Study Notes for the Sunday Mass Published by Christians for Christ Ministries. We are a non-denominational Christian ministry that seeks to encourage and facilitate Christians in studying the Holy Scriptures. **"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus."** 1 Timothy 2:5

Sunday Mass Study Notes for Sunday, 08-05-2018



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes. This week we open with a reading from Exodus, where God performed a miracle to feed the multitude of Hebrew people who had just been delivered from slavery in Egypt. We then move to the letter that Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians, where he describes what being a Christian looks like, contrasting new life in Christ to the old way of life in darkness. Finally, we conclude with Jesus' declaration that he is bread from heaven, harkening back to the manna that was described in the first reading from Exodus.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Exodus. The Hebrew people had just been delivered from the captivity of the Egyptians. God raised up Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. As we will see, even though God performed many miraculous signs and provisions in this first phase of the Exodus the people quickly complained against Him and wanted to return to their captivity. As you read, ask yourself in what ways you too find it easy to complain about God's ways and would wish to return to captivity's predictability.

First Reading:

> *Exodus 16:1-15 NAS95 1 Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the*

> *sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 "On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?" 8 Moses said, "This will happen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD." 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.'" 10 It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" 13 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.*

The Hebrew people were in an interesting transition All of their lives, they had been slaves. Now slavery is not desirable in any context, but it is predictable and structured. You don't have to make any decisions, everything is decided for you. In the midst of the oppression, though, your basic needs are taken care of. While it was not luxurious living, the Hebrew slaves had a sense of security that was no longer available to them in their new-found freedom. Instead of looking at all that God had done to deliver them from their oppression and trust Him for their daunting future, they chose to rehearse the "good" points of their slavery (the security of food and shelter) and accused God of not caring about them.

This wasn't an isolated instance of grumbling, rather the text says, "The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (v. 2). In spite of their hard hearts, God heard the people and answered by telling Moses that He would "rain bread from heaven for you" even in the case when they did not obey Him (v. 4), which He knew they wouldn't. Moses explained to them that their complaints weren't against him but against God (v. 8). God made a special provision to provide for the sabbath by making the manna quantitatively different (a double

portion) on the day before as well as qualitatively different – it would not spoil during the sabbath rest day. God then announced the miracle to Moses through the appearance of the Shekinah glory which the people saw (v. 10). In the meantime, in the evening before the raining of the manna from the sky began, God sent quail to the people (v. 13). The text concluded with the people seeing the manna and not recognizing what it was until Moses explained it to them (v. 15). The word "manna" in Hebrew means "what is it." As you can imagine, this was an extraordinary way for God to provide for His people. God seems to work in very unexpected ways.

There are many spiritual parallels in this reading between the provision of God through the manna and the person and work of Jesus Christ who, as we will see in the Gospel reading, called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35). In spite of the fact that the people grumbled against God He still provided food for them. The parallel in the New Testament is that in spite of the fact that most of the people didn't accept Jesus as their Messiah, God still provided salvation through Him. The manna was a very unique provision that was done only by God and could not come about by any natural means. In the same way, Jesus was God's supernatural provision and also did not come about by natural means but was instead born through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Ephesians and the context is Paul's teaching on the spiritual unity of believers in the church and the unique calling to which God calls His people to walk together in a new way outside of sensual and greedy practices.

Second Reading:

> *Ephesians 4:17-24 NAS95 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.*

Paul typified the Gentiles as unbelievers who "walk[ed] in the futility of their mind[s], being darkened in their understanding" of the true salvation that comes only from God (v. 17). Their behavior is typical of the qualities displayed in the unbelieving world, and even among the grumbling Hebrews about whom we read in the first reading. In contrast, believers are called to set aside their former practices and walk in the newness of life, being renewed in their spirits and to put on the "new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (v. 24). Like the manna in the desert on the six day which was qualitatively different, believers

are also called to be different from unbelievers who by their nature embrace ungodly behaviors because of the spiritual darkness that reigns in their hearts. As believers in Jesus, we now have a new nature in us. In order to understand our new nature, we must learn the truth about our identity in Christ, which Paul says begins when our minds are renewed. This renewing of our minds is why Bible study, prayer and being with other believers is so important for our growth in the Christian life. These practices help us to begin to see things as God sees them and then our lives become transformed as we let His ways be our ways (Romans 12:1-3).

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is from John 6 where Jesus reveals to the people the parallel between God's provision of the manna in the desert and to Himself as the "bread of life" that provides eternal life through faith in Him. Knowing what happened in the story before we pick up the reading will be helpful. The immediate context of today's reading is just after the multiplying of the loaves and fishes in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15). Afterwards Jesus fled from there because He sensed that the people were going to take Him by force to make Him their king (v. 15). Jesus, though, did not leave the region with the disciples on their boat, but he nonetheless showed up on the other side with them. This is why they ask Him when he got there and explains why they are confused in today's reading (v. 25). It was during this time that a storm arose and the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water (v. 19). Jesus got into the boat which was then immediately at the opposite shore (v. 21). In this instance, the text says that Jesus wasn't in the boat and never mentioned whether or not He calmed the sea (refer to Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25, and Matthew 8:23-27). But from these other references, we know that Jesus was able to do miraculous things, which was part of Him showing His legitimate right to claim Himself as the Messiah.

Gospel Reading:

> *John 6:24-35 NAS95 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" 26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." 30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness; as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."*

Before we study the text, note that Jesus' point in this particular teaching wasn't whether or not He is spiritually present in the elements of communion. The main point of Jesus' teaching is that belief in Him is the only way to obtain eternal life through the Father God. Even though some of the people were familiar with Jesus, this shouldn't have stopped them from seeing the miraculous signs that He was doing and how His work confirmed the teaching of the Old Testament (John 6:45).

The reading is the third of many misunderstandings that the people had about Jesus and the nature of the promised Messiah. In each case Jesus uses a common symbol to describe a spiritual reality. The first time this happened was back in Chapter 3 during His discussion with Nicodemus who misunderstood Jesus' reference to spiritual birth. Jesus explained the need to be born again or from above (John 3:3). The second case was Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman where Jesus equated trusting Him with "living water" that would satisfy the unquenchable thirst of the human soul (John 4:6-29). The symbolism that Jesus was using here with the Samaritan woman and the water was an illustration of the eternal life that can only come through faith in Him. Like Nicodemus (and to the Jews in today's reading), this connection between a concrete substance (birth, bread, water) and a spiritual reality wasn't obvious to the woman because she asked him to give her the water so she wouldn't have to keep coming to the well (John 4:15). Jesus gave a clue to His disciples about what was to come shortly after this interaction when they urged Him to eat something (John 4:31). Jesus answered them by saying, "I have food to eat that you do not know about," and "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:32, 34).This is very similar to what happened in the story today but instead of water Jesus used the symbolism of bread. This opens the next chapter in which Jesus feeds the people with physical food to provide for their temporal needs but unveils their greater need of eternal life through faith in God's only spiritual provision: Jesus, the heavenly manna.

Paul sheds light on these allusions from Israel's past for those of us who are reading this as Gentiles, without the history of the Jewish people as our backdrop. He gave the following explanation about the water, manna, and the people's unbelief in Exodus about which we read in the first reading:

> *1 Corinthians 10:1-5 NAS95 1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless, with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.*

Paul wanted New Testament believers to understand the spiritual heritage and to learn from the mistakes that led to disbelief and rejection of God's provision for their lives. Therefore, it is important to understand this passage in light of the broader context of Jewish history. Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah, God's special and chosen servant to deliver people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). What they expected of the Messiah and what Jesus portrayed were two very different things. The people had a hard time accepting that God's unexpected ways (faith in the suffering servant as explained in Isaiah 53) was better than their visions of Messiah (a political ruler

who would take care of their physical and material needs).

In today's story, people from among the five thousand whom Jesus fed earlier were searching for him (v. 24) Their reaction to finding Jesus miraculously on the other side of the lake was not what we would expect. They did not ask Him **how** He got there but rather **when** He got there, trying to piece together a plausible explanation (v. 25). Jesus didn't bother to answer their impertinent question, but rather cut to the heart of the matter of their deep spiritual need. They were overcome by their desire for physical bread, but Jesus saw their more critical need, spiritual food that would lead to eternal restoration and life. They followed Jesus there because they desired to eat their fill of the bread that He gave them last time, so Jesus explained to them that their physical need for bread was minor compared to their need for spiritual restoration with their Heavenly Father that came only from God. Jesus told them that although they saw the signs He did they still didn't believe in Him as the Messiah from God, but rather approached Him as their physical provider, a sort of genie on demand (v. 26). Remember that Jesus had to flee from them right after the feeding of the five thousand because He knew that they were going to try and make Him their civil King because they saw Him as their provider. Instead of going along with their folly, Jesus instead told them, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you" (v. 27).

Looking back to the manna in the desert, had the people not been so hard hearted they could have better understood God's provision. In the case of the manna it was collected for the first five days of the week and went bad overnight. But on the sixth day God provided a double amount of a special type which was preserved for a two-day period in order to provide for a sabbath rest day. In the spiritual sense Jesus is our special manna, the one who provides our eternal Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4). The people in this story then bullheadedly asked Jesus for another sign, an attitude about which Jesus said later, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39). Jesus answered their request for a sign with an explanation of how God's provision of manna was similar to the spiritual nourishment that He desired to give them, if they would ask God to change their hearts so they could listen and receive God's provision to them through Christ as Messiah. We will see next week in verse 44 that Jesus continues to explain the way to God through Him by saying, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." Jesus addresses their need for restoration in their relationship with the Father by referring back to Israel's history and said, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat" (v. 31).

The people responded to Jesus' illustration of Himself as their spiritual bread in a similar way as did the Samaritan woman saying, "Lord, always give us this bread." Jesus answered them by using language which included the information about His interaction with the Samaritan woman and the sign of the living water. This he most likely did for the benefit of His disciples who had still not understood the sign of the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 8:17 – 21). Jesus used an "I am" statement which strongly indicated His divinity, saying "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst" (v. 34). Jesus was the double provision of the special manna that didn't perish on the sixth day that nourished the people into their Sabbath

rest. The work of God is not "works", for Jesus clarified this in verse 29: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Jesus explained that the way to God was uniquely through faith in Him.

We will see this claim better next week as we study the continuation of Jesus' teaching on this matter where Jesus said, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes** in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (v. 40). The heart of the matter was **belief** in Jesus as the one and only Son of the Father, the only One through Whom came eternal life. Though the people sought physical bread to satisfy their physical needs, Jesus cut to their greater need of spiritual healing which came only through belief in Him as the only way to God.

What does this mean for our lives? The main point of the reading was Jesus' profound statement that belief in Him as a type of spiritual manna was the only means of finding peace and eternal life with God. Unlike Nicodemus who seemingly believed Jesus later in his life (John 19:39), and the Samaritan woman who believed in Jesus immediately after listening to Him, many of the people in this story didn't believe and separated themselves from Him. This is evident in the infamous John 6-6-6- verse: "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." After this statement Saint Peter boldly identified Jesus as the Christ, saying, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68c – 69).

To whom will you go? Will you seek eternal life through the machinations of being a good person and observing religious activities? Will you be like the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus who surrendered their lives to the person of Jesus Christ, or will you respond like many in the crowd that separated themselves from Jesus because their Messiah didn't measure up to their expectations? Later in this discourse Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). May we be convinced from this passage to seek eternal life through faith in the One and Only means, Jesus Christ.

Reflection Questions

1. What parallels do you see between the people of our day who want God on their own terms and the hard-hearted people of Israel in the Old and New Testament readings? What does the Ephesian's passage say about this way of thinking?

2. How can you be part of bringing a message of hope and light to people who are approaching God with an expectation of God being a genie on demand (and often being disillusioned with God's unexpected ways of interacting with them)? Are there areas of your own life that you need to work through disillusionment with the Lord's unexpected ways so that you can be freed up to minister to

others authentically in their own struggles with surrendering to God?

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Mass Study Notes for Sunday 8-2-2015



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for **8-2-2015**. This week we open with a reading from Exodus, where God performed a miracle to feed the multitude of Hebrew people who had just been delivered from slavery in Egypt. We then move to the letter that Saint Paul wrote to the Ephesians, where he describes what being a Christian looks like, contrasting new life in Christ to the old way of life in darkness. Finally we conclude with Jesus' declaration that he is bread from heaven, harkening back to the manna that was described in the first reading from Exodus.

Introduction to the First Reading:

The first reading is from Exodus. The Hebrew people had just been delivered from the captivity of the Egyptians. God raised up Moses to lead His people out of Egypt. As we will see, even though God performed many miraculous signs and provisions in this first phase of the Exodus the people quickly complained against Him and wanted to return to their captivity. As you read, ask yourself in what ways you too find it easy to complain about God's ways and would wish to return to captivity's

predictability.

First Reading:

Exodus 16:1-15 NAS95 1 Then they set out from Elim, and all the congregation of the sons of Israel came to the wilderness of Sin, which is between Elim and Sinai, on the fifteenth day of the second month after their departure from the land of Egypt. 2 The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness. 3 The sons of Israel said to them, "Would that we had died by the LORD'S hand in the land of Egypt, when we sat by the pots of meat, when we ate bread to the full; for you have brought us out into this wilderness to kill this whole assembly with hunger." 4 Then the LORD said to Moses, "Behold, I will rain bread from heaven for you; and the people shall go out and gather a day's portion every day, that I may test them, whether or not they will walk in My instruction. 5 "On the sixth day, when they prepare what they bring in, it will be twice as much as they gather daily." 6 So Moses and Aaron said to all the sons of Israel, "At evening you will know that the LORD has brought you out of the land of Egypt; 7 and in the morning you will see the glory of the LORD, for He hears your grumblings against the LORD; and what are we, that you grumble against us?" 8 Moses said, "This will happen when the LORD gives you meat to eat in the evening, and bread to the full in the morning; for the LORD hears your grumblings which you grumble against Him. And what are we? Your grumblings are not against us but against the LORD." 9 Then Moses said to Aaron, "Say to all the congregation of the sons of Israel, 'Come near before the LORD, for He has heard your grumblings.'" 10 It came about as Aaron spoke to the whole congregation of the sons of Israel, that they looked toward the wilderness, and behold, the glory of the LORD appeared in the cloud. 11 And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 12 "I have heard the grumblings of the sons of Israel; speak to them, saying, 'At twilight you shall eat meat, and in the morning you shall be filled with bread; and you shall know that I am the LORD your God.'" 13 So it came about at evening that the quails came up and covered the camp, and in the morning there was a layer of dew around the camp. 14 When the layer of dew evaporated, behold, on the surface of the wilderness there was a fine flake-like thing, fine as the frost on the ground. 15 When the sons of Israel saw it, they said to one another, "What is it?" For they did not know what it was. And Moses said to them, "It is the bread which the LORD has given you to eat.

The Hebrew people were in an interesting transition All of their lives, they had been slaves. Now slavery is not desirable in any context, but it is predictable and structured. You don't have to make any decisions, everything is decided for you. In the midst of the oppression, though, your basic needs are taken care of. While it was not luxurious living, the Hebrew slaves had a sense of security that was no longer available to them in their new found freedom. Instead of looking at all that God had done to deliver them from their oppression and trust Him for their daunting future, they chose to rehearse the "good" points of their slavery (the security of food and shelter) and accused God of not caring about them.

This wasn't an isolated instance of grumbling, rather the text says, "The whole congregation of the sons of Israel grumbled against Moses and Aaron in the wilderness" (v. 2). In spite of their hard hearts, God heard the people and answered by telling Moses that He would "rain bread from heaven for you" even in the case when they did not obey Him (v. 4), which He knew they wouldn't. Moses explained to them that their complaints weren't against him but against God (v. 8). God made a special provision to provide for the sabbath by making the manna quantitatively different (a double portion) on the day before as well as qualitatively different – it would not spoil during the sabbath rest day. God then announced the miracle to Moses through the appearance of the Shekinah glory which the people saw (v. 10). In the meantime in the evening before the raining of the manna from the sky began, God sent quail to the people (v. 13). The text concluded with the people seeing the manna and not recognizing what it was until Moses explained it to them (v. 15).The word "manna" in Hebrew means "what is it." As you can imagine, this was an extraordinary way for God to provide for His people. God seems to work in very unexpected ways.

There are many spiritual parallels in this reading between the provision of God through the manna and the person and work of Jesus Christ who, as we will see in the Gospel reading, called Himself "the bread of life" (John 6:35). In spite of the fact that the people grumbled against God He still provided food for them. The parallel in the New Testament is that in spite of the fact that most of the people didn't accept Jesus as their Messiah, God still provided salvation through Him. The manna was a very unique provision that was done only by God and could not come about by any natural means. In the same way, Jesus was God's supernatural provision and also did not come about by natural means but was instead born through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Introduction to the Second Reading:

The second reading is from Ephesians and the context is Paul's teaching on the spiritual unity of believers in the church and the unique calling to which God calls His people to walk together in a new way outside of sensual and greedy practices.

Second Reading:

Ephesians 4:17-24 NAS95 17 So this I say, and affirm together with the Lord, that you walk no longer just as the Gentiles also walk, in the futility of their mind, 18 being darkened in their understanding, excluded from the life of God because of the ignorance that is in them, because of the hardness of their heart; 19 and they, having become callous, have given themselves over to sensuality for the practice of every kind of impurity with greediness. 20 But you did not learn Christ in this way, 21 if indeed you have heard Him and have been taught in Him, just as truth is in Jesus, 22 that, in reference to your former manner of life, you lay aside the old self, which is being corrupted in accordance with the lusts of deceit, 23 and that you be renewed in the spirit of your mind, 24 and put on the new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth.

Paul typified the Gentiles as unbelievers who "walk[ed] in the futility of their mind[s], being

darkened in their understanding" of the true salvation that comes only from God (v. 17). Their behavior is typical of the qualities displayed in the unbelieving world, and even among the grumbling Hebrews about whom we read in the first reading. In contrast, believers are called to set aside their former practices and walk in the newness of life, being renewed in their spirits and to put on the "new self, which in the likeness of God has been created in righteousness and holiness of the truth" (v. 24). Like the manna in the desert on the six day which was qualitatively different, believers are also called to be different from unbelievers who by their nature embrace ungodly behaviors because of the spiritual darkness that reigns in their hearts. As believers in Jesus, we now have a new nature in us. In order to understand our new nature, we must learn the truth about our identity in Christ, which Paul says begins when our minds are renewed. This renewing of our minds is why Bible study, prayer and being with other believers is so important for our growth in the Christian life. These practices help us to begin to see things as God sees them and then our lives become transformed as we let His ways be our ways (Romans 12:1-3).

Introduction to the Gospel Reading:

The Gospel reading is from John 6 where Jesus reveals to the people the parallel between God's provision of the manna in the desert and to Himself as the "bread of life" that provides eternal life through faith in Him. Knowing what happened in the story before we pick up the reading will be helpful. The immediate context of today's reading is just after the multiplying of the loaves and fishes in the feeding of the five thousand (John 6:1-15). Afterwards Jesus fled from there because He sensed that the people were going to take Him by force to make Him their king (v. 15). Jesus, though, did not leave the region with the disciples on their boat, but he nonetheless showed up on the other side with them. This is why they ask Him when he got there and explains why they are confused in today's reading (v. 25). It was during this time that a storm arose and the disciples saw Jesus walking on the water (v. 19). Jesus got into the boat which was then immediately at the opposite shore (v. 21). In this instance, the text says that Jesus wasn't in the boat and never mentioned whether or not He calmed the sea (refer to Mark 4:35-41, Luke 8:22-25, and Matthew 8:23-27). But from these other references, we know that Jesus was able to do miraculous things, which was part of Him showing His legitimate right to claim Himself as the Messiah.

Gospel Reading:

John 6:24-35 NAS95 24 So when the crowd saw that Jesus was not there, nor His disciples, they themselves got into the small boats, and came to Capernaum seeking Jesus. 25 When they found Him on the other side of the sea, they said to Him, "Rabbi, when did You get here?" 26 Jesus answered them and said, "Truly, truly, I say to you, you seek Me, not because you saw signs, but because you ate of the loaves and were filled. 27 Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you, for on Him the Father, God, has set His seal." 28 Therefore they said to Him, "What shall we do, so that we may work the works of God?" 29 Jesus answered and said to them, "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." 30 So they said to Him, "What then do You do for a sign, so that we may see, and believe You? What work do You perform? 31 "Our fathers ate the manna in the wilderness;

as it is written, 'HE GAVE THEM BREAD OUT OF HEAVEN TO EAT.'" 32 Jesus then said to them, "Truly, truly, I say to you, it is not Moses who has given you the bread out of heaven, but it is My Father who gives you the true bread out of heaven. 33 "For the bread of God is that which comes down out of heaven, and gives life to the world." 34 Then they said to Him, "Lord, always give us this bread." 35 Jesus said to them, "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst."

Before we study the text we need to make an important statement about beliefs regarding communion. Jesus' point in this particular teaching wasn't whether or not He is spiritually present in the elements of communion. These are matters that we leave to the church to decide as believers in many different Christian denominations believe including not just Catholics but also some Protestant denominations including Lutheran and Episcopal. The main point of Jesus' teaching is that belief in Him is the only way to obtain eternal life through the Father God. Even though some of the people were familiar with Jesus, this shouldn't have stopped them from seeing the miraculous signs that He was doing and how His work confirmed the teaching of the Old Testament (John 6:45).

The reading is the third of many misunderstandings that the people had about Jesus and the nature of the promised Messiah. In each case Jesus uses a common symbol to describe a spiritual reality. The first time this happened was back in Chapter 3 during His discussion with Nicodemus who misunderstood Jesus' reference to spiritual birth. Jesus explained the need to be born again or from above (John 3:3). The second case was Jesus' interaction with a Samaritan woman where Jesus equated trusting Him with "living water" that would satisfy the unquenchable thirst of the human soul (John 4:6-29). The symbolism that Jesus was using here with the Samaritan woman and the water was an illustration of the eternal life that can only come through faith in Him. Like Nicodemus (and to the Jews in today's reading), this connection between a concrete substance (birth, bread, water) and a spiritual reality wasn't obvious to the woman because she asked him to give her the water so she wouldn't have to keep coming to the well (John 4:15). Jesus gave a clue to His disciples about what was to come shortly after this interaction when they urged Him to eat something (John 4:31). Jesus answered them by saying, "I have food to eat that you do not know about," and "My food is to do the will of Him who sent Me and to accomplish His work" (John 4:32, 34).This is very similar to what happened in the story today but instead of water Jesus used the symbolism of bread. This opens the next chapter in which Jesus feeds the people with physical food to provide for their temporal needs but unveils their greater need of eternal life through faith in God's only spiritual provision: Jesus, the heavenly manna.

Paul sheds light on these allusions from Israel's past for those of us who are reading this as Gentiles, without the history of the Jewish people as our backdrop. He gave the following explanation about the water, manna, and the people's unbelief in Exodus about which we read in the first reading:

1 Corinthians 10:1-5 NAS95 1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. 5 Nevertheless,

with most of them God was not well-pleased; for they were laid low in the wilderness.

Paul wanted New Testament believers to understand the spiritual heritage and to learn from the mistakes that led to disbelief and rejection of God's provision for their lives. Therefore, it is important to understand this passage in light of the broader context of Jewish history. Jesus claimed to be the promised Messiah, God's special and chosen servant to deliver people from their sins (Matthew 1:21). What they expected of the Messiah and what Jesus portrayed were two very different things. The people had a hard time accepting that God's unexpected ways (faith in the suffering servant as explained in Isaiah 53) was better than their visions of Messiah (a political ruler who would take care of their physical and material needs).

In today's story, people from among the five thousand whom Jesus fed earlier were searching for him (v. 24) Their reaction to finding Jesus miraculously on the other side of the lake was not what we would expect. They did not ask Him **how** He got there but rather **when** He got there, trying to piece together a plausible explanation (v. 25). Jesus didn't bother to answer their impertinent question, but rather cut to the heart of the matter of their deep spiritual need. They were overcome by their desire for physical bread, but Jesus saw their more critical need, spiritual food that would lead to eternal restoration and life. They followed Jesus there because they desired to eat their fill of the bread that He gave them last time, so Jesus explained to them that their physical need for bread was minor compared to their need for spiritual restoration with their Heavenly Father that came only from God. Jesus told them that although they saw the signs He did they still didn't believe in Him as the Messiah from God, but rather approached Him as their physical provider, a sort of genie on demand (v. 26). Remember that Jesus had to flee from them right after the feeding of the five thousand because He knew that they were going to try and make Him their civil King because they saw Him as their provider. Instead of going along with their folly, Jesus instead told them, "Do not work for the food which perishes, but for the food which endures to eternal life, which the Son of Man will give to you" (v. 27).

Looking back to the manna in the desert, had the people not been so hard hearted they could have better understood God's provision. In the case of the manna it was collected for the first five days of the week and went bad overnight. But on the sixth day God provided a double amount of a special type which was preserved for a two day period in order to provide for a sabbath rest day. In the spiritual sense Jesus is our special manna, the one who provides our eternal Sabbath rest (Hebrews 4). The people in this story then bullheadedly asked Jesus for another sign, an attitude about which Jesus said later, "An evil and adulterous generation craves for a sign; and yet no sign will be given to it but the sign of Jonah the prophet" (Matthew 12:39). Jesus answered their request for a sign with an explanation of how God's provision of manna was similar to the spiritual nourishment that He desired to give them, if they would ask God to change their hearts so they could listen and receive God's provision to them through Christ as Messiah. We will see next week in verse 44 that Jesus continues to explain the way to God through Him by saying, "No one can come to Me unless the Father who sent Me draws him; and I will raise him up on the last day." Jesus addresses their need for restoration in their relationship with the Father by referring back to Israel's history and said, "He gave them bread out of heaven to eat" (v. 31).

The people responded to Jesus' illustration of Himself as their spiritual bread in a similar way as did the Samaritan woman saying, "Lord, always give us this bread." Jesus answered them by using language which included the information about His interaction with the Samaritan woman and the sign of the living water. This he most likely did for the benefit of His disciples who had still not understood the sign of the feeding of the five thousand (Mark 8:17 – 21). Jesus used an "I am" statement which strongly indicated His divinity, saying "I am the bread of life; he who comes to Me will not hunger, and he who believes in Me will never thirst" (v. 34). Jesus was the double provision of the special manna that didn't perish on the sixth day that nourished the people into their Sabbath rest. The work of God is not "works", for Jesus clarified this in verse 29: "This is the work of God, that you believe in Him whom He has sent." Jesus explained that the way to God was uniquely through faith in Him.

We will see this claim better next week as we study the continuation of Jesus' teaching on this matter where Jesus said, "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and **believes** in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (v. 40). The heart of the matter was **belief** in Jesus as the one and only Son of the Father, the only One through Whom came eternal life. Though the people sought physical bread to satisfy their physical needs, Jesus cut to their greater need of spiritual healing which came only through belief in Him as the only way to God.

What does this mean for our lives? The main point of the reading was Jesus' profound statement that belief in Him as a type of spiritual manna was the only means of finding peace and eternal life with God. Unlike Nicodemus who seemingly believed Jesus later in his life (John 19:39), and the Samaritan woman who believed in Jesus immediately after listening to Him, many of the people in this story didn't believe and separated themselves from Him. This is evident in the infamous John 6-6-6- verse: "As a result of this many of His disciples withdrew and were not walking with Him anymore." After this statement Saint Peter boldly identified Jesus as the Christ, saying, "To whom shall we go? You have the words of eternal life. We have believed and have come to know that You are the Holy One of God" (John 6:68c – 69).

To whom will you go? Will you seek eternal life through the machinations of being a good person and observing religious activities? Will you be like the Samaritan woman and Nicodemus who surrendered their lives to the person of Jesus Christ, or will you respond like many in the crowd that separated themselves from Jesus because their Messiah didn't measure up to their expectations? Later in this discourse Jesus said, "It is the Spirit who gives life; the flesh profits nothing; the words that I have spoken to you are spirit and are life" (John 6:63). May we be convinced from this passage to seek eternal life through faith in the One and Only means, Jesus Christ.

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. What parallels do you see between the people of our day who want God on their own terms and the hard-hearted people of Israel in the Old and New Testament readings? What does the Ephesian's passage say about this way of thinking?

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2. How can you be part of bringing a message of hope and light to people who are approaching God with an expectation of God being a genie on demand (and often being disillusioned with God's unexpected ways of interacting with them)? Are there areas of your own life that you need to work through disillusionment with the Lord's unexpected ways so that you can be freed up to minister to others authentically in their own struggles with surrendering to God?

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site:

http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/080215.cfm

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB

Mass Study Notes for Sunday 6-29-2014



Welcome back to the Sunday Mass notes for 6-29-2014. This week we open with a reading from Acts

12 in which Peter was locked in prison by evil King Herod. Then we move to the second reading from Saint Paul's Second Letter to Timothy which is Paul's last written statement to the world just before his martyrdom. We conclude with this week's Gospel lesson in which we will look at Peter's confession of Jesus as the much awaited Messiah. We answer the question, what did Jesus mean when He said, *"you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (Matthew 16:17)?*

The first reading is from Acts 12 and the context is just after the apostles had heard that the Gospel had gone out to the Gentiles and that they also were being saved (Acts 11:1). Barnabus had found Saul (Paul) in his hometown of Tarsus (v. 25) and brought him to Antioch where he spent a year with him there (v. 26). It was in Antioch that Saint Luke reported that the believers were first called "Christians" (v. 25), likely a term of derision given to them by the pagans in the region. At the close of the chapter, God revealed through Agabus that there would be a worldwide famine and subsequently the church in Antioch took up a collection to send to the "brethren living in Judea" (v. 29). From the end of Chapter 12 Peter's ministry faded from view and Paul became the prominent leader of the church whose focus at that point also shifted from the Jews to the Gentiles. Paul later called himself "a prisoner of Christ for the Gentiles" (Ephesians 3:1) while Peter was the one who had been entrusted with the Gospel to the Jews (Galatians 2:8).

> *1 Now about that time Herod the king laid hands on some who belonged to the church in order to mistreat them. 2 And he had James the brother of John put to death with a sword. 3 When he saw that it pleased the Jews, he proceeded to arrest Peter also. Now it was during the days of Unleavened Bread. 4 When he had seized him, he put him in prison, delivering him to four squads of soldiers to guard him, intending after the Passover to bring him out before the people. 5 So Peter was kept in the prison, but prayer for him was being made fervently by the church to God. 6 On the very night when Herod was about to bring him forward, Peter was sleeping between two soldiers, bound with two chains, and guards in front of the door were watching over the prison. 7 And behold, an angel of the Lord suddenly appeared and a light shone in the cell; and he struck Peter's side and woke him up, saying, "Get up quickly." And his chains fell off his hands. 8 And the angel said to him, "Gird yourself and put on your sandals." And he did so. And he said to him, "Wrap your cloak around you and follow me." 9 And he went out and continued to follow, and he did not know that what was being done by the angel was real, but thought he was seeing a vision. 10 When they had passed the first and second guard, they came to the iron gate that leads into the city, which opened for them by itself; and they went out and went along one street, and immediately the angel departed from him. 11 When Peter came to himself, he said, "Now I know for sure that the Lord has sent forth His angel and rescued me from the hand of Herod and from all that the Jewish people were expecting." (Acts 12:1-11)*

The story revealed how God responded to the prayers of the church (v. 5) in a powerful way in order to secure Peter's release from prison. Peter testified that the Lord had sent an angel in order to rescue him from the King who had just killed his friend and fellow disciple James (v. 2). The events of that evening were so mystifying to Peter that he wasn't even sure that they were really happening (v. 9). It was only after Peter had "[come] to himself" (v. 11) that he realized that his release was had really occurred.

This story in Acts gives many reasons to fear God, not man. Hebrews 13:6 reminds us, "The Lord is

my helper; I will not fear; what can man do to me?" When we are in situations where someone in power is misusing their position in order to try to hurt the cause of Christ, we can have confidence to stand up for our beliefs and do the right thing, even if we are punished for it. Peter's life was in danger and God delivered him. And for some reason, while God spared Peter's life at that time, He did not spare James' life. So we don't always know the outcome of our faith, but we do know that God is our helper and we can turn to Him in the midst of our fear and trust Him for the outcome. Ultimately, evil people are not in control. Even their evil is used by God for His redemptive purposes (Romans 8:28-30).

The Book of Acts is a story of transitions. As we close today's reading from Chapter 12 the focus in Acts shifted from Saint Peter to Saint Paul. In the same way that Peter was bold in sharing the Gospel to the Jews, Paul spread the Gospel message to the Gentiles and to the ends of the Roman world. He endured many hardships and as we move to the second reading, we will see the closing chapter of his adventurous life of faith as he prepare for his own transition to eternal life in heaven.

The second reading today is from Paul's Second Letter to Timothy. In this address, Paul recorded one of his last statements to the church before he met his death as a martyr. We have included verses 9 – 16 which were skipped in the reading in order to provide the full context.

> *6 For I am already being poured out as a drink offering, and the time of my departure has come. 7 I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; 8 in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing. 9 Make every effort to come to me soon; 10 for Demas, having loved this present world, has deserted me and gone to Thessalonica; Crescens has gone to Galatia, Titus to Dalmatia. 11 Only Luke is with me. Pick up Mark and bring him with you, for he is useful to me for service. 12 But Tychicus I have sent to Ephesus. 13 When you come bring the cloak which I left at Troas with Carpus, and the books, especially the parchments. 14 Alexander the coppersmith did me much harm; the Lord will repay him according to his deeds. 15 Be on guard against him yourself, for he vigorously opposed our teaching. 16 At my first defense no one supported me, but all deserted me; may it not be counted against them. 17 But the Lord stood with me and strengthened me, so that through me the proclamation might be fully accomplished, and that all the Gentiles might hear; and I was rescued out of the lion's mouth. 18 The Lord will rescue me from every evil deed, and will bring me safely to His heavenly kingdom; to Him be the glory forever and ever. Amen. (2 Timothy 4:6-18)*

Paul alluded to the practice in Jewish Law in which drink offerings were made (Exodus 29:40). The drink offering in the Old Testament was something that pointed to the finished work of Jesus Christ in the New Testament. When we celebrate communion we commemorate Jesus' finished work on the cross for our salvation through the pouring out of His blood for us. Paul used this terminology to say that like Christ he too would soon be offered up to God. Next, Paul asked for provision of some practical things including a cloak and some reading materials (v. 12). He warned his readers of Alexander the coppersmith in order to prevent them from also coming into contact with him (vv. 14 –

15). Sadly, Paul commented that nobody stood by him in his first trial except for the Lord who strengthened him so that he could finish his proclamation of the Gospel to the Gentiles (vv. 16 – 17). He knew that at any instant he could be sent to heaven (v. 18).

When we see the close of Paul's life, it is a good time to reflect on our own lives and the legacy we will leave. Paul was used by God in some amazing ways, but isn't it true that God wants to use all of us for His good work in the world? We may not have a worldwide ministry like Paul, but God wants us to be able to come to the end of our lives and be able to look back and say with Paul, "*I have fought the good fight, I have finished the course, I have kept the faith; in the future there is laid up for me the crown of righteousness, which the Lord, the righteous Judge, will award to me on that day; and not only to me, but also to all who have loved His appearing.*" What does it mean to love or long for his appearing? How might our lives be marked by this value system? What do you need to be doing today and tomorrow so that you can say this at the end of your life?

As we move onto the Gospel lesson let's pause to remember the great sacrifices that Paul made for us as members of his future Gentile church.

The Gospel reading this week is from Matthew 16. The context of the reading is just after Jesus fed the 4,000 alongside the Sea of Galilee (Matthew 15:33-39). Next, He had gone by boat to Magdala (v. 39) and then right before today's reading Jesus explained to His disciples about what had happened regarding the feeding of the two large crowds, first the 5,000 and then the 4,000. After He did this Jesus warned them to beware of "the leaven of the Pharisees" (Matthew 16:11) and then He traveled with them to the region known as Caesarea Philippi. It is in this region that as we will see in today's reading, Peter made his famous confession that Jesus was the Christ, the much awaited Messiah.

> *13 Now when Jesus came into the district of Caesarea Philippi, He was asking His disciples, "Who do people say that the Son of Man is?" 14 And they said, "Some say John the Baptist; and others, Elijah; but still others, Jeremiah, or one of the prophets." 15 He said to them, "But who do you say that I am?" 16 Simon Peter answered, "You are the Christ, the Son of the living God." 17 And Jesus said to him, "Blessed are you, Simon Barjona, because flesh and blood did not reveal this to you, but My Father who is in heaven. 18 I also say to you that you are Peter, and upon this rock I will build My church; and the gates of Hades will not overpower it. 19 I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven; and whatever you bind on earth shall have been bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall have been loosed in heaven." (Matthew 16:13-19)*

Several significant points jump out of the text. First, Peter, the uncontested leader or the disciples, made the marvelous statement through the help of God the Father that Jesus was indeed the Messiah (v. 16). Jesus affirmed his confession and went on to build upon Peter's statement. What did Jesus mean when He told Peter, "upon this rock I will build my church" (v.18b)? Jesus' meaning is clear when we look one level deeper into the plain meaning found in the original language. Peter, whose name in Greek is "Petros", literally means "rock." However, the foundation on which Jesus

spoke about building the church is a different Greek word "petra" which means a mass or rock. In context, what Jesus said was close to this paraphrase: "Simon, I am changing your name to Petros, and upon this petra (foundational mass of rock) I will build my church." Jesus said that He would build His church upon the foundation (petra, meaning mass of rock or many large rocks), which, in context, is Peter's confession that Jesus is the Christ. Peter clarified this meaning in the Book of First Peter. Peter said, "you also, as living stones, are being built up as a spiritual house for a holy priesthood, to offer up spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ" (1 Peter 2:5). Although Peter used the word "lithos" for stone, he stated how the individual stones are built up into a holy priesthood of believers "through Jesus Christ." The church is the collection of spiritual rocks that are built on the "petra" or foundation that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God (Matthew 16:16) through whom is the only way to eternal life (John 14:6).

Saint Paul used a similar analogy in explaining how God empowered him as the leader and builder of the church among the Gentiles (Ephesians 3:1), in the same way that Peter was the builder of the church among the Jews (Galatians 2:8). Paul said, "According to the grace of God which was given to me, like a wise master builder I laid a foundation, and another is building on it. But each man must be careful how he builds on it. For no man can lay a foundation other than the one which is laid, which is Jesus Christ" (1 Corinthians 3:10-11). In Ephesians Paul clarified how Jesus intended the church to interpret this passage by pointing out that our faith has "been built on the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Christ Jesus Himself being the corner stone" (Ephesians 2:20).

Paul used the symbolism of Jesus as the Rock or foundation in First Corinthians:

> *1 For I do not want you to be unaware, brethren, that our fathers were all under the cloud and all passed through the sea; 2 and all were baptized into Moses in the cloud and in the sea; 3 and all ate the same spiritual food; 4 and all drank the same spiritual drink, for they were drinking from a spiritual rock which followed them; and the rock was Christ. (1 Corinthians 10:1-4)*

When Paul said the "they were drinking from the spiritual rock" and "the rock was Christ" (v. 4) both times he used the word "petra." Jesus was the foundation stone, the One Who provided sustenance to the Hebrews escaping from the Pharaoh.

Jesus Himself explained the necessity of a sure foundation in Luke Chapter 6:

> *47 Everyone who comes to Me and hears My words and acts on them, I will show you whom he is like: 48 he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock; and when a flood occurred, the torrent burst against that house and could not shake it, because it had been well built. 49 But the one who has heard and has not acted accordingly, is like a man who built a house on the ground without any foundation; and the torrent burst against it and immediately it collapsed, and the ruin of that house was great. (Luke 6:47-49)*

When Jesus said, "he is like a man building a house, who dug deep and laid a foundation on the rock" (v. 48) the word in the original was "petra" The giant rock that was rolled to seal Jesus' tomb was a

"petra" (Matthew 27:60). Peter **was** one of the foundational stone**s** (the apostles and prophets), but Jesus **is** the Chief Cornerstone, the Foundation of the Church. "For this is the will of My Father, that everyone who beholds the Son and believes in Him will have eternal life, and I Myself will raise him up on the last day" (John 6:40).

Second, Jesus said that He "will give you the keys of the kingdom in heaven, and that whatever he bound on earth would be bound in heaven and whatever was loosed on earth would be loosed in heaven. We previously discussed this in the June 8, 2014 edition of Mass Notes. In summary, we said that the keys of the kingdom is salvation through faith in Jesus Christ. The binding and unbinding of sin is found in the gift of faith (Ephesians 2:8-9) when a person comes to the knowledge of Jesus Christ as their Savior. Peter and the other apostles were being sent out with authority to preach the Gospel (Matthew 28:18-20), which would be the entry point of faith. In a certain sense, they were being commissioned to open the doors of the Kingdom of God to others by their obedience in proclaiming the Good news and making disciples. We then see Peter is Acts 2:14-40 fulfilling this call by preaching a message of repentance and salvation in Jesus Christ. This is in line with Jesus' teaching when He said, "Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on him" (John 3:36). Later, Jesus instructed the group of ten disciples (eleven less Thomas) gathered together in the upper room after His resurrection that anyone who believes in Him through the preaching of the Gospel will be saved. The keys of the Kingdom were being entrusted to this group of men who had been with Jesus in a personal way. They were going to be His hands and feet in the world from now on. And the story of the Gospel continues to penetrate lives because we are all commissioned to be his ambassadors, representing God's love and truth to the world with our lives and our proclamation of the Good news (2 Corinthians 5:20).

Finally, Jesus said, "the gates of Hades will not overpower it" (v. 18c), meaning that all of the evil will not be able to overcome the God-ordained movement of the church. This is an important statement that no matter how awful the world may become, the power of Satan will never destroy God's church. We can rest in the fact that Jesus has overcome the world (John 16:33, 1 Corinthians 15:57) and through Him alone we can find the power to continue His commission of making disciples and teaching (Matthew 28:16-20).

Bottom Line: Questions for Reflection

1. All three passages for this week involve the opposition that Christians have had to face in order to be true to God. In what areas of your life have you faced opposition because of your faith? How can these passages strengthen your faith and give you truth to hold onto in times of opposition?

2. Jesus asked his disciples a very pointed question: "Who do you say that I am?" At some point, each of us has to answer this question. How does Peter's response resonate with you? Is this the foundation you are building your life on? If so, how does your life reflect this? If not, what foundation are you building your life on? Would you like Peter's response to be your response, too? You can pause and ask God to change the direction of your life so that you can build on the Chief

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Cornerstone, Jesus Christ.

Readings for the Week

Note: For a listing of readings for the Roman Catholic Mass visit this web site: http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/062914-day-mass.cfm

First Reading ACTS 12:1-11

Second Reading 2 TM 4:6-8, 17-18 (plus skipped verses)

Gospel Reading MT 16:13-19

Source(s):

Online Scripture verses for most Bible versions can be found at: http://www.biblegateway.com/

Scripture quotations taken from the NASB