

The Hosts of Heaven with Our Lord: The Entrance with the Gospel Book

Theme

The Entrance with the Gospel Book shows us that Christ is in our midst, leading our worship. The angels are always worshiping Christ in heaven, and we the Church have the great privilege and responsibility to join with them.

Outline

Imagery and Icons

Gospel as Icon of Christ

Quiet Prayers

Variable Hymns

Trisagion

Scripture References¹

Psalm 8

Psalm 88 (89)

Isaiah 6

Hebrews 2

Hebrews 12

Apocalypse 4

Apocalypse 12

Quote

Consider who they are who sing with you, and that should be enough to move you to vigilance. It should be sufficient when you remember that, while being clothed in a body and bound up with the flesh, you have been accounted worth to hymn the Lord, to is common to all, together with the bodiless powers.

— St John Chrysostom *On Matthew 19.3* as quoted in *The Divine Liturgy* by Priest-monk Gregorios

¹ References from the Greek Bible; differing Hebrew Bible references are noted in parentheses.

Scriptures References

Psalms 8 NETS

Regarding completion². Over the wine vats. A Psalm. Pertaining to David.

O Lord, our Lord,
how admirable is your name in all the earth,
because your magnificence was raised beyond the heavens.
Out of mouths of infants and nurslings
you furnished praise for yourself,
for the sake of your enemies,
to put down enemy and avenger,
because I will observe the heavens, works of your fingers—
moon and stars—things you alone founded.
What is man that you are mindful of him
or son of man that you attend to him?
You diminished him a little in comparison with angels;
with glory and honor you crowned him.
And you set him over the works of your hands;
you subjected all under his feet,
sheep and cattle, all together,
and further the beasts of the plain,
the birds of the air and the fish of the sea
—the things that pass through paths of seas.
O Lord, our Lord, how admirable is your name in all the earth!

Psalms 88.6–8 (89.5–7) NETS

The heavens will acknowledge your wonders, O Lord,
indeed, your truth in an assembly³ of holy ones,
because who in the clouds shall be deemed equal to the Lord?
And who among divine sons shall be compared with the Lord?
God is glorified in a council of holy ones,
great and awesome to all that are around him.

² Εἰς τὸ τέλος. I prefer the translation “Unto the end”. These psalms speak of the goal or end of the Christian life, of victory that is possible in the contest of life to those born of God. (1 John 5.4–5 also see several passages in Revelation 2 & 3; ESV uses ‘the one who conquers’) The Hebrew phrase is frequently translated “To the choirmaster” which “indicates the choral dance which awaits us when our struggles are over.” (St Gregory of Nyssa *On the Inscriptions of the Psalms* 2.2.)

³ ἐκκλησία also translated ‘church’.

Isaiah 6.1–8 NETS (modified)

And it happened in the year that King Uzziah died that I saw the Lord sitting on a throne, lofty and raised up, and the house was full of his glory. And seraphim stood around him; each one had six wings, and with two they covered their face, and with two they covered their feet, and with two they flew. And they cried out one to another and said:

“Holy, holy, holy is the Lord Sabaoth; the whole earth is full of his glory.”

And the lintel was raised at the voice with which they cried out, and the house was filled with smoke. And I said: “O wretched that I am! I am stunned; for being a man and having unclean lips, I live among a people having unclean lips, and I have seen the King, the Lord Sabaoth, with my eyes!”

Then one of the seraphim was sent to me, and he had in his hand a live coal that he had taken from the altar with the tongs. And he touched my mouth and said: “Behold, this has touched your lips, and it will take away your lawlessness and purify your sins.”

Then I heard the voice of the Lord saying, “Whom should I send, and who will go to this people?” And I said, “Here am I; send me!”

Luke 10.17–20 ESV

The seventy-two [that Jesus had sent out] returned with joy, saying, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us in your name!” And he [Jesus] said to them, “I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven. Behold, I have given you authority to tread on serpents and scorpions, and over all the power of the enemy, and nothing shall hurt you.

Nevertheless, do not rejoice in this, that the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice that your names are written in heaven.”

A cross-reference to Apocalypse 12.7ff. See also John 12.31, Colossians 2.15.

John 12.27–36 ESV

“Now is my soul troubled. And what shall I say? ‘Father, save me from this hour’? But for this purpose I have come to this hour. Father, glorify your name.” Then a voice came from heaven: “I have glorified it, and I will glorify it again.” The crowd that stood there and heard it said that it had thundered. Others said, “An angel has spoken to him.”

Jesus answered, “This voice has come for your sake, not mine. *Now is the judgment of this world; now will the ruler of this world be cast out.* And I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all people to myself.” He said this to show by what kind of death he was going to die. So the crowd answered him, “We have heard from the Law that the Christ remains forever. How can you say that the Son of Man must be lifted up? Who is this Son of Man?” So Jesus said to them, “The light is among you for a little while longer. Walk while you have the light, lest darkness overtake you. The one who walks in the darkness does not know where he is going. While you have the light, believe in the light, that you may become sons of light.”

When Jesus had said these things, he departed and hid himself from them.
Italicized portion similar to Luke 10.17ff and Revelation 12.7ff.

John 16.33 ESV

I [Jesus] have said these things to you, that in me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation. But take heart; I have overcome the world.

Colossians 2.13–15 ESV

And you, who were dead in your trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, by canceling the record of debt that stood against us with its legal demands. This he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the rulers and authorities and put them to open shame, by triumphing over them in it [that is the cross].

Hebrews 2.5–12 ESV

For it was not to angels that God subjected the world to come, of which we are speaking. It has been testified somewhere,

“What is man, that you are mindful of him,
or the son of man, that you care for him?

You made him for a little while lower than the angels;
you have crowned him with glory and honor,
putting everything in subjection under his feet.”

Now in putting everything in subjection to him, he left nothing outside his control. At present, we do not yet see everything in subjection to him. But we see him who for a little while was made lower than the angels, namely Jesus, crowned with glory and honor because of the suffering of death, so that by the grace of God he might taste death for everyone.

For it was fitting that he, for whom and by whom all things exist, in bringing many sons to glory, should make the founder of their salvation perfect through suffering. For he who sanctifies and those who are sanctified all have one source. That is why he is not ashamed to call them brothers, saying,

“I will tell of your name to my brothers;
in the midst of the congregation I will sing your praise.”

Hebrews 12.1–2 ESV

Therefore, since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses [the Old Covenant saints just mentioned previously], let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before him

endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God.

Hebrews 12.22–24 ESV

But you have come to Mount Zion and to the city of the living God, the heavenly Jerusalem, and to innumerable angels in festal gathering, and to the assembly of the firstborn who are enrolled in heaven, and to God, the judge of all, and to the spirits of the righteous made perfect, and to Jesus, the mediator of a new covenant, and to the sprinkled blood that speaks a better word than the blood of Abel.

Apocalypse 4.7–11 ESV

And around the throne, on each side of the throne, are four living creatures, full of eyes in front and behind: the first living creature like a lion, the second living creature like an ox, the third living creature with the face of a man, and the fourth living creature like an eagle in flight. And the four living creatures, each of them with six wings, are full of eyes all around and within, and day and night they never cease to say,

“Holy, holy, holy, is the Lord God Almighty,
who was and is and is to come!”

And whenever the living creatures give glory and honor and thanks to him who is seated on the throne, who lives forever and ever, the twenty-four elders fall down before him who is seated on the throne and worship him who lives forever and ever. They cast their crowns before the throne, saying,

“Worthy are you, our Lord and God,
to receive glory and honor and power,
for you created all things,
and by your will they existed and were created.”

Apocalypse 12.7–9 ESV

Now war arose in heaven, Michael and his angels fighting against the dragon. And the dragon and his angels fought back, but he was defeated, and there was no longer any place for them in heaven. And the great dragon was thrown down, that ancient serpent, who is called the devil and Satan, the deceiver of the whole world—he was thrown down to the earth, and his angels were thrown down with him.

In contemporary American Christianity, this is often viewed as something that will happen toward the end of the earth, but read all of Apocalypse 12: this happened during Christ’s earthly ministry. Cf Luke 10.18.

Prayers:

The Prayer of the Entrance

O Master, Lord our God, who hast appointed in heaven orders and host of angels and archangels for the service of thy glory: Cause that with our entrance there may be an entrance of holy angels serving with us and glorifying thy goodness. For unto thee are due all glory, honor and worship to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit, now and ever, and unto ages of ages.

The Prayer of the Thrice Holy

O holy God, who resteth in the holy place, who art hymned by the seraphim with the thrice-holy cry and glorified by the cherubim and worshipped by every heavenly power, who out of nothingness hast brought all things into being, who hast created man according to thine image and likeness and has adorned him with thine every gift; who gives to him that sketch wisdom and understanding, who despises not the sinner but hast appointed repentance unto salvation, who hast vouchsafed unto us, thy humble and unworthy servants, even in this hour, to stand before the glory of thy holy altar and to offer the worship and praise which are due unto thee: thyself, O Master, receive even from the mouth of us sinners the thrice-holy hymn and visit us in thy goodness. Pardon us every transgression both voluntary and involuntary; sanctify our souls and bodies; and grant us to serve thee in holiness all the days of our life, through the intercession of the holy Theotokos and of all the saints, who from the beginning of the world have been well-pleasing unto thee.