

The Apostles' Creed: Week 10

...From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead...

In the Scriptures:

1. Then the Lord will go out to fight against those nations as He fights on a day of battle. On that day His feet will stand on the Mount of Olives, which faces Jerusalem on the east. The Mount of Olives will be split in half from east to west, forming a huge valley, so that half the mountain will move to the north and half to the south. You will flee by My mountain valley, for the valley of the mountains will extend to Azal. You will flee as you fled from the earthquake in the days of Uzziah king of Judah. Then the Lord my God will come and all the holy ones with Him.

On that day there will be no light; the sunlight and moonlight will diminish. It will be a day known only to Yahweh, without day or night, but there will be light at evening. On that day living water will flow out from Jerusalem, half of it toward the eastern sea and the other half toward the western sea, in summer and winter alike. On that day Yahweh will become King over all the earth—Yahweh alone, and His name alone.

(Zechariah 14:3-9)

2. “So if anyone tells you, ‘There he is, out in the wilderness,’ do not go out; or, ‘Here he is, in the inner rooms,’ do not believe it. For as lightning that comes from the east is visible even in the west, so will be the coming of the Son of Man. Wherever there is a carcass, there the vultures will gather.

“Immediately after the distress of those days

“the sun will be darkened,

and the moon will not give its light;

the stars will fall from the sky,

and the heavenly bodies will be shaken.’*
*Quotes from Isaiah 13:10, 34:4

“Then will appear the sign of the Son of Man in heaven. And then all the peoples of the earth will mourn when they see the Son of Man coming on the clouds of heaven, with power and great glory. And he will send his angels with a loud trumpet call, and they will gather his elect from the four winds, from one end of the heavens to the other.

(Matthew 24:26-31)

**Quotes from Isaiah 13:10, 34:4*

3. For we must all appear before the judgement seat of Christ so that each of us may receive what is due us for the things done while in the body, whether good or bad.

(2 Corinthians 5:10)

...From there he shall come to judge the living and the dead...

As described by Christian writers:

4. I think upon that day and hour when we shall all stand naked, like men condemned, before the Judge who accepts no man's person. Then shall the trumpet sound aloud and the foundations of the earth shall quake, the dead shall rise from the tombs and all shall be gathered together from every generation. Then each man's secrets will be manifest before thee: and those that have never repented shall weep and lament, departing to the outer fire; but with gladness and rejoicing the company of the righteous shall enter into the heavenly bridal chamber.

How shall it be in that hour and fearful day, when the Judge shall sit on his dread throne! The books shall be opened and men's actions shall be examined, and the secrets of darkness shall be made public. Angels shall hasten to and fro, gathering all the nations. Come ye and hearken, kings and princes, slaves and free, sinners and righteous, rich and poor: for the Judge comes to pass sentence on the whole inhabited earth. And who shall bear to stand before his face in the presence of the angels, as they call us to account for our actions and our thoughts, whether by night or by day? How shall it be then in that hour! But before the end is here, make haste, my soul, and cry: O God who only art compassionate, turn me back and save me.

– *Lenten Triodion*, from the Orthodox Liturgy

5. The doctrine of the Second Coming teaches us that we do not and cannot know when the world drama will end. The curtain may be rung down at any moment: say, before you have finished reading this paragraph. This seems to some people intolerably frustrating.

...But we think thus because we keep on assuming that we know the play. We do not know the play. We do not even know whether we are in Act I or Act V. We do not know who are the major and who the minor characters. The Author knows. The audience, if there is an audience (if angels and archangels and all the company of heaven fill the pit and the stalls) may have an inkling. But we, never seeing the play from outside, never meeting any characters except the tiny minority who are "on" in the same scenes as ourselves, wholly ignorant of the future and very imperfectly informed about the past, cannot tell at what moment the end ought to come. That it will come when it ought, we may be sure; but we waste our time in guessing when that will be. That it has a meaning we may be sure, but we cannot see it. When it is over, we may be told. We are led to expect that the Author will have something to say to each of us on the part that each of us has played. The playing it well is what matters infinitely.

- C.S. Lewis, "The World's Last Night"

6. What is there to hinder Christ from coming? When I have studied and thought over this word, “Behold, He cometh,” “Yes,” I have said to myself, “indeed He does. Who shall hold Him back? His heart is with His church on earth. In the place where He fought the battle He desires to celebrate the victory. His delights are with the sons of men. All His saints are waiting for the day of His appearing, and He is waiting also. The very earth in her sorrow and her groaning travaileth for His coming, which is to be her redemption. The creation is made subject to vanity for a little while; but when the Lord shall come again, the creation itself also shall be delivered from the bondage of corruption into the glorious liberty of the children of God.”

We might question whether He would come a second time if He had not already come the first time; but if He came to Bethlehem, be assured that His feet shall yet stand upon Olivet. If He came to die, doubt not that He will come to reign. If He came to be despised and rejected of men, why should we doubt that He will come to be admired in all them that believe?

-Charles Spurgeon, “The Second Coming of Christ”

Why we believe in the Second Coming:

- Since the return of Christ will be in the future, one cannot find historical evidence for it like the previous parts of the Creed. What we have instead is a promise: the assurance of the Lord that he will surely return to Earth to set the world right. We believe this promise based on trust that God is reliable, and that his Spirit which strives with creation will bring it into perfection.
- Here and now, justice does not always prevail. But we believe that God is righteous and just. Therefore, when Christ returns in glory, he will judge all the people who have ever lived. The righteous will be rewarded eternally, while the impenitently wicked will be punished eternally. Although this doctrine can be scary, we must remember that no one will be excluded from the kingdom except by their own refusal to accept love. The good news is that it is the merciful and self-sacrificing Jesus who will be doing the judging. Therefore the Church looks forward to this event with celebration and hope.