

1] In the ancient world there were many mystery religions, as they were called. They had gods and goddesses to whom the devotees attached themselves as clients. Among these mysteries there were the cults of Isis, the mysteries of Eleusis, celebrating Demeter and Persephone, the mysteries of Mithras, and the cults of Serapis and of Orpheus.

2] These religions featured dying and rising gods and at their heart they were tied to nature; they were mythical expressions of the rhythms of nature and their heroes and gods were personifications of nature. At best, their followers were seeking something beyond this life; at worst they were the abode of demons in a fallen world.

3] We are not so earthbound. Jesus Christ is not a god who dies and rises each spring, for the God who said, 'Let there be lights in the firmament of the heavens... and let them be for signs and seasons, and for days and years,' [Gen.1:14] is not subject to or ruled by His own creation.

4] Do not pay too much attention to those who point out the budding leaf, the re-emergence of flowers and the renewed life as at this springtime, as if this were the meaning of Christ's resurrection. Why! Our fellow Orthodox Christians in the Antipodes are keeping

festival with us, not amidst the new life of the vernal equinox: for them it is harvest time. We might well look on the natural cycle, as with all Creation, as a symbol of the underlying realities, where the re-emergence of living things points us towards Christ coming from the tomb; or, indeed, harvest time in the Southern Hemisphere, indicating Christ, risen from the dead, the firstfruits of those who have fallen asleep. (cf.1 Cor.15:20)

5] But the heart of our understanding of the mystery of the resurrection of Christ, to use the Greek, is *anamnesis*; It is a remembering: not remembering merely as a process of the mind, recalling something from the past. It is something far more dynamic, far more powerful. It is the entering into the experience itself: Pascha, the Passover of Christ; His greatest sign and miracle and mighty work. He has actually defeated Death itself; something that those devotees of those ancient mystery cults could only long for in the face of their own human tragedy, and the tragedy of Nature herself, which as St Paul remarked, 'The whole creation groans and labours with birth pangs together until now.' [Rom.8:22)

6] In the New Testament there are eleven accounts, recording the resurrection appearances of Our Lord, each one, a different facet of that final revelation of God on earth. They form a cycle of readings in church, Eothinon, or dawn gospels, proclaimed at Matins (Orthos) Sunday by Sunday. The priest chants the

week's gospel from the southern end of the Holy Table, like the angel within the tomb, proclaiming to the holy Myrrhbearers that Christ is risen. For Pascha is the Evangelion, the good news to be published abroad.

7] What does this mean for us? Are there only eleven resurrection gospels? No! Each one of us who has been baptised into Christ Jesus were baptised into His death [cf. Rom.6:3], so that each one of us is a sign of His resurrection, 'Who were born, not of blood, nor of the will of the flesh, nor of the will of man, but of God.' [Jn.1:13]

8] What does this mean for us? Was there only one angel in the tomb? No! For each one of us, whose life is hidden with Christ in God, is a heavenly messenger to this world, 'Who makes His angels spirits, His ministers a flame of fire.' [Ps.103:4]

9] What does this mean for us? Look at those lights held in your hands on this night: these are icons of your very own souls. And the light shines in the darkness, and the darkness did not comprehend it. and we are sent to bear witness of that Light; the true Light which gives light to every man coming into the world. (cf.Jn.1:5-9) Christ is risen!

gbnhj