

Note 1: Retrograde Readings and the So-Called 'Special Sections'

The cycle and order of Gospel readings is determined by the date of Pascha. Beginning with the day of the radiant Resurrection, the Gospels are set out in their appointed order until the following Pascha, after which the previous cycle of readings is begun anew. This order can be found among the general directions in the Gospel Book.

For Sundays and weekdays, the Gospel Book has 50 ordinary sections, namely 8 from Pascha (concluding with All Saints Sunday), 32 from All Saints Sunday to Publican and Pharisee Sunday, and 10 from Publican and Pharisee Sunday until Pascha. There is no standard number of days between one Pascha and the next. This is why there is either an internal Pascha, when in the course of the civil year Pascha occurs twice, or an external Pascha, when there is a single Pascha in a civil year (in the liturgical Gospel Book, see the *'Remarks About the Annual Dates for the Gospels and Evangelists, When They Begin and Their Duration'*).

Whenever there is an internal Pascha (within the church year based on Pascha), the number of Sundays and weekdays does not correspond to the usual fixed sections of the Gospel Book. In such a case, there are fewer Sundays than designated sections, which are then superfluous and so will be left over and not read in that year. For example, those sections assigned to the Sundays preceding Publican and Pharisee Sunday are affected. As laid down in the Typikon, from Publican and Pharisee Sunday, the sections assigned to those Sundays are read even if the preceding sections had not been read (Typikon, sequence for 7 January, at 'See:').

Now, if there is an external Pascha, then, for some Sundays and weekdays, there might not be enough ordinary sections. When that happens, there is a so-called retrogression (see pg 20) or turning back in the ordinary sections read previously. This retrogression affects only the Gospels read at the Divine Liturgy, and never has any bearing on the Gospels read at the Morning Service, the Resurrectional Gospels, the Octoechos, or the Prokimenons and Halleluiahs verses before readings of the Gospels and Apostles; these all go in accordance with own order.

1. There might not be enough of these sections for the five weekdays following the 17th Sunday after Pentecost. In the general directive for reading the Gospels, reading from Luke begins after the 17th Sunday, on the Monday of the

18th week, during which the Gospel of Luke is always begun on the Monday after the Elevation, as laid down by the Typikon.

It could happen that the 17th Sunday would be the Sunday before the Elevation; there would then be five weekdays remaining until the Elevation, and there would not be enough ordinary sections of readings for them, since the Sunday before the Elevation and the very day of the Elevation have their own special readings. In that event, the *Remarks* printed at the beginning of the liturgical Gospel Book, give this directive: ‘If there is an external Pascha, it is to be said that we never have to read this seventeenth week. Rather, turn back and read these five days from wherever you desire.’ On this model, when such a thing happens, it is prescribed that we turn back to the Gospel of Matthew, and read whatever sections we prefer. _)

2. There might not be enough ordinary sections for the weeks and Sundays intervening between the 32nd Sunday and Publican and Pharisee Sunday. This happens in church years when there are more than 32 Sundays and weeks (see the table below) between the first Sunday-After-Pentecost and Publican and Pharisee Sunday.

In such years, all the Gospels are read on weekdays in accordance with the ordinary directive until the 32nd Sunday, and thereafter for the intervening weeks in accordance with the ordinary directive beginning with the 23rd Sunday, reading through them sufficiently until they fill the Sundays and weeks intervening between the 32nd Sunday and Publican and Pharisee Sunday.

The principles which affect the repetition of the Gospel readings on these intervening Sundays also have the same effect on weekdays. On some Sundays after Pentecost, beyond the readings laid down by the ordinary directive, special readings are also appointed for the Sundays Of the Forefathers, Before Christ’s Nativity, After Christ’s Nativity, Before the Enlightenment, After the Enlightenment. On these Sundays the sections laid down for them are read, the ordinary sections are not read, and there remains a reserve of readings which can supply the insufficiencies of the intervening Sundays on which it is laid down that there be read the ordinary sections which fell on the Sundays named above.

Now, even these ordinary sections might not be sufficient for a particular Sunday in years when there is both a late and an early Pascha. In that case, Section 62 of Matthew is designated to be read on that Sunday. _)

On this model, it is evident that, however many intervening Sundays there might be in a given year, the retrograde readings (that is, the repetition of sections already read) are not related to the Sundays in any way.

On Holy Forefathers Sunday (see pgs 453-455), the Gospel of the 28th Sunday is always read. So, even if Holy Forefathers Sunday does not coincide with the 28th Sunday, then the ordinary Gospel for the 28th Sunday is read on Holy Forefathers Sunday. _)

Concerning the reading of the Apostle and Gospel on the Saturday and Sunday after Christ's Nativity, as well as on the Saturday and Sunday before His Theophany, see pg 483.

_) This same order is kept with regard to the Apostolic readings. (*TR: This seems to have been superseded by more recent specific directives not included in the liturgical Gospel Book.*)

_) (*TR: This is footnote 1 on pg 627.*) There can be five Sundays on which it is laid down that we read the appointed sections, while the ordinary sections are set aside: Holy Forefathers Sunday (2nd Sunday before Christ's Nativity), Holy Fathers Sunday (1st Sunday before Christ's Nativity), the Sunday after Christ's Nativity, the Sunday before the Enlightenment, and the Sunday after the Enlightenment. On this model, it is possible to keep five Gospels in reserve for the Liturgy. It is not necessary to have more than these, since there will not be more than 37 ordinary Sundays. Yet in the liturgical Gospel Book there is a note to the effect that there might not be enough of the ordinary Gospels. In such an event, it is laid down that we read the 62nd section of Matthew about the woman of Canaan. When can this happen? It is not difficult to answer this question if we turn our attention to one of the Sundays above, on which the ordinary Gospels can be directed to be read, yet not be read.

This can happen with the Sunday after Christ's Nativity if it coincides with the Sunday before the Enlightenment. Supposing that Christ's Nativity falls on a Sunday, the Lord's Circumcision then falls on a Sunday and His Theophany on a Friday. In the given circumstances, the Sunday after Christ's Nativity will also be the Sunday before the Enlightenment. Then the same thing happens as it would if Christ's Nativity fell on a Monday or a Tuesday, but of these three occurrences, only one entails an insufficiency of ordinary Gospels for the ordinary Sundays, and that is when Christ's Nativity falls on a Monday. In that case, there can be only

four exceptions to the ordinary Gospels, on the Sundays of the Holy Forefathers, of the Holy Fathers, before the Enlightenment (the same day as the Sunday after Christ's Nativity) and after the Enlightenment. Among these Sundays, it could happen that there would be all 37 of the possible ordinary Sundays, for example, when the need arises for there to be more than the designated four sections to provide 33 sections when there are only 32 of them. In that instance it is necessary to read the 62nd section of Matthew's Gospel on the Sunday preceding Zacchaeus Sunday; in other circumstances there are sufficient ordinary Gospels.

In continuing the Great Indiction (see below for that), there occur 22 times to read Section 62 of Matthew about the Woman of Canaan: twice in a leap year, if Pascha occurs on 18 April and if it was on 25 March in the preceding year; and if Pascha occurs on 21 April and was on 1 April in the preceding year; 12 times if in non-leap years Pascha occurs on 15 April but was on 26 March in the preceding year; 8 times if in a non-leap year it came on 22 April but occurred on 2 April in the preceding year. (*TR: All these dates assume the use of the 'old', or Julian Calendar; they do not function in the 'new' (Gregorian or Revised Gregorian) calendars.*)

From such years, it is possible to determine the dates for the following years in the near future: 1907, 1918, and 1929, in which Pascha will be celebrated on 22 April, and when Pascha occurred on 2 April in the years preceding them. This is likewise the case for 1935, when Pascha will be on 15 April, when it will have been on 26 March in 1934 (*Manual for Village Pastors, 1894, 16*).

_ (*TR: This is footnote 2 on p. 627.*) This order in the Typikon was given in order to preserve a relationship with the Gospel reading. In the Typikon, there are no (ecclesial) directives concerning such relationships with the apostolic readings, but some people propose that it follows that there ought to be such an order relative to the apostolic readings. Even so, the Typikon makes no assumptions about a possible separation of the Gospel and Apostle readings coinciding on any important day of the week.

*S. V. Bulgakov, Handbook for Church Servers, 2nd ed. 1274 pp. (Kharkov, 1900) pp 0626-0628
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