

SUNDAY, JANUARY 3, 2021
Sunday before the Theophany, Forefeast of the Theophany
Holy Prophet Malachi

Chronologically, Malachi was the last of the prophets. He was born after the return of the Hebrews from the Babylonian Captivity in 538 B.C. He was unusually handsome in countenance. According to tradition, the people called him an angel, perhaps because of his external beauty or because of his spiritual purity, or even perhaps because of his association with an angel of God. On many occasions he spoke face to face with an angel. When this occurred, others heard the angel's voice, but they were not worthy to see the face of the angel. The young Malachi prophesied that which the angel proclaimed. He cried out against ungrateful Israel and against the lawless priests. Five hundred years before Christ, Malachi clearly prophesied the coming and the mission of John the Baptist: *Lo, I am sending my messenger to prepare the way before me* (Malachi 3:7). Mainly, he is chiefly the prophet of the day of the Dreadful Judgment. *Before the day of the Lord comes, the great and terrible day* (Malachi 3: 23-24). He reposed in the Lord while still young. Following him, there were no more prophets in Israel until John the Baptist.

GREAT VESPERS

LORD I CALL: Four stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 5 followed by three of the Forefeast, and three for the prophet.

Resurrection, tone 5:

By Your precious Cross, O Christ,
You have put the devil to shame.
By Your Resurrection, You have blunted the sting of sin
and saved us from the gates of death.//
We glorify You, O only begotten One.

Christ was led as a sheep to the slaughter
in order to grant Resurrection to the human race.
The princes of hell were frightened by this,
for the gates of sorrow were lifted.
Christ the King of glory had entered,
saying to those in chains: “Go forth!”//
And to those in darkness: “Come to the light!”

O great wonder!

The Creator of the invisible suffered in the flesh in His love for man
and rose again immortal.

Come, O sons of nations,
let us worship Him,

for delivered from error by His compassion,//
we have learned to sing of one God in three Persons!

We offer You our evening worship,
O never setting Light,
Who came in these last days to the world in the flesh;
Who even descended to hell to dispel its darkness.
Who has revealed the light of Resurrection to the nations.//
Glory to You, O Lord and Giver of light!

Forefeast, tone 6:

Behold the Enlightenment of the faithful!
See, our Atonement desires to enter the streams of the river,
that He may wash away man's filth and corruption,//
refashioning us, who had been broken to pieces!

O Lord, Your Forerunner cried out in fear,
when he saw You approaching and asking to be baptized:
"O my God! My Creator!//
How can I baptize You, the sinless One?"

O faithful, let us assemble in spirit
at the streams of Jordan,
that we may clearly behold the great wonder!
We shall see the Creator of all made manifest,//
as He comes to be baptized.

Prophet Malachi, tone 8:

Beholding the words that came forth from your divinely-inspired tongue,
truly marveling, I bless you, O Prophet of truth,
for your clear message has illuminated the world,//
foretelling the coming of the Lord for our salvation.

You were an angel on earth,
emulating the Angels with your way of life.
You were enriched by appropriately bearing the name of Angel,*
and harmoniously you joined beauty of soul with beauty of body,//
O most blessed Malachi.

O Lord, I set before You Your Prophet
as an advocate and intercessor.
By his entreaties and prayers, O Compassionate One,

put an end to the misdeeds of my despairing soul,
for You are full of loving-kindness,//
as You possess essential and natural goodness.

Glory to the Father, and to the Son, and to the Holy Spirit;

Forefeast, tone 4:

Oh, the marvelous wonder!
He Who baptizes by the Holy Spirit and by fire
comes to be baptized by John in the Jordan.
Neither simply God nor plainly man,
but, in both His natures, He is one only-begotten Son.
In His humanity, He asks a servant to baptize Him;
in His divinity, He takes away the sins of the world//
granting great mercy to all.

now and ever, and unto ages of ages. Amen.

the Dogmatikon in tone 5:

In the Red Sea of old,
a type of the Virgin Bride was prefigured.
There Moses divided the waters;
here Gabriel assisted in the miracle.
There Israel crossed the sea without getting wet,
here the Virgin gave birth to Christ without seed.
After Israel's passage, the sea remained impassable;
after Emmanuel's birth, the Virgin remained a Virgin.
O ever-existing God Who appeared as Man,//
O Lord, have mercy on us!

APOSTIKHA: All stikhera of the Resurrection in tone 5:

We magnify You in songs of praise,
O incarnate Christ and Savior.
By accepting the Cross and death for our sake,
as the Lord and Lover of man,
You overthrew the gates of hell,//
and arose on the third day, saving our souls.

By being pierced in the side, O Lover of man,
You have poured out drops of life and salvation for all.
By accepting death in the flesh, You have granted us immortality.
You have freed us by being placed in the tomb,
and have resurrected us with Yourself in glory, as God.//
Glory to You, O Lord and Lover of man!

Your crucifixion and descent into hell are awesome, O Lover of man.

You have captured it, releasing the ancient prisoners.
You have opened Paradise and given it to us.
Grant us purification of sins,
who glorify Your Resurrection on the third day!
Make us worthy of Paradise//
and save us, O Lover of man!

For our sake, You accepted death in the flesh,
to rise from the dead on the third day.
Heal us from our earthly passions,
and restore us from our evil transgressions;//
and save us, O Lover of man!

Glory... now and ever... Amen

Forefeast, tone 5:

Christ our God is coming to be baptized in the river Jordan,
desiring to cleanse us from our iniquities by His appearance,//
for He alone is good and loves mankind.

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 5

Let us, the faithful, praise and worship the Word,
co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
born for our salvation from the Virgin;
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh,
to endure death,
and to raise the dead//
by His glorious Resurrection.

Forefeast, tone 4

Prepare, O Zebulon,
and adorn yourself, O Naphtali!
River Jordan, cease flowing,
and receive with joy the Master coming to be baptized!
Adam, rejoice with our first Mother,
and do not hide yourselves as you did of old in Paradise;
for having seen you naked,
He has appeared to clothe you with the first garment.//
Christ has appeared to renew all creation.

Dismissal Theotokion, tone 5:

Rejoice, Impassable Gate of the Lord!
Rejoice, Wall and Protection of those who run to you!
Rejoice, Unshakable Refuge!

Rejoice, you who knew not wedlock,
Who gave birth in the flesh to your Creator and God://
Do not cease praying for those who praise and worship your Son.

DIVINE LITURGY

TROPARIA

Resurrection, tone 5

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co-eternal with the Father and the Spirit,
born for our salvation from the Virgin;
for He willed to be lifted up on the Cross in the flesh,
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for having seen you naked,
He has appeared to clothe you with the first garment.//
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Saint John of Damascus

Teacher of Orthodoxy, piety, and purity,
Enlightener of the universe!
And divine inspiration to monastics
By your teachings we are all enlightened,
And by your spiritual music, O all-wise John of Damascus,
Pray to Christ our God for the salvation of our souls!

KONTAKIA

Resurrection, tone 5

You descended into hell, O my Savior,
shattering its gates as Almighty,
resurrecting the dead as Creator,
and destroying the sting of death.
You have delivered Adam from the curse, O Lover of man,//
and we cry to You: “O Lord, save us!”

Prophet Malachi, tone 4:

Endowed with the gift of prophecy, O Malachi,
you clearly proclaimed the saving coming of Christ to the world.//

His brightness has brought light to the whole universe.

Forefeast, tone 4:

Today the Lord enters the Jordan and cries out to John:

“Do not be afraid to baptize Me.//

For I have come to save Adam, the first-formed man.”

Prokeimenon, tone 6:

O Lord, save Your people, / and bless Your inheritance!

V. To You, O Lord, will I call. O my God, be not silent to me!

Epistle: (298) 2 Timothy 4:5-8 But you be watchful in all things, endure afflictions, do the work of an evangelist, fulfill your ministry. For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure is at hand. I have fought the good fight, I have finished the race, I have kept the faith. Finally, there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will give to me on that Day, and not to me only but also to all who have loved His appearing.

The Alleluia in the eighth tone:

V. O God, be bountiful to us and bless us, show the light of Your countenance upon us, and have mercy on us. (Ps. 66:1)

V. That we may know Your way upon the earth, and Your salvation among all the nations. (Ps. 66:2)

Gospel: (1) Mark 1:1-8 The beginning of the gospel of Jesus Christ, the Son of God. As it is written in the Prophets: “Behold, I send My messenger before Your face, Who will prepare Your way before You. The voice of one crying in the wilderness: ‘Prepare the way of the LORD; make His paths straight.’” John came baptizing in the wilderness and preaching a baptism of repentance for the remission of sins. Then all the land of Judea, and those from Jerusalem, went out to him and were all baptized by him in the Jordan River, confessing their sins. Now John was clothed with camel’s hair and with a leather belt around his waist, and he ate locusts and wild honey. And he preached, saying, “There comes One after me who is mightier than I, whose sandal strap I am not worthy to stoop down and loose. I indeed baptized you with water, but He will baptize you with the Holy Spirit.”

Communion Hymn: Praise the Lord from the heavens, praise Him in the highest!
Alleluia, Alleluia, Alleluia!