

Bible Study - 3 March 2015
Biblical & Theological Themes
of the Sunday of Orthodoxy

The First Sunday of Lent
Commemoration of the Restoration of Icons in 843 AD

What does this icon represent?



How are these two icons related?



Genesis 18

And the LORD appeared to him by the oaks of Mamre, as he sat at the door of his tent in the heat of the day. **2** He lifted up his eyes and looked, and behold, three men stood in front of him. When he saw them, he ran from the tent door to meet them, and bowed himself to the earth, **3** and said, “My lord, if I have found favor in your sight, do not pass by your servant. **4** Let a little water be brought, and wash your feet, and rest yourselves under the tree, **5** while I fetch a morsel of bread, that you may refresh yourselves, and after that you may pass on—since you have come to your servant.” ... Then the men set out from there, and they looked toward Sodom; and Abraham went with them to set them on their way. **17** The LORD said, “Shall I hide from Abraham what I am about to do... **22** So the men turned from there, and went toward Sodom; but Abraham still stood before the LORD **33** And the LORD went his way, when he had finished speaking to Abraham; and Abraham returned to his place.

Genesis 1:26-27

Then God said, “Let us make man in our image, after our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth.” So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.

Centrality of the Incarnation



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These slides are examples of typology – used in iconography & in biblical exegesis



Hymnography Themes: Incarnation

- The prophets, inspired by the Spirit, O Lord, foretold that you, whom nothing can contain or grasp and who shone forth in eternity from the immaterial and bodiless womb of the Father (ἄσωμάτου τε γαστρὸς τοῦ Γεννήτορος), would become a child, taking flesh from the Virgin, being joined to humans and seen by those on earth...
- Though you are uncircumscribed (ἄπερίγραπτος) in your divine nature, you were pleased to take flesh and be circumscribed. In assuming flesh, you took to yourself all its distinctive properties (ἰδιώματα). Therefore we depict the likeness of your outward form, venerating it with relative honor...

Hymnography Themes: Real flesh

- Restoring to the churches the representations of your flesh (Σαρκὸς τὸ ἑκτύπωμα), O Lord, we ascribe to them an honor that is relative, and so express the great mystery of your dispensation. For you did not appear to us merely in outward resemblance, as the followers of [Mani](#) claim, who are enemies of God, but in the full and true reality of the flesh. And so the icons that depict your flesh lead us to the desire and love of you (πόθον καὶ ἔρωτα)!

Note the attack on [Manichaeism](#): Certainly this is a reflection of Byzantine concerns about its widespread influence. St Augustine himself was a Manichee before his conversion to Christianity.

Hymnography Themes: Orthodoxy

- Leaping with joy, let us cry aloud today: How marvelous are your works, O Christ! For you made us of one mind and brought about our agreement.
- Seeing this great blessing, how the divided members of Christ have been brought to unity, let us clap our hands for God has bestowed peace upon us.
- No longer are the impious heretics exalted in their pride, for the power of God has firmly established Orthodoxy.
- Today a festival of victory has been given to the Church through the divinely-inspired will of our rulers Michael and Theodora, who in piety uphold the true Faith.
- Let us praise Christ, who appointed a devout Empress to rule over us, together with her son crowned by God.

Hymnography Themes: Icons

- Keeping the laws of the Church that we have received from the Fathers, we paint icons of Christ and his saints, and with our lips and heart and will we venerate them as we cry aloud: All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord ([Psalm 103:22](#)).
- The honor and veneration that we show to the icon we ascribe to the prototype (πρωτότυπον) it represents. Following the teaching of the saints... we cry aloud: All ye works of the Lord, bless the Lord!
- The Church rejoices now in you O Lord, her Bridegroom and Founder, for by your divine will you have delivered her from the error of idolatry and by your precious blood ([Acts 20:28](#)) have betrothed her to yourself...

Hymnography Themes: Salvation

- Enlightened by this mystery of God's providence, the divinely-inspired prophets foretold it of old; and this they did for our sakes, who see the fulfillment of the ages. Receiving through this mystery divine knowledge, we know one Lord and God, glorified in three Persons, and Him alone we worship. We have one faith, one baptism ([Ephesians 4:5](#)), and we are clothed in Christ ([Galatians 3:27](#)). This our salvation we confess in deed and word, and we depict it in the holy icons.

Hymnography Themes: Deification

- The uncircumscribed (ἄπερίγραπτος) Word of the Father became circumscribed, (περιεγράφη σαρκούμενος) taking flesh from you, O Theotokos, and he restored the sullied image to its ancient glory, filling it with divine beauty (τῷ θείῳ κάλλει συγκατέμιξεν). ([Gen 1:27](#); [Romans 8:29](#); [1 Cor 15:49](#); [Colossians 3:10](#)) This our salvation we confess in deed and word, and we depict it in the holy icons.

Image and Likeness & Deification





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Hymnography Themes: Types

- The grace of truth has shone upon us. The mysteries darkly prefigured (προτυπούμενα) in old times have now been openly fulfilled. The Church is clothed in a beauty that surpasses all earthly things, through the icon of the incarnate Christ (τὴν ἔνσωμον Εἰκόνα Χριστοῦ) that was foreshadowed by the ark of testimony (τῆς σκηνῆς τοῦ μαρτυρίου τὸν τύπον προῦπογράφουσα) ([Exodus 25:22](#)). This is the safeguard of the Orthodox faith, for if we hold fast to the icon of the Savior we shall not go astray. We shall glory in the icon of the Word made flesh, which we venerate but do not worship as an idol (εὐσεβῶς προσκυνούμενη, οὐ θεοποιούμενη).

Hymnography Themes: Types

- He who of old commanded Moses to set up the ark of the testimony, came to dwell in you, O Virgin, as in a spiritual ark....

In the Orthodox tradition, especially in liturgical hymnography and in patristic exegesis of the Bible, references to the Old Testament are most commonly used as types. This is a much broader approach to the Hebrew scriptures than the literal interpretation of prophets. Typology sees a spiritual unity between the two testaments, so events that have no direct connection to Christ are still seen as illuminating our understanding and experience – for example, Jonah!

Hymnography Themes: Types

Typological interpretation of the Old Testament was not actually an invention of the Church Fathers. The New Testament writers often used typological interpretation, and the Epistle and Gospel readings of the First Sunday of Lent are good examples.

Hebrews Reading. But much else in this Epistle is typology, most notably chapters 7-9. Note especially 7:1-19; 8:1-7; and all of chapter 9.

Gospel Reading. The allusion to Jacob's ladder in Genesis 28:10-22.

We will look at other examples in future classes.

Gospel Summons (Sunday Evening)

- Let us now set out with joy upon the second week of the Fast; and like Elijah the Tishbite let us fashion for ourselves from day to day, brothers and sisters, a fiery chariot from the four great virtues: let us exalt our minds through freedom from the passions; let us arm our flesh with purity and our hands with acts of compassion; let us make our feet beautiful with the preaching of the Gospel; and let us put the enemy to flight and gain the victory.

Gospel Summons (Sunday Evening)

- Come, let us cleanse ourselves by almsgiving and acts of mercy to the poor, not sounding a trumpet or making a show of our charity. Let not our left hand know what our right hand is doing; let not vainglory scatter the fruit of our almsgiving. But in secret let us call on him that knows all secrets: Father, forgive our trespasses, for you are the lover of humankind.

([Matthew 6:1-14](#))