

ILLUMINATIONS SESSION 2 – 20141007

NICENE CREED – OUR SYMBOL OF FAITH

NOTES:

“MAKER OF HEAVEN AND EARTH”

CREATION - To **create** means to make out of nothing; to bring into existence that which before did not exist; or, to quote the Liturgy of St. John Chrysostom: “to bring from non-existence into being.” The Orthodox Church believes that God the Father is the “Creator of Heaven and earth and of all things visible and invisible.”

The Scriptural description of creation is given primarily in the first chapter of **Genesis**. The main doctrinal point about creation is that God alone is uncreated and ever-existing. Everything which exists besides God was created by Him. God, however, did not create everything individually and all at once, so to speak. He created the first foundations of existence, and then over periods of time (perhaps millions of years, (see *2 Pet 3:8*) this first foundation of existence by the power which God had given to it—brought forth the other creatures of God. (See Gen 1:19, 20, 24).

GOD MADE EVERYTHING GOOD - We must make special notice as well of the goodness of the created physical world. There is no dualism in Orthodox Christianity. There is no teaching that “spirit” is good and “matter” is bad, that “heaven” is good and the “earth” is evil. God loves His entire material creation with His eternal love and, as we shall see, when the physical creation is mined by sin He does everything in His power to save it.

GOD IS OMNIPRESENT – Present everywhere – we pray it: *O Heavenly King, the Comforter, the Spirit of Truth, who art everywhere and fillest all things. Treasury of Blessings and Giver of Life! Come and abide in us. And cleanse us from every impurity. And save our souls, O Good One!*

“AND OF ALL THINGS VISIBLE AND INVISIBLE”

Angels and Evil Spirits

In addition to the visible, physical creation there is an invisible world created by God. The Bible sometimes calls it “the heavens” and other times refers to it as “above the heavens.” Whatever its symbolical description in the Holy Scriptures, the invisible world is definitely not part of the physical, material universe. It does not exist in space; it has no physical dimensions. And so it cannot be located, and it has no “place” which can be “reached” by travel within the galaxies of the spatial, locatable “places” of the physically created universe.

However, the fact that the invisible, created world is purely spiritual and is not discoverable on a map of the created material spaces makes it no less real or truly existing. The invisible creation exists as different from the created material universe and, of course, as totally different from the uncreated, absolutely super-divine existence of the uncreated God.

Invisible created reality consists of the hosts of bodiless powers, generally—and somewhat incorrectly—called the angels.

Angels

Angels (which means literally “messengers”) are, strictly speaking, but one rank of the incorporeal or **bodiless powers** of the invisible world.

According to Orthodox Scripture and Tradition there are nine ranks of bodiless powers or the **Hosts** (**Sabaoth** means literally “armies” or “choirs” or “ranks”). There are **angels, archangels, principalities, powers, virtues, dominions, thrones, cherubim, and seraphim**. The latter are described as offering continual adoration and glory to God with the incessant and ever-resounding cry of Holy! Holy! Holy! (*Isa 6:3; Rev 4:8*). Those in the middle of the above listing are little-known to men while the angels and archangels are seen as the active workers, warriors, and messengers of Yahweh relative to this world. Thus, angels and archangels are seen to struggle against spiritual evil and to mediate between God and the world.

Generally speaking the appearances of the bodiless powers to men are described in a physical way (“six-winged, many-eyed”; or in the “form of a man”). However, it must be clearly understood that these are merely symbolical descriptions. By nature and definition the angels have no bodies and no material properties of any sort. They are strictly spiritual beings.

Evil Spirits

In addition to the created spiritual powers who do the will of God, there are, according to the Orthodox faith, those who rebel against Him and do evil. These are the demons or devils (which means literally those who “pull apart” and destroy) who are also known both in the Old and New Testaments as well as in the lives of the saints of the Church.

Satan (which means literally the enemy or the adversary) is one proper name for the devil, the leader of the evil spirits. He is identified in the serpent symbol of Gen 3 and as the tempter of both Job and Jesus (*Job 1:6; Mk 1:33*). He is labelled by Christ as a deceiver and liar, the “father of lies” (*Jn 8:44*) and the “prince of this world” (*Jn 12:31; 14:30; 16:11*). He has “fallen from heaven” together with his evil angels to do battle with God and his servants (*Lk 10:18; Isa 14:12*). It is this same Satan who “entered Judas” to effect the betrayal and destruction of Christ (*Lk 22:3*).

The apostles of Christ and the saints of the Church knew from direct experience Satan’s powers against man for Man’s own destruction. They knew as well Satan’s lack of power and his own ultimate destruction when man is with God, filled with the Holy Spirit of Christ. According to Orthodox doctrine there is no middle road between God and Satan. Ultimately, and at any given moment, man is either with God or the devil, serving one or the other.

The ultimate victory belongs to God and to those with Him. Satan and his hosts are finally destroyed. Without this recognition—and still more—the experience of this reality of the cosmic spiritual struggle (God and Satan, the good angels and the evil angels), one cannot truly be called an Orthodox Christian who sees and lives according to the deepest realities of life.