



SESSION 6: POLYCARP TO ST. IRENAEUS – READINGS

(excerpts from On the Apostolic Preaching by Saint Irenaeus)

1. **God created all:** "...the origin of all is God, for He Himself was not made by anyone, but everything was made by Him. And therefore it is proper, first of all, to believe that there is One God, the Father, who has created and fashioned all things, who made that which was not to be, who contains all and is alone uncontainable."
2. **Trinitarian doctrine:** "And this is the order of our faith, the foundation of the edifice and the support of our conduct: God, the Father, uncreated, uncontainable, invisible, one God, the Creator of all: this is the first article of our faith. And the second article: the Word of God, the Son of God, Christ Jesus our Lord, who was revealed by the prophets according to the character of their prophesy and according to the nature of the economies of the Father, by whom all things were made, and who, in the last times, to recapitulate all things, became a man amongst men, visible and palpable, in order to abolish death, to demonstrate life, and to effect communion between God and man. And the third article: the Holy Spirit, through whom the prophets prophesied and the patriarchs learned the things of God and the righteous were led in the path of righteousness, and who, in the last times, was poured out in a new fashion upon the human race renewing man, throughout the world, to God."
3. **Reason for the Law of Adam:** "But, in order that the man should not entertain thoughts of grandeur nor be exalted, as if he had no Lord, and because of the authority given to him and the boldness towards God his Creator, sin, passing beyond his own measure, and adopt an attitude of self-conceited arrogance against God, a law was given to him from God, that he might know that he had as lord the Lord of all. And He placed certain limits upon him, so that, if he should keep the commandment of God, he would remain always as he was, that is, immortal; if, however, he should not keep it, he would become mortal, dissolving into the earth whence his frame was taken. And the commandment was this, 'You may eat freely from every tree of the Paradise, but of that tree alone, whence is knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat; on the day that you eat of it, you shall die the death.'"
4. **The virgin birth:** "And just as through a disobedient virgin man was struck and, falling, died, so also by means of a virgin, who obeyed the word of God, man, being revived received life. For the Lord came to seek back the lost sheep, and it was man who was lost; and, therefore, He did not become any other formation, but being born from her who was of the race of Adam, He maintained the likeness of the formation. For it was necessary for Adam to be recapitulated in Christ, that 'mortality might be swallowed up in immortality'; and Eve in Mary, that a virgin, become an advocate for a virgin, might undo and destroy the virginal disobedience by virginal obedience."

5. **Faith, not Law, brings Righteousness:** “Thus He also fulfilled the promise to Abraham, by which God promised him to make his seed as the stars of heaven, for Christ accomplished this, being born of the virgin, who was the seed of Abraham and establishing believers in him ‘as lights of the world’, making Gentiles righteous by means of the same faith as Abraham, ‘for Abraham believed in God and it was reckoned to him as righteousness’. In the same way, we, believing in God, are made righteous, for ‘through faith shall the righteous live’; so ‘the promise made to Abraham came not through the Law but through faith’. Since Abraham was made righteous by faith, and ‘the Law is not laid for the righteous’, likewise, we are not made righteous by the Law, but by faith, which received testimony from the Law and Prophets, and which the Word of God offers us.”
6. **Judgement of those before and after Christ:** “For those who died before the manifestation of Christ there is hope, when raised at the judgement, to obtain salvation, whoever feared God and died in righteousness, and had the Spirit of God within them, such as the patriarchs, the prophets and the righteous. But for those who, after the manifestation of Christ, did not believe in Him, there is, in the judgement, inexorable vengeance.”
7. **Why Pilate sent Christ to Herod:** “And again in the Twelve Prophets, He says, ‘And, they brought him bound as a present to the king’. For Pontius Pilate was procurator of Judaea, and at that time bore ill-will against Herod, king of the Jews. Therefore, when Christ was brought to him, Pilate sent Him bound to Herod, giving him leave to interrogate in order to know for sure whatever he wished about Him, thus finding in Christ a suitable pretext to be reconciled with the king.”
8. **On heresies:** “This, beloved, is the preaching of the truth, and this is the character of our salvation, and this is the way of life, which the prophets announced and Christ confirmed and the apostles handed over and the Church, in the whole world, hands down to her children. Thus it is necessary to keep with all strictness, being pleasing to God, by good works and a sound mind, not thinking that there is another God the Father besides our Creator, as the heretics think, who despise God who Is, and make an idol of that which is not, and fashion for themselves a ‘father’ much higher than our Creator, and think that they have found something greater than the truth; for they are all impious and blasphemers against their Creator and Father, as we have demonstrated...”