“...it is a righteous thing with God to repay with tribulation those who trouble you, and to give you who are troubled rest with us when the Lord Jesus is revealed from heaven with His mighty angels, **in flaming fire** taking vengeance on those who do not know God, and on those who do not obey the gospel of our Lord Jesus Christ. These shall be punished with **everlasting destruction from the presence of the Lord and from the glory of His power**, when He comes, in that Day, **to be glorified in His saints** and to be admired among all those who believe, because our testimony among you was believed.”<sup>2</sup>*

## The Light of the Judgment of the parables of the Wheat and Tares in the Gospels

*<sup>38</sup> The field is the world, the good seeds are the sons of the kingdom, but the tares are the sons of the wicked one. <sup>39</sup> The enemy who sowed them is the devil, the harvest is the end of the age, and the reapers are the angels. <sup>40</sup> Therefore as the tares are gathered and burned **in the fire**, so it will be at the end of this age. <sup>41</sup> The Son of Man will send out His angels, and they will gather out of His kingdom all things that offend, and those who practice lawlessness, <sup>42</sup> and **will cast them into the furnace of fire**. There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth. <sup>43</sup> Then the righteous will shine forth as the sun in the kingdom of their Father. He who has ears to hear, let him hear!<sup>3</sup>*

## Colossians' Light of the Judgment

*If then you were raised with Christ, seek those things which are above, where Christ is, sitting at the right hand of God. <sup>2</sup> Set your mind on things above, not on things on the earth. <sup>3</sup> For you died, and your life is hidden with Christ in God. <sup>4</sup> **When Christ who is our life appears, then you also will appear with Him in glory.** <sup>5</sup> Therefore put to death your members which are on the earth: fornication, uncleanness, passion, evil desire, and covetousness, which is idolatry. <sup>6</sup> **Because of these things the wrath of God is coming upon the sons of disobedience,** <sup>7</sup> in which you yourselves once walked when you lived in them.<sup>4</sup>*

## 1 Corinthians Light of the Judgment: Revealing Heaven and Hell in Us: Our True Selves

---

<sup>2</sup> 2 Thessalonians 1:6-10

<sup>3</sup> Matthew 13: 38-43

<sup>4</sup> Colossians 3:1-4

*“...each one’s work will become clear; for the Day will declare it, because **it will be revealed by fire; and the fire will test each one’s work, of what sort it is.** If anyone’s work which he has built on it endures, he will receive a reward. If anyone’s work is burned, he will suffer loss; but he himself will be saved, yet so as through fire.”<sup>5</sup>*

### **Gospel of Matthew’s Light of the Judgment, Reveals Us as Sheep or Goats and the Quality of Our Love**

<sup>31</sup> *“When the Son of Man comes **in His glory**, and all the holy angels with Him, then He will **sit on the throne of His glory.**”* <sup>32</sup> *All the nations will be gathered before Him, and He will separate them one from another, as a shepherd divides his sheep from the goats.* <sup>33</sup> *And He will set the sheep on His right hand, but the goats on the left.* <sup>34</sup> *Then the King will say to those on His right hand, ‘Come, you blessed of My Father, inherit the kingdom prepared for you from the foundation of the world:’* <sup>35</sup> *for I was hungry and you gave Me food; I was thirsty and you gave Me drink; I was a stranger and you took Me in;’* <sup>36</sup> *I was naked and you clothed Me; I was sick and you visited Me; I was in prison and you came to Me.’* <sup>37</sup> *“Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry and feed You, or thirsty and give You drink?’* <sup>38</sup> *When did we see You a stranger and take You in, or naked and clothe You?’* <sup>39</sup> *Or when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?’* <sup>40</sup> *And the King will answer and say to them, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did it to one of the least of these My brethren, you did it to Me.’*

<sup>41</sup> *“Then He will also say to those on the left hand, ‘Depart from Me, you cursed, **into the everlasting fire** prepared for the devil and his angels:’* <sup>42</sup> *for I was hungry and you gave Me no food; I was thirsty and you gave Me no drink;’* <sup>43</sup> *I was a stranger and you did not take Me in, naked and you did not clothe Me, sick and in prison and you did not visit Me.’* <sup>44</sup> *“Then they also will answer Him, saying, ‘Lord, when did we see You hungry or thirsty or a stranger or naked or sick or in prison, and did not minister to You?’* <sup>45</sup> *Then He will answer them, saying, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, inasmuch as you did not do it to one of the least of these, you did not do it to Me.’* <sup>46</sup> *And these will go away into everlasting punishment, but the righteous into eternal life.*

### **III. The Light the Great White Throne Judgment of the New Heaven and New Earth Revelation – the Eternity of Salvation and Hell of the Condemned**

<sup>1</sup> *Then I saw a great white throne and Him who sat on it, **from whose face the earth and the heaven fled away.** And there was found no place for them.* <sup>12</sup> *And I saw the dead, small and great, standing before God, and books were opened. And*

---

<sup>5</sup> I Corinthians 3:13-15

another book was opened, which is the Book of Life. And the dead were judged according to their works, by the things which were written in the books.<sup>13</sup> The sea gave up the dead who were in it, and Death and Hades delivered up the dead who were in them. **And they were judged, each one according to his works.**<sup>14</sup> **Then Death and Hades were cast into the lake of fire. This is the second death.**<sup>15</sup> **And anyone not found written in the Book of Life was cast into the lake of fire.**

**Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away.** Also, there was no more sea.<sup>2</sup> **Then I, John, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband.**<sup>3</sup> And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, **“Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God.”**<sup>4</sup> And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes; there shall be no more death, nor sorrow, nor crying. There shall be no more pain, for the former things have passed away.” ...

<sup>6</sup> And He said to me, **“It is done! I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. I will give of the fountain of the water of life freely to him who thirsts.**<sup>7</sup> **He who overcomes shall inherit all things, and I will be his God and he shall be My son.**<sup>8</sup> **But the cowardly, unbelieving, abominable, murderers, sexually immoral, sorcerers, idolaters, and all liars shall have their part in the lake which burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death.”**

### **The New Jerusalem**

<sup>9</sup> Then one of the seven angels ... carried me away in the Spirit to a great and high mountain, and showed me the great city, the holy Jerusalem, descending out of heaven from God,<sup>11</sup> **having the glory of God. Her (Jerusalem’s) light was like a most precious stone, like a jasper stone, clear as crystal.**<sup>12</sup> ....

### **The Glory of the New Jerusalem**

<sup>22</sup> **But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple.**<sup>23</sup> **The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.**<sup>24</sup> **And the nations of those who are saved shall walk in its light, and the kings of the earth bring their glory and honor into it.**<sup>25</sup> **Its gates shall not be shut at all by day (there shall be no night there).**<sup>26</sup> **And they shall bring the glory and the honor of the nations into it.**<sup>27</sup> **But there shall by no means enter it anything that defiles, or causes an abomination or a lie, but only those who are written in the Lamb’s Book of Life.**

It is not a question of Christ imposing anything on us or inflicting us with anything bad or rewarding us with good. We will experience His Light that shines not only on everyone, but for those that love Him it will shine *in* them – illumine them.

For those, to the extent they do not love Him, will feel the Light negatively and will resent no longer having a choice to sin. In the same way we are surrounded by darkness in this world and sin always the easy choice, in the new world we are surrounded by His Light and the virtues not only come to us effortlessly – they are the only choice.

We will be live in the Light of Christ in complete freedom to act in accordance with our will – which is His will. In the Light of the new creation we will have utter integration within our being. To the point that not only are our bodies and souls living as a single unified life, but the powers of our soul, like the senses of our bodies, are acting as one: complete integration.

Our senses of sight, taste, touch, hearing, seeing and smelling will all be unified and integrated in the Light. We will see with our ears, nose and mouth. hear with our eyes and nose and mouth. Taste with our eyes, ears and nose...

In the same way there will be complete unity among us (Gal. 3:28), complete integration, peace, wholeness, unity, and feeling for one another as for ourselves. We will truly be one in Christ as Christ is one with the Father and the Spirit. (Jn 17).

And we will be, in Christ, one with the new creation. Complete unity, integration and peace with animals and the earth – and everything in, and of, the earth.

## 6.4 The Second Coming / Return of Christ

### IMPLICATIONS FOR LENT (DISCUSSION)

#### **Spiritually and practically:**

The relevance and place of the Light of God in our lives as our salvation, (i.e. purification, illumination and deification).

#### **Existentially:**

A future that frees our present.

#### **Relationally:**

Security in Him that bears the humility that allows us to trust Him and let go of having to trust ourselves.

– letting go by letting Him

– trusting, humble laughter

*For Protestants in particular*

### **What about the Rapture?**

As we noted in our discussion of the end of man/eschatology in section 5, the Rapture is a 20<sup>th</sup> century belief that is not shared by most of the Christian West or East. As noted in Wikipedia:

The **rapture** is an eschatological (end time) theological position held by some Christians, particularly within branches of American Evangelicalism consisting of an end time event when all Christian believers who are alive, along with resurrected believers, will rise "in the clouds, to meet the Lord in the air." ...The idea of a rapture as it is currently defined is not found in historic Christianity, but is a relatively recent doctrine of Evangelical Protestantism.

Most Christian denominations do not subscribe to rapture theology and have a different interpretation of the aerial gathering described in 1Thess. 4. Roman Catholics, Orthodox, Anglicans, Episcopalians, Lutherans, Presbyterians, United Methodists, United Church of Christ, and most Reformed Christians, do not generally use *rapture* as a specific theological term, nor do they generally subscribe to views associated with its use. Instead these groups typically interpret *rapture* in the sense of the elect gathering with Christ in heaven after His second coming.

### **What about the Millennium?**

The belief in a literal one thousand year reign of Christ on the earth is a very old belief. As we also noted in our discussion of section 5, it however has never been adopted by either the Roman Catholic or Orthodox Churches. Who instead view the thousand years as a symbol for perfection or completion. The Church historically viewed this (and still views it) to symbolize the Church age. In which the 'body of Christ' reigns on earth until Christ's Second Coming.

*For Orthodox in Particular*

### **What about Apokatastasis?**

Apokatastasis ('restoration' of all, or 'return' to God) is the doctrine espoused by Origen (purported to be the belief of St. Gregory of Nyssa), that says ultimately all will be saved. That because evil has no existence in itself and because it is finite, at some point the people who are deceived and deluded by it will come to the end of it and repent, and then be forgiven – and therefore saved. (Usually included in this is not only the unrepentant within humanity, but even Satan and the demons as well).

This is also often associated with 'universalism' – the belief that hell does not exist and all will be saved at the judgment. Neither has been a challenge to the Orthodox view, since the inception of apokatastasis long ago, nor the more recent 'universalism.' Both are based on an inadequate/ non-patristic view of the nature of 'eternity.' There is no change in eternity in the uncreated Light. It is the eternal day without end – the eternal present.