

October 9, 2011  
Apostle James, son of Alpheus

## Father Pat's Pastoral Ponderings

When St. Paul declared that Christ "rose again the third day according to the Scriptures" (1 Corinthians 15:4), he had certain particular biblical texts in mind. These are the Old Testament texts that inform his argument through the rest of 1 Corinthians 15-chiefly from the Book of Psalms. He begins with the opening line of Psalm 110 (LXX 109), a verse cited by Jesus himself (Matthew 22:44) and quoted from the very beginning of Christian reflection on the Resurrection (Acts 2:32-36).

Paul begins his exposition: As Christ conquered sin by his death, so he overcame death by his Resurrection. This victory, however, remains to be completed in the final destiny of the Church and of each believer. Although Christ has already delivered the deathblow to death, contaminated human history continues; human beings go on dying. Death was the first thing to invade human history, and it will be the last to leave.

For this reason, Paul calls death "the final enemy." Of Christ he says, "For he must reign, until he has put all enemies under his feet. The final enemy [*eschatos echthros*] will be disposed of---death" (1 Corinthians 15:25-26).

The present reign of Christ is described as forward -looking; there is an "until": "He must reign *until* He has put all enemies under his feet." The final defeat of death lies in the future.

This reign of Christ until the subjection of his enemies is the thesis that comes to St. Paul from the first line of Psalm 110: "Sit at My right hand *until* I subject your enemies as a footstool under your feet."

A close comparison of the psalm verse with Paul's actual citation of it, however, reveals a subtle but significant difference; namely, Paul's insertion of the adjective "all": "For he must reign until He has subjected all [*pantas*] enemies under his feet."

In fact, the Apostle has more than one psalm in mind here. In accordance with an exegetical principle the Rabbis called *gezarah shavah* (similarity of expressions), St. Paul's citation of Psalm 110 contains an allusion to Psalms 8:6 (LXX 8:7): "You have set him over the works of Your hands, having subjected all things [*panta*] under his feet."

In joining these two psalms in the same citation, Paul united two Messianic themes. Whereas Psalm 110 refers to David/the Messiah, Psalm 8 is a reference to Adam, to whom God subjected all the other objects of His Creation (Genesis 1:28).

Adam's reign over the rest of Creation, however, was seriously impaired by the Fall inasmuch as this introduced into human experience an alien component-death! -over which man had no authority at all: "Cursed is the ground for your sake; / In toil you shall eat of it / All the days of your life. / Both thorns and thistles it shall bring forth for you, / And you shall eat the herb of the field. / In the sweat of your face you shall eat bread / Till you return to the ground" (Genesis 3:17-19).

What, then, does Paul assert by this allusion to Adam in reference to the Resurrection from the dead? He is declaring that Christ's fulfillment of the prophecy in Psalms 110---"Sit at My right hand until I subject your enemies as a footstool under your feet"---also will restore the primordial state of human sovereignty over the created order. When death will be completely conquered in the final Resurrection, the crowned Messiah will, as the Second Adam, thereby vindicate human history.

In doing so, he will likewise restore the proper structure of Creation. The final "subjection" of all things to God, which is integral to the Resurrection, means the complete restoration of the created order, inasmuch as man's bondage to death and corruption subverted that order.

All Creation, therefore, looks forward until this will be accomplished. A couple of years later, Paul elaborated this theme, when he wrote: "For the earnest expectation of Creation eagerly waits for the revealing of the sons of God. For the Creation was subjected to futility, not willingly, but because of Him who subjected it in hope; because Creation itself also will be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God" (Romans 8:19-21).

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**All Saints Orthodox Church**  
**Antiochian Orthodox Christian Archdiocese of North America**

4129 W. Newport Avenue / Chicago, IL 60641

Church Office: (773) 777-0749

<http://www.allsaintsorthodox.org/>

**Father Patrick Henry Reardon, Pastor**

[phrii@touchstonemag.com](mailto:phrii@touchstonemag.com)

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