

Life after Death

“The fear in the face of the mystery of death lies in the fact that a new life is beginning for the individual. And of course this is also connected with the eternal state of his soul and body. According to St Theognostos, the hour of death is a new birth, when the human being, particularly someone who is just, comes out as from some dark, second maternal womb and enters the immaterial and radiant realm. Therefore he advises him to be joyful, since he is being carried through death towards the fulfilment of his hopes. But along with that, he advises him to be watchful ‘because of the ungodly demons that surround him’, which try up to the last moment to injure him.”

The Mystery of the Soul's Departure from the Body

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“Paradise and Hell do not exist in God's view, but in man's view. God sends His grace to all men, since ‘He makes His sun rise on the just and the unjust and sends His rain on the evil and the good’. If God gives us a command to love all people, even our enemies, He does the same Himself. It is impossible for Him not to love sinners as well. But each one feels God's love differently, according to his spiritual condition.

Light has two properties, illuminating and burning. If someone has good vision, he benefits from the illuminating property of the sun, the light, and he enjoys the whole creation. But if someone else lacks an eye, if he is without sight, then he feels the caustic property of light. This will be so in the future life too, as well as in the life of the soul after it leaves the body. God will also love the sinners, but they will be unable to perceive this love as light. They will perceive it as fire, since they will not have a spiritual eye and spiritual vision...

The Church shows this in the iconography of the Second Coming.

There we see the saints in the light that comes from the throne of God; and from the same throne springs the river of fire, where the unrepentant sinners are.”

Interpretive Analysis of the Parable of the Rich Man and Lazarus

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“In the patristic tradition it is clear that there are not two places, but God Himself is Paradise for the saints and God Himself is Hell for the sinners.”

The Holy Fathers on Paradise and Hell

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“If someone has repented, has confessed, but his nous has not had time to be healed and illuminated, by the grace of God he will increase in divine knowledge. We do not mean this in the sense of Latin theology, according to which someone who confesses but does not have time to do his penance will go through what they call purgatory. In the Orthodox Church we do not speak of appeasing divine righteousness, but of entering the stage of purification and repentance, even if the cure has not been completed. In these cases divine grace will help in the cure even after death, in the sense that those who have repented will by divine grace become better able to receive illumination and participation in the glory of God.”

The Continuing Development in the Age to Come