

Heaven and Earth

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Holy Cross Greek Orthodox
Church, Farmington Hills

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Heaven & Earth



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1

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What is Heaven?

Third heaven :
God's place, the Kingdom of God;
where God and the angels dwell

Second heaven :
Space;
where the stars and planets dwell

First heaven :
sky, atmosphere;
where birds dwell



Three heavens?

Saint Paul tells us about a person
(probably a veiled reference to
himself) who “was caught up to
the third heaven”
(2 Corinthians 12:2)

What are the three heavens?

Multiple Meanings of Heaven

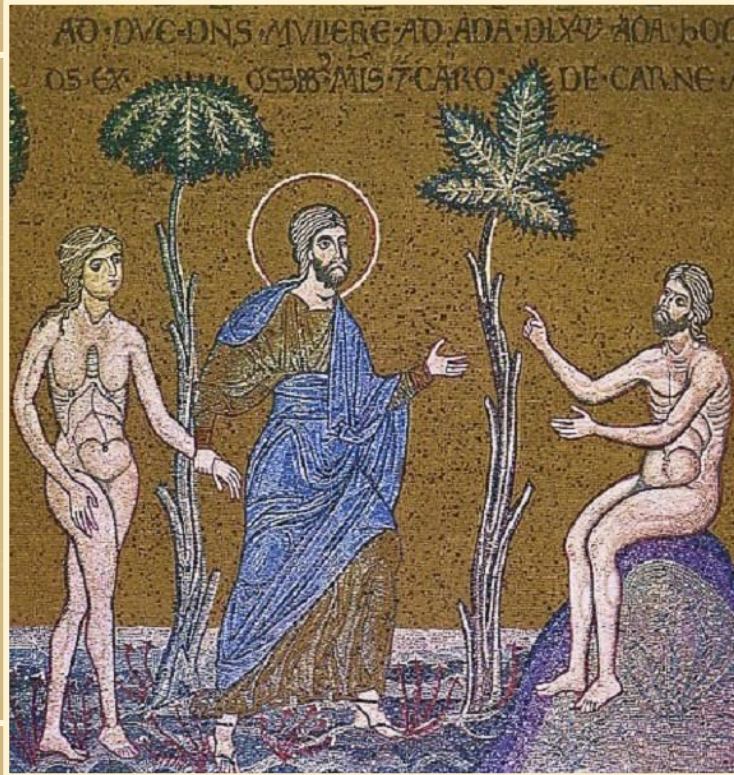


- Heaven can mean the sky (See Genesis 1:20, Exodus 9:8, Matthew 16:2, Acts 10:12)
- Heaven can mean space (See Genesis 1:15, Genesis 15:5, Deuteronomy 4:19)
- Heaven can mean God's place (Also called the "highest heaven" or "heaven of heavens") (See Isaiah 66:1, Matthew 5:34, Acts 7:49)
 - Heaven as God's place is METAPHORICALLY taken as in the sky which presents an earth/sky distinction (See Deuteronomy 26:15, Exodus 20:22) Heaven is inconceivable, so images and metaphors help us to try to understand in a basic way.
- God isn't located in the sky nor the Heavens, but He fills all of creation (See Deuteronomy 10:14, 1 Kings 8:27, Jeremiah 23:24)
 - Orthodox Prayer to the Holy Spirit says, "everywhere present and filling all things".
- When reading about Heaven in the Bible make sure you know which heaven is being referenced.
- Today, we are looking at Heaven as God's place.

2

In the Old Testament

In the Beginning



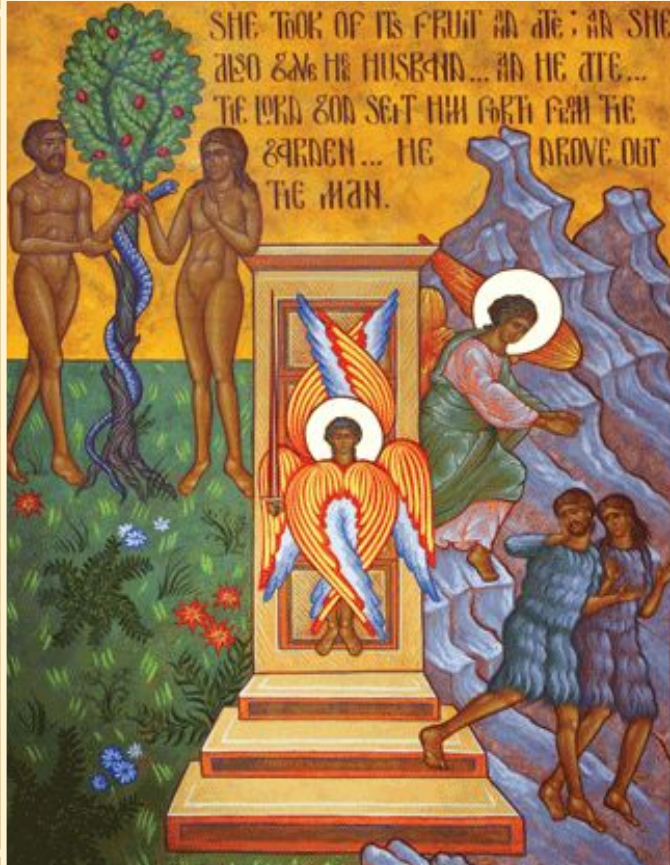
In the Garden of Eden, Heaven and Earth were completely overlapping.

God and humans dwell together.

God plants the Garden of Eden
(Genesis 2:8)

God walks in the Garden
(Genesis 3:8)

In the Beginning



When Adam and Eve sin, they bring a separation between God and Man, between Heaven and Earth.

We contribute to the separation everytime we sin.

This is not a full separation (for there is no place where God is not).

God does not abandon us, but at certain times and places, Heaven and Earth overlap once again.

Heaven and Earth Overlap in Old Testament



Jacob's Ladder

(Genesis 28:10-17)

Jacob is traveling and he falls asleep on the ground one night.

He has a dream of a ladder from earth to heaven and the angels of God are ascending and descending on it. Jacob wakes up and says, "Surely the Lord is in this place" and "How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven."



The Burning Bush

(Exodus 3:1-6)

Moses is tending his animals in a field. He sees a bush on fire yet not consumed. As He approaches, God tells Him, "Do not come near; take your sandals off your feet, for the place on which you are standing is holy ground." This is the very presence of God. Therefore, it is holy ground.



Mount Sinai

(Exodus 19:9-20)

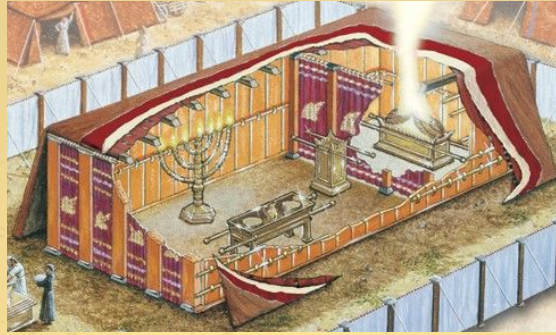
After leaving Egypt, the Israelites travel to Mount Sinai. There God tells them He will appear to them. They are told to stay away from the mountain and not even touch it. Thunder, lightning, trumpet sounds, and a thick cloud cover the mountain and God comes as fire to speak with Moses and the people. Moses then goes up the mountain and receives the Law.

Heaven and Earth Overlap in the Temple

Heaven and Earth overlapped in Temples. This is where a person could stand in God's presence.

Elements of the construction were like a garden in order to resemble the Garden of Eden where Heaven and Earth fully overlapped. (1 Kings 6:18, 29, 32, 35)

Specifically, God's presence was at the Mercy Seat which was just above the Ark of the Covenant in the Holy of Holies. (Exodus 35:22)



The Tabernacle

(Exodus 25-31, 40)

The Tabernacle was a collapsible tent which was the place of worship while the Israelites wandered in the wilderness for 40 years. When they finished construction: "Then the cloud covered the tabernacle of meeting, and the glory of the Lord filled the tabernacle."

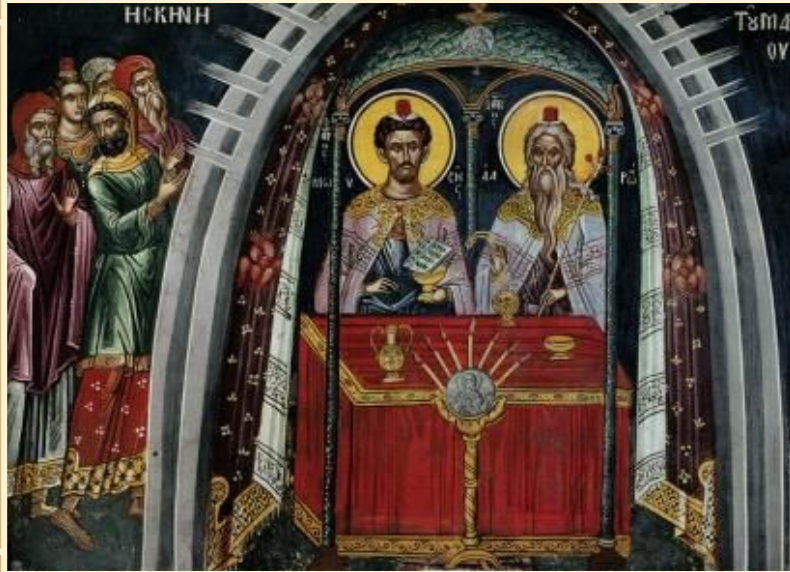


The Temple

(1 Kings 6-8)

The Temple is the place of worship in Jerusalem. When they finished construction: "the cloud filled the house of the Lord"

A Problem



There is a problem here.

The Temple is full of God's presence, goodness, and beauty.
The Temple is Heaven.

But human's space is full of death, sin, and ugliness. We are earth.

How can us humans enter God's presence? How can earth and Heaven overlap?

This was solved through animal sacrifice. Somehow, the sacrificed animal took the place of your death, sin, and ugliness, and then they could enter the presence of God. (Leviticus 16-17)

3

Jesus Christ

Jesus Christ

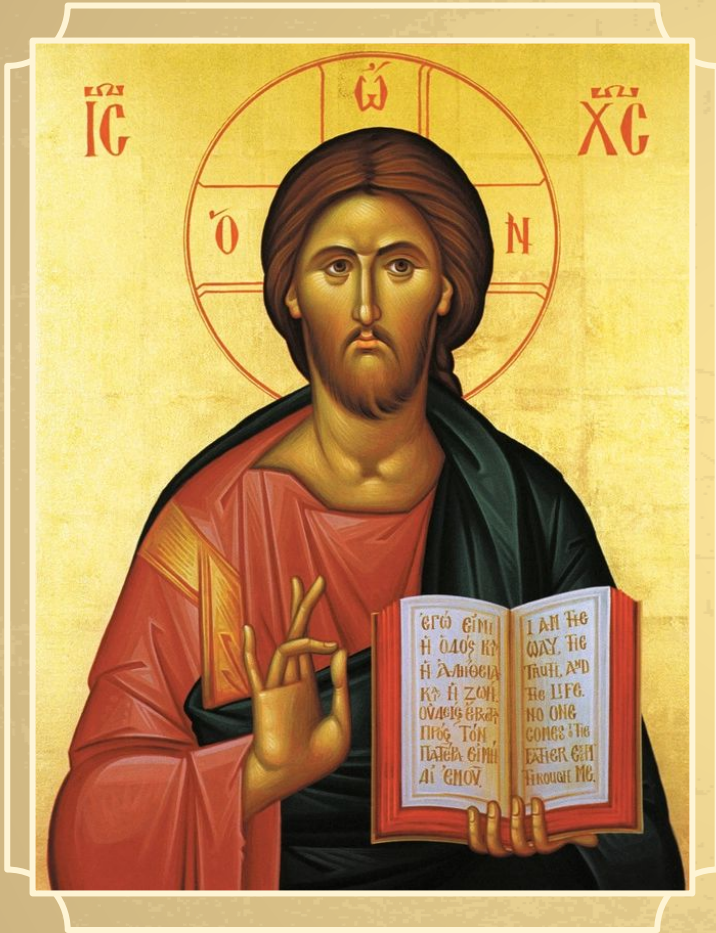
"And the Word became flesh and dwelt [literally, tabernacled] among us, and we beheld His glory" (John 1:14, Exodus 29:45)

Jesus Christ is the Tabernacle.

Jesus Christ calls Himself the Temple. (John 2:19)

Jesus Christ is the Temple.

He is the overlap of Heaven and Earth. He is God's presence.





Annunciation

At the Annunciation, the Archangel Gabriel tells Mary that the "power of the Highest will overshadow you". The Tabernacle was overshadowed with the Lord when it was finished. This shows that Jesus is the presence of the Lord and the meeting place of Heaven and Earth.



Transfiguration

At the Transfiguration, a cloud overshadowed the mountain and the voice of God spoke. Mount Sinai was covered with a cloud when God spoke to the Israelites in the wilderness. Saint Peter then says to build Tabernacles. Jesus is showing that He is the presence of God and the meeting place of Heaven and Earth.

Jesus is Different



Jesus is different than the
Tabernacle and the Temple.

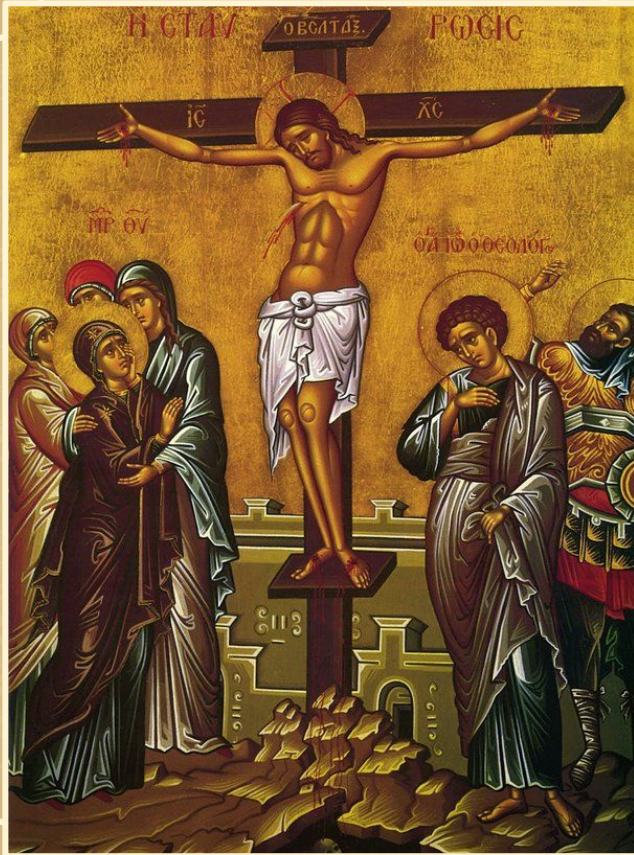
God isn't staying in one isolated
place. He is going into the Earth,
the place of death, sin, and
ugliness. He is healing the sick
and forgiving the sinners.

He is bringing Heaven to Earth.

This is why He says:

"Repent, for the kingdom of
heaven is at hand!" (Matthew 3:2)

"Your kingdom come, Your will be
done, On earth as it is in heaven."
(Lord's Prayer, Matthew 6:10)



The Lamb of God

Jesus Christ is also called "the Lamb of God". (John 1:29)

When Jesus Christ is crucified, it seems that this bringing together Heaven and Earth is stopped. But, the opposite happens.

He is the sacrificial Lamb (just as the animal sacrifices of the Old Testament).

His death is the first act of bringing together Heaven and Earth.

At Jesus' Crucifixion, the veil of the Temple is torn in two. This is a miraculous event which shows there is no longer a separating wall between Heaven and Earth.

The image features a textured, golden-brown background. A white double-line frame with rounded corners encloses the central content. A dashed grey line arches across the top of the frame. Below the number '4', there is a decorative horizontal line with a central flourish and dots at both ends.

4

The Church

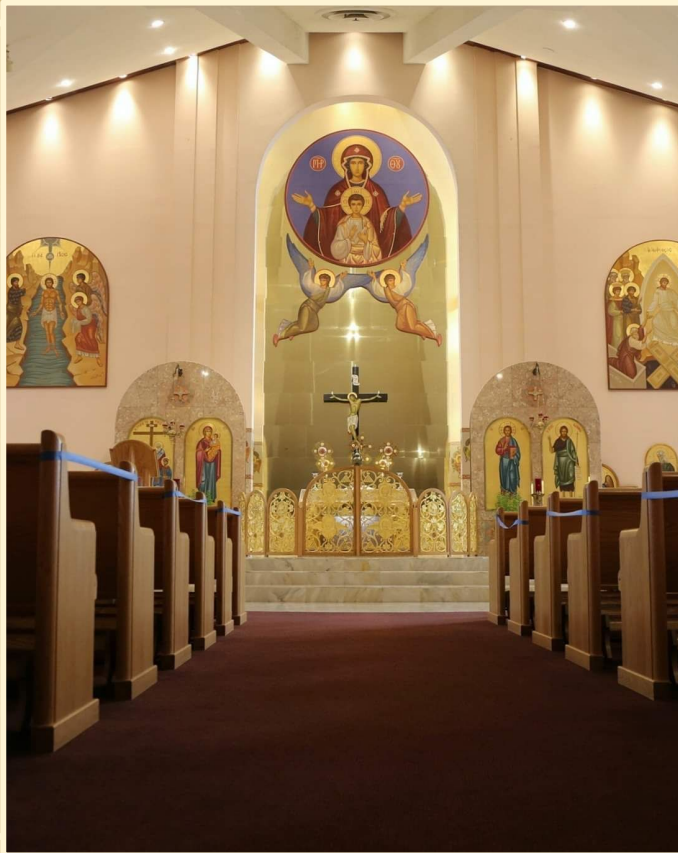
Worship in Church



The Samaritan Woman asks Jesus where to worship God? He responds, “those who worship Him must worship in spirit and truth.”
(John 4:19-24)

As Jesus goes into the Earth, He is bringing Heaven (God’s presence) to all of creation. God’s presence is freed from the walls of the Temple. We can worship everywhere.

Jesus work of death and resurrection begins the process of Heaven and Earth overlapping once again.



Church as Heaven

.....
The Church Building is an overlap
of Heaven and Earth

It is a place set aside for the
worship of God and is a place
where we experience God's
presence.

"Standing in your glorious church,
we think we are standing in
heaven."

(From Lenten Orthros)

"We knew not whether we were in
heaven or on earth. We only know
that God dwells there among
men."

(Russia Primary Chronicle)

Church as Heaven



The Church Building is an overlap
of Heaven and Earth

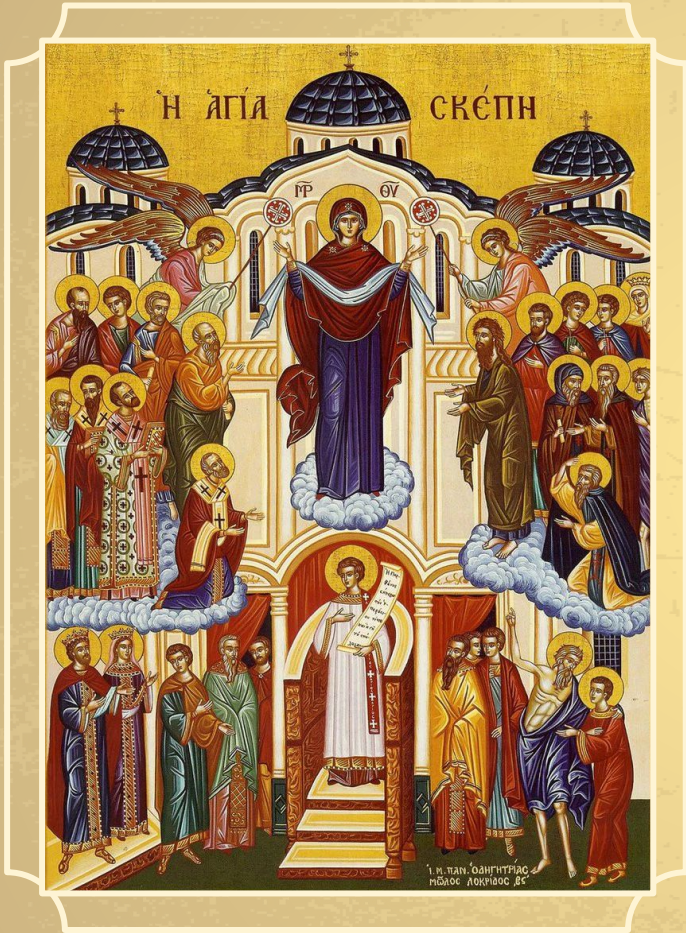
The Angels are present with us

“...grant that holy angels may
enter with us, that together we
may celebrate and glorify Your
goodness...”

(Small Entrance Prayer)

“Together with these blessed
powers, Master, Who loves
mankind, we also exclaim and
say...”

(Prayer at Holy, Holy, Holy)



Church as Heaven

The Church Building is an overlap
of Heaven and Earth

The Saints are present with us

Feast of the Protection of the
Theotokos on Oct 1, 28

On Oct 1, 911, there was an All-night Vigil in the Blachernae Church of the Mother of God in Constantinople. The church was full of people. St. Andrew the Fool-for-Christ was standing in the rear of the church with his disciple Epiphanius. At four in the morning, the Theotokos appeared above the people, holding her omophorion outstretched as a protective covering for the faithful. She was clothed in gold-encrusted purple, and shone with an ineffable radiance, surrounded by apostles, saints, martyrs and virgins. The Feast of the Protection was instituted to commemorate this event, and to remind us that we can prayerfully receive the unceasing protection of the Most-holy Theotokos in any time of difficulty.

Divine Liturgy



The Divine Liturgy is a foretaste of the Kingdom of God. It is a foretaste of the return to complete overlap between Heaven and Earth.

“Hearken, O Lord Jesus Christ our God, ... You Who are enthroned with the Father on high and are present among us invisibly here.”
(Prayer Before Holy Communion)

All of the Sacraments are an intimate experience of God’s presence to each one of us.

5

The End

The End



"I look for the resurrection of the dead, and the life of the age to come." (The Creed)

There are many images and metaphors used when discussing the Kingdom of God. It is an existence we cannot quite understand in detail. One thing that is clear: the Kingdom of God is to be in the presence of God.

We are to return to how it was in the Garden of Eden with Heaven and Earth completely overlapping.

(Philippians 3:20-21, 1 Corinthians 15:20-28)

Now I saw a new heaven and a new earth, for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away. ... Then I, saw the holy city, New Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride adorned for her husband. And I heard a loud voice from heaven saying, "Behold, the tabernacle of God is with men, and He will dwell with them, and they shall be His people. God Himself will be with them and be their God." ... But I saw no temple in it, for the Lord God Almighty and the Lamb are its temple. The city had no need of the sun or of the moon to shine in it, for the glory of God illuminated it. The Lamb is its light.

Revelation 21:1-3, 22-23



Summary



- Heaven can mean multiple things: sky, space, and God's place.
- In the Beginning, in the Garden of Eden, Heaven and Earth completely overlapped.
- Adam's sin brings separation between Heaven and Earth.
- In the Old Testament, Heaven and Earth overlapped at specific times: Jacob's ladder, Burning Bush, Mount Sinai, and especially the Tabernacle and the Temple.
- Jesus Christ is the Tabernacle and the Temple.
- Jesus Christ is God leaving His confined space and coming among the Earth. Jesus Christ is starting the process of Heaven and Earth to overlap again.
- In the Church, Heaven and Earth overlap. The Angels and Saints are with us. The Sacraments, especially Holy Communion, bring us into the presence of God.
- In the End, Heaven and Earth will once again be completely overlapping.

Questions?



Thanks



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