

## St. John of Kronstadt: Sermon on the All-Joyous Day of Pascha



*By St. John of Kronstadt*

*I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead, and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death. (Apoc. 1:17-18)*

*These things saith He that is holy, He that is true, He that hath the key of David, He that openeth, and no man shutteth, and no man openeth. (Apoc 3:7)*

I congratulate you all on the Bright Resurrection of Christ, and on such a great and holy day I wish to talk to you, dear brothers and sisters, on these words of Holy Scripture; and I call you dear because you are very dear to our Lord Jesus Christ, Who redeemed us at an infinitely precious price--His most pure Blood, poured out on the Cross for our salvation. Remember this and do not forget; do not forget from what you have been redeemed at such a precious price: from sin, the curse, and death, both temporal and eternal. Guard yourselves with all your strength from sin, which has caused such misfortunes in the world, and even now causes every kind of misfortune. And so, I repeat: Christ is risen! In truth He is risen!

I wish to explain to you the words from the Apocalypse of the Apostle and Evangelist John the Theologian which are quoted at the beginning: "I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth, and was dead; and behold, I am alive for evermore, Amen, and have the keys of hell and of death." By these mighty words the Lord indicates that He is the Unoriginate and Almighty Creator of everything visible and invisible, or the angelic world; that all creation received its beginning from Him, including Lucifer himself, cast down from heaven and become satan and the devil, the chief of the fallen angels, who dared to oppose God and enter into battle with his Creator and introduce sin and death into God's world. The Lord says: I am the first and the last; from Me all the created spirits received their beginning--the angels and the demons, who before were good and holy spirits; by My word heaven and earth and the whole human race were called

into existence and given the laws of existence and life; by Me are accomplished and will be accomplished all births of creatures and, through Me will be the end of heaven and earth and all earthly creatures; through Me will be the universal resurrection and the judgment of all; through Me will be conquered and put under foot all My enemies and the whole kingdom of satan; by Me the final enemy---death is destroyed and annihilated.

Since the Apocalypse of the Apostle John is the last book of the Holy Scripture and the first book is the Genesis of the world and the human race, written by inspiration of the Holy Spirit by the Prophet Moses, the Lord, indicating this, says that through Him the world and the account of its existence began: through Him also there will follow the end of the visible world, which is declared in special detail in the Apocalypse, which speaks Also of the final battle of the serpent or satan with the Lamb, Who was slaughtered and tasted death for the salvation of the World. Therefore the Lord says to John: I am the first and the last, that is through Me everything received its beginning, through Me it will end; through Me there will be the end of the world, the end of the kingdom of satan and the beginning of his eternal torment, the end of the battle of good with evil--the end of death, the end of dying--and righteousness will reign. From Me good and evil will receive their just reward; unrepentant sinners will go into eternal torment, and the righteous into eternal life. "Behold, I come quickly; and My reward is with Me, to give every man according as his word shall be" (Apoc. 22:12), the Lord says many times in the Apocalypse.

Indicating that He endured death for us, and that without doubt the general resurrection will be through Him, the Conqueror of death, He says: "I was dead, and behold, I am alive for, evermore, amen;" and you also will be alive forever. This is the meaning of the words of Him Who arose: "I am the first and the last; I am He that liveth and was dead" for you, for your redemption from death, and I; that is: I conquered your death by My innocent death for your sake, and behold, I am also forever and will sit with My Father on His throne; I was not separated from Him, even though I was on earth accomplishing My great work for you who are subject to sin and death. Therefore, do you also, My followers, work and struggle against sin and do righteous deeds, and where I am, there shall My servant be also--that is, in the eternal Kingdom.

Remarkable also are the Lord's words: "I have the keys of hell and of death;" and, in another place in the same book: "these things saith he that is holy, he that is true, he that hath the key of David, he that openeth, and no many shutteth; and shutteth and no man openeth." Just as the conquerors of cities in ancient times, as a sign of their victory, took the keys of the city gates and entered triumphantly into the conquered city, so also our Lord, having conquered hell and death for us by His own death, as Conqueror took from Satan the keys by which he had ruled for whole thousands of years, the keys of hell and death, and destroyed Hell, that eternal place of bonds for the earthborn, and liberated the eternal captives and led them out into the light of the Kingdom of Heaven.