

**The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**  
**Old Testament Reading 1**  
**The creation of the world (Genesis 1:1-13)**

A reading from Genesis.

In the beginning, when God created the heavens and the earth,  
the earth was a formless wasteland,  
and darkness covered the abyss,  
while a mighty wind swept over the waters.

Then God said, "Let there be light," and there was light.

God saw how good the light was.

God then separated the light from the darkness.

God called the light "day," and the darkness he called "night."

Thus evening came, and morning followed – the first day.

Then God said, "Let there be a dome in the middle of the waters,  
to separate one body of water from the other."

And so it happened:

God made the dome, and it separated the water above the dome from the water below it.

God called the dome "the sky."

Evening came, and morning followed – the second day.

Then God said, "Let the water under the sky be gathered into a single basin,  
so that the dry land may appear."

And so it happened: the water under the sky was gathered into its basin,  
and the dry land appeared.

God called the dry land “the earth,”  
and the basin of the water he called “the sea.”

God saw how good it was.

Then God said, “Let the earth bring forth vegetation:  
every kind of plant that bears seed  
and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.”

And so it happened:

the earth brought forth every kind of plant that bears seed  
and every kind of fruit tree on earth that bears fruit with its seed in it.

God saw how good it was.

Evening came, and morning followed – the third day.

## **The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**

### **Old Testament Reading 2**

#### **Balaam's prophecy of a king for Israel (Numbers 24:2-3, 5-9, 17-18)**

A reading from the Book of Numbers.

When Balaam raised his eyes and saw Israel encamped, tribe by tribe,  
the spirit of God came upon him, and he gave voice to his oracle:  
The utterance of Balaam, son of Beor, the utterance of the man whose eye is true,  
How goodly are your tents, O Jacob; your encampments, O Israel!  
They are like gardens beside a stream, like the cedars planted by the LORD.  
His wells shall yield free-flowing waters,  
he shall have the sea within reach;  
His king shall rise higher than the mountains and his royalty shall be exalted.  
It is God who brought him out of Egypt,  
a wild bull of towering might.  
He shall devour the nations like grass, their bones he shall strip bare.  
He lies crouching like a lion, or like a lioness;  
who shall arouse him?  
Blessed is he who blesses you, and cursed is he who curses you!  
I see him, though not now;  
I behold him, though not near:  
A star shall advance from Jacob, and a staff shall rise from Israel,  
That shall smite the brows of Moab, and the skulls of all the Shuthites,  
Till Edom is dispossessed, and no fugitive is left in Seir.  
Israel shall do valiantly,  
and Jacob shall overcome his foes.

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### **Old Testament Reading 3**

#### **The prophecy of a king from Bethlehem (Micah 4:6-7, 5:2-4)**

A reading from the Prophecy of Micah.

On that day, says the LORD, I will gather the lame,  
And I will assemble the outcasts, and those whom I have afflicted.  
I will make of the lame, a remnant,  
and of those driven far off, a strong nation;  
And the LORD shall be king over them on Mount Zion, from now on forever.  
Therefore the Lord will give them up,  
until the time when she who is to give birth has borne,  
And the rest of his brethren shall return to the children of Israel.  
He shall stand firm and shepherd his flock by the strength of the LORD,  
in the majestic name of the LORD, his God;  
And they shall remain,  
for now his greatness shall reach to the ends of the earth;  
he shall be peace.

**The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**  
**Old Testament Reading 4**  
**Prophecy of a virtuous king from Jesse (Isaiah 11:1-10)**

A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Thus says the Lord:

But a shoot shall sprout from the stump of Jesse, and from his roots a bud shall blossom.

The spirit of the LORD shall rest upon him: a spirit of wisdom and of understanding,

A spirit of counsel and of strength, a spirit of knowledge and of fear of the LORD, and his delight shall be the fear of the LORD.

Not by appearance shall he judge, nor by hearsay shall he decide,

But he shall judge the poor with justice, and decide aright for the land's afflicted.

He shall strike the ruthless with the rod of his mouth,

and with the breath of his lips he shall slay the wicked.

Justice shall be the band around his waist, and faithfulness a belt upon his hips.

Then the wolf shall be a guest of the lamb, and the leopard shall lie down with the kid;

The calf and the young lion shall browse together, with a little child to guide them.

The cow and the bear shall be neighbors, together their young shall rest;

the lion shall eat hay like the ox.

The baby shall play by the cobra's den, and the child lay his hand on the adder's lair.

There shall be no harm or ruin on all my holy mountain;

for the earth shall be filled with knowledge of the LORD, as water covers the sea.

On that day, the root of Jesse, set up as a signal for the nations,

the Gentiles shall seek out, for his dwelling shall be glorious.

**The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**  
**Old Testament Reading 5**  
**No one can compare with God (Baruch 3:35 – 4:4)**

A reading from the Prophecy of Baruch.

Such is our God; no other is to be compared to him:

He has traced out all the ways of understanding,

and has given her to Jacob, his servant, to Israel, his beloved son.

Since then she has appeared on earth, and moved among men.

She is the book of the precepts of God, the law that endures forever;

All who cling to her will live, but those will die who forsake her.

Turn, O Jacob, and receive her: walk by her light toward splendor.

Give not your glory to another, your privileges to an alien race.

Blessed are we, O Israel; for what pleases God is known to us!

## **The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**

### **Old Testament Reading 6**

#### **Prophecy of a kingdom that shall not end (Daniel 2:31-36, 44-45)**

A reading from the Prophecy of Daniel.

Daniel said to Nebuchadnezzar:

“In your vision, O king, you saw a statue, very large and exceedingly bright, terrifying in appearance as it stood before you.

The head of the statue was pure gold,  
its chest and arms were silver, its belly and thighs bronze,  
the legs iron, its feet partly iron and partly tile.

While you looked at the statue, a stone –  
which was hewn from a mountain without a hand being put to it –  
struck its iron and tile feet, breaking them in pieces.

The iron, tile, bronze, silver, and gold all crumbled at once,  
fine as the chaff on the threshing floor in summer,  
and the wind blew them away without leaving a trace.

But the stone that struck the statue became a great mountain and filled the whole earth.

This was the dream; the interpretation we shall also give in the king's presence.

You, O king, are the king of kings;

to you the God of heaven has given dominion and strength, power and glory;  
men, wild beasts, and birds of the air, wherever they may dwell, he has handed over to you,

making you ruler over them all; you are the head of gold.

Another kingdom shall take your place, inferior to yours,

then a third kingdom, of bronze, which shall rule over the whole earth.

There shall be a fourth kingdom, strong as iron;  
it shall break in pieces and subdue all these others,  
just as iron breaks in pieces and crushes everything else.

The feet and toes you saw, partly of potter's tile and partly of iron,  
mean that it shall be a divided kingdom, but yet have some of the hardness of  
iron.

As you saw the iron mixed with clay tile, and the toes partly iron and partly tile,  
the kingdom shall be partly strong and partly fragile.

The iron mixed with clay tile means that they shall seal their alliances by  
intermarriage,

but they shall not stay united, any more than iron mixes with clay.

In the lifetime of those kings the God of heaven will set up a kingdom  
that shall never be destroyed or delivered up to another people;  
rather, it shall break in pieces all these kingdoms and put an end to them,  
and it shall stand forever.

That is the meaning of the stone you saw hewn from the mountain  
without a hand being put to it,  
which broke in pieces the tile, iron, bronze, silver, and gold.

The great God has revealed to the king what shall be in the future;  
this is exactly what you dreamed, and its meaning is sure.”



**The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**  
**Old Testament Reading 7**  
**Prophecy of a king from David (Isaiah 9:6-7)**

A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

For a child is born to us, a son is given us;  
upon his shoulder dominion rests.  
They name him Wonder-Counselor, God-Hero,  
Father-Forever, Prince of Peace.  
His dominion is vast and forever peaceful,  
From David's throne, and over his kingdom,  
which he confirms and sustains by judgment and justice,  
both now and forever.

**The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers**  
**Old Testament Reading 8**  
**The prophecy of Emmanuel (Isaiah 7:10-16; 8:1-4, 9-10)**

A reading from the Prophecy of Isaiah.

Again the LORD spoke to Ahaz:

Ask for a sign from the LORD, your God;

let it be deep as the nether world, or high as the sky!

But Ahaz answered, "I will not ask! I will not tempt the LORD!"

Then he said: Listen, O house of David!

Is it not enough for you to weary men,

must you also weary my God?

Therefore the Lord himself will give you this sign:

the virgin shall be with child, and bear a son, and shall name him Immanuel.

He shall be living on curds and honey

by the time he learns to reject the bad and choose the good.

For before the child learns to reject the bad and choose the good,

the land of those two kings whom you dread shall be deserted.

The LORD said to me: Take a large cylinder-seal,

and inscribe on it in ordinary letters: "Belonging to Maher-shalal-hash-baz."

And I took reliable witnesses, Uriah the priest, and Zechariah, son of  
Jeberechiah.

Then I went to the prophetess and she conceived and bore a son.

The LORD said to me: Name him Maher-shalal-hash-baz,  
for before the child knows how to call his father or mother by name,  
the wealth of Damascus and the spoil of Samaria shall be carried off by the king  
of Assyria.

Know, O peoples, and be appalled!

Give ear, all you distant lands!

Arm, but be crushed! Arm, but be crushed!

Form a plan, and it shall be thwarted;

make a resolve, and it shall not be carried out,

for "God is with us!"

# **The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers with the Divine Liturgy**

## **Epistle Reading**

### **The son of God is greater than the angels (Hebrews 1:1-12)**

A reading from the letter to the Hebrews.

In times past, God spoke in partial and various ways to our ancestors through the prophets;

in these last days, he spoke to us through a son,

whom he made heir of all things and through whom he created the universe,

who is the refulgence of his glory, the very imprint of his being,

and who sustains all things by his mighty word.

When he had accomplished purification from sins,

he took his seat at the right hand of the Majesty on high,

as far superior to the angels as the name he has inherited is more excellent than theirs.

For to which of the angels did God ever say:

“You are my son; this day I have begotten you”?

Or again: “I will be a father to him, and he shall be a son to me”?

And again, when he leads the first-born into the world, he says:

“Let all the angels of God worship him.”

Of the angels he says: “He makes his angels winds and his ministers a fiery flame”;

but of the Son: “Your throne, O God, stands forever and ever;

and a righteous scepter is the scepter of your kingdom.

You loved justice and hated wickedness;

therefore God, your God, anointed you with the oil of gladness above your companions”;

and: “At the beginning, O Lord, you established the earth,  
and the heavens are the works of your hands.

They will perish, but you remain;  
and they will all grow old like a garment.

You will roll them up like a cloak, and like a garment they will be changed.

But you are the same, and your years will have no end.”

## **The Vigil-Eve of Christmas, at Vespers (without Divine Liturgy)**

### **Epistle Reading**

#### **The promise is not nullified by the Law (Galatians 3:15-22)**

A reading from the Letter of Saint Paul the Apostle to the Galatians.

Let me give you an everyday example  
of a promise not being nullified by the law.

You cannot add anything to a man's will, or set it aside,  
once it is legally validated.

There were promises spoken to Abraham and to his "descendent."

Scripture does not say, "and to your descendents," as if it applied to many,  
but as if it applied only to one, "as to your descendent"; that is, to Christ,

My point is this: a covenant formally ratified by God is not set aside as invalid  
by any law that came into being four hundred and thirty years later,  
nor is its promise nullified.

Clearly, if one's inheritance comes through the law,  
it is no longer conferred in virtue of the promise.

Yet it was by way of promise that God granted Abraham this privilege.

What is the relevance of the Law, in such case?

It was given in view of transgressions  
and promulgated by angels, at the hands of a mediator;  
it was to be valid only until that descendent or offspring came  
to whom the promise was given.

Now there can be no mediator when only one person is involved,  
and God is one.

Does that mean that the law is opposed to the promises [of God]?

Again, unthinkable!

If the law that was given was such that it could impart life,  
then justice would be a consequence of the law.

In fact, however, Scripture has locked all things in  
under the constraint of sin.

Why? So that the promise might be fulfilled in those who believe,  
in consequence of faith in Jesus Christ.