

CONSUME A LION



An Examination of the Gospel of Thomas by Andrew Shpagin.

The Gospel of Thomas is an extremely interesting and profound work. It contains keys to understanding not only human relationships, but also many obscure passages in the Bible.

Alas, the worship of God in our time is based on a system of religious rituals, fear and prohibitions.

Religion is associated with asceticism, restrictions, prohibitions, and extreme conservatism. And, of course, also with hypocrisy, since religion makes demands that are impossible to comply with in practice. As we all know, human passions and desires are almost always in conflict with God's requirements. This being the case, it is no wonder that even preachers secretly violate their own prohibitions. This is a path to nowhere.

We believe that the love of God and people should be a lifestyle, and that our passions and desires should serve us. This book is about thinking in a new way and searching for beautiful, logical, albeit non-standard solutions. It was written primarily for the open-minded. It's not about religious doctrine; we are not creating a new religion or sect - there are enough of those already. Our aim is to encourage the reader to search and to think. In other words, we want to ignite interest in objective research and critical thinking. We are open to being persuaded by offers of better ideas and solutions, that is, those that better eliminate contradictions in the inner world of man, in understanding human relations, God, and the Bible.

The text of the Gospel of Thomas rings true even in our time, allowing one to look at familiar things from a different perspective. Writing this book greatly affected our values, lifestyles, and attitudes toward people; it shook us to the core.

We gathered weekly over the course of two years to study the Gospel of Thomas. For us, the issue of canonicity or non-canoncity mattered little, what mattered was the meaning of the text. The thoughts outlined below are a brief summary of what we discussed [1] with friends. So, the views and thoughts expressed here are not all mine - I just put them all together. My authorship of this book is, therefore, very conditional.

The objective of this study is to uncover the meaning of the Gospel of Thomas and present it in the clearest possible manner, without the introduction of complex rules and constructs. This study does not aim to understand the historical context and motives of the people who wrote the text. On that subject there is a wonderful book by prof. Nechipurenko [2], and also one written by Elaine Pagels [9]. Our goal is different - to understand which values of the Gospel of Thomas are applicable to us, modern people.

The Sermon on the Mount (Matt. 5) teaches us not just how to act, but what we should be like. The Gospel of Thomas reveals more on this subject - what we should be, and what the "Kingdom of God in us" means. This is an intuitive code of higher morality. It is intuitive and not based on rules or precepts in the form of "go there; do not go there; do not look; kiss here; do not kiss here"[2] [6]. These are rather ideas that are hard not to fall in love with, if only one would explore them without prejudice.

Studying this text, we were surprised by how relevant it sounded to us, how beautiful the principles embodied in it are. And this is not just a theoretical study, this work greatly influenced

our way of life, and how we think.

Before proceeding to the study of the Gospel of Thomas proper, I would like to acquaint the reader with a couple of important ideas: the Fall, and the husband and wife. We came to the conclusions outlined below through studying the Bible, and prior to studying the Gospel of Thomas.

In detail, the idea of the Fall can be read in Appendix A. In brief - the essence of the Fall is not that Adam and Eve ate some fruit from a tree. The point is the story, described in the Bible, is happening to us, here and now. The Fall is not just the eating of the forbidden fruit. It is eating it at the wrong time, when a person is not ready, when man is in a hurry, and his impatience spoils everything and he misses the target (that is, he sins).

The idea of a husband and wife in every person is described in detail in Appendix B. In brief - in every person, regardless of gender, there are two parts, one can be conditionally called a husband, the other a wife. The inner husband symbolizes the mind, judiciousness, the inner part of the person. The wife represents emotions, external beauty, the outer side of a person, so to speak. This is not obvious; however, such a hypothesis solves many problems of understanding the Bible and in many ways helps to understand human behavior. If this idea seems strange to you, read carefully Appendix B.

Obviously, there is another question to the Gospel of Thomas - who is the author? Why Thomas? When was it written? Did Thomas himself write it? Maybe it's a fake and authorship was attributed to gain respectability? But our interest is in the essence of what was written, rather than on the authority of the person who wrote it. Even if it was written not two thousand, but a hundred years ago, and was written by an anonymous author - we judge in essence the ideas presented, and not the authority of the author. Moreover, Thomas became a symbol of doubt. According to the classical Gospels, he wanted to put his fingers in the wounds of Jesus in order to believe that he was resurrected. Therefore, the very name "Gospel of Thomas" is largely symbolic; it is precisely for those who ask questions, those that are not satisfied with the standard "patches".

Introduction. Secret sayings.

These are the secret sayings which the living Jesus spoke and which Didymos Judas Thomas wrote down. 1. And he said: "Whoever finds the interpretation of these sayings will not experience death."

There are several important keys to understanding the Gospel of Thomas. As we go along, we will look at them one by one. A fundamental tenet common to all the canonical Gospels is that the Kingdom of God is eternity - God is not sometime later, when a person dies, but here and now: "The Kingdom of God is within you". In the Bible, and even more so in the Gospel of Thomas, life and death are rather not physical life and death, but processes that take place in a person's mind, that subsequently only appear in his daily actions. You will find many such examples even in the canonical books of the Bible. We believe that, in essence, man is an eternal

being, but life and existence are different concepts. It is possible to exist, but not to live, having lost hope, joy and the desire to develop. And, on the contrary, finding all this, one can again feel the breath of life.

Although man aspires to eternal life, in reality he has a hard time understanding what this actually means. It is rather a matter of faith, beliefs and personal observations, but we believe that eternity begins not at the moment a person dies physically, but here, on earth, and continues after physical death. This is consistent with what Jesus taught: "The Kingdom of God is within you".

Numerous parables of Jesus (about the mustard seed, the protection of the house, etc.) also indicate that the beginning of eternity is now, and not somewhere and sometime in the future. It is in this context that the words "will not taste death" should be considered; a person, who has embarked on the path of spiritual development on the earthly stage of his existence, will continue to develop even after his physical death.

But in these words there is another, practical meaning. Very often, people who have become Christians lose, after a few years, their keen interest in knowing God, the world and the people around them. Why? They were explained everything, told what was what, presented a vapid, primitive picture that grates with its disharmony, and told: "This is truth, you cannot doubt it." People ate it, and started to engage in ministry and business, having ticked the box "Knowledge of God." And they died. Neither God, nor the Bible, nor the truth was any longer interesting; after all, they reason, very smart people have already told them all they needed to know! The Gospel of Thomas is full of interesting riddles and stunning answers. He who finds the interpretation – will not taste death: means will not be disappointed in his path, will not lose interest in life, in research, in God. This is that fire; that spark, that is stronger than death.

Principles of the search for truth

2. Jesus said, "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."

This verse offers a very interesting method of knowing the truth. Usually truth and knowledge are passed on through training: the teacher teaches his students and those in turn theirs. Students either validate statements themselves, or accept them at face value, due to the perceived authority of their authors. Without belittling the importance of teaching, we must recognize that in the religious approach there is a clear bias towards "trusting authorities, as one would God Himself". In this sense, the scientific approach is much more balanced. The first verse of the Gospel of Thomas directs us to the idea that knowledge comes from enlightenment, which is the result of a persistent search. And a method of verification is proposed: "And he will rule over the All." What does it mean to rule? "It is the glory of God to conceal a thing, but the glory of kings is to search out a matter" (Proverbs 25: 2). Kings are us (our inner man), if we explore God's mysteries. First of all, you need to rule over yourself. It is no secret that to rule over self is one of the most difficult tasks that a person could undertake. Usually a person wants to start with ruling

over others, and even that is wrong. Jesus taught: "Whoever wants to be great among you must be last and be servant of all." This is the method of reign that Jesus proposes. But it will not be possible to rule in this way unless one first conquers himself. Practical examples: the husband in the family attains true leadership, if he does not command and give out instructions, but works, serves, participates in big and small matters, responds easily and even anticipates the requests of the wife, accepting rebukes with a smile, not snarls, behaving in an indulgent manner in all things, and not in self-justification or the desire to escape from the uninteresting part of the work. Then his authority is not questioned, he will be king, although this approach is different from the classical "good management." Actually the same applies to work.

Rule can be called other terms: self-control; self-restraint; power over oneself; when one does what he wants consciously, and not what he suddenly thinks of. The approach to knowledge of truth through search, enlightenment and a check on "reign" differs from both the classical "unconditionally believe the authorities", and the charismatic "God told me, now listen to me." In the first case there is no enlightenment, in the second - there must be a check on the reign first (at least in my life). This approach makes people free, relieves authorities from pressure and at the same time warns against excessively violent fantasies and misconceptions. This does not eliminate the need to learn and listen to the advice of wise people, but transfers them from the category of "lord and authority" to the category of "brother". It is not surprising that the Gospel of Thomas did not become canonical; already from the first verse it undermines the system of continuity and authoritarianism.

Very well the idea of this verse is illustrated by Rudyard Kipling's poem "If" in the translation of M. Lozinsky - "Commandment":

Control yourself among the crowd of the confused
Who are cursing you for the confusion of all.
Believe in yourself in defiance of the universe,
And those of little faith, let go of their sin.
Though the hour has not come, wait, tirelessly,
Let liars lie, do not condescend.
Be able to forgive and do not seem, forgiving,
More generous and wiser than others.
Be able to dream, not becoming a slave of dreaming,
And to think, without deifying your thoughts .
Equally meet with success and outrage,
Not forgetting that their voice is lying.
Stay quiet when your own word
Cripples a rogue to catch fools,
When all life is destroyed and again
You have to recreate everything from the foundations.
Be able to put in a joyful hope,

On the card everything you accumulated with difficulty,
All to lose and to become poor like before
And never regret it.
Be able to force the heart, nerves, body
To serve you when in your chest
For a long time everything is empty, everything burned down
And only Will says: "Go on!"
Remain simple, talking with kings,
Be honest when talking to the crowd.
Be straight and firm with enemies and friends.
Let everyone in the proper hour count with you!
Fill with meaning every instant
Hours and days elusive running -
Then the whole world will you see as your dominion
Then, my son, you will be a Man!

Where is the Kingdom of God?

3. Jesus said, "If those who lead you say to you, 'See, the kingdom is in the sky,' then the birds of the sky will precede you. If they say to you, 'It is in the sea,' then the fish will precede you. Rather, the kingdom is inside of you, and it is outside of you. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty."

This verse is very much in tune with the idea: "The kingdom of God will not come with observable signs. Nor will people say, 'Look, here it is,' or 'There it is.' For, you see, the kingdom of God is within you. "(Luke 17: 20-21). The Gospel of Thomas extends this idea somewhat. First, there are people who will teach in essence that: "The Kingdom of God is where you are not" - that is to say, somewhere in the sky (die – get there, now listen to us and follow us).

What can "in the sea" mean? Usually, the sea means nations. It turns out, saying: "The kingdom of God is in the sea", - seems like a missionary service to all nations. It's all right, but without finding the Kingdom of God in ourselves – this too will not make sense, we will spread not the Kingdom of God, but dungeons for the souls of men, which, alas, is not uncommon. Yes, the "fish" (common people of this world) will precede you. Look at the history of the colonization of America, where it all began with missionary work, and ended with seizure and barbarous extermination. As it were, "fish" are ahead on all fronts - church structures were often used to achieve political goals.

What does "within you and outside of you" mean? If only within - there is a risk of elitism,

superiority over others, pride of the type: I am special, I have within "the Kingdom of God", but you do not. Therefore, "outside of you" is also important. To see the Kingdom of God in everything around: in people, in the structure of the universe, in solving the mysteries of nature. Then it will unfold deeper and fuller. To get rid of "Christian elitism" and start seeing Christ around is very important.

Know yourself

3. When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty.

At first glance, the call to "know yourself" sounds trite, because this call often sounds superficial and it remains unclear what to do.

A call to know oneself implies that in you, in a person, there are some laws that need to be investigated. Moreover, it is not just to study academically and sort out, but "to know", that is, to merge with them and become one. It's not for nothing that the word "know" is often used in a sexual context. There are different approaches to knowing oneself. Some look for supernormal abilities. This is also possible, but the main thing is not to turn it into charlatanry. For us, the method of knowing ourselves through the prism of the commandments of Christ is closer: do not judge, do not covet, love, go through two fields instead of one, be the last and the first at the same time. Applying this to ourselves, we discover, on the one hand, weakness, infirmity and inability, and on the other, God's presence in us.

The Protestant idea of "100% corruption" is alien to us. In man there is darkness and corruption, but at the same time there is a portion of Christ in everyone; one must get to it, awaken it, and light it. It is this idea that is implicit in this verse. The idea of "100%" is good for subordination, and repression, so that, people understanding their low worth, listened to those in positions of authority. Hence the poverty referred to in this verse.

Rest on the seventh day. The old man and the baby

4. Jesus said: "The old man in days will not hesitate to ask a small child seven days old about the place of life, and he will live. For many who are first will become last, and they will become one and the same."

This verse is a very interesting piece of puzzle, in which there are several characters – the "old man" and a "small child of seven days"; the "small child of seven days" turned out to be wiser than the "old man", since the old man asks the child about the place life.

It is very interesting to try to figure all this out. Let's start with the "small child of seven days".

The concept of "seven days" plays an important role in the Bible. How God created nature in six days - is told in the first chapter of Genesis. And the second chapter tells us that on the

seventh day God rested from his labors. But neither in the first nor in the second chapter of the book of Genesis does it mention that man was on the seventh day. Man is spoken of only in the context of the sixth day. Speaking of God, the seventh day is mentioned.

The word "day" should not be taken literally, as our usual 24-hour day. I will not dwell in detail on this right now, since this is the subject of a separate discussion. I want to draw attention to other interesting details.

For a better understanding of this verse, I recommend reading the article "On the Fall", which is in the appendix to this book.

The essence of the Fall is not that Adam disobeyed or violated an order of God by eating the fruit, but that he hastened to do it, that he ate the fruit at the wrong time. Doing even good deeds, but hastily, not at the right time or not being ready, a person can spoil life both for himself and for those around him.

The Fall is closer to the concepts "not timely", or "hastily", than to "disobedience," or "violation." A more complete explanation can be found in the article "On the Fall".

"And the Lord God commanded man, saying," From any tree of the garden you may eat freely, but from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil you shall not eat, for in the day that you eat from it you will surely die. "(Gen 2: 16-17).

The question arises: why, then, having eaten the fruit from the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, Adam did not die the same day, and, judging by what is written in the Bible, lived a long life?

This can be explained if we consider the term 'day' not as 24 hours, but as some stages in the formation of human consciousness.

We will consider the sixth and seventh days as levels of human consciousness:

- The sixth day - this is the level of our human reality with all the problems, difficulties, haste, impatience, lack of restraint, and so on.
- The seventh day - is the level of peace, of true harmony: "And on the seventh day God finished his work that he had done, and he rested on the seventh day from all his work that he had done. So God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on it God rested from all his work that he had done in creation." (Genesis 2: 2-3).

Hence, the death of Adam, who tasted the fruit, means only that he did not attain the seventh day. Having lived for many years, he died in the sixth day, that is, in that level of human consciousness, which is personified by the sixth day (he remained with his difficulties and problems).

By and large, all of humanity lives as it were in the sixth day.

Jesus said, "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest" (Matthew 11:28). The word "rest" is a kind of invitation to the seventh day, an invitation to enter that state of the soul in which a person will be in real joy, peace and harmony.

Observance of the seventh day (Saturday) is very important, for example, for the Jews. On Saturday they do nothing - they rest. For us, the Sabbath has a completely different meaning. We

must strive to ensure that the Sabbath was every day, that is, to strive to live every day in joy, harmony, unity with oneself, getting rid of the contradictions that have dogged us in all directions.

In light of this understanding, it is much easier to understand this verse.

"A small child of seven days" is the person who was born on the seventh day. To each of us, regardless of age, there may come a time when we finally understand what the 'seventh day' means. Having acquired harmony and peace, a person becomes a "small child of the seventh day".

The arrival of the "seventh day" is not the absence of problems or struggles, but the absence of internal contradictions. (Through the prism of this understanding of the "seventh day" I advise you to read the 4 chapter of the Epistle to the Hebrews).

The seventh day is the day before the eighth. On the eighth day, according to Jewish traditions, the male child is circumcised. What is it for? In circumcision there is a certain symbol and meaning. Having passed this procedure, the Jewish child becomes a full-hedged, full-fledged member of the Jewish community, accepting all the rules, rules, laws and prejudices of the society in which he lives.

If a person could not keep on the seventh day, he misses the chance to find peace, misses some amazing opportunity in his life and gets on the eighth day (circumcision), that is, he is often taught useful, and often useless values (rules, laws, prejudices and fears). The inculcation of these values is necessary in order to restrain human emotions and disposition, thus preserving humanity from self-destruction and chaos.

However, this set of traditions and prejudices is important, basically, precisely because of the person's limited consciousness. If a person has inner harmony and peace, then there is no need for this circumcision, because such a person is already living by conscience, in inner peace and his words are weightier than a whole machine with contracts, signatures and seals.

An example of such a "small child of seven days" is Jesus. He obeyed the law of God. Often it seemed that he ignored the traditions of the people where he was born. For example, on a Sabbath, as Jesus and his disciples were walking through a grain field, they plucked heads of grain and ate them. For such disregard of the Sabbath day, Jesus and his disciples were reproached by the Pharisees. Jesus wasn't liked for ignoring the traditions; they called him a criminal and a violator of the law and Jewish traditions.

Who is this "old man" who came to ask advice from a "small child of seven days?"

The "Old Man" is a person who eventually came to the need for peace. This is a person who is looking for true peace and harmony. It is possible to come to this only by gaining wisdom and experience. Having gained wisdom and experience, a person must get rid of prejudices and start living in a state of inner peace.

There are people who push us to this, playing the role of a "small child of seven days." They help us to move forward without enslaving us, just as an infant does not enslave us, but captivates us with love for him.

In my life there were people who played the role of a "small child of seven days". They pushed me, without making me dependent on them. They inspired, prompted and then moved on.

Summarizing the given verse, it is possible to deduce a certain pattern of movement to true peace:

1. All babies are inexperienced, impatient, and immature. They seek to test all boundaries for strength and, are therefore in need of education, restrictions, laws and punishments – in other words, circumcision. This is the story of the Fall described in the 3rd chapter of Genesis, and is what happens to people here and now.

2. Growing up, a person acquires experience, wisdom, knowledge and matures to the necessity of living without religious and social prejudices, but in conscience and in love. He is assisted in this by the "small child of seven days", that is, by people who push him towards something, who direct and inspire him.

3. If a person misses the moment, does not notice or pay attention to the "small child of seven days" (to the hints and assistance of people), he starts a new week; the eighth day begins - circumcision. The person experiences disappointment and falls into the hands of more powerful people and religious organizations, but he finds no real peace there either.

This will continue until the person understands what the matter is and will not find real peace.

In light of this, the meaning of the last phrase of this verse - «**For many who are first will become last, and they will become one .**» - also becomes clear.

The "**first**" are those who developed spiritually and were in fact very close to entering the seventh day, but couldn't, because they could not resist, and therefore began a new week. That is, the first became the last: "**For many first will be last.**" And they had to start all over again the ascent to true peace.

"**One**" means "One". "**And they will become one**" - to achieve unity, humanity needs to go through all seven days.

This verse teaches us how to achieve unity, how to at last not miss that moment in life that leads to true peace, and how to continue living in the seventh day.

For there is nothing secret that will not be revealed

5. Jesus said: "Know what (or whoever) is before your face, and what is hidden (or whoever is hidden) from you, will be revealed to you. For there is nothing secret that will not be revealed."

This verse is a bit like: "first take the log out of your eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from the eye of your brother." True, a person tends to notice less what is obvious to others except themselves, because people prefer to see what they want to see. Getting rid of such bias and self-deception is an important part of knowing yourself and knowing God. This quality is inherent in the "baby of the seventh day", as we previously discussed.

Often the religious way of thinking dictates: "We must believe that there are secrets that are inaccessible to us, which we do not need to understand, but only to believe." But in this verse I

hear a different note: although there are secrets unexplored by me, they only exist in order for me to strive to comprehend them and understood them. Therefore, for me personally, the knowledge of physics, mathematics, or any creative process, is consistent with the knowledge of God. To know the high and the inaccessible – comprehend that which is close, while aiming high.

Do you hate something? Then don't do it!

6. His disciples questioned him and said to him: "Do you want us to fast? How should we pray? Should we give alms? What diet should we observe?" Jesus said: "Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate, for all things are plain in the sight of heaven. For nothing hidden will not become manifest, and nothing covered will remain without being uncovered. "

The basis of all religions are - fasting, prayer, alms. Overcome yourself; restrict yourself to feel that you are a man elevated spiritually, close to God. But Jesus breaks these familiar boundaries. **Do not tell lies, and do not do what you hate.** It is simply amazing! This opens up a somewhat different understanding of the commandment "deny yourself." This does not mean "doing what I hate" and so denying myself. To deny yourself, you need to do what you love, becoming thus "the last and servant of all". And by becoming the last, you become the first, gaining more than you gave up.

Using the example of a family: He who serves, labors, puts himself second as an employee, and not as a boss, gets ultimately more joy and satisfaction than one who requires attention, service, subordination, because if those around him (wife, children) are happy, then he too will be happy. And all that he wishes will be realized.

We fully experienced this principle in our family.

Note that verses 7 through 15 are, to some extent, an answer to the question of the disciples. Verse 15 is the answer to the question of the disciples in verse 6.

The husband and the lion

7. Jesus said: "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man."

This is one of the most important verses in the Gospel of Thomas. It offers us a new look at human morality and human relationships.

For a more precise understanding of this verse, I suggest reading it in the translation of Professor Nechipurenko: "Jesus said:" Blessed is the lion that the husband will consume and the lion will become a husband. And cursed is the husband whom the lion will consume, and the lion will become a husband!"

What does the word "lion" mean? A lion is a strong being, which is difficult to restrain and difficult to control. It is human passions; desires that are difficult to curb and difficult to control, remind us of a lion.

Let's imagine that a lion is a person's passions and desires, and that the husband is each of us.

An interesting picture then emerges.

Throughout the history of mankind, people have had various approaches to solving the problem of the conflict between strong desires, human passions and the desire to act fairly, correctly, and in truth.

The easiest way to solve these problems is to run away from your desires, passions and temptations; to try not to look at women- that is, to run away or hide from the lion.

The fact of the matter though, is that it is not possible to get away. The lion (desires and passions) will still get to and consume a person, even if he hid in a monastery or a cave.

Another way of solving the problem is to try to kill (or at least sully) the lion - that is, to call human desires dirty and evil, and disparage them in every possible way to deprive them of appeal.

People, in a similar way, have tried to cope with their sexual passions. Christian sages and leaders declared sexual desires dirty and obscene. What came of this? Well, it turned out that, despite such declarations, human desires haven't disappeared, and people are now eating not a clean and well-groomed lion, but a dirty and evil one, and the problem of the existence of the lion of human passions only worsened. Therefore, running away from the lion or simply pouring dirt on it is wrong, and also quite useless.

The aim of most religions is to move away from the passions, to rise above them and eventually to stop desiring. This is tantamount to wanting to make fish live without water.

Passions and desires are given to man to be used for their intended purposes, correctly and beautifully – man, in the process, obtains pleasure, joy and inspiration from them.

It is this very verse that opens up a slightly different view of this problem. Instead of being consumed by the lion or running away from it, one must consume the lion and become one with it, giving the lion, in the process, a truly human face. We must make sure that this lion does not consume the person from the inside, but makes him more beautiful, stronger and happier: "Blessed is the lion that the husband will consume, and the lion will become a husband."

There is a parable in the Bible about talents - a talent is an ancient unit of weight for gold and silver. People were given a certain amount of wealth and opportunities, each a certain amount. Those who put their talents to good use received praise from the Lord, while the one who hid his talent, buried it in the ground, so that it would not be lost, and his Master would not scold him, received a severe reprimand.

And what has the parable of talents got to do here, you ask? The answer is simple. Relations with the lion are somewhat similar to this parable. All desires and abilities are given to man not for him to bury in the ground, but to put to use for bliss, happiness and joy.

Passions can be a source of happiness and joy, if they are used at the right time, as an internally mature person. An example of this is the Fall, which is not simply an issue of the violation of a prohibition, but of the immaturity of man, in engaging in an action at the wrong time (Gospel of Thomas 4).

I suggest considering the application of this verse to the issue of sexuality, since it is clear that,

precisely, in this area resides one of the biggest and most powerful lions in the history of humanity.

Due to the fact that Christianity and other world religions viewed sexuality mainly as something bad and spoiled, as something that is useful only for procreation, in the 60s of the twentieth century a sexual revolution struck.

The basis for the Christian understanding of sexuality is the verse: "But I say to you that anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28).

Many Christians try very hard not to commit adultery in their hearts. They try to look at women without lust or lower their gaze. But, despite their efforts, this task proves too difficult.

The Bible has a strange advice on how to deal with this kind of temptation: "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." (Matthew 5:29-30).

As far as I know, no one uses this advice. I heard only about Origen, who took this verse literally and castrated himself. But, as it turned out, this also does not help. Desires arise in the head, and they need to be resolved in the heart and mind of man. It is important to understand why each desire is given. One should try to find each desire the right application and proper place, rather than prohibiting desires.

There are several interesting riddles in this verse. Even when you take the verse literally, you can notice several such moments:

1. Let us pay attention to the highlighted phrase from Matthew 5:28: "But I tell you that **anyone who looks at a woman with lust** has already committed adultery with her in his heart." Notice, nothing is said about the wife, it is said simply about any woman. If we put the sign of equality between lust and sexual attraction, we get a paradox. After all, it is traditionally accepted that it is okay to look at a wife with lust (sexual attraction). So, it turns out that **lust and sexual attraction are different categories**.

2. Consider this highlighted phrase from Matthew 5:28: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already **committed adultery with her in his heart**." Adultery, according to the traditional canons, has to do with married people. Hence it turns out that only unmarried men can look at women with lust - as soon as a man gets married, it is over, he's sealed his own fate and can't look anymore!

3. Let's continue analyzing the selected phrases from this verse: "And I say to you that anyone who looks **at a woman** with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

That is, it turns out that one may not look at a woman with lust - this is adultery. Whereas a man could be looked at with lust, and this isn't considered adultery.

4. It is interesting that "**looks**" – is in the present tense, but "**already committed adultery**" – is in the past tense. That is, adultery took place even earlier than the actual act of "looking". Why

so? We will address this issue a little later.

Let's think how one can, in general, look at a woman. In addition to lust, there are a few quite interesting options, in which there is an erotic context:

1 - To admire her beauty.

2 - Look at her with love.

Admire her beauty. Indeed, the beauty of the female body, especially naked, is irresistible. This is perhaps the most beautiful thing in the physical world, at least for men, and it's simply impossible not to admire it. In essence, traditional Christianity offers only two options of what to do with this beauty: you either run away or refuse to look, so as not to commit adultery in your heart or lust.

This applies not only to Christians. Social values are such that the body of a woman is considered something indecent. A celebrity photographed in the nude - oh, what a scandal! Who had a hand in this?

This is the largest theft in history, committed by Christian (and not only) fundamentalists, purportedly for a good cause! Men were actually robbed of a balanced and respectful view of female beauty. Still men can't help but look at this beauty, but they have to do it on the sly, in secret, causing themselves even more harm. Because of this, they feel guilty, thinking: "What a horror! I looked at the woman! I have sinned!"

Declaring women's beauty something sinful and displeasing to God, you can easily manipulate people. At one time I experienced this myself to the fullest.

Those who stole from people a balanced attitude to women's beauty committed a crime against God, who created this beauty. It is the largest theft in history!

To look at a woman with love. Love can be: sacrificial - Agape; friendly - Phileo; erotic - Eros.

The essence of lust - **I want you, by all means.**

The essence of love - **I will give everything, I am ready to retreat, to sacrifice my interests so that the other person is happy.**

The essence of love is eros - **I'm ready to go to any length to make you happy but we need to be together. Dealing with troubles and difficulties together is preferable to enjoying prosperity and success separately.**

The difference between lust and love is that lust takes, wants, craves, while love is ready to give and to sacrifice. So in this sense, lust is bad for both the wife and the other woman. It is possible to love is many, if a person is capable of it. But this is a rarity.

What is the meaning of this statement? Earlier Christ said that hatred in the heart is the same as murder. Adultery in the heart is the same as real betrayal. What is done in the heart differs from reality only in that a person lacks the strength, courage, resources to carry it out. If you really want to look, go ahead and look, but not surreptitiously, hiding, ashamed, and fearing the wrath of God. If this happens, one must discard the prohibition, as it is anyway useless in light of these words of Jesus. It is necessary to change our approach to women - from lust to

admiration of her beauty, even to admiration of her eroticism, but keeping respect for her, her desires and personality. This is a different cultural attitude, where a woman is not an object or object of lust, but a person - respected, beautiful, and cherished.

In this case, you could say, "If you look at a woman with love and admiration, you have already fallen in love with her in your heart."

For as it happens with people, they look, desire, and then think to themselves (or write in the comments): "What a despicable woman, a whore, no decent person would show herself that way?"

The same can be applied to a man. Although for some reason in one and the same situation a man is called a macho, and a woman a whore. This is probably a kind of protection from lust in men: to paint the object of lust dirty, so as not to want it. Does it help? As for me - that's what is meant by: "men committing shameful acts with other men" (Rom 1:27), and not what you used to think.

Several situations.

Is it possible, sitting next to your wife, to admire the beauty, the body, the clothes of her friend? Is it possible to compliment, hug and even kiss a girlfriend of your wife's so that your wife does not become jealous? It is possible, but only if the family has trust, understanding and love for each other. My wife, for example, knows that I will never stop loving her, although there are many beautiful women around. She knows that our hearts beat in unison. She understands that I will not stop loving her, even if I offer attention and affection to another woman. If there isn't such intimacy and trust in the relationship, then you need to first work on the relationship before moving on to admiring and complimenting someone else.

The essence of adultery is the betrayal of love. To fall out of love, deceive, abandon - it doesn't matter where this takes place in the heart or in reality. You began desiring another, and as a consequence, you stopped loving your wife. In the verse that we are examining, there is a simple and logical prohibition that is intuitively clear - not to commit adultery, not to betray love, not to stop loving. The essence of almost every primitive religiosity is to prohibit something simple and needed by all and then force people to struggle heroically and suffer from fear and falls; to reproach and manipulate people through their feelings of guilt. One *cannot* not desire, but one can, *not* betray. Even in thought. You like a girl - be brave and talk, and don't just dream. Married - tell your secrets and innermost thoughts to your wife. Be honest and frank to the end. Cast off cowardice and the husks of fears and feigned religiosity. It is clear that this requires living with one heart and soul, working on it every day. If one lives with his wife on different sides of the wall, and then suddenly wants something – disappointment awaits him. First it is necessary to deal with the wall in the relationship. The wall is a sign that adultery had taken place a long time and everything is in a mess.

This idea is confirmed by the analysis of the text. As we have already said, the word "looks" in

the text we are considering is in the present tense, but "has already committed adultery" - in the past. That is, adultery had taken place earlier than the actual looking. Adultery - this is not an event, but a human condition. This is his attitude towards a woman (or to a man - everything is symmetrical here).

If you want something, but it is prohibited - it's better to do than torment yourself with unrealized dreams. But do it, observing the principle of "love your neighbor as yourself" and not betraying love. Do it honestly and consciously, and not as a person with split thoughts.

There is an anecdote on this topic.

Several believers and several non-believers were walking along the street past a strip club.

The non-believers say: "Let's go, have fun."

The believers say: "Yes, we would love to, but we can't."

If there was such a desire - I would go and see what attracted me so much. I would invite my wife to come with me, but I would not do it on the sly, like a coward. Then they we would have decided together whether we need it or not. The principle of openness in desires is a cool concept for harmony in the family. And what if the desires are different? There is patience, there is love that overcomes everything and makes the impossible possible. Over time, either we come to the same opinion, or we understand that the idea that has arisen is not ours. In general, everything has its time.

You can betray sexually, but you can just trade your wife for a bottle / fishing / football / car (do not think that I'm against fishing, cars, football or having a beer with friends. I'm talking about something else). It is "falling out of love" that is the problem, not erotic feelings, fishing, cars, football, etc.

Fundamentalists make the erotic feelings the scapegoat, because an immature person is usually like this: likes another woman - stops loving the first, likes a car – that's it, the wife is not so interesting anymore, because there is a new interesting toy.

The amount of love is scanty. Even his wife cannot fit into it and there is barely enough room in it for him.

Here's another example. My wife and I are watching an instructive and somewhat useful film of explicit content. Yes, there aren't many of those, but there are a few. The result is more passion in sex, more experience, more trust.

By better understanding the subject, you are able to give incomparably more pleasurable to your wife both physically and emotionally. But if there is a religious fear of a naked woman, and no maturity and confidence – then this is absolutely contraindicated, as it will cause a split in consciousness and a sense of guilt. We must then run quickly to repent.

Next example: a group of wise and mature people gathered, say, in a sauna or on a nudist beach. Everyone is naked. From what they saw, no one drooled or fainted. When the ban is lifted, lust disappears. There remain friendship, admiration, trust, love, mutual assistance, and reliability.

An interesting question is why in the struggle against temptation it is necessary to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye? I think in the light of this article the answer lies on the surface, and it's easy to guess why. It's enough to think what 'right' and 'left' mean. Google it. Unlike the thoughtless cutting off of the limbs, cutting off the "right hand" and discarding the "right eye (view)" solves the problem described in the article. Notice, it is the right eye that seduces! And the right hand! What the hell is it? Here, read the questions and answers on fornication on this site

http://www.truechristianity.info/ask_priest_fornication.php.

Do not take it as an indiscriminate or haughty criticism, but such an attitude to issues of sexuality torments and drives a person into a corner. Think about these questions. I do not think that Jesus was tossing about stupid advice.

Large and small fish

8. And he said, "The man is like a wise fisherman who cast his net into the sea and drew it up from the sea full of small fish. Among them the wise fisherman found a fine large fish. He threw all the small fish back into the sea and chose the large fish without difficulty. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear."

At first glance, this verse completely falls out of context. But if we recall the principle of the Fall, which has just been discussed, everything becomes clear and very appropriate to the context as an illustration.

There are small fish - that is, something that is not yet ready. A wise man can separate them from the big ones, put them away for a while and use to his benefit what he is ready for. But man prefers to consume everything.

The Parable of the Sower

9. Jesus said, "Now the sower went out, took a handful (of seeds), and scattered them. Some fell on the road; the birds came and gathered them up. Others fell on the rock, did not take root in the soil, and did not produce ears. And others fell on thorns; they choked the seed(s) and worms ate them. And others fell on the good soil and it produced good fruit: it bore sixty per measure and a hundred and twenty per measure."

This parable is almost exactly repeated in the classical Gospels. But what does it mean in this context? If we read the previous verse, it seems it is a case of effective management. That is, we select all that is promising, and discard all that is not promising. In this verse the message of the previous verse is clarified, to avoid the impression of "effective management". After all, the Kingdom of God is not a skillful selection of cadres, not a company with a high level of competition for positions; it is sown everywhere - its essence is love, not calculation. And the external evaluation of a person is not always accurate. After all, quite often the one who is a drunkard today will help thousands by repenting. That is - sow the kingdom of God everywhere, but verify by the final result.

The mention of the worm, which eats the seeds that fell among the thorns, is also interesting. Is not this the worm of hell fire, about which it is said, "where their worm does not die and the fire is not quenched?" One of the faces of hell is probably the futility that the worm personifies, eating all the good beginnings. After all, both the Kingdom of God and hell fire are what happens (or, at least, begins) on the earth.

Inspire, do not force

10. Jesus said: "I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes."

It is very difficult to convince a person of something in an argument. But it is totally unrealistic to convince a fool of anything, since he hears only himself. In a dispute, people are mainly engaged in honing their position even more and are rarely able to convince the other, unless their opponent is a wise enough person who is able to listen and learn. In that case, he and the stupid can learn something useful.

But there is a completely different way of persuasion, which requires more patience and self-control - it is to throw fire, set fire, get under his skin and give the person time to figure it out, examine himself and rekindle this fire; what is more, additional "pressing" only extinguishes the fire, since a person will have to defend himself. Therefore, in a dispute it is important to find where to throw fire, and then to restrain your passion and the desire to pressure your opponent to the breaking point and put him in a position of having to fight back.

If you ignite a person with an idea, then in time he will come to perceive this idea as his own, since it developed and flared up in him - remember Stirlitz and Schellenberg from the movie "17 Moments of Spring". If you spell everything out, then a person will lose interest in the subject very early, because "everything has already been done for him." But it's so hard not to spell things out! There is a desire to say all at once and hit the listener's imagination with a beautiful idea! But this in fact spoils everything. The same principle of the Fall: we want to pluck fruits that are not ripe, catch fish that have not grown. This principle is well realized in the Bible and in the Gospel of Thomas.

The Bible has many ideas that sound somewhat provocative, strange, stirring us to reflection. Some people perceive "strangeness" not as a reason to dig and delve deeper into the issue, but as a test of their faith: the stranger a thing is, the stronger their faith! But, alas, this is blind faith.

Read about the genocide in Deuteronomy, and then read the Sermon on the Mount and - Hallelujah! Thank God! Our faith is strong, no contradictions.

Read the Gospel of Thomas, didn't understand a thing - yuck, uncanonical, the authorities didn't command us (to read it), disgusting! Alas, the proposed method of persuasion still requires that a person be an aspirant and seek to know the truth, whatever it may be. In blind faith, one can also find breaches and set fire, but this is not easy.

At one time, I was also persuaded by the same method, as I was once the owner of this very "blind faith". My friend, Vitaly Lysenko, actually prompted me to study an issue around which was a fierce debate (Hebrews 9:27). As a result of research and search, after a while, I changed

my mind and agreed with him. Blind faith cracked and eventually crumbled.

It's the same in the family. It is foolish to order your wife to do something or to act on the principle of "I want". You need to induce and inspire, and be patient when the situation calls for it. And then everything happens by itself just as it should be.

Three Heavens

11. Jesus said: "This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away. The dead are not alive, and the living will not die."

What is heaven? Just don't say the clouds in the sky or something in the upper atmosphere. Heaven for man, in the spiritual sense, represents the highest standards in his perception. **This heaven** is the heaven of Old Testament morality. **The heaven above it** is the heaven of New Testament morality and standards. The fact that there is a crack in it was discussed earlier; see the explanation for verse 7.

What next? What is the heaven above it? The Apostle Paul spoke about the third heaven (2 Corinthians 12: 2-4: "I know a man in Christ who fourteen years ago was caught up to the third heaven. Whether it was in the body or out of the body I do not know—God knows. And I know that this man—whether in the body or apart from the body I do not know, but God knows— was caught up to paradise and heard inexpressible things, things that no one is permitted to tell."

"Inexpressible words", which one cannot tell a person, is very similar to Hebrews 8:10, **"I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts: and I will be their God, and they will be my people."** That is, the third heaven is more than just a paradise somewhere out there, it's a human condition. This is a state where a person is not constrained by the morality and dogmas of the first and second covenants, but understands the essence and principles, and does not just grasp after the formulas (sayings) of the New or Old Testament. Therefore the notion of "inexpressible words that is impossible for a person to retell" is appropriate. After all, to retell for real is to change a person, to convey to him the very essence of the understanding that you yourself received. True words are sayings plus their deep understanding and embodiment in a person.

The Bible has sayings, but it is incumbent on us to explore them and extract their meaning. These are laws in our thoughts, this is the third heaven.

"Inexpressible words" seem to be some kind of mystical concept, and "heaven" is something before which you can only prostrate yourself. But all this has a much simpler and more practical meaning. The term "word" will be discussed in more detail later, when we study the 14th and 15th sayings, there is an excellent illustrative example, but for now we will be patient.

The saying about the dead and the living, if you take it quite literally, is just a tautology and nonsense. But in the allegorical sense, everything is much clearer. Dead and living are concepts independent of the dead and living physically. But again, the living spiritually, as a rule, is understood in this sense: those who very well follow the charters of our organization (religion), the sects are alive, the rest are dead, which is also meaningless, since a person who is alive from

the point of view one organization, is dead from the point of view of other organizations. Therefore, it is better not to assess whether a person is dead or alive, but it is better to ask yourself: am I alive? As we already said at the very beginning, it is possible to simply exist, and not really live, having lost hope, joy and the desire to develop, or you could feel the breath of life once again.

Leadership or fraternity

11. "In the days when you consumed what is dead, you made it what is alive. When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do? On the day when you were one you became two. But when you become two, what will you do?"

12. The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?" Jesus said to them, "Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."

These statements at first glance seem very difficult, but let's try to figure them out.

Before the 12th verse was the phrase **"This heaven will pass away, and the one above it will pass away."** We have already explored this question and came to the conclusion that the first heaven is the morality and dogmas of the Old Testament, and that the second heaven is the heaven of the New Testament commandments and morality.

"In the days when you consumed what is dead." What does "dead" mean? These are the sayings of the Old Testament, the letter of the law, information from the Bible, not embodied in life, that is, dead.

In those days, the religious worldview was very important for people, and therefore the Old Testament writings were a particularly important source of information for them. However, these are only "dead" letters. In order for these "dead" letters to become something live, it is necessary to put them into practice, it is necessary to make it alive through your live, through your actions. Making words alive can only be through the implementation of the written. It is this meaning that is embedded in the phrase: **"when you consumed what is dead, you made it what is alive."**

Then Jesus asks a few not very clear questions, for example: **"When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do?"**

"In light" means: when they know the truth, they will learn something new when they are visited by illumination (Gospel of Thomas 1), what will they do?

I think that the answer to this question is in the following sentence of this verse: **"On the day when you were one you became two."** Probably, we are talking about disciples, when they were with Jesus, when they lived together, they were one with him, and they were one because they united around Jesus.

If we look at the 13th verse: **"The disciples said to Jesus, "We know that you will depart from us. Who is to be our leader?" Jesus said to them, "Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."** We can conclude that the disciples were well aware that soon the time will come when they will remain without

Jesus and the difficulties will begin.

I think that the question of the disciples: **"Who is to be our leader?"** Is their attempt to answer the question posed by Jesus: **"But when you become two, what will you do?"** What will they do when Jesus is no more, will not be the one who unites them in one whole? Herein lies the question.

As we know, man is a dual being. In every man there is both male and female (reason and emotion). Reason and emotions are necessary for a person's development, for a full life, but the main thing is that these "two" do not divide a person into two separate components, but rather as one whole instrument that helps a person to become better, higher and more perfect.

When a person is guided by, at one time, reason, and at another, emotions, he cannot control himself. It's like sitting on horses that are running in two different directions.

So, when Jesus will no more be, the division of disciples becomes more apparent, so Jesus asks them: "What will you do in this situation?" And Jesus' question: **"When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do?"** - becomes clearer after the question of the disciples. When a person realizes the truth, he strives for inner unity and integrity, and the elimination of internal contradictions. This is precisely the answer to the question: **"When you come to dwell in the light, what will you do?"** Strive for inner unity, so that the two who are inside the person become one.

But, alas, the students were not at all interested in the questions of cognition, illumination, and the inner integrity of man, they were more interested in who would be the main one that would unite them all under one roof. And this, in spite of the fact that Jesus already told them (Mark 10:42-43): **"So Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those regarded as rulers of the Gentiles exercise lordship over them, and their superiors exercise authority over them. But it shall not be this way among you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant.'"**

People need some sort of hierarchy in order to unite. But in fact, in order for people to unite, we need, not a hierarchy, but the desire to become a whole person, one in whom reason and feelings are subordinated to each other and work for a common goal.

Next comes the mention of James the just. Jesus said, **"Wherever you are, you are to go to James the righteous, for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."**

Wherever you are - this means the internal state in which they were. In that state of the inner world in which you are, you will go to James the just. James the just is the brother of Jesus, who later became the head of the Jerusalem church. He was called just because he was a very just, ascetic, and to some extent, harsh man. Even Peter was a little afraid of him.

There is in the Letter to the Galatians a reference to how Peter became a hypocrite. At first he ate food that Jews were not supposed to eat, and when James came, Peter began to hide, and the Apostle Paul rebuked him for it.

Yes, being a strong leader is not bad, but it is much more important and more valuable to have really fraternal relations that are not based on fear, on authority, on the necessity of unconditional

submission. The Law of God is in the hearts of people, and it is it that encourages them to unite, have the same thoughts, and the same goals, when everyone tries to be the last and servant of all, instead of trying to be the first and boss of all.

The phrase **"for whose sake heaven and earth came into being."** is very mysterious and difficult. The phrase is more like sarcasm than praise. It has been suggested that in many ways heaven and earth is a place for such people who either look for a guide or rule over others. Our goal is to rise above this, to where there is a relationship of love, fraternal relations, understanding not of words but of hearts, to where the first serves as the last.

Another question arises: why couldn't Jesus inspire them, explain things to them in more detail, so that they could have avoided the mistakes they later made?

The problem is that it is impossible to convey to a person, verbally, the words about which we spoke before. Man understands verbal, spoken, or written words as he can understand them. Often it happens that we say one thing, but a person understands something else. At the level attained by the disciples, there still was no choice. They had not yet learned anything higher or better than to go and find a good, strong, somewhat authoritarian leader. For the time being that was their condition. Everything has its time. The time will come, and that which we spoke about in one of the previous verses about the third heaven, which will come after the first two, will be. This is a different morality - different life principles. Well, for now, so.

So far, there was an era of leadership, when people needed to be directed, needed to be led, resorting to authoritarian and manipulative methods. Perhaps after getting enough of this, people will strive for something better and will come to understand that that something better, to which they strive, exists.

Three words. Prayer, fasting, alms - a sin or the basis of religion?

13. Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to someone and tell me whom I am like." Simon Peter said to him, "You are like a righteous angel." Matthew said to him, "You are like a wise philosopher." Thomas said to him, "Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom you are like."

Jesus said, "I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out."

And he took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?" Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."

14. Jesus said to them, "If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits. When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile

you, but that which issues from your mouth - it is that which will defile you."

Jesus said to his disciples, "Compare me to someone and tell me whom I am like?" In the classical Gospels, Jesus also asked the disciples the question: "Who am I like?" The correct, but somehow too trivial answer to this question was: "You are the Christ, the son of the living God. " It was this answer of Peter that Jesus approved.

But in this verse of the Gospel of Thomas we see a similar, but still different dialogue:

- **Simon Peter said to him: "You are like an angel of justice";**
- **Matthew said to him: "You look like a wise philosopher";**
- **Thomas said to him: "Lord, my lips will not accept what you are like."**

The words of Thomas can be understood in two ways. The first thought is that Thomas does not know anything, does not understand anything and has not understood who Jesus is. But then it is not clear why Jesus said: **"I am not your master. Because you have drunk, you have become intoxicated from the bubbling spring which I have measured out. "** Most likely, Thomas wanted to say: "I understand who you are, but I just cannot put it into words, because my words are not enough to describe how I understand you." Judging by the fact that Jesus paid special attention to Thomas's answer, we can conclude that Jesus liked something about his answer.

Let us recall the story from the classical Gospels, where Jesus praised Peter for the answer that Jesus is the son of the living God. At first glance, it may seem that the story is rather strange. What's so surprising? Did the disciples not know that Jesus is the son of the living God and that he is the Christ? But Jesus somehow praised Peter for that answer.

As far as I understand, Peter's response was good not because he simply said that Jesus is the son of God, which he remembered and retold. In this statement there was no significant achievement or something new. The bottom line was that, watching Jesus, and not just recounting others, Peter came to the conclusion that Jesus is God's anointed, the Son of God. There is a difference - to hear and remember, or to come to a conclusion from personal observations and experience. It was in this latter that the value of that statement from the classical Gospels was.

With Thomas - a similar story. Thomas understood who Jesus was, but could not express it in words. This is what drives us to a deeper rethinking of the concept of "word".

People are used to the fact that a word is just a collection of letters and sounds that symbolize something. There are words that have opposite meanings. For example, the same lion in the Bible is used in a positive sense (Jesus is compared with a lion), and in the negative (the devil is a roaring lion, looking for someone to swallow).

Many people, often using the word "Christ" or the phrase "Oh, God," do not put any meaning in them. For them it's an empty sound. But there are people who put deep meaning into these phrases, invest their whole soul, for them it is not just a set of letters or an empty sound, but their whole life.

In Thomas's words: **"Master, my mouth is wholly incapable of saying whom you are like"** Jesus heard a deeper meaning; these words were more explicit and expressive than a mere verbal

formulation, such as **"wise philosopher "** or **"just angel"**.

Jesus told Thomas: "I am not your master," and this is very important. Jesus said in the Gospel that the relationship between him and the disciples should not be of lordship, but brotherly. With this phrase, it seems to me, he recognized Thomas as his brother, who in some ways understood him.

What do the words **"For you drank, did you get drunk from the source of boiling, which I measured?"** mean? This is the source from which Thomas got drunk, that he tasted and understood something important.

"The boiling source" most likely, is the source of God's wisdom. Some call it "Holy Spirit", some call it "the wisdom of God", but nevertheless it is the source of life, the source of our creativity, our love, and while this source is boiling in us, we feel alive.

In this context, the following words sound quite interesting: **"And he took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?" Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."**

At first glance it seems that there is a mystery that cannot be solved.

What are these three words? It seems that there is not even a hint of what these words are. Let's try to solve the mystery.

In the context of the previous argument, the puzzle is easily solved. If we perceive words not simply as a set of letters or sounds, but as a formulation plus a concept, then everything becomes clear.

For example, the phrase "I love you" sounds like one whole word, and not as a combination of words, because this is one single concept. The same phrase can be used to say quite different things, often very different from each other.

One says: "I love you and I'm ready to give everything for you", putting all of his soul, all of himself, into this phrase. And another utters the same phrase, meaning, I need something from you. Here is an example of the fact that the same phrase can have different meanings.

Understanding words as an integral concept is of great practical importance. For example, when a person speaks, we should not just hear a set of spoken words, but also understand what is behind these words. This helps us to avoid superficial attitudes towards people, not to take others too literally, not to find fault with inaccurate words, understand others properly, and therefore, to love and build relationships. This applies to the family, children, friends, and even to one's enemies. To understand, love, and turn enemies into friends. After all, very often people argue to the point of fighting (and in a religious dispute, often to the point of killing one another), talking about the same thing, but in different ways. Each of the disputants hears the spoken words, but does not hear the real and intended meaning of those words. Learning to hear truly is a very important step towards the Kingdom of God in us. This is a very profound topic, and was also raised in the Bible more than once. Remember the story of the Tower of Babel. Alas, people now

speak different languages, even if both speak good English or Russian. What about the gift of speaking in tongues? What is the use of speaking abracadabra, if it is much more important to learn how to speak the language of your interlocutor, so that the true meaning of the words you said was understood by him!

If we speak of the word as a more complex concept, then the verse 15 gives us these three words: **"Jesus said," If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves; and if you pray, you will be condemned; and if you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits."**

There are three words in this verse:

- The first word is **"If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves";**
- The second word is **"If you pray, you will be condemned";**
- The third word is **"If you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits."**

All this sounds very unusual and strange, because **fasting, prayer and alms** are the basis of man's religious activity.

Why are seemingly good concepts criticized in these words?

In the 14th verse it says, **"If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."** These words of Jesus destroy the religious zeal of the disciples, as a consequence of which they really could become angry with Thomas, if they hear these words not from the authoritative Jesus, but from Thomas.

A little later we will try to figure out what kind of stones they are, what kind of fire comes out of them and why it will burn them.

In the 6th verse, **"His disciples asked him; they said to him: "Do you want us to fast, and how should we pray, give alms and abstain in food?"**

The answer was quite stern: **"Jesus said:" Do not lie, and what you hate, do not do it. For everything is open before heaven. For there is nothing secret that will not be revealed, and there is nothing intimate that would remain unsolved. "**

The disciples could listen to such words from Jesus, but they could not listen to them from Thomas. They would have told Thomas that he was acting smug, trying to stand out, wanted to be the first. This was said because there was competition between the disciples; this is very clearly seen in the classical Gospels. The disciples were also angry with James and John when they came and asked about primacy.

Let us return to verse 14, which speaks of stones that will fly at Thomas, if he said one of those words. The phrase **"you will pick up stones and throw them at me"** does not mean that they will actually take stones and throw them at him. No. The term **"stones"** may refer to arguments that fly into a person, some harsh remarks or indignation at what he said. In addition, stoning in the Old Testament is a punishment for the wrongdoers, that is, Thomas, as a result of the negation of religious norms, will be branded as wicked.

What does it mean in this case: **"a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up"**?

In verse 10, we discussed the fact that Jesus threw fire into the world and guarded it until it

burst into flames. **"I have cast fire upon the world, and see, I am guarding it until it blazes."** The fire that comes out of the stones is the fire that lights the person.

That is, if Thomas had told them these words without explaining their meaning, they would have become very upset and mad at him. But if they understood the meaning of those words, their true significance, then it really would be the fire that would ignite them and burn in them those religious layers that are in fact completely unnecessary.

Although if a person does not want to accept arguments, does not want to change, but wants to stay in the state in which he is, the same fire can burn him and in a bad way, destroying his life and plunging him into despair, and turning his life into ashes.

Remember that God in the Old Testament is compared to a "consuming fire". Now the meaning of this is quite clear.

Let's try to understand why Jesus criticized the three main principles of a person's religious life: fasting, prayer, and alms.

The essence of a person's religious life is that a person seeks to do certain things that will please God, and so make him happy.

Consider, for example, fasting. For some reason, food is included in the list of things that could be used to please God. People believe that if they do something difficult for themselves, they will find favor in the eyes of God on account of it.

Even in the Old Testament (Isaiah 58), it is said that a real fast is to give up untruth, release the oppressed, and to do away with the yoke. We do not mean to let the animals out of the yoke, but the people on whom we put the yoke - stop torturing them. This kind of fast is really appropriate, but a religious fast is not needed at all. Fasting for health is useful, but don't take it as a service to God. In this case, Jesus is sharply critical of such fasts, saying: **"If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves"**. With such a fast, a person actually moves away from God. A person thinks that by this fast he has pleased God and, accordingly, does not seek deeper, does not try to understand something real, he is limited to the simple performance of duties, thinking at the same time that the job is done. It's like a student who, having done something simple, came to the conclusion that the work was done and that it was no longer necessary to develop further. Thinking: "I have done my work and I am free." Such a student will never comprehend the depths of knowledge. But this is only the tip of the iceberg. The religious approach to fasting creates a much more serious problem.

Fasting is akin to asceticism. The idea that the refusal of fun and excitement is for some reason acceptable and pleasing to God, has brought a lot of harm. Rather than trying to understand why these desires arise in humans and using them for creative purposes, religions prefer prohibitions. And unrealized desires of a person come out, so to speak, "on the black market". For example, Catholicism has a concept of celibacy; priests cannot marry. But all these desires have not disappeared! The result is a lot of sex scandals in the Catholic Church. Remember the movie "The Thorn Birds". Bottom line: the ascetic approach gives rise to sin, because it transforms the beautiful into the sinful. You can't say it more precisely: **"If you fast,**

you will give rise to sin for yourselves."

Consider the second utterance of Jesus: **"If you pray, you will be condemned."** This is another sharp statement, for which stones are thrown.

"Do not be verbose," Jesus said about prayer. Prayer is often just a lot of words that we are used to saying. After all, we are Christians, and we need to pray! Often such wordy prayers are like spam (unsolicited emails). Why should God listen to meaningless spam, which we repeat every day, if man doesn't put his heart and soul in? Most likely, this is done simply to show that: 'I am capable of doing the same thing many times. And for your sake, Lord, I am ready for any sacrifice'. Do we really need these sacrifices? No! We just need to change. We need to learn how to love, solve problems, forgive grievances, build relationships, follow the principles of bliss that Jesus spoke about (and showed by example), rather than pointlessly repeating the same thing over and over again. It is for this senseless repetition that there will be condemnation, just like for indulgence in meaningless activities and the aimless use of time that could be used to one's advantage. Moreover, the transformation of the teachings of Jesus Christ into a typical religion with an endless repetition of one and the same thing, rituals, and a hierarchy, is in itself a great misfortune.

Consider the third statement of Jesus: **"If you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits."** Alms are one of the foundations of religion. But alms nowadays have often become just a business or something similar. For today it is not clear for whom this really is a necessity, and for whom it's just a way to make money.

The concept of "giving alms" should include, not handouts, so as to be left alone, but love, cordial disposition, and an attempt to understand a person and give him something of value and importance.

There is one other downside to alms. Alms justify just about any human folly. Hand out more, serve people more and you will be respected, even if you teach people some nonsense. For that reason, alms are very popular with politicians. Every religion rests on alms; alms justify all flaws and follies in doctrine. Alms, as it were, give donors the moral right not to think and not to change. Consequently: **"If you give alms, you will do harm to your spirits."**

Summing up the reasons why the concepts of "fasting", "prayer" and "alms" are viewed negatively, it must be said that because of the abuse of these concepts, the love of God has turned into a "dead religion". This is the main problem. Because of these three concepts, a person can feel before God as one who did his duty entirely without God himself, without beginning to change, and to love. This is what constitutes a danger to one's relationship with God – a much greater danger than some obvious misdeeds.

At the end of the 15th verse, Jesus calls the disciples to a rather simple way of life without religious attitudes: **"When you go into any land and walk about in the districts, if they receive you, eat what they will set before you, and heal the sick among them. For what goes into your mouth will not defile you, but that which issues from your mouth - it is that which will defile you."**

Food is not only food, but also information that we absorb. Communicate with people without condemning them, not boiling with indignation when we do not agree, but healing, helping to change their lives for the better, resolve conflicts, relieve pain, giving them joy, and trying to see things from their perspective. Yes, there is physical healing from diseases, and it is important! But I think that it is even more important to heal a person of his spiritual and psychological problems, and shocks, because a person usually suffers much more and longer from these.

Whom to honor?

15. Jesus said, "When you see one who was not born of woman, prostrate yourselves on your faces and worship him. That one is your father."

At first glance this looks somewhat provocative. It seems that you need to come up with someone and then worship him.

I think that some things are said provocatively in order to induce us to think and look for a deeper and real meaning of these words.

Recall John, chapter 4, verse 21, where Jesus says to the woman: "Believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem."

Here we are talking about worshipping in spirit and truth, and not about prostrating ourselves before others and worshipping them, inventing new gods.

What does it mean: "When you see one who was not born of woman?"

This is something new, amazing and real, this is something that was born of God, not emotion.

I will cite an example from my life to illustrate what it means to be "born of God."

Everyone knows of the problems parents have with children. Somehow (not the first time, or the last) I had a conflict with my eldest son, Peter. I tried to explain to him what he had been wrong in and where mistakes had been made. But in his eyes I saw incomprehension, anger and disagreement with my statements. At that moment I suffered. I was angry with him and surprised how one could not understand simple things. And suddenly God gave me direction so that I fell in love with my son with greater strength, and stopped being angry with him. God gave me strength so that we could solve this problem not by emotions, but by love. I was able to call Peter to live in love, without deceit and tricks. This understanding has in many ways changed my attitude to children and to people around me. I even recorded this episode since it was very important to me. More details can be found in the article "About the meeting" [3].

To prostrate and worship means the idea that came from God, to truly love, to sincerely accept and follow it.

We can say that each person consists of two halves (husband and wife). From the husband (the inside person) is born that which is reasonable, wise and judicious, and from the union of husband and wife, their mind and emotions with God, the spiritual is born. In the end, these halves (husband and wife) should become one whole in God. A man and a woman should not obey each other, but the common decision that they both made.

True submission to someone is not that situation where: "It's hard for me, I do not agree, I do

not want to, but I will do it, because God commanded it." No! It seems to me that God does not want this kind of worship; yes, no one does. Rather, this is the appropriate attitude: "Did you agree with this, rejoiced and began living like that, took it as a part of your life?" There is no sense in worshiping, smashing your forehead against the ground, then getting up and continuing to denigrate your neighbor.

God is not to be worshipped out of fear, and fear of doing something wrong. God needs to be loved, to understand the amazing thing that he reveals in us, to follow this and make it a part of our life. This is the true worship of God in spirit and truth.

Let me give an example from the life of our friends. One friend denounced another - a pastor - in obvious financial impropriety. After the passage of some time, the pastor admitted the validity of the accusations, repented, and said that he understood his guilt and realized that it was wrong to live that way. This turnaround was born of God. But after a few days, the pastor suddenly changed his mind, and it almost came to blows. The abrupt change was something born of the wife, that is, of emotions.

This example shows that there was no real worship of God. Yes, he fell prostrate, saying: "I understand everything. I will change!" But, unfortunately, it was only a temporary emotional impulse, he did not take it as a part of his life, did not agree with his whole soul. This was not true worship of God. He thought that if he prostrated himself and hit the ground with his forehead, that that would count as repentance. He did not understand that one must sincerely accept this and change.

There are, of course, examples where people are able to change certain things in them, in their lives, that is, to come to true worship.

From the time the following quote from the Bible (Hebrews 10:16) became important to our family: "I will put my laws in their hearts, and I will write them on their minds", our lives changed much for the better - we became much freer, and better understood what God is like.

Certain things in our family life came to us from above. After reading the Bible, we understood and made it a rule to deal with all problems in our life immediately and directly, without delay.

We also realized that worship does not consist in creating for yourself a majestic, high-seated entity, who watches over everything, and to whom you have to come and worship by pounding your forehead on the ground, but the desire to follow the revelation that God has given us, and to change your lives in accordance with it.

Generational conflict of values. What is happiness and harmony?

16. Jesus said: "Men think, perhaps, that it is peace which I have come to cast upon the world. They do not know that it is dissension which I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, and war. For there will be five in a house: three will be against two, and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father. And they will stand solitary."

17. Jesus said, "I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind."

Most often people think that Jesus helps people live in joy, harmony, agreement, and unity. This is actually so! Indeed, the goal of Jesus Christ is the Kingdom of God in every person.

But we find that almost all the verses in Thomas sound somewhat provocative. This is clearly seen in the phrase: **"It is dissension which I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, and war."**

One is immediately reminded of wars that bring division, grief and misfortune. The question arises: did Jesus come just for that?

We will try to figure it out. Sometimes the way to reach an agreement is through division and inconsistencies. Not every successful and happy family can boast that unity, peace, and mutual understanding came all at once. Everything happens in stages. First comes love - this is a very pleasant, and beautiful moment. Usually it seems that this will last forever. This, of course, would be very desirable; but alas, difficulties, disagreements, inconsistencies, and quarrels begin to arise. People start thinking that there is no way out, that they will now have to live with these problems. But hopeless situations, as we all know, do not exist, and from these difficulties, problems and inconsistencies, too, there is a way out.

You can stop, leaving all the difficulties, disagreements, inconsistencies and quarrels unresolved - as they are. It might be easier this way, but will it lead to peace and harmony in the future? On the other hand, you could try to understand the reasons for the quarrels and disagreements and make every effort to understand each other; having figured that out, come to mutual understanding, a new level of relationships, and live happily ever after.

It seems to me that in verse 17 - **Jesus said:" Men think, perhaps, that it is peace which I have come to cast upon the world. They do not know that it is dissension which I have come to cast upon the earth: fire, sword, and war. For there will be five in a house: three will be against two, and two against three, the father against the son, and the son against the father. And they will stand solitary "**- we are talking about entering a new, more correct and happier level, about the process of coming to the Kingdom of God- that is, acquiring a new level of consciousness, inner harmony and joy.

There is a naive belief that if people only talked about good things, and warned each other about possible mistakes, that all humanity would live happily. In fact, this is not so! Every generation, in spite of everything, "gets bloodied", "step on the same rake", making the same mistakes their ancestors made. Mankind does not want to listen to warnings, does not want to learn from other people's mistakes.

Parents invest in their children the best qualities of their souls, and nature. And by their own example show kids how to do things right, and what not to do at all, but children still act in their own way.

Man often has to experience difficulties in life. This is, probably, so that we could, having analyzed the situation, change. These changes are not easy for everyone. Some people change

even after a simple verbal persuasion, while some need life to hit them a certain way for them to change their minds.

In general, there is a certain kind of inertia in human society. Mankind cannot move immediately from a slave system to a democratic one. Consciousness and values change gradually in people. Usually, people's values change from great upheavals.

For example, after the Second World War, people made a conclusion about Nazism. They understood what had to be done in order not to allow anymore wars. It cannot be said that everything was done absolutely right, but an attempt to find solutions to global problems was made. This is a slow but correct transition to a new level - the level of peace and mutual understanding. Some can learn and draw conclusions simply from words, and some need to make mistakes, and only then comes to them an understanding of what the Kingdom of God is - that is, peace, calm, and mutual understanding.

The kingdom of God is not easy to explain in words, so that everyone will understand at once and live happily. That's why Jesus said: **"I came to throw divisions, fire, sword, war on the ground."** Yes, of course, division, fire, sword and war are bad, but without this, mankind cannot come to true harmony, joy and understanding.

"For there will be five in a house: three will be against two." The word "five" means five senses of a person that are fighting against each other and thus, conditionally, divide a person into several parts.

"Three will be against two and two against three" - these are the inner contradictions of a man which pull him in different directions.

"The father against the son, and the son against the father. And they will stand solitary." This is most likely about traditions and prejudices. The most profound traditions handed down from parents, including everything transferred to us with our mother's milk, are logically compared to the word "Father." "Son" – relates to some new values and traditions acquired by the younger generation.

The concepts "Father" and "Son" can be called parts of a person which are in conflict with each other. A person from childhood is inculcated with the values of past generations. But as he grows up, his views and understanding of many life situations start to change; disagreements with prejudices arise. The young generation tries to break the fetters of many regulations and live freely. This is the war that occurs inside the person: "Father against son and son against father".

Maturing internally, a person becomes wiser, becomes whole. This gives him the ability to understand and accept his "father", having combined with new ideas, with the "son", so that they do not fight in him. Values inculcated in man from the beginning, that is, the "father", must enter into a symbiosis with acquired values and traditions, that is, with the "son."

Unfortunately, not everything leads to unity, peace and harmony. For example, revolutions that sought to completely tear down the old and build something new didn't lead to anything good. It is better to just take the best from the "fathers" and combine it with the values of "son". Only then will they become "one." Man, approaching the Kingdom of God, is able to unite very

different values and become internally whole and one.

"Jesus said: 'I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard and what no hand has touched and what has never occurred to the human mind.'"

People think that Christianity or everything connected with Jesus is a constant, uphill, life-long battle. But the battle is not an end in itself. The main thing is the achievement of the Kingdom of God - namely, unity, peace, and mutual understanding.

Yes, indeed, there are difficulties, there are battles, but this is not a way of life! This is a level that must be overcome in order to start living peacefully, beautifully and harmoniously.

But not everything is so simple. There comes the next stage, in the transition to which, it may be necessary to fight again. But this does not mean that one must live in a state of constant struggle. After going through all the stages, a person will see that joy, reap the fruits that are in the Kingdom of God, and understand that there is harmony within man. This is exactly what is said in the 17th verse: "And they will stand solitary."

"Jesus said: 'I shall give you what no eye has seen and what no ear has heard.'"

Perhaps there will be more battles, but living with Christ means acquiring harmony and wholeness, and not torment all your life.

A very good illustration of this verse is the history of our family. My wife, Marina, was brought up in a family where the Orthodox principles were very strong.

When Marina was 16-17 years old, she went to the evangelical community. Because of this, she had a huge conflict with her mom, who is of orthodox faith, as her mom was against all "sectarians". Her mom even resorted to taking her shoes; they had some quite serious quarrels. It was so hard, words can't convey it. In the end, my wife defended her right not to go to the Orthodox Church, and asserted her right to keep going to the Evangelical community she had been going to go.

It was there at that community that we met. When Marina was 19, we got married. From that moment on, her mom began to put less pressure on her. This was the transition to the next stage of life!

The first stage for Marina represented the period she lived with her family. On the way to the next stage, she had to fight for her perception of the world.

We stayed a few more years in that Evangelical community, attending meetings and taking an active part in the ministry. After a while, we saw problems and inconsistencies with both the Bible and common sense. Relations between people were like between bosses and subordinates, and not fraternal, as it should be. We disagreed with this.

When we realized that authoritarianism and dictatorship are incompatible with Christian doctrine, 9 months of very hard struggle and repeated attempts to explain that something was wrong began. Confrontation with people, whom we loved and appreciated, commenced. The situation was painful for us.

After some time we decided to leave, or rather, we were asked to leave and not to interfere

with them living according to their rules. This was the second battle.

After leaving the community, we moved on to the next level of happiness and harmony. Our stereotypes and principles connected to Christianity, but not to God, began to break down. Since then, much has changed in our lives.

In parallel with this there was another process.

I worked for a long time in GSC, a company which was engaged in writing such well-known computer games like "Cossacks", among others. But my wife and I wanted to do our own projects that would benefit people. At this time, all the projects of our department in the company were coming to their logical conclusion, and therefore the desire to start something of our own fitted in well with the course of the company's development, and I was able to make a smooth and painless exit for everyone involved. Our financial situation wasn't great, so things were difficult at first, and we had to live rather modestly. But this did not frighten us at all. On the contrary, we became more close-knit, friendly, and united. We began working on our projects in earnest, exerting the maximum efforts.

So ended the battles for the change of work and exit from the community in which we were. In our lives, a new era, a new stage, a new level of happiness, mutual understanding and unity, then commenced.

You cannot say: "Here, before you were unhappy, and now, finally, you became happy." The fact is, we considered ourselves happy, even while in the community we mentioned earlier. But, having experienced something new and better, one, naturally, has no desires to return to the old.

Of course, we had more stages, which are not so easy to talk about, as they were of a more subtle nature. Also, not enough room :)

But, again, even this simple illustration shows that you don't need to be afraid to change something in your life. Beyond the battle and agitation there is something better. When there is a vision and a goal, we need to fight for them; maybe even take risks, in order to start living better, on a new level of inner harmony and happiness, on a new level of the Kingdom of God in us.

The beginning and the end.

18. The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us how our end will be." Jesus said, "Have you discovered, then, the beginning, that you look for the end? For where the beginning is, there will the end be. Blessed is he who will take his place in the beginning; he will know the end and will not experience death."

Humanity is interested in everything related to the end of the world, with the second coming of Jesus Christ. As a rule, Christians are waiting for this. It seems to people that this will solve all the problems; evil will be defeated, and truth will triumph.

People are waiting for God to come and solve all the problems for them, as parents sometimes do homework for children, doing them, in essence, a disservice. Parents invest their soul, strength, money, everything they have, in bringing up their children. And now, the children are

grown and ready to get into college. Is it right to go and take the exams for them? Doing that would be a big mistake! As the children will not understand or learn anything.

Christians put a similar meaning in the second coming of Jesus Christ.

Many people perished and suffered, trying to change something in this world. Is it true it was all in vain? God will come and do our "homework", that is, immediately solve all our problems for us? I, myself, do not think that this is how it will all happen.

Instead of predicting when Jesus or similar things will come, you need to understand the basis and reasons for all this, why all this is happening.

Countless times people have tried to predict when the "end of the world" would come, when Jesus will come. This was one of the first signs of quackery and ignorance. Jesus Himself said: **"Do not go and do not chase"** for the predictions of the end of the world. It is not predictions that we should be engaged in, but in trying to learn and understand the basis, and causes of all that is happening around us.

I believe that it is the duty of everyone who wants to know God, to have an understanding of nature, and of moral, physical and spiritual laws, at least to the best of our abilities and talents. Therefore, I don't think it is the lot of a person who loves God to just sit and wait for Jesus to come and solve all problems. You need to learn actively, get to the basics.

One of the main principles that influenced me quite strongly in my time was the understanding of God in two main aspects:

- 1) Loving God.
- 2) Just God.

To these two well-known principles, I would add one more: God is intelligent, and devoid of primitive human vanity, thirst for praise and lust for power. Since recognition and respect are the result of wise actions by a person or God, and not of their demands for honors.

Love is not only when blessings are distributed to people, not only happiness, or the resolution of all problems, which is immediately offered to everyone. Sometimes happiness is not given immediately, but after trials, difficulties and sufferings. In the future, I know that all this will serve for good.

If you think that God is good, then many religious concepts look very suspicious and strange. For example, the concept of an eternal hell is a concept that is invented to intimidate people, to subordinate them to rulers, and to make them afraid of losing eternity. Only in a situation of fear of losing eternity are rulers and religious leaders easily able to influence and control people's minds. This concept is clearly contrary to the belief that God is good and just.

What kind of justice can we talk about if people think of eternal hell?

For example, a person who has committed a finite number of crimes cannot be punished by imprisonment (with constant torture) for an indefinite period, since in this case the punishment will be much greater than the crime. Is it fair - for a finite number of crimes to be punished forever in hell? This is at least a contradictory idea; it is most likely a fabrication and lie invented for the sole purpose of controlling people.

When we talk about the basics: **"Have you discovered, then, the beginning"** - then first of all you need to think about these two principles: God is good and God is just. Try to take these principles as a basis, read the Bible; having understood the events of the New and Old Testaments in a new way, look impartially and evaluate from the point of view of these principles.

As soon as I first reread the Bible, taking these two principles as a basis, a lot of things in my life turned upside down, and changed for the better. My eyes opened to many things, and much became clear. I began to honestly ask myself questions that I previously considered inconvenient. For example, the events described in Deuteronomy are they retribution and just, or genocide?

Now I will not talk about all the conclusions that have been made - you can be read them in the comments to other verses - but if you take these principles as the basis and try to study the Bible in this way, very much begins to change.

Let's return to the coming of Jesus, which people are very much waiting for. This is what is said about the second coming in the Gospel of Luke, chapter 17, verses 22-24: "Then he said to his disciples, 'The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.'" At the first reading, it seems that there must be a miracle, lightning will flash, there will be heavenly cataclysms, people will finally see Jesus Christ, for whom they had been waiting so long. People paint themselves such pictures without thinking about the deeper meaning of these words: The sky is inside a person, like the Kingdom of God, and the lightning flashing from one end of the sky to the other is lightning that flashed in the consciousness of a person - in his mind.

The two ends of the sky are, most likely, the two hemispheres of the human brain. Lightning is the illumination that will pass through the mind, the consciousness of a person, through which he will understand something really important. And thus will see Jesus Christ, not physically, not in the form of something supernatural, but with the eyes of the heart; will feel him through his soul, and become like him in life principles, and in love for people. That's what it means to see Jesus Christ in your life.

"Once asked the Pharisees, when the Kingdom of God will come, he answered them: The kingdom of God will not come in an observable way. And they will not say: here it is, or: it is there. For, behold, the kingdom of God is within you."(Luke 17:20-21).

The coming of the Kingdom of God takes place primarily within us. If a person does not change within, then the Kingdom of God will quickly turn into hell.

Let's return to Thomas: "For where the beginning is, there will the end be." Where is this beginning? The answer is simple - in the mind of man, in his soul. There was a beginning and there will be an end. There will be an illumination, that is, a moment when lightning will slip in the mind of a person.

In this context, the phrase sounds logical: **"For where the beginning is, there will the end**

be."

The one who will stand at the beginning, that is, the one who comes to sound mind, whom this insight will visit, who will advance in understanding how life works, will come to a reasonable understanding, including of religious issues, will know both the beginning and the end. This person will see Jesus Christ. This will bring him the Kingdom of God - joy and happiness in life. And he will not taste death.

People are afraid of death. In fact, a person can actually be dead during life. Yes, he breathes, he walks the earth, but there is no growth in him, no joy, and no vitality.

The Kingdom of God begins here and continues in eternity. For a person who really knows the beginning and the end, life is interesting and abounds in vitality; his life will not come to moral and spiritual death.

Yes, we believe that physical death for man is not the end. But first of all, what's important is the present, and not what will happen later, because if there is no present, there also won't be a future.

People often assume that if they are Christians and believe in certain doctrines, they will live forever after death, and God will place them in "good apartments".

If we do not live in unity and harmony with God here, then this will not be "there" too. I think this is the meaning of the phrase: "And he will not taste death."

Blessed is he who was before.

19. Jesus said: "Blessed is he who came into being before he came into being."

19. If you become my disciples and listen to my words, these stones will minister to you.

These sayings seem very strange, but let's try to find the key to them.

A more accurate translation is: "**Jesus said:**" **19. Blessed is he who existed from the beginning before he began to exist.**

19. If you become disciples in me (and) if you listen to my words, these stones will serve you. "

This translation suggests that the word "**exist**" in the context of "**if you will exist in me as disciples**" speaks not of the physical existence of man, but of his existence in God, his existence as a disciple of Jesus Christ.

If we talk about existence as involvement with God, then, most likely, we are talking about two categories of people; the two categories of the word "**exist**."

One category is to exist in God, to be connected to God.

The second is to become more explicitly his disciples - obtain, so to speak, the official status of "a disciple of Jesus."

For example, the centurion, Cornelius, of the book of Acts was a man who loved God, loved people, served them, and even built a synagogue for the Jews. He helped people a lot, was kind, and it was to him that God commanded Peter to go to preach and teach the truth. Cornelius is an example of a person who "**existed before he began to exist**." Cornelius is clearly connected to

God, and loves God, but until a certain point he was not recognized, as it were, as an "official" disciple of Jesus.

Why is "**blessed**"? Because he is a disciple of Jesus first and foremost in essence, and later also became so in letter, according to formal attributes. That is, blessed is the one who first became an inner disciple of Jesus' disciple, and then became one by "formal" attributes.

It is very bad if a person became a disciple of Jesus by external signs, said he loves God, and that he is a disciple of Jesus Christ, but is not a disciple in his inner essence. This is a very painful existence.

In the light of this interpretation, this verse becomes very understandable and resolves many of the contradictions that exist in Christianity.

When Christians preach somewhere, for example in dormitories, some students ask them: "What about the natives that lived on a remote island, did they all go to hell because they were not preached to?" The question is quite logical, but puts the preachers at an impasse, because it seems silly to send them all to hell because of transportation problems. Preachers are unable to give a clear, correct and beautiful answer to this question.

Everything is really very simple. It is important that a person become a partaker of God, become a disciple of Jesus Christ in essence, by inner aspirations. This is more important than to start being called a disciple of Jesus Christ. In that case, do we need to be called disciples of Jesus Christ? We'll talk about this a little later.

Reading in the Sermon on the Mount: "Blessed are the poor in spirit", "Blessed are the peacemakers", "Blessed are the meek" and other commandments, we actually see the image of a man who is truly blessed, truly close to God.

Often, religious people think that in order to become a Christian, a person of God, it is necessary to believe in a number of doctrines, always speak positively about Jesus Christ, attend meetings, read the Bible many times, and so on.

In fact, the goal is not just to make a person well-read, and not just to make him always say only good things about Jesus Christ. The goal is to make man a new creation, one who can truly love, and can follow the principles of the Sermon on the Mount. It is of such people that the Kingdom of God consists; it is precisely such people that can live in harmony, happiness, and agreement with each other and with God.

Those who divide and demand fulfillment of certain obligations from one another are unlikely to be related to the Kingdom of God, because the religious approach often destroys everything, it tortures people, and imposes on them unbearable burdens.

So, being a disciple of Jesus Christ in essence is when the words, commandments, the truths of Jesus became a part of a person. That is, to be not just well-read and speak well of God, but to become one who has these letters written on his heart. This is the essence of true existence in Jesus Christ, not formal - in letter, but in fact - in essence.

Reading and studying the Bible help us to understand everything more accurately and in more detail. The question of whether or not it is necessary to become an explicit disciple of Jesus will

be analyzed using an everyday example. It is one thing to have a passion for mathematical sciences and to grasp everything that relates to mathematics or physics, and another to study at a university and see the achievements of people during the whole era of the development of science.

Of course, it is good to study at the university, to acquire knowledge, but if studying at the university is not what a person wants, then this is a complete waste of time. In this case, more blessed is he who enrolled in the university because he wanted to study; accordingly, he is in his rightful place!

It is the same way with the teachings of Jesus Christ. If a person was essentially a Christian at heart, and he then acquired knowledge that helped him to understand everything deeper and better, he is really blessed and in his rightful place.

The situation with the aborigines on the distant islands is also becoming clear. They could have been with God, could have been disciples of Jesus Christ, even without having had a preacher, although this is not easy. Preachers, in turn, could, either, have spoiled everything, by inculcating in them false knowledge, or helped, by providing them with more information, and more necessary and correct knowledge.

There is a book "Eternity in their Hearts", which tells about people who had quite right ideas about God, about God's son long before they could learn anything about Jesus Christ.

Many peoples had legends that the son of God must come help and save them. People expected that someone would come and give them authentic information about God and the Son of God. The book "Eternity in their hearts" – is precisely about those people who became believers in the inner essence before they officially became believers.

I would also like to present the following quote from the book "The Shack" by Paul Young. Jesus says to the protagonist: "Those who love me come from every system that exists. They were Buddhists or Mormons, Baptists or Muslims, Democrats, Republicans and many who don't vote or are not part of any Sunday morning or religious institutions. I have followers who were murderers and many who were self-righteous. Some are bankers and bookies, Americans and Iraqis, Jews and Palestinians. I have no desire to make them Christian, but I do want to join them in their transformation into sons and daughters of my Papa, into my brothers and sisters, into my Beloved."

From the quote it is clear that being a disciple of Jesus Christ in one's inner essence, is much more valuable and blessed than simply acquiring external "formal trappings of a believer".

The 19th verse says: **"If you become my disciples and listen to my words, these stones will minister to you."** What do you mean **"the stones will minister to you"**? Stones, as a rule, are associated with letters written on the tables of the Old Testament. These are the two stones on which the 10 Commandments were written. Also the word "stones" is found in the New Testament. When the Pharisees demanded that the disciples stop praising Jesus, Jesus told them: "If they stop, the stones will cry out," that is, if the disciples are silent, the stones will cry. In this context, it is seen that the law itself will testify about Christ, even if the disciples are silent.

What do you mean **"the stones will serve you"**? That is, the law will serve a person? This statement sounds a bit blasphemous, because as a rule people understand that they must serve God, they must serve the Law of God, at least submit to it. If it sounds the opposite, that the law should serve people, then religious people feel some inconvenience and even disturbance. But, by and large, the law is given to people to serve them, and not people the law.

One day, when the Pharisees caught disciples eating grains on Saturday, which was prohibited by law (any work on the Sabbath was forbidden to the Jews), Jesus said: "The Sabbath is for man, and not man for the Sabbath."

Commandments are not given in order to torture or restrict a person; they are given so that a person, restraining himself from some unreasonable things, becomes happy. The commandments regulate the attitude towards parents, the attitude to the property of the surrounding people, and the attitude towards God. That is, they direct life in the direction in which the person will become happier and closer to God.

The law of God must be viewed not as limitations, but as a kind of framework that guides man to happiness.

Jesus said, **"And you will know the truth, and the truth will make you free"** (John 8:32).

In the end, one has to become truly free. But freedom must be paired with responsibility and maturity; it is incompatible with stupidity, irresponsibility, and immaturity. Freedom coupled with irresponsibility leads to destruction and torment for a person. That is why it says here: **"If you become a disciple in me, and listen to my words, these stones will minister to you."**

It is not right when a person rises above God and above the law, saying at the same time: "I can ignore what I want, I can do what I want, and I do not care about the law of God." This is inherently destructive.

Finding freedom, maturity and integrity, acquiring the commandments of God, written not on stones but on the heart, a person becomes free and can use the law for his happiness, and not just be subject to and limited by the law.

Becoming a disciple in essence, a person begins to really understand what the law says. And then the law begins to serve the person and not the person the law.

Five trees

19. "For there are five trees for you in Paradise which remain undisturbed summer and winter and whose leaves do not fall. Whoever becomes acquainted with them will not experience death."

20. The disciples said to Jesus: "Tell us what the kingdom of heaven is like." He said to them, "It is like a mustard seed. It is the smallest of all seeds. But when it falls on tilled soil, it produces a great plant and becomes a shelter for birds of the sky."

At first glance, these two verses do not seem to be much related. But, as we have often observed in the Gospel of Thomas, the next verse usually provides a clue to the meaning of the previous. The 19th verse propels us to an understanding of the 20th.

How are we to understand "**you have five trees**"?

This is like an equation with 5 unknowns. 'Trees' can be understood in a lot of different ways. But the 23rd verse compels us to think that perhaps one of these trees is what grows from a mustard seed (the parable of a mustard seed in the canonical Gospels).

This leads us to the idea that, most likely, the trees in question are trees that are mentioned in the Bible. Let's try to list and find these trees in the Bible.

One of them we already know – this is something that grows from mustard grain. If we look at the trees that are mentioned in the Bible, we immediately find two more trees. In the book of Genesis there is a tree of life and a tree of knowledge of good and evil. Here we have already found three trees. It remains to find two more.

One of the most important trees or that which is mentioned in both the Old and New Testaments is the vine. The people of Israel are compared to the vine; Jesus compares himself to the vine, and his disciples - with the branches.

Another tree, but of a slightly different nature, is mentioned in the New Testament - the tree (the cross) on which Jesus Christ is crucified. There are many places in the Bible where the cross is mentioned just like a tree, for example: "He himself bore our sins" in his body on the cross, so that we might die to sins and live for righteousness; "by his wounds you have been healed." (1 Peter 2:24)

The cross is very often used in the context of a tree, which encourages us to consider the cross of Jesus to one of these five trees, especially since Christians attach great importance to this.

So, based on the Bible, we found five trees that may well be related to trees in paradise:

- 1 - Tree of life;
- 2 - Tree of knowledge of good and evil;
- 3 - The cross (the tree on which Jesus is crucified);
- 4 – The tree that sprouted from the mustard seed (mustard tree);
- 5 - Grapevine.

Now let's try to analyze each of these trees in turn, understand what they are and what is the meaning of each.

The tree of life - symbolizes the desire of man for eternity, God, something higher. This tree symbolizes a person's life with God; the joy of living with God is what makes a person an eternal being, and not someone who simply lives to die tomorrow.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil is a much underrated tree. In most cases, Christians believe that this is a bad tree, since the fruit was eaten from it and the story of the fall began. Therefore it is considered a dubious tree.

The tree of knowledge of good and evil, as far as we have seen and studied, is an extremely important tree, and is in fact very good. The only issue is that knowledge must occur at the right time. Knowledge at the wrong time, when a person is not yet ready to understand certain things, master skills, can lead to disaster. But if everything is done at the right time, it leads to happiness and bliss. Classical examples of knowledge at the wrong time, when a person is not ready: the

sexual life of man, nuclear energy, computer use. The tree of knowledge of good and evil symbolizes what a person should know. A person cannot be blissful, if he does not understand, if he does not aspire to something higher, does not learn anything new, does not develop. The tree of knowledge of good and evil is responsible for knowledge and development.

The Bible says that you need to love God with all your heart, with all your soul, **mind** and power. Although people want to love God with both their soul and heart, but somehow with the mind things are much worse.

For the last couple thousand years, the natural sciences have been developing rapidly, but the knowledge of God has stood still. People believe that development in this area is not very necessary. The main thing, they believe, is to conserve the truth, to strive for the standard of the first few centuries. It's like trying to attain the standards of a baby lying on a changing table. This is the wrong approach! And all that is from the fact that the tree of the knowledge of good and evil is mostly perceived by Christians as something unnecessary, and harmful.

Comprehension of God should develop in the same way as the natural sciences. There must be amazing discoveries, there must be progress in this matter - there is very little of this right now and the search is not so intensive. In most cases, Christians simply try to keep dogmas and defend themselves from attacks by atheists. Therefore, the tree of knowledge of good and evil is, very likely, the most undervalued of all trees.

For us personally, it is especially important. Knowledge, the ability to change your point of view in favor of a better opinion, explanation, is most valuable.

Personally, it is not so important for me to keep my convictions - it's more important to change them for something better. Therefore, the ability to change for us is one of the virtues, and this virtue is connected with the tree of the knowledge of good and evil.

The cross of Jesus is the tree on which Jesus Christ is crucified. It symbolizes sacrifice, a cross that we ourselves must carry in life, not grumbling, not complaining about fate. A person who simply wants to avoid difficulties, in fact, attracts them like a magnet. We must, imitating Jesus, courageously accept troubles, overcome and conquer them.

That each one has a cross to carry is just a fact of life. Simply, there is something that a person needs to overcome. It is important how people relate to this. If he hates it, tries constantly to muddle up in this matter, then there will be no bliss. The cross in your life needs to be received with willingness and courage.

The tree Cross of Jesus symbolizes the sacrifice of God for us and also our sacrifice for the sake of other people. He, who does not sacrifice and does not give, cannot be a blessed person. The one, who lives for himself, for his own pleasure, will not be able to be truly happy. Therefore, among all the five trees, the tree on which Jesus was crucified seems the most difficult, but it is absolutely necessary for the happiness of man.

The tree which sprouted from the mustard seed (mustard tree) – isn't very much like a tree. There is an interesting article about the mustard tree online. Do a Google search for "mustard tree" – the site 'hrampokrov.ru' has useful information that should help in understanding this

issue. A mustard tree is a shrub that reproduces very quickly. Here is the most important quote about this tree: "Pliny the Elder wrote in the 1st century CE, on two characteristic properties of a mustard plant: the extreme health benefits of mustard and the extreme danger to the garden. Once sown, it quickly spreads and destroys the garden, filling it. Because of its uncontrolled spread, in Judaism, it is forbidden to sow mustard in gardens and orchards and it is prescribed to be sown only in the fields where it can be grown separately from other plants."

If you think about such properties of mustard, then, it seems to me, it symbolizes the infectiousness of the Kingdom of God. Often, people tried to spread the "Kingdom of God" by force, that is, to compel a person to believe, especially in the middle and early centuries. People did not know the power symbolized by the mustard plant. The heretics and Gnostics had a better understanding of this issue. Remember, with what fury Catholics exterminated the Cathars; they feared their teachings like animals fear fire. Protestantism also spread like wildfire, like an epidemic, while bringing people liberation, until it became a dull set of dogmas.

Jesus Himself said that the Kingdom of God is like a mustard plant, and here the basic general quality is contagiousness. The Kingdom of God itself is attractive not because of pressure or manipulation, not because of what was forced, but because it brings happiness and joy to a person's life. This is what makes the Kingdom of God really contagious.

Everyone wants to live happily and joyfully. If a person really takes in all the principles that Jesus spoke about, this will open for him the way to joy and happiness. For this it is not necessary to force or manipulate him, or to make him a member of some strange organization. This is the meaning of the mustard tree. Its contagiousness is in the fact that it displaces everything superfluous, all else in the garden. On account of this, the mustard tree is a very important tree in Paradise.

The vine is a special tree. In the Old Testament the people of Israel are compared to the vine. Moreover, it is emphasized that the vine itself as a tree is not very useful, except, perhaps, its fruits. True, there is another use - as firewood. It is believed that vine firewood is very good; they are fragrant and therefore the best for the barbecue. In the Gospel of John, chapter 15, verses 5-6, Jesus said: "I am the vine; you are the branches. If you remain in me and I in you, you will bear much fruit; apart from me you can do nothing. If you do not remain in me, you are like a branch that is thrown away and withers; such branches are picked up, thrown into the fire and burned."

That is, both worldly and biblical meanings teach us that the vine is useful either by fruits or by the fact that it burns well.

I searched Google for what I could use a vine for, and found practically nothing. There are only two uses - its fruits are edible and the vine makes good firewood.

It is believed that the vine symbolizes the church. From the above quotation, this also becomes clear. The vine is Jesus himself and the people who dwell in him.

It is clear that the word "church" means not a building, not an organization with a specific charter, but people who live in Jesus Christ. It is the community, the people themselves who are the church.

The vine symbolizes the fact that the Kingdom of God in man is completely opposite to the individualism of man. That is, a person becomes blissful in fellowship with others, in harmony with them, and serving them. This is precisely what comprises the church, rather than just charters, dogmas, buildings and authorities.

The vine symbolizes communication, life together, happiness in society, service to people, and mutual understanding.

The vine symbolizes fruits, that is, grapes, and grapes are known for the fact that they are used to make wine. Wine in this case is a communion that brings joy and fun, like wine (in reasonable quantities, of course) brings joy and fun into a person's life.

"He who knows them will not taste death." There is a difference between hearing information and knowing information. To know is to really make something one's own, to become one with something; even knowing in a sexual way is to unite with one's wife and become one. To know these trees is to translate these principles into practice, to become one with them. Having known, a person will live, not like one that is dead or barely alive, but as one that is truly alive.

The parable of the field and the children.

21. Mary said to Jesus: "Whom are your disciples like?" He said, "They are like children who have settled in a field which is not theirs. When the owners of the field come, they will say, 'Let us have back our field.' They (will) undress in their presence in order to let them have back their field and to give it back to them."

Therefore I say: "if the owner of a house knows that the thief is coming, he will begin his vigil before he comes and will not let him dig through into his house of his domain to carry away his goods. You, then, be on your guard against the world. Arm yourselves with great strength lest the robbers find a way to come to you, for the difficulty which you expect will (surely) materialize"

Let there be among you a man of understanding. When the grain ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand and reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear!

These verses are surprisingly related, although at first glance it seems that we are talking about different things, between which there is no logical connection. They show the stages of man's spiritual development.

In verse 21 it is not entirely clear who "them", "they", are, and also what that "their" means. After reading another translation, everything becomes clearer: "Mary said to Jesus: "Who do your disciples look like?" He said: "They are like little children who have settled in a field that does not belong to them. When the owners of the field come, they (the hosts) will say: "Leave us our field". They (the disciples) will undress in their presence in order to leave it to them (the owners) and give them (the owners) their field. "

This is the first stage in the formation of man as a disciple of Jesus, which is characterized by a certain simplicity and naivety. In other words, this is childhood, naivety, the first steps. It's not literally about children; it's about the apprentice disciples of Jesus, who are taking the first steps

in this direction.

What does "a field that does not belong to the disciples" mean? This means that they came to a place that was created long before them; they adopted a worldview that was created long before them, for example, religion, Christianity.

An alien field happens in the life of every person. It happened with me. When I was a 5th year physics student at the university, I seriously decided to become a Christian, a disciple of Jesus. I was invited to church. I did not refuse and came to a meeting of the University Bible Society. After a while I realized that the field on which I had settled was not mine, and did not belong to me, since the rules and customs there were formed long before me.

My wife was also invited to join the Bible Society, and she also settled on this field that did not belong to her.

My wife and I were in this society about 11 years. At some point during this time, we got into a certain conflict that had to do with rules that we thought were authoritarian and dictatorial. And with some other things that were, in our view, completely inconsistent with the teachings of Jesus Christ, namely, the relationship "master - worker ", or "boss - servant ".

When we became enlightened and started to say that relationships should not be one of domination, but fraternity. And that certain behaviors we noticed were inconsistent with Christian teachings, we were asked to leave and not interfere. In other words, they told us: "Leave us our field."

"They will undress in their presence in order to leave it to them and give them their field." Disciples undress in the presence of the owners in order to leave them their field. So too it was with us. We came to this organization with pure hearts and sincere motives. We sincerely tried to solve the problems that arose, being sure that they could be solved. We bared our soul before them and eventually left and gave back to them the field on which we had settled, but which did not belong to us. It really was not our field! Ours is in a completely different place, and is quite different.

At first glance it seemed that this story had to do with just us. But after talking with others who came to the meeting on that day, we found out that each one of them had exactly the same story as ours. Everyone came to an organization that had its own charter, rules, and principles that were very different from what we read in the Bible, from how we understood Jesus Christ. And, accordingly, each, in his time, was either expelled or asked to leave and not interfere with the organization in which he had found himself. Hence it follows that each one came and settled on someone else's field, since they didn't have theirs yet.

It's amazing that, if we, as disciples of Jesus, try to follow what is written in the Bible, the way we see and understand Jesus, conflict sooner or later arises. You could, of course, say: "Okay, do not touch us, leave us in your field. It is all right, we will tolerate everything, as long as we can stay in this field." But in this verse it is said that it is necessary to be consistent to the end, and that a real disciple of Jesus should not put up with such things.

Almost always it happens that people come to someone else's field and settle on it. But what

happens then?

Time passes, and people remain sincere, remain themselves with an open and pure soul. This is exactly what the owners of this field do not like, and therefore sooner or later these people will be asked to leave. From this moment,, the next stage, which is described in verse 25, begins for the departed people: "Therefore I say: "if the owner of a house knows that the thief is coming, he will begin his vigil before he comes and will not let him dig through into his house of his domain to carry away his goods. You, then, be on your guard against the world. Arm yourselves with great strength lest the robbers find a way to come to you, for the difficulty which you expect will (surely) materialize. "

"Therefore I say." What does "therefore" mean? The word "therefore" indicates that there is a connection between the 24th and 25th verses. From the moment the disciples were asked to leave the field, despite the fact that they bared their souls to the owners of this field, they acquired something truly valuable - their home. That is, the beliefs they had to defend in that field - what they had really suffered through, what they had really achieved, and not what was inculcated. This is their home, which must be protected. They see not only a person with sincere motives and an open heart, but thieves and charlatans, who are especially numerous in religion.

Unfortunately, religion tends to attract many people who either want to profit from the big crowd or enjoy power. Such thieves and charlatans are easily spotted by former babies (disciples), who were asked to leave the field. The weapon in this case is both the Bible and very firm internal beliefs that were developed by the disciples during the course of passage through the first stage.

After a person is expelled from the field, he develops a very hard inner core, which does not allow him to be as naive as he was at the first stage. The next stage commences - the stage of wakefulness and acquisition of firmness in one's convictions. This is what will not allow him to, once again, go to someone else's field and settle on it, just as easily as the first time. The man has already acquired a certain house of his kingdom.

"Be on your guard against the world." Usually, people have a peculiar understanding of what is meant by worldly and spiritual things. Worldly things, for example, are considered work, going to the movies, walking on the street, talking with friends. Spiritual things are taken to mean going to church, praying, and reading the Bible.

It seems to me that this stereotype is completely off the mark. The worldly and spiritual things lie in the plane of love, right and beautiful deeds, principles, and beliefs. Do we act according to the principles of the commandments of Christ? Do we love people? Do we deal with people in accordance with the truths of Christ? This is what can be tied to the concept of "worldly" and "spiritual" things.

The worldly and spiritual are not distinguished by external signs: whether a person reads the Bible, went to church and so on, but by how he treats people, how he loves, how much his life and principles correspond to the principles of Jesus Christ.

"Be on your guard against the world." - love people, serve them, live the principles of God

in the simplest situations. Go to the movies - live by these principles; communicate with others, drink even beer with them - live by these principles.

"Arm yourself with great strength." Be ready to fight back and don't get into the same situation with the field again; do not go back to someone else's field again. If you have a home, then develop and protect it.

"For the difficulty which you expect will (surely) materialize." This state is not the last stage in the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ. This is the stage of waiting. When a person seeks, when he has already understood something, has acquired, for example, an inner solid core, he still waits anyway. Be in this state of wakefulness until you find and understand what is real and worthwhile.

Then the 26th verse describes the next stage of the disciple of Jesus Christ. **"Let there be among you a man of understanding. When the grain ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand and reaped it. Whoever has ears to hear, let him hear."**

Being in a waking state, trying to practice the principles of Jesus Christ, a person gradually acquires very important qualities; he becomes knowledgeable. Knowledgeable – this is not just someone who has a lot of knowledge. Knowledgeable means someone who does everything on time.

Remember the principle of the Fall? The Fall and, in general, sin is not when a person does something bad, but when he does everything not at the right time, out of place; when everything is not right in his life.

Out of place - this is the sinful state of a person, when he does not know what he is doing. And the next stage that comes to a person's life during wakefulness is the stage of a knowledgeable person, when he intuitively understands what to do and when to do it.

In the Bible there are these words: "If you remain in me and my words remain in you, ask whatever you wish, and it will be done for you." (John 15: 7).

The knowledgeable person's desires come true. A knowledgeable person begins to taste and feel that God is with him. He starts to, not only read the Bible, thinking: "Well, yes, probably it's true", but to actually experience it in his life.

"When the grain ripened, he came quickly with his sickle in his hand and reaped it."

This is exactly about the fact that everything happens in a person's life at the right time. He begins to hit the target and feel that God is really with him.

But this is still not the last stage of those described here.

Eyes in place of an eye.

22. Jesus saw infants being suckled. He said to his disciples, "These infants being suckled are like those who enter the kingdom." They said to him, "Shall we then, as children, enter the kingdom?" Jesus said to them, "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor

the female be female; and when you fashion eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter the kingdom."

This is the next stage in a person's life. This expression of Jesus is well-known: "Be like children." Jesus often compared his disciples with babies and said that such are the kingdom of God.

Disciples, like all people, think, mostly with amazement: "How, if we are babies, will we enter the kingdom?" This sounds strange. Is simple naivety and childish stupidity really all that is needed to enter the kingdom? In the 24th verse naivety was manifested. This was a certain stage on the way to the Kingdom of God in man, but this is only the beginning. Therefore, Jesus explains to them that no, it's not a matter of naivety; it's a matter of further development. It is interesting that, developing, a person still preserves certain children's qualities.

If life has worn out man, he becomes cynical; it seems to him that he knows everything and no one can advise him. The word for this is: "obdurate". He is not able to hear advice, and cannot change, because he thinks he knows everything, does everything right and is always right about everything. This is not a knowledgeable person. Usually such people constantly blunder in life. They know everything, but for some reason they are not asked about anything.

The 26th verse does not apply to people who say they know everything. In fact, knowledgeable people refer to those who, like infants, retain their naivety, simplicity, and openness to change, even being experienced people. It refers to those who do not think that they are the best - that they are above everyone else, that they are the best teachers, or that they can do anything better than anyone else. If a person thinks that way of himself, then, he, most likely, got stuck at some stage and stopped developing.

It is the qualities of simplicity and spontaneity that must be preserved in a person to the end – like in infants. A person should be ready to change, develop, even being very experienced.

"Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one."

This is the next stage, where you need to make two (husband and wife), which are in each person, one whole. It is necessary rid one's life of the contradictions that tearing one apart; make one's internal and external sides one; work on self to make both the outside and the inside identical. This is very difficult! A person always wants to show himself better than he really is. Only having overcome and having got rid of this, can a person become simple and open.

"And the upper side as the underside" - It is usually believed that a person has things of higher and lower natures. For instance, thinking activities, and certain spiritual aspirations, are considered things of a higher nature. While sexual desires are thought of as things of a lower nature.

But in fact a person must find unity in everything: both in the higher and in the lower. The upper side should become as the lower one, and the lower side as the upper. So that the person would not be ashamed of what he does, so that he is ready to give an account.

I would like everyone to understand that the sexual side of a person is not something

shameful; it is just as beautiful as the achievements of the human mind, as well as spiritual aspirations.

"And when you make the male and the female one and the same" - the husband and wife should become one whole, so that the mind and emotions merge into one and do not contradict each other, do not tear the person into two parts.

"So that the male not be male nor the female be female" Naturally, there are certain stereotypes inculcated in us from childhood, about what a woman should be and what a man should be like. This does not mean that the stereotypes are bad or wrong. Yes, a man should take care of a woman, give her compliments, flowers, speak beautiful words to her – these are not the things you need to get rid of. It is necessary to become not just "I am a man", but to become both a man and a woman; then the male will be able to understand the female, and the female the male.

In order to truly understand and love a person, one must learn to live in the body of another person, understand his desires, look not only from one's bell tower, see and understand not only from one's point of view.

"When you fashion eyes in the place of an eye" Starting from childhood, as we grow and develop, we are inculcated with certain prejudices, experience and views. We are taught how to look at certain phenomena, events, and actions. We are instilled the rules of morality and behavior. That's exactly what the eye represents. Most often this person has one eye - his point of view.

Before that, we said that a person should try to look at things from another person's perspective, evaluate phenomena and events from all sides, be versatile enough to live not only in one's own body, but also in the bodies of those around us.

A person will have to part with his point of view; he will have to make eyes in the place of an eye, in order to be able to look at things from all positions. To do this, it is necessary to transform one's system of views into a more perfect one, which more accurately describes the surrounding reality. And one needs to learn to be more objective.

The disciple of Jesus has to **make** eyes in the place of an eye, in order to get closer to the Kingdom of God, to cease being a man and to cease being a woman, to become not only himself but also the surrounding people, in order to understand and love them.

"A leg in place a leg" A person most often goes where he is sent. The leg symbolizes motion, movement of a person. To make a "leg in place of a leg" means to really understand where one is going, the purpose of one's life, why one does the things he does. To do things not just because someone said they had to be done or it was necessary to do them, but to find meaning and proceed with understanding.

"Image in place of an image" Usually a certain set of images is inculcated to man, including the image of God. A person is taught that God is so-and-so, and that he must be imagined that way. In Orthodoxy icons are very common. For what purpose are they? It is to make it easier for a person to imagine God. As a rule, a very fearsome image of God (Father) is inculcated, that

looks sternly at people to make sure someone doesn't do anything wrong, does not sin, or make mistakes.

Making an "image in place of an image" has to be done through research, through using all of one's life experience, historical information, the experience of other researchers, in order to connect all in a harmonious picture. Alas, there is a large void in this area. People most often either ignore the search for truth, or blindly follow the traditions and "lore of their ancestors". Although we have been taught for thousands of years that deviation from a simple understanding of biblical truths is fraught with the danger of falling into terrible heresies, the Bible itself pushes us to search for an "image in place of an image."

Remember the genocide in the Old Testament, and a lot of completely wild stories, for example, about the Gibeonites and David, Elisha and the bear, and Ananias and Sapphira. These stories seem to push us: Well, will you accept it, "swallow it without looking" or will you look for an "image in place of an image"?

Instead of the image that is imposed on us, it is necessary to create a real image, to see with those eyes that we made in place of the eye. It is with these eyes that one can truly see the image, see God in a different way, not in the way he was painted to us. When this happens, then we will enter the Kingdom of God. This is the main theme of the whole of this interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas.

These verses very well describe the path of a disciple of Jesus Christ. Of course, it's one thing to see, to imagine this, and quite another to walk this path and really create an eye in place of an eye. And learn to look from the position of others, from the position of a man and a woman, to make the outer side as the inner, and the upper - as the lower.

This is a very difficult path, because it contradicts public prejudices and instilled images. Yes, it is not easy, but the fact that we understand the task is good. This is the beginning of the path to the Kingdom of God.

The power of unification

23. Jesus said, "I will choose you, one from a thousand and two from ten thousand, and they will stand as a single one."

In order to understand this verse, it is necessary to understand two points: first, to solve a mathematical problem (one from a thousand, two from ten thousand); secondly, to understand what "election", "chosenness", "elected" means.

The concept of "chosenness" repeatedly appears in the Bible, as well as in the Gospel of Thomas. Wrong understanding of the meaning of this concept can be misleading. Many films and books are based on the notion of "chosenness".

Let's try to figure out what the word "chosenness" means.

The history of this word has a lot to do with the saying of Jesus: **"No one comes to the Father, but through Me"** Due to a misunderstanding, this seemingly simple phrase raised a huge storm in the minds of many people. But the meaning is actually quite simple.

It is said of Christ in 1 Corinthians 1:24 and 1:30, that he is **"God's power and God's wisdom"** This means that it is possible to come to the Father only through comprehension of his mind, his wisdom, through living in accordance with the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Such a simple thought, but it is perceived incorrectly. What people were given to understand by the various preachers was that they could come to the Father only "through our congregation, which is the most correct one. If you do not believe in the truth of our congregation, you cannot come to God." It is this wrong idea that has penetrated all sects and some big religious organizations, that leads to the division of people. Look only at how many different communities and confessions in Christianity are now irreconcilable to each other! People having seemingly close views become bitter enemies. This is what happens when people with fanaticism follow their misunderstanding of Jesus' sayings.

As a rule, chosenness is understood as follows: God has chosen one particular person and only raises him, helps only him in everything. And for this, the chosen one should be very grateful to God, and appreciate that this "lottery" fell to him, and not to someone else.

In every religious organization, a person is called chosen, thereby emphasizing the amazing privilege he has received, and for which he should be grateful to the organization. Therefore, the completely normal concept of "chosenness" has become a means of manipulating people.

What does the word "chosenness" really mean? "Chosenness" is to choose a person, who can, wants to, and knows how to perform a certain task better than many others.

Election is not a question of who is lucky and who is not. A "chosen" person is someone who knows how to do their work better than others. He has certain qualities, knowledge, skills, and abilities that allow him to perform a unique job. In "chosenness", as in any knowledge, there is great power. After all, there is nothing surprising in the fact that one person can be stronger than a thousand or even a million.

For example, a person with a gun can chase away a crowd of a hundred people without automatic weapons. A person armed with knowledge and gifted with high intelligence can make a large number of people believe in him, and thus he will be stronger than them. Therefore, "chosenness" is rather a measure of the hypothetical value of a person's knowledge, skills, and abilities, and not just an issue of being lucky or unlucky, as in a lottery.

Every person is chosen precisely for his unique task, which only he can solve. Being chosen does not mean that a certain person is better than all others. And is not a reason for senseless pride. This is the ability to be in your place at the right time, to be able to not miss the moment that is the shining moment for you.

Having talked about what chosenness is, let us now think about the mathematical problem that confronts us.

The phrase "one from a thousand and two from ten thousand" is used in the Bible several times. For example, Deuteronomy, chapter 32, verse 30, says, **"How could one man chase a thousand, or two put ten thousand to flight, unless their Rock had sold them, unless the Lord had given them up?"** And Psalm 91, verse 7: **"A thousand may fall at your side, ten**

thousand at your right hand, but it will not come near you."

It turns out that one can chase away a thousand, and two can drive ten thousand if they unite with each other and with God. The strength of one chosen person is equal to the strength of a thousand people, and the strength of two is equal to that of ten thousand. For example, one person can persuade a thousand people of something, and send them somewhere. This is not surprising, and is not a cause for pride – but for greater responsibility in life.

Two people, united as one, and with God, are ten times stronger than each taken separately. This is a very important idea, because the power in the complete unity of two people is really great.

In all times, this force was well understood and resisted. It isn't in the benefit of rulers for people to be united, and therefore strong, and thus able to resist. No ideology, including religious ones, is interested in making people reasonable and wise. Throughout their history, religious figures have tried to divide the husband and the wife units, so that they are never one whole unit, because in the event of unification, they could overcome everything, figure out everything, and succeed in all their undertakings.

One of the strong, effective and powerful diversions, thanks to which it becomes easier to manage people, as it prevents couple from being one whole unit, is the idea of labeling unhealthy and spoiled that which unites husband with wife, namely, the sexual life. Sexual relations in Christianity were declared something second-rate, ugly, and shameful; something which should not be talked about, and should make one blush.

Christian thinkers and leaders try to make sex as unattractive as possible; suitable only for procreation. Everyone understands that if there is no sexual relationship, mutual understanding, and mutual respect in the family, there won't be unity either. When there is no unity, people are, of course, easier to control. Conversely, if people truly support each other sexually, morally and spiritually, they become ten times stronger, and, as such, very difficult to control. This is what is said in the verse: two are ten times stronger than one.

Rulers and ecclesiastical authorities were interested in having each person, individually, tied to his master - to his church, to his pastor, but definitely not to his wife or husband. Let them live under one roof at the distance of a stretched chain, but they will not become one person.

My wife and I were convinced of this personally. When we were in the University Bible Society, we felt the opposition to the formation of our family as one whole unit. If, for example, a husband starts to resist the ideas and methods of the organization, then pressure is brought to bear on his wife to influence her husband, and bring him back to the "bosom of truth." All this was presented in this context: It is necessary to love God more than each other; one must be more devoted to the ideas of the organization more than to each other, since being devoted to each other is idolatry.

But in fact, as we later realized, it was an attempt to resist the the two, that is, us, from becoming one. Because once we become one, we will understand how to destroy the wrong ideology. This is exactly what happened to us.

From the very birth of our family, we fought for our hearts to always beat together, so that no rift, no gulf would begin to separate us.

Human morality is aimed at condemning betrayal, and deception. But it should, really, be aimed at uniting people, so that problems are solved at their very earliest stages, when the cracks have not yet turned into a gulf.

This verse is like a hymn to the unity of people, a hymn to the end that the two, having merged together, became much stronger than each individually.

The writing of the interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas would have been absolutely impossible without the help of Elena Tisichnaya, who helped me express all these ideas in an accessible and understandable form. Pay attention to the surname “Tisichnaya” (meaning thousandth in Russian) - just like in this verse. When I myself was trying to write the interpretation of the Gospel of Thomas, things went very slowly, although there were ideas and an understanding of many issues. But when we started to do it together with Elena, when we combined our talents and abilities, things went ten times faster. This is another example of the fact that there is a great deal of strength in union.

Show us the place where you are.

24. His disciples said to him, "Show us the place where you are, since it is necessary for us to seek it." He said to them, "Whoever has ears, let him hear. There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness. "

The wording of the disciples' question to Jesus is rather interesting: "Show us the place where You are." They were in essence asking to be shown the place they needed to go to, to meet Jesus, in order to have the opportunity to communicate with Him and worship Him. The question is somewhat odd on account of the fact that Jesus was standing in front of them when they posed it, and there was no need to go anywhere to be with him! Most likely, it was an issue of where they were to look for Jesus in the future, when he would no longer be with them.

A similar question arises in every faith. All religions have their holy places. Muslims, for example, need to make a trip to Mecca at least once in their life; Orthodox Christians have icons that need to be touched, temples, where to go to pray; Protestants have prayer houses. In every religion there is a place where you can come to, to find God.

The idea of a particular place, where one could come to in order to meet God, is refuted not only in the Gospel of Thomas, but also in the classical Gospels.

John 4: 19-24, says: “Sir,” the woman said, “I can see that you are a prophet. Our ancestors worshiped on this mountain, but you Jews claim that the place where we must worship is in Jerusalem.” “Woman,” Jesus replied, “believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem. You Samaritans worship what you do not know; we worship what we do know, for salvation is from the Jews. Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the

Spirit and in truth."

All denominations of Christianity, especially Protestantism, agree that man is an extremely sinful, spoiled, and bad creature. And that only God's grace can save him.

Practical observations and this verse show that the idea of absolute corruption is absolutely wrong. If a person is always told that he is bad and has no talents, he will, eventually, believe it and, even if it is not so, will become a bad and incompetent person. On the other hand, if you find something good in him, some striking feature, talk often about his positive qualities, light a fire in his soul, then even out of a scoundrel you can make a person who can be of benefit.

That is, it turns out that **"The place where You are - is the light in every person"**.

It says in Luke 6:45: "A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in his heart, and an evil man brings evil things out of the evil stored up in his heart. For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of."

In the heart of every person there is good and evil. The victorious one will be that which we are able to kindle and that to which we give the opportunity to grow.

The teachings of Christ are directed at kindling in man a fire of knowledge, of truth, of interest in truth, and of interest in learning.

A good example is the upbringing of children. Each family is faced with the fact that parents always try to get a child to do what is interesting to them, not the child. They try to instill in him a love for the line of work that they are engaged in. The child resists it; he does not want it. Why? Because he is not interested; it isn't his cup of tea.

This approach to parenting is wrong. Instead of forcing him to do this or not do that, the child should be helped to open himself, open up his talents and develop them. This is an important truth, but, unfortunately, parents do not immediately come to it, they do not immediately understand that it is necessary to develop in the child that which he does best, and not impose their ideas on him.

"There is light within a man of light, and he lights up the whole world. If he does not shine, he is darkness."

The process of human development entails finding and developing your potential and sharing the results with those around you. Only then will the process take place harmoniously and there will indeed be growth.

The real development lies not only in discovering something new, but in sharing the fruits of your labor. It is necessary not to allow a person to "stew in his own juice." This is, in fact, one of the reasons I needed to write this essay on the Gospel of Thomas.

It's not enough to just learn something, having learned, you need to tell others, a not be too lazy to bring it to a "working version". Otherwise there will be no use, no light. This is in tune with what Jesus said at the very end of his stay with the disciples: **"Go into all the world and preach the gospel," "Teaching them to observe all that I commanded you," "Behold, I am with you always, to the very end of the age "**.

The essence of the spread of the Kingdom of God is not to repeat the same sequence of words

(for example, believe in Jesus, Jesus died for your sins or something like that), but to uncover potential in ourselves, help others, and ignite people with the desire to live by the principles of Jesus Christ, because they work.

A mote in your brother's eye.

25. Jesus said: "Love your brother like your soul. Guard him like the apple of your eye."

26. Jesus said: "You see the mote in your brother's eye, but you do not see the beam in your own eye. When you cast the beam out of your own eye, then you will see clearly to cast the mote from your brother's eye."

These verses sound rather familiar. Similar statements are also made in the classical Gospels; they were heard even by people who may not have been interested in the Bible. Let's try to understand them and understand their meaning more deeply.

In the Gospel of Thomas, there is the 22th verse which has a similar meaning.: **"Jesus said to them: "When you make the two one, and when you make the inside like the outside and the outside like the inside, and the above like the below, and when you make the male and the female one and the same, so that the male not be male nor the female; and when you fashion eyes in the place of an eye, and a hand in place of a hand, and a foot in place of a foot, and a likeness in place of a likeness; then will you enter the kingdom."**

"When you make eyes in the place of an eye" - the ability to look not only from your point of view, from your own side and position, but to see with the eyes of people around you, to think the way people around you think, not to adjust the situation to suit your principles and yourself.

"Love your brother as your soul." Brother here means not just a blood relative. It is any person who happened to be nearby and in need of love, support, and advice. It is worth taking a look at the parable of the Good Samaritan (Luke 10: 29-36). Now, a person who says he loves everyone, most likely, does not attach any importance to this and generally does not love anyone but himself.

To truly love your brother as your own soul is not easy. Yes, it is easy and convenient to love someone who is far away (there is the phrase "to love at a distance"), since one does not have to deal with the person's shortcomings every day, resolve misunderstandings and overcome differences that arise. We must learn to love a person who is near (your brother).

"Guard him like the apple of your eye" - one needs to learn to see the world from the other person's point of view, to protect and guard his vision of the situation, as you would protect and guard yours. That is, you need to understand it, "to make eyes in the place of an eye".

"You see the mote in your brother's eye, but you do not see the beam in your own eye." Very often people notice well the shortcomings and problems of people around them, but they do not notice their own, that are obvious to everyone around. They require others to change, not noticing that their own problems are more egregious. For example, a wife wants her husband to be sincere. But meanwhile she is very easily offended by little things. We end up with a vicious

circle: It is difficult for the husband to be sincere, as he is afraid that the wife will be offended. So he sometimes lies and twists so as not to offend, and the wife, in turn, resents the fact that the husband is not completely sincere.

In this situation, it is futile to struggle with the problem of the other half and demand an immediate correction. We must start with ourselves first, and then it will be clear how to help the other half. The wife creating a scene will not make her husband sincere. The husband, rebuking his wife for touchiness, also does not solve the problem.

Usually people can talk about the wrong actions of others, without thinking that they themselves behave worse. That is, they do not see the beams in their own eyes (their mistakes), but see, very clearly, the mote in the eye of a brother. A person, who wants to correct his neighbor, help him to overcome unpleasant traits of character, must start with himself, and see himself from the outside. It is a useful skill to be able to see yourself through the eyes of another person.

Fasting and the Sabbath

27. If you do not fast from the world, you will not find the kingdom. If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the Father.

Let's try to understand the concept of "peace". Christianity has such concepts as "worldly" and "spiritual." It is usually understood that by "spiritual" we mean things relating to Jesus, and the Bible. While "worldly" is associated to work, business, and various sundry issues. This division is not entirely correct. It is necessary to look at things not only from the perspective of how they look. We must also pay attention to their true essence. "Worldly" and "spiritual" should be determined not by clichés, but by inner content.

The "spiritual" is that which obeys the law of Christ, and the commandments of God; that which aims at establishing harmony, peace, joy in human life. Therefore, work, caring for children, going to the store or even good sex between husband and wife, can be no less spiritual than reading the Bible. If a person is reading the Bible, looking for a good quote with which to condemn his neighbor, then can one call this spiritual? No! Reading the Bible in this way makes it simply a mundane task.

"To fast from the world" means to avoid what is inherently contrary to the law of Christ. Fasting from the world is when a person decides not to condemn his neighbor, decides to make peace with his wife, his friend, his neighbor, confess to something, and become more candid.

Isaiah 58: 6-10, says: "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke? Is it not to share your food with the hungry and to provide the poor wanderer with shelter— when you see the naked, to clothe them, and not to turn away from your own flesh and blood? Then your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear; then your righteousness will go before you, and the glory of the Lord will be your rear guard. Then you will call, and the Lord will answer; you will cry for help, and he will say: Here am I. "If you do

away with the yoke of oppression, with the pointing finger and malicious talk, and if you spend yourselves in behalf of the hungry and satisfy the needs of the oppressed, then your light will rise in the darkness, and your night will become like the noonday."

To fast from the world means to stop torturing people, to help others, to see things from their perspective, to show a way out of a seemingly hopeless situation. This is a real fast, not just limiting yourself in food or other things. Restrictions should not be for the sake of making you suffer just a tad more than usual.

The result of this fast is that "your light will break forth like the dawn, and your healing will quickly appear, the Lord will accompany you, the Lord will hear." A person will, for sure, find the Kingdom of God if he fasts from the world, and from those things that torment and destroy those that surround him.

Even more interesting is the question of the Sabbath: **"If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the father."** In the Bible, much attention is devoted to the Sabbath. For the Jews, the Sabbath is, so to speak, the central commandment. It is believed that on the Sabbath you cannot work; it is necessary to postpone all business; it is advisable not to travel long distances. It all looks rather strange and, as far as I'm concerned, ridiculous. Jesus gave examples of strange situations. Here is one in Luke 14: 5: "At the same time he said to them: "Suppose one of you has a child or an ox that falls into a well on the Sabbath day. Wouldn't you pull it out right away?" Wrong understanding of the Sabbath leads to the most ridiculous situations. Christians solved this problem in their own way - they moved the Sabbath to Sunday, so as not to be like the Jews.

The key to understanding what the Sabbath means is in this saying of Jesus (Matthew 11: 2): "Come unto me, all ye that labor and are heavy laden, and I will give you rest." The essence of the Sabbath is not in a certain day, but in the state of a person, to which he must come, to find rest.

If we think that the world was created in six literal days, and on the seventh day God rested, then it is the literal (Saturday) day that seems important. But if we know, as previously discussed, that those were rather stages, periods, and the state of man, then the allocation of a literal Saturday as a resting day is not self-evident.

During our analyses of the 4th verse, we discussed in much more detail the theme of the Sabbath, the seventh day. The Bible has these sayings: "where the worm does not die and their fire does not die out" and also: "There will be wailing and gnashing of teeth." It is believed that these statements refer to hell, where all sinners will end up. The worm of doubt, the gnashing of teeth, weeping, conscience, which torments man with fire, life circumstances that do not give man rest, all these are very often found here in our life. These are all attributes of our modern life. Freedom from all of these, the opportunity to live in harmony with those around us - this is the true peace that man finds in Jesus Christ.

"If you do not observe the Sabbath as a Sabbath, you will not see the father" – this reminds us a lot of what is said in the Sermon on the Mount, in the 6th blessing of Beatitudes:

"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God." If we draw a parallel, it turns out that when a person makes a Sabbath a Sabbath, it, at least, is somewhat reminiscent of a pure heart. It is the purity of the heart that gives a person a feeling of joy, freedom, comfort. It's not necessarily lack of activity and sitting in a chair; it's rather the opposite. A person loses the ability to work and cannot even get up from the chair when he is in desperation, when he does not have peace, joy, interest in life, in work, or in any activity. People often try to work more in order to forget or make more endurable, their emotional pain and anguish. But in either case it is not a Sabbath.

An also important attribute of the Sabbath is the need to search for truth in one's life. Often, in the midst of vanity and different matters, the search for truth and righteousness, seems to be something insignificant. It seems that at the moment it is more important to solve some pressing problems or deal with other domestic issues. But if we do not devote time to searching for the truth, do not try to understand how everything really is, then after a while the domestic issues become so complex that, not understanding the overall picture, we start to get more and more tangled up in them that, after a while, we don't know how to get out of our difficulties anymore. Therefore, the search for truth is no less important than resolving domestic issues.

Summing up, we can say that making the Sabbath a Sabbath means giving the Sabbath a true meaning. That is, finding peace, getting rid of the worm that does not die, and the fire that does not quench, repenting, coming to terms with and learning to live in peace with others and with God. Only then can you truly see God in your life, experience joy, miracles, and true peace.

Absence of thirst, drunkenness and blindness

28. Jesus said, "I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh. I found all of them intoxicated; I found none of them thirsty. And my soul became afflicted for the sons of men, because they are blind in their hearts and do not have sight; for empty they came into the world, and empty too they seek to leave the world. But for the moment they are intoxicated. When they shake off their wine, then they will repent."

Let's try to figure out what means: **"I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh."** For a clearer understanding, refer to 1 John 4:2-3: "This is how you can recognize the Spirit of God: Every spirit that acknowledges that Jesus Christ has come in the flesh is from God, but every spirit that does not acknowledge Jesus is not from God. This is the spirit of the antichrist, which you have heard is coming and even now is already in the world."

The phrase from John's Epistle: **"Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh"**, is very similar to what is said in verse 28 of the Gospel of Thomas: **"I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in the flesh."** It seems that in 1 John the words "who came" indicates that this verse is used to weed out heretics, to distinguish those who believe in the authenticity of the historical Jesus from those who do not believe or do not take the coming of Jesus literally. He who believes that Jesus came, worked miracles, and walked the earth – is a Christian. And he who thinks there was no such thing or that everything was somewhat different - is a heretic. The first impression is exactly this.

I do not doubt the authenticity of the historical Jesus, but I believe that this verse is about something else. If it were a question of recognizing the authenticity of the historical Jesus Christ, it would have been more logical to use the words "who was here" (came and went) instead of the words "who came" (came and stayed). This is an important difference.

The essence of Christian doctrine and the Christian faith rests not in belief in the existence of Jesus, or in the accuracy of what was recorded in the Bible, but in the fact that Jesus Christ lived in man, manifesting in his life, in his thoughts and aspirations.

"Who came in the flesh" means that Jesus Christ came and lives in us now. That is the way it is. Sometimes people just do not realize that the ideas and principles of Jesus Christ live in them, but upon reading the Bible, it dawns on them that practically everything in their lives happens according to these principles. And sometimes, on the contrary, we believe in all the doctrines of the church, but oppress our neighbor.

In the period of the emergence of Christianity and in the Middle Ages, it was established that communion with God must take place through priests, who in fact replaced Jesus Christ in us. Christ is in heaven, in holy people, but not in the flock, not in us.

The word "confess" differs from the words "talk", "discuss", "repeat". To confess is to show Christ in your life. To confess Jesus Christ, who came in the flesh, means that Christ, his principles are clearly visible in us without any attempt to demonstrate it in some way.

"I took my place in the midst of the world, and I appeared to them in flesh." It's not just that Christ came about 2 thousand years ago, talked with people, lived, and walked like all people. First of all, we are talking about the fact that he stood in the midst of us and appeared in our flesh to us, and because we (people) are more often drunk, nobody notices this. One of the main features of intoxication is euphoria. At the time of euphoria, the human brain blocks unpleasant sensations and problems and is in a cheerful (intoxicated) mood, often without a rational reason.

Often people go into a state of intoxication in order to simply forget and not think, at least at the moment, about problems. Short-term intoxication allows a person after some time to return to reality and solve all problems. If intoxication is a style of life and a person systematically escapes from difficulties into prolonged intoxication, thinking that things will be resolved, and disappear, by themselves, such a person becomes a hostage of difficulties and problems, which eventually grow larger and larger.

Intoxication can be alcoholic, emotional and even religious. Religious intoxication is when a person leaves his studies, work, and family, to forget everything in religion. This has nothing to do with a calling to address real social needs. Emotional intoxication can be short-term (having fun to relieve stress, to relax) and prolonged (having fun for the sake of fun, without thinking about tomorrow, about problems). Short-term intoxication is, to some extent, beneficial, whereas a prolonged intoxication is very dangerous, because, constantly running away from problems, a person does not notice how he deteriorates, and thereby becomes lost to society.

All forms of entertainment and even intoxication are permissible and, I would even say, good

as a means of pleasure between deeds, but are very bad as tools for solving problems. All this leads to a dead end and emptiness. Both from alcoholic and emotional intoxication comes sobering up, sometimes with a tough encounter with reality. Repentance in this case is an honest, constructive and consistent solution of all problems rather than anesthesia.

The phrase **"Blind in their hearts"** reminds us of **"Blessed are the pure in heart, for they will see God"** (Matthew 5, Sermon on the Mount, the **Beatitudes**). **"Blind in the heart"** means that they do not see God, **"They will see God"** - it means that they will see the heart of God. A person sees and feels God only when there is a feeling of purity in the heart, calmness, and joy. If the heart is unclean, it is blind.

The flesh for the sake of the spirit? Spirit for the sake of the body?

29. Jesus said: "If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a wonder. But if spirit came into being because of the body, it is a wonder of wonders. Indeed, I am amazed at how this great wealth has made its home in this poverty. "

For me, personally, this verse is probably one of the most difficult to understand, because there is an unknown and sufficiently little explored object - that is spirit.

I suppose that in man, besides the body, there is also a spiritual component, where all his internal and moral rules are laid-what he loves, what he aspires to, and what he seeks.

Being the father of four children, I see that they are all different. Each of them, right from birth, has his own set of desires, prejudices and aspirations.

To all my children I speak equally good words, I talk to them about beautiful things, I teach them how to live and act right. In a word, I'm bringing them up the same way, paying equal attention to all four. But each of my sons understands my words in their own way and each of them is growing up as an individual that is not at all like his brothers, either in character, hobby or desire. I see how, as they mature, they are becoming different people, each with his own interests, and desires; each with something of his own that he loves.

Watching the children, I came to the conclusion that the spirit is, most likely, the inner law of the person; what he aspires to, and what he subconsciously seeks and loves.

What does **"If the flesh came into being because of spirit"**? It is often believed that each person at the end of his life gets directed by God to either heaven or hell. This direction depends on how the person lived his life - bad or good, believed in God or not. This point of view, to be honest, does not stand up to criticism and, it seems wrong to me.

How a person is, can be determined not only by his actions, but also by his surroundings, the circumstances into which he fell, the country where he was born and lives, and by the people he met.

You cannot, for example, just draw a straight line, and say that those who are on the right side are going to hell, and those on the left are going to paradise. After all, it may be that someone missed being on the left side of the line by just a tiny bit. What then? Must he now go to hell? And another person, on the contrary, just barely crossed to the left side of the line. Must this

person now go to heaven?

The illogicality of this idea can be clearly seen. It is more logical to assume that the body is given to man so that his spirit got educated; so that those laws that are embedded in the human spirit underwent a certain evolution, and became perfect and harmonious.

The combination of the spirit and the body of man, as a result of which the spirit changes for the better, is really amazing! This is the principle that is reflected in this verse.

"If the flesh came into being because of spirit, it is a miracle." This miracle can be compared with the birth of a child. It is incomprehensible, and surprising, but happens often.

"If spirit came into being because of the body, it is a miracle of miracles." (Another translation says that if the spirit began to exist for the sake of the body, then this is a miracle of miracles). This is the second category, which is much more amazing and is much less common.

What examples of real-life situations can we use to illustrate this? John the Baptist said that it was Elijah who came or that it was the spirit of Elijah. Jesus, for example, did not come to improve the quality of his spirit, to improve his laws laid down in His spirit; they were already good and perfect. He came to people using the body, because it was easier to reach and help them this way.

Often in the Bible, people are called angels (they are sent for certain purposes). If the spirit was called into existence for the sake of the body - this is a miracle of miracles. This is the lot of people elected for a unique mission. Their spirit was sent to the earth in order to take on a body, but not for the sake of improving this spirit, but for the sake of helping other people.

People are trying to figure out, trying to understand what a person's spirit is. While this area is very little studied and little understood at the present time, this verse shows us that there is a great deal of depth there.

Man does not yet have any instruments or physical principles by which he can measure the spirit or somehow interact with it. Let's hope that humanity will, nevertheless, come to a deeper understanding of the concept of "spirit". Even in physics there is, in principle, a place for such a concept.

There are four fundamental interactions or forces: gravitational, electromagnetic, strong and weak. At first glance, it seems that these interactions describe all the forces that exist in nature. But, meanwhile, there is another well-known force, only it is not called a force, but a principle of determinism, that is, of chance.

The principle is that, for example, a particle flies as a wide wave packet, but on a photographic plate it is captured and causes a chemical reaction only in one spot. Why in this particular spot? This remains a mystery to the present day. It is only known that if many such particles are released, they register and cause chemical reactions in spots, where there are more of them on the average. Measurement is built on these principles in quantum mechanics.

So, indeterminism is, in many ways, the missing force, the missing link.

If we learn to control this indeterminism and make it determinism, then in fact it will become the way to the realization of very unlikely events, that is, in other words, miracles. But it is

unclear how to manage this process. It is clear only that, where the wave function of the object is greater, the object is registered in that place more often. This is a good mechanism for interactions between the spirit and the human brain.

If the spirit is able to control indeterminism and make it actually a control mechanism, in this case, taking advantage of the fact that unlikely processes occur, there is interaction, but catching it is extremely difficult, because we cannot control randomness. But such objects as spirit or God, probably, can do this. This is the complexity of the study of such objects and interactions, since the mechanism of indeterminism itself is still unknown. Why does a particle suddenly discard, practically, all its states from a huge wave packet and leave only one state? This is still a great mystery for physics, and is in many ways related to the issues of the spirit, the soul and God.

Three, two or one God?

30. Jesus said: "Where there are three gods, there are gods. Where there are two or one, I am with him."

The word "three", as a rule, is perceived as spirit, soul and body of a person, or the Trinity. In this verse this word has, in my opinion, another meaning and it is quite logical.

There is such a classification of the inner world of man, that is:

- 1) The husband in the person (inner husband);
- 2) The wife in the person (the inner wife);
- 3) God is in man.

Three gods in a person means absolute discord, because the husband is by himself, the wife is by herself and God is by himself. There is no unity and harmony.

"Where there are three gods, there are gods (that is, there is no order). Where there are two or one, I am with him." "I am with him" means the unity of the husband, wife and God, that is, it is the best form of harmony. If two, for example, the husband with God (the mind is subordinate to God) or the wife with God (the emotional part of the person is subordinated to God) - this means that the two have merged and become one, which is the beginning of harmony.

It also happens that the husband and wife are together, that is, the person is whole. Indeed, many people who seek harmony, truth, and right, live as whole individuals, but do not officially consider themselves believers. This is most likely due to the fact that, at a certain time, they had a bad experience of Christianity, which, likely, had to do with misunderstandings and contradictions. In such people, too, there is, in fact, Christ.

Remember: "where two or three are gathered in my name, there I am in the midst of them." Traditionally, it is believed that if several people come together, then God hears them better. But it is much more important that the inner parts of a person come together.

No prophet is accepted in his own village

31. Jesus said: "No prophet is accepted in his own village; no physician heals those who know him."

This is a fairly well-known truth both from the experience of dealing with people, and from

the classical Gospels, in which there is a very similar phrase of Jesus. The relatives did not perceive him as a prophet, or a messiah, and treated him lightly.

Frivolous attitude towards those that are close is quite common. Every man at least once in his life met with the phrase: "Don't tell me what he (she) is capable of; I know what he (she) is capable of." This is about a husband, wife or children, for example.

People look at each other superficially and also superficially evaluate each other, without trying to dig in deep to better understand all their abilities. There is no respect between people; there is no desire to help each other open up.

With such phrases as: "My husband is not capable of this or that"; "My wife is not capable of this or that," "I know her and also I know what she can do and what she knows how to do" - people impoverish their lives, and as a result things don't work out well for them, and nothing changes for the better.

In order for a person to be able to do something extraordinary, in order for him to be self-confident, in order for him to be able to, at a certain moment, surprise everyone and make life around him more interesting, joyful and happy, one must inspire him and believe that he is capable of something greater.

Our attempts at changing loved ones are more often fruitless for the simple reason that we ourselves do not believe that this change is possible. "Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, and endures all things." - (1 Corinthians 13:7).

Eternal City of Love and Mutual Understanding

32. Jesus said: "A city being built on a high mountain and fortified cannot fall, nor can it be hidden."

Reflecting on this verse, let's think about what can be eternal and, accordingly, cannot fall.

Governments that have powerful weapons, powerful ideologies, and networks of agents cannot stand forever (an example of such a powerful state was the Soviet Union).

Hence it is clear that everything eternal cannot be based on strength, fear and intimidation. That which is built on fear and intimidation, will, sooner or later, crack, collapse and fall.

Only that which is harmonious, beautiful, built on love and internally consistent, can be truly eternal. This is the Kingdom of God. It cannot fall, not because it is guarded by a very powerful God or angels, but because it has inner harmony. I think this verse is about just such a city, built on a high mountain.

Our favorite principle, according to which we try to live: "Not against, but above" - is consonant with this verse. The city is high not in a geographic sense. People, who live in it, act highly (nobly, lovingly).

There is still a discourse about God and eternity. Since God is eternal, he cannot be evil or wield his power on the basis of fear or strength. All that is evil and disharmonious self-destroys.

"Nor can it be hidden." The city cannot be hidden due to the fact that once a person becomes confident in his life views and attitudes, confident that everything he believes in is true,

he immediately wants to share this with everyone around him, so that others could live just as happily and harmoniously.

Real harmony and the strongest of fortresses are actually based on love and mutual understanding, but never on force, weapons, restrictions or dominion.

A strong family is not that where a stern husband holds power in his hands firmly, but that where people really value and respect each other, where there is harmony in relationships and everyone loves others as well as themselves.

In the Sermon on the Mount - (chapter 5 of the Gospel of Matthew) - it is said: "Blessed are the meek: for they shall inherit the earth." There is an opinion that the meek are modest, as opposed to brazen, people, who cannot achieve anything in life. In fact, meekness is not impotence; it is a tamed force. In meekness there is an invincible power by which such people inherit the earth. The meek achieve their goals through patience and love, while the arrogant achieve theirs through cunning, deceit and force.

Yes, arrogant people usually achieve their goals faster and with less effort, but such a kingdom is short-lived; it quickly cracks and collapses. And these people are left with nothing.

Hence the conclusion that real power is not in rudeness, not in the cunning of deception, but in love, truth and harmony. It is such a society, and such a family that will stand in times of difficulty.

Preach from the housetops

33. Jesus said, "Preach from your housetops that which you will hear in your ear. For no one lights a lamp and puts it under a bushel, nor does he put it in a hidden place, but rather he sets it on a lamp stand so that everyone who enters and leaves will see its light. "

The second part of this verse almost exactly repeats the verse from the classical Gospels. For example, in the Gospel of Matthew: "And whosoever is on the housetop, he shall not go down to take up his garment." What does the word "housetop" mean?

The "housetop" is a higher level of understanding, love and knowledge, to which a person has risen and from which he should not go down, that is, return to the old level of his knowledge and understanding.

"Preach from your housetops" -to preach about the best that one has achieved.

The Gospels tell a lot about the spread of the Kingdom of God and the word of God. Christians so literally accepted these appeals that they oftentimes, rather obsessively, start telling (preaching) people that they need to repent and that they need to believe in Jesus. But the essence of the spread of the Kingdom of God is to proclaim the very best that a person has achieved, what will touch and surprise another person, what will prompt him to rise to a higher level, that is, to climb on his housetop, so that he can live better.

Notice, it is said about one ear, and not about "ears". "Ear" - this is not something that is from the proverbial "In one ear, out the other." This is the ear with which a person hears the word of God and understands what God says; that is, it is the mind and heart of a person. It is this ear that

preaches to another ear from the housetops, that is, from the heart, a person shares with another person the best principles from his experience.

"No one lights a lamp and puts it under a vessel, no one puts it in a secret place" -a person who understands something about God, understands that this is something high and amazing, cannot hold back and not talk about it. For example, as it happens with us. Guests come to us, and, willy-nilly, the conversation turns to some Christian themes on the Gospel of Thomas, and on the principles of life. Although we don't try or make it our goal to tell anyone anything, it just always turns out that way that we end up talking about things that have to do with Jesus. People simply want to share the most intimate, the most profound thoughts that they have. The spreading of the Kingdom of God must be from heart to heart, and not by coercion.

If the blind leads the blind, both will fall into the pit

34. Jesus said, "If a blind man leads a blind man, they will both fall into a pit."

There are places in the Bible that help to better understand what "blind" means.

For example, Matthew 23:24 "You blind guides! You strain out a gnat but swallow a camel." Blind means one who sees someone else's problem, but does not see his own that are obvious and blatant. Matthew 23:16: "Woe to you, blind guides! You say, 'If anyone swears by the temple, it means nothing; but anyone who swears by the gold of the temple is bound by that oath.'" The blind man suffers from spiritual blindness.

The question arises: why don't we see obvious things? The answer is because most people are engaged in self-deception.

An example of blindness can be an ordinary family, where a husband and wife often see each other's shortcomings and problems, but at the same time do not notice their own.

In Luke 4:18 it is seen how the blind man becomes sighted: "The Spirit of the Lord is on me, because he has anointed me to proclaim good news to the poor. He has sent me to proclaim freedom for the prisoners and recovery of sight for the blind, to set the oppressed free."

"Sight to the blind" - enlightenment occurs when the blind man sees everything in true light. That is when he gets sight. That same family, we talked about earlier, can serve as an example of this, but here everything is the opposite. The husband or wife, rather than reproach each other for any shortcomings, try to correct themselves in the first place, remembering the promises they made to each other in the process of creating a family.

"If a blind man leads a blind man, they will both fall into a pit." A person, who has not yet had an epiphany, leads one like him directly into a pit. That is, into dead ends, from which they can't find their way out, and as a consequence of which their lives go into deep crisis.

Binding hands

35. Jesus said: "It is not possible for anyone to enter the house of a strong man and take it by force unless he binds his hands; then he will (be able to) ransack his house."

Although the topic of this verse is somewhat provocative, I would even say thuggish, Jesus, of

course, is not teaching us how to rob another person's house. Most likely, we are talking here about how to protect ourselves from robbery.

I want to draw attention to one detail, namely: that for a strong person to become weak, it is enough to tie his hands to stop him acting actively.

If we are strong in promises, but very weak in their execution - we have hands that are tied. We are strong as long as we do something. As soon as we get into a situation where all we do is talk, but take little action, we become weak. Then our beliefs and principles start to crack. In essence, we get robbed.

Do not worry from morning till night

36. Jesus said: "Do not be concerned from morning until evening and from evening until morning about what you will wear."

At first glance it seems that this verse should offend most women, and even men who care about how to look nice and neat.

It may give the impression that there is a call to live somehow sloppy, not to take care of yourself. Such a strange literal meaning compels us to reflect more deeply on this.

There are literal clothes, and there is an image, that is, in some measure, clothes. For example, when going to work, a person wears an "official image"; when walking with friends - another image; when at home with his family - a third image. Thus, it seems that this is not one person, but three different personalities.

A person must learn not to create an image for himself, but to be one who does not need to constantly "change clothes" in order to look better in someone's eyes. No matter how banal it may sound, in many respects it is an appeal to be yourself, so that it would not be shameful to show your inner world to other people.

Therefore, instead of dressing in such a variety of beautiful clothes, you just need to become beautiful inside; then you will not have to constantly worry about what you will wear from morning to evening and from evening to morning.

Disrobe without being ashamed

37. His disciples said, "When will you become revealed to us and when shall we see you?" Jesus said, "When you disrobe without being ashamed and take up your garments and place them under your feet like little children and tread on them, then will you see the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid."

In many respects this verse is related to the previous saying, as here, too, clothes are being talked about.

In both the 36th and 37th verses, clothes are a kind of mask or image of a man. People should be simple and open, and throw down (at their feet) all masks and hypocrisy.

"Disrobe without being ashamed." When our inner man turns out to be such that we will not be ashamed to show him, then something amazing will happen.

In many respects this statement is also important because it speaks of liberation from prejudice and hypocrisy.

In truth, even the literal meaning of this verse is also important, because at all times, especially from Christians, the church environment, there had always been a culture of shame of the naked human body. It was believed that a naked human body is something sinful, forbidden, and a source of temptation. Bans, as we well know, usually generate unhealthy interest. The beauty of the naked body and the sexuality of man were placed in the category of things that are indecent. I, for one, believe that this is a big mistake.

I think it is necessary to adopt a more balanced approach to the beauty and sexuality of the human body. That is, respect the body and not create any hype around it.

It's no secret that the greatest amount of controversy in the human brain arises precisely because of his sexual desires, due to the fact that this is an area is in the taboo category and it is difficult for him to be completely frank in these matters.

Establishing order, creating harmony in this area is one of the most important tasks for a person. But due to prevailing stereotypes and prejudices, this task is one of the most difficult, especially for people who have a conservative, church upbringing.

Pay attention to the phrase: **"take up your garments and place them under your feet."** Notice, it doesn't say to throw them away, but to place them under your feet, that is, to stand above your clothes.

"You see the son of the living one, and you will not be afraid." To see the son, means to see the son of God in you. That is, to obtain those qualities that are characteristic of the son of God, and of which Jesus spoke. And how do people usually imagine the appearance of Jesus? Often, this is more like a scene from a science fiction movie. That is, he is a radiant person and things along that line.

But another understanding of this saying is closer to us. To see the son of God in oneself means learning to love people, serve them, put them above oneself, and to do what Jesus taught, as written in the Bible and in the Gospel of Thomas.

The Bible says: "There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love." – (1 John 4:18) Learning to love, we begin to overcome our fears.

Search for the real

38. Jesus said, "Many times have you desired to hear these words which I am saying to you, and you have no one else to hear them from. There will be days when you will look for me and will not find me."

39. Jesus said, "The Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge (gnosis) and hidden them. They themselves have not entered, nor have they allowed to enter those who wish to. You, however, be as wise as serpents and as innocent as doves."

We will consider the two verses at once, since they are in many ways interconnected.

As far as I know, most people who were quite active in the church environment, in Christian intercourse, listened to sermons, tried to study the Bible, more than once, had a fleeting feeling that, in general, somehow, things are not as they should be. There was a desire to dig deeper, but, unfortunately, there always were more important things to deal with and there was no time to sort things out.

I believe that it is exactly those moments that are mentioned here: **"Many times have you desired to hear these words which I am saying to you, and you have no one else to hear them from."** Yes, at those moments of doubt one wants to hear something real, something that really will resolve all the contradictions, so that it will be possible to throw away all prejudices and clutter. Jesus calls on us to cast off our burden of prejudice. He said in the Gospels (Matthew 11:30): "For my yoke is easy, and my burden is light." At the same time, Jesus said of the teachings of the Pharisees, that they put unbearable burdens on people. What does it mean? The teachings of the Pharisees are very difficult to carry out and cause a feeling of deception. While the doctrine that Jesus brought is truly beautiful; it revives a person, strengthens him, and helps him live happier. This does not mean that the teachings of Jesus are easier. A person still needs to overcome himself in many ways, sometimes taking bold steps forward, but, despite everything, one feels that this is something real.

"There will be days when you will look for me and will not find me." I myself felt it. I really wanted to find the real, but for some reason no one spoke about it. Is it because of the fact that **"the Pharisees and the scribes have taken the keys of knowledge."**?

When I went to Christian meetings, we were told how to correctly understand the Bible. At first it seemed that everything was correct, but with deeper and more detailed examination it turned out that there are contradictions with scientific data (for example, Gen. 1), with our own experience, and with what is written in the Bible itself. For example, if you try to square the teachings of Jesus with Deuteronomy or the Book of Joshua, your brain will simply short-circuit. This straightforward approach looks like forgery of the real keys of knowledge.

A more detailed study of the Gospel of Thomas (and not just Thomas), helped us to find some keys, and this really opened our eyes. Let's take, for example, the story of the fall. It turns out that the Fall is not just from disobedience or from eating a fruit. The Fall is what happens here and now with every person. Read the interpretation of verse 4; there is no point in retelling everything.

A symbolic approach to the interpretation of the Bible and the Gospel of Thomas is also a vital and key point. One, who understands everything in a straightforward and quite literal way, is forced to carry burdens that are unbearable (that is, contradictions).

Behind all the words written in the Bible are certain principles upon which they are based. One must correctly understand these principles, and not simply take a verse and execute it to the letter.

Another key is the understanding of the husband and the wife as parts of a person. This

principle easily resolves many contradictions and makes many places in the Bible understandable. But these keys were hidden, declared heresy, forbidden to use.

In order to penetrate the full depth of the teachings of Jesus Christ, one needs to be a sincere and wise enough person. It is necessary not only to scrape off the crust from the surface, but to really penetrate deep, using those keys that were discovered.

In science, a lot of insight is needed. Studying the Laws of God, I think, requires just as much insight.

The false and the true vine

40. Jesus said: "A grapevine has been planted outside of the father, but being unsound, it will be pulled up by its roots and destroyed."

In the Bible, both in the Old and in the New Testament, the vine is associated either with the people of Israel or with the church. In the Gospels Jesus says that He is the true vine.

Imitation of the true vine, the church of Jesus Christ (the vine is planted without the Father) is the use of Christianity for manipulating, controlling, and enslaving people. This is precisely the part of religion that was ridiculed in all times and that was destroyed with the arrival of rational thinking, and the strengthening of the position of science. This is called, in the Bible, pharisaism and hypocrisy.

From the moment Christianity solidified and gained strength, it became one of the political forces and was used by the powerful as a tool to rule people.

Of course, one cannot say unequivocally that all church organizations belong to a fake vine, as there can be, in one building, organization, or community, different people: those who really love God and seek Him with all their soul, and those that imitate love and use it to pursue personal goals and enslave people.

The true vine that will be strengthened is a religion that is based on a sincere desire for God, knowledge, and the search for truth. Oftentimes, an organization that, by all logic, should help in the search, turn out to be an obstacle. But if a person is determined to find God, he can overcome all obstacles. Remember the 1st verse: "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."

Whoever has something in his hand will receive more

41. Jesus said: "Whoever has something in his hand will receive more, and whoever has nothing will be deprived of even the little he has."

Sometimes people think that the Kingdom of God is social justice, common goods, equality (confused with communism).

In fact, it is an opportunity for a person to realize his full potential.

Anyone who is waiting for any handouts from other people will get nothing – what he has will

be taken away, and he will be left with nothing.

Whoever has in his hand, that is, one who develops, grows, seeks, explores, will receive more. He, who aspires and seeks, will find. For him that knocks, the door will be opened.

A person can achieve much more by taking into account the principles of the Kingdom of God, than without them. They are like good tools in the hands of a master.

In the classical Gospels, the same principle is recorded in almost similar wording.

Be Passersby

42. Jesus said, "Be passers-by."

At first glance, it seems that passers-by are those who do not understand anything, but simply go by. Most churches call: "Be good parishioners, come here every Sunday, sit and listen!"

I think that the call in this verse to be passersby is connected, not with indifference and passing by, but with the fact that people should not rest on their laurels, but continue marching on.

The construction of a religious denomination is similar to the construction of a house, since it is necessary to build strong walls in order to cast off all enemies, that is, critics, to acquire good verbal cannons, useful for criticizing other denominations.

A similar way of building a house, only in ideological space, is criticized here. One must be a passerby who does not stop in such houses, but continues ahead and develops.

A very similar principle is also set forth in the classical Gospels. Jesus said, "I am the way, the truth and the life." – (John 14:6) "I am the way" is the road by which we walk, that is, He is not the building or fortress where we live, but the way.

Love the tree and hate the fruit

43. His disciples said to him: "Who are you, that you should say these things to us?" <Jesus said to them,> "You do not realize who I am from what I say to you, but you have become like the Jews, for they (either) love the tree and hate its fruit (or) love the fruit and hate the tree."

The Pharisees kept trying to learn from Jesus his status: who is he; does he consider himself the Messiah, the Christ? The same question interested the disciples of Jesus.

But Jesus did not want to just tell everyone "about his titles." He wanted people to understand everything themselves, which is why he often forbade his students to talk about what miracles he did and whom he healed.

"You do not realize who I am from what I say to you?" - So Jesus answered the question: "Who are you?" From his sayings it was necessary to be able to understand who he is and what his words stand for.

Sometimes, people, during conversations, evaluate the authority of the speaker, instead of evaluating the wisdom of what was said. Credibility, for many, is a sufficient enough factor in deciding whether or not to listen to a person. I want to draw attention to the fact that the same

approach is used by Christians to the Holy Scriptures. Everything written in the Bible is considered of great value by Christians, not because they understand the sayings and are amazed, and surprised, but simply because the sayings are written in the Bible.

Studying the Gospel of Thomas, we consider as important, the essence of what is written - does it help or not, does it reveal something amazing? And not whether it was written by Thomas or someone else. In other words, it is not an issue of the authority of the writer.

"You do not realize who I am from what I say to you?" – This is a call by Jesus to judge by the essence of his words, and not by "titles" and "signs on the door."

"But you have become like the Jews, for they (either) love the tree and hate its fruit (or) love the fruit and hate the tree." The tree produces the fruit, and the fruit comes from the tree - there is a direct causal relationship and logic. It is interesting that Jews and, after them, Christians, do not like logic, in fact, they hate it. To them, it is much more important to, not doubting, simply believe and repeat dogmas and commandments. Understanding them is not considered essential - the key point, they believe, is not to doubt.

The Jews created a religion that is inherently illogical in many ways; at least in external appearance.

It is unclear why sacrifices are needed, why the arrangement of the altar and the temple is clearly prescribed, why it is forbidden to work on Saturday, why one must not eat pork and other "unclean" foods. And this all had to be done, not based on logic, but simply because God (supposedly) had ordered it. This is the style of religious thinking - "do not reflect, just do as you were told, and by this you will render honor and respect to God." It is, probably, this approach to religion that is criticized by this verse.

It is wrong to simply, mindlessly, repeat actions or words, out of respect for authorities. It is necessary to look for the reason why it was so said or done.

During our attempts to understand why God instituted the Sabbath, amazing things about the Sabbath and other issues opened up before us.

If you see the fruit - look for the cause. That is, look for the tree from which this fruit grew. If you see the tree – try to figure out what kind of fruit it will produce. That is, to what results a thing leads. Love logic, research and reasoning.

Blaspheming the Holy Spirit

44. Jesus said: "Whoever blasphemes against the father will be forgiven, and whoever blasphemes against the son will be forgiven, but whoever blasphemes against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven either on earth or in heaven."

In the classical Gospels there is a very similar verse on the unforgivable sin (Matthew 12:31-32): "Therefore I say to you: every sin and blasphemy is forgiven to men, and blasphemy against the Spirit will not be forgiven to men, if someone says a word against the Son of Man, he will be forgiven; but whoever speaks against the Holy Spirit will not be forgiven in this age or in the future").

People, reading this verse, involuntarily, start to think about the nature of this sin that is so terrible, that it cannot be forgiven, not now, not in the future. Is the Holy Spirit so touchy that blasphemy against it cannot be forgiven? Unforgiving in this context sounds very strange.

Holiness is usually associated with the fact that there is forgiveness and love. That blasphemy against the Father and the Son will be forgiven, but not against the Holy Spirit, looks somewhat strange.

Why do people blaspheme the Father or Jesus? There are many atheistic books that ridicule Jesus' sayings or situations that are described in the Old Testament. They are presented in a comic light, emphasizing the absurdity of this or that event, often with some degree of exaggeration.

Upon reflection on what is being criticized, it becomes clear that it is not God or Jesus, but human stupidity (including the belief that God himself gave absurd orders).

Usually, what is strange, wrong and not true is blasphemed and criticized. Such blasphemy is not dangerous, since it actually shows the weak, foolish, and irrational sides of what people believe. There are also cases of blasphemy from hatred, envy, or simply to irritate. Such blasphemy can be safely ignored.

Usually, it is this kind of blasphemy that people are very indignant about. For example, Muslims get very indignant if someone speaks badly of Muhammad or the Qur'an. Orthodox Christians - if someone says blasphemy against a priest, a saint, or someone from the Orthodox hierarchy. Protestants - if their pastor is insulted, or doubt in the Trinity is expressed.

If blasphemy is justified, it must be analyzed and conclusions drawn. If it is stupid – the only damage done is to the person that said the nonsense.

Change, by any organization, of the very essence, the very spirit of the teaching of Christ, is the most dangerous blasphemy of all. Worship of God turns into business; fraternal relations become hierarchical and manipulative; love and self-sacrifice get used as means of controlling in people, and cruelty. Alas, it seems that people have collected the worst qualities: arrogance, touchiness, fault-finding, pettiness, lust for power, deviousness, love of honor and praise, and attributed them all to God. What could be worse?

People, seeing such ugliness, will believe that God himself is just as cruel, vain, power-hungry and selfish. And will sincerely and justly hate such a God.

It is in the change, the distortion, and the falsification of the spirit of Christ's teachings, that the worst blasphemy against the spirit of the teachings of Christ, and the Holy Spirit, lie. This cannot be washed off and fixed.

It is because of this kind of blasphemy, sounded for many centuries, that people of our time are disappointed in God, and in religious organizations.

Those people who love and follow God, have no choice but to quit such organizations, since it is impossible to change them.

Based on my experience, I can say that it is next to impossible to change even a small organization, no matter how much you want this, and how hard you try. Apparently, traditions are

just too strong, and people themselves do not want to change. Alas!

Grapes are not harvested from thorns

45. Jesus said: "Grapes are not harvested from thorns, nor are figs gathered from thistles, for they do not produce fruit. A good man brings forth good from his storehouse; an evil man brings forth evil things from his evil storehouse, which is in his heart, and says evil things. For out of the abundance of the heart he brings forth evil things."

There are similar statements in the classical Gospels. What is in the heart will surely come out. This is a fairly well-known truth, as well as "all that is secret will be revealed."

"A good man brings forth good from his storehouse; an evil man brings forth evil things from his evil storehouse." I want to pay attention to the word "storehouse". It contains the verb "store"- to put away, to stash, to hide. The good or evil that a person tries to hide in his heart, comes out, sooner or later, and gives its results.

There are no bad or good people. But so much bad can be pouring out of one person, that it is difficult to work and communicate with him. On the other hand, a lot of good can come out of a person, in spite of his shortcomings. Therefore, the "Protestant" concept of absolute corruption is completely wrong and does not describe real-life situations.

What should one do if the heart is a treasure of bad and evil? Even in this case, it's better to be frank, and let out what is bad and evil from your heart, rather than accumulate it.

Man is like a vessel for the accumulation of both positive and negative emotions. It is very important to learn how to accumulate positive emotions and impressions, while making sure to, either disregard negative emotions, or not accumulate them. It is important to be able to see the good even in the bad. And to live by the principle "whatever happens, it is all for the best." The Bible also has this principle. It is formulated as follows: "For all, be thankful." (1Thessalonians 5:18)

I recently tried the fruit of the thorn. I wouldn't say it's very tasty, but it is useful and quite edible. Although it is not grapes, but still, even in a man who looks like a thorn, you could see the beautiful.

One day, on the radio, I heard an interesting quote from Lev Tolstoy on this subject: "One of the most common misconceptions is to consider people to be good, evil, stupid, and intelligent. A person flows, and has all possibilities in him: he was stupid - became clever; he was angry - became kind and vice versa. This is the greatness of man! "

He who becomes small will know the Kingdom

46. Jesus said, "Among those born of women, from Adam until John the Baptist, there is no one so superior to John the Baptist that his eyes should not be lowered (before him). Yet I have said, whichever one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom and will become superior to John."

This verse very well explains and complements Matthew 11:11 "Truly I tell you, among those

born of women there has not risen anyone greater than John the Baptist; yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven is greater than he."

When we read Matthew 11:11, we get the strong impression that John the Baptist was a great man, but that any, even the most impoverished person, who entered the Kingdom of God, is better and more majestic than John. This sounds extremely strange. On the one hand, it causes vanity among Christians and on the other hand, sounds disrespectful to John the Baptist.

Comparing the verses of the Gospel from Thomas **"Yet I have said, whichever one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom and will become superior to John."** and the Gospel of Matthew **"yet whoever is least in the kingdom of heaven..."**, we, involuntarily, notice that in one and the other case the words "child" and "least" appear.

"Child" is not one who is small in height, is insignificant, modest, or is huddled in a corner and does nothing. This is the one who serves and helps everyone, without being all proud of himself and his accomplishments. He seems to be behind everyone, but everyone needs him and everyone loves him. Because of this, he becomes the first (great): **"Anyone who wants to be first must be the very last and the servant of all"** (Mark 9:35).

The ability to be a child is necessary for the Kingdom of God to be in the heart of a person (**"whichever one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom and will become superior to John"**). In the Kingdom of God are those people who have become children. That is, they have learned to love and serve others. There is no hierarchy. The smaller becomes bigger, bigger smaller, and no one brags about their merits or achievements. Having accomplished more, one should help those who have accomplished less. This is the foundation of the Kingdom of God.

Let us think about what John the Baptist symbolizes in the historical context. It symbolizes monasticism, self-denial. John led a rather ascetic way of life ("For John the Baptist has come, he does not eat bread, and neither does he drink wine." - Luke 7:33), "John also wore clothes from camel's hair and a leather belt on his loins and ate acorns and wild honey." - (Mark 1: 6)

Self-denial and the ascetic way of life were respected among people of all religions. This was considered one of the greatest virtues of man. John the Baptist was one of those who were imitated by ancient monks.

Monasticism first arose as an opposition to the fact that Christians became rich, proud people, began to merge with the rulers of that time. It was a kind of opposition movement, performing all the feats of self-denial. Over time, the self-denial of the monks began to be used for propaganda, proving that Christians are courageous people capable of the deeds of self-denial; it became beneficial to the church and even secular authorities.

In the Bible there is the phrase: "Reject yourself." Monasticism, it would seem, perfectly embodies this principle. That's why from Adam to John the Baptist, of those born of women, none was superior to John the Baptist. The image of one, who rejects himself, his pleasures, his rights, and limits himself to telling people the truth, has become an ideal for so many generations.

"Deny yourself" can be understood quite differently in the context of the verse **"Whichever**

one of you comes to be a child will be acquainted with the kingdom and will become superior to John." A man who deprived himself of all pleasures and pleasures, has by no means rejected himself, he simply shows how good he is at self-restraint.

Over time, monasticism has, in many ways, become a competition – to see who can reject himself more. This is not in the spirit of the Kingdom of God!

Why compete in the fortitude of self-sacrifice, when it's much better to simply put self, not first but behind. In the first place should be put those around you – their world, their happiness and their joy. Put the happiness of people around you above your happiness, and then, in the first place, you will become happy.

"Deny yourself" is not depriving yourself of everything, it is a desire to serve people, to love them, so that you can experience joy and happiness.

Of course, there are things you need to deny yourself, and things in which you have to limit yourself. One can even postpone doing something if it tortures those around or has a destructive effect on them. But this should not be ostentatious self-restraint. You just need to sincerely want to make others happy, while putting yourself last.

Remember that "Jesus said: "Blessed is the lion which becomes man when consumed by man; and

cursed is the man whom the lion consumes, and the lion becomes man." It turns out that self-restraint in the style of the monasticism of John the Baptist is when a person decides to isolate himself, and to renounce the lion. That is, his passions, joys and pleasures. But it is much better to put this fire, that rages in a man, to good use - for growth, development, happiness of others and, ultimately, of oneself.

This rejection of oneself is much better than asceticism or medieval self-restraint. It is not necessary to try to limit each other as much as possible - we need to make each other as happy as possible.

Thus, this verse from the Gospel of Thomas teaches us how to truly reject ourselves so that it makes us and those around us happy.

Unite the opposites

47. Jesus said: "It is impossible for a man to mount two horses or to stretch two bows. And it is impossible for a servant to serve two masters; otherwise, he will honor the one and treat the other contemptuously. No man drinks old wine and immediately desires to drink new wine. And new wine is not put into old wineskins, lest they burst; nor is old wine put into a new wineskin, lest it spoil it. An old patch is not sewn onto a new garment, because a tear would result."

This verse makes one think about the problem of duality of man, which, perhaps, each of us is faced with. For example, a person could be faced with the desire to live in comfort and help others; spirituality and sexual desires; work and family; hobbies and family; honesty and the desire to earn. As a rule, these are difficult things to combine, things that pull a person in

different directions. It is quite difficult to be on both sides at the same time.

"It is impossible for a man to mount two horses or to stretch two bows." If we approach this saying literally, then we can say that it is possible. In the circus, for example, people can sit on two horses and can stretch two bows.

But this is not about an artificially created situation, but about real life. Is it possible to combine opposite things in life? Yes, it is possible, but only if the opposites become one and do not pull a person in different directions.

Considering earlier the concept of the Fall, we came to the conclusion that the fall of man and sin are actions that were done not at the right time (with delay or with anticipation). For example, in order to earn money, you need to go through several stages in your life: study, get a specialty and experience, and only then make good money. Some people without going through these stages on time want lots of money immediately. So they go for theft or other illegal actions. Thus, not having gone through all the stages of preparation for earning money on time, a person commits a sin. Similarly, in our case, it is quite possible to combine concepts that seem to be opposite, but this requires a certain amount of time and patience.

Our favorite principle "not against, but above" helps in this task. It is not necessary to solve problems using the principle "against", that is, through quarrels, accusations, insults, demands, ultimatums and whims. We must try to solve them using the principle "above". That is, acting nobly, loving people, making them happier, thereby making ourselves happier.

The path to unification of opposing things often lies in love and patience. Whichever area of life we take, only by love, patience and affection, can one achieve harmony and unite the things that people, as a rule, find hard to unite.

Let's talk now about the skins and wine. Skins, symbolize certain traditions, frameworks, and rules. Wine is, most likely, the essence, spirit and meaning of any teaching.

For example, the teaching of Jesus Christ (the new wine) cannot be placed within the framework of the Jewish world view, with its set of rules, dogmas, and prohibitions (old wineskins); although there were many common elements between the Jewish and the Christian worldviews.

A person who develops spiritually, explores, and learns something new, must be ready for a radical change in his worldview and also that others might point their fingers at him and call him a heretic and strange fellow.

For example, my wife and I changed our worldview and at some point abandoned Christian fundamentalism and the literal understanding of the Bible; we resorted to a symbolic approach, completely overhauled our understanding of both life principles and the Bible, and came to unexpected conclusions. Of course, we did not come to such an understanding immediately, and not because doing so was convenient for us, but because we had a huge number of contradictions and questions that remained unanswered. We decided not to take half measures with regard to our former views, but to radically change them. This is what the parable of skins and wine symbolizes.

Moving Mountains

48. Jesus said: "If two make peace with each other in this one house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move Away,' and it will move away."

If a person or even several people pray or ask God for something, it is not guaranteed that their prayer will be heard and fulfilled. Why so? Is there, possibly, an error in the text?

In Matthew 18:19 there is a similar saying: "Again, truly I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything they ask for, it will be done for them by my Father in heaven." The question arises, who are these two? There is a suggestion that this is the inner husband and the inner wife, which should be one in the person, and not tear it apart. Only then can man overcome his internal contradictions and only then his desires will begin to be fulfilled.

"They will say to the mountain, 'Move Away,' and it will move away." What is this mountain, which is mentioned here? There are two versions of how this can be understood.

The first version: there is a good idea in the words of the song, performed by Valery Korop "In your holy presence", where it says: "In your holy presence mountains are melting - the mountains of problems, the mountains of sin, and the mountains of misfortune and failure." Mountains are all the problems and obstacles in the way of man – that, which seems impossible, that, which seems beyond his power, control and strength. It is such mountains that a person can move if he strives and achieves inner integrity between his two parts (the inner husband and wife).

The second version: the mountains in the Bible are associated not only with something problematic and difficult, but also with a spiritual height. For example, Jesus went to the mountain to pray, and therefore the mountain is a symbol of some spiritual heights.

Then a rather interesting meaning of the concept of "moving the mountain" appears. Most likely, moving the mountain is a change of one's worldview (discussed in verse 47 of the Gospel of Thomas), of what we believe. After being accustomed to a certain worldview, an adult person finds it quite difficult to change, because this is something with which he is familiar, although it has many obvious flaws. It is possible to change something for the better, by becoming internally whole.

That's what happened to me and my wife. From conservative and very traditional views, we moved on to a logical and beautiful understanding of the Bible. At least, we are trying and moving in this direction.

We are also ready to accept another point of view, if someone offers something better. In this sense, mountains in their positive meaning are also amenable to displacement and movement. Spiritual heights can and should be moved, not ossified in their conservatism.

Blessed are the solitary and elect

49. Jesus said: "Blessed are the solitary and elect, for you will find the kingdom. For you are from it, and to it you will return."

The word "only" (in the Coptic version of the Monahos) means "one".

We discussed the internal unity earlier, so we will not repeat it.

"Elected", "chosen" is a chance given to a person to find his election, that is, in which he can show all his best aspects, find his place in life.

People who have achieved unity and who have found election are truly blissful, and have really found the Kingdom of God; for the Kingdom of God is not some place up in the clouds, but harmony and joy in the heart of man.

"For you are from it" In traditional Christianity, especially in Protestantism, the view is held that man is completely corrupt and evil. And that can change by God's grace. But life experience tells us that there is, nonetheless, light in man. Election helps man find this light and develop it, suppressing all the evil that is in him.

My wife and I have four children. They are all different; each has his own personal views, habits, and desires. Our task is to see each child's unique talents and capabilities, understand his desires and make every effort to help him develop these qualities. It's better than constantly hammering that they are bad, and trying to remake them into what we want. **"For you are from it"** – is the piece of the Kingdom of God in every person that needs to be found and developed, thus expelling everything evil and wrong from man.

"And to it you will return." I want to pay attention to the word "return". This sounds like a hint that the person was already there.

If we consider the standard concept of hell and paradise, it turns out that at the end of the life of each person it is sent off to either hell or heaven. Each religious movement defines this in its own way; sets its conditional red line separating hell and paradise. This concept is extremely strange, and in it, there is, absolutely, no logic, no justice, and no truth. What if the person just barely missed reaching this line? Must he then suffer forever? What about the issue of justice - is it just to suffer infinite punishment for a finite number of misdeeds committed during one's lifetime? Therefore, the traditional idea of hell and paradise won't do. It is necessary to search for another answer.

There is a concept that a person comes to earth not once. It is quite logical. This is not about reincarnation, as in Vysotsky's "Song about the transmigration of souls", where someone will become a kind dog, and another will be a baobab.

It's about the fact that there is spirit, soul and body in a person. The body and soul can change, memory and memories are renewed, but the spirit, as a set of internal laws, remains. That is, what a person loved, that, to which he sincerely aspires, is preserved, even if you take all his memory from him. It is this set of internal laws and rules that are improved or degraded throughout one's lifetime.

Some rules and laws are laid in a person right at birth. Therefore, the hypothesis that a person comes to earth more than once has the right to exist. At least, it is more logical than the hypothesis of hell and paradise, especially since hell and heaven may well be here on earth.

Within each person here, on earth, there can be either the Kingdom of God, that is, love, joy, mutual understanding, or hell, that is, a worm or fire that devours a person's soul. This is the torture of conscience, regret, and despair because of missed opportunities. Hence we can conclude that heaven and hell are here on earth. A similar hypothesis, although not completely perfect, is still more logical.

If we consider hell and heaven as events happening to man on earth, and from that position re-read the Bible, then everything fits perfectly into this concept. Therefore, **"For you are from it, and to it you will return"** again acquires a new meaning in this context. I repeat - this is a hypothesis. If you have a better idea – offer it.

Repose in motion

50. Jesus said, "If they say to you, 'Where did you come from?', say to them, 'We came from the light, the place where the light came into being on its own accord and established itself and became manifest through their image.' If they say to you, 'Is it you?', say, 'We are its children, we are the elect of the living father.' If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your father in you?', say to them, 'It is motion and repose.'"

At first glance, the light mentioned here may seem something mystical and surprising, something that is difficult to understand. In fact, everything is very simple! There is one kind of light that possesses the properties described here - this is the light of knowledge.

Our worldview developed because we asked questions correctly and did not accept standard answers, because we needed not only to believe, but also to understand what we believe. It is from this kind of light that we have come, from seeking knowledge to finding the right and true understanding. We are still in the process of searching, because knowledge generates more knowledge and more opportunities. On this subject there is even a saying: "Learning is light, and ignorance is darkness."

In every science there are studies aimed at finding better, subtler and more correct explanations to natural phenomena. Of course, the finale is far, but the progress of science is undeniable.

In religion, however, light is allowed through a narrow tube – with deviations allowed, neither to the right nor to the left. I would not like to live like this. Therefore this phrase: **"We came from the light, the place where the light came into being on its own accord"** - is very close and understandable to us.

"If they say to you, 'Is it you?', say, 'We are its children, we are the elect of the living father.'" In the previous verses it has already been discussed that people who love God should strive to be his children in essence, that is, by actions, thoughts, ideas.

"If they ask you, 'What is the sign of your father in you?', say to them, 'It is motion and repose.'" The principle of "motion and repose" is very important for our family. Repose does not mean that you need to sit or lie down and do nothing. Real repose is smooth motion, when everything works perfectly, when everything in life is going well like a perfectly working

mechanism. Ideally, it does not break, even if everything seems to go awry and not according to plan. If, in this turbulent motion, we keep tranquility, joy and love in our souls - this is repose. Therefore, this repose can be in motion.

There is an anecdote that illustrates this truth well enough.

A preacher died and ended up in heaven – in the very heaven he had imagined. A luxurious palace; one word and every need is immediately satisfied. "Cool," thought the preacher. But a few days later he felt bored and started to miss certain things. On earth it was necessary to work constantly, necessary to constantly go somewhere with reports, to give sermons. His life was filled with very hectic and vigorous activities. But here it was not necessary to do anything. He had a question: where is the hectic activity in heaven? What is there to do here? And they answered him: "We do not have any of that. And who told you that this is heaven? "

Heaven is not a place where you do not have to do anything. This is a state where everything works correctly and harmoniously; a place where you hit the target, even if everything goes wrong; a place where there is harmony in everything. This, of course, does not negate the need to sometimes just relax and unwind. A change of situation is also motion. But the place where you, regularly, do not need to do anything is likely to be called a place of spiritual death.

For the Jews, the Sabbath is a day of rest. On the Sabbath they were not to do anything. It was forbidden to travel a greater distance than prescribed (a Sabbath distance), as this was already considered work.

For us, peace lies in the words of Jesus: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest." (Matthew 11:28).

True peace is when God reassures, life gets better, and things proceed as they should. In other words, repose in motion.

Illumination

51. His disciples said to him: "When will the repose of the dead come about, and when will the new world come?" He said to them, "What you look forward to has already come, but you do not recognize it."

Hearing about the repose, of which Jesus spoke in verse 55 of Gospel of Thomas, the disciples decided that it was a question of the coming of the Kingdom of God on Earth and the resurrection of the dead.

The question of the end of the world and the second coming of Jesus Christ is of interest to many people. This topic is given much attention in the classical Gospels.

For example, in Luke 17: 20-24: "Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst." Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here

he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other."

In these verses, there are amazing moments that seem contradictory. On the one hand, **"The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed"** and on the other hand **"For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other."**

Christians imagine that lightning will flash, Jesus Christ will descend from heaven and solve all the problems of mankind; will overcome untruth, will judge all the wicked, and make the righteous happy.

There are inconsistencies in this view of the coming of Jesus Christ. The first - **"is not something that can be observed"** and **"the kingdom of God is in your midst."** Second, Jesus will descend to the ground and begin to solve all tasks that were previously given to people, because they could not solve them themselves. This is somehow wrong. It's like, for example, parents watched for a long time how their child struggled to solve a problem and, after a while, instead of helping her solve it by gradually pushing her towards the solution, explaining how it needed to be done, they sat down and decided to solve the problem themselves. Such an approach is not only meaningless but is also of no benefit.

The kingdom of God and hell are, as we know, within each person, and hence the Kingdom of God comes to us not in an observable way, but at the level of thoughts and consciousness.

What does the phrase **"For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other"**? What does this have to do with flashing lightning?

The flashing of lightning from one end of the sky to the other (from one hemisphere of the human brain to another) is when a wonderful thought illuminates a person.

For example, the prodigal son, having left his father and wandering in distant countries, spent all his money and health, eventually, ended up eating with the pigs from the same trough.

But one day he was illuminated by a simple idea - to humble himself and return to his father. And from that moment began his reformation and true repentance (Luke 15: 17-18) "When he came to his senses, he said, 'How many of my father's hired servants have food to spare, and here I am starving to death! I will set out and go back to my father and say to him: Father, I have sinned against heaven and against you. "

Similarly, the coming of Jesus Christ into the consciousness of man is a thought that will illuminate and surprise him.

The kingdom of God has come, but people have not known it, because they are waiting for someone to solve their problems, although the solution is usually close, and consists of a simple thought or an idea that needs to be realized.

"Jesus said:" Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All." (Gospel of Thomas) - This is the lightning. Man will reign over everything; he will be able

to control his life; have power over himself; and will be able to inspire those around him, so that they too will find happiness.

For instance, to approach another person and ask him for forgiveness is to a certain person something of an illumination that would solve his problem. For another, an illumination would be admitting to a deception, in an issue in which he was insincere. For yet another, an illumination is finding a way out of a difficult situation. Through such simple things the kingdom of God comes into the heart of man. Through these, Jesus Christ appears to people, and not just in the form of lightning from heaven.

Let us return to verse 51 of the Gospel of Thomas. **"His disciples said to him: "When will the repose of the dead come about? ""**

The dead are, literally, already in repose; they do not move; they do not think. No wonder they are called "deceased". They are already in repose. It's about something else!

It is more logical to assume that the repose of the dead is the repose of the spiritually dead. Such people suffer and agonize over the fact that certain things disturb their life harmony. They cannot work or conduct family affairs; everything is out of place, and life has lost its meaning.

The question arises: on what day will the repose of such people come?

The answer to this question is the example of the prodigal son, who acquired peace the very day it dawned on him that he had to return to his father.

The repose of the spiritually dead person will come when the realization of what he needs to do, in order for his life to change, hits him. This will be an illumination, the lightning that is visible from one end of the sky to another.

Having followed his inner call, he will be able to leave the state of the spiritually dead, rise again and begin to live a new life. The true repose that people are waiting for comes through the heart of man, illumination and courage in following through with the decisions one has made.

You left out the one who is alive

52. His disciples said to him: "Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel, and all of them spoke of you." He said to them, "You have omitted the one living in your presence and have spoken (only) of the dead."

To some extent, this verse is a continuation of the 51st, where Jesus said, "What you look forward to (the repose) has already come, but you do not recognize it."

The disciples thought that this repose is Jesus who stands before them and speaks to them. The phrase: **"Twenty-four prophets spoke in Israel, and all of them spoke of you"** -the disciples wanted, first, to demonstrate their knowledge of the prophets, perhaps hoping for the praise of Jesus; secondly, they wanted to flatter Him, that He is great, for such great prophets speak of Him. To this Jesus replied: **"You have omitted the one living in your presence and have spoken (only) of the dead."**

The prophets are, most likely, the authors of Old Testament books. They are twenty-three - Moses, Joshua, Ezra, Nehemiah, Job, David, Solomon, Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, Daniel, Hosea,

Joel, Amos, Obadiah, Jonah, Micah, Naum, Habakkuk, Zephaniah, Haggai, Zechariah, and Malachi. The 24th being John the Baptist.

Christians have a habit of talking about and praising Jesus constantly. They obviously believe that the more they utter the word "Jesus", the more pleased God is. But this is not so.

Frequently mentioning the same thing without understanding the meaning behind it is more like spamming a person's mailbox; this annoys and distracts from the main tasks. Therefore, we should not be surprised that God does not hear our requests and prayers.

The third commandment reads: "Do not mention the name of the Lord your God in vain", that is, in vain, meaningless. Jesus also said: "Do not be wordy in prayer."

Jesus did not need senseless praise, glory, personal recognition. He just wanted them to see the life that's in Him, and understand its essence.

"You have omitted the one living in your presence." The question arises - how did they omit, since they were standing next to him as they spoke? But in fact, such can happen. People can be next to each other, but the distance between them can be great, because they do not understand each other, their thoughts being opposite.

Husband and wife, for example, can sit next to each other and drink tea, but they are far from each other, since they do not live as one person; they are far apart from each other internally.

If the heart is far away, then praise simply loses its meaning.

Is circumcision useful or not?

53. His disciples said to him, "Is circumcision beneficial or not?" He said to them, "If it were beneficial, their father would beget them already circumcised from their mother. Rather, the true circumcision in spirit has become completely profitable."

One of the main rites and requirements of the Jewish religion is circumcision. It is done on the 8th day of the birth of the child. The child should be circumcised on the 8th day, even if this day falls on the Sabbath - a day of rest.

In circumcision, perhaps, there is some benefit, for example, in terms of hygiene, but it is very doubtful.

We spoke in great detail about circumcision while analyzing the 4th verse of the Gospel of Thomas, where we tried to understand why the child was circumcised on the 8th day of his life. The 7th day is a day of rest. Most likely, if a person misses his day of rest, he is then circumcised on the 8th day.

What does it mean to miss one's day of rest? Every person in life has the opportunity to rise to a new level of development - make a breakthrough in life. But often a person does not notice or ignores this day, missing the opportunity to become better. On the 8th day he gets circumcised, thereby new restrictions are imposed on him. He thus has to submit to various social prejudices, customs and orders, regardless of whether or not they are logical, useful or strange.

This process repeats periodically in a person's life. He either rises to the occasion and uses these opportunities, or passes them, and he again undergoes circumcision, having missed his day of rest.

"Is circumcision beneficial or not?" The disciples of Jesus ask. Is there any benefit from the ritual circumcision of the foreskin? **"He said to them: "If it were beneficial, their father would beget them already circumcised from their mother."** In my opinion, the answer is rather disrespectful.

Usually, if people do not understand something, they carry out certain rites. If people understand the meaning of the rite, they follow its principle, not carrying out the rite itself. This applies to everything: sacrifices in the Old Testament, the fulfillment of the Sabbath, circumcision, etc.

The word "circumcision" is used repeatedly in the Bible not only in the literal sense. For example, there is the expression "circumcise hearts", this means separating right from wrong. A person must understand: what is right, and what is not, and must act correctly and conscientiously.

"A person is not a Jew who is one only outwardly, nor is circumcision merely outward and physical. No, a person is a Jew who is one inwardly; and circumcision is circumcision of the heart, by the Spirit, not by the written code. Such a person's praise is not from other people, but from God."(Romans 2:28-29).

True circumcision is one that occurs at the level of a person's conscience; at the level of thought and understanding: **"Rather, the true circumcision in spirit has become completely profitable."**

"This is the covenant I will establish with the people of Israel after that time, declares the Lord. I will put my laws in their minds and write them on their hearts. I will be their God, and they will be my people." (Hebrews 8:10) - One of the favorite poems and principles of our family.

"I will put My laws in their minds" - signifies true circumcision, which is in the spirit of man. One, even when tempted by something, can easily reject this temptation. For example, he could steal, but he will never do it. Or he could deceive, but he is disgusted by the thought, and he also will not do it, even if he'll get a lot of money for cheating. He will not succumb to temptation, because he circumcised in his heart.

True circumcision, which is in the spirit, is the laws of God written on the heart of a man that were able to separate in his heart, truth from the falsehood, and good from evil. Such circumcision is really beneficial.

Why is this kind of spiritual circumcision not carried out on a person, for example, at the time of his birth? A person would have been born immediately clever and kind, with a clear conscience and a high level of adequacy. The answer is obvious. The very process of achieving this goal is, by itself, of very high value. Having received something for nothing, without struggle, a person often does not appreciate it. For example, children of wealthy parents often neglect their studies,

using their great resources for entertainment, not for development.

Therefore, the very process of achieving the goal, the process of circumcision of the human heart is very important. The result achieved is of special value, like all that is achieved by considerable effort.

Of course, some might object and say: "But what about grace? Does man really attain the Kingdom of God through his efforts, labor, deeds and merit? "

No, that's precisely the rub. Fixing and changing oneself is a very difficult task. Even a traveler on the road needs help; otherwise he will not be able to reach the end of the journey.

Often in situations that were difficult for me, when all my personal resources were exhausted, I could only pray and hope for the help of God. Therefore, one cannot say that the Kingdom of God is achieved only by one's own efforts. There is mutual merit. This is a combination of the grace of God and the response of man to the call of God.

The poor in spirit

54. Jesus said: "Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of heaven."

It sounds very provocative, because the poor are hardly blissful people. "When you come to know yourselves, then you will become known, and you will realize that it is you who are the sons of the living father. But if you will not know yourselves, you dwell in poverty and it is you who are that poverty. "-(The Gospel of Thomas 3) There is a contradiction. How are the poor blessed, if poverty is clearly given here in a negative sense?

Most likely, such a concept as poverty exists both in a positive and negative sense. What kind of poverty is poverty in a positive sense? What poverty is an attribute of the Kingdom of Heaven?

On the other hand, we meet in the Bible the condemnation of wealth.

"Jesus said to his disciples: "Truly I tell you, it is hard for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of heaven. 24 Again I tell you, it is easier for a camel to go through the eye of a needle than for someone who is rich to enter the kingdom of God." (Matthew 19:23-24).

Does Jesus want everyone to be poor? I remember an anecdote: In 1917, the granddaughter of a Decembrist hears a noise on the street and sends the servant to find out what's wrong. Soon the servant returns.

"There's a revolution, lady!"

"Oh, a revolution! That's great! My grandfather was also a revolutionary! And what do they want?"

"They want to do away with the rich."

"That's strange. My grandfather, on the other hand, wanted to do away with the poor."

How can we understand such strange ideas about poverty and wealth in the Bible and the Gospel of Thomas?

Reviewing the previous verses, we have seen that things which, at first sight, seem literal, like, circumcision, the resurrection of the dead, the coming of Christ, and a new world, must first be understood spiritually; only then will there be more logic and harmony in what was said.

The literal meaning of the word "poverty" is contradictory and incorrect, even in the light of the Gospel of Thomas, not to mention practical experience. Hence, we are talking about some spiritual understanding of the phrase "blessed are the poor".

This phrase is very similar to "Blessed are the poor in spirit, for theirs is the Kingdom of Heaven" (Matthew 5: 3, Sermon on the Mount).

The word **'poor'** probably means poor in spirit ("poor in spirit") and not poverty in physical terms (no money, apartments, cars, etc.). Let's try to understand this concept.

The term "the poor in spirit" is one of the most mysterious in the Bible. This is the first blessing of the Beatitudes, which would mean it is extremely important; nevertheless, its meaning remains quite vague. There is no clear-cut answer as to why this is so important. Let's try to understand this precept as deeply as we can.

The first and most obvious interpretation of the word **'poor'** is that it refers to those that have little. That is, having little spirit, and therefore faint-hearted. It turns out that people who lack spirit draw it from God, as a result of which they become strong in God. There is some logic here; but there is also a problem.

First, if people were weak and then gained strength and spirit from God, they can no longer be blessed by this commandment, because they had already acquired from God, power and all that they lacked; which means they are no longer faint-hearted. True believers cannot be called faint-hearted (having little spirit).

Let's try to understand the phrase **"poor in spirit"** as poor in the spiritual sense.

Man very quickly gets used to a certain standard of living and comfort. If something is below this level, it is perceived as a negative, and the person gets upset. I think that it is to such a condition that the term **"poor in spirit"** refers to.

"Poor in spirit" are people who are poor at the internal level. They do not believe that they own what they physically possess, and rejoice not only in the changes for the better, but also in what they have at the present.

A person who does not raise his inner level of requirements is much happier than one that constantly raises it in step with changing external conditions.

The only person that can really live happily, is one who does not consider the things that surround him and people that work with him, as personal possessions; one who rejoices in what he has at the moment, and not that he has more today than he had yesterday.

This is the difference between being simply a man and being one that is **"poor in spirit"**. Living by the principle of **"poor in spirit"** is very important, especially in the family.

There is a very good principle in the Bible: "Lend to them without expecting anything back." (Luke 6:35). People, helping each other (and this is not about money), expect reciprocity; reciprocal help. There is no need to languish in expectations! You just need to help sincerely and with all your heart!

Yes, a person, of course, can reciprocate - it would be very nice; it would be a joy. But if he does not reciprocate, there is no need to be upset!

The common man is usually upset when reality does not meet his expectations. While one that is **"poor in spirit"** reacts to this normally: reciprocated - excellent; did not reciprocate - also OK.

The principle of **"poverty of spirit"** is the basis of human happiness. If a person understands this not just as a rule, but will sincerely believe so and live by this rule, he will become much happier. No wonder Jesus said: **"Blessed are the poor, for yours is the Kingdom of Heaven."**

"The Kingdom of Heaven" is not the place where a person ends up after death, no! "The Kingdom of Heaven" is what is here and now. It begins here and continues into eternity. That is why **"poverty of spirit"** is needed here, in our daily life, as one of the most important principles that make a person happy and make him an associate of the Kingdom of God; that is, a blessed man.

Yes, sometimes there is a belief that **"poverty of spirit"** can be achieved by artificial methods. For example, through constantly scolding yourself, saying: "I'm so bad; I fail in everything" and so on. This is not right! Do not try to, artificially, knock down your level of perception.

"Poverty of spirit" is having the same depth of joy and gratitude for both the small and the great; it is a willingness to serve instead of looking down on people.

If a person scolds himself, beats and knocks himself to the ground with these blows, this actually means that the level of his inner perception is very high. By scolding himself, he has to artificially lower the level. This is definitely not bliss!

Bliss is when a person loves to live in such a way that the desire to live by the principle **"Blessed are the poor in spirit"** comes from the heart. The secret of the principles of the Kingdom of God is that they tend to win people's hearts. These principles lead to harmony, joy, happiness and love- to everything that people want and strive for.

You ask, would not a "poverty of spirit" lead to unwillingness to develop, to seek better and higher? For example: "I'm good. Don't bother me." No! After all, "poverty of spirit" does not preclude the pursuit of development. It removes grief and annoyance from imaginary losses. Moreover, a happy person has much more strength to live and develop!

Having tried to live by these principles, you begin to understand that it is better than to suffer from the discrepancy between the expected and the received. The principles of the Kingdom of God, like happiness, are very "contagious" in the good sense of the word!

Having such a quality as poverty of spirit makes a person's life blissful. He receives even small and simple things with joy and gratitude, because he "counts" not from his current state, but from "zero", believing himself in the inner man to be "the last and servant of all".

However, this excludes self-flagellation, self-abasement, and constant repetition of the mantra "I am such a sinner". These attempts to artificially "knock" lower one's level of perception do not lead to bliss. Poverty of spirit is having the same depth of joy and gratitude for both the small and the great; it is a willingness to serve instead of looking down on people. And the way to this I see not through self-abasement and scourging, but through loving this way of thinking. This quality is not tied to material wealth. But for a materially wealthy person it is more valuable and useful,

and also more difficult to achieve.

Hating father and mother

55. Jesus said, "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not hate his brothers and sisters and take up his cross in my way will not be worthy of me."

At first glance, this verse sounds extremely provocative and contradictory, since Jesus taught that one should love his neighbor as himself.

There are principles in the Bible that oblige a man to love his parents and take care of his family: "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." - (1 Timothy 5: 8)

It is not easy to understand the 60th verse. Nevertheless, we will try to get as deep an understanding of what Jesus meant by this statement as possible.

Similar sayings, even in a more vivid version, appear more than once in the canonical Bible.

For example: "If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple." (Luke 14:26) This sounds even stranger. How can this be reconciled with verses that clearly condemn hatred?

"But anyone who hates a brother or sister is in the darkness and walks around in the darkness. They do not know where they are going, because the darkness has blinded them." (1 John 2:11).

"Anyone who hates a brother or sister is a murderer, and you know that no murderer has eternal life residing in him." (1 John 3:15).

It is obvious that a literal understanding of these sayings about hatred towards one's relatives leads to absurdity. Therefore, let's try to dig deeper. There are several options for understanding the 60th verse.

The first option is closest to the literal one. The word "hatred" must be seen as a kind of hyperbole. In the Russian language, there was the word "navidet" and it bore such meanings as: to see willingly, watch willingly, with pleasure. Its antonym "nenavidet" did not initially carry such negative meanings as disgust and evil feelings towards someone.

At all times there were considerable contradictions between such concepts as "family", "family solidarity" and "truth."

In some cases, family solidarity goes against the truth, as people for the sake of the family are ready to hide crimes, give bribes, engage in deception, etc. For example, to ensure that a child, who is lazy and poorly educated, got into college, parents are willing to give a bribe. In order to prevent a son who had violated the law from being imprisoned, the parents are ready to hide the crimes.

It is on family solidarity that the mafia is built.

Therefore, these words of Jesus are aimed at destroying such wrong aspects of family solidarity.

Certainly, people should support and help each other, but this should not contradict truth, justice and honesty.

If a child studies poorly or is lazy, then it he should not be helped, through bribes, to get into a prestigious university or to occupy a position that he does not deserve. Perhaps, having lost these benefits, having experienced difficulties in life, he will think and "apply himself." Yes, it will be painful for parents to watch this. But it will be more correct and better for the children themselves.

If there are contradictions between truth, family solidarity or traditions, then for the sake of truth and conviction a person should be ready to engage in a certain amount of confrontation with his family, his parents.

For example, the father believes that his son should work as a butcher, like him, or continue some kind of family business, but his son has another calling (remember Lomonosov). In this case, the son must act according to his inner feelings, in accordance with the calling in his heart, even if it is necessary to damage relations with his family.

In my life there was a similar situation. My mother and I are very close and love each other. One day I realized that I wanted to know God and become a Christian. I started attending meetings. Mom, having decided that I was in a sect (to some extent she was right, but I understood this later), was very upset and was against these meetings. This led to a huge conflict between us. We had a very complicated relationship for 3-4 years. At that moment, we both suffered greatly, but I still could not compromise.

All those years, it seemed to me that I acted in relation to my mother as a person who hated her. But with the passage of time, we got to understand each other. Our relationship rose to a whole new level and we began to live with one heart.

It is not for nothing that the Gospel of Thomas 101 states that "Whoever does not hate his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not love his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. For my mother [...], but my true mother gave me life."

In each of our lives, there are certain moments when the truth and the call that one feels is contrary to what our parents say. In such cases, there is no need to compromise; one must act in truth and follow the vocation that he hears in his heart. After rejecting a compromise, a person will be able to love his parents even more after a while.

In our family there was a situation when my wife's parents tried to impose their own way of thinking on us, to make us live as they saw fit. We rejected this and, as a result, a period of very difficult relationship with them began. But a few years later, after seeing how happy our family was, mutual understanding developed between us and them and our relationship became much better than before. My belief is that, had we compromised then, we wouldn't have been able to take our relationship with them to a new level.

Sometimes a person acts as if he hates his father and mother. If this is done for the sake of truth, then the relationship between them will become better than that which they would have,

had he simply compromised and acted according to the dictates of his parents.

The second way of understanding this verse is less literal.

If we consider fathers and mothers in the spiritual sense, that is, as people who had a great impact on one's spiritual development, as teachers who formed one's values. And brothers and sisters as employees and friends (brothers and sisters of the church organization to which one belongs), then this verse is of great practical importance.

As a person grows spiritually, he must surpass the level of his father and mother, and brothers and sisters. If he develops spiritually and follows what is written in the Bible and in the Gospel of Thomas, at some point in time, he will hit the ceiling of the values that were inculcated in him through the years. If he continues to grow spiritually and does not stop, then a conflict with those who brought him up, and instilled those values and principles in him, is unavoidable.

A similar situation occurred in my life. I attended church meetings, while continuing to develop spiritually. There came a time when I had to get into conflict with the church organization because I saw contradictions between what I read in the Bible and what I was told there. I read the Bible and understood that the relationship between people should be fraternal, and not, for example, as between a lord and servant. This was what caused the conflict. It was a very difficult time for me and for those people who could be, notionally, called my spiritual fathers and mothers, as well as brothers and sisters.

I realized that when a person follows Jesus, there comes a time of conflict when he has to hate, in a figurative sense, his father and mother as well as his brothers and sisters.

"And take up his cross in my way will not be worthy of me." What does it mean to "take up your cross"? The words "your" and "cross" are important here.

The words «your» means the talents of a given person, his capabilities and at the same time his cross, which is, suffering due to the use of his talents. For example, my cross, as it seems to me, is the ability to settle conflicts, to help find mutual understanding and common ground between people. I'm good at it, although it's not easy at all. I have to overcome myself and be patient each time. To be honest, I would like to pass this cross to someone else, as I sometimes think to myself: "Why should I be the one to do this?" Or say to myself: "Let these conflicts resolve themselves." But I understand that every person must do his work, no matter how difficult, and worthily bear his cross.

"Take up your cross" also means not giving up, not giving up that which you can and should do. For example, the cross of all parents is the upbringing of children. Sometimes it seems that the children kill you with their disobedience and rebelliousness. But at the same time, carrying this cross, we get joy and satisfaction from the recognition of the fact that we are useful in life; that we can advise and help our children.

Giving up your cross seems to be a simple and easy solution to all problems, but it, in fact, leads to an even greater aggravation of difficulties in a person's life. One, who can't take it and leaves his family and children, will end up being tormented by this his whole life.

For me, to carry my cross is in many respects consonant with the 7th commandment "Do not

commit adultery", that is, "do not stop loving". Do not give up half way, that which you have loved and taken responsibility for. One must persevere and carry on to the end!

It is this steadfastness and courage that makes one like Jesus Christ, in the sense that one gains the qualities that we see in the Gospel of Thomas, the Sermon on the Mount and the classical Gospels.

About corpses and weeds

56. Jesus said: "Whoever has come to understand the world has found (only) a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world."

57. Jesus said: "The kingdom of the father is like a man who had good seed. His enemy came by night and sowed weeds among the good seed. The man did not allow them to pull up the weeds; he said to them, 'I am afraid that you will go intending to pull up the weeds and pull up the wheat along with them.' For on the day of the harvest the weeds will be plainly visible, and they will be pulled up and burned."

58. Jesus said: "Blessed is the man who has suffered and found life."

Verses 56 through 58 should be considered as one whole, because they trace a single logical chain, although at first glance it may seem that these poems have nothing in common.

Let's consider the 56th verse.

First: what does it mean to "understand the world?" To understand the world means to study patterns, cause-effect relationships.

Second: what does it mean to "find a corpse?" At first glance, it looks strange. What is this strange corpse and where does it lie? Meanwhile, when we examine patterns, be they historical or psychological laws, we find no such corpses.

A corpse is something that has been recognized by history as dead, as dangerous; something that should never happen again. Excellent examples of this type of corpses are communist ideology and Nazism.

There are obvious corpses (the examples given above), but there are also less obvious ones. When we find such a corpse, we can bypass it and not repeat the mistakes that were committed before.

"Whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world." "Is superior to the world"= means praise for the one who found the corpse. That is, someone who discovered such a corpse (a dead ideology) and did not go down that path, avoided error and danger, did the right thing. In this sense, "he is superior to the world" - he found a way to proceed higher.

There is a saying: "History teaches that history does not teach anything". Unfortunately, people often repeat the same mistakes, stepping on the same rake. The one who knows how to see these rakes, who knows how to learn not only from his own mistakes, but also from the mistakes of others, "is superior to the world."

It is not for nothing that verse 57 follows the 56th, as in verse 57 we are given, though not in obvious form, but nevertheless a notable example of such a corpse.

A similar parable is also found in the classical Gospels (Matthew 13: 24-30, 36-43).

The question arises, what actually happened? Good seeds were sown and weeds were sown by the enemy. The weeds grew. The owner of the field, who sowed good seeds, did not allow his servants to pull up the weeds.

The person who sowed good seeds is, most likely, God. Servants are disciples of Jesus, those who participated in the creation and growth of the Christian church.

Why did not God allow his servants to pull up the weeds? One of the activities that the Christian church has been engaged in since its foundation is the struggle against dissent and heresy - that is, in practical terms, pulling up the weeds. Heresy was considered something more terrible than even murder or adultery. Fighting heresy is one of the main tasks of the church. It's amazing how such a parable was so willfully disregarded. The followers of Jesus actually did what He forbade.

Correct detection of weed is not a question of fighting against heresies, because disagreements create conditions for healthy and free competition. What are weeds, and what is wheat, will eventually become apparent with time.

Advancements in the spheres of science and technology, freedom, and human rights have, in fact, shown where the weeds are, and where the wheat is. What was considered wheat turned out to be weed, and vice versa.

The fight against dissent, against heresy is the corpse, which was spoken about in verse 61. And which, having been discovered, must simply be bypassed, so as not to become a corpse yourself.

When we left the Christian organization where we were for quite a while, we understood this principle. It became clear that the meetings should be organized in such a way that every person could say what they think as long as there is justification. You can't just condemn, saying that this is heresy or that one could not say such things here.

The corpse, connected with dissent and heresy, is much less noticeable. People constantly trip up against it. It serves as an obstacle to the development of Christian thought and the personality of man. In the end, this led to the fact that the church became a haven of superstition, a tool for manipulating people and a commercial organization. I'm not talking about all people who believe, love and deserve respect (rather, in spite of, and not thanks to), but as an institution, it has really lost its position. And this is a good thing, because with the same values, but possessing power, it was also a repressive apparatus, not having enough patience to work in conditions of free competition.

Briefly, dogmatic thinking is a corpse. It leads to the impossibility of intelligent dialogue. As a result, division and hatred between even very close branches of a teaching (in this case Christianity). It is, precisely, dogmatism that is the cause of division in the church; because for a dogmatist, any digression from dogma is a betrayal of God. The lessons of history, of the 20th century in particular, do not give an intelligent person the slightest chance to continue to think dogmatically.

Often I ask the same question to people who think dogmatically: Is genocide good or bad? Is it possible to somehow justify the extermination of an entire people, young and old? Answer - bad, cannot be justified. But what about the genocide of the peoples of Palestine, which is described in the Bible? Genocide on the orders of God (according to the text) is it justified? Answer - justified. God knows best who should live and who to kill. This is a type of surgery; the tumor is excised. Sometimes they cite an example of an airplane captured by terrorists. If you do not shoot down the plane, more people will die if it is directed to a city. But even in this situation, no one is shooting down airplanes. There is always hope. Perishing or defeating the terrorists is the choice of those on the plane, not those who press the button to bring it down. Therefore, this example is incorrect. By the way, there was actually an insightful real-life situation that illustrates my point; read about "United Airlines Flight 93, September 11, 2001", there is a film about it.

Here another corpse is clearly visible - under no circumstances should God be used to justify one's violence or the violence described in the Bible. We've already been down that road- the crusades, countless religious wars, the battle cry "Gott mit uns" ("God with us" - the motto depicted on the coat of arms of the German Empire, widely used in German military units since the XIX century, in particular etched on belt buckles).

Violence breeds violence, and there are no exceptions. That God would initiate and encourage wars with the aim of bringing about good through evil and violence is an unviable idea. The Old Testament style of warfare (genocide, total destruction) found countless imitators, especially among those who call themselves Christians. It is not credible to say "do not smoke" if you yourself smoke. It is difficult to talk about this in detail here - it is a very voluminous topic. Read a full study on this subject: "Jesus Wars" - By Philip Jenkins [10, 11].

Although we do not go on crusades, we often use God to justify our violence against disobedient children, although the real reason is our lack of restraint and irritation.

But believers (fundamentalists) do not want to give up dogmatic thinking. We will have to abandon the idea of literal accuracy and inerrancy of the texts of the Bible. We will have to repent of violence against people of non-traditional sexual orientation, which has been going on for thousands of years. Fundamentalists are vehemently opposed to both of these things. They consider it better to justify genocide than to take such steps.

Now we can logically move on to verse 58, where Jesus said: "Blessed is the man who has suffered and found life."

Indeed, it is much better to act, to seek, to strive and develop, than to become a corpse or simply ossified, and cemented in those dogmas that one is required to believe blindly. This 58th verse complements well the 56th and 57th verses.

There is no need to impose your point of view on others. We need to find talent in each person and try to help him develop it; one needs to listen to the opinions of others, even if it sounds like heresy.

The idea of not fighting dissent is very important both in a global, ecclesiastical sense, and in

an applied, family and personal context. Do not require, for example, children, a wife (husband) to subordinate and fulfill an idea, because you consider it the only true and correct one, rather, help them to develop their talents and foster their abilities.

The Samaritan and the lamb

59. Jesus said: "Take heed of the living one while you are alive, lest you die and seek to see him and be unable to do so."

60. <They saw> a Samaritan carrying a lamb on his way to Judea. He said to his disciples, "That man is round about the lamb." They said to him, "So that he may kill it and eat it."

He said to them, "While it is alive, he will not eat it, but only when he has killed it and it has become a corpse." They said to him, "He cannot do so otherwise." He said to them, "You too, look for a place for yourself within repose, lest you become a corpse and be eaten."

For greater clarity, this verse is best examined in the translation of Professor Nechipurenko (from Coptic):

Jesus said: "Look at the one who is alive, while you are alive, so that you do not die - look for him! And you do not have the power to see. They saw a Samaritan carrying a lamb entering Judah. "Jesus said to his disciples: "Why did this man turn over the lamb?" They said to him: "So that he can kill it and eat it." He said to them: "As long as it (the lamb) is alive, he will not eat it, but if he kills it, it (the lamb) becomes a corpse." They said: "Otherwise, he cannot do it." He said to them: "You also seek a place in peace, so that you do not become corpses and you are not eaten."

Again we come across complete riddles. To some extent this saying is a continuation of the previous topic of the corpse, since this is actually an example of how you can find a corpse in an unexpected place.

We need to be especially attentive to the verses of the Gospel of Thomas, because most of the puzzles in them are not obvious and the clues are not immediately apparent.

Let's think about the Samaritan with the lamb. In the Gospels there is a parable about a man who was traveling from Jerusalem to Jericho and was robbed by thieves along the way.

This parable was rather interestingly interpreted by Yevgeny Polyakov, to wit, that Jerusalem symbolizes spiritual heights and the Kingdom of God, while Jericho is symbolic of a place of apostasy from God.

The man, who was going from Jerusalem to Jericho, to some extent, was on a road that was distancing him from God. Therefore it isn't surprising that thieves robbed him on that road.

If Jerusalem symbolizes the Kingdom of God, some spiritual height, then the question arises - who is the lamb and who is the Samaritan?

Many concepts in the Bible are used both in a positive and negative sense. The concept "Samaritan" is also used in both senses.

A Samaritan, in a positive sense, is a person who is far from religion and is not an official

representative of the Jewish religion. For this reason the Jews did not consider them to be people. There is a parable about the Samaritan who helped the traveler on the road, although everyone else turned their backs on him.

A Samaritan, in a negative sense, is a person who mixed Judaism with other religions. With the result being a mixture of different religions, that is very far from God.

The lamb is a symbol of meekness. Often, Jesus himself was compared to a lamb. Therefore it is logical to assume that the lamb is either Jesus himself or his teachings. That is, the Samaritan took Jesus, his teaching and started to go into Judea. He did not enter, but was entering. He was on the cusp of entering, but had not yet entered.

"Jesus said to his disciples:" (Why) did this man turn over a lamb? "" What does an overturned lamb mean? There is no doubt that this means the inverted teachings of Jesus Christ. That is, it is now clear who this Samaritan that was carrying an inverted lamb to Judea was.

The inverted lamb is the symbol of the inverted teachings of Jesus Christ - that is, meekness, love, humility, freedom and joy turned into an instrument of control over people, an instrument of state power, an instrument of oppression and suppression of dissenters. Such an ideology, based on intimidation, suppression of critical thinking, manipulation, blind faith, subordination to authorities without hesitation, became for us an obvious corpse. We cannot simply become members of some traditional church, because this corpse, alas, immediately catches the eye, and from it, unfortunately, do not rush to get rid of, because they do not see it.

The Samaritan's goal is to take advantage of the inverted teachings of Jesus Christ for gain.

Indeed, when Christianity became the dominant religion, it began to be used by the powerful of this world as a tool for controlling people contrary to the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ, contrary to the meekness and love that Jesus preached.

From the parable it is unclear whether the lamb was killed or not, but now we understand that Christianity is currently in a rather weak position. Science has largely outstripped it, especially in terms of the speed of progress.

Due to the fact that those Christians who are like the Samaritan in this parable lost their power, people began to live and think freely, many are disappointed in official Christianity.

The real teaching of Jesus Christ makes people free; it gives meaning to their lives; it helps them find the Kingdom of God and happiness.

In the untrammelled form, the teachings cannot be used for anyone's selfish interests or evil goals. Therefore, people tried as best as they could to turn the lamb upside down and make it a corpse.

"You too, look for a place for yourself within repose, lest you become a corpse and be eaten." It is necessary to seek true joy, peace and harmony, so as not to become corpses. Do not try to use the teachings of Jesus Christ for control and manipulation.

This verse sums up several previous sayings. We must learn to see where the corpse is, and where life is. Learn to tell them apart. Often the corpse may look attractive, as Jesus said to the Pharisees: "You are like painted coffins that look beautiful on the outside, but inside are full of

the bones of the dead and all uncleanness" (Matthew 23:27).

Two on a bed

61. Jesus said, "Two will rest on a bed: the one will die, and the other will live." Salome said, "Who are you, man, that you ... have come up on my couch and eaten from my table?" Jesus said to her, "I am he who exists from the undivided. I was given some of the things of my father." <...> "I am your disciple." <...> "Therefore I say, if he is destroyed, he will be filled with light, but if he is divided, he will be filled with darkness."

It is better to consider this verse in the translation of Professor Nechipurenko. In his translation, this is the 61st verse: **Jesus said: "Two will rest on the bed: one will die, one will live." Salome said: "Who are you, husband? As from one you ascended my bed, and you ate at my table. " Jesus said to her: "I am the one who exists from one who is one; I've been given (that which belongs) to my Father. " Salome said, "I am your disciple." Jesus said to her: "Therefore I say:" When he becomes one, he will be filled with light, but when he becomes separate, he will be filled with darkness."**

In the classical Gospels there is also a similar saying. Gospel of Luke 17:34: "I tell you, on that night two people will be in one bed; one will be taken and the other left."

As always, the verses of the Gospels of Thomas and Luke raise many questions. For example, what is this bed? Who will be taken where? Who will remain where?

In the Gospel of Thomas, there are several, albeit not obvious, hints for understanding this verse.

At first glance, in some phrases, for example, "ascended my bed" you can see the sexual overtones. But this is not about that. Let's try to understand what was meant.

After the phrase Jesus **"Two will rest on a bed: the one will die, and the other will live."** His student Salome asked a rather strange and seemingly inappropriate question: **"Who are you, husband? As from one you ascended my bed, and you ate at my table. "We will try to figure it out.**

Let's imagine that Salome invited Jesus to visit her. They sit together; perhaps they drink wine, eat and talk on various topics. And then Jesus says: **"Two will rest on a bed: the one will die, and the other will live."** This phrase surprised, perhaps, even offended Salome. She could not believe that now two friends are conversing, resting on a bed and that after a while Jesus will live, and she will die. The shocked Salome actually raised a claim with Jesus, asking: **"Who are you? You ascended my bed, and you ate at my table, "Will you indeed live and I will die? We are good friends with You, You came to visit me, and we have a great time. Why is it so? To this "Jesus said to her: "I am the one who exists from one who is one; I've been given (that which belongs) to my Father."** Salome, marveling at what she heard, says to Jesus: **"I am your disciple,"** making clear that there is a deep connection between them, as between a teacher and a disciple.

Most likely, the concepts "die" and "live" do not mean the end of physical life. At the

beginning of our study of the Gospel of Thomas, it was said about spiritual death and spiritual life.

One will be disappointed, lose interest in life, in Jesus Christ, in people and thereby become spiritually dead. And the other will develop, which means that he will remain alive.

How can this happen if Salome is both a disciple and a close friend of Jesus Christ? The answer is obvious. Such external forms of unity, as being on the same bed, that is, to be close friends or even to be a student, are clearly not enough.

Then Jesus speaks of his disciple: "When he becomes one, he will be filled with light, but when he becomes separate, he will be filled with darkness."

Jesus prays for the unity of his disciples (John 17:22-23) "I have given them the glory that you gave me, that they may be one as we are one— I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me."

One of the main tasks of the church was to make the church become indivisible and unified. So that everyone would obey the same rules and laws; so that there would be no disagreements. The absence of disagreements is a good idea in principle, but more important is how this unity is achieved - by orders or through mutual understanding? For example, is mutual understanding and unity possible between husband and wife on this basis: the husband tells his wife to obey him unquestioningly and to take everything he says as a law? Obviously not! This is one of the worst possible ways to achieve unity.

It's the same in the church. Attempts to unite people by orders, edicts or force, lead to complete collapse and a most disgusting form of dictatorship. There are, of course, moments when orders are appropriate; for example, to coordinate actions in a life-threatening situation. But as a tool with which to build relationships, orders are more destructive than useful.

"That they may be made one" means, in the first place, that the inner parts of a person should become one whole, so that internal contradictions that tear man apart are eliminated. A little earlier we discussed this in detail (there where we spoke about two horses).

As experience shows and history testifies to this, it is impossible to build unity between people, simply by ordering: "Be united, think alike." After all, people still think differently. So it becomes necessary to introduce censorship, prohibitions and punishments for dissent. The result is dissatisfaction, protests and so on. We have been through this many times.

If a husband and wife, for example, strive for inner integrity, honesty and unity, not by order, but by mutual sincere desire, they will achieve this. People who are not too lazy to spend time on communication without accusations and recriminations, in time may find out that they speak about the same, but in different words, and thereby reach an agreement.

Therefore, when Jesus speaks of unity, I think that this is, first and foremost, the unity between people, on the basis that everyone personally seeks inner integrity and unity as Jesus himself has this inner unity. Jesus' prayer, I believe, encourages disciples to be one, first, internally, and secondly, among themselves. In addition to all external forms of unity between people, it is

important that everyone becomes one (without internal contradictions) like Jesus, like God.

To achieve unity with another person, it is necessary first of all, to work on eliminating one's internal contradictions, fears and things that divide one.

Having found such inner unity, a person can have true friendship and unity with those around him.

We must pay attention to how far or close we are to each other internally. You can sit next to one another, lie on one bed, but live as if on different planets. You have to be close not just by outward signs, but, first of all, by spirit and soul. It is to this, we believe, that Jesus draws attention in this verse.

Left and right

62. Jesus said: "It is to those who are worthy of my mysteries that I tell my mysteries. Do not let your left (hand) know what your right (hand) is doing."

A more complete translation, taking into account the missing places, is in Professor Nechipurenko, 62nd verse: **"Jesus said:" I tell my secrets to those who are worthy of my secrets. Do not let your left hand know what your right hand will do. "**

The concepts of the right and left have always stood out throughout human history. These concepts are found in the Bible, in everyday life, and in politics.

In the Gospel of Matthew, there is a very similar verse: "But when you do alms, do not let your left hand know what the right hand is doing" (Matthew 6: 3).

The meaning of the verse in the Gospel of Matthew seems obvious: if you give alms, then you should do it modestly and not praise yourself for it.

In the Gospel of Thomas, the same construct applies not to charity, but to secrets.

We must admit that the Gospel of Matthew also speaks of secrets: "That your alms be secret; and your Father who sees what is done in secret will reward you openly " (Matthew 6: 4)

While examining the 7th verse of the Gospel of Thomas, we asked the question: why did Jesus recommend the cutting off of the right hand and plucking off of the right eye to fight temptation? It is obvious that the direct and literal application of this principle is simply meaningless and useless. Therefore it is imperative we seek a deeper and more comprehensive meaning.

In the Bible there is an interesting verse that talks about the last judgment. It also mentions the concepts of "right" and "left": "When the Son of Man comes in his glory, and all the angels with him, he will sit on his glorious throne. All the nations will be gathered before him, and he will separate the people one from another as a shepherd separates the sheep from the goats. He will put the sheep on his right and the goats on his left." (Matthew 25: 31-33). Sheep are those who gave alms; those who were kind to others. Goats - those people who were selfish and did not come to the aid of others at a time of difficulty.

There is also an interesting principle in the Bible: "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on thy right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also." (Matthew 5:39).

These concepts are also found in politics. Right-wingers in politics are conservative people

who support the existing government (conservatives, reactionaries), while leftists are those who advocate the need for change and transformation of the existing system (radicals and progressives).

In one article there is a rather interesting characteristic of the right and left.

In France, the boy asked his father what it means for politicians to be right or left [4]. The father replied: "To be right means to dream of the greatness of France. To be left means to dream of happiness for the French." That is, the right emphasizes the greatness of the state, the importance of power, ideas, principles, and in the left - the importance of individual happiness.

To some extent, this correlates with the Bible, because the right are those who cared about other people, the altruists, and the left are those who adhered to a more individualistic position.

However, this does not mean that the right is good, and the left is bad, as after all, in the fight against temptation, it is necessary to cut off the right hand and pluck out the right eye.

So, to sum up, the right is associated with generally accepted norms, righteousness and mercy; no wonder the Bible says that it is the right hand that gives alms.

The left hand is associated with dissent, individualism, with non-standard things, with violations and counteractions to established standards. There is even an expression in this regard: "This is something left".

There is also a well-known expression: "Go left." In Ephesus, I learned about its origin. There was a street in the city of Ephesus leading from the port to the city center. To the right of this road was a library, and to the left - a house of love. One, going not to the library, but to the house of love had to turn left. Ever since, there has been the expression "go left."

The right arm and the left arm are different, but they both play important roles. It cannot be said that the right or left approach to any given situation is the only correct one.

Most of the existing world religions are to the right. In practically every religion, be it Buddhism, Islam, or Christianity, a huge and important role is played by charity. In many ways it is through charity and philanthropy that religions prove their right to exist; because they encourage people to struggle with their own selfishness and to work for the benefit of others, forgetting self and sacrificing personal needs.

It is not for nothing that the Bible says that it is the right hand that gives alms, and that the left hand should not know this. That is, by giving alms, a person should not feed his selfishness and self-esteem.

However, renouncing individualism, the right hand does its charitable work not entirely unselfishly. People of different world religions are merciful in many ways in order to bring other people to their religion to prove that their religion is the most merciful, the most correct and the most kind.

It is through deeds of love and compassion that religions become attractive to people who are tired of selfishness, malice, and lack of love from the world around them.

There are also things in which the right-hand approach is powerless. Although the right-hand approach partly helps a person get rid of selfishness, yet it is powerless in dealing with

temptations and, judging by the saying of Jesus, the right eye and right hand prevent a person from fighting temptations.

Jesus said, "If your right eye causes you to sin, pluck it out and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and cast it from you; for it is more profitable for you that one of your members perish, than for your whole body to be cast into hell." (Matthew 5:29).

The approach of almost every religion to the desires and temptations that visit a person is simply to institute a ban. But the ban, as we know, further inflames human desire, making what is forbidden even more desirable.

Remember: "Jesus said," If you fast, you will give rise to sin for yourselves." - (Gospel of Thomas 15). Fasting is traditionally associated with asceticism - renunciation of food, pleasures and joys in life. But the ascetic approach in itself does not solve the problem of sin - the problem of temptation. On the contrary, it even generates in a person more desire to act against the rules, making the goal not just desirable, but coveted.

Remember: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman with lust has already committed adultery with her in his heart" (Matthew 5:28). We discussed this in detail while examining the 7th verse of the Gospel of Thomas.

One of the most important ideas expressed in the 7th verse is that the rejection of the ban deprives it of its charm and strong attractiveness. And, in many respects, solves the problem of temptation.

A person must find the right application for each of his desires and aspirations. No given desire of a person is a mistake or something superfluous; for they could be useful in certain situations or for certain purposes.

Also interesting in the context of right and left is Matthew 5:39: "But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also."

To strike in the right cheek is to accuse a person of being in the wrong. In fact, any accusation of a person being in the wrong is a blow to the right cheek. In such cases, people, as a rule, hit, in response, the right cheek of the offender. Thereby looking for what is wrong with the one who accuses. So they take turns striking each other on the right cheek.

This principle is often called the "principle of non-resistance to evil". That is, when a person must turn the other cheek. This principle is rightly criticized. Yes, one does not always have to be absolutely submissive; in some situations one must clearly resist evil and injustice. For example, in situations where the lives of others are endangered there is a need to act decisively.

This verse is not about obedience raised to a fanatical and religious level, but rather about a practical way of resolving the conflict. If someone accuses me and hits me on the right cheek, I must turn the other cheek.

Since the right cheek is associated with the right and generally accepted norms, then if someone accuses me of violating the generally accepted norms or of being in the wrong, I will

try to open my soul to him and personality to him, show him what is in my heart, and talk to him heart-to-heart. The personal is closer to the left, but the public - to the right.

In my life there have been many occasions when, in response to accusations, I talked to the person heart to heart. After that, the accusers and I became close and good friends.

In fact, turning the left cheek in response to a blow to the right is a much stronger weapon than simply responding in kind.

I have observed children arguing among themselves many times. They usually trade insults until an adult steps in and puts an end to the nonsense. With adults, things end in war.

If we apply the principle that we are talking about, and just talk to the accuser heart to heart, instead of striking back, conflicts will resolve faster and the flames of the altercation will be put out.

Thus, the right and left sides are a person's personalities; they are both important and necessary, but it is necessary to understand when to use the right side, and when to use the left.

Often, everything happens the other way around. For example, if a person does good deeds with the left hand, he fuels with that his egoism and exalts himself in his own eyes by the fact that he did a good deed. And if the right hand tries to fight temptations, then, on the contrary, it drives itself into a corner, from which it cannot come out, because prohibitions never solve the problem of temptation.

This is the mystery that is spoken about in this verse: **"It is to those who are worthy of my mysteries that I tell my mysteries."**

It is really important to know and understand the mystery of where to apply the right hand, and where the left.

The carelessness of the rich

63. Jesus said: "There was a rich man who had much money. He said, 'I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouse with produce, with the result that I shall lack nothing.' Such were his intentions, but that same night he died. Let him who has ears hear."

Similar sayings are also found in Luke 12: 16-20: " And he told them this parable: "The ground of a certain rich man yielded an abundant harvest. He thought to himself, 'What shall I do? I have no place to store my crops.' "Then he said, 'This is what I'll do. I will tear down my barns and build bigger ones, and there I will store my surplus grain. And I'll say to myself, "You have plenty of grain laid up for many years. Take life easy; eat, drink and be merry."' "But God said to him, 'You fool! This very night your life will be demanded from you. Then who will get what you have prepared for yourself?'"

Both options raise certain questions. One of the questions is whether wealth is evil? Let's try to figure this out.

If a person earned money with honest labor, created jobs, did something useful, using his talents, abilities, skills, is this bad or evil? No, there is nothing bad or evil in this!

It is bad to be just a beggar who does not want to create anything, does not want to work, does not make any effort to improve himself, but simply goes with the flow of life. This is evil!

"Let him who has ears hear." There is a certain allegory here that needs to be heard and understood, and after which everything will become logical.

"I shall put my money to use so that I may sow, reap, plant, and fill my storehouse with produce, with the result that I shall lack nothing.' Such were his intentions, but that same night he died."

If we look for allegorical meaning, it is logical to assume that we are not speaking here of physical death, (when a person dies and is put in a coffin), but of spiritual death -this concept was discussed earlier.

"That I shall lack nothing." This kind of calmness is, in fact, spiritual death. If a person, striving for wealth, dreams of stopping working and developing after he gets rich, then he is on a direct road to spiritual death.

One, who seeks, fights, aspires, loves and overcomes difficulties - lives! Wealth, used for development, research, and helping people, is true peace for a person. This is what means to grow rich in God. It is then that a person can truly be alive.

To grow rich "in God" is not necessarily to give alms. It is also an opportunity and a desire to explore the world around us, to create new technologies, to discover new opportunities for ourselves and for those around us.

Invitation to a feast. Pragmatism.

64. Jesus said, "A man had received visitors. And when he had prepared the dinner, he sent his servant to invite the guests. He went to the first one and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said, 'I have claims against some merchants. They are coming to me this evening. I must go and give them my orders. I ask to be excused from the dinner.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master has invited you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a house and am required for the day. I shall not have any spare time.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'My friend is going to get married, and I am to prepare the banquet. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused from the dinner.' He went to another and said to him, 'My master invites you.' He said to him, 'I have just bought a farm, and I am on my way to collect the rent. I shall not be able to come. I ask to be excused.' The servant returned and said to his master, 'Those whom you invited to the dinner have asked to be excused.' The master said to his servant, 'Go outside to the streets and bring back those whom you happen to meet, so that they may dine.' Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father."

In this parable, the person inviting guests symbolizes God.

What does the invitation to dinner mean? These are certain opportunities that open up for a person.

Each of us has several key moments that can change our whole life. They are often invisible, but are decisive.

"Invitation to dinner" - this is that valuable and important moment in a person's life, using which he can rise to a new height in life, gain new opportunities and abilities.

Often in most people such moments go unnoticed, as they are busy with their own affairs and pay no heed to these moments.

It seems to me that in my time I didn't miss such an invitation to dinner. Here is a little story from my life.

I worked for many years in a fairly solid company, which released many famous computer games. I was well qualified, had a good position, high salary and stability. Despite this, I felt a call to change something in life. My wife supported me; I'm grateful to her for that.

We had a desire to create a computer game based on John Bunyan's book 'The Journey of the Pilgrim'. As I understand it, this desire was just a springboard for further changes in my life.

Despite the stability, the fact that everything was very good and could be left as they were, we decided to respond to this appeal and go to the "invitational dinner", so to speak. In the end, this changed our lives very much.

We did not succeed with the game. It turned out that Christianity and the setup of the Kingdom of God are much more difficult than can be portrayed in any game. But thanks to this attempt we arrived at a much better understanding of the essence of Christianity.

The result of this **"invitation to dinner"** has been big changes in our lives.

We had to leave the church organization in which we were then. We understood a lot about the Kingdom of God, found freedom, joy and a new level of happiness in our family. Not missing this invitation, we gained a lot more than we had with that stability of doing daily things that promised us peace of mind.

"I ask to be excused from the dinner." People missed the time of the invitation, they felt that they did not need it, that they had more important things to do, and that, in general, things were just fine with them. As a result, they did not go to their father's place ("Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father.") "The places of my father" is a state of a person when there is harmony, joy, happiness- that is, the Kingdom of God.

This verse shows that one should not miss key moments in life. If we feel a desire and a call, we should not give up on this, thinking to ourselves that: "A bird in hand is worth two in the bush."

"Businessmen and merchants will not enter the places of my father." We must act in love, according to what we feel and see. Do not take only what is profitable.

At first, it may seem that attending this dinner is a simple waste of time and that is better to do business instead of going to the dinner. This is a misconception.

One of the most important components of a person's happiness is to learn not to miss such moments and be able to respond to God's call and inspiration.

In fact, we are all businessmen and merchants. The fact that we have to buy and sell things

does not in any way mean that we are merchants in our inner essence.

Merchants are people who, by their inner essence, never do things that are not beneficial to them, and never act out of love and inspiration. They evaluate the benefits from a pragmatic point of view, and act in accordance with this.

It is very difficult for such people to achieve happiness, because for them there is no concept of "God's call" or "acting out of love." It is not easy for such people to enter the Kingdom of God. And it is not easy for them to find joy, peace and happiness, since not everything can be bought and sold.

"If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles." (Matthew 5:41). At first glance, it seems that a person who follows this principle loses. He was asked to do one thing, and he did two. It turns out that he did a second thing for free, since no one promised to pay him for it.

In fact, a person who tries and puts his heart into his work eventually gets much more.

A person who feeds his strength from inspiration and love will achieve much more than one who constantly assesses and weighs everything, whether it is profitable or not.

None of the merchants said honestly: "I do not want to." Everyone came up with some excuses. After all, one who does not want looks for excuses, but one who wants - looks for opportunities.

People looked for an excuse not to go to the dinner, thinking that it was unprofitable for them.

Despite this seeming unattractiveness, this dinner is the most beneficial and valuable thing in a person's life. One needs to be able to feel these moments in life and not miss them.

An excellent illustration of this text can be read in Alexander Gorbatsky's blog on pragmatism [5] [7].

A pragmatist is the one who evaluates everything only in terms of profit and benefit; one who cannot act following a spiritual impulse, just for love. That is, a merchant in essence. But we should not confuse a pragmatist with a practical person. A practical person is one who tests in practice his ideas, not limiting himself to dreams. I personally agree with the position of the practical man (remember the test for "ruling" from the first verse of the Gospel of Thomas). The position of the practical man is not easy: if he tries and makes a mistake, stones will fly at him. But it's better to try and make a mistake than to be a pragmatist or an indecisive and cowardly person, dependent on the praise of others. We cannot fail to mention the theoreticians - those who think they know everything, reason cleverly, are proud, but are afraid to try. Their knowledge is an illusion, because without practical verification, ideas mean little.

Hear the voice of healthy criticism!

65. He said: "There was a good man who owned a vineyard. He leased it to tenant farmers so that they might work it and he might collect the produce from them. He sent his servant so that the tenants might give him the produce of the vineyard. They seized his servant and beat him, all but killing him. The servant went back and told his master. The

master said, 'Perhaps he did not recognize them.' He sent another servant. The tenants beat this one as well. Then the owner sent his son and said, 'Perhaps they will show respect to my son.' Because the tenants knew that it was he who was the heir to the vineyard, they seized him and killed him. Let him who has ears hear."

This is a very famous story, commonly found in the classical Gospels (Matthew 21, Mark 12, and Luke 20).

The classical understanding of this story is that the owner of the vineyard is God. The vineyard's keepers are the scribes, the Pharisees, and the Jewish priests. The servants that were sent are the prophets. The son who came and was killed is Jesus.

At first glance it seems that it all adds up and everything is logical, but a question arises about the final phrase: **"Let him who has ears hear."**

Standard interpretation does not require deep reasoning. If this concerns the relationship of Jesus and the Pharisees, then for us it has no great practical value, it is just a historical sketch.

Let's try to figure it out, looking at it a bit out of the box. If you think about it, it becomes clear that everything described in this verse happens to each of us very often. Consideration of this passage is possible on several levels. Let's start with the most obvious.

Consider one of the most common situations. For example, a person heard God's call to talk about Jesus Christ. The man became a pastor, created a community and began to preach. A lot of people gathered around him.

After some time, imperceptibly for the pastor, a very common situation described in this parable arose: he (the pastor) begins to value his vineyard (the number of people) more than God's truth and love. Subsequently, there arises abuse of power, financial abuse, suppression of dissent, and the formation of a hierarchical system in order to maintain the structure and keep people in obedience. They expel those who think wrongly, those who see the wrong state of affairs in the community, and those who criticize and point out these wrong things.

For an outsider, these abuses seem obvious, but those who are inside the community, who are accustomed to the authority of this person, and are used to obeying, simply cannot see the problems.

People - critics, who talk about abuse, face rudeness. They are treated like rebels, heretics, trespassers and, in the end, are simply expelled from the community, despite the constructive and objective nature of their criticism.

Criticism, in whatever form it is expressed, is necessary and very useful in other for the organization to be healthy and develop properly. But, unfortunately, criticism is almost always rejected and not taken into account, especially if it concerns religious organizations.

The next stage is the arrival of the son. What is the difference between the son and the servants who came? Servants are outsiders who came, criticized and left. A son is someone who claims and has the moral right to become an heir, in many ways even a continuer of the business of this organization.

The son acts in the spirit of humility and love - like Jesus Christ. He is honest, open and direct,

as Jesus Christ taught his disciples. But this person also faces contradictions and wrong things in this organization. He begins to criticize the organization, trying to correct it. He encourages it to live according to God's principles, but almost always he does not succeed. He becomes an outcast, superfluous, one who is hated, who obstructs the proper (in their opinion) growth of the organization.

"Once we kill him the inheritance will be ours." To kill means to expel, to get rid of. "There is no man – there is no problem."

With the departure of such a person comes seeming calm, but this calm is already without God, and without any chance of leading to peace, joy and harmony. The organization thereby becomes just another prison for the souls of men.

In such organizations, and in ordinary life, everything happens in almost the same way. I personally witnessed a similar story. This kind of thing happened to my friends in a variety of organizations. Something similar happened in the company where I work, which I founded and develop. But, fortunately, we already had experience, and we knew what to do.

Intensely and enthusiastically working, we did not notice the emergence of problems. We were busy with progress and development, and weren't always paying attention to the comments and suggestions of users, to mistakes that needed to be urgently corrected, instead of rapidly developing new technologies (in fact, because of ambitions).

After a while, critics that were very highly critical of the company emerged. Like with all normal people, we found their criticism very unpleasant to hear.

But **"he, who has ears, let him hear."** We heard! We paid attention to the criticism and instead of ignoring it, we listened. As it turned out, it was criticism that became, to a certain extent, the engine of our progress, and the people who criticized us became our friends and the most ardent supporters of our business.

The fact that we did not ignore the remarks, but drew conclusions, and the fact that we answered all the questions posed by people, brought only benefits to the company's development.

I still don't know what **"the arrival of the son"** means in relation to the company, as I did not miss the "arrival of servants". Having been in my time in the roles of the servant and the son, I realized that it is very important not to miss these critics who help one to grow and to reach the pinnacle of success.

Similar situations can occur in a family. For example, in a family, one person (husband or wife) considers himself the boss. The other begins to resent, and disagreeing with this, makes sharp remarks (the arrival of the servants from the parable). The arrival of the son is an attempt to solve the problem by meekness, when just comments and criticism do not help. If a person misses the warning and the opportunity to establish real harmony and peace, the family is destroyed.

As can be seen, similar stories permeate our lives and the history of mankind.

On a more global scale, it is applicable to the church as a whole. The fact that church leaders did not listen to critics and heretics led the church to stagnation and stasis - to the state that we

see now.

This story teaches us to understand the importance of being able to listen to critics, to hear this voice, sometimes even a little rude, but so important for us, our happiness and development.

Cornerstone

66. Jesus said, "Show me the stone which the builders have rejected. That one is the cornerstone. "

What is this cornerstone? Usually this is the first stone that is placed in the base of the building. It is it that takes the main brunt and determines the position of the building.

The concept of "cornerstone" is mainly used as a metaphor, as the basis for some kind of teaching or undertaking.

When you read the Gospel of Thomas, as well as the Bible, you get the impression that this cornerstone is Jesus Christ and his teaching.

Was it not Jesus Christ who became the foundation of the future Christian world, the foundation upon which the society was built, and its history for two millennia after that?

However, looking closely, we see that the foundation was, rather, not Jesus Christ himself, but the external aspects of Jesus Christ and his teachings.

What do the external aspects of Jesus Christ mean? The external aspects mean the historical details of the life of Jesus Christ. Where he walked, where he lived, what miracles he did. The literal resurrection is also very important. All the details of his life are very important.

But, unfortunately, understanding his teaching, its essence has become unimportant.

When you delve deeper into the teachings of Jesus Christ and analyze them in detail, you understand that they free people, make them happy, and independent, but, at the same time united. It makes people brothers. At the same time, it is this essence of the teachings of Jesus Christ that impedes the building of Christianity in the style of a mega-corporation. It prevents the enslavement of people and the use of Christianity as a tool of state power to control people.

The inner essence of Christianity was discarded, and instead of this external details became important: rituals, repetition of stories about Jesus. It became very important for people to celebrate events that were in the life of Jesus Christ or his followers, but almost unimportant to live according to the principles that he taught. But this is precisely the cornerstone that the builders rejected.

In 1 Corinthians 1:24, Christ is called God's power and God's wisdom. It was this side of Christ that was discarded as unnecessary. It is much more profitable to have people simply obey, not raise objections and ask unnecessary questions, than having them really strong and wise. With reasonable people, it is more difficult to build a society of people who unquestioningly obey orders and do not interfere with management.

The main thing is not to miss your chance and not to throw away this cornerstone. It is important to build a life based on this cornerstone, in love, peace and harmony. Actually, the

whole book is about these principles.

If one who knows the all still feels a personal deficiency, he is completely deficient.

67. Jesus said: "If one who knows the all still feels a personal deficiency, he is completely deficient."

As a rule, there is an idea of God that God knows everything, He does not need anything, He is completely self-sufficient and, accordingly, he does not need people much and can do without them.

This idea of God's self-sufficiency seems a bit strange, because if someone is a loving person, it is not sufficient for him to have just self; he needs to express this love, to give it. Accordingly, the idea that God is self-sufficient is very strange indeed.

This verse in many respects reflects the opposite idea: God, knowing everything, is in need of everything, including us, to show his love and communicate with people.

Sometimes it seems to people that by increasing their knowledge, abilities and skills, they will become self-sufficient and will no longer need anyone.

In fact, the more we learn and acquire, the more we need the people around us. A person who is filled with joy, happiness and various abilities, needs the opportunity to share this with those around him.

A person, who thinks that he is self-sufficient and that he needs no one, is locked in himself. Such a person is on the wrong path.

Selfishness and focus on self do not bring happiness to a person - this is a low level.

For full happiness, both God and man have a need to give and gift, to help people and make them happier.

Real happiness is to serve, to help people, to give them presents, to see their joy. This applies to both, man and God. The more we grow spiritually, the more we need those around us.

Blessed are you when you are hated

68. Jesus said: "Blessed are you when you are hated and persecuted. Wherever you have been persecuted they will find no place."

69. Jesus said: "Blessed are they who have been persecuted within themselves. It is they who have truly come to know the father. Blessed are the hungry, for the belly of him who desires will be filled."

Persecution for beliefs has always been considered something exalted and worthy only of heroic personalities, martyrs, and people that are strong in spirit.

It is not for nothing that the Sermon on the Mount says that those who are persecuted for the truth are blessed. However, it is not all persistence – although, truth be told, it is sometimes not easy to tell one from another. People, sometimes, call their fanatic persistence in their delusions (primarily of a religious nature) suffering for truth. Besides, hatred and harassment can hardly be called bliss; it is most unpleasant, especially if it is useless.

Let's try to look at the verses of the Gospel from Thomas from another side. Since the verse does not say that they are being persecuted or hated for the truth, there is therefore a different way of understanding this.

Jesus said, "Blessed are they who have been persecuted within themselves." A parallel is seen with the 65th verse, which we considered just recently. Analyzing the 65th verse, we came to the conclusion that people often miss the moment of fair criticism, thereby missing the opportunity to improve and change.

The 65th and 69th verses are similar in many respects, but there are also differences. For example, in the 65th - people are not receptive to criticism, but in 69th - it seems to me, on the contrary, that they were. In verse 69, persecution and criticism reached the heart, and did not ricochet off of "the thick skin," as in verse 65.

People are blessed only if persecution and criticism reach their heart, because only then can they understand the essence of criticism, change for the better and avoid even greater difficulties in the future.

"Wherever you have been persecuted they will find no place." If the criticism has reached the heart itself and the person has changed, has repented, then there will be no room for further criticism.

A person who is able to accept unpleasant words (criticism) levelled at him and at the same time is able to change, and not just dig in his heels or be offended - is truly blissful. The phrase: **"Blessed are the hungry, for the belly of him who desires will be filled"** - confirms this. Such a person really knows God.

Blessed are those who seek truth, who seek something better and not just mindlessly and persistently uphold their position. Those who constantly defend themselves, not listening to criticism, those who refuse to admit that others have the right to criticize them, will not be blessed. They will remain in the state they are in. No one can help them with their problems.

"The belly of him who desires will be filled" - the belly, is not necessarily the stomach where food goes. There is food for the mind. The belly is our mind.

Aspiring to something better, to changes, people reach their goals and from this they themselves benefit in the first place

To give birth, not to force

70. Jesus said, "That which you have will save you if you bring it forth from yourselves. That which you do not have within you will kill you if you do not have it within you."

What is **"this"** that we bring forth from ourselves? Looking in the context of the previous few verses, **"this"**, first of all, is the ability to hear, the ability to change, the ability to listen to the voice of God and people.

Also equally important are the words **"bring forth"**. For example, you can force a person to do something that he does not want to do, you can rebuke him for improperly done work, but until consciousness is born in him, it (attempts to force him to change) will kill him.

It is very important that it is born in a person, and not just forcibly shoved into him. We truly come alive at the moment something is born in us, when we ourselves come to some conclusion.

If nothing is born in a person, it kills him - life becomes boring, monotonous, and indeed it is difficult to call it a normal and correct life.

If you really need to persuade someone of something, it's much better not to hammer him with arguments, but to give him the opportunity to come himself to the idea that you want to convince him of.

The most correct way of persuasion is to give a person time, chance and opportunity, so that he himself comes to the idea that he is being presented.

In my time, I too was persuaded of many things in this way. My attitude to God, the Bible and life has changed in many respects precisely under the influence of this kind of argument. It's not easy; it takes time and keeping your own impatience in check to help a person bring forth that which is in him, and not just torturing him with arguments.

The church is people

71. Jesus said, "I shall destroy this house, and no one will be able to build it [...]."

In the classical Gospels, Jesus also speaks of the destruction of a certain house. The literal meaning of these words is well known and quite obvious: it is about the destruction of the Jewish temple, which was destroyed by the Romans around A.D. 70. Since then, the Jewish temple, despite the importance of this building for the Jews, has never been restored. On that place now is the mosque of Omar. The restoration of the Jewish temple in the near future is not expected.

What does this saying mean on a deeper level? What is the destruction of the house? I will try to explain this by the example of what the phrase **"I shall destroy this house"** means to me

As soon as I became a Christian, the concept that the church is a kind of house in which people gather to pray together to God was very important to me. It was this house as a unifying factor that was quite important.

As a rule, the church, for people, is a building where they gather to pray to God and glorify him. I, too, previously perceived the church in the same way. However, over time, this concept collapsed for me and my family. Now I understand that the church is not at all a house; the church is people who live in love for each other. These are people who follow the principles and teachings of Jesus Christ in their heart, either explicitly or on a subconscious level.

"And no one will be able to build it (again)", that is, it will be impossible to go back to the understanding that the church is a building where people pray. The concept that the church is people is much better and more attractive.

In the Bible itself, the word "ecclesia" (Greek "church") means a meeting, a community of people. If the church is a house, then, people, having come to church, are with God; they serve him there. But as soon as they leave the building, they, at once, become seemingly free from promises and obligations; they immediately feel more at ease, being at a distance from God, and live as they want.

However, if the church is people in which God lives in one way or another, whatever we do, we still continue to be inside the church.

Thus, Jesus destroyed this house in us. It is not possible to build it back up again.

I am not a divider, am I?

72. A man said to him: "Tell my brothers to divide my father's possessions with me." He said to him, "O man, who has made me a divider?" He turned to his disciples and said to them, "I am not a divider, am I?"

This verse contains several semantic levels. The first is the moral standard of justice.

I have four children, and I observe this situation almost every day. Children see very well when they are treated unfairly, but it is extremely difficult for them to see that they have acted unfairly towards another person. They take offense and cry. They think that they were offended, but they do not notice their own role in this.

In adults, everything is exactly the same. Typically people see the injustice done to them, see the mistakes and guilt of others, resent insults directed at them, but, unfortunately, very few people are able to see themselves from the side, to assess the correctness and fairness of their actions in a given situation.

In this parable, a person came to ask Jesus for justice for himself, so that his brothers will correctly divide their father's belongings (inheritance).

Many people ask God for justice. Yes, justice is a quite important thing in each of our lives, and one, of course, needs to strive for justice. But each person's primary concern should not be whether or not others are treating him fairly, but whether or not he is treating others fairly.

God rarely helps in the restoration of justice to the supplicant. In my experience, Jesus helps people to rise to a different moral level, helps to behave in a more enlightened way. God seeks to change the heart of man, to make a person better, more honest and just with those around him. He does not take the side of the poor and those upset at everyone who constantly demands that justice be restored to their "side."

It is much better to rise higher, become stronger and more just, than to constantly demand that you be reimbursed for some defect or that you be treated more fairly.

I will give an example from my life. I worked for quite a long time, almost for free, doing a fairly profitable job for the company I worked for and my boss. I did not demand a salary increase (I did not demand justice for myself), but rather contented myself with having enough money to buy food. After some time, the boss himself offered to compensate me for the great job I had been doing in the past several years. With the money he gave me, I was able to buy an apartment.

From my personal experience, I see that not demanding justice for yourself is much more profitable than constantly looking for your own benefits and constantly making sure no one offends you.

If we do not seek justice for ourselves, but try to act justly with other people, God

compensates us for this deficiency and will give us much more than we seemingly lost at the time.

It does not say here that a person should become one that no one respects or one whose rights are easily violated. Rather, God helps a person to become so internally strong that he is able to find solutions that are better and not just directed against unjust people.

Let's consider the following semantic level of this dictum. If the father is God, then the things of my Father are, most likely, God's Testament, what God gave to people (the Bible, people's knowledge of God, information about Jesus Christ and the Apostles).

It is worth noting that Christian denominations are, in fact, engaged, in the division of these things. Each denomination believes that the things of the Father belong to it, to its direction, and that it possesses the most accurate understanding of the sayings of Jesus and what is written in the Bible.

Life just at the expense of inheritance, of things received from the Father, is truly a miserable existence. Real life is the development of business, the production of something useful, research, knowledge, and the like.

In Christianity, it turns out that we live simply on inheritance. It is believed that all the most important and essential things happened a long time ago, when Jesus walked the earth, when miracles occurred, when the Apostles traveled around the world and preached. This was a long time ago. Now it's over, there are no miracles; all that is left is to share the things of the Father.

Since that time there has been a rapid development of science, but religion has remained stuck in its conservative positions. Often religion is a barrier to scientific development. Due to religious views, people were extremely cruel to each other, and unleashed wars on one another, for example.

Hence we can conclude: instead of dividing the inheritance of the Father and proving that you own more than others, one needs to learn how to build relationships, society, and how to live with those around you.

Yes, this is a paradoxical situation, but His followers have made Jesus "the one who divides." It is precisely in Christianity that there is a huge number of denominations, and, probably, Jesus, foreseeing such a situation, exclaimed: "I am not a divider, am I?"

A lot around the source, but there is no one at the source

73. Jesus said: "The harvest is great but the laborers are few. Beseech the Lord, therefore, to send out laborers to the harvest. "

74. He said: "O Lord, there are many around the drinking trough, but there is nothing in the cistern."

A similar verse is found in Luke 10:2. The verse is understood, as a rule, as meaning that people need to spread the word about Jesus, the Gospel, and how to live. And accordingly, for this purpose, it is necessary to engage as many missionaries as possible, that will go about and teach this.

There is a deeper meaning to verse 73 of the Gospel of Thomas, and the next verse, 74, which emphasizes the fact that the main thing is quality, and not quantity, is a clue to understanding it. That is, it is not so important how many people go around talking about Jesus, a lot or a few. More important is the fact that very few people want to enter the source, get to the depths and really get to God.

The saying "**The harvest is great**" does not mean that a lot of people simply need to relate a lot, but that there are so many things that need to be learned, understood and discovered. Unfortunately, there are few people who really do this, because people are more inclined to work on quantity, not quality.

"**Great harvest**" means a lot of God's mysteries that need to be discovered; but, unfortunately, there are few people involved in this enterprise. A lot more difficult than simply understanding these principles is putting them to practice. That is why there is a need for people who would discover, explore and understand all of this. The discovery and knowledge of these secrets could have a global impact and bring about a change in society, and a change in the principles on which society is built.

Understanding what God is like, and being able to convey this to people is a task that is both important and difficult. Therefore, the reason for writing this book lies not in convincing people of anything in particular, but in helping them to look at the Bible and Jesus from another perspective. The book seeks to ignite curiosity in people, and give them interesting ideas to further spiritual growth, and not just provide ready-made answers to questions, or suggest how to act in this or that situation.

The paramount aim of this book is to teach as many people as possible critical thinking, teach them how to change for the better, and how to love.

The Solitary Will Enter the Kingdom of God

75. Jesus said: "Many are standing at the door, but it is the solitary who will enter the bridal chamber."

The word "**solitary**" here means "monahos", that is, single.

At first glance, this verse emphasizes elitism in the sense that there are many people, apparently, seeking the Kingdom of God, but only a few, chosen from them, will be able to enter. As a rule, every person at heart thinks that he is the chosen one; only he is somehow particularly good and he has something to be proud of.

But this verse carries a completely different meaning. It should be considered at the level of one person and his desires.

A person stands near the source, in front of the door to the Kingdom of God, but he has a huge number of desires that tear him apart, and a lot of ideas that pull him in different directions. Entering the Kingdom of God will come only when a person can collect all this into a single whole. And this, as a rule, is not an easy task.

What does it mean to enter the Kingdom of God? Many imagine it this way that the Apostle

Peter sits somewhere and lets people through the gate. In fact, the Kingdom of God is peace, joy, integrity and harmony in man.

In order for all this to happen, one just needs to unite all his desires into a single whole, so that one is not pulled apart by them, so that not many are standing in front of the door, but a single person. Only then will it be possible to enter the **"bridal chamber,"** that is, into a place of joy, peace, pleasure and true bliss.

The Parable of the Pearl

76. Jesus said: "The kingdom of the father is like a merchant who had a consignment of merchandise and who discovered a pearl. That merchant was shrewd. He sold the merchandise and bought the pearl alone for himself. You too, seek his unfailing and enduring treasure where no moth comes near to devour and no worm destroys."

At first glance, the impracticality of this story is striking. What's the point of buying jewelry instead of goods that can be put into business and multiply capital? Let's try to understand all the same, where the logic is and what the matter here is.

I want to start at the end of this saying, namely: **"where no moth comes near to devour and no worm destroys."**

The worm, as a rule, is a worm of doubts that torment a person.

A moth is an insect that consumes something that has been left idle for a long time.

The pearl symbolizes something of value, which looks beautiful, but seems impractical. What are the properties of this thing of value? :**"Where no moth comes near to devour."** - a hint that this thing of value does not deteriorate over time. **"And no worm destroys."** - It does not cause a person torment. There is in the Bible such a phrase about hell and torment: "where their worm does not die and the fire does not quench" It clarifies the meaning of the concept of "worm". And in everyday life we often hear a "worm of doubt – equipoise of doubt". Many things of value, at first glance, seem impractical, but in the end turn out to be very valuable and useful on a larger time scale.

I will give an example. Imagine that a man who always lived by the principle "He, who is more brazen, is right" decided to change this principle to another: "it is more blessed to give than to receive."

This action may seem strange, because it is easier to live by the first principle; the benefits and profits come immediately, which cannot be said about the second.

In the longer term, the principle of "it is more blessed to give than to receive" is much more practical, although it is not so obvious.

People who live by the principle "he, who is more brazen, is right", that is, arrogant people, who march to their goals, as they say, "through a trail of corpses", despite everything, can also achieve some of their goals. But the question is, will they be happy as a result? By their impudence, they will, most likely, destroy relations with others and lose much (material resources, happiness, and so on).

Things acquired in this way bring torment (worm) and often lie idle, covered in dust (moth) - for example, an official's large collection of expensive cars. A person who follows the principle of "it is more blessed to give than to receive" acquires friends, is loved, and in the end, in most cases, achieves much more in terms of happiness and bliss in life. It's like in chess: certain moves seem not advantageous or practical, but in the next 5-10 moves, turn out to be very profitable. A man who lives by the principle of "it is more blessed to give than to receive" **no worm destroys**. The things of value that he acquires are much more durable and reliable - **no moth comes near to devour**.

This parable shows that much that seems impractical at first glance can become practical later. All the commandments of Christ ("blessed are the poor in spirit", "blessed are those who thirst for righteousness" or "it is more blessed to give than to receive" and many others) seem impractical, but a person living by these principles becomes happier and in the long run understands that this is, actually, the most advantageous option.

In my life I have experienced this more than once. I have already given an example of how I performed work that made the company I was working for a lot of money, for a very small fee in order to pay taxes honestly. In the end, wanting to live honestly, I ended up benefiting without even expecting it, namely: I bought an apartment using the amount of money that was withheld each month from my paycheck for several years, but was eventually paid me when the tax legislation changed. Speaking about practicality, it is necessary to understand that not only material gain is a practical result. Happiness, harmony in the family, getting rid of painful contradictions is an even more important practical result.

One more example, I went to a Christian organization for quite a long time, and it seemed to me that I would pass my whole life there. I had excellent relations with people. It seemed to me that this was my place, but one day I found a **"pearl"**: I realized that fraternal relations, love relations between people are much better than totalitarian hierarchical relations, submission and blind faith.

I left that organization. It was very hard for me. Relations with many people dear to me were destroyed; it was very painful. I had to give up a lot in life. However, in the long term, this brought happiness to my family and to my life in general. I experienced the joy that freedom brings, which resulted, ultimately, in material gain (I set up my own company).

Following the principles of Jesus Christ is a very practical thing, but not instantaneously and not immediately. And not necessarily practicality, since practicality is only a material benefit, as we have already discussed. It should be understood that if we follow the precepts of Jesus Christ and seek the Kingdom of God, setting material gain as our primary goal, then, most likely, we will find neither benefits, nor the kingdom of God, because the law states: "But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well." (Matthew 6:33).

Split a piece of wood, and I'm there; Lift up the stone, and you will find me there.

77. Jesus said: "It is I who am the light which is above them all. It is I who am the all. From me did the all come forth, and unto me did the all extend. Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

This saying was one of the main points in the plot of the mystical thriller "Stigmata." The film is based on the correct idea that the church is not a building, but Christ in people.

The obvious but superficial meaning of this verse is that God is in everything: in the phenomena of nature, in people and so on. I believe that the study of the laws of nature, and attempts to understand the setup of things, also ultimately lead to God.

Seeing, for example, a watch, we understand that someone made it. Similarly, nature has a master - the creator of its laws.

There is a principle in the classical Gospels that, at first glance, seems the opposite of this verse - Jesus said: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No one comes to the Father except through me." (John 14: 6). This very verse has served as the basis for all sorts of religious strife.

Almost all religious organizations believe that the Jesus, whom they preach and believe in, is the very Jesus, without whom one cannot come to the Kingdom of God. Different denominations genuinely do not like each other because of different understandings of Jesus. They also have no respect for those who do not say anything about Jesus, be they unbelievers or people of other religions.

However, a deeper examination of this verse reveals something else. Indeed, no one comes to God except through Jesus Christ. Man achieves harmony in life, and, ultimately, the Kingdom of God enters his life through the qualities, features and principles of Jesus Christ; not through empty words like: "I love Jesus."

As the Apostle Paul said, Christ is God's power and God's wisdom (1 Corinthians 1:24). It is with God's power and with God's wisdom that we enter the Kingdom of God. If you do not live by the principles of Jesus Christ, it is difficult to find the Kingdom of God in life.

The verse quoted by me (John 14: 6) is actually very similar to the 77th, in the sense that Jesus is a light for all.

Once, my wife and I watched a very grave film about Muslims "The Stoning of Soraya M". In a Muslim village a rather terrible drama developed: a Muslim woman was stoned after being falsely accused. But in all her actions, the principles of Jesus Christ were visible; I'm not talking here at all about silent humility before injustice. "Split a piece of wood, and I am there. Lift up the stone, and you will find me there."

On the one hand, God exists both in living and in inanimate things. But that is not the only point. Let's think about what "wood" and "stone" are.

A stone, as a rule, is something very hard and that has lain around for very long ago. If you want to know what is hiding under the stone, you usually do not split it, but lift it up and look underneath. In Christianity, the stone, as a rule, symbolizes the teaching of the Old Testament (since the Mosaic commandments were written on two stones - the so-called tablets), and its firmness symbolizes the firmness and inviolability of religious customs and traditions.

"To lift up the stone" means to be able to look at ancient traditions and writings not on top of the stone, where everything is easy and clearly visible, but to look deeply under it (to understand deeply), because only in this way (after understanding) you can truly find Jesus Christ, find God . This is what we are doing. We try to lift this heavy stone and look at the biblical teachings from a completely different side.

"Split a piece of wood." The growth of a tree does not require as much time as the formation of a stone. Accordingly, we can say that the wood is something that has appeared relatively recently. In other words, this is something that appeared in our culture, in our life a few centuries ago. Having dug deeper (having studied deeply), we can discover God there.

Time goes by, culture, customs, science and views on life change. People of the "old-school" – conservatives - find it difficult to see anything good in the new trends. They, therefore, often criticize, for example, new music and the approach of the younger generation to life. If you manage to "split the wood" and manage to reach its core, you will probably find a lot of good things in the new.

We need to respect the new tendencies, examine them, study them, be able to see in them something real. The old traditions must be respected; we have to try to understand them from different angles, and not blindly follow them.

Many principles of the Old Testament look very strange, for example, circumcision, the Fall, and the Flood. But, as it turned out, they all have a deeper meaning. Many old principles can sound new in our time and be useful and practical. I advise you to read appendix (B) - about the 10 commandments

A reed shaken by the wind, and a man clothed in fine garments.

78. Jesus said, "Why have you come out into the desert? To see a reed shaken by the wind? And to see a man clothed in fine garments like your kings and your great men? Upon them are the fine garments, and they are unable to discern the truth."

When we read this verse, it may seem, at first glance, that concepts such as "reed", "garments", "kings", and "desert" are not connected in any way.

There is a similar saying in Matthew 11: 7-8, "As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? 8 If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes? No, those who wear fine clothes are in kings' palaces."

For a better understanding of the essence, let us begin, perhaps, from the end of this saying.

"Kings and your great men" - in the modern world these are politicians and rulers.

"Reed shaken by the wind" and "a man clothed in fine garments" - at first glance there does not seem to be anything in common between reeds and garments in these sayings. What does "fine garments" mean? It is the comfort, success and wealth of politicians and rulers. **"Reed, shaken by the wind"** - means a reluctance to change for the better. Under the influence of the wind, the reed bends in the direction in which the wind is blowing, but the reed does not move

anywhere, because it is rooted in the soil. About the same is done by politicians, and indeed by many people.

Let's consider these concepts on the example of politicians. As a rule, politicians talk a lot and promise a lot (they lean towards people), but they really do not do anything for people. They continue to steal and deceive just as they stole and deceived in the past (the root remains in place, not moving anywhere).

The saying about the reed and fine garments is associated with John the Baptist, Matthew 11: 7: "As John's disciples were leaving, Jesus began to speak to the crowd about John: "What did you go out into the wilderness to see? A reed swayed by the wind? If not, what did you go out to see? A man dressed in fine clothes?" This further confirms the idea of how a reed is associated with fine clothes. The Bible describes an episode when scribes, Pharisees and Sadducees came to John the Baptist: "But when he saw many of the Pharisees and Sadducees coming to where he was baptizing, he said to them: "You brood of vipers! Who warned you to flee from the coming wrath? Produce fruit in keeping with repentance. And do not think you can say to yourselves, 'We have Abraham as our father.' I tell you that out of these stones God can raise up children for Abraham. The ax is already at the root of the trees, and every tree that does not produce good fruit will be cut down and thrown into the fire." (Matthew 3: 7-10).

John the Baptist denounced the politicians of the time, that is, the Pharisees and Sadducees, saying they came to hear him only because he was popular with the people. Thus the Pharisees and Sadducees wanted to show that they, like the people, respected John. But in reality it was just a farce and populism, and was done with the hope of greater respect from the people. Modern politicians also act in the same way. In the hope of popularity, they support fashion trends which they in no way share.

But this applies not only to politicians. Often people imagine themselves doing great things, good deeds, hard work, reaching certain goals. But in reality, they do not work hard or make any effort to achieve their goals. In fact they only console themselves and those around them with their promises. This is the reed that is shaken by the wind.

Both children and adults often make promises to change, to start living differently. Promising, people get a lot of pleasure from the process, imagining themselves already changed. And having received pleasure, they immediately forget about their promise and nothing changes. So it goes indefinitely. This is a typical reed shaken by the wind; one with fine garments too (pleasure from apparent change).

After reading this verse, we must understand that it is necessary to change for the better, rather than simply promising and taking pleasure from the idea of changing for the better.

Let's return to the beginning of the verse: "**Why have you come out into the desert?**" What does "**come out into the desert**" mean? In the context of this verse, the desert means the place where Jesus and John the Baptist preached; the place that people went to, to listen to these sermons.

Usually people live in cities, in their comfort zone with modern infrastructure. The desire of

man to know God better, to move in this direction, leads to the fact that he seems ready to give up his comfort and come out into the desert for the sake of his spiritual development.

What does a person see when they come out into the desert? Apparently, he sees again the reed shaken by the wind. Why? Because, turning to God, he presents himself as a religious person connected to God, but does not want to change anything in his life. He is satisfied with the option: came → confessed → light a candle → went home and lives, as before, for example, insulting his wife (husband), and deceiving the boss and so on.

People who come to God not for the purpose of changing, becoming truly better, and rising higher, but in order to derive pleasure from their own good intentions, cannot know the truth. The difficulty of knowing the truth lies in the fact that people imagine themselves as knowing the truth when in reality they don't know it; present themselves as changing, when in fact no change is taking place; present themselves as honest, without actually ceasing to speak untruth.

Another point that we have not considered is the **"wind"**. The wind that sways the reed, that blows in the field. In the Bible, the wind usually symbolizes the spirit (Holy Spirit, God's spirit). He induces a person to good deeds, influences a person and directs him. As in this verse - the wind sways to the right side the cane stalk.

For example, a politician knows that he should work not for his own good, but for the good of the people he serves. But nevertheless, bending from the blowing wind towards the people, he arches back (resists the wind), and, as a result, is unable to work for the good of the people.

Blessed are those who have heard the word of the Father and have kept it.

79. A woman from the crowd said to him: "Blessed are the womb which bore you and the breasts which nourished you." He said to her, "Blessed are those who have heard the word of the father and have truly kept it. For there will be days when you will say, 'Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk.'"

This saying has at least three semantic levels.

Let's consider the first semantic level – the literal one.

Indeed, at the peak of his popularity, Jesus looked like a very gifted man, who was lucky in life. His parents were also very fortunate to have such a gifted son. The literal meaning of this verse is a reference to a historical fact, when in the 70's CE there was a siege of Jerusalem by the Romans. In light of this, the phrase

"For there will be days when you will say, 'Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk'", becomes clear. In those days, people really rejoiced that they did not have children, because they needed to take care of themselves only. Things were very hard for families with children, with monstrous cases of cannibalism being recorded (in the book of Flavius Josephus).

But it is more important for us to understand what this verse has to do with us. So, let's

consider the second (moral) level of this saying.

The phrase **"Blessed are the womb which bore you and the breasts which nourished you"** is perceived as praising those parents who gave birth to gifted children.

At the same time, people whose children are not so gifted or not so obedient, or fail at school, think: "Oh God, how difficult it is for us to have children like these."

The point is not whether or not it is a "lucky" thing to have gifted children, as things can also be very difficult with the gifted children. The point is the ability to hear the word of the Father: **"Blessed are those who have heard the word of the father and have truly kept it."**

Much is determined not by how intelligent or talented a person was born, but by one's ability to hear and to learn. Since innate talent and abilities are only a small part of human success; the rest are work and the ability to hear and develop what has been heard.

Talented people often have a hard time in life. Many of my friends, who are very talented, have difficult lives. It seems to me that this is because they simply do not make enough effort to achieve their goals; they lack the humility to hear the word of the Father.

Let's consider the third semantic level - it is particularly interesting.

I just want to note that this verse consists of three main parts:

- 1 - **"Blessed are the womb which bore you and the breasts which nourished you";**
- 2 - **"Blessed are those who have heard the word of the father and have truly kept it";**
- 3 - **"Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk."**

Each of the parts consists of two parts, where one part refers to the womb, and the other part to the breasts.

If we look more deeply at the second part of the saying: **"Blessed are those who have heard the word of the father and have truly kept it"** - it becomes clear that **"Blessed are those who have heard the word of the father"** refers to the womb, but **"and have truly kept it"** refers to the breasts and milk.

The womb is our mind, our heart; that is, what we can hear God's truth with; the place where truth is born.

Breasts are what we nourished and nurtured this with.

If we were to understand the third part of the verse not literally: **"For there will be days when you will say, 'Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk'"**, - then it becomes clear that it is not about children at all.

The point here is that there may come days when people who work little, invest little in the development of their business, may seem happier than those who work a lot and invest a lot in the growth of their business. That is, the third part, in fact, means the disappointment of man.

Often, people live reminiscing, with regret, about mistakes they made in the past, about projects they started, but had led to dead ends.

Such situations arise as a result of the fact that the second part of the saying was not fulfilled; the words of the Father were either not heard, or these words were not truly kept, which leads to

the wrong path, and, in the end, to disappointment.

The idea of regret and torment over missteps is widespread and well represented even in movies. For example, one of the main themes of the movie "Night Watch" is the idea that if you changed something in the past, then everything will work out.

There is a practical question: how to fulfill the second part of the saying, how to hear the Father's words and truly keep them?

For me personally, some words from art works and especially from the Bible and the Gospel of Thomas became very important.

I particularly like these sayings: "Blessed are the poor in spirit" (one of the most important for me), "Who among you wants to be the first, must be the last and servant of all", "If someone forces you to go one mile, go with him two", "Do not against, but above," "Fashion eyes in the place of an eye," "Consume the lion, and not be consumed by the lion." They became the basic principles that largely determined my life and guided my actions.

I did not just hear them, saying, "Oh, good principles!" I heard the word of the Father with my mind and my heart, loved it and kept it. This, of course, does not mean that I am able to perfectly comply with all these principles or that I succeed in everything. But I aspire to this. I like to live by these principles. I feel that they are alive, strong and help me to win in many situations.

It is very important to pay attention to our life experience and to everything that we hear, otherwise, if we do not hear the Father's words and do not keep them truly, there will come days when one wants to say: **"Blessed are the womb which has not conceived and the breasts which have not given milk"**- that is, what a pity that I acted this way, what a pity that I devoted my time to doing this, what a pity things turned out this way.

Of course, moments of regret and remorse are inevitable in the life of every person. However, it is important that we learn to accept, joyfully and positively, even those moments that seem negative and bad for us. That is, having made a mistake and analyzed it, we can avoid making an even greater mistake, avoiding thus big troubles in the future.

Analyzing my life, it is difficult for me to find such moments about which I would say: "What a pity that this happened, it would have been better if this had not happened", because I understand that even unpleasant moments were necessary in order to make better decisions in the future.

If we can hear and keep the Father's word, we can get rid of disappointments; we can safely and confidently say that everything that happens in our life happens for good and good.

He who has come to know the world has found a body

80. Jesus said: "He who has recognized the world has found the body, but he who has found the body is superior to the world."

This saying is consonant with the saying: "Jesus said: "Whoever has come to understand the world has found (only) a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world." (Gospel of Thomas, verse 56).

In the 61st verse we discussed earlier, we cited examples of how a person who knows the world around him and its laws often stumbles upon corpses (dead ideology, errors and mistakes). Accordingly, it is necessary to be able to see and avoid this. But at the same time, one must understand that life would be inadequate if it were built on just trying to avoid mistakes.

We must strive to do something beautiful, worthwhile, try to find our calling.

The saying, **"Jesus said: 'He who has recognized the world has found the body, but he who has found the body is superior to the world.'"**(Thomas 80) continues the thought of saying: "Whoever has come to understand the world has found (only) a corpse, and whoever has found a corpse is superior to the world." (Thomas 56).

"The world is not worthy of him" - means that a person has achieved something, and this phrase, accordingly, sounds like praise.

"Found a body" - means that a person has found something, by means of which he can live (something useful, his calling, and not just the avoidance of mistakes.)

Let him who has grown rich be king

81. Jesus said: "Let him who has grown rich be king, and let him who possesses power renounce it."

Let's try to understand what the concepts **"rich"** and **"king"** mean.

A word similar to "king" also occurs in the first verse of the Gospel of Thomas: "Jesus said, "Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."

Considering the first verse, we came to the conclusion that this word means controlling oneself, one's emotions, and thoughts. This is a valuable skill to have. Those who are able to rule over themselves are listened to by others, and respected. In many ways, such a person has moral and spiritual power over people.

How are we to understand **"who became rich"**? To understand this phrase, let us recall the story from the classical Gospels about the young man who came to Jesus and said he wanted to be perfect. Despite the fact that this young man fulfilled all the commandments, did no one harm, and respected his parents, "Jesus said to him: "If you want to be perfect, go, sell your possessions and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me." (Matthew 19:21).

Many Christians took these words of Jesus literally. They distributed their wealth and possessions to people and remained poor, thinking that they were doing the right thing, just as Jesus had said.

However, it is worth looking at a deeper meaning of the concept of "wealth". If a person simply distributes his material assets, his property to the poor, then, by and large, he only harms these people. Yes, indeed, for a while these people will have food, it will be easier for them, but you cannot get far on charity. If a person is not used to working, to striving for something, then the benefits obtained so easily will quickly disappear and the person will remain in the same state

as before, and maybe even worse, because he has already got used to the benefits. That is why the benefits of such a distribution of property to the poor are minimal, and perhaps generally harmful.

If we imagine that wealth is not money or material possessions, but knowledge, wisdom and spiritual acquisitions, then such distribution of property makes sense.

Let us recall the wise merchant who acquired the pearl (Thomas 80). Notice, he sold his less valuable property in order to acquire the pearl.

That is, one must understand that this is not about material wealth, but about spiritual acquisitions, knowledge, and wisdom.

By distributing just such acquisitions, it is possible to really help people.

"Let him who has grown rich be king." The king will not be the one, who has a lot of money, but the one who became rich through the acquisition of knowledge, wisdom, and truth; one who has learned to control himself, his emotions and thoughts.

If a person wants the people around him to do exactly as he wishes, then for this he needs to either convince people or use force.

The Gospel of Thomas says that the use of force is useless and that anyone who wishes to reign must abandon such methods. To have control over oneself and, to a certain extent, over people, it is much wiser to apply wisdom and to use spiritual wealth.

For example, when children do not obey, the first thing you want to do is punish them, express your fury and anger over their disobedience. These are all emotions that do benefit neither children nor us! It is much wiser to find an approach to children.

One of the most beloved life principles of our family is "Not against, but above." Of course, it is not always possible to apply it, but we try very much to achieve our goal not by force, but by love, wisdom, and applying the spiritual wealth we have acquired.

Once I was at a psychology meeting, where ways to make a person do what you want were discussed. Two options were examined: the first was the use of force. The second was to behave in such a way that the person himself wants to imitate you.

Everyone laughed about the second option, because they thought that this is a method of manipulation, and the same use of force and cunning to achieve one's goal. But that is in fact far from the case.

Manipulation is when one person pulls another by strings and forces him to make decisions that answer to the needs of the one pulling the strings.

A wise approach to the situation is when both people are open to each other. This approach helps a person learn how to love what you love, not by cunning, not by substitution of some circumstances, but by openness, honesty and love.

These are two completely different methods. The second really leads to the goal. But you need to remember that the other person has his own point of view and he, too, may want to change your mind. You must be able to hear it. Everyone can change their point of view.

As already mentioned, it is much better to inspire a person and give him a little push for

self-development than to just force or manipulate him.

This is how we understand the phrase **"let him who possesses power renounce it."**

He who is near me is near the fire

82. Jesus said: "He who is near me is near the fire, and he who is far from me is far from the kingdom."

Considering this verse, one recalls: "I am the way and the truth and the life. No man comes to the Father except through me." (John 14: 6). The meaning of this saying was analyzed in the 77th verse of the Gospel of Thomas.

It is important for a person reading the phrases "near me", "I", "Me", to understand them correctly.

The meaning of these words is not that a person should constantly talk about Jesus, go to church and so on. The point is that one needs to live by the principles of Jesus, and that Jesus lived in him.

What does "near the fire" mean? It's not just standing by the fire and basking, enjoying its warmth and light. Yes, fire carries light and heat, and therefore a person near the fire must carry this fire, emitting light and joy.

The concept of "fire" is also found in one of my favorite songs - "We ask a lot of God". Here is an excerpt from it:

If you love, it does not matter
That not everyone understands you
The love that was once lit
Shines with inextinguishable light
Its fire shines brightly
You do not need to talk about it
Everyone will notice it
Where it is, there is love and friendship.

People who are near Jesus, in whom Jesus lives, live in love and friendship

They emit such a bright glow that it is difficult not to notice them.

They burn just as fire burns. "By this everyone will know that you are my disciples, if you love one another."

(John 13:35)

What does it mean to burn? To burn means to live with interest in everything, strive for the best, for mutual understanding, love and unity. A person who does not seek anything and does not care about anything, does not burn. This means that he does not live, because it is very difficult to call such a life, life.

It is much better to burn than to barely smolder or be just cold. To burn is to shine on people around you, to bring warmth and light into their lives with your sincerity and joy. Of course,

burning has a flip side. A person can brightly burn and glow, but one day he can burn up, that is, sacrifice himself, as Jesus did in his time.

Among Christians, the sacrifice of Jesus Christ is, primarily, perceived in this way: the most important thing that Jesus did was that he died on the cross and thereby offered a certain sacrifice for the sins of all people.

However, for me this idea seems insufficiently accurate and deep.

Jesus' death on the cross is only the final moment of His life. His main sacrifice, His main work is His teachings. He burned with this and knew how it would end. He left a bright mark both in history and in the hearts of people. That his life would end in such a way in that society was inevitable. Death on the cross is the logical end of his bright life.

Jesus said: "Greater love has no one than this: to lay down one's life for one's friends." (John 15:13)

Many Christians lived like this. Their love was so bright that they sacrificed themselves for the sake of other people. This is a high level of love and faith.

Despite such possible consequences and the risk of burning up, it is still better to burn than to be lukewarm.

"And he who is far from me is far from the kingdom." The concept of **"Kingdom"** was discussed earlier in the verses of the Gospel of Thomas, for example, in the 85th. Indeed, when a person is far from Jesus Christ, from his life, it is very difficult for him to control himself and his life; in other words, it's hard to reign in your life.

The images are manifest to man, but the light in them remains concealed

83. Jesus said: "The images are manifest to man, but the light in them remains concealed in the image of the light of the father. He will become manifest, but his image will remain concealed by his light."

"The images are manifest to man, but the light in them remains concealed." God speaks to man using different images. Why? Is it not easier, more convenient and clearer to communicate verbally? But not everything is as simple as it might seem at first sight.

Let us imagine that a physicist needs to explain the fundamentals of quantum mechanics to a child. Can he, using laws, formulas and rules, explain this to the child verbally, without resorting to images and comparisons? Of course, not, for the simple reason that the child has too little knowledge and life experience. The physicist will have to resort to images and comparisons that are most likely inaccurate, but only so can the physicist ensure that the child will at least understand something.

As a physicist needs to resort to images for explanation, so too does God have to resort to images to bring us closer to the truth.

The mention of God talking to people, showing them different images, is also found in the Bible: "In the past God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets at many times and in various

ways" (Hebrews 1: 1),

"Now these things occurred as examples to keep us from setting our hearts on evil things as they did." (1 Corinthians 10: 6). What happened in the desert with the Israeli people is an image for us, and our task is to be able to learn from this lesson.

Most Christians perceive the Bible, first of all, as a historical book, impeccably accurate, and not as a book in which images for our edification are laid. Therefore, if it is written in Genesis that the Earth, animals and man were created in six days, then people basically take it literally. Or if the Bible says that God told the Israelites to slaughter all the people on the land, where they were to settle, then, it is necessary to slaughter all people, including children and women.

This is nonsense! The Bible should be perceived as a book of images and tips for action, otherwise one can be faced with things that are absurd and monstrous, such as God's order to the Israelites to commit genocide.

Why do people mostly take the Bible not figuratively, but literally? Because the figurative understanding of opens up lots of possibilities for different perceptions of the written word. While a literal understanding seems to present less of that kind of danger, because everyone should understand the texts the same way.

I repeatedly heard the phrase: "I would not have believed in God, if He had not been able to accurately preserve the text of the Bible to our day." People believe that the Bible is an accurate book on history, physics, and astronomy and so on. At such absurdities, atheists can only laugh. This happens because many people cannot discern the profound figurative meaning embedded in the Bible, and as a consequence the literal meaning seems to them the most correct, important and accurate. But the moment people are able to find and understand the figurative meaning of the Bible, they start to see that it is more beautiful, useful, correct and practical, and from that moment on the literal meaning loses its significance and importance.

Unfortunately, for many so far these images are invisible. It seems to people that the literal meaning is very important and that God must accurately preserve what was once written in the Bible.

In the Book of Genesis there is a story, for example, about Adam and Eve, who ate a certain fruit, because of which God punished them with expulsion from Paradise, and since then people started to die.

Such a punishment for such a seemingly small offense seems completely inappropriate and cruel. But if you try to see and understand in this story a figurative meaning, it will prove to be more valuable than the direct and literal meaning.

The story of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, of the fruit that was plucked from the tree, was examined earlier. I will only remind you that its meaning is not just in disobedience to God, but that they had plucked the fruit, not being ready to use it properly.

Each of us often observes stories of this kind in everyday life. For example, children want to copy their homework, instead of trying to do it themselves; many seek to achieve material wealth quickly and dishonestly, rather than learn and then earn money by honest work. Endless

examples can be given.

In fact, the figurative meaning of many biblical stories is much deeper and more meaningful. And so it's not so important whether the events are real, what the tree looked like in the story about Adam and Eve, and whether Adam and Eve themselves existed.

And the story of the Flood, for example, actually sounds quite absurd, since it contains apparent contradictions not only of physics and biology, but of even simple logic. But as an image this story is very important for us. For example, it seems that a person who systematically violates some very important truths, whether it is disregard of love for one's neighbor, egoism, mockery of someone, gets away with it and nothing happens for him. However, the meaning of the story of the flood is that sooner or later a flood occurs in the life of such a person, with which he cannot cope without having prepared an ark beforehand and without beginning to correct his life. The figurative meaning is much more important than if it there had in fact been a flood.

I often cite this story about the flood as an example to my son. Suppose a person is lazy, does nothing, studies badly and ignores admonitions. It seems that nothing bad happens; life goes on, no matter what. However, if you do not pay attention to on time and do not improve, then one day the flood will come. The person then discovers he is unable to find a job, that he is unneeded by the society, and unable to create a family, and so on. That is, countless problems that cannot be dealt with, and which pull him to the bottom, crop up. But at first it seemed that nothing terrible happens.

From these examples it is clearly evident that the understanding of images is more important than the literal meaning of the text and blind faith in the historical accuracy of the events described in the Bible.

An important task is the ability to detect light hidden in recorded Biblical images, the ability to see images in situations that happen to us and those around us in everyday life, and the ability to learn lessons from this.

In addition, there is another reason why God hid the truth in images. If everything in the Bible had been said quite plainly, then the Bible, most likely, would not have survived.

So why did the Bible survive and become very popular? The answer is simple: it was widely used and, to some extent, proved useful for the needs of rulers and kings. They created such a religion, through which you can easily manage people and subordinate them to yourself, using the literal meaning of the written word. People did not look deeper, did not read and did not understand the images that spoke about love, truth and mutual understanding.

Christianity has become widespread and popular, turning from a small sect into a dominant religion ever since the Roman emperor Constantine realized that it could be very profitably used for governing the state.

That's why it is said: **"But his image will remain concealed by his light."** The light of truth, which carries a deep understanding of the meaning of the Bible and its images, is despised by those in positions of power, those who want to subjugate others. To conceal His image by his light, that is, hiding the correct understanding of the Bible was necessary for it to survive to this

day. The Gospel of Thomas, unlike the classical Bible, was much less protected in this sense.

The texts of the Gospel of Thomas were considered (and are considered) gnostic, harmful and heretical. They were destroyed and were almost completely destroyed. And all this is due to the fact that the images in the texts are more explicit and there is no need to look for a literal meaning in them. For that reason the Gospel of Thomas remained long unknown. The scroll with these texts was reliably hidden and found only in 1945.

Those that seek the truth and seek to understand it, that see the hidden meaning, images and light that are laid deep, can see and understand what God really is. People, who do not strive to understand this and figure things out, create God in their own image and likeness, and God becomes as greedy, ambitious and jealous as they are.

Unfortunately, most people have this image of God. It seems to them that God punishes for the smallest sins, is angry about minute insults in His address, and that the slightest disobedience deserves death and terrible torment in hell (in our world - a torture chamber).

You looked at a beautiful woman, or (oh, horror!) did not pay your tithe – you are finished; get ready to be tortured for eternity with red-hot iron. A person who acts like such a god will, rightly, be called a tyrant, monster and dictator.

The recognition of the fact that the superficial meaning is absurd forces us to carry out a deeper examination, thanks to which the true meaning is revealed; a meaning that is more beautiful and valuable for our spiritual development, and for building relationships with people and a healthy society.

"In the image of the light of the Father, he will become manifest." Reading the Bible, you can see a lot of inconsistencies, but you need to firmly believe that God is truly good and just. It was this belief that was my lodestar. The image of God as dictator was completely unacceptable, so I searched deeper and found that the figurative meaning of the Bible was more valuable and more accurate than the literal one. Those who seek God will be able to penetrate this protective shell of the Bible.

Images which came into being before you

84. Jesus said: "When you see your likeness, you rejoice. But when you see your images which came into being before you, and which neither die nor become manifest, how much you will have to bear!"

There are two very similar words - **"likeness"** and **"image"**. In the light of the previous verse, we can conclude that the **"image"** is an inner essence, a deep inner similarity, not obvious at first sight.

"Likeness", apparently, refers to a more external similarity (similarity in character, habits, behavior, etc.).

It often happens that we meet a person very similar to us, with a similar character, life events, temperament, and even similar life experiences. We celebrate this moment, since it is very easy for us to communicate with such a person, and topics for conversation arise, as if, by themselves.

Yes, it is really joyful and pleasant, however, there is also a "but" here.

In Socionics there is a pattern - two people who share similar characters (both extroverts, logicians, rationalists), easily understand and feel each other, but they cannot help each other in practical situations, since they either have the same view of how to get out of a situation, or both are equally at a loss as to how to get out of the situation.

People who are different in socionic traits can help each other: one person grows spiritually and morally, and the second also grows spiritually and morally, despite possible conflicts between them.

Therefore, likeness, similarity - this is certainly very good, but there are certain drawbacks.

"When you see your images which came into being before you" When we examined this verse, we were faced with several very interesting ways of understanding it.

The first way of understanding this phrase is that, each person has his favorite principles (qualities), which he applies in life, without thinking. He does some things unconsciously, intuitively, not because he was forced or because it was necessary.

One person finds it intuitively unpleasant to cheat; another likes to look at things from the perspective of others, and not only from his own; a third, with great willingness, takes up a task and does it much more vigorously than was even required of him.

After reading the Gospel of Thomas, I was deeply touched by several things. For example, in verse 27, I was particularly hooked by the phrase "when you fashion eyes in the place of an eyethen will you enter the kingdom."

I understood this principle immediately. Having learned to look at the world, at a given situation, not only with one's own eyes (taking into account only one's point of view) but also with the eyes of the other person (listening to another's point of view), one can solve conflicts, understand others and, in general, live much more happily.

I practiced this principle intuitively even before I read about it. But now I understand that consciously applying this principle is much more effective than just using it from time to time.

So it turned out that I found the image that was mine, but existed before me in the Gospel of Thomas.

When reading the Gospel of Thomas and the Bible, this happened to me many times. For example: "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles." (Matthew 5:41). This is also my favorite principle. I always want to do more and better than I am asked. Applying this principle purposefully, you can achieve your goal much more effectively.

We can examine the development of science and technology on the examples of purposeful application of principles. For example, there are unique things that only one master can do. If this master will formalize his knowledge and skills in the form of technologies and principles and teach other people to do things the same way as he does, a technological breakthrough will take place. The knowledge and skills of the master will not remain in the form of his unique abilities.

Similarly, mathematicians and physicists, for example, bring to science new principles that allow others to start research, not from the very beginning, but from a higher stage and thus

accumulate knowledge that leads to the development of science and technology. The same applies to spiritual principles.

Yes, it is certainly very good, when people are intuitively able to act in a kind, fair and honest way. However, this should become the norm and principle for all. A clear formulation of the principle helps us to implement it more effectively.

"Which neither die nor become manifest." As we have already said, the principles we practice intuitively, we find in books, in history. We see that they occurred before us, and this helps us to use them more effectively. These principles do not die, they are always alive, despite the fact that people die and are born.

The phrase **"Nor become manifest"** is more difficult to understand. Perhaps it means **"not obvious"** or **"do not appear by themselves"**. These principles do not lie on the road or in a conspicuous place, they need to be found, discovered, understood and deciphered.

The second way of understanding the phrase **"when you see your images which came into being before you"** is that it is a reference to the vocation of man.

For example, one person, having entered the army, cannot wait to get out of it, while the other feels quite at home there, understanding that this is his place, his life and vocation. He sees his own image, which existed before him, and merges with it.

I also observed situations where some people come to a religious organization (sect) and are uncomfortable in it, because they see the problems that exist there, while for others this sect is like a home; they are comfortable in it and happily practice all the principles that are preached there.

Admittedly, in addition to the life of a person as an individual, life exists as a social phenomenon. For example, a communist or religious ideology – where it is essential to believe, without thinking, rejecting thoughts. The idea is clearly preserved through the course of centuries. There are always people who want to just believe without thinking, and that's enough for them.

People die and are born, but the ideology remains. The idea itself has a firm foundation and is transmitted from person to person in an almost unchanged form. It lives a life of its own.

Ideology passes from person to person like computer programs that are copied from computer to computer, or viruses that copy themselves, and then spread through computers.

Ideas, like computer programs, can be both useful and harmful. The latter can be very tenacious and enslave people.

Perhaps such images, existing as social phenomena, although people are born and die - are the images that existed before us, but are now ours.

A person lives and one day finds his image, his place in life. He is happy about this, because he understands that this is exactly what he loves.

The third way of understanding **"When you see your images which came into being before you"** is very personal, but I dare to suggest it also.

I had a very strong feeling of déjà vu several times. I once watched a movie about Thomas

More, "A Man for All Seasons," and had a feeling that everything that was happening in the film was connected to me. Such a feeling arose even in spite of the fact that I very much disagree with Thomas More.

For reference - Thomas More was a thinker and activist who wrote a famous work "Utopia". He lived at the time of the most famous English king, Henry VIII, the same one who had six wives.

Thomas More was a good friend of the king; he had four children, and was a principled man. Henry VIII executed Thomas, despite their friendship, for his honesty, bluntness and unwillingness to compromise.

Although I disagree with very many of Thomas More's views, his position, nevertheless, deeply shocked me.

This is not just a likeness, because likeness is a similarity in actions and character. It is an image; an image is a deeper form of similarity. Coming face to face with a similarity of images, a person is surprised; he is shocked; just as I was shocked and surprised, after watching the film "A Man for All Seasons."

I also get a sense of déjà vu when I read the Gospel of Thomas. These poems, like nothing else, turned out to be very close to me; they, too, are like my images that came into being before me.

The phrase **"how much you will have to bear?"** I can relate to what I feel when I read the Gospel of Thomas.

We examined three different ways of understanding the 88th verse. For me, as a researcher, the first approach is very important from a practical point of view.

Remember, earlier, we dealt with the concept of "word". A word is not just a set of letters or some kind of sound; it's a certain concept, a whole idea.

That is why for me it is important not to simply use principles from time to time, it is important to formalize them as a word, as new concepts. It could be said that I am striving to place a new brick in the building of my inner world and, starting from it, move on.

Had he been worthy, he would not have experienced death

85. Jesus said: "Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth, but he did not become worthy of you. For had he been worthy, he would not have experienced death."

This verse expresses a completely different point of view on the subject of Adam's perfection than is offered in traditional Christianity – be it Orthodoxy, Catholicism or Protestantism.

The following quote completely reflects the point of view of traditional Christianity on the subject of Adam's perfection: "If the Lord himself, looking at his creation, said:" It's very good, "then it was. Adam was a perfect man, which implies that he had free will, which he used to disobey God. Free will is one of the facets of perfection Adam possessed "- (<http://cogmtl.net/Qa/q116.htm>).

I believe this verse of the Gospel of Thomas expresses a much more logical idea: Adam was not perfect; he was just an innocent and naive person.

Adam was like a child, who is born imperfect and naive, pure, like a sheet of paper, on which much is to be written.

If Adam was truly perfect, avoiding mistakes, he would not have tasted death. It was his imperfection, naivety and haste that caused the Fall.

According to the third chapter of Genesis, the result of Adam's fall was punishment from God - expulsion from Paradise and mortality. However, there is an opinion that this was not punishment for Adam's transgression, but the need to get into difficult conditions in order to get closer to perfection. It is through difficulties in life, through the search for a way out of difficult situations, that a person approaches perfection.

"Jesus said, "Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect." (Matthew 5:48). Why did Jesus give an order that cannot be fulfilled? After all, mistakes, if only because of ignorance of all facts, are unavoidable. In physics, there is such a thing as stable and unstable equilibrium. Here is an example of an unstable equilibrium. Place a small ball on the top of a big ball. The small ball is in an unstable equilibrium, since the slightest movement will lead it to fall off the big ball, that is, to exit the state of equilibrium.

Very close to the state of unstable equilibrium are such human qualities as naivety and innocence. Due to the fact that a person is naive and does not know much, it is very easy to get him out of balance, and the result will be a fall. This is exactly what happened with Adam, as described in the Bible.

Perfection is close to a stable equilibrium, but a stable equilibrium can also be of different kinds.

There is a static equilibrium - this is when we have, for example, a hemispherical depression and we put the ball in its very bottom. Moving the ball in different directions, we understand that it will still slide into the middle of this depression. Exiting the unstable equilibrium, the ball falls down, finds its groove and freezes there in a state of stable equilibrium.

Approximately the same happens with people. They lose their balance (they make mistakes), then they find their niche and freeze there. But this is still not perfection.

It is better for us to be in a state of dynamic equilibrium. This is when there is a system (people) that moves, but small perturbations of the system do not lead to uncontrolled destruction or disruption of its operation.

Examining the Gospel of Thomas, we see that dynamic balance is the closest thing to perfection. Man develops and the system develops, in a controlled fashion, without destructive consequences for man.

Those commandments and principles that are set forth in the Bible and in the Gospel of Thomas maintain such a dynamic balance in life.

Moving forward, using and loving these principles, a person can find a way out of any given situation, even a very difficult one, and, thus, not slide into chaos, but remain in a state of

dynamic equilibrium. This is the form of perfection that is achievable for man.

When it comes to perfection, people think only of static equilibrium, that is, a person falls into his hole and lies in his own pit, in his life's niche.

However, it is interesting that almost always, if the system is in some static equilibrium, there is an even deeper pit.

Therefore, people believe that perfection is unattainable and it is unnecessary to strive for it, because your efforts will be futile.

In the case of dynamic equilibrium, when the system, in this case a person, is in motion, he advances deeper and deeper, not stopping at what has been achieved.

Thus, a person can and should strive for excellence. Is it possible to achieve this in our conditions? We often make mistakes and do wrong things because we simply do not have all the facts.

Perfection is not to always act precisely and correctly, but to find a way out, even if we have done a wrong act, or have fallen into a difficult or seemingly hopeless situation. A person striving for perfection, even making mistakes, can get out of any situation with dignity and victory.

It is traditionally believed that perfection is to walk a fine, thin line, which is called the "Will of God".

However, we believe that perfection is when everything that a person does is wonderful, even if his actions look somehow unusual or even wrong from the point of view of those around him.

For example, the Pharisees criticized Jesus because on the Sabbath, He and His disciples picked some heads of grain and ate them while walking through a grain field. It was believed that it was forbidden to do this on the Sabbath. But Jesus and the disciples did this, and it was not a sin or a mistake, because the people of that time (in particular the Pharisees who condemned Jesus) did not understand the true meaning of the Sabbath.

We experience some echo of perfection when we love. A person that is genuinely in love can act absurdly, but still look wonderful. It is to such perfection, I think, it is necessary to strive.

"And what does this verse have to do with us? - You ask. "Well, yes, Adam, probably, once lived, but what do we care?"

"Adam came into being from a great power and a great wealth."

It sometimes seems to children born into great wealth, or adults who won in the lottery, that they have it made in life and are incredibly lucky. But in fact, this luck does not benefit the person. Real wealth is in maturity and wisdom. Power and wealth, which came to man not from the inside, but from the outside, often spoils him.

Unlike animals, man was given a powerful intellect, skilled hands, and the ability to develop and to explore. But immaturity and inability to manage these gifts led to the fall.

Children, born in very good conditions, often develop worse and slower than those who have to overcome difficulties in life. When raising children, it is worth remembering that it is necessary, first of all, to teach them to overcome difficulties, rather than create ideal living conditions for them; helping people, it is necessary not to solve the problem for them, but to

encourage them to seek their own way out of the situation.

By solving all a person's problems for him, you can imperceptibly harm. An example of this is a case from my life. One person constantly asked to borrow money. For a while he received them. But one day it became apparent that the money he received was more of a hindrance than help to him, since he never did try to get a job that would enable him to get out of his difficult situation. In the end we informed him that we were loaning him money for the last time and that it was time for him to think about how to get out of his situation.

It must be admitted that for a while there we felt sorry for him, but at the same time we understood that refusing to keep giving him money was the right thing to do. In fact, not long after, he found a job, and his life became much better than he had when he depended on short-term monetary assistance.

Perhaps the expulsion of Adam from paradise by God is not a punishment, but a necessity. Exile is an opportunity to gain experience, wisdom and reach perfection.

The son of man has no place to lay his head

86. Jesus said, "The foxes have their holes and the birds have their nests, but the son of man has no place to lay his head and rest."

This verse almost exactly repeats the following statement of Jesus: "Jesus said to him: "Foxes have dens and birds have nests, but the Son of Man has no place to lay his head."(Luke 9:58).

At first glance, it seems we are talking about the fact that a person must follow Jesus anywhere and everywhere, preach with him, and accordingly, forget about leisure and tranquility, as he will have to, constantly, be on the move.

Perhaps the idea arises that with these words Jesus as though warns a person and leads him away from a wrong step; it is even possible that Jesus was checking this way whether a person was ready for such sacrifices. But the previous verse from the Gospel of Luke (9:57): "As they were walking along the road, a man said to him, "I will follow you wherever you go." - indicates to us that it was such a life that a man who asked Jesus was looking for. This suggests a figurative, allegorical sense, since even Jesus still had to go to a village in the evening to rest, sleep and eat. Reading the Bible, we see that Jesus was at feasts and at a wedding feast.

What is the meaning behind this? What does it mean to **"lay his head"**?

If you consider the head not as an "object" that you need to put on a pillow to sleep, but as an organ that people think with, think and reason, then most likely **"lay your head"** means to reach a certain worldview and calm down, with your head laid, - relax. That is, it is a certain final worldview, a final system of views.

This idea further reinforces the comparison of people with foxes and birds of the sky.

Foxes, as a rule, are associated with earthly (secular) wisdom and cunning, that is, the wisdom of this world.

"Foxes have their holes." The ability of people to discover their niche by hook or crook, cunningly build their future, so to speak, dig their own holes.

As for the "**birds**", at the very beginning of the Gospel of Thomas (verse 2), it was also about the birds of the heavens. There it was said that if the Kingdom of Heaven is in sky, then the birds of heaven will precede you.

Who are these "**birds**"?

"**Birds**" - this is probably the symbol of a certain impulse, an aspiration for heaven, for something higher.

The concept of "priesthood" is closest to this. Priesthood is when a person dedicates his life to seeking God, striving for God, for the Kingdom of God. Such people can be called "birds of the sky".

Honestly speaking, it's difficult even to compare ourselves to people who have devoted their lives to the search for God, because in self-denial, in suppressing the desires of their body, they are way ahead of us. Another question whether this kind of dedication is necessary? It seems to me that it would be more beneficial to apply their selflessness in a more constructive channel.

In terms of self-denial, those who can be called the priesthood are far ahead of us, but they also have nests. If we look at the number of church buildings - this is a huge number of nests.

The aim of birds is laying eggs and producing offspring – offspring that are just like them. The goal of religion is the transmission to the next generation of teachings in an unchanged form with minimal distortion, preserving exactly as from the first centuries. In this religion is very similar to birds.

What does it mean "**The son of man has no place to lay his head.**"?

Following Jesus means constantly changing one's thinking. The head is needed not only to lie on the pillow, but much more to think, develop, explore deeper God's laws and thereby move forward.

If we compare the scale of progress in physics over the past 2000 years and the scale of development of religious thought, the contrast is simply catastrophic.

A person must develop and change for the better. There is no age when you can say: "That's it, I will not try to change, I am what I am, and that's it!"

Of course, it's much easier to say: "Accept me as I am. I will not change. Better you change." Adults often refuse to change, because it is very difficult. Easier for people, like foxes, to dig their hole and sit in it, refusing to change anything in themselves.

"**The son of man has no place to lay his head.**" A person should not stop in his development. I believe that the essence of following Jesus, in many ways, is that a person, whether young, middle-aged or old, retains the ability to change for the better, retains flexibility. This is precisely the essence of this phrase.

Most people want to be accepted as they are. If this is the opinion of more than one person (in the family or the company), then there are conflicts, because it is very difficult for people to agree and understand each other, everyone wants to be understood. Among them there must be someone who will not wait to be accepted as he is, but will accept other people as they are. For this he will have to change and develop, in many ways even adapting to the needs of others, learn

to look with eyes in place of an eye (as previously discussed).

For me, an ideal society is a society where people are open and ready for change and development, where flexibility and the ability to change are considered truly wonderful qualities.

This verse does not forbid a person to rest, sleep, and have fun, but forbids stopping growth. Old age does not come when a person is many years old or when he has gray hair, but when a person decides to stop his development, when he decides that he does not need to change anymore.

As long as a person is striving for something higher and better, he remains young at heart!

Wretched is the body that is dependent upon a body

87. Jesus said: "Wretched is the body that is dependent upon a body, and wretched is the soul that is dependent on these two."

Let's try to figure out what "the body depends on the body" means.

We will focus not on the word "**body**", but on the word "**dependent**".

Imagine - a young man and a girl meet. They are interested in each other, they love each other. Each of them tries to do something pleasant, tries to avoid stupidities and mistakes, of course, to the best of their ability. They have not yet become dependent on each other, not yet obligated to each other.

They then became a husband and wife, and the situation starts to change - they are already officially dependent on, and obligated to, each other. They stop trying to please each other, because already there are relations, obligations and duty. People start to save their energy and because of this too easily slide into a level of dependency on each other. One orders, the other obeys. This is what destroys love between people.

Jesus in Mark 10: 42-44 proposed another principle: "Jesus, calling them (James and John), said to them: "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all."

The concept of "being a servant" does not imply a humiliating sense of domination of one person over another. Here the opposite principle is prescribed, where the domination of one over the other is rejected in favor of voluntary and joyful service to each other. There are two types of relationships:

- First - dependence on each other and dominance over each other;
- The second - fraternal and equal relationship with each other, when people are not afraid of each other and are honest with each other.

In Matthew 23: 8 Jesus said: "But you are not to be called 'Rabbi,' for you have one Teacher, and you are all brothers." Looking down on others is rejected here. We can teach or be disciples, while maintaining the fraternal relations, and not master-servant.

Relations between people, where there is a dependence of one on another, are wrong. Correct

relations are fraternal, where honesty and equality are present.

Unfortunately, the most frequent violations of the principle of right relations are observed in the relationship between husband and wife, where one tries to somehow enslave the other and to make the other dependent, perhaps for reliability and ease of management. This is a miserable and ugly sight.

"Wretched is the body that is dependent upon a body " very accurately highlights the violation of the principle of fraternal relations.

A truly beautiful and lasting love is where people with joy and love serve each other. People are really happy when there are fraternal relations between them.

We must change the relationship of dependence and servitude to fraternal, loving relationships. To whom do we owe this? First of all to ourselves! For the sake of happiness. This requires a high level of consciousness from us, but this is what the Gospel of Thomas teaches us; and the Bible, too, if we read them carefully.

"Wretched is the soul that is dependent on these two." Unhappy is the one who has not unified into a single whole the inner and outer man, the husband and wife.

Traditionally, it is believed that the wife must obey her husband. But we are not talking about the direct physical subordination of one person to another, but about the fact that the outer person must obey the inner, that is, the emotions should obey the mind and the aspirations of the soul.

Man does not control himself if the mind is enslaved by the desires of the body, if the body dictates to the soul what to say and how to think. Such enslavement destroys the right relations between people; a person begins to speak only obsequious words instead of truth. In the Bible, such people are called "false prophets", that is, people who say only what others want to hear without thinking that the truth can really help people.

The angels and the prophets will come to you

88. Jesus said: "The angels and the prophets will come to you and give to you those things you (already) have. And you too, give them those things which you have, and say to yourselves, 'When will they come and take what is theirs?'"

There are some pretty well-known stories about the arrival of angels to people. For example, there is a story about Abraham and Sarah, who for a long time had no children. One day, three travelers came to Abraham's tent. Abraham was glad to see the visitors. He invited them into his house, set the table and chose the best calf, so the travelers could satisfy their hunger.

Nobody could have thought that his guests were not simple travelers, but messengers of the Most High - angels who had taken the form of wanderers.

The pilgrims told Abraham that he would soon have a son. A year later, Abraham and Sarah had their long-awaited son - Isaac.

Another example is the Christmas story about how Jesus promised to visit a shoemaker. The shoemaker was looking forward to the meeting. But that day only needy people came to him, to whom he did not refuse help. The day turned into evening, but Jesus never came. After a while,

the shoemaker realized that it was Jesus who had come to him under the guise of the poor people.

"Truly I tell you, whatever you did for one of the least of these brothers and sisters of mine, you did for me." (Matthew 25:40). The word "Me" stands for Jesus.

An angel is a messenger of God that helps man; the very word "angel" means "messenger". It does not have to be a creature with wings and a glowing halo, as it is usually described; it may be people around us. If we can see in these people an angel with wings and a glowing halo, then there will be many wonderful events, in our lives and we will be happier. Unfortunately, people have difficulty accepting advice, guidance and reproach from others. It seems to us that we know better than others how to live. We do not know how to listen to others. When we learn to see and hear angels, then the Kingdom of God will enter our lives.

On the day we were analyzing this verse, a very interesting thing happened to me and my wife. It seemed to us that it was like the arrival of an angel.

We have very close and good friends - Valera and Alena. We wrote this book together with Alena; Valera works for us.

A couple of days before Sunday (the day of our meeting), we had some misunderstanding with our friends. We figured it all out and seemingly resolved the issues. But on Sunday morning Alena wrote to Marina that there were some unresolved issues: Marina has an incorrect understanding of an employer-worker relationship; it is improper to humiliate a man; it isn't easy for Valera being with us, because there is a lot of noise, and yelling, especially at the children.

During our meeting, Alena called and she and Marina talked on the phone about these issues (in another room). I was sitting at the meeting thinking to myself that they must be having a difficult conversation, clarifying circumstances and making claims and counter claims.

After a while Marina came back to the meeting and I saw joy on her face. It became clear that they understood each other. Marina recounted the telephone conversation and, as it turned out, it was a good illustration of this verse.

We have four children and often there are times when you speak, and no one reacts; you speak a second time - again there is no reaction; you speak a third time, a fourth time ... You start to get irritated and start to speak in elevated tones, which then turn into screams. Gradually, you have to go straight to the second or third stage of communication (shouting), because you understand that no one reacts to your first request (quiet request). In the end, all this leads to a very tense situation in the family. Although we very much cherish and love each other, but the commanding tone in conversation has become so frequent that we, alas, have ceased to even notice it.

Marina took this rebuke, one might say, as a message from God, as the words of an angel, very humbly and correctly, with an appreciation of the essence.

As a result, much has changed. Our attitudes towards the children have become more patient and calm, our relationship as husband and wife more pleasant and joyful, and the relationship with our friends more profound and open. But it could have been different if we had simply "turned on pride" and say: "Do not meddle, this is our business, we know how to act."

Marina's attitude to Alena's words, as to the words of the angel, led to a big change for the

better.

Surprisingly, this situation coincided with the study of this verse. We really can be angels to each other, but only if we treat each other's words with attention, without pride, and without prejudice; if we learn to hear each other.

"The angels and the prophets will come to you and give to you those things you (already) have." Indeed angels and prophets do often give us things, but we do not take them, while saying that we ourselves know what to do and how to do it; do not meddle in our business. We do not think that by taking what we are given, we can bring into our lives a particle of the Kingdom of God.

"And you too, give them those things which you have." What should one give? For an angel, material things or sacrifices are not important. It is important for him that the message he brought is carefully listened to and accepted for execution. If the words of the angel reach our heart, it will bring into our lives the joy and happiness that we will want to share with everyone around us.

One must learn to receive angels, to hear and to know on what day they come: **"... When will they come and take what is theirs."** In this verse we are talking not only about the angels, but also about the prophets: **"The angels and the prophets will come to you."** A little earlier we discussed the parable of the husbandmen and prophets who came to rebuke the people, therefore we will not discuss it again in detail. The words of the prophets are more aimed at rebuke. They are often harsh and unpleasant. People often reject prophets, because their words may sound too sharp, and as a result, people are unable to attain the Kingdom of God and happiness in life.

Prophets are those who come, denounce, and leave. Angels are rather those who are close to us, as in our case with Alena. No wonder there is the notion of "guardian angel" - living next to us and protecting us. These we can be for each other, if only we learn to hear and learn to discard unnecessary pride.

The internal and the external

89. Jesus said, "Why do you wash inside the cup (s) do not understand that the one who made the inside has also made the outer part?"

This saying to some extent is a continuation of the teachings of Jesus in the classical Gospels: "Woe to you, teachers of the law and Pharisees, you hypocrites! You clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence." (Mt 23:25).

"But the Lord said to him:" Now then, you Pharisees clean the outside of the cup and dish, but inside you are full of greed and wickedness." (Luke 11:39).

At first glance, it may seem that the 93rd verse contradicts the statements of Jesus in the classical Gospels. Perhaps, it is so. But it is necessary to understand why Jesus said this.

It was very important for the Pharisees to look spiritual, proper, and to observe all the rites. Monitoring compliance with the rites and ritual purity, they failed to grasp that the inner world is also very important: "... but inside they are full of greed and self-indulgence", "... but inside you

are full of greed and wickedness."

"Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not realize that he who made the inside is the same one who made the outside?" Jesus' words speak for themselves: "The exterior will become pure and beautiful only when that which is inside is purified."

Christians took this principle too literally and with great zeal. They believed that the inner is the most valuable and important, and the outer (clothing, beauty, appearance) is of almost no value, is temporary, perishable and not very necessary.

Under the influence of quotations from the Bible, for example: "All people are like grass, and all their glory is like the flowers of the field; the grass withers and the flowers fall" (1 Pet 1:24) the human body, human beauty and appearance became, for many people, something temporary, unnecessary and useless. For them, only the spiritual world and following Jesus were important.

Therefore, perhaps it is in opposition to this view and such teaching it is said in the Gospel of Thomas: **"Why do you wash the outside of the cup? Do you not realize that he who made the inside is the same one who made the outside?"**

Now in many conservative churches it is believed that the more spiritual and closer to God is a woman who is less beautifully dressed. A vivid example of this is the clothing of nuns, under which the beauty and attractiveness of women is hidden.

In verse 9 of the second chapter of Genesis it says: "The Lord God made all kinds of trees grow out of the ground—trees that were pleasing to the eye and good for food. In the middle of the garden were the tree of life and the tree of the knowledge of good and evil." All trees in paradise are good; they, in many ways, symbolize a person and his desires. They are good, but each has its place and time in life.

Beauty, human desires, education (things of a temporary nature), just as the tree of knowledge of good and evil, are useful, valuable and necessary. We can bring many examples of things of a temporary nature. Here are a few of them: beauty with time disappears, fades; education - its benefit becomes clear only when you have matured; the body is beautiful in youth, but in advanced age is, alas, not. Despite the temporary nature of many things, one must understand that they are useful and should be used to their fullest extent.

Everyone should use their resources, not bury them in the ground or ignore them (remember the parable of talents).

Harmony between the inner and outer world of man is the first idea of this passage.

The second idea - internal change must necessarily lead to external changes. For example, a person after his misdeed repented and promised to change. He took pleasure in saying to himself: "I'm good; I repented; now I will be good. I changed". Man thinks himself a "hero who conquered self." But on this, unfortunately, it often all ends. Mentally, he seemed to have changed, but outwardly remained the same as he was, repeating all the same mistakes. A person's internal change must lead to external change, that is, his behavior and habits must change.

Internal changes should be reflected on the outside. If we wash the inside of the bowl, then our

outer side must also change, otherwise the change is worthless.

Come unto me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild

90. Jesus said, "Come unto me, for my yoke is easy and my lordship is mild, and you will find repose for yourselves."

A very similar verse is found in Matthew 11: 28-29: "Come to me, all you who are weary and burdened, and I will give you rest. Take my yoke upon you and learn from me, for I am gentle and humble in heart, and you will find rest for your souls."

The phrase "you will find rest for your souls" once had a major impact on our worldview. In the Bible there is such a thing as the "Sabbath". The Sabbath, as a rule, is associated with a day of the week and is traditionally understood as a day when you do not need to do anything. In Christianity, there is confusion, as to on what day "nothing" should be done - Saturday or Sunday?

This verse puts everything in its place. The Sabbath is not a day of the week; it is a person's state (Sabbath, that is, peace). The real Sabbath is peace, joy and unity in the soul.

"My yoke is easy." What does "easy yoke" mean? Let's think about what kinds of yokes there are.

The first kind of yoke is the yoke of a commanding nature. This is the simplest, straightforward and most primitive kind of power, when a person is ordered to do what he needs to do in a categorical manner, leaving him no chance of having his own opinion and choice. This kind of yoke in most cases gives quick results; the person does everything and does not even notice how after a while he becomes a slave.

If such a yoke is applied, for example, in the family, it generates wrong, abnormal, ugly relations. In some cases, orders are necessary to coordinate actions when performing important tasks. This is perfectly normal, since it does not lead to violence against a person, if everything happens by mutual consent.

The second kind of yoke is manipulation. Manipulating a person's sense of duty, guilt, and various moral levers to force a person to do what he does not want to do.

This type of yoke, practically, does not differ from the previous one. It also gives quick results, but in essence, it is nothing but violence and deception.

The third kind of yoke is a **"meek yoke"**. The essence of this kind of yoke lies in the fact that we need to openly and honestly help a person fall in love with what we love ourselves. To manage without orders, coercion and manipulation to achieve one's goal; walk the same path; to be able to ignite a person with an idea and achieve unity of mind.

Yes, this kind is very laborious and requires a lot of patience, perseverance and awareness, but the result is worth it. This yoke is the strongest and most reliable.

Unfortunately, people are impatient and do not want to wait long for results, therefore, as a rule, they prefer the first or second kind of yoke.

Basic principles of meek yoke: The first is love. The second is the desire to act nobler. The

third is openness and equality in relationship. The fourth is the ability to wait for the moment when words would not be in vain, but will hit their mark. The fifth is the ability to see with the eyes of the other person (eyes in the place of an eye).

Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you

91. They said to him: "Tell us who you are so that we may believe in you." He said to them, "You read the face of the sky and of the earth, but you have not recognized the one who is before you, and you do not know how to read this moment."

A similar saying was also found in verse 43: "Who are you, that you should say these things to us?"

<Jesus said to them,> "You do not realize who I am from what I say to you."

As in the 43rd verse, and in the 91st, there is a general problem of people's unwillingness to think and analyze independently. People often want to be told just how to believe or how to think correctly. This is easier.

There are two concepts - "learn" and "know". "Learn" is to hear information and, perhaps, remember something from what was heard.

"To know" is to understand; to deeply penetrate; to merge with some idea; to pass it through your heart. It's like an engine in a man; like a fire burning in him.

Jesus did not want from his disciples a superficial attitude toward himself, such as: "Tell us that you are the Christ, that you are a messiah, show a couple of miracles, and then we will believe you."

For people, it is often important to attach the correct nameplate, so to speak, to the office of their life and also orient themselves by the nameplates of other people like: "This is the boss, this is the pastor, this is the person who needs to be feared, and so on."

There is leadership in name and leadership in fact. A leader in name is one who has a large inscription on his office saying "Chief". A leader in fact is a person who others want to obey, who others want to follow, not even knowing what is written on his nameplate.

It is important to be a leader in fact. If you are a good specialist, if you know your business well, if you are passionate about something, then willy-nilly people follow you.

Jesus did not want to be just a formal leader, who had in his office a golden nameplate with the inscription: "Messiah. Bow down here." He wanted the disciples to understand the essence of His principles, and not simply bow down before him as before God, as before the Messiah. He wanted them to be imbued with the essence and spirit of his teaching. It's amazing that the main question of Christianity was the question: "Is Christ God?" Is Christ represented as a vain person who values a golden nameplate on the door and is angry if this nameplate is not noticed? What a monstrous absurdity! How many people died for this "golden nameplate"?

The goal of Christianity, as we see in the Gospel of Thomas, is that "I become like Jesus." But not only! And he, too, will become like me: "Jesus said: "He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to

him." (Gospel of Thomas 108)

If, for example, one person is kind and beautiful - this does not mean that all kind and beautiful people are as similar to each other as two drops of water. All people are different and have their own unique qualities, character traits.

To be like Jesus does not mean that everyone should be like him in appearance and in character.

Christ helps people not just to become like him, but to truly develop their individuality. His laws and principles help to become brighter and better.

In contrast, it is noted that in religious totalitarian organizations such as sects (regardless of the size of the organization) people are made similar to the founders of these organizations. Thus, a kind of psychological cloning of the founder of the organization practically takes place. But in true Christianity (in the way it should be), a person can truly unlock his potential, his abilities and talents. That is why in verse 108 it says: "I myself shall become he" (we'll take a closer look at this verse later). I have given this example, because in the verse in question, it is said: **"You read the face of the sky and of the earth, but you have not recognized the one who is before you, and you do not know how to read this moment."** That's what it means to "know".

The principle of knowing concerns not only religion or Jesus Christ. This is a fairly important principle. It's one thing to know, to hear, and it's another thing to penetrate the essence completely and truly merge with it; then the effectiveness of one's work and the scale of one's achievements will be much greater.

The essence of a real discipleship is to know, and not just to learn the material, which after a while is then forgotten. This is what Jesus wanted from his disciples. Once you know something, you cannot forget it.

That is why a certain reproach of his disciples could be heard in the words of Jesus. The essence of the question posed by them speaks for itself - they did not understand and did not know who Jesus is, did not merge with him, did not understand his idea.

This idea develops in the next verse.

Now I do desire to tell, but you do not inquire after it

92. Jesus said: "Seek and you will find. Yet, what you asked me about in former times and which I did not tell you then, now I do desire to tell, but you do not inquire after it."

This verse continues the thought of the 95th. The standard problem of a teacher and a student is touched upon here. There are two approaches to learning - "to learn" and "to know".

The first (to learn) - this method is aimed at memorizing by explanation, repetition and control. A person learns something new, but that does not mean that he has known it.

The second (to know) is aimed at memorizing through deep personal interest, desire, pursuit of knowledge with one's whole heart (**"seek and you will find"**).

In order for a person not only to learn something new, but to know it, one needs to interest him, ignite him, give him the basics, and show him the perspectives. The interested person will

want to understand more deeply what has been said. Yes, this is a difficult method, but it is it that translates learning into knowing.

"What you asked me about in former times and which I did not tell you then." It seems to me we are talking here about the second approach to teaching, when the question is not given a direct answer, but hints and tips are given which should help to find the answer to the question if a person is really interested in what he asked - **"seek and you will find."**

The purpose of Jesus 'disciples' stay with him is knowledge. Do not just hearing and remembering, but to truly know. For this you need a keen interest; so Jesus also resorts to lighting up people so that they themselves sought and found answers to all questions.

This principle is even reflected in the very first verse of the Gospel of Thomas: "Jesus said, Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All. "

Before Jesus was the problem of how to light up his students, rather than just tell them something. Jesus talked about this problem: **"Now I do desire to tell, but you do not inquire after it."**

Before we want to help others become knowing, and not just learned, we ourselves must become such. We ourselves must seek, get ignited, give ourselves completely to the work that we are doing, and try to understand deeply the essence of what we are doing.

Remember: **"And he took him and withdrew and told him three things. When Thomas returned to his companions, they asked him, "What did Jesus say to you?" Thomas said to them, "If I tell you one of the things which he told me, you will pick up stones and throw them at me; a fire will come out of the stones and burn you up."** (Gospel of Thomas 13)

This is a typical application of the second method. Thomas did not give a direct answer to their question, he intrigued them, and it was to encourage his companions themselves to seek an answer. This was to some extent a challenge, which, apparently, they did not accept. They were not interested in Thomas' words and did not understand, that's why they ask such a naive question in verse 91.

We on the other hand were very interested and were hooked; we accepted the challenge and, we believe, found the answer to this question, studying the 13th and 14th verses of the Gospel of Thomas.

Do not throw the pearls to the swine

93. Do not give what is holy to dogs, lest they throw them on the dung-heap. Do not throw the pearls to swine, lest they [...] it [...].

The ending of this phrase, unfortunately, has not been preserved, but it is entirely possible to guess what the issue was about, especially since there is a similar statement in Matthew 7: 6: "Do not give dogs what is sacred; do not throw your pearls to pigs. If you do, they may trample them under their feet, and turn and tear you to pieces."

Let's try to understand what the concepts of "dogs" and "swine" mean.

Dogs are devoted animals, which, for all their devotion, can show a bestial grin. They can be either kind or mean. Yet one of the main qualities is still devotion and a desire to protect their master.

Dog-like devotion can also be found in humans. It is very difficult to change the point of view of a person who has a dog-like to an idea. Neither persuasion, nor logical reasoning will help. He is ready to defend his opinion quite aggressively. Persuasion and coaxing are useless in the face of this kind of devotion.

Dog-like devotion is most widespread in the religious sphere. A person believes in something and ceases to hear and accept arguments, ceases to think logically, but just mindlessly defends his master, thinking that this master is God. Trying to prove something to such people, you need to understand in time that you need to stop and stop wasting your breath, stop convincing them, as it is useless.

What is holy to us can be heresy for them, and what is wonderful and beautiful to us provokes rage and hatred in them.

What does "swine" mean?

Swine are a symbol of indiscrimination, and insensitivity to values.

"Do not throw the pearls to swine."

A pearl is some principles and values that a person discovered; that he extracted with considerable difficulty, one can say, at the cost of suffering.

What is precious to us, has absolutely no value for the swine, they are completely indifferent to this.

It may seem that this verse calls on us to disrespect others, practically suggesting that certain people be considered dogs or swine. But this sounds somewhat wrong. I believe that you do not need to classify people and consider dogs or swine. It is necessary to understand that the state of a person changes. It may happen that we too will find ourselves in the position of dogs or swine, defending our idea, not listening to either logic or common sense.

When we are indifferent to the values and needs of other people, when we are only interested in mercantile interests, we are in the position of swine.

These concepts are presented here not for us to have a disrespectful attitude towards others or think ill of them, but in order for us to learn to stop in time. This principle becomes very clear when raising children.

Repeating, over and over again, the same request to children is harmful. This teaches them to ignore the requests that were sounded at the beginning, which triggers in adults an explosion of emotions, irritation, and anger. It is better for the children not to do certain things. It's better that there be negative consequences than persuading and begging them. It is better to say once, but without delay, what you need to say. This will be most effective approach.

I think it is this attitude toward one's words that this saying of the Gospel from Thomas teaches.

Jesus faced the same problem that we face in the process of raising children, and generally

speaking with people. We try to teach something, passing on information, checking, and controlling, but get no results. Why? Because the person we are trying to teach does not have a personal interest in, or desire for, what we are trying to teach him.

Then we try to generate interest, create a puzzle, but this does not help either. We are at a dead end and do not know what to do. We are tempted to begin persuading, convincing, pleading, and bringing innumerable arguments, but this too turns out to be useless.

Perhaps one just needs to understand when it is time to give up and stop wasting one's breath.

Jesus did not persuade his disciples, and did not force them to do anything. He knew that the moment would come when the word he says will reach them. We, too, need to gather our strength and wait patiently till the moment arrives when our words reach that person, like an arrow fired at a target.

He who seeks will find

94. Jesus (said): "He who seeks will find, and he who knocks will be let in."

This verse is a logical continuation of the 92nd and 93rd verses.

In the previous verses we discussed a rather urgent problem when a person does not perceive transmitted information either through consistent systematic training or through puzzles. It is impossible to teach him anything if he himself does not want it, if he is not fired up by it. This is especially true when it comes to children.

When viewed in the context of the previous verses, then to some extent, the answer to the question, what to do in such cases, is verse 94.

It is necessary to search for the right approach to a person; to knock and try to interest him; to try to explain things. The goal will be achieved if we seek the path to its achievement with all our heart. As the saying goes, "who wants to - looks for an opportunity, who does not want to - looks for a reason."

In many respects, failure in some undertakings, and inability to do certain things, are connected not so much with the lack of conditions or material and technical base as with an insufficiently ardent desire and insufficient determination to achieve the goal.

A person is capable of much, if he really wants to achieve what he has conceived. The theme of this verse is also very well illustrated by the movie "My name is Khan".

Lack of determination and desire to achieve something more interferes with learning, work and so on. People find it easier to find a million reasons that prevent them from reaching a goal, saying, for example: "Bad teachers; a passive work collective", than to make efforts, become interested and, although not quickly, but confidently move towards the cherished dream.

To achieve a goal one needs to search, work and knock, sometimes even repeatedly, without despair, if it is not opened immediately.

It is very difficult in this respect in the education of children. We often hurry to conclude that our child is not sufficiently capable in this or that direction. The same thing in the family - it's easier to label a person, for instance, a fool, a drama queen, deficient, etc., than to resolve and fix

everything.

Yes, to label, to put forward this kind of verdict is very simple, but is it right? Our task is not to make a hasty verdict, but to inculcate interest.

The task of each of us is to be able to see the beautiful things that can be developed (whether in children or in people around us) and not give up.

Give it to one from whom you will not get it back.

95. (Jesus said :) "If you have money, do not lend it at interest, but give it to one from whom you will not get it back."

"But give ..." most likely, the word **"it"** is missing, that is **"give it to one from whom you will not get it back."**

There are many such sayings in the Bible, for example: "But when you give a banquet, invite the poor, the crippled, the lame, the blind, and you will be blessed. Although they cannot repay you, you will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." (Luke 14: 13-14). "But love your enemies, do good to them, and lend to them without expecting to get anything back. Then your reward will be great, and you will be children of the Most High, because he is kind to the ungrateful and wicked." (Luke 6:35).

At first glance, the Bible promotes a prodigal and least profitable way of life for people. As if to say: "Live like this, and after death, when you are resurrected, everything will be fine for you."

The resurrection and eternal life should not be considered as something that begins after death. This is what happens to a person here and now (this is well illustrated in Leo Tolstoy's novel "Resurrection").

"You will be repaid at the resurrection of the righteous." A man necessarily receives a reward if he lives not only for himself, but knows how to love and give. As my personal experience shows, one of the most unprofitable things in life is to be an egoist; one who tries to acquire only for himself.

Such a person is like a chess player who sees only one step forward and seeks to kill an opponent's piece without understanding the ramifications in a few moves.

How then to understand such sayings?

"Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." (Matthew 5:42).

"Give to everyone who asks you, and if anyone takes what belongs to you, do not demand it back." (Luke 6:30).

A literal approach to these principles can lead to stupid and abnormal situations.

How then to correctly understand these principles? Even common sense tells us that it is not necessary to give a person exactly what he asks, because sometimes this only brings him harm. Sometimes it is enough simply to talk with a person and offer him advice and morally support, and this helps him much more than just a handout.

These principles are more about indifference than about extravagance.

Being a giving man is more visionary and promising, perhaps even more profitable, than being stingy, greedy and selfish.

The Kingdom of the Father is like a certain woman

96. Jesus said: "The kingdom of the father is like a certain woman. She took a little leaven, concealed it in some dough, and made it into large loaves. Let him who has ears hear."

When we were discussing this verse, several interesting ways of understanding it arose.

The first idea concerns how the Kingdom of God is spread (harmony, happiness in people's lives).

The Kingdom of God cannot be established by force. Forcing people to be happy, to be adequate and to love others is impossible. Strength and coercion can be applied, but only to prevent some destructive or dangerous actions.

The word "leaven" implies reaching the Kingdom of God through influence, just as leaven makes bread fluffy and tasty. A word, spoken correctly and accurately, has more significance than a thousand words spoken in vain.

There are no clear instructions on how to master the method of soft and effective influence. It's a kind of intuitive skill to do everything on time, without delaying because of indecisiveness, while avoiding impatient haste. This art was perfectly mastered by Jesus. We learn this art also when we study the Gospel of Thomas. Remember, for example, the idea of the Fall.

The second idea has to do with a lot of faiths and world religions. The woman who put the leaven in the dough is associated with the Holy Spirit; in the Old Testament the word wisdom is feminine. The word "Ruach" (spirit) is also feminine in the Hebrew language. This topic was discussed in detail in the article "About the husband and wife", which is in the appendix to this book.

Large loaves are world religions, faiths and worldviews, including atheism. I think God's revelation, some inspiration from the Holy Spirit, is at the heart of almost every faith, every world religion and every worldview. For example, the basis of Islam is a protest against the fact that, according to ancient customs, girls were killed at birth.

I think it was from God that Muhammad, the Muslims received a call to rebel against the barbarous custom. However, it is another matter what grows out of the initial revelation that a person received, whether it be Mohammed, Buddha, Moses, Jesus, Paul, or Luther. Even atheism has at its basis a protest against the reluctance of believers to reason, think critically, and to develop.

Often the problem arises when there is a need to make the original revelation popular. In this case, a lot of strange ideas that would very much surprise the founders of this or that movement appear, for example, the worship of the golden statues of the Buddha. I do not think that the Buddha would approve of this.

It also seems to me that Christ would not approve of fierce disputes between Christians because of the slightest differences in creeds or the repression of dissent.

The question arises: why then does God not explain in detail how to act properly?

This is roughly the same problem we face when raising children. The more often we tell children how to act in a particular situation, the more we teach them something, the more they resist, and the more desire they have to act in their own way. Their actions really have some value in the event that they reach their goal through personal experience, through their experiments. In such moments it is important to understand that you do not need to do everything for children, but you just need to correctly guide them, add the leaven, so to speak.

It seems to me that God acts in the same way. People cannot always correctly understand what is set forth, even if everything is explained to them accurately and in detail. To come to an understanding of many things, a person simply needs to grow up on his own, to pass everything through his heart; otherwise it will not be of any value to him.

A certain woman who was carrying a jar full of meal

97. Jesus said: "The kingdom of the father is like a certain woman who was carrying a jar full of meal. While she was walking on the road, still some distance from home, the handle of the jar broke and the meal emptied out behind her on the road. She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident. When she reached her house, she set the jar down and found it empty."

At first glance, it is not very clear - is it a positive or negative example?

"The kingdom (of the Father) is like a certain woman" - this is most likely a positive comparison. But **"She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident."** (In another translation it says that the woman did not notice the trouble) - Apparently, something not very good is happening to the woman; it is more like a negative.

Let's try to figure out what practical situation corresponds to what is happening in this verse.

The first thing that comes to mind is the situation when a person becomes a Christian. In the beginning he is very passionate and tries with all his heart to devote himself to God. However, as a rule, a little time passes, and the person cools down, everything turns into a routine, and subsequently interest disappears.

Such things happen not only in the field of religion, but also in the family. Meeting each other, people create a family in which there is passion, love and the desire to be with each other always. After a while, the initial passion and love disappear. Why does this happen? A clue to the answer to this question lies in this verse.

"The handle of the jar broke and the meal emptied out behind her on the road." (Most likely, it spilled out.) **"She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident."** The key to the problem is a lack of knowledge and a lack of understanding of the fact that the vessel has ceased to be whole.

One of the key elements that help us keep love, whether in our faith or in the family, is

wholeness. The desire for wholeness, I believe, is one of the most important qualities of a thinking person.

If a person believes, he must try to be whole and sufficiently consistent in his actions; try to notice and patch up all the "holes" (misconceptions, ignorance, unresolved issues, etc.) in his doctrine and worldview. If closing the "hole" proves impossible, then one needs to dig deeper to fully understand everything and solve the problem.

In religion there is such a thing as dogma. It is these dogmas that are universally used to close all the "holes", saying this is the right way to believe - and the "hole" is considered closed.

Without personal research, without the desire to understand why God said so, without understanding the principles of the Bible, without a beautiful and harmonious picture in one's world view, a person ceases to think, and after a while loses interest in everything.

The desire for wholeness must encourage a person to move forward, rather than put on "rose-colored glasses" and think that everything is fine.

Here we read about the cruelty and genocide in the books of the Old Testament. What do we say to ourselves? Do we say, we must believe; the Bible is infallible. Or do we say, it is worth trying to understand this? At one time such questions prompted us to search. The contradictions between science and literal reading of the Bible – is a hole in a jar which we cannot accept. That is why in the search for wholeness one seeks an answer. A lively interest in God and self-development makes life really interesting.

All this applies equally to the family. If we are satisfied with having holes our relationship, then, most likely, the flour will be sip out, and the relationship will become empty, as the jar in this parable.

One of our family's key principles is not to accept "holes" in our relationship. That is, not to have unresolved issues and unhealed wounds. Only then will family life not be painful and burdensome. The jar with the flour will not become empty.

"She did not realize it; she had noticed no accident." Problems with wholeness in Christianity and in the family arose due to the fact that became more important for people to "just believe" than to know and understand.

There are several approaches to learning and understanding something. The first is to act in accordance with certain rules, dogmas and axioms. All that is not included in this framework is then declared dissent, heresy and harmful teachings.

The second is the search for a more beautiful and closed system. On this path, sometimes you need to sacrifice some rules that previously seemed accurate and correct, in order to make the system more closed, beautiful, and as less controversial as possible. When we tell people about the allegorical approach to understanding the Bible, we are often told - if there are no clear axioms, you can come up with anything; these are just your fantasies. But the essence of the allegorical approach is not to fantasize a lot, but to seek a more beautiful and self-consistent explanation instead of believing in absurd statements.

Exploring the Bible and the Gospel of Thomas, we largely had to sacrifice the idea that the

Bible is literally accurate from the physical, astronomical and historical perspectives. We came to the conclusion that the Bible is a book inspired by God, and given to inspire us. The Bible is a task book, not a book of ready-made recipes. We must learn to separate the wheat from the chaff, even when just reading the Bible. The quest for wholeness prompts a deeper exploration of both the Bible and our relationship with others.

Kill a Powerful Man

98. Jesus said: "The kingdom of the father is like a certain man who wanted to kill a powerful man. In his own house he drew his sword and stuck it into the wall in order to find out whether his hand could carry through. Then he slew the powerful man."

This verse looks torn out of the context not only from the perspective of the Gospel of Thomas, but of Christian doctrine in general. This saying sounds very provocative, because Christ taught us to love our enemies, and not to kill them, and, of course, Jesus never called for resolving issues by violence.

Therefore, this verse can either be considered a mistake or accident, or we need to think of a deeper meaning. The more provocative a saying sounds, the more interesting and deeper it is.

Let's consider this verse logically. From the perspective of Christian doctrine it is impermissible to think that Jesus is calling here for one to take up a sword and kill an enemy. Hence, the issue here is certainly not about people who are one's enemies.

The question arises, who then is this **"powerful man"**?

We associate the house with a person. That is, the house is the inner world of man.

What kind of person do we usually call powerful? Predominantly, when we talk of a powerful person, we usually have in mind a person with pumped-up muscles or someone who can lift a lot of weight. A powerful person is not only one who is physically strong, but one that knows how to be morally restrained, has willpower, self-control and can resist temptation.

Who wants to kill a powerful man? One of these people is me. I know one thing: I do not want to be a powerful person. I do not want to be a person who needs to constantly restrain his emotions; who constantly, through the strength of will, tells himself "no", "forbidden". I want to kill a powerful person in order to become a person who acts out of love and not one that just refrains from bad actions and behavior because they are "forbidden". This is natural self-control based on love, not ban. I want to do or not do a thing, not because it is "permitted" or "forbidden", but because I love it or do not like it. This is the ability to consciously realize your desires, and not just curb emotions that seek to burst free.

For greater clarity, I will give an example. Most of us have children. We all know how difficult it is sometimes with them. We get emotional when they do not obey; we can flare up; scream. A powerful person in this case will try to contain their emotions and not scream. That's what I want to kill in myself, so that instead of containing anger and negative emotions, I could act sensibly and judiciously, because this is acting this way is more effective.

A person who has ceased to be powerful in the sense that we have described, becomes a

loving and morally tall person.

Saint Augustine once said: "Love - and do what you will." For me this is a much greater ideal than just being a powerful person who has the willpower to restrain his desires.

"Stuck it into the wall." Why stick a sword into the wall? What is a wall?

Walls are kind of internal partitions in a person that symbolize his willpower and inner principles.

The walls in a house play an important role - they support the roof and create a certain comfort. But if there is no door in the house or it is not in the right place, or is in general superfluous, it is necessary to make alterations, by installing a new door or walling up the superfluous one, even if it contradicts public principles or some kind of moral standards.

"... whether his hand could carry through." Rejection of the principle of "restraint" does not mean permissiveness or arbitrariness. This is the way to more effectively achieve one's goal. Replacing the principle of restraint by the principle of love, we must check whether our hand is strong, whether we succeeded in achieving the goal, and not to roll into chaos.

While discussing a verse from the 2nd chapter of Genesis, we said that all the trees that were planted in paradise were good, whether it's the tree of life or the tree of the knowledge of good and evil. Trees most likely symbolize a person's desires. All the desires of man are good, if they are used with benefit and at the right time.

Spiritual development in man should not be directed at exhausting oneself with the struggle with one's desires, but at finding the right application for them and directing them in the right direction. Our desires should not subjugate us, but serve us. By directing our desires to positive and creative work, we make ourselves and the people around us happy. Sometimes it is necessary to put up a door where it is not normally done, if it is really convenient, done on time, and benefits.

If the Kingdom of God is built on the premise that man must constantly restrain his desires and emotions, then it cannot be strong, solid and stable. A person must change his value system so that he finds a place for each desire, so that his internal mechanism works smoothly and clearly.

In my life there is an example of the right direction and application of desires. It's hard to talk about personal moments in detail, but one of my strongest temptations in my youth was everything related to sexual desires. However, in adulthood, I realized that I should not struggle with this, but just needed to direct it in the right direction, so that everything was fine, creative and fun. I have learned to use these desires for good and happiness. Everyone must walk this path alone. Everyone must personally cut a door in the wall exactly in the place where he needs it, and not where he was told to do it.

Those who do the will of the Father are my brothers and mother

99. The disciples said to him: "Your brothers and your mother are standing outside." He said to them, "Those here who do the will of my father are my brothers and my mother. It

is they who will enter the kingdom of my father."

It is not necessary to suspect Jesus here of a disrespectful attitude towards his brothers and mother. The Bible speaks about respect and love for parents and others: "Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever." (1 Timothy 5: 8).

Therefore, let us try to consider the allegorical interpretation of this verse. The house is the inner world of man (verse 98). Hence, **"those here"** are those who are in the house, that is, in the mind of a person.

Who are "your brothers and your mother"?

Around 249 AD, Cyprian of Carthage uttered a catchphrase: "No one can have God as Father who does not have the Church as mother." This was said in reproach to heretics and dissenters in the church, since in those days there was a particularly fierce struggle for people to think in the same way and have common authorities and a single doctrine.

Yes, Jesus lived long before Cyprian of Carthage, but the problems raised in this verse (what unites people, how to make people think alike) have always existed.

"Your brothers and your mother are standing outside." It is very likely that **"mother"** is the church, and **"brothers"** is the society around us. It is worth paying attention to the fact that both the **"mother"** and the **"brothers"** are like outside.

At all times the church evoked a certain respect and a certain fear. Majestic, huge buildings were supposed to evoke a feeling of reverence among the people who were entering them. Luxury clothes symbolized the power of God; the wealth of the Kingdom of God. However, these are all external things (standing outside) that do not reach the heart of a person. They inspire fear and reverence, but no more.

It will not be possible to make people become like-minded people, even if they are put under the same roof and told them the same thing. People can only become truly like-minded and committed to ideas when they themselves come to those ideas; when they feel them and pass them through their heart and soul; when they themselves nurture and truly love those ideas. Real unity must come from within man.

"Those here who do the will of my father are my brothers and my mother." The true church is not any organization or the beauty of church buildings. The true church is the beauty of human hearts; these are people in whom God lives, no matter how correct or incorrect the doctrines they profess are. Doctrines are no more than "current working hypotheses".

"It is they who will enter the kingdom of my father." Real harmony, real Kingdom of God cannot be imposed from above or from outside. You cannot force a person to enter the Kingdom of God; you cannot force a person to be happy. It must not only be born in him, it must also develop and grow in him.

As we believe, the main method of achieving unanimity in people is not to force a person to do something, not to make him dependent on you, not to lead him by chains, not to push him in the back, but to inculcate desire, to ignite him, give him freedom of choice and help him to love

what you yourself love.

Give Caesar Caesar's, God God's, me mine

100. They showed Jesus a gold coin and said to him, "Caesar's men demand taxes from us." He said to them, "Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine.""

In the Gospels of Mark, Matthew and Luke there is a very similar story, where the Pharisees came to Jesus and began to tempt him, asking him if it was necessary to pay taxes to Caesar. In those days, a question of that nature was a temptation, because paying taxes to the Roman Empire looked like a betrayal of one's own people, and the call not to pay taxes was a revolt.

Jesus' answer was very wise, and it confounded those who asked this question with a sly purpose. He said to them: "Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar's, give God what belongs to God."

A similar kind of answer is also found in the Gospel of Thomas: 100 **"Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar, give God what belongs to God, and give me what is mine."** In this verse this answer sounds more extended, since, in addition to "Caesar – Caesar and God - God", there is a third category – **"give me what is mine."**

This verse can be divided into three categories. Let's try to figure out what these categories mean for each of us. Let's start with the end of the saying.

1. Category 3: "Give me what is mine."

Jesus, as we know, is the son of God, but that does not mean that we should constantly repeat this and glorify Him. He wants us in our inner world, and by our qualities, to become God's sons. Most likely, the phrase **"Give me what is mine"** means - become like me (Jesus). That is, personal growth, beautiful internal qualities of a person, his ability to act nobly, wisely, in accordance with the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

2. Category 2: "Give God what belongs to God" (realization of creative potential)

God is the creator of Heaven and Earth, the creator and ruler of the universe. Being himself a creator, God created us also as creative personalities. Therefore, first of all, **"give God what belongs to God"** means: be creative people, develop, invent and create.

Traditionally it is accepted that first of all, our worship belongs to God, therefore in all world religions people, kneeling, bow to God. However, Jesus once said: "Believe me, a time is coming when you will worship the Father neither on this mountain nor in Jerusalem....Yet a time is coming and has now come when the true worshipers will worship the Father in the Spirit and in truth, for they are the kind of worshipers the Father seeks. God is spirit, and his worshipers must worship in the Spirit and in truth." (John 4:21, 23-24).

Therefore, if we say that worship belongs to God, we mean: "Give to God what He expects of us; realize the potential is in us." True worship has nothing to do with bows.

Since personal growth and likeness according to internal qualities are already classified in the third category, it means that the creative abilities and aspirations of a person should be included

in the second category.

3. Category 1: **"Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar"** (actions of people because of a sense of duty)

The word "Caesar" refers to the concept of "a person's duty to society, to the state, and to other people".

For example, attending church on Sundays. If a person does this willingly, sincerely - this action relates to the third category (**"Give me what is mine"**). If going to church is a habit or a duty it belongs to the 1st category (**"Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar"**). That is, a person simply pays back a debt to those around him or simply pays a debt for the sake of public opinion.

At first glance, it is quite obvious that a person reading the Bible **"gives to God what belongs to God."** It belongs to God in the event that a person reads the Bible, sincerely wanting to learn new things. But if this is done out of a sense of duty, out of necessity, on account of protocol, or because he is a Christian, then it already belongs to Caesar - **"Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar"**.

Is that which belongs to Caesar, necessarily bad and unneeded? No, it is not. This is also very important and integral part of human life, since a person must necessarily have a sense of responsibility and a sense of duty.

Not everything that we do in life is the realization of our personal creativity or personal growth (although we would like it to be so). Some things have to be done, because it is our duty to those around us and to our family.

For example, it is the duty of a programmer to correct mistakes in his program; a student's duty is to go to school and comprehend the sciences, even if some of them do not seem particularly interesting; it is the duty of parents is to patiently educate their children (even when they do not listen and get on their nerves).

It is important to be able to combine business with pleasure. It is important for there to be a balance between a sense of duty, the realization of one's potential and personal growth.

The same things, for example, study, education of children, can be both a manifestation of one's creativity, and the opportunity for personal growth. The main thing is that it does not become routine and duty.

Reading this verse, it is necessary to understand what exactly in our life belongs to each of the categories; to make sure that the second and third categories were the most populated; the first, as it is, is never empty as a rule. Being driven only by a sense of duty is very difficult.

Without all these three categories in the life of man, there will be no Kingdom of God.

Let's try on simple life examples to learn to determine the category of people's actions.

The first situation: A man sits and draws pictures. He paints them for himself, simply because he finds this interesting and it brings him satisfaction. To which category do his actions relate? Correct, to the second, as this is the realization of creative potential (**"Give to God what belongs to God"**).

The second situation: To what category can we assign payment of taxes? It seems only to the

first - the actions of people based on a sense of duty ("**Give Caesar what belongs to Caesar**"). But there are times when this can also apply to the third category - personal growth ("**Give me what is mine**").

An example of when the payment of taxes belongs to the third category is a case in my life. I, as a programmer and one who owns a company, once decided that I will always use only licensed software and honestly pay taxes. I came to such a decision not because I was afraid of any penalties or punishments, but because I wanted to, and must, act conscientiously and out of a sense of solidarity with other developers. This kind of payment of taxes relates to personal growth, and not to duties. This, however, does not mean fanatically following all laws of the state. If the tax is more than adequate, then I will optimize and save as much as possible on the taxes; after all, I'm the one who works and not the state for me.

So, using these sayings, we will be able to much better understand our life, to understand exactly what it lacks and what, perhaps, should be corrected.

Hating and loving father and mother

101. Whoever does not hate his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. And whoever does not love his father and his mother as I do cannot become a disciple to me. For my mother [...], but my true mother gave me life.

Basically, as always in the Gospel of Thomas, the literal meaning of this saying sounds utterly monstrous and unacceptable.

Of course, everyone understands, and it has been said many times that neither the Bible nor Thomas teaches us to hate our relatives, especially our father and mother.

Father and mother are mentioned twice in this verse, and they need to be loved and hated at the same time. There are many such instances in the Bible.

Such sayings make wary. It becomes clear that one needs to either look for a deeper meaning, or reject everything and read no further.

Reading the Bible and taking it literally, we run into quite a few wild places. For example, orders for the destruction of entire nations. The Jews had to destroy everyone (including small children and their mothers), on the land to which they were to move.

No sensible person can accept that such an order could come from God, for we call God just and kind. But when people read it in the Bible, they believe that God could have said it and therefore they come up with excuses as to why God ordered it. For example, that those people were very, very bad (evil and spoiled, had cruel customs, etc.), so they all had to be destroyed. Similar methods (creating an enemy image) were used by criminal regimes in order to force their soldiers to destroy people.

Hitler's Germany acted in a similar against the Jews. They took their human form from them, trying to picture them as worse than wild beasts, and make it is much easier for soldiers to carry out the cruel orders to kill. Watch the film "God on Trial" - very impressive.

Believers condemn the fascists, and applies the same categories to God, while glorifying Him

and calling him good.

It is obvious that people who seriously think about such issues cannot tolerate this, therefore both Christianity and the Bible are rightly criticized by atheists (and not only).

Reading criticism against Christianity, I largely agree with it. I do not agree only with the final conclusion that there is no God, because I have experienced so much in my life that I cannot explain except by the existence of God.

"Whoever does not hate his father and his mother ..." A little earlier we said that the mother is the church, and the father is God. However, the first part of the saying isn't talking about the church or God in the true sense of these words. It is rather an everyday, superficial view of the church and God.

It's no secret that even those who sincerely believe attribute qualities to God, which for a person would be absolutely disgusting. For example, the love of being bowed to, of being told flattering and laudatory words, extreme degree of jealousy, lust for power, captiousness, suspiciousness and vindictiveness on account of even the slightest mistakes (except in bulk and for your own people who believe). God, to put it simply, was made to look like North Korean dictators. Hardly anyone would want to associate with a person who possesses such qualities, but that doesn't stop believers from getting along with such a God.

That is why verse 101 says: **"Whoever does not hate his father and his mother as I do cannot**

become a disciple to me."

Using just common sense, it is impossible not to hate that image of God, which is presented to people. If one does not see these problems in the perception of God, it becomes impossible to move on and learn something deeper.

At first glance, it may seem that Jesus did not contradict the words of the Old Testament in anything. He referred to the Old Testament prophets, and quoted passages from the Scriptures. It seems, he, thus, reinforced the authority of the Old Testament. However, it is impossible not to pay attention to the fact that Jesus strongly criticized the understanding of Scripture by the scribes and Pharisees.

The interpretations of the Old Testament, which Jesus himself gave, were sometimes quite unexpected and looked like a completely different view.

He told the Pharisees: "Thus you nullify the word of God by your tradition." (Mark 7:13). Does this concern only the Pharisees of that time, or does it also apply to the Pharisees of our time?

Jesus quite sternly told the Pharisees: "Your father is the devil." I believe, he called the devil that image of God, which the Pharisees tried to convey to the common people. The same happens in our time.

In the light of this, the words of Jesus from the classical Gospels about hating one's relatives become clear. Usually there are attempts to weaken these words, replacing the concept of "hatred" with the notion of "loving less than you love God," because the direct sense of the word

is too jarring to the ears. But the word "hatred" in Luke 14:26 ("If anyone comes to me and does not hate father and mother, wife and children, brothers and sisters—yes, even their own life—such a person cannot be my disciple") is translated as "hate, disdain, loathe." As we see from the Gospel of Thomas - it is not necessary to weaken the meaning of these words; everything becomes clear. We discussed the concepts of "father and mother", and it is not hard to guess the role of the other characters.

Who are the father and mother that Jesus called to be loved? We know and talked about the fact that both the father (God) and the mother (the church) are in man. It is these fathers and mothers that we explore as we study the Gospel of Thomas.

It is said in the preface that the Gospel of Thomas offers us some kind of intuitive value system, an intuitive moral code that does not need to be followed by following one rule after another; it is rather a lifestyle with which we can fall in love. When we talk about the church or God as a mother or father, we understand this as that church and that God with which it is difficult not to fall in love.

The church is actually people that are close in spirit, and God is that God who motivates us to develop, to behave more nobly, and to strive for something better and higher. It is such a God and such a church that make us truly alive.

You can simply exist, or you can truly live, opening up new, beautiful and interesting, pages.

A dog that does not eat and does not let oxen eat

102. Jesus said: "Woe to the Pharisees, for they are like a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen, for neither does he eat nor does he let the oxen eat."

The saying "a dog sleeping in the manger of the oxen" existed before Jesus. For example, the ancient Greeks had a saying: "A dog sleeping in a bullpen".

Modern people also use such sayings, for example, "a dog in the manger" or "I myself do not, nor will I allow another to."

A similar idea is also found in Luke 11:52: "Woe to you experts in the law, because you have taken away the key to knowledge. You yourselves have not entered, and you have hindered those who were entering."

Let's try to figure out how the Pharisees are similar to dogs, what kind of manger this is, and what oxen are being talked about.

The main function of a dog is to guard a person's premises. From what or from whom in this case should the Pharisees guard and how are they similar to dogs? The Pharisees guard people from delusions, from pernicious passions, from the path to self-destruction, and from bad habits and so on.

The Pharisees are religious leaders who have taken upon themselves the duty and responsibility to tell people about God, to define the rules of morality, and to tell people what is good and what is bad.

In short, Pharisaism can be characterized as follows: do not think and do not want strive for

more, and demand the same of others. But this is only in theory, in practice things turn out a little differently.

In the Gospel of Thomas, the opposite idea is evident, namely: one must think, one must, instead of suppressing desires, direct them in the right direction, so that these desires can bring benefits.

Suppressing human desires is like closing all openings in a boiling cauldron. Sooner or later the pressure will rise, and an explosion will occur. The suppressed desires often break out in the form of aggression, and dissatisfaction, which ultimately leads to conflicts, wars and human victims.

"A dog sleeping in the manger of oxen". Not allowing the oxen to the trough, the dog, as it were, tells them that abstinence from food and moderation in food are useful, that you oxen, will have less strength due to malnutrition, and thus will sin less.

But oxen need to work. They are to some extent the force that propels progress; that performs the work. And for this they need food, no matter what.

The position of the Pharisees, suppressing the desires of man, suppresses his thought activity, his progress, which in this case symbolizes the oxen.

Condemning the Pharisees, we do not reflect on the fact that this parable is directly related to us. Deciding for others what they can and cannot do, we become those same Pharisees.

We should learn to see through the eyes of others, and not just express our wishes and requirements. We must learn to see what the other person wants, to learn to understand it the same way we understand ourselves. Rather than prohibit, we need to learn to channel the desires and energy of people in the right direction.

I myself tried to solve problems by prohibitions, forbidding my older son from playing computer games, since he did not control himself in this activity. After a while, I saw that such prohibitions only lead to conflicts between us, and to lies on his part, since he still played, but secretly and by deceit.

I have learned from my own experience that prohibitions are a wrong method. I realized that instead of prohibitions I needed to be able to interest him in using the computer for productive purposes; I needed to show him that creating something on the computer (including games) is no less interesting and brings no less satisfaction than just playing games. I began to learn the art of motivation.

The study of the Gospel of Thomas strongly influenced the perception of those around us and the perception of our own children. It became clear that simply requiring everyone to do something was a wrong approach. Instead of prohibitions and demands, a well-grounded motivation is needed. Yes, it requires much more creative efforts, patience and perseverance, but in return you get less unnecessary emotions, and more joy and pleasure.

People brought up in the Christian tradition are used to banning everything that they do not like, or that seems wrong. First of all, this concerns the upbringing of children.

Our close friends have an adult son, whom they try to educate according to the principle: Do

not to forbid, but interest; help and in some cases side with him, even if you do not quite agree with him.

Talking with them on the issue of raising children, I realized that they, like all Christians, also made mistakes in the upbringing of their son. They, like many others, brought him up according to the principle of prohibitions and admonitions. After a while, they noticed that their son began to deceive them in order to do what he wanted, he withdrew into himself and stopped telling them everything that was happening with him, realizing that he would not get any support from them anyway.

Analyzing the situation, our friends realized that nothing can be achieved by prohibitions, that that was the wrong approach. You need motivation; you need to learn to come to a "common denominator"; to learn to hear your child and see everything through his eyes. Learning to do this, the family found peace. The son ceased deceiving, began consulting his parents on various issues, and even began giving useful advice to his parents on how to deal with this or that situation. The family found peace and joy in their relationship.

The Pharisees are reproached for hypocrisy. Forbidding other people by suppressing their desires, they are not able to cope with their own desires. Naturally, this gives rise to hypocrisy.

There are a lot of prohibitions in the sexual sphere. But despite all the prohibitions and commandments that Christianity offers for restrictions in this area, the problem is still impossible to solve because of the difference between what the literal reading of the Bible requires and what man wants.

There is a certainty that in this sphere all desires are given to man for a reason. What is important is to find the correct and constructive application for each of these desires.

Many married couples are faced with fears and prohibitions. For a happy, friendly and beautiful family life you only need to do one thing - replace fears and prohibitions with openness and honesty. You need to learn how to talk to each other about your desires, openly and without fear.

This verse about the dog and oxen is of fundamental importance. We need to decide which path we want to take: either the path of prohibitions, with the need to introduce ever more stringent controls, or the path of fraternal relations, motivation, and trust.

The Bible says that Jesus instructed his disciples to be brothers to each other, and not masters over each other. The Gospel of Thomas speaks about this even more clearly.

The only way to stop being a dog sitting in a bullpen is to replace prohibitions with honesty, motivation – and creativity, so that a person grows and develops, and does not go down the path of self-destruction.

Where the brigands will enter

103. Jesus said, "Fortunate is the man who knows where the brigands will enter, so that he may get up, muster his domain, and arm himself before they invade."

In the previous verse we considered two fundamentally different approaches to life.

The first approach is based on restrictions to protect a person from various dangers. But, as it turns out, for this, you simply need to stop desiring, thinking and developing.

The second approach is based on freedom and motivation instead of prohibition; on finding a creative approach to a person. But do not think that all problems will be solved automatically, and that life will be perfect. Certainly, there is always some danger that freedom will be used for self-destruction.

"Fortunate is the man who knows where the brigands will enter." Yes, it would be nice if a person knew when and who will come to rob him.

Of course, in this verse we are not talking about those brigands who are robbing people in a literal sense. Here we are talking about those brigands who settle in human hearts and steal happiness and joy from people.

Freedom does not mean complete anarchy, complete chaos and lack of any self-control. Freedom (the second approach) is an opportunity to achieve what a person truly wants. While in the first approach (restrictions and prohibitions), a person is given the opportunity to achieve only what is wanted from him.

On the way to self-realization, a person faces difficulties (brigands). Who are these brigands? Brigands represent laziness, infatuation with bad habits, lack of restraint, and the desire for children to choose the same specialty as their parents. Brigands are everything that prevents a person from confidently and quickly moving towards achieving his goal.

For example, young people set a goal to become excellent specialists in some field. For this, they move towards their goal; for example, they enroll to study.

It can happen that they are met on the way by brigands: laziness, the desire to play (instead of studying), and so on. A brigand on the way to achieving a goal for young people can be, strangely enough, the desire to have their own, albeit small money. You ask, is it bad, is it a brigand? Often – it is exactly like that. By devoting a lot of time to earning money at a young age instead of acquiring knowledge, a person does not notice that he devotes very little time to his goal, thereby moving away from it further and further.

Having set a goal, a person must go towards it, having in advance thought out what brigands he might encounter on the way. He must be prepared to meet these brigands, and also to be able to escape them.

Real freedom (the second approach) requires some focus from a person - **"girding up your loins"**, whereas life in the first approach requires more discipline due to fear, and not on account of purposefulness. This is the difference between the first and second approaches.

The Gospel of Thomas does not call us to permissiveness. It encourages us to be focused in order to achieve a higher purpose, so that a person can realize himself, and not just realize the ambitions of those around him.

Objection to prayer and fasting

104. They said to Jesus "Come, let us pray today and let us fast." Jesus said, "What is

the sin that I have committed, or wherein have I been defeated? But when the bridegroom leaves the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray."

In the Gospel of Thomas, Jesus is very critical of fasting and prayer. Meanwhile, in the classical Gospels Jesus often fasted and prayed. What is the matter?

At present, prayer and fasting have a connotation of cult-religious activities. This is a form of worship of God, a kind of ritual that every self-respecting Christian must perform. Many people believe that the more you pray, the faster you will be heard. However, even in Matthew 6: 7 it says: "And when you pray, do not keep on babbling like pagans, for they think they will be heard because of their many words."

In fact, the essence of prayer is not in reciting memorized words. Repeating the same things every day, we are kind of sending unwanted letters (spam) to God that no one reads. The essence of prayer is the statement of a certain need. A prayer does not always need to begin with the word "Lord" and end with the word "Amen." A prayer can simply be the thoughts of a man spoken aloud or to himself, in which he does not resist God, in which he obeys the teaching of Jesus Christ (either explicitly or implicitly).

The Bible says, "Pray without ceasing." But if a person constantly prays, he cannot do any useful work. In the Bible, meanwhile, it is said, "He who does not work does not eat." Therefore, prayer is a certain way of thinking, in which man obeys God, in which the thoughts of a person flow in accordance with the spirit of the teachings of Jesus Christ.

Fasting and prayer were already considered by us in verse 14. There were expressed thoughts that fasting and prayer as religious, cultic actions in themselves are meaningless and harmful. The 14th verse also rejects prayer as a kind of religious cult action. Turning communication with God into a formal cult is as harmful as creating a personality cult around a person.

The problem is that the teaching of Jesus Christ instead of becoming a way of thinking, living and acting, became a cult of the person of Jesus Christ, and simply a religion; instead of transforming people's lives and helping them live in love for one other and for God.

"But when the bridegroom leaves the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray." It is necessary to resort to fasting when joy and peace leave us; when there is a need; when we see no way out of a given situation. But in no case because of the fact that it is so prescribed, or because everyone does it from year to year. Fasting does not consist in the refusal of food. It consists in the rejection of what oppresses or distracts a person from his goal. "Is not this the kind of fasting I have chosen: to loose the chains of injustice and untie the cords of the yoke, to set the oppressed free and break every yoke?" (Isaiah 58: 6).

Jesus came to free people from restrictions, and not to oppress them with a large and long list of restrictions and commandments. No wonder the Bible says: "Where the spirit of the Lord is, there is freedom." It is also said that Jesus came to release the oppressed

As an example of a fast, I want to relate a situation from my life. One day, my son's cheeky conversation with me brought me into rage and anger. Having succumbed to this state, I began to shake him and, one might say, growl; which led to even greater resistance from my son. I realized

that I was doing something wrong; I realized that this state deprives me of peace, tranquility and joy and does not lead to a solution to the problem, but, on the contrary, further aggravates everything. I stopped, brought myself, and my emotions and feelings in order, and said to my son: "Excuse me, please. I do not want to do you harm and I do not want to talk to you rudely. Let's sit down and figure out this situation; let's clear this up." Yes, it was not easy for me to say all that, but I made an effort and said it anyway. I apologized for my rudeness and lack of restraint, after which we easily solved the problem that had led to the conflict. I'm happy that I managed to curb my emotions. This was the fast, that is, the rejection of rudeness and that which deprived me of peace, **"When the bridegroom leaves the bridal chamber, then let them fast and pray."**

Summarizing, we can say that fasting and prayer are not acts of a religious nature, it is a vital necessity. Prayer is communication with God at the same level as we communicate with others around us. Fasting is a rejection of what deprives us of peace and repose. A rejection of that which prevents us from focusing on what we really want.

He who knows the father and the mother will be called the son of a harlot

105. Jesus said: "He who knows the father and the mother will be called the son of a harlot."

At first glance it is completely incomprehensible, is this praise or criticism; will they be called "the son of a harlot" fairly, or it is a baseless accusation and abuse.

However, in the light of the fact that the father is God and the mother is the church (considered in the Gospel of Thomas 101), it becomes perfectly clear that this is a person who has learned, that is, has become one, merged with God and the church, but not in the everyday sense of the word, but in the true meaning.

On the way to knowing the true God, we do not simply obey a long list of rules, but begin to understand the principles and logic on which these rules are based.

Jesus violated the rules of the Jewish religion (into which he was born). Recall how He and his disciples plucked the ears of corn on a Sabbath and did some work, which is strictly forbidden to the Jews. Jesus understood the principle behind these actions, so he easily violated the rule itself. There are many such examples.

A person who understands the basis of God's principles does not necessarily follow exactly all the rules, and therefore may run into hatred and contempt from people who blindly follow religious rules.

Jesus in his time was called the son of a harlot; it was claimed that his mother had sinned with a Roman legionary. Among the Jews such a myth was very popular.

Jesus was an example of a person who knew the father and mother and was called the son of a harlot.

We, by and large, can also expect such a fate, because willy-nilly we violate principles and traditions; because we understand the root, the basis of the teachings of Jesus Christ, and not just

follow rule after rule.

Once I showed several of my articles that were much more neutral than the Gospel of Thomas to a man from the Presbyterian Church. He read them, and was seized by terror. He said that this is a terrible heresy that is poisoning the minds of many.

Trying to understand the Bible, analyzing the Gospel of Thomas, we must be ready for criticism, but this should not in any way embarrass or stop us. Criticism is a quite logical phenomenon.

Often in the Christian world it is believed that it is a good thing when one is scolded, because it means that one is on the right track ("Blessed are those expelled for the truth"). But that is not necessarily true! You can be rebuked justly, for example, for stupidity. We must analyze ourselves, analyze the doctrine, and subject it to critical analysis, in order to understand whether or not we have merged with the real God and the real church or are mistaken.

At the heart of our worldview is not only a critical attitude to someone else's worldview. First of all, we must be critical of our own worldview and our ideas.

I want to understand why in this verse the one who knows the father (God) and the mother (the church) is called the son of a harlot.

A person, for whom the traditions and durability of the religion he professes are of preeminent importance, looks down on people like us. His mother (church) is real and had been tested over centuries and millennia. As for you, we don't even know who you are – your mother is a harlot.

Such a comparison strengthens the etymology of the word "fornication". Wandering is actually moving from one spiritual partner to another. The life of a man who seeks, who seeks to know something new, the truth, is like wandering from one worldview to another in search of the best.

From the point of view of a person who stands firmly on conservative positions, this kind of movement (the search for truth, the search for something new) is to some extent fornication.

However, there is a struggle between the two principles. Some people are revolutionaries who are trying to change things and come up with something new; others stand on conservative positions. Both have their own important goals. Revolutionaries must change something; move progress forward. Conservatives try to ensure that revolutionaries do not "screw things up" with their forward movement. Between the conservative and progressive views there is confrontation and some mutual dislike. Conservatives call people who are too eager for progress "children of fornication", while those who love progress call conservatives "backward". Of course, this is wrong. There must be respect and understanding of everyone's role.

About the tradition of the father, mother - there is a very interesting and very mysterious story in the Bible. In the Old Testament a man named Melchizedek is mentioned several times. He is first mentioned when Abraham, returning from war, gave tithes of everything he had acquired to a certain mysterious king Melchizedek, who is also called a priest. Melchizedek then blessed Abraham.

In the Bible, Abraham is considered the greatest of the patriarchs; and here we have some

mysterious Melchizedek, who is mentioned just a couple of times, blessing Abraham, and, as it were, standing above Abraham.

Also, Melchizedek is mentioned in the Psalter by David. He speaks of the coming Messiah, that he is a priest forever in the order of Melchizedek.

The same theme is also addressed in the Epistle to Hebrews 7: 4: "This Melchizedek was king of Salem and priest of God Most High. He met Abraham returning from the defeat of the kings and blessed him, and Abraham gave him a tenth of everything. First, the name Melchizedek means "king of righteousness"; then also, "king of Salem" means "king of peace." Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever. Just think how great he was: Even the patriarch Abraham gave him a tenth of the plunder! "

I want to draw attention to Hebrews 7: 3: "Without father or mother, without genealogy, without beginning of days or end of life, resembling the Son of God, he remains a priest forever." It says: "without a father or mother, without genealogy." In the Old Testament, as a rule, genealogy is very important; it is important who the father is and who the mother is. This Melchizedek is mentioned as someone without a father and without a mother. Jesus is also a priest after the order of Melchizedek.

This tells us that the point is not in genealogy, and not in the antiquity of the doctrine, but in the role that this or that matter plays in people's lives; whether it solves practical issues facing people; whether it helps build relationships with others, and with God; whether it creates harmony in life.

In this sense, Jesus is, on the one hand, an heir of the Jewish religion, and on the other, a priest according to the order of Melchizedek, without a father and without a mother, without genealogy. That is, Jesus to some extent combines in himself a certain conservatism with a revolutionary movement forward.

When you make the two one

106. Jesus said, " When you make the two one, you will become the sons of man, and when you say, 'Mountain, move away,' it will move away."

We have already analyzed a very similar verse: Jesus said, "If two make peace with each other in this one house, they will say to the mountain, 'Move Away,' and it will move away." - (Gospel of Thomas 48).

"If two make peace with each other in this one house" – the two in this house, I would remind you, are the husband and wife inside a person.

A person who finds peace, inner unity, can solve problems and difficulties in life (move mountains); can even solve problems related to his outlook, which are not so easy to move. A person becomes able to change, change his opinion, his outlook for the better and, thus, develop spiritually.

"When you make the two one" is not only about uniting the inner husband and wife, so that

the inner essence of a person becomes one, but about unity in a more general way.

In the Sermon on the Mount there is a similar verse: "Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Who are peacekeepers? These are people, who resolve conflicts; who help the warring parties find a common language. They make **"the two one"** - opposing, warring people - one whole, friends.

"They will be called children of God" - in the Sermon on the Mount, and **"you will become the sons of man"** - in the Gospel of Thomas. **"When you make the two one..."**

It does not take much effort to divide people, sow enmity and strife between them, find differences between them, emphasize differences, and condemn - it comes naturally. But uniting people is rather difficult. This requires a lot of effort and creativity; you need to deploy the entire arsenal of Christ's commandments; you need to learn to look through the eyes of other people; you need to understand people and seek what they have in common. And, in the end, you need to love those whom you seek to reconcile and unite.

The word **"make"** emphasizes the active approach and effort that must be applied to achieve wholeness and unity. Yes, it really is not easy, but it's worth it!

"You will become the sons of man" (Gospel of Thomas), "Son of God" (Sermon on the Mount).

Jesus in the Gospels quite often calls himself the son of man. It's strange, because according to Christianity, man is a very sinful, weak, and powerless creature. In many ways he is. If children are constantly called weak and foolish, then they will grow up that way. But if you seek and develop in them the beautiful, the likelihood that they will grow up as good people is great.

"You will become the sons of man." The word "man" is a beautiful and noble word. This is what we must see, first of all, in people.

Yes, it is very easy to criticize people in anything, but it is difficult to see the true motives of people, to ponder about them - it requires considerable efforts. The habit of thinking good about people helps in finding peace, agreement, reconciliation and unity.

The fact that Jesus called himself the **"Son of Man"** emphasizes the existence in man of a great potential for development and spiritual growth, in order to become truly beautiful.

Of course, to be like a man in appearance and to be truly a man by inner qualities, are different things. One needs to work hard on the last one.

Without becoming a man by inner qualities, it is impossible to experience the happiness and the joy that a person can really achieve.

Only one who has managed to become a real Man - a person who knows how to do opposite things wholeheartedly - succeeds in finding a way out of practically any situation, and has the ability to move the mountains (problems) he encounters in his path.

The hundredth sheep

107. Jesus said: "The kingdom is like a shepherd who had a hundred sheep. One of

them, the largest, went astray. He left the ninety-nine sheep and looked for that one until he found it. When he had gone to such trouble, he said to the sheep, 'I care for you more than the ninety-nine.'

A very similar parable is also found in Matthew 18:12-14: "What do you think? If a man owns a hundred sheep, and one of them wanders away, will he not leave the ninety-nine on the hills and go to look for the one that wandered off? And if he finds it, truly I tell you, he is happier about that one sheep than about the ninety-nine that did not wander off. In the same way your Father in heaven is not willing that any of these little ones should perish. "

The issue of finding one stray sheep in the beginning of the parable in the Gospel of Matthew is completely unintelligible, since it seems not very reasonable to risk 99 sheep for the sake of finding one.

In the Gospel of Thomas, it says a little differently: **"One of them, the largest went astray ... when he had gone to such trouble, he said to the sheep:" I care for you more than the ninety-nine. "**

Let's try to figure it out. Suppose that sheep are people. There are many questions. Why does Jesus think one person is more valuable than the other ninety-nine? Why can a lot of other people be neglected for the sake of one? In addition, the man's statement to the sheep: **"I care for you more than the ninety-nine"** - seems unfair. Why such an unjust attitude to everyone else? Does he not like them, or are those he already has not valuable, not important and not needed? Yes, it sounds very strange!

Therefore, I want to get to the bottom of this parable and find another, more beautiful and correct interpretation.

In any work, the correct and excellent-quality execution of the set task is welcomed from the beginning of the work (from 0%) to the end (up to 100%). But, as practice shows, 99% of the work done is not so difficult. The most difficult is the last percentage. It is the final stage (the last sheep) that is the most complex, laborious and the largest. It is this stage that is overcome with the greatest difficulty.

The most valuable quality in employees is the ability to get things fully done. Sometimes it seems that it is not so important if a task is left a little incomplete, after all, it is almost all done. But, as practice shows, it is this last percentage that determines just how high quality the product will be and how much it will be in demand. It is this last percentage that is the largest sheep that requires particularly careful work.

It is not necessary, however, to confuse the desire to bring work to the completion with perfectionism.

Perfectionism is the desire to achieve the best possible result. The belief that an imperfectly done work is unacceptable can be both a normal personality trait, and a mental deviation from accepted norms.

In our case, we are talking about the largest sheep, which is usually not noticed at first sight, but which in fact is very important. The ability to see that there is a lack of something

inconspicuous, but nevertheless of the utmost importance, is what this parable is about.

I can give an example of such a large sheep. A programmer wrote a program. He checked it - everything seemed right, everything worked. When the program got to the user, it turned out that it could not be used; it was either inconvenient, or something in it didn't work. It is this gap between what the programmer did, and whether a user can use it that is the largest sheep.

This principle applies to a wide range of life situations. The ability to get things fully done is a very important ability.

In fact, we came to the study of the Gospel of Thomas precisely because of the lack of this last and largest sheep. In the Bible, there were many inconsistencies, many strange places that people for some reason do not notice, despite the fact that they are glaring and conspicuous. In order to find this important and the largest sheep, you need to work hard; which is why she is the most beloved. The Gospel of Thomas is for us the largest sheep.

Here is an example of a large sheep from the area of family life. People live together; after a while they have misunderstandings, disagreements, and lack of clarity. You might think: "It's okay, it's just that we are all different people, that we have different views on life", and leave everything as it is, without having agreed, without having resolved things, and without having come to a common ground. What will this lead to later? It will lead to the appearance of even greater problems, disagreements and misunderstandings. People begin to live "as if on different planets." It is important to see the missing large sheep in time. It is invisible, but it is the most determinative and important in life. For peace, unity, joy and tranquility in life, it is important to find this last sheep as soon as possible and not let it go.

Here is one more example of a hundredth sheep, but from the field of science. Science is also developing thanks to people who, seeing small inconsistencies in the picture of the world, look for that largest sheep. And the seemingly minor inconsistencies lead to a deeper understanding of nature, and the discovery of new physical laws. At the end of the IX century, many physicists asserted that everything has been discovered, and that the laws of nature are all understood. Nevertheless, the people who were looking for this last sheep got to quantum mechanics, to nuclear physics, and to semiconductor electronics. In many ways, what we see around us is due to people who see inconsistencies and are looking for this largest sheep.

Summing up, I want to draw attention to the fact that the ability to see the imperceptible, which is the most important, leads to truly impressive results and reveals something truly great.

He will become us!

108. Jesus said: "He who will drink from my mouth will become like me. I myself shall become he, and the things that are hidden will be revealed to him."

This verse is one of the most important in the Gospel of Thomas. It largely sums up what was said earlier.

"He who will drink from my mouth" He who heard the words of Jesus and accepted them - "drank". He quenched his inner thirst with the words of Jesus; found answers to questions.

The phrase "**He who will drink from my mouth will become like me**" can be perceived in such a way that Jesus wants people to be completely similar to him, to be his copies. Yes, indeed, something similar is happening in very many totalitarian sects or organizations of a dictatorial type, where people are trying to make themselves look like the founder of the movement. I personally experienced it myself.

But this verse says, "**I myself shall become he**" - this is what underlines the essential difference between Jesus and the leader of the religious movement. Not only do we become like Jesus, but He also becomes like us. You can draw an analogy with parents who try to make sure that their children in the future will be doing the same things they are doing. For example, so the son of a butcher grew up a butcher; a shoemaker's son - a shoemaker. And so on. This is absolutely wrong. The task of parents is not to make children copies of themselves, but to see the talent, ability, zest and uniqueness of the child; to develop and cultivate those qualities and help the child become a complete person.

This verse is an example of a not one-sided conversation with God, not a monologue of God, in which He tells us what to do, and we unquestioningly carry it out, because that's His will. This verse is an example of understanding between God and man. A person chooses his own way, and God supports him on this path. The verse indicates that in many ways it is a person who determines what the Kingdom of God is.

There is a similar idea in the classical Gospels, but it is somewhat veiled: " Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven." (Matthew 18:18).

This verse was once used in the most perverted way. Church hierarchs decided that it was Peter and his spiritual heirs who had the right to determine the church's rules, how the church would live. It can be said that the right to decide what the Kingdom of God would be was usurped by several people; they then used this power recklessly and with a great deal of abuse.

However, in the Gospel of Thomas it is said that this power belongs to every person in whom God lives. Such a person participates in determining what the Kingdom of God is, and he, to some extent, influences its rules, laws and development.

In all religions, God is omnipotent, omniscient, infinitely wise and immutable. The question then arises, why create man? Yes, the life of God seems somewhat boring, because when you know everything, nothing changes, and nothing interesting happens.

People try to imagine God as powerful, strong, and great, as they can imagine. This is due to the fact that people are prone to servility and flattery.

This verse reveals a slightly different side of God. The words "**I myself shall become he**" mean that a person can to some extent convince God of something, and not just be a blind executor of rules and laws.

On the basis of religious differences, more strife arises than accord. On this basis, unfortunately, there is more hostility than peace and unity.

On the basis of those same laws, those same ideas, it is quite possible to build a much better

structure and, as it were, present it to God for consideration; which is what we are actually trying to do by exploring the Gospel of Thomas. We are trying to find such an understanding and internal laws for man, that will make him truly happy and free and, of course, living in unity with God.

I want to cite a rather interesting quotation from the Old Testament on this subject - Isaiah 41: 21-24: "Present your case," says the Lord. "Set forth your arguments," says Jacob's King. "Tell us, you idols, what is going to happen. Tell us what the former things were, so that we may consider them and know their final outcome. Or declare to us the things to come, tell us what the future holds, so we may know that you are gods. Do something, whether good or bad, so that we will be dismayed and filled with fear. But you are less than nothing and your works are utterly worthless; whoever chooses you is detestable."

In these verses, God offers to present to people their work, to prove and to do something truly amazing and magnificent. In this there is a resemblance to the Gospel of Thomas 108. In Isaiah 41, God actually reproaches the Israelites for what the Jewish religion has become.

"And the things that are hidden will be revealed to him." The question of the mystery will be considered a little deeper in verse 109, but briefly I want to say that by studying the Gospel of Thomas and applying an allegorical approach to Bible study, we discovered a lot of new things for ourselves, as it says in the 1st verse: **"Let him who seeks continue seeking until he finds. When he finds, he will become troubled. When he becomes troubled, he will be astonished, and he will rule over the All."** The gospel of Thomas truly shocked and surprised us. It changed our values and views on life, and helped us to overcome a number of practical problems in the upbringing of children, and in our relationships with people.

Treasure on the field

109. Jesus said: "The kingdom is like a man who had a hidden treasure in his field without knowing it. And after he died, he left it to his son. The son did not know (about the treasure). He inherited the field and sold it. And the one who bought it went plowing and found the treasure. He began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished."

This verse becomes clear if we assume that the "field" is the Bible; is religion. On the field is the earth, on the earth the plants grow, and deep under the earth treasures are hidden. In the same way, treasures are hidden in the Bible. A question may arise: why hide these treasures from people? Is it not more logical and better to write everything clearly? But there are reasons for that. Treasures are valuable, interesting and attractive to people for the very reason that they do not lie on the surface, and it takes a lot of time and effort to look for them. The more effort invested in finding the treasures, the more valuable they are. Everything a person obtains without much effort is usually not valued by him. That is, the treasures in the Bible are hidden in order for a person to seek, think, understand - only then will what is written in the Bible be of great value to him. If all the principles of the Bible had been absolutely clear and the true meaning

clear, then it would have been uninteresting for those who want to control people (because it would have made them free) and, most likely, it would not have survived to this day.

Religion was very often used to control people, and to induce them to obey through fear of hell and a "terrible" God.

But the Bible has survived to this day so that everyone who wants to can find its hidden treasures (truth).

Finding its treasures is not that difficult, one just has to pay attention to the peculiar "tags". Different discrepancies, strange suspicious places, and inconsistencies encourage people to seek answers to these riddles (to find these treasures). It is these searches that make people reflective, sincere and, in the end, free.

Who or what is the **"man and his son"** in this parable? This is a religious system that has subordinated both the Bible and the principles of the Kingdom of God; a system that has, to be more precise, used all this to control people.

Both for Orthodoxy and for Catholicism, the principle of continuity is very important. For example, Peter and the apostles passed on knowledge to their disciples (spiritual sons), and these disciples to theirs and so on. Through this chain, both the priesthood and Christian legends and traditions were transmitted (**"He (the son) inherited the field ..."**). The word **"sold"** in this verse means that the truth was used for enrichment; used to deceive and enslave people. In the end, the Christian ideology lost the power and the influence that it had a couple of centuries ago. Even 50 years ago, the influence of Christianity was much stronger.

In our time, although Christianity still quite popular and has a lot of churches, most people treat it more as a tradition - they observe fasting and religious holidays just in case, without giving them much significance. The other group of people takes Christianity very seriously, so seriously that it borders on fanaticism, where you have people believing without thinking.

"And the one who bought it" (He who bought the field). Who bought this field? Those who bought this field were not heirs; they do not have the principle of continuity; they are not disciples of the disciples of the disciples (etc.) of Jesus.

In order to get to a certain depth, to the truth that exists in the Bible and in Christianity, a person needs to pay a certain price - this is the time and the material resources spent on understanding everything (being a member of the evangelical community, I had to spend a very, very considerable amount of money, which, incidentally, I do not regret it at all).

As a result of research in this field, I discovered very many interesting things. I will not enumerate all the principles – for that this book was written - I will name just a few that have greatly influenced our life, way of thinking, and our happiness and joy:

- The parable of the lion that has to be consumed.
- The principle of making an eye in the place of eyes.
- The principle of a dog sleeping in the manger of oxen.
- The value of the third sky.

"He began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished." In general, the Bible

negatively refers to usury and to this kind of earnings. What then is the essence of the matter in this case? It does not say that he gave money at interest, and then demanded that people return money with interest. It only says here that he gave money at interest.

What does the word "**money**" mean in this case? This is the wealth (knowledge) that a person has acquired. What we ourselves acquired; that which is truly amazing and valuable; that which we do not need to be keep to ourselves, but must give (tell) others. We like to tell people, for example, about the principles of the Gospel of Thomas. We see that people are interested in this topic; it touches on something important and deep in the soul. People return these principles with interest to us, enriching and deepening our ideas, although we do not demand them from them.

It is possible to give such an example on the topic of "giving at interest". We hold meetings where we talk with people about the Gospel of Thomas, and about the Bible. People who come to our meetings enrich us. We tell them how we understand certain principles, and they, in turn, tell us their deeper meaning, helping to reveal to an even deeper level that which is embedded in the Bible and in the Gospel of Thomas. The principle, 'we give - people give us', works in parallel to this. Even without expecting that, we receive much more than we invest in, and give to, other people. That's the correct meaning of the phrase "**lend money at interest**".

"He began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished." I want to draw attention to **"to whomever he wished."** I remember my impressions of the first few years after I became a Christian.

I remember reading in the Bible words to the effect that if someone is ashamed of Jesus, Jesus, too, will be ashamed of him on the Day of Judgment. I understood this to mean that it was necessary to preach the word of God, since I am a Christian. But the problem was that, despite my love for Jesus Christ and his principles, I honestly did not want to do it. It was difficult for me to preach, because I saw a lot of inconsistencies, and had a lot of questions related to things I was to talk to people about. It was a big stumbling block for me.

Now everything is completely different. Talking with acquaintances and friends about all kinds of life issues, we do not notice how the conversation turns to the principles of the Gospel of Thomas and the Bible. It happens because these principles are excellent illustrations for different everyday situations. The conversations turn out very interesting, lively and unconstrained. I can assure you: to talk about these principles, to preach about them, to someone who really wants to listen, is much more pleasant and productive. Therefore it is very rightly said: **"He began to lend money at interest to whomever he wished."**

Whoever finds the world and becomes rich let him renounce the world

110. Jesus said: "Whoever finds the world and becomes rich let him renounce the world."

At first glance, it looks like a traditional call to give up everything that is worldly, to follow everything spiritual. But the meaning is somewhat different if we consider this verse in the context of verse 109, where we discussed the field and the treasures found in it.

The **"rich"** is more likely the one who gave money on interest (Gospel of Thomas 109), accordingly, the association suggests that **"world"** in 110th is the field from verse 109.

In the classical Gospels Jesus himself said that the field is the world: "The field is the world, and the good seed stands for the people of the kingdom. The weeds are the people of the evil one." (Matthew 13:38).

As we found in the 109th verse, the field in this case is a set of Christian traditions; a superficial interpretation of the Bible; it is the entire religious system, which, by and large, has a minimal relation to God (but still keeps in its depths hidden treasures). When we found these riches, hidden treasures, and principles that made us happy and free, religious Christian traditions and the superficial meaning of the Bible became unimportant for us. **"Whoever finds the world and becomes rich let him renounce the world."**

The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence

111. Jesus said: "The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence. And the one who lives from the living one will not see death." Does not Jesus say, "Whoever finds himself is superior to the world?"

Among Christians there is an opinion that when Heaven and Earth roll up like a scroll, life on earth will end and the end of the world will come; the universe will move into some other phase; Jesus will come and solve all human problems; do things differently, and finally, put things in order.

However, there is a completely different way of understanding these words. In the days, when the Gospel of Thomas and the Bible were written, books were in the form of scrolls. In order to read what was written, the scrolls had to be unfolded. After reading, you scrolled it back.

Hence came the idea of understanding that **"The heavens and the earth will be rolled up in your presence"** means that the celestial and earthly laws will be read and understood, meaning they will roll up before us.

"All the stars in the sky will be dissolved and the heavens rolled up like a scroll; all the starry host will fall like withered leaves from the vine, like shriveled figs from the fig tree." (Isaiah 34: 4). This verse from the Bible is very similar to the Gospel of Thomas 111. Here, too, we are talking about the heavens, which will be rolled up like a scroll.

At first glance, there is an impression that there will be some terrible cataclysm - something terrible on a cosmic scale. But in the light of the interpretation we have proposed, this verse becomes completely understandable and reveals a different meaning.

"The heavens rolled up like a scroll." God's laws and laws of nature will be understood, science and religion will finally unite.

Now science is proceeding from the part of earthly, physical and mathematical laws, while

religion is trying to understand God.

A time will come when humanity will come to understand and unite into one single whole, an understanding of nature and God. In this sense, personally, I am sure that the knowledge of God and science are moving towards each other - real science and real religion do not contradict each other.

"all the starry host will fall like withered leaves" It is believed that the "starry host" is a star, but personally I associate the "starry host" with religious and Christian fundamentalism, that is, with a literal interpretation of the texts of sacred books; this category of people is the most warlike.

People who demand from others the fulfillment of some Christian rules, restrictions, moral norms, do this in a very militant and tough way, while they themselves, unfortunately, cannot cope with their own passions and fulfill that which they require of others. This is the main problem of fundamentalism.

"Wither" - this in some way will rot; will burn. Jesus criticized the Pharisees, because they, while demanding that others bear unbearable burdens, did not themselves want to lift a finger to do it.

"And the one who lives from the living one will not see death." We believe that man is an eternal being, and life does not end with physical death. However, this is an area that we cannot accurately investigate or verify. Let's hope that there will come a time when this area will also be understood.

"Will not see death." This refers not to physical, but spiritual death. He, who has not lost interest in life and growth, will not see spiritual death.

In 1972, under the guidance of the American scientist, John Calhoun, a rather interesting experiment, "Universe-25", was conducted. It explains well, the meaning of the concept of "spiritual death".

In this experiment participated mice, for which the ideal, one might say, paradisiacal living conditions were created. In the room where they were, a comfortable temperature, ideal for their existence, was maintained. They were given enough food and water; there was cleanliness, and no natural enemies. They were isolated from the main world. In this enclosure, about 10,000 mice could live without problems and without experiencing discomfort.

Initially, the mice developed rapidly and, it seemed, the colony would grow, thrive and multiply, but the maximum number of mice never reached more than 2,200.

A few years later the colony completely died out, and the mouse paradise never became a paradise. The problem was that in the beginning there was a struggle, the mice struggled for survival, and for females. Over time, the mice ceased to be interested in anything. They lost interest in reproduction and in life, and in the end, on the 1780th day after the experiment began, the last inhabitant of the "mouse paradise" died. (More details about this experiment can be read in the article "Universe-25".)

This example illustrates the concept of "spiritual death" well. This example clearly shows that

the loss of interest leads to a boring, unbearable, difficult and meaningless life.

The practical meaning of this verse for us is this: we will not see death while we are striving to know Heaven and Earth, and trying to read this book. Life will truly be rich, and we will not lose interest in it.

"Does not Jesus say, "Whoever finds himself is superior to the world?" Finding yourself, your calling, and inner harmony is extremely important. This verse is very closely related to the 112th verse, exploring which we will examine in detail what this means.

Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul

112. Jesus said: "Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul; woe to the soul that depends on the flesh."

In this verse the words "woe" and "depends" are encountered twice. "Woe" is a consequence, and the cause of this woe is in the word "depends."

Let's start with the second part of the verse - "woe to that soul that depends on the flesh", it sounds more familiar. If a person is completely subordinated to his bodily desires, and the soul cannot resist this and is, as a consequence, completely dependent on the person's bodily desires, then life is very hard for such a person, because he is actually a slave to his flesh (his desires). This is called lust. The bodily desires of such a person stand much higher than his spiritual life and spiritual needs. The person becomes addicted, and this destroys his life.

Virtually all religions claim that it is bad when bodily desires dictate to the soul how to live. It is in this sense that the second part of this verse, "Woe to that soul that depends on the flesh," sounds quite familiar and usual. The first part of the verse, "Woe to the flesh that depends on the soul", sounds more interesting and nontrivial.

While we were discussing this verse at a meeting, one of the participants told an anecdote, which we mentioned while discussing the 7th verse, but here it serves as a good illustration, so we'll venture to repeat:

Several believers and several non-believers were walking along the street past a strip club.

The non-believers say: "Let's go, have fun."

The believers say: "Yes, we would love to, but we can't."

People have a desire, but the soul forbids them to carry it out. Thus, a person creates contradictions between his bodily and spiritual desires. Perhaps the problem lies in the word "depends".

For instance, a situation in which one person depends on another. What happens? One person dictates the conditions, and the dependent party must obey and fulfill everything that he is told, although he does not really want to do it.

Dependence is not the best type of relationship, both between people and within the individual. Instead of dependence, it is better to practice cooperation, mutual understanding and consensus.

If the desires of the body and soul do not coincide, one must try to find arguments to convince

the dissenting party and give oneself a chance and an opportunity to be convinced. Both sides should be equal.

The Bible says that hatred is the equivalent of murder. If a person hates someone, he is ready to destroy him, but he does not do it, because he simply does not have the opportunity, the means, the courage and the moral strength to do it. Hate, by and large, is murder without the ability to bring it to the logical end.

Likewise, desires differ little from actions. For example: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28). That is, a person looks, wants, but cannot because of lack of courage, physical ability and so on. The difference between desire and action is not that big.

In the event of contradictions in a person, one should not simply fight and forbid desires to arise – this won't work in any event. It is necessary to understand why desires arise and why they exist at all; it is necessary to try to and channel these desires in the right direction. No one desire arises in vain.

Personally, If I had been in the place of those believers from the anecdote, I would have told my wife about the desire that had arisen, and we would have gone together to see what exactly had attracted me so much there. Certainly, neither jealousy nor mistrust would have arisen, on account of the fact that we are honest with each other.

The ability to not restrain desires, to not struggle with oneself and with one's desires, but to direct them into constructive channels, makes life, including family life, very beautiful - there is no need to waste energy and time in constant struggles with oneself and one's desires.

But, you say, there are much more serious problems. For example, the desire to use drugs (drug addiction), alcohol dependence.

Watch the video - [j.mp/replacedrugs\[6\]](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j.mp/replacedrugs[6]), in English - [j.mp/replacedrugs2](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=j.mp/replacedrugs2).

I will not retell the details, but the point is that you can get rid of harmful links by forming healthy ones, that is, interacting with people you want to be with. Dependence is just a symptom of the destruction of links with a healthy (loving) environment. The same idea – one should direct his energy to something healthy and constructive.

It is very important that the body and soul find a common language, and not just fight with each other. It is important that they learn to talk with each other and find a compromise, and not just prohibit things and get angry with each other.

For me personally, the issue of sexuality was one of the most burning and important questions in my life. It's hard to speak about this in great detail and fully, but it was honesty and openness with my wife that helped me achieve harmony and wholeness in this matter. We understood each other, and found for all our desires a reasonable and good place in our life.

Yes, the transition from a relationship of dependence to a relationship of consensus and mutual understanding is not easy, but the result is beautiful.

If a wife dictates to her husband or a husband dictates to his wife what to do (dependency relations), then the half that is dictated to should pluck up courage, to some extent not be afraid

of a scandal, and say that this is wrong. This is the only way to move from a relationship of dependence to one of fraternity and consensus.

Of course, there is a risk in this transition, but in order to live happily, so that desires are satisfied, and the soul and body are in harmony, it is necessary to understand that slavery, both within a person and in relations between people, is an abnormality. In order to get out of this internal state and put your life in order and achieve inner unity, it is worth taking a chance.

Now I propose to recall the end of verse 111: "Whoever finds himself is superior to the world." Indeed, to overcome such internal contradictions, to find a consensus between the desires of the body and the desires of the soul, means to find oneself, to find a place for each desire, to understand why it arises and where it can be used.

"Is superior to the world" The world, as already discussed, stands for religion, religious outlooks and traditions. They lead, as we believe, to the separation of the body and soul of man, as if to say to the soul: "The body's desires are wrong, bad, fight, subdue the flesh." We believe that there is a level higher and better than this.

When will the kingdom come?

113. His disciples said to him: "When will the kingdom come?" <Jesus said,> "It will not come by waiting for it. It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is.' Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it."

The theme of the coming of the Kingdom of God is repeatedly touched upon in the Bible. For example, in Luke 17: 20-24: "Once, on being asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would come, Jesus replied, "The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed, nor will people say, 'Here it is,' or 'There it is,' because the kingdom of God is in your midst." Then he said to his disciples, "The time is coming when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. People will tell you, 'There he is!' or 'Here he is!' Do not go running off after them. For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky."

It is traditionally believed that this passage is speaking about a second coming of Christ that will happen sometime in the future. There will be some incredible, majestic phenomenon of planetary scale; Christ will come to earth, solve all problems, and punish the wicked. But if you read these poems thoughtfully, amazing details come up.

In the Gospel of Thomas it is said that the Kingdom of God will not come when it is expected ("**It will not come by waiting for it.**"), and in the Gospel of Luke it is said that it will not come so that everyone will notice it ("The coming of the kingdom of God is not something that can be observed"). Although at the same time it is said that the Kingdom of God will come brightly and noticeably ("For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other.")

Here, one can see, with an unaided eye, a clear contradiction between the inconspicuous

arrival of the Kingdom of God and a striking phenomenon - like a flash of lightning shining from one end of the sky to the other.

Yet it does happen that the lightning flashes from one end of the sky to the other unnoticed. This phenomenon is called "illumination". At the moment of illumination, lightning, sort of, flashes from one hemisphere to the other in the human brain.

The inner world of man can be called the sky, and the flash of lightning (the Gospel of Luke) is not a global cataclysm, but a person's moment of enlightenment.

I want to draw attention to several interesting moments in the Gospel of Thomas 113.

"It will not come by waiting for it." The kingdom of God does not come to those people who expect it, doing nothing. The Kingdom of God must be actively sought, striven for, thought about; in short, one must earnestly and actively search for it.

"It will not be a matter of saying 'here it is' or 'there it is.'" Often people think that the Kingdom of God is a happy life somewhere, other than where we are (vernacularly speaking). But no, the Kingdom of God is not in a specially designated place, it is where we are. If we live in it, if we have it in our hearts and minds, then we carry it with us. In other words, it is not in some church building, some beautiful and rich house that you have to go to specifically. It is in us.

"Rather, the kingdom of the father is spread out upon the earth, and men do not see it." The kingdom of God is not obvious. It does not lie on the surface. As a rule, people tend to react to advertising, which says "The Kingdom of God is here! Come to us and you will be happy! We will tell you what to do in order to reach the Kingdom of God." Maybe not with such pretentious words, but this kind of advertising is used by many religious organizations in order to entice as many people as possible.

We have a totally different goal and another idea. We strive to teach people to think, analyze, and seek. We want people to treat the Bible (and not only) creatively, thoughtfully, and non-traditionally. We want them to search for interesting, beautiful, and non-standard solutions.

In conclusion, I want to give a biblical example of illumination, like lightning in the sky.

The prodigal son left his father in search of a beautiful life and, in the end, ended up eating with pigs, after squandering his savings.

And then, while living such a miserable life, he had an epiphany. He realized that in his father's house, the servants had surplus to eat, while he has to die of hunger. The son returned to his father and, thus, found happiness and the Kingdom of God.

The kingdom of God is actually not far from people. Usually this is a simple decision, and is often obvious to everyone around, except for the person himself who is unable to see it, come to it and achieve happiness.

When a person gets to this idea and understands what he lacks, and what he needs to change, then this enlightenment will come; then the lightning will flash: "For the Son of Man in his day will be like the lightning, which flashes and lights up the sky from one end to the other."

The wife who became the husband

114. Simon Peter said to him: "Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life." Jesus said, "I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males. For every woman who will make herself male will enter the kingdom of heaven."

"Let Mary leave us, for women are not worthy of life" sounds extremely insulting and provocative. This, of course, is not about depriving women of life. Most likely, we are talking here about the fact that women are not worthy of eternal life. This is what Peter means by saying this phrase. But even in this case such statements are very offensive and hurtful.

I recall one verse: "In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed shameful acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their error." (Romans 1:27).

It is traditionally considered that this verse condemns homosexuality. However, in my opinion, it deals with a completely different issue. And this has a direct relevance on the current verse from the Gospel of Thomas.

"Men also abandoned natural relations with women." Firstly, since the beginning of Christianity, the attitude towards women was often negative. Women were seen as a source of temptation, and enticement. All church offices were held by men, and all major issues were decided by men. Although there are references in the Bible to women-prophets and women-deacons, nonetheless, historically, men monopolized power in the church.

What does it mean to "abandon natural relations with women"? In the Catholic Church there is a celibacy rite - everyone who wished to become a priest must forego the creation of a family and abstain from sexual relations. That is, they must give up, what one might call, necessary things. What has such a refusal led to? The choice between sex, creating a family and devotion to God led to big problems – to pedophilia, for instance, in the Catholic Church.

In pursuit of pseudo-spirituality, men, who, to some extent, usurped power in the church, abandoned natural relations with women. They refused to create a family, and to have sex. They thought it unspiritual, carnal, and unrelated to the Kingdom of God.

The natural use of the female is, of course, not only sex, but first and foremost, respect, love, and sincere, uncontrived admiration for a woman.

Disrespect, abuse, insult, humiliation and incomprehension of women can be called unnatural use of the female.

Natural and unnatural use of the female, in the first place, is related to the sphere of relations, and not to that of sex.

"Men committed shameful acts with other men." From the very beginning of the church, women occupied a lowly position; they were not taken into account. As the saying goes, "when it rains it pours." Such attitude towards women that existed until, perhaps, the twentieth century, can be called a disgrace.

Against the background of sexual prohibitions, countless scandals arose, but the problem of desire was unable to be solved by bans.

The Orthodox and Catholic churches claim their origin from the Apostles. The Catholic Church, in particular, emphasizes that they are the successors of Peter.

As a matter of fact, Peter, in this verse, expresses a disrespectful attitude towards women, which eventually became entrenched in church circles.

To a large extent, feminism arose as a pushback against such an unfair and wrong attitude towards women. A woman is no less a brother and spiritual person than a man. A woman, just like a man, can receive inspiration from God. Women are no less intelligent than men. You could even argue who is smarter. Therefore, such attitudes towards women are extremely unfair and wrong.

The verse from the Epistle to the Romans is only at first glance related solely to the issue of homosexuality; it in fact speaks of a disgusting historically developed attitude towards women.

In the Gospel of Thomas we see how Jesus redirects Peter's thought in another direction.

It has been said earlier that there exists a husband and wife unit in every man. This is what Jesus is talking about.

"I myself shall lead her in order to make her male, so that she too may become a living spirit resembling you males." Not every man can say that he has a living spirit. Therefore, I don't think the issue here is about making a woman look like a man by her internal and external qualities. It's more likely about the inner husband and wife that are in every person. More details about this can be found in the appendix to this book.

The inner husband and wife are not related to the sex or appearance of a person. Rather, we can say this: the husband is the spirit, the mind of a person, while the wife is the emotions, and the external manifestations and tenderness of a person.

The kingdom of God in man is established when the inner husband and wife become one; when they do not argue among themselves and do not separate; when the mind, spirit and emotions pursue one goal and move in one direction; when they understand and love each other, and their hearts beat as one.

It is about the husband and wife becoming one whole person - a Godly husband - we are talking about here, and not about Mary Magdalene having an operation and becoming a man. A person, in whom the emotions and the mind become one, can be happy; the Kingdom of God is in him.

This verse is the last in the Gospel of Thomas. It, as it were, sums up, telling us about the inner unity, respect, and mutual understanding between husband and wife in man.

Appendix A

About the Fall

The story of the Fall, described in the third chapter of Genesis, is, mildly speaking, rather odd and raises a lot of questions. First of all, the punishment does not seem to fit the crime. Firstly,

for some consumed fruit – billions of people were condemned to suffering and agonizing death. Secondly, it is strange to threaten with death, for his first mistake, an inexperienced person that we are teaching.

Reading the text and taking the words literally, some decide that God is evil and petty and are repulsed by the very idea of God. Others, on the other hand, decide that such an approach glorifies God, whose holiness is such that he cannot tolerate even the slightest act of disobedience. But this is quite curious since one who is wiser and holier does not get angry on account of mistakes made by others, but corrects and lifts them up to his own level.

I am often tempted to get angry at my children for their faults (which are many), but I do not see this as a sign of holiness. Rather, I see it as a need for repentance for having allowed myself to get angry at them in the first place. These were quite serious issues for me and a source of inner restlessness - is God really like that, I kept asking myself. But then, one day, I came across an interesting thought in a book called "Two Stories of Creation", by the Jewish mathematician, Pinchas Polonsky. Here is the relevant passage from section 7.4 of the book: "Did God originally plan to allow man to eat of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil?"

"When God, by placing Adam in the Garden of Eden, forbade him to eat the fruits of the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was this prohibition temporary or permanent? In other words, was the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil forbidden Adam as a matter of principle, or was it intended for him in the long term? The text of the Torah does not provide an unambiguous answer to this question. However, the Midrash clearly and specifically states that God had intended to introduce man to the Tree of Knowledge in the future. The Midrash says: "Adam ate of the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge three hours before the Sabbath." [Recall that this all happened on the Sixth Day of Creation, that is, on Friday. The words "three hours before the Sabbath" mean that there was still a quarter of a 12-hour Day before the advent of Sabbath]. Had man not violated the prohibition and taken the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge on his own, God would have, on the Sabbath, allowed Adam to perform a Sabbath Kiddush over the juice of the fruit of the Tree." [7]

Although the Bible itself does not have this fact, the oral traditions clearly provide a key to understanding God's plan. Some might object and say, this is not in accordance with the Bible. But why must the key to understanding the Bible be found only in the Bible? Is the key to a safe with jewels kept next to the door or inside the safe? Be that as it may, this idea changes many things. It turns out that God had wanted to give Adam the fruit of the Tree of Knowledge, but only when Adam was ready for it! Impatience is the root of many of mankind's sins.

The thief wants to live a beautiful life, without working, so he steals, not wanting to wait for the good fruits of honest labor. The murderer kills, because the other person stands between him and his goal; he does not want to get to his goal through the correct but longer route and seeks a shortcut.

Church hierarchs decided that it would be much faster to build the Church if everything was organized along the lines of the template laid down by "princes" - with a hierarchical

authoritarian structure, that tolerates no dissent - and not by heeding the advice of Jesus: "Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant." (Mark 10: 42-43).

The approach to understanding the Fall is a fundamental and extremely important point. The notion of God, punishing severely for the slightest missteps, gives rise to tyrants, because this then becomes a model for emulation. I do not like the approach to church rule; I do not see that it corresponds to the teachings of Jesus. In fact it is no more than your run-of-the-mill corporate management structure with a totalitarian bent. And clearly not according to Mark 10:42. Yes, the several millennia it has stood attests to the strength of the structure. But equally interesting is the fact that for some reason, systems with this approach become in the end, prisons with haughty overseers who mercilessly whip those that dare raise their heads, and not a society of those who passionately love one another according to the First Epistle to the Corinthians.

Why is understanding this story so important? If for the slightest disobedience, an infinitely severe punishment is meted out, then an image of God as a tyrant appears. But if it is a problem of the haste of man himself, then God helps man to rise higher, to become better. Quite a different motive.

In the first case – there is the fear of stumbling, and the fear of punishment. In the second case – you have the desire to grow, to achieve the best, without the constant fear of making a mistake and perishing. Fear is only the beginning of wisdom; but not more.

From the point of view of standard Christianity, the tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil was designed to test obedience. Can Adam blindly obey? The tree emphasizes distance in order for us to know our quiet place in the corner (which, incidentally, is ideal from the point of view of controlling the masses). But from our point of view, the tree emphasizes that this distance, although it exists, is temporary, and conditioned by our immaturity. God is more interested than us in seeing that we overcome it.

The essence of sin is that a person unfairly cuts corners, while on the path to his goal. But this cutting of corners is only an apparent path to success. Precisely in this was the deception of the serpent. To be more convincing, it threw in a portion of truth, after all, knowledge is good, and God really wants people to become his sons, that is, as Elohim (Gods); obviously, in terms of their qualities, strength and wisdom. I'm not talking here about people with mental problems who tell others that they are Jesus.

I have no idea whether the story in Genesis actually happened in real life. It is in fact too fantastic when taken literally, and the possibility that it is simply a parable cannot be discounted. But this does not detract from its significance. It shows the essence of sin well and is of practical importance for us, as it shows how to both recognize and avoid sin.

Why was the punishment so great? It isn't because God is cruel as in the song: "The priest had a dog, he loved her, she ate a piece of meat, and he killed her." Hasty actions usually come with

consequences that tend to snowball with time, as most people can attest from personal experience. Thus the consequences of a person's hasty actions serve as his punishment.

Both timely and an untimely choices have their consequences. The sin described in relation to Adam and Eve is what is happening now with us, and not just something that happened with someone sometime ago in the distant past. The story is about us. It is happening here and now. Why is everything in life out of place? Why do we not reach our goals? Is it not because of the fact that Adam and Eve, who are in each of us, act as described in the book of Genesis? We need to see, and recognize this and learn how to achieve peace and harmony in our lives; the peace and harmony, which Adam and Eve did not achieve.

Of course, some might ask, "Oh, if so, is the story about Jesus, His death and resurrection also just a parable?" If we are honest researchers, then we must say that the possibility that it too is a parable cannot be discounted. But the story of the resurrection does not have the same moral problems we encountered in the story of the Fall.

The story of death and resurrection actually emphasizes God's greatness. He is not like "princes" who know how to be served, but do not know how to serve. God showed that He can be both the first and the last. Therefore, there is no logical reason to cast aside the literal meaning, because both the literal and allegorical readings show the greatness of God. However, a solely literal examination of these events is clearly not enough to understand God.

Appendix B

About husband and wife.

What is special about this subject? Why is this topic interesting?

First, we will outline several problematic moments from the Bible that led us (and many others long before us) to unusual conclusions.

First, in the Epistle to Timothy (1 Timothy 2:15) there is a rather incomprehensible, at first glance, passage: "... will be saved through childbearing—if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety."

What about the unmarried and those unable to give birth; how do they get saved? It turns out that there is a way of salvation without Christ - just have a few children. How much should one give birth to, to be saved? This is very strange and contradicts the whole idea of salvation in the Bible and leads to unhealthy consequences - to competitions of "who will give birth to more children" in very conservative churches. However, this passage is sometimes seen as a kind of additional insurance (although this is not said aloud). If things do not work out, we can, at least, enter the Kingdom of God through giving birth to children.

There is also a hypothesis that we are talking about the salvation of mankind through childbirth - through the birth of Mary Jesus Christ. But this is not true, because it is said in the future tense: "if they continue in faith, love and holiness with propriety" - that is, it is an event that occurred after the writing of those lines, therefore, it is not about Mary.

There is, however, a childbirth, through which both men and women are saved. Often at Christmas, people pray for "Christ to be born in the heart."

Indeed, a person is not saved by the fact that he repeats a learned set of phrases and doctrines, but from the fact that Christ will be born and grow in him. This is the childbirth, through which man – as in men and women - is saved. That is, this verse speaks of men as well.

Secondly, the First Epistle to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 14: 34-38) speaks of the silence of the wife:

“34. Women should remain silent in the churches. They are not allowed to speak, but must be in submission, as the law says.

35. If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home; for it is disgraceful for a woman to speak in the church.

36. Or did the word of God originate with you? Or are you the only people it has reached?

37. If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command.

38. But if anyone ignores this, they will themselves be ignored.”

As we know, a woman, as well as a man, can inherit the Kingdom of God, through her the Holy Spirit can undoubtedly speak. In the New Testament, prophetess-wives are mentioned (Acts 2:17, 21: 9). So why must she remain silent in the congregation, if the Holy Spirit can (and does) speak through her? Maybe Paul was angry with the women and said this without thinking? We would rather not consider such a possibility.

Why does Paul speak here in riddles, if in these words are plain, straightforward and literal? Why does he write: "If anyone thinks they are a prophet or otherwise gifted by the Spirit, let them acknowledge that what I am writing to you is the Lord's command."? That is, is it not enough to just read the obvious words? Does one also have to be a prophet or a spiritual person to understand them? We must either say that Paul spoke only about the church in Corinth and that that does not apply to us, or seek in this some timeless meaning.

In the light of what has been considered, we can assume that the talk there is also not only about women. If we assume that the husband and wife are not just two sexes, but also certain parts within each person, then a number of contradictions are removed. We can also better understand the Bible and ourselves.

About what commandments does Paul speak? Obviously, we are being referred to the Old Testament.

"Be still before the Lord, all mankind, because he has roused himself from his holy dwelling." (Zechariah 2:13);

"But the Lord is in his holy temple; let all the earth be silent before him." (Habakkuk 2:20).

Is the author addressing the earth? It is quite clear that he is addressing not the earth, but people. It is very similar to what Paul says, but the appeal goes to man, not woman. However, it is not always necessary to remain silent: "The lion has roared - who will not fear? The Sovereign

Lord has spoken – who can but prophesy?" (Amos 3: 8).

Let's try to figure out who should speak and who should remain silent. In Isaiah 61:10, the coming Messiah is compared, simultaneously, with the bridegroom and the bride: "I delight greatly in the Lord; my soul rejoices in my God. For he has clothed me with garments of salvation and arrayed me in a robe of his righteousness, as a bridegroom adorns his head like a priest, and as a bride adorns herself with her jewels."

Since Jesus was also fully human, it is said in addition that man was created in the image of God: "So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them." -Genesis 1:27. That being the case, it is fair to assume that there is a part in a person that can be called a "groom" and one that can be called a "bride". The word "jewels" relates to the bride, that is, clothes, which are logical to compare with such external qualities of a person as appearance, and emotions, which are external manifestations of a person's inner world. The word "head" relates to the groom. Let's look at the Book of Proverbs 25: 2: "It is the glory of God to conceal a matter; to search out a matter is the glory of kings."

Is this written only for kings and so irrelevant to us? Probably, this also applies to us, that is, the king is one who reasons, who investigates the matter, and does not judge superficially.

Comparing the head in the Book of the Prophet Isaiah and the kings here, we see that the head is associated with wisdom, reasoning, and the mind of Christ. Also undoubted is the association with the authorities - power over oneself, that is, self-control.

In light of this, it is logical to assume that the call for silence of the wife refers to the external side of a person, that is, to his emotions and his appearance. Everything becomes clear - in a meeting the external person with his emotional storms should keep silent, but the inner person that is full of wisdom and the Holy Spirit should speak. This is confirmed by other passages:

"Until we all reach unity in the faith and in the knowledge of the Son of God and become mature, attaining to the whole measure of the fullness of Christ."- (Ephesians 4:13) The verse refers to both the man and the woman.

"So in Christ Jesus you are all children of God through faith." (Galatians 3:26).

"For all of you who were baptized into Christ have clothed yourselves with Christ." (Galatians 3:27).

"There is neither Jew nor Gentile, neither slave nor free, nor is there male and female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus." (Galatians 3:28).

Summarizing, we can say that the First Epistle to the Corinthians 14:39 speaks not of the prohibition of speech on the basis of sex, but of the prohibition of speech on the basis of emotions and hurts. For example, interrupting, displaying impatience, levelling fervent accusations, playing on a person's empathy, manipulating and doing many other things that can be ascribed to the attributes of the outer person. All this has nothing to do with the sex of a person. The outer person must obey the inner and learn from him at home (that is, thinking in private). This applies to both the man and the woman: "Watch your life and doctrine closely." – (1 Timothy 4:16)

This idea can be developed further and somewhat generalized. We came to the conclusion that the husband and wife can, in addition to the direct meaning, also mean the inner and outer parts of a person. Everyone knows the comparison of Christ and the Church as a groom and his bride. This presents a problem for men; it is not easy for them to imagine themselves as a bride – as a woman. It looks somehow strange. But in the light of our discourse everything becomes clear: Christ is the inner part (the Husband) of the single organism, the Church is the outer part (His body) – through which it (the organism) interacts with others. Everything becomes clear and ceases to be strange.

Why is it important to understand this? First of all, it will help to better understand oneself and, accordingly, act correctly. This helps men to hope not on their alleged "boss status", but on the wisdom that comes from God; helps them get rid of the stupid and harmful sign on the door - "I'm in charge here". But more importantly, the example of a husband and wife clearly shows us that understanding the Bible, including on an allegorical level, is simply necessary; without this the Bible simply cannot be understood correctly.

Allegorical interpretation is not an abstraction that does not affect life; it is an attempt to understand the essence, and not just to latch on to the exterior. Reading about Jesus in the New Testament, we see that his answers to the questions of both his disciples and the Pharisees are a way into the depth of the commandments of God, and not just support or denial of their opinions.

Allegorical interpretation is a train of thoughts, when we try to penetrate the very essence, the principles, and not simply fish out of the Bible mechanical commandments.

Such a train of thought is inextricably linked with how we live. Looking through this prism at the Bible, we through it look at those around us, and at ourselves, trying to understand the essence of actions, and not how they look. A vivid example of this theme is perhaps one of Jesus' most famous words: "But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart." (Matthew 5:28).

These words were at all times perceived simply, clearly and directly - one should not look at a woman with lust. What Jesus gave as an example of the principle was turned into a mechanical rule, and moreover was made in philistine Christianity almost the gravest sin. But, firstly, there is no qualification: one's wife or not. Also, are women too forbidden to look or is it just men? Besides, unmarried men cannot commit adultery, but only at the most live in fornication, if we talk about the sexual sphere. So it is clear that the point is not in this. This is a more general formulation of the 10th commandment - neither the outer man nor, especially, the inner man should look with envy, with a desire to take, at the external dignity of others, regardless of their gender, not noticing or despising that which is (that is, betraying love - commit adultery). This is a life style aimed at the pursuit of the external, when a person, disappointed in some external ideals (betraying love for them), rushes to others who are no better. Examples:

- 1) A person goes from one assembly to another in search of approval, comfort and praise; not finding Christ himself. Therefore, in the old one they castigate him (he left the assembly), and in the new one he will not find anything good, he will go to the next, because he did not dig deeper,

and he did not understand; he simply chases after the external.

2) The husband ignores his wife, but does not look at others; he thinks that he does not commit adultery and that he is good. In place of his wife he has either a car, the construction of a house, a job, church meetings, or a career. He chases the external, betraying his love (you can substitute a wife for a husband).

3) A person abandoned his love for God and for the truth; now he is interested in maintaining the status in his organization, instead of loving truth he fell in love with the status and hides his genuine questions far away so that they do not damage his "status".

Another variation is "a Christian on Sundays" or a Christian in church and a tyrant or an egoist at home.

Conversely, the desire to acquire inner high qualities is commendable (like Elisha and Elijah).

In addition to all this, we can look at God in a new way:

"So God created mankind in his own image, in the **image of God** created he him; male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:27);

"**By wisdom** the Lord laid the **earth's foundations**, **by understanding** he set **the heavens** in place." (Prov 3:19);

"**Wisdom** has built her house; she has set up its seven pillars. She has prepared her meat and mixed her wine; she has also set her table. She has sent out her servants, and she calls from the highest point of the city, "Let all who are simple come to my house!" To those who have no sense she says, "Come, eat my food and drink the wine I have mixed." (Proverbs 9:1-5).

Wisdom is the female side of the character of God; the mind is the male side. In the very spelling of the word Yahweh -

יהוה – there are two components:

הָוָה - Eve - Havva;

and י (iodine) the symbol of the male principle.

Although I am not an expert in the question of Hebrew, the similarity is beyond doubt. In addition, the Spirit in Hebrew (Ruach) is also of a feminine gender. This is in good agreement with the analogy between husband and wife we cited - the Holy Spirit executes the interaction between God and man and is the external (perceptible) side of God.

In the light of the fact that man is created in the image of God and in God there is a kind of husband and wife, one cannot say that the husband is good and true, and the wife is bad and mundane.

Joint action gives birth to a fruit: "Nevertheless, in the Lord woman is not independent of man, nor is man independent of woman." (1 Corinthians 11:11). This is true in the case of literal men and women, Christ and the Church, and God and the Holy Spirit. The concept of the outside being bad and the inside good, is incorrect. It can easily be the other way round, the outside looks good, but the inside is awful (painted coffins, as Jesus said). The bottom line is that both parts must be in agreement and the outer person must obey the inner, and not vice versa: "A woman should learn in quietness and full submission. I do not permit a woman to teach or to

assume authority over a man; she must be quiet." (1 Timothy 2: 11-12).

Also, if there is complete inner harmony in God, our goal is not just slavish obedience of the outer to the inner, but a state where the outer person and the inner person are in harmony, just as in a good family where there is not military discipline, submission and strict prohibitions, but love, mutual respect, frankness, and unity in thoughts and intentions (one should not confuse the outer person and "flesh", the symbol of sinfulness in man). This idea is consistent with Ephesians 1:10: "To be put into effect when the times reach their fulfillment—to bring unity to all things in heaven and on earth under Christ."

Thus, we examined the concepts of "husband" and "wife" as applied to the individual, the family, the church and God. In all cases, one and the same idea is clearly traced: the "husband" is the inner side, and the "wife" the outer, tangible or visible side. Both sides are very important and necessary, and it is unfair to say that one side is better or worse than the other.

All the arguments examined above lead us to seek inner consensus first in ourselves, in the family, in the church (communion), in the future age - not on the basis of authoritarian principles, such as self-mortification, prohibitions or taboos (as applied to man) domination over the wife (as applied to the family), domination over the flock (as applied to the church), intimidation by the prospect of eternal torture (as applied to the future age), but on reconciliation in Christ (that is, the commandments of Christ and the life of Christ in us). This impels us not to be satisfied with the superficial level, which means:

- **On a personal level** – the mere ban or taboo, and what is permissible and what is not, mean little to us. Instead, we seek to understand the reason for the ban and to exclude it, rather than simply follow the tradition or prohibition. This does not mean a more rigorous approach; this leads to a change of concepts. Some bans are lifted, and some are added.

- **At the family level** - we are not satisfied with the superficial: "everything seems peaceful." There is an anecdote.

A man came to a psychologist and said:

- I have a very good wife: she does everything she never contradicts me.

"What's the problem then?"

"For some reason she is very unhappy ..."

Therefore, in the family, we are satisfied only with complete bodily, mental and spiritual unity and no less.

- **At the church level** - we are not satisfied with external unity, when all roles are distributed, when everyone repeats the same in unison, but do not dare ask the "killer question" leading to a "decline in reputation". Let everyone think in very different ways, but treat each other with love and respect and seek the best.

- **At the level of the future age** - the traditional medieval notion of the type "they play harps and sing songs in paradise, but in hell they set people on stakes and fry them in skillets" or something like that, does not fly. You cannot think of God in barbaric terms. Any dictator can do something like this (and they did). Remember the maxim: "For friends - everything, for the rest -

the law.” (Francisco Franco -Spanish dictator). Does it remind you of something? But God has prepared something better. Faith without reflection, analysis, and understanding is simply unacceptable to us.

Appendix C

The Ten Commandments

Let's reflect on the meaning of the Ten Commandments, on the understanding of how God speaks to man, on the meaning of the Law of God.

I'm a mathematician, a physicist, and a programmer, and I have an intimate knowledge of a mathematical model that will help us understand the essence of this issue more deeply.

Imagine a very complex information object; let's call it the Law of God (the word of God, the truth). The essence of this object is that it allows you to choose the right solution in any life situation, and the solution is the best, optimal, leading to the goal.

Imagine another object - the totality of human minds. The first object (the Law of God) will try to project onto human minds. Since the first object is more complex and more multidimensional than the space of human minds, it is clear that people understand only a part of the whole, and only in application to the current time and to current circumstances.

In general, projection is, in fact, a shadow. For example, we have a three-dimensional object, the sun shines on it, and the shadow is projected onto a two-dimensional plane. It turns out that from a three-dimensional object we get a two-dimensional object - a shadow. Approximately the same happens with the Law of God and human minds.

Human minds, in comparison with the Law of God, are very flat and simple. On this plane, 5 thousand years ago, they tried to project the Law of God. As a result, people received the Mosaic Law for the Jewish people.

In those days, people had much less knowledge than now, humanity had much less information opportunities, and people were much less free. We can say that in the space of human minds, there were much fewer dimensions and this space was poorer in terms of possibilities and breadth of views. People listened to God and tried to project the incredibly complex Law of God on their perception.

The Ten Commandments were the first thing that was successfully projected.

Does this mean that the Ten Commandments are an accurate reflection of the Law of God? I think not! It's just a good enough projection of the Law of God on the minds of the people of that time.

It is often said that God is incomprehensible. This is true, because the Law of God is very difficult to understand, it requires a very complex study. Incomprehensible - means very deep; one in which there is still something that we can understand.

For example, the cosmos seems incomprehensible. Why? Because the stars and all the cosmic planets are very far away, and we are limited in research methods. Nevertheless, no one refuses to

explore the cosmos just because it seems incomprehensible.

Incomprehensibility is the engine of progress and human interest, because it is always interesting to try to figure out something that is complex. It is the same with the word and Law of God. This is a huge field for research.

The projection of God's words on the mind of man is called revelation. That is, these are the words of God, written down as the human mind is able to understand it, and the ears hear it. Most often this is not at all what God said, just as a painting differs from the living original.

That's why the Bible and personal revelations need to be treated not as an absolute truth, but as what people heard from the words of God. But still the picture of a good artist is a masterpiece. So the projection of what God said can be much deeper than the understanding of the author who recorded the words. Hence from the projection, one can restore part of the original meaning, which even the one who recorded the words could not see.

Modern man, having more knowledge, technical capabilities and historical examples, can understand more than the author who wrote down the words. Therefore, the allegorical approach to understanding the Bible is quite appropriate to restore from all projections the fullest possible picture of the Law of God and of God's character.

There is such a thing as "the spirit of the law." Human laws try to convey this spirit, but they do not do it accurately. Evil people often use this inaccuracy to apply the letter of the law contrary to its spirit. Everyone can easily recall dozens of examples on this subject (for example, the annexation of the Crimea). But conscientious people will try to understand the spirit of the law from the letter of the law. This is our goal in Bible studies.

Let us move on to the Ten Commandments.

Recently, a rather curious incident happened to me and my wife. I sometimes write down the most important principles by which my wife and I try to live. Having written everything that I remembered, I asked my wife to read and edit my notes. After removing a few duplicates, I noticed that there were ten principles; just as many as God's commandments. This match interested me, and I decided to analyze my records for matches with God's commandments. I was surprised that some of the matches were quite obvious.

For a better understanding, I suggest that you read my principles and compare them with the Ten Commandments. So:

10 Principles By Which We Try To Live

1. The essence is more important than the form. More important is the essence of actions and phenomena, and not how they look at first sight.
2. Rejection of prejudices and traditional frameworks in favor of more harmonious, albeit unusual solutions. Flexibility in our worldview and willingness to learn, grow, change our point of view and our way of life if we encounter something higher and better.
3. Do everything in a timely manner; hit the target. Do not delay; do not hesitate, but do not

rush. What we say is executed.

4. Consistency in all spheres of life; beauty, harmony and order inside and outside. Live without inner contradictions and fears.

5. Openness, trust, and sincerity in relationships; not only between husband and wife, and parents, but with everyone. Do not hide desires, but do not impose them. "Take off your clothes." Do not allow cracks in relationships.

6. Inspire, not force. Help to love, not force to do love. Win by acting nobler. Reject manipulation and violence.

7. Do not commit adultery; do not betray love. Do not stop loving those you love!

8. Learn to look through the eyes of another. See the real needs of people; give more than you take.

9. Do not take your word and your promise lightly. Our "yes" or "no" should carry more weight than even an oath or a document with signatures and seals.

10. The abilities, desires, feelings, passions, beauty and sexuality of a person are given for the greater good, for harmonious development and happiness, and not to be fought (desires). It is necessary to channel this energy in the right direction, and not extinguish it. Consume the lion, and do not allow the lion to consume you.

The Ten Commandments of Moses

1. You shall have no other gods before me.

2. You shall not make for yourself an idol in the form of anything in heaven above or on the earth beneath or in the waters below. You shall not bow down to them or worship them; for I, the LORD your God, am a jealous God, punishing the children for the sin of the fathers to the third and fourth generation of those who hate me, but showing love to a thousand [generations] of those who love me and keep my commandments.

3. You shall not misuse the name of the LORD your God, for the LORD will not hold anyone guiltless who misuses his name.

4. Remember the Sabbath day by keeping it holy. Six days you shall labor and do all your work, but the seventh day is a Sabbath to the LORD your God. On it you shall not do any work, neither you, nor your son or daughter, nor your manservant or maidservant, nor your animals, nor the alien within your gates. For in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, the sea, and all that is in them, but he rested on the seventh day. Therefore the LORD blessed the Sabbath day and made it holy.

5. Honor your father and your mother, so that you may live long in the land the LORD your

God is giving you.

6. You shall not murder.

7. You shall not commit adultery.

8. You shall not steal.

9. You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor.

10. You shall not covet your neighbor's house. You shall not covet your neighbor's wife, or his manservant or maidservant, his ox or donkey, or anything that belongs to your neighbor.

If you read carefully my principles and the Ten Commandments, it is obvious that my second principle corresponds to second commandment (knowledge and research conquers idols in a person); principle #3 - commandments #3 (value and accuracy of the word); principle #4 - commandments #4 (the Sabbath is peace and harmony); principle #6 - commandments #6 (Jesus said that hating one's brother is the same as killing him); principle #8 - commandments #7 (do not betray love. Betrayal in the broadest sense. For example, if the husband (wife) humiliates his wife (husband) or beats her (him), manipulates her (him), etc.; principle #9 - commandments #9 (faithfulness in promises, honesty); principle #10 - commandments #10 (control, power over desires).

Some principles are quite clearly similar to the commandments, some are less obvious, but nevertheless a common theme can be traced. For example, principle #5 corresponds to something in commandment #5. Of course, there are biological fathers and mothers, who one should treat with respect, but we also need to honor those from whom we have learned something, from whom we have noted something important. They, to some extent, became our father or mother, some part of our consciousness. Openness, trust, sincerity in relations with others is really a tribute and gratitude for this; mutual respect.

Even less obvious is the conformity of the 1st command and the 1st principle.

One of the factors that deprives a person of freedom (the house of slavery - Egypt in the commandments of Moses) is that he always judges everything by form (for example, if a person is well dressed, looks good, then he is good; if he smiles – he's probably good, and etc.). This is a superficial judgment. God always looks at the essence, and we must look at the essence of phenomena, and not evaluate only by external factors, by the uppermost visible layer. One needs to be able to look deep inside. Jesus said: "Do not judge, or you too will be judged."

Man really wants to judge others precisely because he sees only this thin outer layer and does not really seek to truly understand what is behind this layer, what is the essence.

God is the essence of everything. Although here is the least literal correspondence, but nevertheless it is evident.

I wrote these ten principles not to somehow copy or alter the Ten Commandments. I just wrote down what is best for me and close to my heart, and in the end, to my great surprise, I got the same Ten Commandments, only as I heard them.

I was much amazed at this seeming coincidence. But, on the other hand, this is not at all surprising, because the same object was projected - the Law of God, in one case on the consciousness of Moses and the people of that time, in another case - on my consciousness.

Since this is really the same object, the same Word of God, common features are traced in these two projections very clearly, although they sound somewhat different. Therefore, you cannot just blindly follow the laws recorded in the Bible; you need to understand their essence, grasp them, love them with all your heart and hear them (these commandments) as God tells them to you personally. In this case, they will not lose their relevance, significance, and force in our time.

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