



# Prophet Elias News

**News in the time of self – isolation for the Orthodox Church  
of the Holy Prophet Elias in Devon  
7th March 2021**



## **Sunday of the Parable of the Last Judgement (Matthew 25: 31-46)**

The parable of the Last Judgement is about Christian love. Christian love is the “impossible possibility” to see Christ in another man, whoever he is, and whom God, in His eternal and mysterious plan, has decided to introduce into my life, be it only for a few moments, not as an occasion for a “good deed” or an exercise in philanthropy, but as the beginning of an eternal companionship in God Himself. For indeed, what is love if not that mysterious power which transcends the accidental and the external in the “other” – his physical appearance, social rank, ethnic origin, intellectual capacity – and reaches the *soul*, the unique and uniquely personal “root” of a human being, truly the part of God in him? If God loves every man it is because He alone knows the priceless and absolutely unique treasure, the “soul” or “person” He gave every man. Christian love then is the participation in that divine knowledge and the gift of that divine love. There is no “impersonal” love because love *is* the wonderful discovery of the “person” in “man”, of the personal and unique in the common and general. It is the discovery in each man of that which is “lovable” in him, of that which is from God.

In this respect, Christian love is sometimes the opposite of “social activism” with which one so often identifies Christianity today. To the “social activist” the object of love is not “person” but *man*, an abstract unit of a not less abstract “humanity”. But for Christianity, man is “lovable” because he is *person*. There person is reduced to man; here man is seen only as person. The “social activist” has no interest in the personal, and easily sacrifices it to the “common interest”. Christianity may seem to be, and in some ways actually is, rather sceptical about that abstract “humanity”, but it commits a mortal sin against itself each time it gives up its concern and love for the person. Social activism is always “futuristic” in its approach; it always acts in the name of justice, order, happiness to come, to be achieved. Christianity cares little about that problematic future but puts the whole emphasis on the *now* – the only decisive time for love. The two attitudes are not mutually exclusive, but they must not be confused. Christians, to be sure, have responsibilities toward “this world” and they must fulfil them. This is the area of “social activism” which belongs entirely to “this world”. Christian love, however, aims beyond “this world”. It is itself a ray, a manifestation of the Kingdom of God; it transcends and overcomes all limitations, all “conditions” of this world because its motivation as well as its goals and consummation is in God. And we know that even in this world, which “lies in evil”, the only lasting and transforming victories are those of love. To remind man of this *personal* love and vocation, to fill the sinful world with this love – this is the true mission of the Church.

Not all of us are called to work for “humanity”, yet each one of us has received the gift and the grace of Christ’s love.... We know that however narrow and limited the framework of our personal existence, each one of us has been made responsible for a tiny part of the Kingdom of God, made responsible by that very gift of Christ’s love. Thus, on whether we have loved or refused to love, shall we be judged. For “inasmuch as you have done it unto the least of these My brethren, you have done it unto Me....”

*From Alexander Schmemmann: Great Lent – Journey to Pascha Saint Vladimir’s Seminary Press 1969*

## **A Cup of Cold Water Has Eternal Resonance**

The judgment of Christ should not be conceived in negative terms. Nor should the prospect of judgment cast a frightening shadow or stir up anxiety over every deed, word or thought. No one is keeping score. Instead, remember that judgment before the Lord means that our lives have significance. Our deeds, words and thoughts are not empty gestures, meaningless sounds, or fleeting impressions destined for oblivion, but the accumulated evidence of a life that was brought into existence and destined to be lived according to the will of our Creator. A “cup of cold water” given “to one of these little ones” has eternal resonance. The Fathers tell us that we have the gift of “self-determination” (Gr. *autexousia*). This means that we are forming ourselves in the way we shall be for all of eternity — a sheep “at His right hand” or a goat “at the left.”

*From ‘The Last Judgment’ by Fr Stephen Kostoff [www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles-2009/Kostoff-The-Last-Judgment.php](http://www.orthodoxytoday.org/articles-2009/Kostoff-The-Last-Judgment.php)*

## The Second Great Commandment

The second great commandment from the Levitical code is that we are to love our *neighbour as being* our very own self. In other words, we find ourselves in our neighbour. Sometimes people want to speak about loving ourselves, that we should have a healthy self-love. That's true. We should not be down on ourselves or berate ourselves or beat ourselves up or fall in any kind of despair over ourselves. We are made by God, and we are loved by God.

However, self-love, *philotheia* in Greek, as St. Maximus, one of our great saints, said, is *the* original sin. When you're not loving God and neighbour, but you're just loving yourself, that loving of ourselves is so destructive according to the Church Fathers because we don't have any self in ourselves. We're made in the image and likeness of God who is love, so the only way we can really love ourselves properly is by loving our neighbour. Even in Hebrew, that's probably how it should be translated: "You shall love your neighbour because your neighbour *is* your very own self. You have no self in yourself." You only find and fulfil yourself by denying your so-called self in love for the neighbour, and then your self is affirmed. It appears. It's realized. Here, I think it's important to note that the paraphrases of the New Testament that say, "You shall love your neighbour as you *love* yourself," are not really an accurate rendering of the text.

In any case, it is a clear teaching of the Holy Scripture that the only way we can prove our love for God is by loving the person next to us, our neighbour. In fact, if we wanted to evaluate how we're doing as a human being, as a Christian, we would just ask ourselves, "How would I treat the person that I hate the most and that hates me the most? How do I treat the one that for me is the most ugly enemy I can think of?" When we see how we do it, then we'll see if we love God or not, because it's *exactly* that person that we have to love.

Excerpt from Father Thomas Hopko - Ancient Faith Podcast March 1<sup>st</sup> 2008  
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## The Only Question

The Lord at the Last Judgement, as it appears clearly from this passage of the Gospel, will ask us nothing about the tenets of our faith, or about the way in which we have tried outwardly to please Him. He will ask us: Have you been human, or inhuman? His only question is: have you been human in the simplest way in which any pagan can be human? Anyone can be human who has a heart that can respond. If you have, then the doors are open for you to enter into the Kingdom and to become by communion with God, not sacramental communion, but a deeper communion even than the Sacrament, become one with Him and grow into being the Temple of the Spirit, the Body of Christ, a place of His incarnate presence.

From a sermon preached by Metropolitan Anthony on March 6<sup>th</sup> 1994.  
Copyright: The Metropolitan Anthony of Sourozh Foundation

### **The Forty Martyrs of Sebaste (March 9<sup>th</sup>)**

When the Emperor Licinius ordered in 320 that all Christians in the Roman Army should repudiate their faith, forty soldiers of the 12<sup>th</sup> ('Thundering') Legion, stationed at Sebaste in Armenia, refused. They were stripped naked and forced into the middle of a frozen lake to die. Baths of hot water were prepared on the banks to encourage them to apostasize. Only one weakened and was brought to shore, whereupon one of the heathen guards, persuaded by the strength of faith of the 39, joined them on the ice to die. Source: Penguin Dictionary of Saints

**Saint Symeon the New Theologian** (949–1022) (March 12<sup>th</sup>) is one of three saints of the Orthodox church to have been given the title of *Theologian* (the others are St. John the Apostle and St. Gregory Nazianzen). Born in Galatia and educated at Constantinople, he became abbot of the monastery of St. Mamas. He assigned a central place to the vision of the Divine Light, and was a formative influence in the rise of Hesychasm.

Some have taken *New Theologian* to mean that St. Symeon was somehow especially radical in his teachings. This is not the case, rather, these are two separate titles. St. Symeon was, in this life, called 'Symeon the New' to distinguish him from a Symeon who was older than he; after his repose, he was given the title of Theologian and retained the 'New' distinction. OrthodoxWiki

## Saint Andrei Rublev's Last Judgement



‘It was Andrei Rublev who was the first to feel that it was necessary to talk about the Last Judgment without fear and without the promise of hellish torment. His fresco of the Last Judgment on the western part of the cathedral [of the Assumption in Vladimir] was a revelation for the Russian people in the XV century, who were used to seeing the Byzantine harsh faces, to tremble and repent, to wait for the wrath of the holy judges for sins and not to doubt the upcoming torment. Rublev first said that the saints, the archangels, the Mother of God and John the Baptist stand at the throne with a prayer for the people, that the judgment of God will be merciful and promise eternal bliss. The man who looked at the vault of the Assumption Cathedral, was supposed to feel in the safe environment of the holy apostles and under the protection of the angels soaring on the vault. There is nothing terrible, neither in apocalyptic animals, nor in the dead, which the Land and Sea give up to the Last Judgment. Only the promise of mercy and forgiveness, bliss and communion of the great heavenly secret.’

Author: Anna Sidelnikova

[https://arthive.com/andreirublev/works/388157~The\\_Last\\_Judgment#:~:text](https://arthive.com/andreirublev/works/388157~The_Last_Judgment#:~:text=)

## The Stranger Within My Gate

by Rudyard Kipling (1865-1936)

The Stranger within my gate,  
He may be true or kind,  
But he does not talk my talk--  
I cannot feel his mind.  
I see the face and the eyes and the mouth,  
But not the soul behind.

The men of my own stock,  
They may do ill or well,  
But they tell the lies I am wonted to,  
They are used to the lies I tell;  
And we do not need interpreters  
When we go to buy or sell.

The Stranger within my gates,  
He may be evil or good,  
But I cannot tell what powers control--  
What reasons sway his mood;  
Nor when the Gods of his far-off land  
Shall repossess his blood.

The men of my own stock,  
Bitter bad they may be,  
But, at least, they hear the things I hear,  
And see the things I see;  
And whatever I think of them and their likes  
They think of the likes of me.

This was my father's belief  
And this is also mine:  
Let the corn be all one sheaf  
And the grapes be all one vine -  
Ere our children's teeth are set on edge  
By bitter bread and wine.

*Kipling was a journalist before he was a poet and fiction writer, and he developed a remarkable skill in giving voice to the thoughts of ordinary people. Whether he personally shared the views in this poem it's difficult to say; he was a man of his time, but his was a complex personality, and he could be subtly ironic at times. What is sure is that those views are as widespread today as they were when the poem was written over 100 years ago. We leave it for readers to decide whether the attitude to the Stranger expressed here is in any way compatible with the Parable of the Last Judgement.*

Ed.

## Scenes of the Last Judgement

Many of the little churches in Messinian and Lakonian Mani in the far south of Greece depict in fresco on the west wall scenes from the parable of the Last Judgement, of the ministrations to those in need, rather than the more conventional apocalyptic scenes of the river of fire and the torments of damned. The image here is of a copy by Anthony Blenkinsopp of one of these panels in the church of Saint John the Forerunner in Areopolis, Lakonia, depicting the welcoming of the stranger.



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### This Week We Celebrate

On Sunday March 7<sup>th</sup>: **Sunday of the Parable of the Last Judgement**

**Sunday of Meatfare**

Epistle: 1 Corinthians 8:8-9:2 Gospel: Matthew 25: 31-46

On Monday 8<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Felix**, Bishop of Dunwich and Enlightener of East Anglia (c648)

On Tuesday 9<sup>th</sup>: The **Forty Martyrs of Sebaste** (320)

**Saint Constantine** of Cornwall (6<sup>th</sup> C)

On Friday 12<sup>th</sup>: **Saint Symeon the New Theologian** (1022)

### Noticeboard

#### Services

**Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup> - 10am** Commemoration of the Departed.

Father Trayan will commemorate the departed online at 10am. All are invited to join him on Zoom at <https://Universityofexeter.zoom.us/j/97409071736?pwd=bWQxUzAzTGJ5ZyswVklwaDZDZmRJQT09>

Meeting ID: 974 0907 1736 Password: 129406

He asks for people to send him the names of their departed loved ones at his telephone number: **07800644599**. Text message, WhatsApp and Viber.

**Saturday March 6<sup>th</sup>**: Vespers/Matins for the Sunday of the Last Judgement – Saint Anne's 6pm

**LATE NEWS** Change of venue for Liturgy on Saturday March 13<sup>th</sup>. This will now take place at Saint James' Church Hall (where we have coffee in normal times). If you have not been there before, it is behind Saint James' Church at Mount Pleasant Road roundabout – Postcode EX4 7AH.

**Sunday March 14<sup>th</sup>**: Vespers for Forgiveness Sunday – Saint Anne's. Time to be confirmed

**The Face of God** is a new film produced by Orthodox in America about the Orthodox Church and climate change, taking its title from Saint John Damascene: 'The Whole Earth is a Living Icon of the Face of God'. Click on [Ad film flier, for web, 2-23-2021 \(1\).pdf](#) for more information. You can view the film at: <https://Faceofgodfilm.com/>

**Science and Faith** There is now a recording available of a discussion with Fr Christopher Knight (Holy Transfiguration parish, Walsingham) about his latest book, from St Vladimir's Seminary Press: ***Science and the Christian Faith: A Guide for the Perplexed***. For anyone who has wondered about the relationship of science to our faith, or been challenged with questions about it, both the discussion and the book are highly recommended. Click here for [A recording of the Book Launch](#). The book will shortly be available in the UK through [SPCKPublishing](#).

Thanks to Elizabeth T for these two items.

### News from Saint Cyprian's

*Letter from Father Daniel dated 19-02-21*

Greetings full of love to you, your family and all the parishioners from me and all the faithfuls here in the name of our Lord.

I am very sorry for not communicating for quite a long time. I have been caught up from all corners for many reasons but most important of all my health has not been good and I am still recovering. My blood pressure has been up on and off but I am on medicine for it now. There has been too much pressure on me during lockdown and it is still on. I need your prayers.

I am very thankful that God is still making you survivors of Covid. How is your family and the parishioners? I still love them. We have lost two priests in Covid. Bishop Silvester of Northern Uganda survived it plus Fr Mbonabingi. Although Covid is going down now it has left many hardships especially in the economy.

Greet Maama Celia, the Fathers and the Christians. May God bless you.

Fr Daniel