



**This week meditations on liturgical texts
from **Skynia Magazine****

May 30 - June 5
The Julian calendar

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Stages of meditation

Please find below some schematic prompts for each stage of the meditation on the Word of God. [Read more.](#)

1. Reading

- Read the text
- What does it tell by itself?
- Clear up the context
- Look up the comments
- Find the key-phrase

2. Meditation

- What is my here and now?
- What does the Word tell me?
- Use your imagination
- "Digest" the text
- The Word and my life

3. Prayer

- What will I say in response?
- Recognition and request
- Gratitude and glorifying
- Prayer in the Word
- My participation in the Divine Liturgy

4. Contemplation

- A call to conversion
- Now I am silent
- Staying in the presence of God
- Now He is guiding me

Biblical readings and meditations

May 30

**Sunday of the Samaritan
Women**

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 11: 19-26, 29-30

John 4: 5-42

Acts 11: 19-26, 29-30

Now those who were scattered because of the persecution that took place over Stephen traveled as far as Phoenicia, Cyprus, and Antioch, and they spoke the word to no one except Jews. But among them were some men of Cyprus and Cyrene who, on coming to Antioch, spoke to the Hellenists also, proclaiming the Lord Jesus. The hand of the Lord was with them, and a great number became believers and turned to the Lord. News of this came to the ears of the church in Jerusalem, and they sent Barnabas to Antioch. When he came and saw the grace of God, he rejoiced, and he exhorted them all to remain faithful to the Lord with steadfast devotion; for he was a good man, full of the Holy Spirit and of faith. And a great many people were brought to the Lord. Then Barnabas went to Tarsus to look for Saul, and when he had found him, he brought him to Antioch. So it was that for an entire year they met with the

church and taught a great many people, and it was in Antioch that the disciples were first called “Christians.”

The disciples determined that according to their ability, each would send relief to the believers living in Judea; this they did, sending it to the elders by Barnabas and Saul.

John 4: 5-42

So he came to a Samaritan city called Sychar, near the plot of ground that Jacob had given to his son Joseph. Jacob’s well was there, and Jesus, tired out by his journey, was sitting by the well. It was about noon.

A Samaritan woman came to draw water, and Jesus said to her, “Give me a drink.” (His disciples had gone to the city to buy food.) The Samaritan woman said to him, “How is it that you, a Jew, ask a drink of me, a woman of Samaria?” (Jews do not share things in common with Samaritans.) Jesus answered her, “If you knew the gift of God, and who it is that is saying to you, ‘Give me a drink,’ you would have asked him, and he would have given you living water.” The woman said to him, “Sir, you have no bucket, and the well is deep. Where do you get that living water? Are you greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us the well, and with his sons and his flocks drank from it?” Jesus said to her, “Everyone who drinks of this water will be thirsty again, but those who drink of the water that I will give them will never be thirsty. The water that I will give will become in them a spring of water gushing up to eternal life.” The woman said to him, “Sir, give me this water, so that I may never be thirsty or have to keep coming here to draw water.”

Jesus said to her, "Go, call your husband, and come back." The woman answered him, "I have no husband." Jesus said to her, "You are right in saying, 'I have no husband'; for you have had five husbands, and the one you have now is not your husband. What you have said is true!" The woman said to him, "Sir, I see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you say that the place where people must worship is in Jerusalem." Jesus said to her, "Woman, believe me, the hour is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You worship what you do not know; we worship what we know, for salvation is from the Jews. But the hour is coming, and is now here, when the true worshipers will worship the Father in spirit and truth, for the Father seeks such as these to worship him. God is spirit, and those who worship him must worship in spirit and truth." The woman said to him, "I know that Messiah is coming" (who is called Christ). "When he comes, he will proclaim all things to us." Jesus said to her, "I am he, the one who is speaking to you."

Just then his disciples came. They were astonished that he was speaking with a woman, but no one said, "What do you want?" or, "Why are you speaking with her?" Then the woman left her water jar and went back to the city. She said to the people, "Come and see a man who told me everything I have ever done! He cannot be the Messiah, can he?" They left the city and were on their way to him.

Meanwhile the disciples were urging him, "Rabbi, eat something." But he said to them, "I have food to eat that you do not know about." So the disciples said to one another, "Surely no one has brought him something to eat?" Jesus said to them, "My food is to

do the will of him who sent me and to complete his work. Do you not say, 'Four months more, then comes the harvest'? But I tell you, look around you, and see how the fields are ripe for harvesting. The reaper is already receiving wages and is gathering fruit for eternal life, so that sower and reaper may rejoice together. For here the saying holds true, 'One sows and another reaps.' I sent you to reap that for which you did not labor. Others have labored, and you have entered into their labor."

Many Samaritans from that city believed in him because of the woman's testimony, "He told me everything I have ever done." So when the Samaritans came to him, they asked him to stay with them; and he stayed there two days. And many more believed because of his word. They said to the woman, "It is no longer because of what you said that we believe, for we have heard for ourselves, and we know that this is truly the Savior of the world." was baptizing.

Meditation

Jesus can be met in an unexpected place. The Samaritan woman went to draw water. She didn't expect to meet anyone. She was surprised that Christ started speaking to her, because the Jews did not share things in common with the Samaritans. The woman was busy with her everyday chorus, - she neither looked for a teacher nor asked for help. Probably, she wouldn't have even uttered a word to Jesus. But He sat there by the well, waiting for her, talking to her. You can meet Jesus not only in church, but also at work, in the market, on public transport, anywhere. The initiator of such an encounter can be God Himself, He does not have to wait for me to

be ready or get prepared, He can be the first to draw my attention, to speak to me.

Jesus can be recognized. The Samaritan woman quickly turned the conversation into a theological direction – she asked about the place and way of worshipping the Father. She spoke of the Messiah and learned that Jesus was Him. She heard and believed. It took the disciples a long time to believe in Jesus as the Messiah, and the woman discovered this immediately, during one conversation. God is close, He makes Himself known, because He wants to act in my life.

You can get from Jesus that what you don't ask for. Jesus offers the Samaritan woman living water that quenches thirst and flows into eternal life. Only God can quench the thirst of my heart. The Holy Spirit is the living water that purifies, restores, heals, and revives.

Meeting Jesus changes lives. The Samaritan woman left her bucket and ran to the city to tell people about Jesus. She no longer wanted to avoid them, she was not afraid of condemnation for her past mistakes and hurried to share the good news. Meeting the Messiah changed her attitude towards her life, her neighbors and God. Meeting Jesus may be unexpected, in an unexpected place, at an unplanned time, but it can restore my faith, show the truth about me. Not to condemn, but to offer a way out, to draw attention to the Savior, to His desire to act in my life.

May 31

Monday

Acts 12: 2-17

John 8: 42-51

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 12: 2-17

He had James, the brother of John, killed with the sword. After he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. (This was during the festival of Unleavened Bread.) When he had seized him, he put him in prison and handed him over to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending to bring him out to the people after the Passover. While Peter was kept in prison, the church prayed fervently to God for him.

The very night before Herod was going to bring him out, Peter, bound with two chains, was sleeping between two soldiers, while guards in front of the door were keeping watch over the prison. Suddenly an angel of the Lord appeared and a light shone in the cell. He tapped Peter on the side and woke him, saying, "Get up quickly." And the chains fell off his wrists. The angel said to him, "Fasten your belt and put on your sandals." He did so. Then he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." Peter went out and followed him; he did not realize that what was happening with the angel's help was real; he thought he was seeing a vision. After they had passed the first and the second guard, they came before the iron gate leading into the city. It opened for them of its

own accord, and they went outside and walked along a lane, when suddenly the angel left him. Then Peter came to himself and said, "Now I am sure that the Lord has sent his angel and rescued me from the hands of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting."

As soon as he realized this, he went to the house of Mary, the mother of John whose other name was Mark, where many had gathered and were praying. When he knocked at the outer gate, a maid named Rhoda came to answer. On recognizing Peter's voice, she was so overjoyed that, instead of opening the gate, she ran in and announced that Peter was standing at the gate. They said to her, "You are out of your mind!" But she insisted that it was so. They said, "It is his angel." Meanwhile Peter continued knocking; and when they opened the gate, they saw him and were amazed. He motioned to them with his hand to be silent, and described for them how the Lord had brought him out of the prison. And he added, "Tell this to James and to the believers." Then he left and went to another place.

John 8: 42-51

Jesus said to them, "If God were your Father, you would love me, for I came from God and now I am here. I did not come on my own, but he sent me. Why do you not understand what I say? It is because you cannot accept my word. You are from your father the devil, and you choose to do your father's desires. He was a murderer from the beginning and does not stand in the truth, because there is no truth in him. When he lies, he speaks according to his own nature, for he is a liar and the father of lies. But because I tell the truth, you do not

believe me. Which of you convicts me of sin? If I tell the truth, why do you not believe me? Whoever is from God hears the words of God. The reason you do not hear them is that you are not from God.”

The Jews answered him, “Are we not right in saying that you are a Samaritan and have a demon?” Jesus answered, “I do not have a demon; but I honor my Father, and you dishonor me. Yet I do not seek my own glory; there is one who seeks it and he is the judge. Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.”

Meditation

The excerpt from the Acts of the Apostles can be read as a historical description of events. Or one may try to find some spiritual parallels in one’s interior life. Finally, that is not such an extraordinary or naïve practice – the writing of the Holy Scriptures was inspired by the Holy Spirit not just (and even not that much) for highlighting historical facts. The Holy Fathers of the Church claim that each fragment can give us a certain spiritual truth through a symbolic sense.

Therefore, let us try and find some spiritual interpretation in the miraculous release of Peter. St. Max the Confessor considers that the image of Peter in the chains symbolizes the status of our contemplation. If Peter is our mind, whom does king Herod symbolize? This name is translated as *the glory of skin*, that is bodily nature, flesh.

We can agree with this: our bodily nature keeps trying to bend our mind to submission all the time, to separate it from the spiritual

reality with a good guard: entertainment, concerns, weakness, that is the whole arsenal of the material world. It is trying to place the mind on the prison's diet, only instead of bread and water here we have a purely material perception of the outer world and events taking place in it, while more beneficial and diverse food, that is the view enriched with the spiritual dimension, is prohibited in this cell.

Our mind, like the mind of Apostle Peter, is chained with the narrowness and limitations of the body and cannot reach Christ or start communicating with the brothers in the mystery of the Church of Christ. Saint Max provides the following interpretation of two guards: the first one is the manifestations of passion in our actions since these passions keep our mind in captivity, all the time trying to convince that they are stronger, that they control both our mind and all our life. The second guard is our conscious pre-disposition to them since even if we escape from our passion we still often choose the road of humble return to them and again put ourselves into their captivity on a voluntary basis. The iron gate is a strong connection of all our feelings, and hence our reactions, life choices, plans to material things.

Today the Lord invites us not to lose our willingness to leave this dark prison, to get back to the bright world full of life. Every day He sends His angel to us, who tries to awaken our thoughts and feelings.

Notice him today, awaken your mind, release yourselves from the chain and leave the prison to join Christ – your life!

June 1

Tuesday

Acts 12: 25-13: 12

John 8: 51-59

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
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- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 12: 25-13: 12

Then after completing their mission Barnabas and Saul returned to Jerusalem and brought with them John, whose other name was Mark.

Now in the church at Antioch there were prophets and teachers: Barnabas, Simeon who was called Niger, Lucius of Cyrene, Manaen a member of the court of Herod the ruler, and Saul. While they were worshiping the Lord and fasting, the Holy Spirit said, "Set apart for me Barnabas and Saul for the work to which I have called them." Then after fasting and praying they laid their hands on them and sent them off.

So, being sent out by the Holy Spirit, they went down to Seleucia; and from there they sailed to Cyprus. When they arrived at Salamis, they proclaimed the word of God in the synagogues of the Jews. And they had John also to assist them. When they had gone through the whole island as far as Paphos, they met a certain magician, a Jewish false prophet, named Bar-Jesus. He was with the proconsul, Sergius Paulus, an intelligent man, who summoned Barnabas and Saul and wanted to hear the word of God. But the magician Elymas (for that is the translation of his name) opposed

them and tried to turn the proconsul away from the faith. But Saul, also known as Paul, filled with the Holy Spirit, looked intently at him and said, “You son of the devil, you enemy of all righteousness, full of all deceit and villainy, will you not stop making crooked the straight paths of the Lord? And now listen—the hand of the Lord is against you, and you will be blind for a while, unable to see the sun.” Immediately mist and darkness came over him, and he went about groping for someone to lead him by the hand. When the proconsul saw what had happened, he believed, for he was astonished at the teaching about the Lord.

John 8: 51-59

And the Lord said: “Very truly, I tell you, whoever keeps my word will never see death.” The Jews said to him, “Now we know that you have a demon. Abraham died, and so did the prophets; yet you say, ‘Whoever keeps my word will never taste death.’ Are you greater than our father Abraham, who died? The prophets also died. Who do you claim to be?” Jesus answered, “If I glorify myself, my glory is nothing. It is my Father who glorifies me, he of whom you say, ‘He is our God,’ though you do not know him. But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word. Your ancestor Abraham rejoiced that he would see my day; he saw it and was glad.” Then the Jews said to him, “You are not yet fifty years old, and have you seen Abraham?” Jesus said to them, “Very truly, I tell you, before Abraham was, I am.” So they picked up stones to throw at him, but Jesus hid himself and went out of the temple.

Meditation

But I know him; if I would say that I do not know him, I would be a liar like you. But I do know him and I keep his word.

In disputes with the Jews Jesus is firm and confident. He doesn't succumb to temptations to turn to argumentum ad hominem (arguments 'to the person') or insult in return. He is steadfast in His identity as the Son, confident in His message, He neither doubts nor reacts to provocations.

The subject of this controversy is fundamental: who is He? What is the value of His word? What should those present there hear, even when in danger of stoning? Such a confidence can only be envied, because usually we need so little to doubt or be filled with anxiety. The resistance of some people pushes us to be protective. Or we lock ourselves in a safe place for us, where there are those whose way of thinking resembles ours. Or we respond with rigidity, which then turns into a stony reaction. In this way we forget that our identity of sons and daughters in particular and Christians in general is given to us: we can't take credit for it. This identity matures as we unite with the Father, live by the words of the Son, and trust in the wise guidance of the Spirit. We don't have to fight against others to define our own identity. On the contrary, it helps us to be confident in case of a confrontation. We don't need to invent new and complex words to describe the person in front of us. We should only accept the words of Christ and follow them with all humility. There is no need to attack, insult or stone others. The only thing we need is to be ready to accept them and not allow God's love to dry up to the extent of the human love. This is the way not to condemn, as

the opponents of Jesus were doing, whom He exposes: you say, *'He is our God,' though you do not know him*. It would also be a great defeat for us to always say: *He is our God*, and to discover that we don't know Him.

O, Lord, help us to trust Your Word more today and strengthen our identity to bear witness of Your love in the world.

June 2

Wednesday

Acts 13: 13-24

John 6: 5-14

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 13: 13-24

Then Paul and his companions set sail from Paphos and came to Perga in Pamphylia. John, however, left them and returned to Jerusalem; but they went on from Perga and came to Antioch in Pisidia. And on the sabbath day they went into the synagogue and sat down. After the reading of the law and the prophets, the officials of the synagogue sent them a message, saying, “Brothers, if you have any word of exhortation for the people, give it.” So Paul stood up and with a gesture began to speak:

“You Israelites, and others who fear God, listen. The God of this people Israel chose our ancestors and made the people great during their stay in the land of Egypt, and with uplifted arm he led them out of it. For about forty years he put up with them in the wilderness. After he had destroyed seven nations in the land of Canaan, he gave them their land as an inheritance for about four hundred fifty years. After that he gave them judges until the time of the prophet Samuel. Then they asked for a king; and God gave them Saul son of Kish, a man of the tribe of Benjamin, who reigned for forty years. When he had removed him, he made David their king.

In his testimony about him he said, 'I have found David, son of Jesse, to be a man after my heart, who will carry out all my wishes.' Of this man's posterity God has brought to Israel a Savior, Jesus, as he promised; before his coming John had already proclaimed a baptism of repentance to all the people of Israel.

John 6: 5-14

When he looked up and saw a large crowd coming toward him, Jesus said to Philip, "Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat?" He said this to test him, for he himself knew what he was going to do. Philip answered him, "Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little." One of his disciples, Andrew, Simon Peter's brother, said to him, "There is a boy here who has five barley loaves and two fish. But what are they among so many people?" Jesus said, "Make the people sit down." Now there was a great deal of grass in the place; so they sat down, about five thousand in all. Then Jesus took the loaves, and when he had given thanks, he distributed them to those who were seated; so also the fish, as much as they wanted. When they were satisfied, he told his disciples, "Gather up the fragments left over, so that nothing may be lost." So they gathered them up, and from the fragments of the five barley loaves, left by those who had eaten, they filled twelve baskets. When the people saw the sign that he had done, they began to say, "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world."

Meditation

Today the Word of God reminds us how Jesus multiplies the loaves to feed the people who have approached Him. God knows the needs of His children. He knows what their souls and bodies need. Besides spiritual food, God also provides physical food.

Where are we to buy bread for these people to eat? From Philip's answer: *Six months' wages would not buy enough bread for each of them to get a little* a conclusion can be drawn that it is impossible to buy enough bread to feed those people. Andrew's standpoint is different: he realizes that five loaves and two fish will not be enough *for so many people*, but entrusts Jesus with this. Probably, apostle Andrew thought that Christ would give this food to the weakest, who were absolutely exhausted. But the Lord wants to feed all those who have come to Him. He knows that everybody needs His food.

The boy with five loaves and two fish gave everything he had, keeping nothing for himself. As the result, not only he but five thousand people were fed. Jesus does not create food from scratch, it does not fall from the heaven as manna. God multiplies what has been given to Him, shared with Him. Everybody was fed, and twelve baskets were left. God is generous, His goods are never-ending for us. Maybe, we need to give Him what we have, not to leave anything for ourselves, to entrust Him with what, as we think, belongs only to us. Then the Lord will give us and people around us what we need.

In these joint meals one may trace the prototype of the Eucharist. *Taking the five loaves and the two fish, he looked up to heaven, and blessed and broke the loaves, and gave them to his disciples to set before the people* (Mark 6:41). After everyone was fed Jesus ordered His disciples to gather up the fragments left over, *so that nothing may be lost*. The food provided by God cannot be lost, cannot be neglected. Only the food given by the Lord can feed us, sate our physical and spiritual hunger, and refresh us.

June 3

Thursday

**The Holy Rulers Constantine
and Helen**

Acts 14: 20-27

John 9: 39-10: 9

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Acts 14: 20-27

But when the disciples surrounded him, he got up and went into the city. The next day he went on with Barnabas to Derbe.

After they had proclaimed the good news to that city and had made many disciples, they returned to Lystra, then on to Iconium and Antioch. There they strengthened the souls of the disciples and encouraged them to continue in the faith, saying, "It is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God." And after they had appointed elders for them in each church, with prayer and fasting they entrusted them to the Lord in whom they had come to believe.

Then they passed through Pisidia and came to Pamphylia. When they had spoken the word in Perga, they went down to Attalia. From there they sailed back to Antioch, where they had been commended to the grace of God for the work that they had

completed. When they arrived, they called the church together and related all that God had done with them, and how he had opened a door of faith for the Gentiles.

John 9: 39-10: 9

Jesus said, "I came into this world for judgment so that those who do not see may see, and those who do see may become blind." Some of the Pharisees near him heard this and said to him, "Surely we are not blind, are we?" Jesus said to them, "If you were blind, you would not have sin. But now that you say, 'We see,' your sin remains.

"Very truly, I tell you, anyone who does not enter the sheepfold by the gate but climbs in by another way is a thief and a bandit. The one who enters by the gate is the shepherd of the sheep. The gatekeeper opens the gate for him, and the sheep hear his voice. He calls his own sheep by name and leads them out. When he has brought out all his own, he goes ahead of them, and the sheep follow him because they know his voice. They will not follow a stranger, but they will run from him because they do not know the voice of strangers." Jesus used this figure of speech with them, but they did not understand what he was saying to them.

So again Jesus said to them, "Very truly, I tell you, I am the gate for the sheep. All who came before me are thieves and bandits; but the sheep did not listen to them. I am the gate. Whoever enters by me will be saved, and will come in and go out and find pasture."

Meditation

The Acts of the Apostles tell us of st. Paul who together with Barnabas on their way home visit the newly formed communities. The duration of community existence depends on the awareness of the high price of the kingdom of God – to enter it, you must overcome all sorts of obstacles. This duration also depends on the leaders, who believe in the Lord and entrust themselves to Him. Evangelizers have to move on, and the Gospel must be constantly proclaimed by new evangelizers and pastors. This concern for the future of the community should never diminish in the Church. The Church is missionary in its nature, so its essence is to spread the Gospel to all nations.

The way back was outlined by the previous work of the apostle. In the end, he sums up the satisfactory results of the generous fruits of their missions, especially by claiming that God opened a door of faith to the Gentiles. This is a mystery hidden in centuries. The mystery touched by eternity. It was foreseen by the prophets, starting from Abraham, in whose descendants all nations would be blessed. Now this mystery is revealed and becomes clear, despite all the adventures that happened along the way.

All this gives us a new image of God and a new image of humanity. God is truly the Father of all, and we are truly brothers, without any division into races, cultures and religions. You no longer have to be a Jew to become a Christian. Every culture has the right to remain itself and be imbued with faith, because salvation comes from faith.

Let us ask the Lord of grace to always be missionaries of the Gospel, not to be afraid to bear witness of Christ to all whom we meet. The world needs witnesses more than teachers, it needs to see God's love in action, it needs to see brotherly love. This is what it means to live as true Christians, to live the life of the Lord, risen and present among us.

June 4

Friday

Acts 15: 5-34

John 10: 17-28

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Acts 15: 5-34

But some believers who belonged to the sect of the Pharisees stood up and said, “It is necessary for them to be circumcised and ordered to keep the law of Moses.”

The apostles and the elders met together to consider this matter. After there had been much debate, Peter stood up and said to them, “My brothers, you know that in the early days God made a choice among you, that I should be the one through whom the Gentiles would hear the message of the good news and become believers. And God, who knows the human heart, testified to them by giving them the Holy Spirit, just as he did to us; and in cleansing their hearts by faith he has made no distinction between them and us. Now therefore why are you putting God to the test by placing on the neck of the disciples a yoke that neither our ancestors nor we have been able to bear? On the contrary, we believe that we will be saved through the grace of the Lord Jesus, just as they will.”

The whole assembly kept silence, and listened to Barnabas and Paul as they told of all the signs and wonders that God had done through

them among the Gentiles. After they finished speaking, James replied, “My brothers, listen to me. Simeon has related how God first looked favorably on the Gentiles, to take from among them a people for his name. This agrees with the words of the prophets, as it is written, ‘After this I will return, and I will rebuild the dwelling of David, which has fallen; from its ruins I will rebuild it, and I will set it up, so that all other peoples may seek the Lord—even all the Gentiles over whom my name has been called. Thus says the Lord, who has been making these things known from long ago.’

Therefore I have reached the decision that we should not trouble those Gentiles who are turning to God, but we should write to them to abstain only from things polluted by idols and from fornication and from whatever has been strangled and from blood. For in every city, for generations past, Moses has had those who proclaim him, for he has been read aloud every sabbath in the synagogues.”

Then the apostles and the elders, with the consent of the whole church, decided to choose men from among their members and to send them to Antioch with Paul and Barnabas. They sent Judas called Barsabbas, and Silas, leaders among the brothers, with the following letter: “The brothers, both the apostles and the elders, to the believers of Gentile origin in Antioch and Syria and Cilicia, greetings. Since we have heard that certain persons who have gone out from us, though with no instructions from us, have said things to disturb you and have unsettled your minds, we have decided unanimously to choose representatives and send them to you, along with our beloved Barnabas and Paul, who have risked their lives for the sake of our Lord Jesus Christ. We have therefore sent

Judas and Silas, who themselves will tell you the same things by word of mouth. For it has seemed good to the Holy Spirit and to us to impose on you no further burden than these essentials: that you abstain from what has been sacrificed to idols and from blood and from what is strangled and from fornication. If you keep yourselves from these, you will do well. Farewell.”

So they were sent off and went down to Antioch. When they gathered the congregation together, they delivered the letter. When its members read it, they rejoiced at the exhortation. Judas and Silas, who were themselves prophets, said much to encourage and strengthen the believers. After they had been there for some time, they were sent off in peace by the believers to those who had sent them. But it seemed good to Silas to remain there.

John 10: 17-28

And the Lord said: "For this reason the Father loves me, because I lay down my life in order to take it up again. No one takes it from me, but I lay it down of my own accord. I have power to lay it down, and I have power to take it up again. I have received this command from my Father.”

Again the Jews were divided because of these words. Many of them were saying, “He has a demon and is out of his mind. Why listen to him?” Others were saying, “These are not the words of one who has a demon. Can a demon open the eyes of the blind?”

At that time the festival of the Dedication took place in Jerusalem. It was winter, and Jesus was walking in the temple, in the portico of

Solomon. So the Jews gathered around him and said to him, "How long will you keep us in suspense? If you are the Messiah, tell us plainly." Jesus answered, "I have told you, and you do not believe. The works that I do in my Father's name testify to me; but you do not believe, because you do not belong to my sheep. My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand."

Meditation

Why did they claim that Jesus had a demon? Can a person having a demon heal people, cast out demons and bring dead people back to life? Only God can do this, the life and health of humans are all in His power. A real person with a demon, who has gone mad, cannot take care of himself, let alone about the people around him.

Can a person with a demon walk on the water, calm down a storm, multiply bread and change water into wine? Who can all creations be subordinated and obedient to? Only to God. A person having a demon will not feed the hungry and will not calm down the scared.

Can a person having a demon know the Law and the Prophets perfectly well, interpret them truthfully and apply them in the way for no scribe or teacher of the people to ever trap him?

Thus, a logical conclusion is that Jesus is God, the Son of God, since what He does no person can do. This conclusion helps us answer other complicated questions the prosecutors of Jesus were faced with. Can Jesus forgive people's sins? Can He know opinions of people, see their misfaith and hypocrisy? Are the words of Jesus

true? Many Judeans could not accept those words, their minds could not accept them. And no wonder, since Jesus speaks about spiritual things which cannot be checked or proven. It is impossible to come to understand God's truth and wisdom through human effort. That is the choice: either you trust, believe, or you reject and make up absurd things, call the holy the sinful, the Creator of common sense – a person having a demon.

Can one kill God? Can Jesus die? How can a creation destroy its Creator? There must be His voluntary consent thereto. Jesus Himself sacrifices His life for sins. Nobody can take His life, only Jesus Himself has the power of giving it and taking it back. That is the will of the Father: to sacrifice the Son to save many sons and daughters. To give away the Holy to acquire the sinners, to clean and sanctify them. Jesus undertakes voluntary sufferings to reduce our sufferings, He dies to give life back to us.

June 5

Saturday

Acts 15: 35-41

John 10: 27-38

- [Reading](#)
- [Meditation](#)
- [Prayer](#)
- [Contemplation](#)

Acts 15: 35-41

But Paul and Barnabas remained in Antioch, and there, with many others, they taught and proclaimed the word of the Lord.

After some days Paul said to Barnabas, "Come, let us return and visit the believers in every city where we proclaimed the word of the Lord and see how they are doing." Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work. The disagreement became so sharp that they parted company; Barnabas took Mark with him and sailed away to Cyprus. But Paul chose Silas and set out, the believers commending him to the grace of the Lord. He went through Syria and Cilicia, strengthening the churches.

John 10: 27-38

And the Lord said: "My sheep hear my voice. I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they will never perish. No one will snatch them out of my hand. What my Father has given me

is greater than all else, and no one can snatch it out of the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."

The Jews took up stones again to stone him. Jesus replied, "I have shown you many good works from the Father. For which of these are you going to stone me?" The Jews answered, "It is not for a good work that we are going to stone you, but for blasphemy, because you, though only a human being, are making yourself God." Jesus answered, "Is it not written in your law, 'I said, you are gods'? If those to whom the word of God came were called 'gods'—and the scripture cannot be annulled— can you say that the one whom the Father has sanctified and sent into the world is blaspheming because I said, 'I am God's Son'? If I am not doing the works of my Father, then do not believe me. But if I do them, even though you do not believe me, believe the works, so that you may know and understand that the Father is in me and I am in the Father."

Meditation

Barnabas wanted to take with them John called Mark. But Paul decided not to take with them one who had deserted them in Pamphylia and had not accompanied them in the work.

The Acts of the Apostles describe a fragment of a quarrel between two great preachers over the third one. As we can see, not everything went smoothly and easily in the Church then, not everything is smooth now.

Paul the apostle wrote many epistles that we read to this day, led many Gentiles and Jews to Christianity, was repeatedly imprisoned,

and even killed for Christ. Due to his leadership character, he not only performed great missionary feats, but also caused conflicts.

For a long time, the first Christian community could not fully accept him. He was feared as the former most dangerous persecutor. But he saw the day when people began to believe him, and he did so much for the Church that the book of Acts became almost his biography.

What was wrong with Mark? We do not know, we only see that he left the mission team halfway because of his weakness. Paul, a strong and determined leader, could not understand weaknesses of others.

Mark, according to some accounts, is considered the author of the first written Gospel. He who has been rejected by one of the greatest apostles, who has been declared unworthy, writes one of the most valuable books for the Church.

I am also often tempted to identify people by their victories and defeats, but behind a person's experience and past, one must see a person. I am not happy when someone clings to me labels of my past defeats, devalues my efforts and rejects my help and initiative.

Now we are not judging Paul for his assessment of Mark. Now we look at ourselves and our experience of cooperation. We look at the experience of the Church, which is the mother of the strong and the weak, the successful and the failed, leaders and simple performers. Jesus gave everyone the best place and role for them. And it is important not to devalue a person because of his/her defeat.

Perhaps it was thanks to Barnabas that Mark did not despair of his calling as an apostle. And it may be thanks to him, this merciful friend of the weak (who once also trusted Paul, whom others did not trust), that we read the Gospel of Mark, so easily written for the reader.

Later Paul met with Mark. When everyone had left him, he wrote to Timothy: *Only Luke is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful in my ministry* (2 Timothy 4:11).

Therefore, the one who was once not worthy of service is now becoming worthy again in the eyes of Paul. Lord, teach me to appreciate everyone I meet.

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