The Questions of John to Abraham

Narration of Abraham, questions of John the Theologian, about righteous souls and other (matters). Father bless.

On the food for the righteous

1 John said, “Father Abraham, you reside in paradise, you receive the righteous souls. Tell me, father, what are the righteous fed in paradise?”

2 Abraham then said, “Listen, child John, the righteous souls are fed heavenly food: a holy service, candle, sacrificial bread, and true mercy. This is what righteous souls are fed.

3 And when angels take this soul from its body and carry it to heaven to God’s throne, all demons (rise to) meet this righteous soul (in) twenty tollhouses (to be judged for its) evil deeds. The angels do not surrender this soul to the evil spirits to be mocked, but deliver it directly to Christ’s judgment, near God’s throne, waiting for it to be remembered (on earth in) holy service, candle, sacrificial bread, and true mercies. And if on some day holy service, candle, sacrificial bread, and true mercy take place, then this soul will be full of light, will be fed and will be joyful.

Memorials for the dead

2 “It is on account of this that our Lord Jesus Christ was crucified, voluntarily descended to Hades, destroyed its dominion, bound Satan and the devil, and then rose from the dead on the third day (when) our Lord Jesus Christ raised Adam and Eve and all the righteous (dead). It is on account of this that we hold a memorial service on the third day after a person’s death.

3“After his resurrection, the Lord appeared to his disciples, and Thomas believed. It is on account of this that we hold a memorial service on the ninth day after a person’s death."

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1 Apocr. Jas. 33:2-36:1
Matt 6:22
Acts Pil. Rec. B 24-25;
Quest. Bart. 1:21-22;
John 20:24-29

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a. MS 333 has “In paradise, righteous souls are fed heavenly food by the Holy Spirit.”
b. Prosvia (from the Greek proshoron) is the bread used in the Orthodox Eucharist celebration.
c. For “twenty tollhouses (to be judged for) evil deeds,” MS 166 has “all (kinds of) tollhouses.”
d. MS 333 lacks “directly to Christ’s judgment.”
e. MS 333 has “If there is a service on the third day.”
f. On the Orthodox memorial service for the dead (the Panikhida), see above pp. 445-46.
g. In 3 Apocr. Apoc. John 8:4, the first memorial service takes place on the ninth day (fourth in Slav II 4:2).
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5After his resurrection, the Lord appeared to Luke and Cleopas and made himself known to them while breaking bread. It is on account of this that we hold a memorial service on the twentieth day after a person's death.

6After his resurrection, (Jesus) rose to heaven to his heavenly father. It is on account of this that we hold a memorial service on the fortieth day after a person's death.

The judgment of the soul

3 If a service is held for this soul on the ninth, twentieth, and fortieth day with a candle, sacrificial bread and true mercy, then angels raise this soul to God's throne. And the Lord will say to it, 'Rejoice and be happy, O righteous soul. You lived by my law; your departure is good, your works are good and your memory is good. You, blessed one, lived on earth without robbing and cheating anyone.' That is when the Lord says to the angels, 'Carry this soul to paradise to Abraham's and Isaac's and Jacob's lap to eternal life.'

3And if a soul lived in poverty and without a family and cannot perform a service or (offer) a candle or sacrificial bread or true mercy, but received the Lord's body and blood in purity and performed God's good works, then even this soul will be accepted by the Lord despite the service, the candle, the sacrificial bread, or true mercy. Your works are good. And the Lord will say, 'Carry this soul to paradise to Abraham's and Isaac's and Jacob's lap to eternal life.'

7If a soul lived on earth without conscience, not fearing God or God's angels or the holy Gospel or spiritual fathers, but performed evil acts with avarice, pride, wrath, desire of money, theft, envy, gossip, banditry, murder, witchcraft, greed, robbery, usury and all Satan's evil works, if this soul is not remembered or (given) a service or a candle or sacrificial bread or true mercy then (may) no (lay) person and no spiritual father remember it in their prayers, because it did not keep Christ's commandments. (This soul) will be brought to Christ's and God's throne and the Lord will say to it, 'You cursed soul, on earth you lived lawlessly, doing evil, performing evil deeds of Satan and the devil and their angels, rebelling against Christ. You are not remembered, your departure is evil and you are thought of as evil.'

10At this time, the Lord will say to the angels, 'Throw this soul into eternal torment; I will not suffer lawbreakers in my sight.' The angels will then deliver this sinful soul to terrible demons; the demons will then carry this soul to the unquenchable fire, to eternal torment, into the outer darkness where there will be weeping and gnashing of teeth.'

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a. The identification of Luke as the unnamed companion of Cleopas is found also in Bk. Bee.
b. Here chleb, the common Slavonic word for bread.
c. Meaning in prayers and services.
d. The word for "remember," with alternative spelling.