

ΕΚΚΛΗΣΙΑ ΑΠΟΣΤΟΛΙΚΟΣ ΠΛΗΡΩΜΑΤΟΣ
Apostolic Church of the Pleroma

*Delivered by Tau Phosphoros
to the Parish of St. Ambelain
on Sunday, March 12, 2017*

YEAR A - SECOND SUNDAY IN LENT

My dear brothers, welcome everyone. We have some truly magnificent readings today, including our start of the reading of the Hymn of the Soul from the Acts of Thomas. This is one of my very favorite parables; its continual reading will last through about the middle of Holy Week. Our other readings today, from Romans and John's Gospel, contain much that is worthy of Gnostic exegesis, so let us look a little at each of the time.

In the passage from Romans we find Paul speaking, as he often does, on the difference between law and grace. He is adamant, time and again, that the Law does not lead to salvation, but only to death. He reminds us in this reading that, "the law works wrath." Thus, the message that Paul consistently delivers is that the Law is not salvific, and that Jesus has come to free us from the yoke of the Law through Grace.

Now, some may rightly point out that it is written that Jesus says that he has not come to abolish the Law, but to fulfill it. But this turn of semantics may be, to use a phrase become popular in modern parlance, a difference without distinction. What I mean is, Jesus, in his day, was looked upon by those in authority as a rebel and a rival, a true threat to the establishment. Thus, if he could be portrayed as a crazed, lawless, anarchist, he could be more easily discredited, and popular opinion could be turned against him.

Now, there should be no mistake, Jesus did in fact - as Paul recognizes and emphasizes repeatedly - come to bring an end to the rule of the Demiurgic Law. But he was wise enough to know that it is not by revolution but evolution that true progress is made. Thus, he presented himself, rightly, as the fulfillment of the Law. Now, to fulfill something is to accomplish it, to end it by completing it. Just as when a prophecy is "fulfilled" it ceases to be prophecy and become historical fact, the Law, once fulfilled, is not abolished, in the sense of destroying it, but it has served its purpose and becomes a chapter closed in history. There is no doubt that many have tried to grasp on to the remnants of the Law, keeping the world in partial darkness. It is only when Christians will truly believe that Christ has fulfilled the Law that humanity as a whole can start to make its next great leap forward.

So, let us look briefly at our reading from John. Jesus is quoted here as saying, "unless someone is born of water and spirit, he is not able to enter into the kingdom of God." This is a clear reference to the Sacraments known today as Baptism and Chrismation. He goes on to say that, "that which is born of flesh is flesh, and that which is born of the Spirit is spirit." This is reminiscent of the parable of the tax collector - "Give to Caesar what is Caesar's, give to God what is God's" etc. Now, I would not go so far as to say that this supports a strict dualism in man, for we acknowledge that the three components of man - body, soul, and spirit - make up one Tri-Unity. But it does suggest that salvation does not come through the hylic modes - law, war, revolution, money, etc. - but through the higher, spiritual means - prayer, grace, gnosis, etc. It also tells us, in a way, not to pass judgment on the hylic for being what it is. Rather, each component must fulfill its mission according to its nature.