

### ***The Nativity of the Theotokos: The Gate Facing East***

*This is the day of the Lord; wherefore, rejoice ye nations; for behold the chamber of Light, the scroll of the Word of life hath come forth from the womb; the gate facing the east hath been born. Wherefore, she awaiteth the entrance of the High Priest. And she alone admitted Christ into the universe for salvation of our souls.*

— *Doxasticon of the Nativity of the Theotokos*

*And when they have completed these days, then from the eighth day onward the priests shall offer on the altar your burnt offerings and your peace offerings, and I will accept you, declares the Lord GOD."*

*Then he brought me back to the outer gate of the sanctuary, which faces east. And it was shut. And the LORD said to me, "This gate shall remain shut; it shall not be opened, and no one shall enter by it, for the LORD, the God of Israel, has entered by it. Therefore it shall remain shut. Only the prince may sit in it to eat bread before the LORD. He shall enter by way of the vestibule of the gate, and shall go out by the same way."*

*Then he brought me by way of the north gate to the front of the temple, and I looked, and behold, the glory of the LORD filled the temple of the LORD. And I fell on my face.*

— *Ezekiel 43.27 – 44.4 (ESV)*

It is stated that every title of our Lady, Mary, teaches us about our Lord, Jesus. With this in mind, let us consider the doxasticon and Scripture reading and what the titles of the Theotokos teach us.

"The Gate Facing East" is from the Scripture reading on Vespers of this feast, Ezekiel 43.27–44.4. (Also see Ezekiel 43.1–5.) Ezekiel 39.25 through the end of the book (48.35) comprises an extended prophecy on the restored Israel. The Lord gave Ezekiel a vision where an angel shows him the new Israel (40.1–4).

Chapters 40 through 43 illustrate the New Temple; chapters 45 and 46 discuss the figure of the Prince as the Lord present with his people. Chapter 44 transitions between these two themes. The passage above details the entrance of the Lord. The prince comes into the restored Temple by the Gate Facing East to 'eat bread before the Lord.' (A reference to the Eucharist and the union of God and humanity.) The Gate is shut, allowing no one else to enter through it.

The Gospel of St John teaches the restored Temple is the Body of Christ (John 2.18–22). The detail to the Eastern Gate being closed points to the ever-virginity of Mary, the Theotokos, from whom Christ received his body. This understanding: Christ received his humanity from his mother also informs the Marian title, "the Scroll on which the Word of Life was written." These titles affirm that Christ is truly and fully human and not an apparition or partially human as some early heretics held. Christ's full humanity is necessary to our salvation for God had to unite himself to our humanity in order to heal it. "What has not been assumed has not been healed." St Gregory the Theologian writes. Salvation and the union of God with humanity would not be possible had not Mary agreed to become the Theotokos. The birth of the Virgin signaled that the curse of Adam would be revoked, creation would be renewed, and humanity would no longer be subject to death and corruption.

*Thy nativity, O Theotokos, hath proclaimed joy to the whole universe; for from thee did shine forth the Sun of justice, Christ our God, annulling the curse, and bestowing the blessing, abolishing death and granting us life everlasting.*

— *Apolytikion of the Nativity of the Theotokos*