

# The *Good News* that John Wrote

*...that you may believe that  
Jesus is the Christ, the Son of  
God, and that believing you  
may have life in his name.*

John 20.31

*Life in the Spirit*

# Objectives of the Class

- To behold in our hearts the glory of Christ
- To participate more deeply in life in the Spirit
- To become more conformed to His image
- To pray for and encourage one another

# Prayer Before Reading Scripture

Shine within our hearts, loving Master, the pure light of Your divine knowledge and open the eyes of our minds that we may comprehend the message of Your Gospel. Instill in us also reverence for Your blessed commandments, so that having conquered all sinful desires, we may pursue a spiritual life, thinking and doing all those things that are pleasing to You. For You, Christ our God, are the light of our souls and bodies, and to You we give glory together with Your Father who is without beginning and Your all holy, good, and life giving Spirit, now and forever and to the ages of ages. Amen.

# **Eastern Orthodox Christian Teaching About Life After Death**

**Fr. Thomas Hopko +**

**"There is no clear dogmatic teaching of our Orthodox Church on death and what happens when we die."**

**Fr. Dumitru Staniloae +**

**...the states of souls departing their bodies are so varied and complex that the Church has avoided giving overly simplified formulations about what happens to them. (The Experience of God, Vol 6, p. 69).**

# Fr. Dumitru Stăniloae (1903-1993)

- Romanian Orthodox Christian priest, theologian and professor.
- Worked for over 45 years on translation of the Greek Philokalia into Romanian.
- Produced commentaries on Church Fathers, such as St Gregory of Nyssa, Saint Maximus the Confessor, and St Athanasius of Alexandria.
- Wrote the book, Dogmatic Orthodox Theology (1978)
- Published as 6 volumes in English, titled "The Experience of God". Quotes in this presentation are from Vol 6, "The Fulfillment of Creation."

## Topics for Our Study

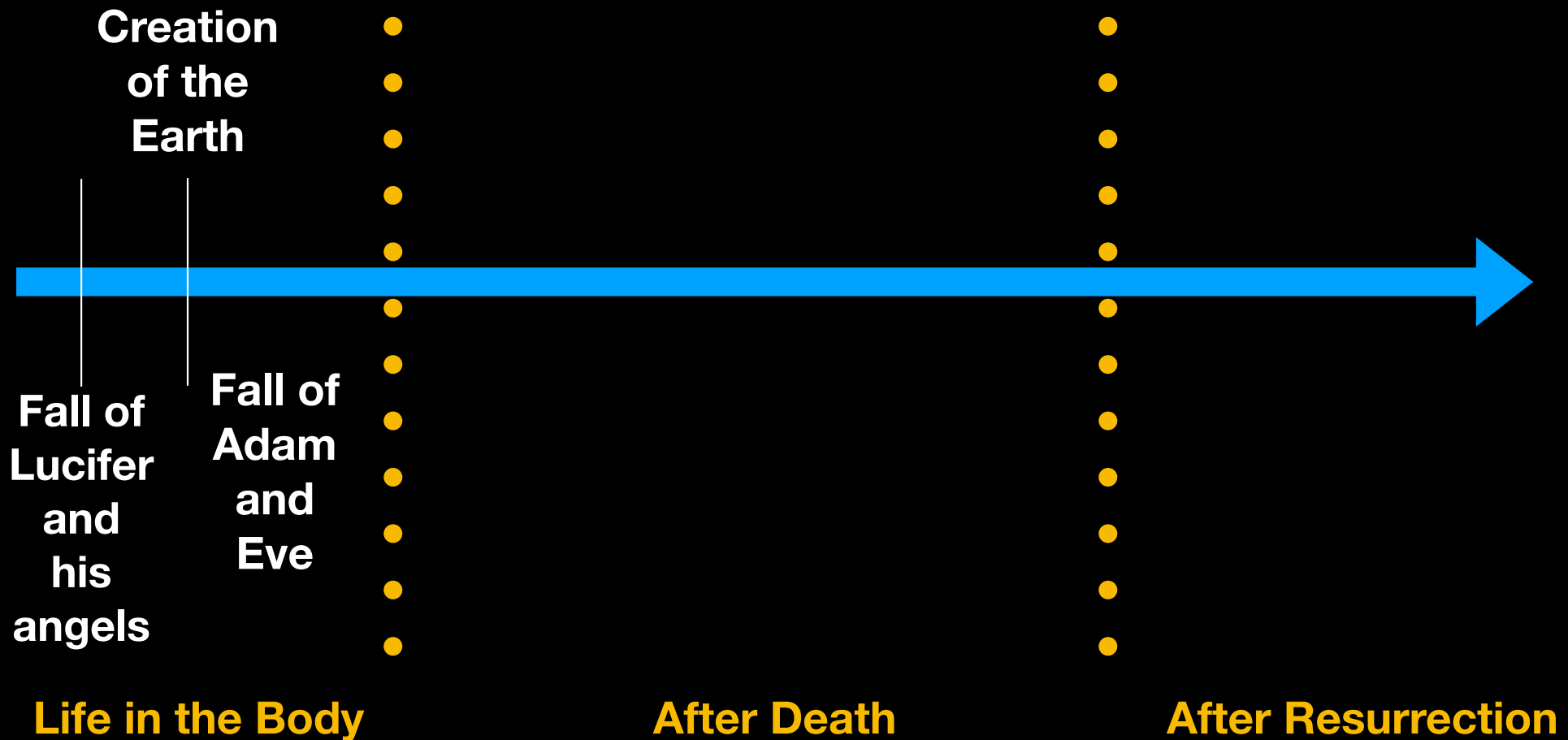
- What happens after death?
- Why do we pray for the dead?



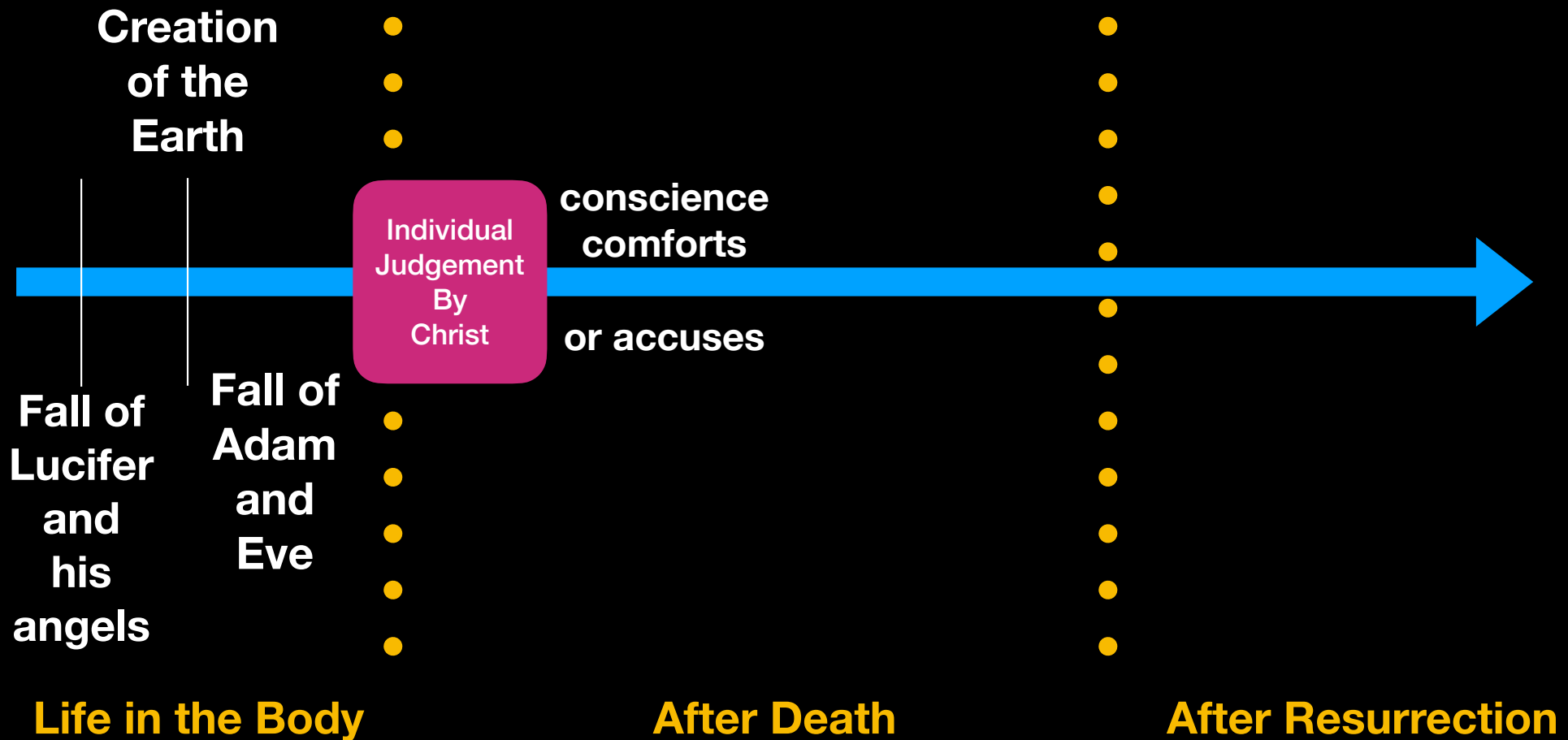
# Some Preliminaries

1. The soul does not exist before conception in a mother's womb.
2. The soul was not created to exist apart from the body (though it can).
3. Death is not natural, nor is it part of God's plan.
4. Do not confuse hades and hell.
5. Around us are both unseen angels and demons.

***I look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the age to come.***



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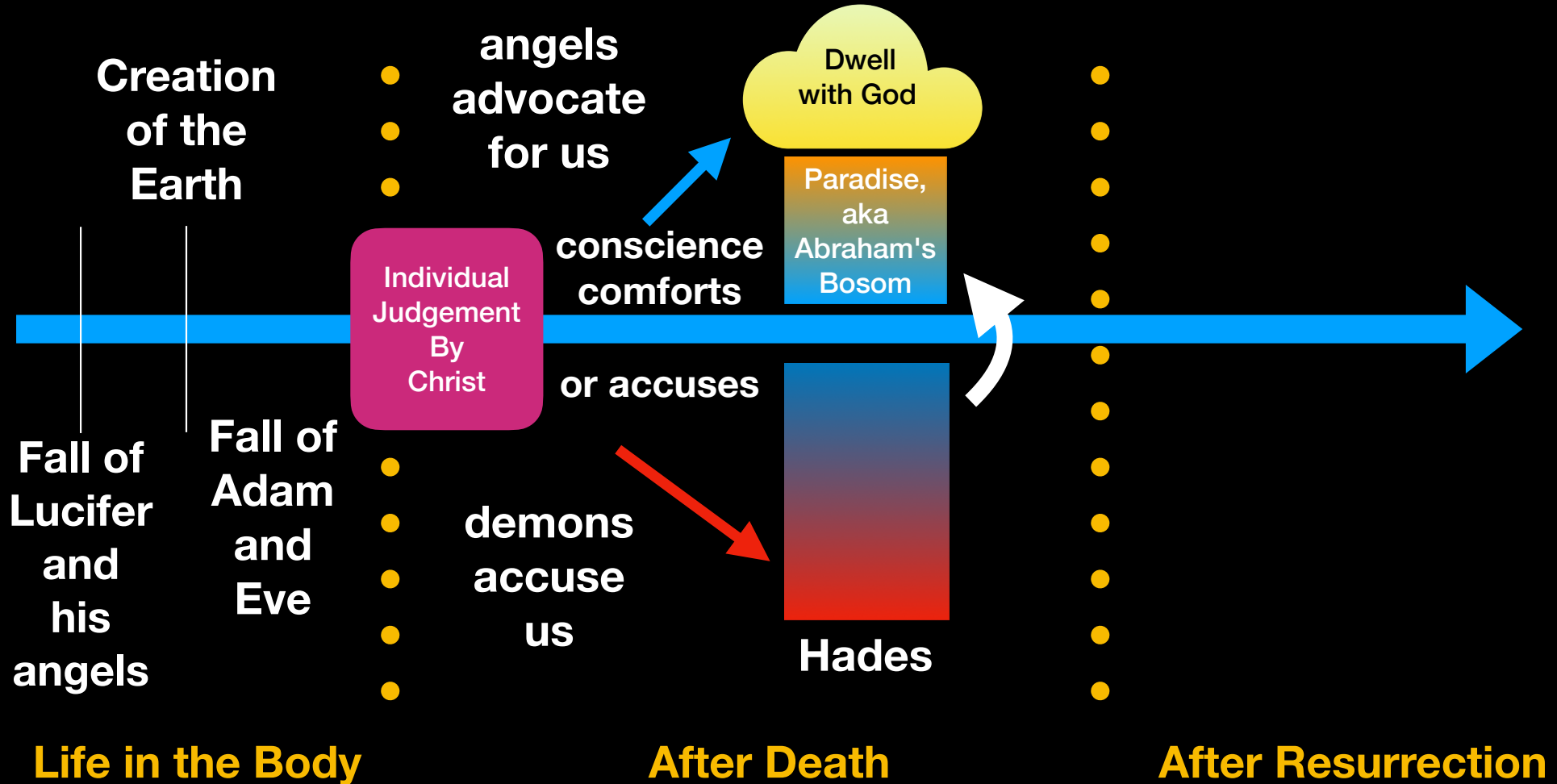
# Why do we pray for the departed souls?

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1. Their condition is variable.
2. Their condition can change through prayer on their behalf.

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## Encyclical to Orthodox in Antioch, 1722 Council in Constantinople

"...we believe that these two places [paradise and hades] have many abodes....and since the souls of the holy and righteous go indisputably to Paradise and those of the sinners go to [first Hades, then] Hell, of whom the ungodly and those who have sinned unforgivably are punished forever and those who have offended forgivably and moderately hope to gain freedom through the unspeakable mercy of God.



## Encyclical to Orthodox in Antioch, 1722 Council in Constantinople

"For this reason, on behalf of such souls, that is, of moderately and forgivably sinful, the Church offers prayers, supplications, Liturgies, as well as memorial services and almsgiving, that those souls may receive benefit and comfort. Thus when the Church prays for the souls of those who have fallen asleep, we hope that there will be forgiveness for them from God, not through fire and purgatory, but through divine love for mankind, in a way known to the infinite goodness of God." (Vlachos, p. 145).

# Why do we pray for the departed souls?

1. Their condition is variable.
2. Their condition can change through prayer on their behalf.
3. Out of love for them.

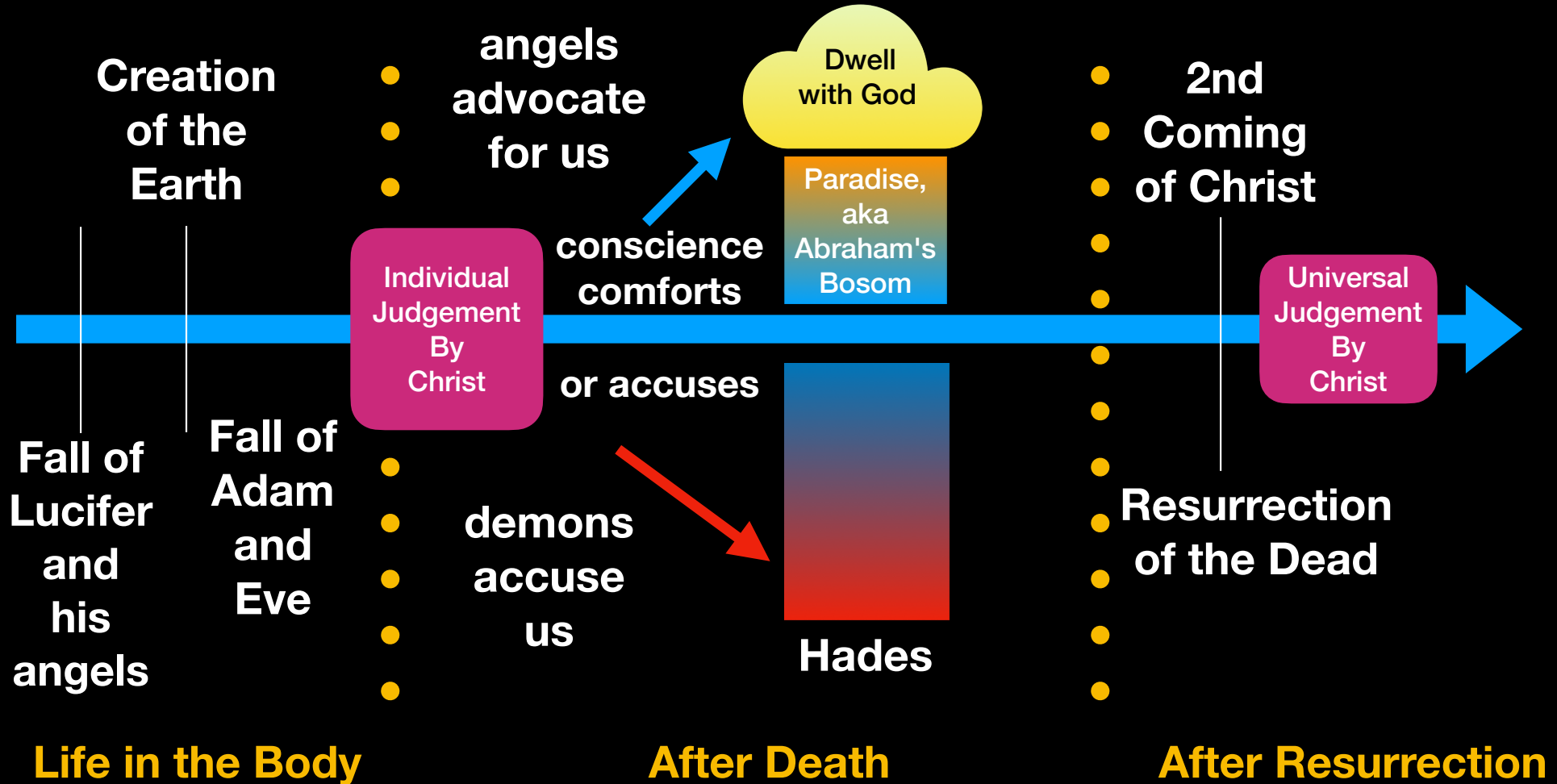
# Why memorials on 3rd, 9th, and 40th day?

1. It is an ancient tradition.
2. No dogma about why those days
  1. Some correlate them to Biblical events.
  2. Some correlate them to events that happen after death.

## The Orthodox Church Does Not Teach the Doctrine of Purgatory

1. It was explicitly rejected by Orthodox representatives at the Council of Ferrara-Florence (1438) as not being a doctrine of the Orthodox Church.
2. The Church teaches only two states: Paradise and Hades.
3. The Church rejects the notion of a 3rd state (purgatory) with created fire that purifies by punishing.

*I look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the age to come.*

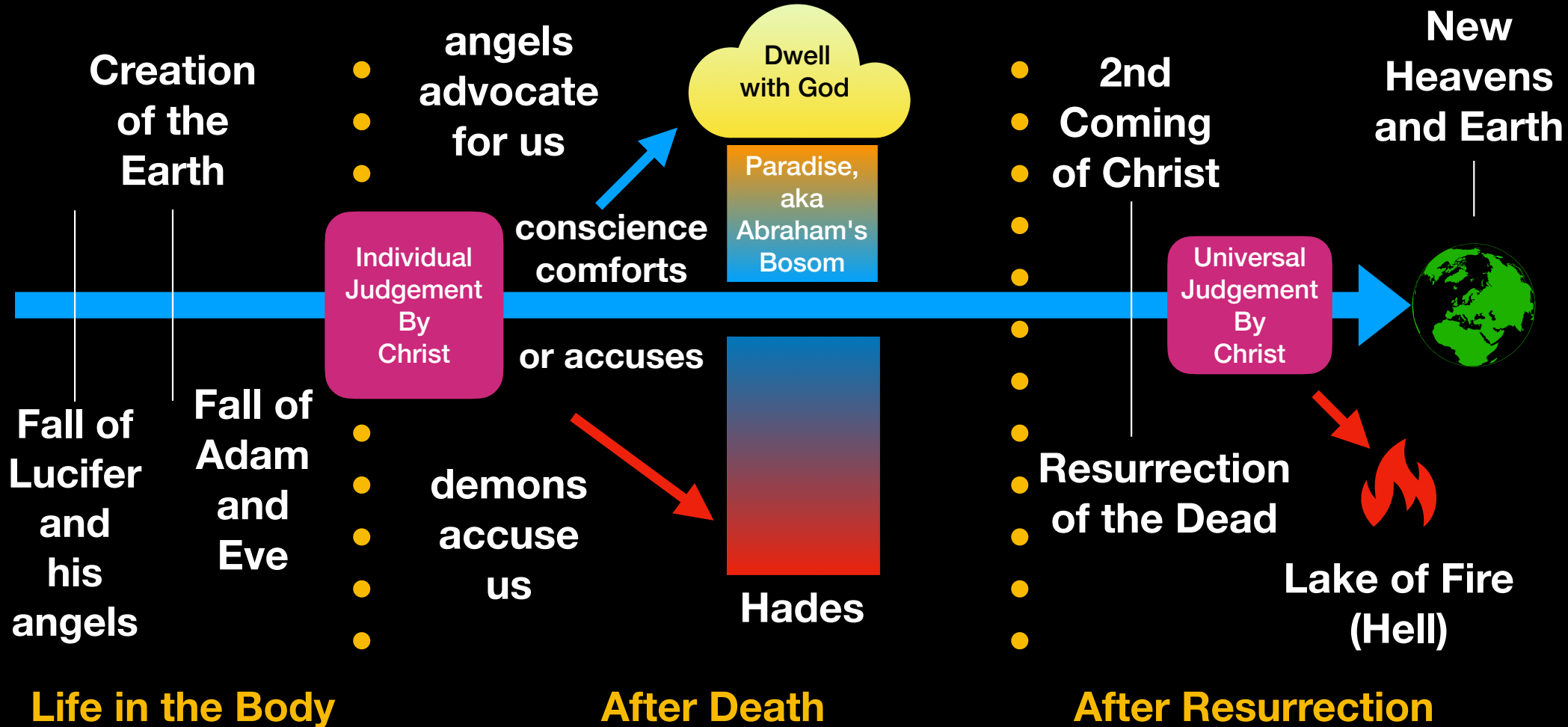




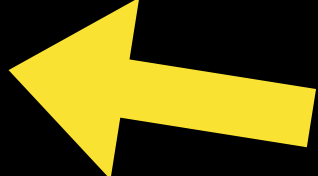
# Η Δευτέρα Παρουσία - The Second Coming



*I look for the resurrection of the dead,  
and the life of the age to come.*



# For Your Reading / Study

1. Schmemmann, Fr. Alexander. 2003. [O Death, Where is Thy Sting?](#)
  2. Schmemmann, Fr. Alexander. 2017. [The Liturgy of Death.](#)
  3. Staniloae, Fr. Dumitru. 2013. The Experience of God, Vol. 6: [The Fulfillment of Creation.](#)
  4. Vlachos, Metropolitan Hierotheos. 1996. [Life after Death.](#)
- 
- If you only read one, read this one.**



# For Your Reading / Study

## 1. Regarding Satan and the Demons

1. Ephesians 2.1-2; 6.11-12

2. 1 Peter 5.8-9

## 2. Regarding Judgement after Death

1. 1 Corinthians 5.8-10

2. Hebrews 9.27

# For Your Reading / Study

## 3. Regarding the Role of Our Conscience During Christ's Judgement of Us

1. Romans 2.15-16

2. 1 John 4.16-18

## 4. Regarding Souls Being in Paradise vs Hades

1. Luke 16.19-31

# For Your Reading / Study

## 5. Our Hope as Christians

1. Romans 8.28-39

2. 2 Corinthians 5.8-10

3. Philippians 1.20-23

4. Hebrews 12.22-23

# For Your Reading / Study

## 6. The Second Coming of Christ

1. Matthew 13.37-43

2. Matthew 25.31-46

3. 1 Corinthians Chapter 15

4.1 Thessalonians 5.9-11

5. 2 Peter 3.1-14

6. Revelation Chapters 20-21

# For Your Reading / Study

## 7. From the Liturgical Texts

1. The Octoechos, Mode 4: To Him who from the dead arose, Christ the Life-Giver, on the third day from the tomb; who crushed the gates of death today by the power which is His; who slew Hades and ground away the sting of death, and rescued Adam and Eve: to Him let us all, born on earth, now sing, earnestly shouting our grateful praise. For He, alone our mighty God, on the third day arose, as the Master of all.

# For Your Reading / Study

## 7. From the Liturgical Texts

2. Third Kneeling Prayer, Pentecost: You deign to receive the offerings and supplications for those bound in Hades and grant to us the great hope that respite and comfort will be sent down from You to the departed from the grief that binds them.

# For Your Reading / Study

## 7. From the Liturgical Texts

### 3. Funeral Service, Memorial Service, Trisagion

# Sources for Liturgical Services and Texts

1. <https://www.goarch.org/chapel/texts>

2. <https://agesinitiatives.com>

Click on "DCS"

3. <https://olw.ocmc.org>

Click on "Search" and "Texts"



## The Catechetical Sermon of St. John Chrysostom Read during Matins of Pascha.

Let no one bewail his poverty, for the universal Kingdom has been revealed. Let no one weep for his iniquities, for pardon has shone forth from the grave. Let no one fear death, for the Saviour's death has set us free.

# Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos)

According to the teachings of the holy Fathers, when someone enters into repentance, the stage of purification, he progresses continually. Perfecting continues both in the 'intermediate state of souls and in the life after the Second Coming. The stages of the spiritual life are purification, illumination, and deification (theosis). These are not to be conceived as water-tight divisions, but as degrees of participation in the grace of God. (p. 27)

## Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos)

The process is continuous. Thus those who have repented before their soul's departure from the body progress and become increasingly receptive to uncreated grace. Therefore we hold memorial services and pray for those who have fallen asleep. (p. 27)

# Metropolitan Hierotheos (Vlachos)

Paradise and Hell do not exist in God's view, but in man's view. God sends His grace to all men, since "He makes His sun rise on the just and the unjust and sends His rain on the evil and the good." ...sinners are unable to perceive [God's] love as light. They will perceive it as fire, since they will not have a spiritual eye and spiritual vision. (p. 28)

**Questions?**  
**Comments?**

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 65

"Jesus Christ needs witnesses at the judgement of the soul. This is not because He alone would not know the whole truth about any soul but because He wants to leave no doubt about the righteousness of His judgement in those who are interested in the fate of that respective soul."

## **Fr. Stăniloae, p. 65**

**For the unrepentant and not desiring communion with Christ: "Due to their lack of communion and the deeds contrary to communion, their conscience condemned them and tormented them to a certain degree even during life on earth."**

**Fr. Stăniloae, p. 65**

**But this state was still veiled  
by certain contacts and  
superficial pleasures.**



**Fr. Stăniloae, p. 65**

**As the state of noncommunion (and thus its torment as well) becomes definitive from the moment of death, from that moment the tormented state of noncommunion also becomes fully evident to their conscience."**

**Fr. Stăniloae, p. 66**

**For the repentant and desiring communion with Christ, their heart no longer reproaches them and the conscience no longer accuses them. They wait for the approach of death calmly and with a ready heart.**

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 69

"In the patristic spiritual writings, there are many...references both to either demons or angels taking hold of each soul immediately after death and to Christ's judgement at the end of the world according to each person's deeds." (e.g., John of Karpathos, Symeon Metaphrastes, John of Damascus, Maximus the Confessor).

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 69

"Good angels appear around the soul that is not totally hostile to communion with Christ and [not] unwilling to repent, that is, the soul that does desire to enter into communion with Him and with all who are in communion with Him. The angels come to strengthen this soul against the fear that is due to the sins it committed during life, sins that the evil spirits reveal and exaggerate.

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 69

If the soul rejoices in the angel's presence, this means that the communion between this soul and the angels has already begun, and therefore this soul has become capable of communion with Christ, whose messengers appear to the soul. Thus, the angels manage, together with the soul, to send away the evil and hostile spirits that want to lock the soul in loneliness and in the desperation connected with it."

**Fr. Stăniloae, p. 93**

**-...the Church considers that there is a continuous gradation from the highest levels of the righteous to the lowest, and from there to the sinners.**

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 93

"In fact, this gradation is so continuous that some who were declared righteous to a lesser degree at the individual judgement and thus who are found in paradise are not radically different than those who bear the stains of sin to a lesser degree and were left in [hades], although the Church maintains the separation between paradise and [hades].

**Fr. Stăniloae, p. 94**

**"This makes it possible for those in [hades] who are not radically different from those on the lowest levels of paradise to pass over to paradise before the last judgement, through the prayers of the saints and of those on earth."**



**Fr. Stăniloae, p. 94**

**"There is, however, a lowest region of [hades], where the worst sinners are, as there are the heights of paradise, where the saints are.**

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 94

Those in paradise, even those on the lower levels, will remain in paradise after the last judgement, but until then they can advance toward ever-increasing levels through the prayers of those on earth and through their prayers for the latter, as well as through their prayers that they may enter into communion with Christ in an increasingly active way.

## **Fr. Stăniloae, p. 94**

**"Up until the last judgement, those in hell who do not totally lack faith in Christ can also be moved to the paradise of communion with Christ, or their torments can be eased through the prayers of those on earth and through the prayers of the saints requested by those on earth, or perhaps through prayers offered through their own initiative.**

## Fr. Stăniloae, p. 94

Through the prayers of those on earth, accompanied by the placement of the particles around the Lamb (which has become the body of Christ) on behalf of the deceased, those who are in the unhappy noncommunion with Christ may be helped by the communion that Christ offers them through His sacrifice; they may also be helped by the communion offered by those who pray that they accept this communion or warm up to it, if they did not leave this life totally hostile or dead to it."

To Him who from the dead arose,  
Christ the Life-Giver, on the third  
day from the tomb; who crushed  
the gates of death today by the  
power which is His; who slew  
Hades and ground away the sting  
of death, and rescued Adam and  
Eve: to Him let us all, born on  
earth, now sing, earnestly  
shouting our grateful praise. For  
He, alone our mighty God, on the  
third day arose, as the Master of  
all. (Octoechos, Mode 4)



When he ascended up on high, he led captivity captive (Eph 4.8)

## **From the 3rd Kneeling Prayer of Pentecost**

**You deign to receive the offerings and supplications for those bound in Hades and grant to us the great hope that respite and comfort will be sent down from You to the departed from the grief that binds them.**