

The poster is split vertically down the middle by a jagged, torn-paper-like edge. On the left side, a man with long brown hair, wearing a modern blue t-shirt and dark pants, walks down a modern city street at night. The street is dark, with blurred lights from buildings and cars in the background. On the right side, the same man, wearing a simple brown tunic and a sash, walks down a sunlit, ancient stone street. The architecture is classical, with stone walls and arches. The sky is a pale blue. The title 'EUTYCHUS' DREAM' is at the top, and the names 'KRUPSKYI' and 'MAKSYM' are at the bottom.

EUTYCHUS' DREAM

KRUPSKYI MAKSYM

Krupskyi Maksym
Eutychus' dream

Dedicated to the one
God cares about
most of all...

*“What has been will be again,
what has been done will be done again;
there is nothing new under the sun”*

Eccl. 1:9

Author's preface

The main character looks at the modern world through the eyes of eternal values that seem a little out-dated for such fast-moving, changeable times.

When half of this book was written, the war started. I simply couldn't write anymore. It seemed that I would never write another line.

Three months later, another tragedy struck. I lost my brother. He was an amazing person, so kind that, as an elder brother, I often scolded him urging to be more practical and not let people use him. Sometimes it seemed to me that he was not well prepared for this life; he was as if from another time, where you don't need to work your way to get a comfortable place in this world and constantly think about what is profitable and promising and what is not. Patiently suffering after an injury, he did not want to take revenge on the culprit of the accident. He was too kind for this world, but, it is my deep conviction, he was more prepared for a better world than any of us. Looking forward to seeing you, my dear Pasha! I am writing this book in your honor!

Prologue

His eyes were stinging, thoughts confused, he could not simply move his arms. Only a sense of guilt did not allow Eutychus to finally fall into a blissful slumber. “What kind of person are you, Eutychus? Look around! Your brothers and sisters will remember this night as one of the most important in their lives. They are listening to the apostle himself! And you are sleeping...”

A spacious room was simply crammed with people. It seemed that if one more person entered, the walls would simply crack. About ten people were standing at the door. They knew there was hardly a chance to get inside, so every now and then they stood on tiptoe, listening, trying to hear fragments of the apostle’s speech.

He was a man short in stature, with a bald spot, a weather-beaten face and sore eyes; and he spoke with special authority. From time-to-time people exclaimed “hallelujah” when they heard about the miracles that took place all over the Mediterranean. At such times Eutychus tried to regain his senses, but it was too hard for a young man whose body needed rest to unload the two ships

early in the morning. His back ached, legs hurt, but a hot stew, flatbread, baked fish, and a few coins in a pouch around his neck were a nice reward for all his hard work. Eutychus sighed, remembering today's fight between the porters. Another moment, and he could have felt the full force of the fist of Eupymides and would not appear in the port for the next few days. Drunk Eupymides randomly beat everyone in a row until a Roman soldier laid him out on the sand with a whip. Eutychus managed to evade the blow, but poor Kalampedis got it – only half an hour later he came to his senses and trudged home with a headache and a huge bruise on his cheekbone.

“Listen, listen, do not be distracted,” Eutychus tried to cheer himself up. It has been six months since he joined the “Way” movement. From that moment on, his joyless life was filled with hope, his heart warmed by the news of Jesus.

Another person attracted the attention of Eutychus, preventing him from completely falling asleep – Melania, the daughter of the house owner. The beauty with thick brown hair was sitting at the feet of the apostle, listening to every word, not paying attention to anyone around. How many times did Eutychus try to catch her eye, to draw her attention. But who is he? Just one of the thousands of residents of the poor quarter. He had no father, only mother, brother and sister, who really hoped that he would be able to earn money in

the port. Without coins hanging on Eutychus' neck they were doomed to half-starved existence. His mother was scared of everything around after the accident at the construction of the temple which took her husband's life, the firm support of their family, the loving and cheerful Nikander. She hardly left their little hut, cooking meals without enthusiasm, suspicious of any activities outside the home, including the "Way" movement. After the funeral, his mother became reserved and aloof, lost all her friends. Coming from the port, Eutychus often saw her crying near the stove. The younger sister and brother were left to themselves. How much Eutychus wanted his mother to know about the hope for a better future for all the followers of the "Way" movement! But so far, conversations about faith were interrupted by sighs and tears, mixed with memories of the death of his father.

A distant relative of the family off and on invited them to visit his house, trying to feed the children who lived from hand to mouth. It was there that Eutychus learned about the movement called "Way", a little later he began to come to the community where – for the first time after the death of his father – he could feel a friendly and nice atmosphere. Basically, they gathered in small houses several times a week. But on Saturdays, other special holidays, or when important guests came, the wealthiest followers of the "Way" invited everyone

to their homes that sometimes accommodated several hundred people. But still there was not enough space, so they had to come in turn, at different times.

To listen to the apostle, everyone gathered in the largest house of Melania's father, who was engaged in trade and, according to some rumors, even had his own ship. Eutychus somehow squeezed himself inside and sat down right in the window opening, leaning his back against the slope. He was not afraid of heights, it was because of the working experience in the port, where occasionally he had to work at height. "Port, port, tomorrow I have to be back to work! When can I get a good sleep? By the time I get home, it will be late night..."

Sleep finally overcame him.

Dream

“I’m flying, I’m flying!” – Eutychus repeated, quickly flying over well-groomed green meadows and picturesque fields. Never before had he seen such beauty and order. The speed was impressive, but Eutychus did not feel any discomfort. On the contrary, he felt free and easy. It cannot be said that he completely controlled his flight. He could slightly change the height, make small turns, but he could not change the direction and speed. In the distance, he could see something amazingly majestic and huge, it was shining and gleaming in the midday sun, reflecting glare in his direction and beckoning him. Soon he saw huge buildings and several bridges. Eutychus felt a shiver all over his body. “No way! I did it! They took me!” He was moved to tears. “New Jerusalem! So that’s what you look like! I dreamed about you so much!” The young man remembered how many times in the evening, when the amazing sunset illuminated the bay, he looked into the distance and dreamed of this city, where there would be no more hunger, no tears of his mother, gloomy soldiers on the streets and daily cries: “Work, keep moving!”

EUTYCHUS FELT A SHIVER
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Of course, what he saw below was quite different from his dreams. Until he saw the huge gate that he thought must be a part of the New Jerusalem. There were no angels flying around, and in general it seemed that there were more shades of gray than gold. Perhaps, at such a height, he simply did not yet see the streets of gold and precious stones. Having made a circle above the city, Eutychus felt the speed of his flight decreasing and he was starting to go down. He was not afraid to fall – his body began to get used to flying. In the distance, on the other side of the city, he saw several pillars of smoke. “Probably that’s the heavenly temple,” Eutychus thought with trepidation. “So soon, very soon I will see Jesus. What will I tell him? I didn’t even have time to prepare for this meeting.”

The feeling of anxiety was growing as the height was decreasing. Shiny boxes of various sizes were moving quickly along the road, some annoying noise began to grow; there were heard beeps, whistles and even a roar. There were various houses too: some beautiful, like the mansions of the rich in his hometown, and others gray, ordinary buildings with dirty windows. Eutychus began to shake because of a premonition of some trouble. Something was wrong. What if he was not among the saved? It was so dirty near those poorly maintained houses, there were fragments of some packages, rags and containers heaped with garbage.

Suddenly, the flight speed significantly decreased, and from a height Eutychus saw himself on the corner of the street. Ragged, dirty and with shabby hair he was sitting just on the sidewalk with his head down and begging. Next to him there lay a box and several bundles of clothes. “No, just not that! It cannot be!” – suddenly, instead of flying to Heavenly Jerusalem, Eutychus found himself right in the middle of his nightmares. Sometimes, after a hard working day at the port, he dreamt that if some kind of accident happened to him, everyone – his mother, younger brother and sister – would have to go outside and beg just like that, hoping to get some money to buy at least some bread. Usually after such a dream, he woke up in a cold sweat and fervently prayed that his family would never have to do that and they would have something to eat. And now he sees this beggar! Here? There was a lively trade in the street, beautiful shop windows beckoned people, everything was blinking, shining and glimmering. At the crossroads, crowds of people passed by silently, without smiling and paying attention to those who were walking nearby, and even more so to the beggar sitting on the sidewalk. “No, no! This is not the New Jerusalem!” Eutychus was horrified to realize. “Where am I?”

After another minute of flying over the streets and houses, trembling with confusion and anxiety, the young man found himself in a huge park, where at that time

there were hardly any people. He slowed down and soon realized that he could completely control his body again. Eutychus sank down onto the paved path and looked around. Feeling a little weak after the shock he experienced, because of the unfulfilled expectations of the heavenly realm, he sat down onto the bench. “Definitely, this is some distant future, the city is huge. It would take a lot of years and money to build all this”, thought Eutychus. “And this means we were waiting for Jesus in vain, we sang songs about His coming. But He never came... How come? Could the apostles have lied to us?” The young man held back his emotions for a long time, but suddenly disappointment and inexpressible sadness overcame him, so that he buried his head in his hands and began to sob, shedding large tears on his dusty brown clothes.

It is not clear how long he was sitting like that, broken, upset, with his head bowed low, when suddenly he heard a woman’s voice:

– Hi. Are you okay?

Eutychus looked up, rubbed his eyes and gaped at the speaker. A girl in an outlandish outfit, with some red strings hanging from her ears, wearing bright and shiny clothes, with orange hair, leaned over and carefully and a little tensely looked at him, trying to understand if she had made a mistake by starting a conversation with a stranger. Another thought almost immediately crossed his mind: “I understand her, we speak the same language.

And that's great!" He immediately felt some kind of relief. If he can communicate with people in this city, not everything is so bad. The young man jumped up, trying to show his respect, but in doing so he frightened the girl and she simply jumped back.

– I am Eutychus. I'm from...

He hesitated, he was about to say "from the past", but, realizing how ridiculous it sounded, he just mumbled something.

– Oh, you scared me! It's just that you were crying so loudly that I thought you needed help.

– I'm sorry, I didn't mean to. I... Uh... Well... I feel better now. Thanks for reaching out to me.

– OK. I'll go then.

Still looking at him, the girl turned and was going to leave.

– Wait, can I ask you something?

– Sure.

The girl was still looking at him suspiciously, she took another step back.

Only when he got up, she saw that the stranger was wearing some kind of dusty, torn brown robe, which seemed to have traces of food and other stuff. Long, tangled hair that apparently he never brushed. "What made me approach this psycho! What if he escaped from the hospital? And there is not a soul in the park, as luck would have it."

– Where am I? What is the name of this city?

“O-o-o, he’s really not okay, I need to get out of here,” the girl thought, feeling her heart begin to beat faster and faster.

– Are you serious? You live in a bubble or something?

– No, no, but...

Eutychus understood, if he told here where he came from, the girl would definitely leave and no one would help him. He decided to try to just tell everything as it is:

– I know, it all looks very strange: both my clothes and myself... But I need help. In the evening I was working in the port... I was just sitting by the window and then ended up here. I won’t do any harm. I just want to go home.

– So where do you live?

– Not far from Troy. This is a famous city in our region.

– Troy?, – it seemed the girl started to understand something, she stopped smiling. “Do you know what it is?”, she showed him a black shiny plate with a string stretching to her ear.

– I don’t know.

– Do you know what year it is?

– I don’t know where I am, but if you had asked me about it yesterday, I would have said that this is the first year of Nero Claudius Drusus Germanicus.

- That's fun! – The girl's eyes widened in surprise.
- And what's this?

She took out her wallet from her backpack and then pulled out a banknote.

- A piece of papyrus? – Eutychus tried to guess.
- It is clear now! – the girl sat down on the other side of the bench, still looking at the young man in surprise.
- What is clear?
- You're from the past. Or am I dreaming...
- It looks that way.
- It all seems like a dream.

She asked a few more questions and, with her mouth open in surprise, listened to Eutychus talk about his life. Well, from time to time she thought this was some kind of prank with a costume that looked really plausible, or perhaps it was a dangerous maniac who skillfully and so authentically pretended to be a harmless guy in need of help. Finally, despite the voice of reason saying she should just go home, the girl decided to help the stranger:

By the way, my name is Barbara. Now let's figure out how to help you.

- What a beautiful name you have. There are girls with the same name in my town.
 - Really?
 - Thank you for helping me.
 - Nothing to thank for yet.
- Suddenly Eutychus' eyes brightened:

– I have an idea. I know where to get help. The “Way”. Take me there! There are prophets there who will tell me how to get back home.

– What way are you talking about? What prophets?
– Thoughts that she is dealing with an insane person returned to Barbara.

– I was a member of the “Way” movement. In the evening, the Apostle Paul visited us and talked about the resurrection of Jesus! It can’t be that this movement disappeared, there must be someone who is left. The apostle said it would spread over the whole world.

– You mean Christians?

– Maybe. Who are they?

– Followers of Christ. There are a lot of them in our city, and throughout the country as a whole.

– Really?

Barbara smiled ironically.

– You’d better not know the history of the last two thousand years.

– Two thousand?

– That’s how much has passed since the birth of Christ.

– Oh, how did I get here?

– What did you think? It’s been a long time, so many empires collapsed...

– And Roman too?

– Yes, Roman too.

For the first time, Eutychus' face brightened up, and a mischievous glint flashed in his eyes.

– No wonder the apostle warned: everyone who persecutes Christians sooner or later will disappear. What about Greece?

– Greece is a free and independent country. Though, relatively poor. And you are a patriot, aren't you?

– Who?

– Okay, I just forget that you are not of this world.

– How do you know everything? Did you study at the gymnasium?

– At the gymnasium and at the university...

– Wow! You must be from a noble family. What are you doing in the park?

The girl sighed and dreamily looked away.

– Uh-huh, noble family. If I had money... What am I doing in the park? I'm walking. Instead of being at the party.

– The party?

– Oh, I feel like today I am a dictionary.

– A dictionary?

Barbara sighed wearily.

– Listen, alien, can I find out the meaning of how many words you know so I can filter my speech?

Eutychus did not understand anything of what she said, but he could sense he was starting to annoy her with his questions:

– I’m sorry.

– No... Why am I saying that? I’m just not in the mood. In short, how can I explain to you why I’m in the park. I study at the university. But there are many other students as well. Recently, a terrible disease struck the world, only recently we started to recover. The university has been closed for a long time. Everyone studied at home. Recently we were allowed to return to the universities again. The people with whom I study organized a big celebration in honor of this. Now, remember: PAR-TY. I was not invited. So I am walking in the park.

– I’m sorry about it.

– That’s okay... Not the first time. I’ll be fine. It’s been since high school that I am not good at getting along with people. Maybe because of the hair color? Maybe because of... Don’t know what.

– And what is this disease?

– Well, this is when an infectious agent gets into the lungs through drops released from the respiratory tract of an infected person... Barbara laughed. – Sorry, that was a cruel joke on your knowledge. In short, this is high temperature, in your language, a fever, and also a cough, it’s hard to breathe. There is something with the blood. Sometimes the disease passes after a few days, or you can die. And no one knows who will recover and who will die.

– Scary! It is the same with any disease.

– Well, not with any these days. But it is especially difficult with this one. By the way, people in the whole world learn the Greek alphabet, returning, so to speak, to the origins of our civilization. By the way, you arrived at a good time, Antichus!

– Eutychus.

– Oh, I'm sorry, Eutychus. Otherwise, for a walk in the park you would pay a big fine. It was forbidden to go out into the street; well, actually here everything happens in waves: it comes and goes. But... do you really care? Forget it.

– A fine?

– Forget it! Let's stop talking and think about how to help you.

– Can you find the “Way” movement?

– Oh, didn't you hear me? Now half the world are followers of Christ, according to official statistics. But no one will help you just like that. Everyone has too many problems.

– No, in the “Way” they never leave anyone in trouble! It just can't be! Let's look for the “Way” movement. They will help me.

Barbara gently smiled.

– The last time I went to church was about five years ago, on an excursion. Maybe something has changed there. Well, let me introduce you to modern Christians. You will see everything yourself.

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– Thank you.

– Don't thank me yet. Just let's agree that you will not tell your story from the very beginning. Because I won't get you out of the asylum. OK?

– Asylum?

– Just don't tell everyone your story. You understand?

– I do.

– So, now we need to find you some decent clothes.

In confusion Eutychus looked at his faded tunic. Yes, it was not new, with small stains, but not to say it was so bad. Eutychus bought this tunic when he received a decent payment for his help in unloading a large merchant sailboat.

– Listen, why look for other clothes? If there is a river or a lake nearby, I can wash mine, it will dry quickly in the sun and I am ready to go.

Barbara laughed.

– No, your outfit is cool. I think you might rock some party. But we need to merge with the crowd as much as possible, given, so to speak, certain difficulties with the documents.

Eutychus did not quite understand the arguments, but decided not to argue. What else could he do? He had to completely trust the first person he met. Barbara took out the black plate, pressed it with her fingers, in a businesslike manner looked into the distance:

– Listen, I have to go for a while. I'll get you clothes.

Just don't go anywhere and don't talk to anyone. If I lose you, we will hardly meet again. This city is huge, you can easily get lost. Deal?

– All right.

– Just sit here on the bench. If suddenly men in black clothes with white inscriptions come up to you, say you are waiting for a relative who will come up any minute. She has all your things and documents, and you are just walking around. Okay?

– All right.

– Good, I'll go then.

A moment later, Barbara disappeared. Eutychus started to panic again: “What if this is just a dream? Who is this girl? What if she never comes again? How can I get out of here? Who will take care of my mother, brother and sister?” He pinched himself several times, shut his eyes, rubbed them, but, looking again into the distance where he saw huge towers, he was once again convinced that getting out of this place was not easy. He only had to wait and hope that Barbara would not fool him.

Meanwhile, the girl has almost reached the nearest second-hand store. Eutychus was of average height and build, so it was not difficult for her to buy him a T-shirt with the name of some club on it, jeans and shorts in good condition. She was in a hurry like never before. But, leaving the store, she suddenly stopped: “Barbara, wait. You bought clothes for a strange man in the park

who says he came from the past. Now you are going back and together with him you are going to look for a church where someone will believe him and give him shelter. And then you need to think about how to send him back to the past. Is everything right? Are you comfortable with this?" Barbara looked at the phone again: "Should I just go home? Even if this guy is insane and brilliantly pretends to be a time traveler, someone should help him and take him back to a psychiatric hospital. It doesn't seem that he wants to hurt me or anyone else. And yes, he is smart enough. Just like some insane people..." Barbara thought again about the party she hadn't been invited to, and about the fact that actually she hadn't been interested in anything at all. It seemed to the girl that soon, just as it happened with her mother, she would have to try some pills for depression: "What do I have to lose? Anyway, this evening is more interesting than a thousand others." With a wave of her hand, she headed towards the park.

Eutychus fidgeted on the bench, peering tensely into the distance. It felt like eternity had already passed, and yet Barbara was not there. Had she abandoned him? Will she not return? During this time, several other interesting events took place. A man sat down on a bench next to him, a cloud of acrid smoke came out of his mouth from

time to time. Eutychus saw something similar in street performances, when some magicians entertained the crowd during the festivals. But why did this man decide to show him this trick? There were very few people in the park... The man was silently demonstrating his skills, then just as silently got up and left. And there was a boy who rushed past the bench, rotating his legs, he was riding some strange structure with wheels and shiny pieces of iron. It seemed to Eutychus that the boy was flying, he was moving so fast. Maybe something like this could bring him back home? All this is so strange. The young man breathed a sigh of relief when he saw Barbara's red hair in the distance: "She did come back!"

– Here you are, take it, – Barbara handed him the package.

– What is this?

– Your clothes.

Eutychus examined the package itself, thinking how he should put it on. Barbara smiled.

– The package is not clothes. Clothes is inside.

The girl took out jeans, shorts and a T-shirt.

– I hope you can figure out how to put it on without my help. Here are the sleeves, this is for the head, and these for the legs. Buttons... Oh, buttons, zipper, buckle... I'll show you, – Barbara several times showed how to fasten it.

– I'll manage somehow, – Eutychus replied sheepishly.

- I'll wait here, and you go to the nearest thicket.
- All right.

This time Barbara was the one to worry. Eutychus had been gone for fifteen minutes. Hiding nearby, he examined his new clothes with surprise. The young man quickly managed to put the T-shirt on. But jeans were a difficult task. The sandals did not fit into the narrow trousers, everything was tangled and tight. Ultimately, Eutychus had to sit down on the ground to get dressed. The clothes were so tight, and it seemed to him that he would not be able to walk. When Eutychus came out of the bushes, Barbara narrowed her eyes and looked at him:

– Well, that will do. The T-shirt fits well. Jeans, a size smaller would be better. But now you look like a typical citizen, except that the shoes are exclusive. Put your tunic into the bag. Let's go look for your "Way" movement.

– Thanks for the clothes. It's probably too expensive, I don't know if I have enough money to pay for it.

– Oh, come on. It's the little things. Let's go, we still have a lot to do.

– Where are we going?

– This is the easiest thing.

The girl took out a black plate and began to click on it.

– What are you doing? – Eutychus asked in surprise. – Is it a decision stone?

– Smartphone? – Barbara smiled. – Well, that’s one way to put it. Here, see for yourself.

Eutyclus carefully took the smartphone and looked at it.

– Look, click here, this is a map. You can see where we are, and you can type what we need. For example, “church”. Here, you see? It is searching. Click here – it shows which way to go and how far. And here, look, it’s the camera. Let’s take a selfie, shall we?

– Selfie?

– Now you’ll see.

– So this is a mirror!

Eutyclus looked in surprise at himself in his new clothes and noticed that it would not hurt him to wash his face.

– And now we will save the mirror. Ready! Here’s the photo. And I have lots of them! Look! Barbara quickly flipped through the gallery.

– Well, you don’t need to see this, and this... What else can I show you? Look, if I need to know something, I just type a question here – and the answer is ready. Cool, isn’t it?

– All the knowledge of the world? All knowledge is available to you?

– Yes, all libraries, pictures, news, gossips. Literally everything.

– Who created such a thing? Are they priests? Wizards?

– No, just talented guys. We call them programmers.

– They must be ruling the world. They have all the knowledge in their hands.

– Well, no, – Barbara paused. – Those who employ them run the world.

– But not everything in the world is worth knowing. How do programmers decide what to show and what not?

– They just give what people want to see. Or make people want what they give. That's the whole secret. Come on, I'll have a lot more to explain to you along the way.

After about ten minutes they left the park, and Eutychus was completely confused. He looked in bewilderment at the noisy cars going back and forth, bright advertisements, inscriptions, he was stunned by the number of sounds. Turning his head in different directions, the young man nearly ran into a pole, and once he stumbled and almost fell. Fortunately, it was not evening yet and there were not so many people on the streets. Eventually, Barbara took his hand and pulled him forward.

– Let's go, keep up! Otherwise you'll get lost and I won't find you.

A few minutes later they turned into a quieter street, Eutychus, wiping sweat with his hand, breathed a sigh of relief. Barbara looked at him and frowned.

– All right, let's make stop. You're white as sheet.

– My ears hurt, there's so much noise. And these fast chariots... It seems that they are about to hit you.

– It happens. But rarely. Just walk close to the houses and look around and nothing should happen to you.

– All right.

While they were standing, people were passing by them. A few girls were the last whom they saw. They were merrily chatting, and one of them, looking at a strange, swarthy, bearded guy, smiled at him. Eutychus was embarrassed, blushed, and looked away. When they were farther away, he timidly asked Barbara:

– Just now... the girls who passed by... are they courtesans?

– What?! Courtesans? Are you crazy?

– It's just that they were dressed like that...

– Dressed like what?

– Well, the clothes were so bright, provocative. Like priestesses of love in the temples of my city.

– I see. Remember, now everyone dresses bright clothes.

Suddenly Barbara fell suspiciously silent and, narrowing her eyes, looked at Eutychus.

– What about me? Am I dressed provocatively too? Maybe too bright?

– No, you're different.

– That's what all the guys think, – the girl sighed. – Whatever you put on, everyone considers you a good and

reliable friend, but others are bright priestesses of love.

– I did not mean that. I don't think that's right. Christian women should dress modestly.

– And who told you that I'm a Christian? Or that I want to dress modestly? Those days are not today, and the rules are different. I think when you get into the church, you will understand that your ideals are in the past.

Eutychus was silent. Barbara too. She started to blame herself for putting this guy down like that. He didn't seem insane to her any longer. Unless he is a brilliant actor, so he can pretend to be a stranger from the past. Although his story still seemed absolutely fantastic, the girl was getting used to the fact that he really did not understand anything in the modern world.

– Well, did you get your breath back? Let's go ahead. It will only take ten minutes to walk to the first church.

– OK, I do not mind.

They went down the street and after about five minutes they saw the pointy towers of the first church in the distance. Eutychus was still reacting to every passing car and jumped back against the wall at the approaching roar of a sports bike. Barbara walked silently beside him. The euphoria of the fantastic story of Eutychus has passed and it led to disturbing thoughts: "What's next? Now we come up to the church, people will listen to his story and offer to call for medical assistance

to take him to a psychiatric hospital. What if we just don't tell anything? What's next? Where should he live? Tomorrow, early in the morning I'm going to the university. Telling my parents is not an option. They worry about me more than they need to. Okay, maybe we will solve it somehow."

– Here we are. It's time to meet Christians of the 21st century. Ready?

Eutychus was staring at the majestic old building. Towers, stained-glass windows, huge wooden doors.

– Are you sure this is a Christian church? You didn't confuse anything? – he asked puzzled.

– Aare you kidding me? Don't you see the cross?

– Which cross?

– Well, a crucifix. A symbol of Christianity. There, on top.

– I just don't know, – Eutychus sighed.

– Now, listen. It's definitely a Christian church, just be sure. Let's go, now you'll understand.

Barbara took Eutychus inside. There was no religious service at that moment, but there were several people in the church. Before entering, the young man was shaking with excitement. Has he found the "Way"? Are his brothers and sisters in faith here? Plucking up courage, he entered the open door. After taking a few steps, Eutychus stopped. He was stunned, he saw the richest decoration of the temple, stained glass windows,

statues, paintings, frescoes, a majestic altar. Suddenly he turned and ran out of the temple. Barbara ran after him. He was standing aside from the entrance and trying to come to his senses, breathing deeply.

– Why did you lie to me? This is not a Christian church!

– What?

– It is so similar to the temples of my town, there were statues of gods and goddesses too, everything was in gold and silver. And there, there... It's definitely now what I am looking for!

Barbara sat down on a bench not far from the entrance:

– Well, the task is getting more difficult. I have no idea what is wrong with this one. Probably, I need to teach you some historical basics, and we will give up this stupid idea of looking for your “Way”. Let's go and sit there.

Eutychus obediently followed Barbara. Despair literally overwhelmed him. Suddenly an unexpected thought came to him.

– Barbara, can we pray?

– Pray?

– Yes. Ask God for help.

– Right here? On the street?

– Why not?

– Well, it will look a little weird though... do whatever you want.

– To be honest, I’m not very good at praying. I only recently joined the “Way” movement, but we were taught to tell God about all our troubles. So, I want to ask Him to help me find the “Way”. I will surely get help there.

Barbara sighed. Eutychus raised his hands to the sky and uttered a few phrases, ending with a loud “amen”. The girl looked around. What will people think of them?

– Don’t you know how to pray? – Eutychus asked.

– I told you that I am not into all these religious things. Let me tell you what’s what, and maybe we won’t look for your “Way” movement at all.

– But who will help me?

Barbara shrugged her shoulders.

– I’m not very good at history. I usually slept during classes because all this antiquity makes me sad, still I gained some knowledge. After the history lessons I have a feeling that I am a little old-fashioned for everything that is happening now, as if I am stuck somewhere in another time, where everything was calmer, easier, where there was no Internet and daily news from around the world. And it’s sad. I think I’m about twenty years behind.

– I understand you very well, – Eutychus said with a slight smile.

Barbara laughed.

– Exactly, who am I complaining to? But generally it makes me depressed.

– Depressed?

– Discouraged? A feeling when you don't want to live. Everyone around is so modern, successful, they create something with the help of their gadgets, and I like drawing with a pencil. I don't tell anyone about it and I don't share in social networks. All right, I should stop complaining, let's get back to history.

– All right.

– In short, you are from the Roman Empire. Christianity, or this “Way” you are talking about, is not a very popular religion. But things are changing fast. After a few centuries, Christianity becomes the state religion and is quickly gains popularity. And... what's next? Ah, I remembered! The Roman Empire will fall in the year... – Barbara took out her phone and made several movements with her fingers. – The fall of the Roman Empire, 476, the barbarians... Yeah, and I'm Barbara. Funny. And then Christians begin to rule in Rome, or rather their bishop. Christianity is slowly spreading around the world. Then 300-400 years of strange things that were happening. There were different processes going on. In short, a thousand years passed.

– Really, a thousand years?! And Christ has not come yet?

– Now two thousand years passed, and, as you can see, He has not yet come. Maybe He will come tomorrow? – Barbara joked.

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YEARS PASSED.

- REALLY, A THOUSAND
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- MAYBE TOMORROW,
- EUTYCHUS REPLIED
SERIOUSLY.

IIIIII

– Maybe tomorrow, – Eutychus replied seriously.

– No, not tomorrow. You haven't heard the rest of the story yet.

– And who ruled the world after 1000 years?

– Well, the world is huge. There were different rulers in different parts of the world. On one side, the Chinese were rising, on the other, the Indians, and no one touched them. But in Europe and Asia, Christian popes and various kings and princes began to rule. But the church took more and more power.

– Popes?

– Well, this is the most important person in the Catholic Church.

– And what is this church? Why are you telling about it if we are looking for the “Way”?

– Because what used to be your “Way” movement turned into a super empire. Do you not understand? Wealth, power, temples like this one everywhere, its own army in some places.

– No way! You're not mixing anything up? So, there are no Christians that are different?

– There was much division into different groups in Christianity. Things were changing fast, probably even you witnessed it. Many heresies, movements.

– The apostle warned about apostates, but they were few and they wandered from the truth.

– I do not know what the truth is and what is not,

but Christianity was divided into two branches. Now I'll tell you the year... 1054, I found it. They quarreled and still have not reconciled.

– It is impossible! – Eutychus exclaimed again.

– Why impossible? Very much possible.

– Your data must be inaccurate? How do you know that this is what really happened?

– Whoa! What a statement! No-no, there's no way I can be mistaken. Back in your century, people wrote different books, and the further – the more. Everything is documented, – Barbara took her smartphone. – And in our time, people shoot video, so that there are definitely no doubts about the authenticity.

– Video?

– Later, okay?

– So, there were many Christians, and there was a division taking place. At the same time, other powerful religions developed and grew stronger: Islam, Buddhism. So, there was competition, including power competition. They fought each other for territory.

– Christians too?

– Especially Christians! Since the VI century.

– There must be some mistake.

– Wait, you haven't heard about the Inquisition and the Reformation yet.

– And what's about it?

– The Catholic Church has always monitored the

situation, so that no one undermines its rule. They resolved the matter in different ways. Some were simply excommunicated, some were drowned, others burned with fire.

Eutychus was staring at Barbara in horror. He could not believe that she was telling a true story about the followers of Jesus.

– And later a certain man, named Luther, appeared, he interfered with their plans. He led the people and the Reformation began, it gave birth to many movements in Christianity. Luther called for reform, for change, but then he decided to create his own movement – Lutheranism. By the way, there is a Lutheran church in the city, we can take a look. So, they fought, and fought, also, various political processes were taking place in Europe. And then America emerged. There are also many Christians there. How many denominations are there now? Let me take a look... well, about a dozen or two main ones, and another hundred or two hundred smaller ones. Or even more. And how can you find your “Way” among them?

– God will help. It doesn’t have to be a numerous movement. The main thing is that these people believe in Jesus and follow His way.

– This I already understood.

– How many Christians are there in the world?

– Do you even know how to count?

– Sure. I work in the port. I used to...

– What is the biggest number you know?

Eutychus picked up a stick from the ground and wrote the letter “M” on the ground.

– Here. That’s a little more than two legions of soldiers. That many!

Barbara raised her eyebrows, thought for a little while, took out her smartphone and started looking for something.

– Ah, I see. Ten thousand. Okay, look here. This dot here is your 10 M’s. Do you understand?

– I do.

– Now let’s draw ten dots. Okay? 100 M’s? Let it be here as a circle.

– Wow, that’s a lot...

– Now imagine a thousand circles. And so, eight times. That’s how many people live on earth. You get it?

Eutychus shook his head.

– That many. Like ants. In different countries and cities.

– And how many Christians among them? Is there at least one circle?

Barbara laughed.

– Well, you’re a pessimist. Let me explain you in a different way. Imagine there are only 8 people in the world. Fine?

– OK.

– Two of them are Christians.

Eutychus' eyes were filled with endless amazement.

– So many Christians?

– Yes, 2 billion. 2000 circles.

– And Jesus hasn't come yet? If there are so many Christians, everyone must know about salvation, and that means they should make their own choice.

– You are so naive. Religions are a very confusing topic. Each denomination considers itself to be true, but still, everything is bad in this world. Do you understand?

– It was the same in our time. But then the "Way" appeared...

– Here we go again... Okay! What is wrong about this church? Go and talk to the priest. You might like what he says and he will solve all your questions.

– They worship idols. There are images of some goddess everywhere.

– Which goddess? It's the Virgin Mary!

– Who is this?

– Mother of Jesus.

– Yes, we heard about her. The apostle said that she lived in Jerusalem. But then Mary died. The execution of Jesus greatly affected her health.

– She's a saint. Everyone bows to her.

– But why?

– I don't know. She is considered... how do they say... – Barbara started looking for something in her

smartphone, – the intercessor. She asks Christ for us. People pray to her. Look what I found: “O immaculate and entirely-pure Virgin Mary, Mother of God. Through you we have been reconciled with our God. You are the advocate of sinners, and the secure haven of those who are sailing on the sea of this life. You are the consolation of the world, the ransom of captives, the joy of the sick, the comfort of the afflicted, the refuge. O great Mother of God...”

– But she died! And why pray to her if we can turn directly to Christ? The apostle taught that He is our Intercessor.

– Well, I don’t know what your apostle taught. She appeared to people in dreams and visions, her images are everywhere, – Barbara continued to search on the Internet, suddenly realizing how much she still does not know. – In short, people think this way: Mary is in Heaven, next to Jesus. He must be busy to listen to all the prayers. So it’s easier to ask her. We turn to her with requests, and she passes them on to Him. This way is faster, I guess. By the way, your apostle Paul is also there, I think. You can also pray to him. Do you want me to find a prayer?

– No, there’s no need, – Eutychus frowned and was silent.

He was completely confused. There was so much new information for him that he was simply confused.

– Are there different... what's the name... Christians? Who don't have statues and big temples?

– Sure. There are those who do not believe in any saints, in intercession. They pray only directly to God. Ah, here it is! Some more interesting information! It was on the news. “Last week, the court sentenced a pastor to a fine for inciting religious hatred. The reason for the penalty was his claim that the Antichrist would come in the form of the Virgin Mary. The scandalous pastor said that it was the god-like woman who was the ideal candidate for this role, since all religions without exception could accept her, including pagan ones. He said more frequent appearances of the Virgin Mary in recent years are part of preparation for the coming of the Antichrist. He also noted that the miracles that usually accompany her appearance are part of this plan. The Catholic Church criticized the statement, saying it was blasphemy and that it offends the religious feelings of millions of people. The pastor, for his part, said that he respects the mother of Jesus, who died about two thousand years ago. And he emphasized that in fact his statement is about the Antichrist, and not the mother of Jesus, accordingly, it can only offend the religious feelings of those who worship the dead and wait for the Antichrist”.

Barbara looked at Eutychus:

– Just for you to understand that Christians have such disagreements about any topic. So, only in our city there will be a dozen different Christian churches.

– How can it be?

– Easy. And you say “Let’s find the ‘Way’, let’s find the ‘Way’”. I guess you might be looking for your “Way” until you get old.

Eutychus became gloomy. He lowered his head and laid it in his hands.

– How will I get back home? Who can help me? There must be some way out. The apostle told us that the followers of the “Way” would exist until the Coming of Christ.

– Apostle again! What coming are you talking about? You mean the end of the world?

– Yes, the end of everything, the judgment of God. There are so many Christians in the world, have you never heard of it?

– Oh, come on! For the last two years everyone has been talking about the end of the world because of what is happening. Still, life goes on, and talking does not help in any way.

– Why? What about being ready for the Coming?

Barbara waved her hand.

– I’m not very interested in this, Eutychus, sorry. I don’t know what you think is so special in your “Way”, but I need to study and then somehow earn a living. Also, I don’t plan to die of some illness or depression. And these thoughts about the end of the world do not add any optimism.

– But we will meet Jesus! This is the most joyful news!

Barbara was silent. She took out her smartphone and started searching for something in it.

– Let's go to the Lutherans. Then maybe we'll visit a few more churches. I do not know how they can help you, but let's do it.

– Okay, let's go.

Eutychus and Barbara walked down the street, but now with less enthusiasm. This time it took a little longer. Barbara, feeling how stressed Eutychus was, led him along the quiet streets. She smiled every time he stared at the cars parked along the streets and when he looked around in confusion, clinging to the wall, when suddenly one of them started moving.

– Well, Eutychus, progress does not stand still. You see what self-propelled chariots we have? And metal birds that fly across the sky! Imagine how you would feel if you were on a plane...

– Who can buy them? Only the rich?

– Cars?

– Um, these boxes with wheels.

– Why? Not only the rich. It's just that the boxes are different: old and cheap, old and expensive, new and not very expensive, new and incredibly expensive.

– But how do they work without horses?

– Mechanisms, Eutychus, mechanisms. Internal

combustion engine. In short, this is such a thing... the fire lights up inside, and the wheels spin.

– And it doesn't burn up?

– It doesn't, as you can see.

– But the fire...

– I'll get ahead of your question. It's not wood, it's kind of fire water. It was invented not so long ago, and now we use it.

– Marvelous!

– Yes. Just take a loan – and buy a miracle.

– A loan?

– Just borrow. If this is a car – it will take five to seven years. If a house – it's about twenty to thirty years.

– Oh! For so many years you have to be in debt! What if you get sick? If you cannot repay?

– Then the house or the car will be taken away. Do you think it's better to save up all your life, limit yourself all the time so that later, when you're old, you can buy something?

– It will remain for your descendants.

– No one cares about the descendants. Well, maybe not everyone, I did exaggerate. But the point is that life is passing, you need to use what you can, while you can.

– But being in debt is so hard. All the time you think about repaying the debt.

– Don't think about it. That's all.

– Why don't you have a car? Why didn't you borrow?

– I depend financially on my parents, I’m only getting education. And my ancestors are as careful with loans as you, so I’ll be long without a car. There is this thing, called credit rating: if you never buy anything on credit, you won’t buy anything more serious. Let’s close this topic. Anyway, you have no money, and no one will give you a loan in the near future.

– All right.

– Things got really complicated in this world, Eutychus. Economics, politics, business, social injustice, and now this terrible virus. And the war, oh... Many people just go crazy. Everything was so much easier in your time.

– Why do you think so?

– For example, you found the “Way” and you are happy, you think it will help you. You earn money – you have food for the day. What else do you need?

– Oh, I would also like to have a chariot and be rich... – Eutychus looked dreamily into the distance. – And I would also like to have a beautiful house, like Melania’s father.

– Like who?

– Well, one rich man in our town. In the port, we often discussed things like these, but in a low voice so that the overseers did not hear. It was easy to get into prison. The Romans are very cruel, not like the Greeks. Our philosophers have always advocated a just society.

But then I found the “Way” movement and realized that God would establish a just Kingdom.

– But He has not established until now. You know, if you imagine that there are only a hundred people in the world, one of them has almost everything, maybe another twenty to thirty people live more or less okay. And the rest... – Barbara tried to find a word, but the words that came to her mind were not decent – the rest just survive.

– You know so much. Do they teach you this at the university?

Barbara shook her head and pointed at her smartphone.

– Just scrol through the feed and you will know everything; everything you need and everything you don’t.

Eutychus did not understand what ‘to scroll through’ means, but, taking into account his previous observations, he understood – this device can answer any question.

– Here we are!

The small gate leading to the Lutheran church was open.

– Are they also followers of Christ? This is such a beautiful temple.

– Eutychus, just don’t start. Maybe it is not as majestic as the Catholic one, but in general, Lutherans are not poor. Let’s go inside, maybe we can talk to someone.

– Are there...

– No, there aren't. And that's ridiculous, being afraid of statues, really?

– I'm not afraid of statues, but it's better not to enter a temple with idols, there is something wrong.

– Nothing will happen to you, don't be afraid. Let's go inside!

Barbara pushed open the massive door, and in a moment they were inside. The decoration of the church was very simple, the walls were painted white and there was nothing at all on them. Simple wooden benches were arranged with social distancing in mind. Some of the benches were stacked at the end of the hall. Eutychus, who at first shrugged his shoulders and was tensed, now calmed down, relaxed and began to look around. Beautiful stained-glass windows, a huge table on a dais, covered with a white tablecloth, with several golden bowls and thick candles on it, and a huge cross above the table – Eutychus and Barbara were examining everything, when suddenly they heard a voice next to them and startled in surprise.

– Hello, young people, – an elderly man in a formal black jacket and a gray shirt with a clergy collar smiled at the disheveled young man and Barbara, who was looking at everything around just as attentively as Eutychus. – What brought you to our church?

– Oh, you scared us, – was all the girl could say.

– I’m sorry, I didn’t mean to. I must have learned to walk very quietly in the worship hall.

– Right, that’s true.

– Shall I show you around? We have an old organ over there in the corner. I can even play it for you.

– We would like to ask something, but we don’t mind having an excursion. This young man is... sort of... interested in Christianity.

– Oh, this is very good. What is your name?

– I’m Barbara. And he is Eutyclus.

– What an interesting and rare name. And I’m Eugene. Pastor Eugene.

Eutyclus said quietly:

– Thank you. Nice to meet you.

– Let’s go, I’ll show you everything. I have been serving in this church for many years and will be happy to tell you about it. Music is a special thing for us. Come on Sunday, our wonderful musician usually plays at the service, there is something to listen to.

– Thanks for the invitation.

Eugene led them near the table, then told a little about when and by whom the church was built. A little later, he sat down at a small antique organ and proudly pushed back the lid.

– This is a gift. The instrument is old, but it has such a wonderful sound! I don’t play professionally, but I can play one of the psalms for you.

Indeed, the sound of the organ was very unusual, solemn, rich. Barbara listened with a smile to the simple melody that the pastor was trying to play. But for Eutychus, acquaintance with the organ was an incredible experience. He had never heard anything like that before. The young man was stunned by the power of this instrument. He covered his ears with his hands and closed his eyes, fearing that this powerful sound would now bring down the walls of this church. Pastor Eugene stopped playing when he saw how frightened the young man was.

– Are you okay? Are you scared?

Barbara turned to Eutychus in surprise:

– Are you afraid of music? Seriously?

– Yes...no...it's just... Such a loud sound.

– Come on! It's not loud at all. You haven't been to concerts yet.

– Are you sure he's all right? – the pastor asked, puzzled.

– Yes, he'll get used to it. It's just... that he had never been to a temple before.

– Never ever?

– In Christian ones.

Pastor Eugene closed the lid of the organ.

– I'm sorry, I didn't want to scare you.

– It's okay, – Eutychus felt embarrassed, as this wonderful, though frightening music was interrupted because of him.

– Let me tell you the history of our church.

– We are in a little hurry, if you can – make it short, please. Actually, I told Eutychus about Luther and his protest against the Catholics.

– Luther did not oppose the Catholics, in fact, he was one of them. He opposed the principles of the Catholic Church and dreamed of reforming it. When Luther failed, he created his own movement which later became the Lutheran Church.

– Why are there so many churches today? There could be two: the wrong Catholic, against which you are fighting, and yours.

– Dear Barbara, – Pastor Eugene smiled, – everything is complicated in the religious world. We are not at war against anyone today.

– Why? Look, Eutychus did not like it in the church, there is a cult of the Virgin Mary! Why don't you oppose it?

– Em-m... – Eutychus tried to cut in. – Well, I... not that I didn't like it, but there is a lot of paganism there, all these statues, symbols and all the wealth. And Barbara also told about those terrible events in the past.

– The Catholic Church has had a difficult history, and religions do not change as quickly as we would like. But today there are very positive changes taking place. In our city, we are all friends, we meet together and believe that sooner or later Jesus will unite all Christians again. Everything just takes time.

– What about the new trends in Christianity? Why do they arise?

– As I said, religion is like a calm and deep river. But many want whirlpools, rapids, noisy and seething streams. People are looking for places where they can throw out their emotions, where there is loud music, dancing. We believe that this is not exactly what a person is looking for. It should be something deep. But, I should say, we also have young people. Maybe not very many, but they are very intelligent. They gather here every Wednesday night, come too.

– Maybe we can come, – Barbara said, with her lips pushed.

She did not really like all those explanations, everywhere she was looking for some fault.

– Do you have prophets? – Eutychus suddenly asked.
– I need advice on what to do in a difficult situation.

– Prophets? Usually, people come to the pastor for advice, he may be able to suggest something. There were many prophets in biblical times. Now we have the Bible and there is everything we need. By the way, young man, do you have a Bible?

– A Bible?

– You don't know what it is? That's strange.

– Yes, – Barbara cut in, – he doesn't know many things, don't be surprised. He doesn't have a Bible, and we haven't talked about it yet.

– Why didn't you tell me? I will give you a Bible. Do you have one? – he asked Barbara.

– I don't need it, I can find it on the phone if I want, – she replied, waving her hand.

– No, everyone should have his own Bible. Let me give you a gift! In our church we give them away for free. I will also give you a catalog of Luther's writings with some quotations. You will be able to understand the depths of his thoughts! Wait, I'll be back in a minute.

When the pastor left, Barbara turned to Eutychus:

– So, are you going to tell him your story?

– I don't know, – Eutychus said dejectedly.

– Well, – Barbara sighed, – I feel like we will walk a lot today.

– Here I am, – again, as if from under the ground, pastor Eugene appeared.

He had two small black books and pamphlets in his hands.

– This is a gift to you, young people. Your first bible!

– Thank you! – Eutychus and Barbara answered at the same time.

– This is a really important book. It will answer all your questions.

Eutychus had never before held a book in his hand. He opened it with interest and very carefully flipped through the pages, because they were so thin! The font was very small, but readable.

– And what is this book, the Bible? – he asked.

– Young man, you really don't know? – Pastor Eugene scratched his head in bewilderment.

– No, he doesn't know. He is... visiting here. In their country it is... not popular, – Barbara stepped in.

– Ah, I see... Let me tell you. The Bible is the Word of God. The Lord gave it to us so that we would find the way of salvation. God communicated with the first people face to face, but then they sinned and such communication was interrupted.

– Yeah, they ate the wrong apples in the garden, – Barbara intervened again.

– Well, we don't know if they were apples or not, but the point is that Adam and Eve disobeyed God. Since then, all the problems started. God still spoke to humans, spoke to Adam, Abraham and other patriarchs. And He commanded Moses to write down His words. Probably, people's memory was not what it used to be.

– Yes, God gave His Law. I know who Moses and Abraham are, – said Eutyclus.

– And you don't know what the Bible is? That's weird, – the pastor chuckled, – well, okay. Then God revealed himself to many other people, and they wrote down all these books: books of poetry, psalms of David, prophetic books – Isaiah, Jeremiah.

– Yes, the prophet Isaiah, David! I know them!

The pastor silently looked at Barbara. Something was not right...

– Look... this is what was written before Christ, – the pastor opened the Bible where there was just a blank page.

– So, now everything that was previously stored only in synagogues is collected in one book?

– Oh, you have heard about synagogues.

– Yes, there is also one in my town.

– Now it will be easier to understand. Right, everything given to the people of Israel has been collected up to this point, and then the New Testament begins.

– The New Testament?

– This is all that was given to us after Jesus Christ. There are four gospels, each tells about the life of Jesus in its own way. Also, His words to us and the story of His death and resurrection are here, and the story of the first Christian Church.

– About the movement “Way”?

– Well... maybe that’s what it was called. And letters too – of the apostle John, Peter, James, Jude and many letters from Paul. And, of course, the book of Revelation.

– Paul’s letters?

– Yes, those that he wrote to different churches.

– And all this is collected in one book and everyone can take it and read it?

– Yes. In some countries, you can be jailed or killed for reading it, but in most countries it is not so difficult

to get this book as a gift or simply download it to your phone.

Barbara expressively pointed at her smartphone so that Eutychus would understand what the pastor was saying. Eutychus continued carefully flipping through the pages, when suddenly a few tears fell on the Bible:

– It's... it's... such a treasure! This is the best present ever! Scriptures, all the words of Jesus and the apostles for me.

The pastor could not hold back his tears. It had been a long time since he had seen anyone so happy to have the Bible. Barbara embarrassedly began to search something on her smartphone. It was very strange that this guy was so moved by a book that he had never read. She decided to interrupt this touching scene:

– Pastor, why are there so many different Christian churches that do not have peace among them, and earlier they even destroyed each other? Even in our city there are more than a dozen different Christian churches. Everyone has the same Bible, what's the problem?

Pastor Eugene sighed wearily:

– I have already told you, this is not an easy question. Jesus prayed for the unity of His followers, but sometimes ambition and power take over. You were right when you said that everyone has one Bible, but everyone reads it in his own way.

– How's that?

EUTYCHUS CONTINUED
CAREFULLY FLIPPING
THROUGH THE PAGES,
WHEN SUDDENLY A FEW
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– Someone reads the Bible in the light of previously adopted philosophical ideas, and it seems to him that it confirms his beliefs. Some use the wrong methods of interpretation, and for them, this book may turn into a collection of allegorical stories of no practical value.

– How do you read? – Barbara asked impatiently.

– Let me tell you what other options there are, and you decide for yourself.

– All right.

– Sometimes church traditions and the authority of priests prevail over the Word of God. It is as if they read it, but they explain and interpret it in a way that is beneficial to the church. And there are some people who don't read the Bible carefully. Or vice versa, too scrupulously – there is one community in the city, it seems to me that they are too focused on some controversial issues. But I must admit that these people pay much attention to the Bible.

– Do you read the Bible in the right way?

– I would say that all the most important things were revealed five hundred years ago, and little has changed since then. So, we pay attention to the works of Luther, since it was through him that God revealed the great truths of the Bible to the world and the Reformation began. Luther believed that the Catholic Church would go through the revival and reform, at first he did not think of creating his own movement. If all Christians

accept the great truths that salvation is given by Christ, that it cannot be earned, then I think there can be unity among Christians.

– I believe that Jesus is our Savior, – Eutychus unexpectedly cut in, until then he continued to look through the pages of the Bible with enthusiasm.

– That is wonderful, young man, I'm happy to hear that! – the pastor smiled.

– Do you tell others about these truths? – Eutychus asked. – Maybe, as an apostle, you travel from city to city? To other countries?

– Once the missionary movement was powerful, but now there are Christians in almost every country and through the Internet they have access to the Bible. It is important to tell your friends who are nearby about this. I think this will work much better.

Some people entered the church and waved to the pastor. Pastor Eugene got up, and the guys realized that the conversation had come to an end.

– Thank you for your time! You told us a lot of interesting things, – Barbara said.

– Read the Bible, and I hope we can see you at the meetings for young people. After a very long break, they have finally resumed and we can meet face to face. Come!

Barbara and Eutychus said goodbye to the pastor. When they went out into the street and moved a little away from the church, Barbara asked:

– So, have you found your “Way”? What will we do next?

Eutychus shrugged his shoulders in confusion.

– I liked Pastor Eugene.

– Then why didn’t you tell him your story? Maybe he would pray to God and tell us what to do next.

– In our community, with burning eyes we told everyone on our way that Jesus would come soon! Maranatha! We lived with this hope!

– Well, it’s not true, because you’re talking to me after two thousand years?

– No, the apostle warned us that before that moment the son of perdition and the mystery of iniquity should be revealed. It obviously took longer, but God knows what He’s doing and He will keep His promise.

– And what are we going to do next? Looking for these fanatics who are still preaching the same thing they preached two thousand years ago? And if God delays for another two thousand years?

– Does everyone have this? – Eutychus pointed at the smartphone in Barbara’s hand.

– I guess so. Even in Africa.

– And everyone can read this book, the Bible?

– If he wants to. Somewhere you can pay the price for that, but if you use a VPN... Ah, forget it. In a word, if to-day someone wants to know something, he will do it. If he does not get confused because of all these differences...

- IN OUR COMMUNITY,
WITH BURNING EYES
WE TOLD EVERYONE
ON OUR WAY THAT JESUS
WOULD COME SOON!
MARANATHA! WE LIVED
WITH THIS HOPE!

IIIIII

– The Word of God is spreading to the ends of the earth. The Coming is near! Members of the “Way” should preach about it!

Barbara pursed her lips:

– As far as I understood, we continue visiting various churches. Looking for someone with burning eyes who talks about the Coming. Great!

– I’m so sorry that you’re wasting your time on me.

– Actually, that’s interesting, though a little strange. Let’s go!

Barbara did not yet figure out where they should go next. They just walked down the street. Eutychus, as before, looked at every car in surprise and gazed at the people passing by. After some time, the young man asked in a whisper:

– Barbara, are they priests?

– Priests? Why do you think so?

– They are so... – Eutychus spread his arms to the sides, – they are big. In temples we had such priests who like feasts. People in our city think that they eat all the food that is brought to the gods, though some still believe that it is eaten by hungry gods. But you can’t say it out loud, you can be sent to jail for disrespecting the temple.

– Eutychus, today food is no longer a problem. And there are many overweight people in the world. Some of them are really priests in the temple of food, – Barbara smiled at her witty joke, – and some simply problems

with metabolism, and they are struggling with their weight all the time.

– These people cannot change food for something else and they have to eat it?

– O-o-h, they are not priests, okay?

Passing by another shop window, Eutychus felt a nice smell coming from there. He slowed down a little, he had not eaten for a long time and even felt a little dizzy as they were quickly walking to the next church.

– Are you hungry?

Eutychus looked away in embarrassment. He certainly wouldn't mind eating a piece of flatbread with fish. Barbara took him by the hand and led him into the diner.

– Now we will introduce you to a typical cuisine of the XXI century.

– I don't know if I have enough money to buy food.

Barbara laughed.

– You are the brightest thing that has happened to me over the past several years, for sure. Do you think we should ruin this adventure by your hungry faint? Let's go, I'll treat you, you're a guest here.

A moment later, Barbara handed Eutychus a huge sandwich stuffed with all sorts of delicious things. With some trembling, he took the food from the hands of Barbara, then bowed his head and whispered a prayer, and then again looked at his treat with surprise.

– Eat it, stop staring.

– This food smells so delicious, it's so... bright.

– Eat, you will get at least some pleasure from your flight into the future.

The girl watched with a smile as Eutychus was eating the food with pleasure. She hadn't seen anyone eat so fast and greedily. It seemed it took him only twenty seconds, and the sandwich was already gone.

– How delicious!

– You want some more? – asked Barbara, narrowing her eyes.

It was only the beginning of the month, and she, like an average student, could afford to buy a little more. But closer to the end, when what her parents gave her for life was spent, she sometimes ate practically nothing for several days – a lot of money she spent on all sorts of unnecessary things, such as coffee, buns, sweets and makeup.

– No thanks! I don't know how to pay you back anyway.

– Come on, you don't have any cash.

– Cash?

– That's money.

– Why not?

Eutychus put his hand behind the top of his T-shirt. Only now Barbara noticed a small bag that hung around his neck. He deftly took out a coin.

– Unfortunately, I only have one. But this is my

earnings for the last few days. In my time, this would be enough for a flatbread and a dozen small fish, and also to buy some grapes and figs. Probably not enough to pay for such a delicious meal.

Barbara smiled.

– The sandwich at this diner is priceless.

But suddenly an idea came to her. She fussily took out her smartphone and started searching something.

– What are you doing?

– Wait a second.

– Are we going to some other Christians? Are we still looking for the “Way”? You won’t leave me, will you?

– You know... well, here it is! I have an idea. Let’s go to one interesting place. Now, show me that coin. If you have to look for a place to sleep, a little money will not hurt. The coin is old. By the way, what is it called?

– Denarius.

– What is it made of?

– Of silver.

– Well, this coin probably has some value. Would you mind exchanging it to something more common in our area?

– Of course not. You bought me such delicious food! It’s yours.

– Look, I don’t need it. Come, let’s try to exchange it.

Twenty minutes later Barbara and Eutychus stopped at a very interesting shop window. There were paintings, vases, some parchment scrolls, folios, cookware, implements and even a few old rifles. The young people opened the heavy door and, along with the ringing of the bell, went inside.

– What is this? A treasure house? Are you sure we can go inside? – Eutychus looked around frightened.

He had never seen such wealth in his life. It seemed to him that now soldiers would appear from somewhere and tie them up for breaking and entering.

– It's an antique shop. There must be expensive things here, but you can buy any of them. Just be careful not to break any vase, otherwise we will both be provided with an overnight stay in prison – I don't have enough money to cover the cost of even the cheapest thing from this shop.

Eutychus, stepping carefully, followed Barbara. Suddenly, as if from the ceiling, a voice came.

– Hello, young people.

Eutychus nearly died of fright. His heart seemed to jump out of his chest. He grabbed Barbara's hand, and she looked at him in surprise.

– Calm down! What happened to you? It's just a seller.

– Good afternoon, – the girl turned to an elderly man in a plaid shirt and a vest. He put on funny round glasses and approached Barbara with a smile.

– Can I help you? I rarely see such young people in my shop. Are you sure you are in the right place?

– Yes, we came to you.

– Okay. And what are you looking for?

– Is this your shop?

– Yes, I am the owner. I myself like to sell, so I am the owner and a seller in one person.

– Do you buy antiques?

The man looked at them again, paying special attention to Eutyclus. He was still looking around frightened, he could not believe that they were not violating anything at that moment, and from minute to minute he expected some danger.

– I do, but on condition that things are not stolen. Also, I do not accept any jewelry unless you can prove that it belongs to you.

– No, not at all, we didn't steal anything. We... found it, – Barbara lied.

– What did you find? Where?

– Well...my friend was traveling and found something.

– That's an interesting story. Okay, show me what you have. I feel that it is better for me not to know about your journey.

Barbara handed him a coin.

– Here. Take a look.

– What is this? An old silver coin?

– I think it's very old.

– My eyesight is not very good, let me take a magnifying glass and see what you have. It seems to have been in the hands of a myriad of people, it's so dirty, I will wipe it. So...

The owner of the shop went to his table, sat down, diligently wiped the coin with a soft cloth dipped in some kind of liquid. Then he turned on the lamp and began to carefully examine the coin.

– Hmm, curious. It's like a copy of some ancient Roman coin.

– Why a copy?

– Too well preserved. These are made for various collectors.

– What if it's real?

The shop owner laughed.

– Well, I think that if it is real, then it could only fall from the sky when you found it. But you've come to the right person. Some time ago I was seriously interested in coins and encountered fakes every day. If this is really an ancient coin, it is worth a lot of money, but I really doubt it. The condition is too good. So, most likely I will see traces of melting and send you with nothing. But today I'm in a good mood, and it's so boring to be here,

I invite you upstairs to my studio. I'll make you some tea and try to examine your coin. Okay?

– Sure.

– Then follow me. Now I will close the door. There is my phone number, if someone needs me, they will call. Let's go.

They climbed up the narrow stairs. Upstairs it was even more interesting. Everything was simply littered with some kind of antique furniture, boxes with all sorts of old stuff. There was a large table in the corner.

– By the way, my name is Alex, but my youngest daughter always calls me Mister Antiquity. – The man sat down at the table, turned to the closet and began to take out various strange devices from there. – Here I have a stereo microscope with a magnification of 100 times, an X-ray fluorescence spectrometer and something else. I think that you have never seen such equipment before, but I know how to use it.

– Will it take long? – Barbara regretted starting all this.

Now Mister Antiquity will examine everything, then he will say that the coin is a cheap fake, and will offer pennies for it. “What if the coin of a poor man working in the port is really worth nothing?” she thought.

– Don't worry, I'll give you an answer in twenty minutes. Oh, I forgot, I promised you tea. It is because I am so excited, I don't remember the last time I did it.

No one has brought coins from the Roman era yet, – Alex got up, went to the other side of the room, where there was an old electric kettle, which, nevertheless, could easily be one of the exhibits, like everything else in this room. – You sit down, right here, there is a coffee table, and I can put your tea there. Until the water boils, I'll start checking.

– All right, – Barbara said.

Eutychus was silent all this time. The sense of danger had already passed, but he felt uncomfortable in the shop. The young man kept looking around, so as not to hit anything with his elbow or accidentally break it.

– First, let's check the weight. This is the easiest thing, – Alex again sat down at his desk, took out a portable scale and after a moment said: – So, let's write down: 3.66 grams (0,13 oz). Now the diameter... Yeah, 21 (0.82 inch). And now let's look at the coin through my microscope.

There was silence in the room. Alex was carefully looking at it. It seemed an eternity had passed before he looked up. His face became serious and concentrated.

– Hmm, I don't understand. No casting seam...

– Should there be a seam?

– Yes, counterfeit coins usually have it.

– Do you think we are lying to you?

– No. People often come to me who themselves became victims of fraud, and found out about it later.

This is especially true for those who visited one of the countries with the ancient ruins and bought “ancient” coins from local dealers.

– It’s a real coin.

– Well, we will not argue. Now let’s find out.

Alex opened his laptop and after about five minutes he was looking at photos of excellent quality coins. Barbara saw the screen out of the corner of her eye and tried to peer at the photographs. It seems that the man really was a master of his craft and knew where and what to look for. Then he found some images of the spectra. After that, Alex took a box from the shelf and carefully opened it.

– Well, maybe the seam was just scoured well. Let’s see. This device is not cheap, but it helped me many times.

The man took out a device with a small screen and brought it to the coin. Then he compared the image on the screen with the photos on the computer. His face became very serious.

– That’s unbelievable. How can it be in such a good condition? There are not many signs of natural wear. There must be something wrong.

– So, what did your device show you?

– It will take a long time to explain. The coin is silver, and I still can’t figure out what the catch is.

– And if there is none?

– None? – Alex got up from the table.

The kettle had boiled for a long time, but the owner of the antique shop completely forgot about it, as well as about his promise to make Barbara and Eutychus tea.

It was one of those days that antiquarians dream of all their lives. When among the stuff and rubbish that people bring them almost every day you see what has real value, perhaps even historical. You can become famous by discovering something valuable that others could not see, and maybe make some good money. A friend of his, an antiquarian from another city recently saw at a sale an old book with some comments in the margins. For six months now he has been traveling to various places, showing at exhibitions one of the rarest folios of English literature of the 16th century. Moreover, with the comments of such a famous person... That's like a dream! They write about you in newspapers, you get phone calls from experts, all these verifications, conferences are waiting for you. How much Alex would like to have at least one thing that could really evoke such interest! And now this coin. What if it's a fake? But many years of experience could not fail. Everything pointed to the fact that the coin was genuine. It really could cost a fortune and become a subject of interest for many collectors. But how come these young people have it?

– Let me call my friend. I need advice.

– All right, – Barbara said. Eutychus nodded.

The man took out his phone and went downstairs so that they would not hear him. He returned five minutes later. He sat down at the table again and began to examine the coin under a microscope, then he maximized the images of the coin on the laptop. He looked through the microscope and at the screen, then again analyzed the spectra and examined the coin: “The inscription on the architrave of the triumphal arch, the rider is holding a spear, here are the prisoners with their hands tied behind their backs.” Finally, Alex took a deep breath and said:

– It looks like you have a genuine coin.

– I told you! – Varvara was delighted. – Can you buy it from us?

– How much do you want?

– We don’t know how much it costs.

– It is expensive.

Barbara shrugged her shoulders. “How much does it cost?” – she thought. “It would be great to get \$50 for it. Enough for a hotel for Eutychus and a good dinner.”

– Here is your coin.

– Aren’t you going to buy it?

– I need to think a few minutes, and I’ll ask you to wait downstairs. Oh, I’m sorry, I absolutely forgot about tea.

– It’s okay, – Barbara waved her hand.

“There must be something else except devices in this room,” thought Barbara. They went downstairs.

Alex started thinking. It seemed to him that it would be easy wrap these two around finger. But professional ethics did not allow him to do so. It was beneath his dignity to deceive the simpletons. When he met people like that, he usually gave them at least a quarter of the value of a coin. This was what his conscience allowed. Many times Alex’s relatives scolded him for such an attitude. “It’s just buying and selling. You named a price, they agreed. It’s their problem! Why are you paying air-heads so much money?” But he was educated differently. Maybe that’s why it has been so hard to run a shop and pay bills for the last few months. Progress does not stand still: you have to make your own website, blog on social networks, and Alex was in this shop all the time, waiting for good luck. But today it seemed that he was on a roll. Or... now he is about to pay a huge amount of money for a fake. His wife won’t forgive him. Hoping to have a good deal, Alex always kept a significant amount of money in an antique shop. It was well hidden upstairs, and even a thief could not find it. A few minutes later the steps of the antiquary were heard on the stairs.

– Finally, – Barbara said quietly to Eutychus.

As it turned out, they spent almost an hour here, this was not at all part of their plans.

– Well... Where is your coin?

– Here it is. Are you buying?

Alex looked at it again. Upstairs, sitting at the table, he imperceptibly put a dot on the coin, so that he knew it was exactly the one he had examined before. Five hundred dollars that he lost six years ago was a good lesson. The sellers swapped the antique coin, and he bought something completely different from what he was looking at. So, this won't work now. The coin was glittering in his hand. "Well, without risking, we risk even more," he remembered the old saying which he repeatedly recalled at such moments.

– I'm willing to pay you fifteen hundred dollars for it.

– What?! – Barbara's eyes widened in amazement.

– How much?!

– One and a half. Is it not enough?

The girl was speechless. Eutychus could not understand what was happening, he only looked in bewilderment first at Barbara, then at the old antiquary. The man pulled out a small stack of some pieces of paper and was holding them in his hands.

– Is it that expensive?

– In some circles, it is. I don't even know how much expensive. But I can't offer you more. Are you selling?

Barbara looked at Eutychus. He shrugged his shoulders. Then she waved her hand.

– Yes, we are selling. Thank you! – The girl took the money and put it in her pocket.

- If you have something else, I'm always happy to see.
- It is unlikely. Thanks again. We will go.
- Take care.

Still unable to believe what has just happened, Barbara walked backwards towards the door, Eutychus followed her. When they were outside, the girl silently took his hand and quickly walked down the street. When they moved about fifty meters away, she suddenly began to jump and laugh, and then hugged Eutychus.

- Wow! That's an adventure! What a deal!

The young man still could not understand the reasons for her joy.

– Now you are a rich man, Eutychus. I think that we can diversify your stay in this place.

- Me? You say rich?

– Well, yes. One and a half grand! For a piece of silver! This is shocking! That's cool! Are you sure you don't have more coins?

- No, there was only one. One and a half grand?

– Oh yes, these gaps in your knowledge! Bucks! Greens! How can I explain? Remember when you ate a sandwich?

- Sure, it was very tasty.

– So, this is almost one and a half thousand sandwiches. You will eat all year long. Can you imagine?

– Is that the worth of those pieces of paper that the owner of the shop gave you?

- Yes, this is money, paper money.

– It is not gold or silver?

– No, it's just green, and that's cool.

– And why are these pieces of parchment more valuable than my silver coin?

– It is hard to explain. Think of it as promissory notes, that's why they're so valuable.

– Do we owe someone?

– We don't, it's like someone owes us. Anyway, now we can just spend this money without thinking about the problems. So, are you ready?

– I wish I could go back home...

Barbara forgot about everything. She was so excited about the money that was in her hands that she completely forgot she was actually walking around the city with some strange guy who claimed he had come from the past. "But the coin turned out to be real," a thought suddenly pierced her mind. "What miracles are happening today! How did Eutychus get here? Is he really from the past?" But an old student habit of having fun whenever possible took over, so the girl sighed again and said:

– All right, I have a plan. We'll change, call a taxi and visit some churches. Maybe we can find a priest or a pastor there, you will get in touch with the representatives of modern Christianity, who knows, maybe you will get some understanding. And we will definitely get something delicious in a super cool place. And then we'll decide what to do next.

– Okay.

Eutychus still could not understand why Barbara was so enthusiastic, but he didn't really have a choice either. The girl was tapping her tablet, saying “well, well... okay, get it.”

– Let's go!

– Where?

– We will get new clothes.

– But I...

– Do not argue! I saw the pastor staring at that old bag with your garment in it. You look a little unusual for your age. Let's go, it's not far!

– All right!

After about 10 minutes they came up to a busy intersection. Eutychus blanched again, trying to stay as close to Barbara as possible. On the corner, there was a six-story building with a beautiful facade and shop windows. In a moment they were inside.

– What is this? – the young man looked up at the glass roof on the sixth floor. – Is it another temple?

– A shopping mall. Temple of all nations.

– Really?

– No, I'm kidding. I'm sorry.

– What is this? What is this mechanism? Moving stairs! – Eutychus saw an escalator nearby.

– Let's go, you'll see. We need to go up to the second floor.

A moment later, holding tightly to Barbara's hand and staggering, Eutychus was going up the escalator. Barbara even grimaced with pain.

– Don't be so scared! You're going to break my arm now!

– It seems to me that this thing can drag me inside.
– Eutychus immediately remembered all the accidents that happened in the port when he worked there.

Sometimes a careless worker, when mooring, unloading ships or repairing masts, could simply be crushed or hit with something. Unfortunately, there were many accidents. His father...

– Now just take a step. And that's it! Oh, look, and you were so scared.

– Does it only move in one direction? How do we go down?

Barbara sighed.

– Just trust the intelligence of the builders. Let's go now!

They passed large boutiques luring with yellow and red 'Sale' stickers and those numbers that can never be trusted.

– There are so many goods! So many changes of fine clothes!

– Well, it's not the finest that you see here. You haven't been to City Plaza yet. And this – just mass market.

– Mass market?

– Well, in a sense, for ordinary people.

– Anyone can buy these clothes?

– Not every day, but once or twice a month you can come and get something new.

– So, this is... How many changes of clothes do you have? – Eutychus asked unexpectedly.

– Changes of clothes? – Barbara laughed. – Okay, fine. Don't explain, I understand what you mean. Fifteen, probably. That is not counting the outdoor wear.

– Fifteen changes of clothes?! That is so many. Why so many?

– To support the manufacturer. Well, that's a joke. Although the whole economy, as far as the teacher explained it to us, rests only on this. Consumption, consumption... I will buy from the seller, he will buy a car for himself, the dealership manager will buy a new house, and so the whole world is flooded with clothes, photo frames and utensils that you will use for cooking only twice in your life.... Well, this is from a great perspective. But I buy just for a change. I can't wear the same clothes every day. Anyway, this is quite modest, not that your "priestesses of love." And sometimes when I feel bored or sad, I just go and buy some new thing, and that makes me feel better. It's not as expensive as you think. Do you have your own house?

– Well, yes.

– And I don't have it and probably won't in the near future. And you say – change of clothes.

– Well, we have a small house.

– In this city, the smallest house will cost... I don't know how much. But I'm sure that's expensive, very expensive. Food, clothes are not a problem. And for the rest of the benefits of civilization you need to work hard.

Suddenly Barbara felt Eutychus slow down again and leaned on her.

– What did you see? What's that now?

– What is this? Why are there statues without a face? Are these products dedicated to idols?

– What? Ah, mannequins. No, this is just to show how the clothes will look on you.

– But all people are different. These mannequins are so tall.

Barbara sighed.

– Now you learned about the secrets of trading. Mannequins are not only tall, but also slender.

– But without a face.

– Yes, the main thing is that the eyes are large, the lips are plump, the skin is flawless, the nose is not crooked, the teeth are snow-white, and then any face will do.

Eutychus did not answer, because he did not understand what Barbara wanted to say. And he was distracted by the magnificent shop windows.

– By the way, this is the place. Come in.

–What will we do?

– Change clothes. Literally. And for the first time in

our lives, we will buy everything like on a mannequin. You will be the most stylish stranger.

In a moment, with the first smile of the shop assistant Eutyclus and Barbara plunged into the world of shopping. Hearing that they want to try on the look that is on a mannequin, and not just try it on, but buy it, young people were given full attention, they were helped to choose the size. Barbara couldn't help laughing when, after a long pause, Eutyclus, feeling embarrassed, walked out of the dressing room barefoot, with all the buttons unfastened.

– I don't know what to do with this.

The shop assistants looked at each other in bewilderment, but a few minutes later, after wearing the shoes, Eutyclus was standing in front of the mirror.

– Oh, wow! That's a different thing! – Barbara said admiringly, looking at him carefully from all sides.

The young man still felt like fish out of water.

– Do I really need to wear all of this? It's all so weird. And these shoes... It just feels like warrior's shoes.

– It's okay, you'll get used to it. You look great! We take it! Where is the cash register?

Eutyclus tried to put the clothes he got in the park into the bag, but Barbara was adamant:

– What are you doing? We will leave this and your old garments too.

– Are you serious? This tunic...

– Eutychus, we will not walk around with a bag of rubbish. Do you want people to take you seriously?

The young man looked with regret at the load of old clothes and the bag with the tunic which remained in this place forever. But he could not leave his sandals. It was a gift from his uncle and they were much more comfortable than the shiny shoes he was wearing. After a minute of argument, Barbara, with a sigh, asked for a new bag and, putting his sandals in it, and put it all in her backpack.

– Thank you for agreeing to take them. Let me carry your bag.

– This is not a bag, it's a backpack. No, your sandals are not heavy.

– What about the Bibles they gave us? I can help.

– It will spoil your new look a little, but whatever.

Barbara handed him a backpack. Forty minutes later they left the boutique and headed towards the exit.

– We need to drink something refreshing. I love fresh juices, – Barbara stopped at a small shop right at the exit. – Give me two large, orange juices. And straws.

Eutychus continued feeling surprised at everything new that he saw in the shopping mall. He looked at his new, fine, though such uncomfortable clothes, at the huge information screens, it seemed that he could stare at them for hours. And the only thing that surprised Eutychus about the fresh juice was a straw. He still could

not understand anything, it made Barbara laugh again, but in the end a small physics lesson was good.

– During the portocali harvest, we often have this drink in the port.

– Portocali? Ah, oranges! Well, you can indulge at least in something compared to us. All right! Stop talking. I'll get a taxi! We are going to look for Christians. So, where are we going?

Barbara started searching something on her phone again.

– Here... Church with some strange long name. Not far from us, 15 minutes by car. Let's go there, and then we'll go to another part of the city, to that huge new church that I always wanted to look at, but kept passing by. Okay?

Eutychus shrugged. Despite all his new clothes, refreshing juice, he still dreamed of going back home, he did not want to get stuck in this amazing, but frightening city. After doing something on her smartphone, Barbara said:

– All right! The car is here. Let's go!

In a moment they were on the street, and Eutychus breathed a deep breath of relief. The air in the shopping mall was strange for him. Maybe it was on purpose, so that people buy more? Too many different smells. Like in the tents of some merchants in his city. When you are there, you get puzzled since you do not know where to

look first because of abundance, and you are sure to buy something. Probably nothing changes.

A few minutes later, it was time for another test. A shiny box with windows quickly rushed to the pick-up point. When the door opened, Eutychus crawled into the back seat as if it were a cave. To Barbara's laughter and the driver's wary glances, he finally sat down, feeling sweat covering his forehead. Barbara sat next to him. A moment later, she felt pain again as the young man grabbed her hand in fear, catching hold of her backpack with another hand.

– Don't be so scared!

– This chariot is moving so fast!

– I'm glad we don't need to go by train. Otherwise, you would die of fear.

Eutychus watched in surprise as the driver deftly turned a wheel and pulled some kind of rod, and this large metal box obediently followed where it was steered. However, he couldn't get rid of stress for the rest of their short trip – the vehicle was too unusual. Only once in his life did he happen to unload racing chariots in the port for the upcoming race in the amphitheater, and the whole town came to see those shiny and beautiful chariots. And, of course, everyone remembers that performance in the amphitheater... the screams of wounded charioteers and the neighing of horses, excitement, dust and admiration for winners.

Only at the end of the trip Eutychus managed to calm down a bit. They drove in silence. Barbara was thoughtfully looking out the window. She kind of felt uneasy about the fact that she so boldly managed someone's money: she bought clothes, ordered an expensive taxi: "What if he needs it for something more important? What if... sooner or later he will have to look for a place to stay in, think what to do next. I have classes tomorrow. All these walks around the city and excursions to churches cannot last forever. This is all so strange..." Barbara also thought that she, as it turned out, had nothing of value in her life that she could share. Eutychus at least has his "Way" that he is looking for, but she... Relations with parents leave much to be desired, money – only for a week ahead, studying that she doesn't like, no beloved... Even compared to this alien from the past, her life looked so empty in this big city.

But an incredible student ability to forget long-term problems and focus on the present day with all its delights again took over. In a moment they were standing in front of the gates of another church building with an exciting expectation of new knowledge and discoveries. Young people examined a beautiful snow-white facade, a modest cross on a single tower, but, as they approached the main entrance, they found out that the door was closed.

– My, it must be closed. We won't even get inside. That is it. I was sure that there is always someone in

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the church. What if a person wants to pray, he stops here and... it's closed? How so? Barbara frowned in disappointment. – I shouldn't have sent the taxi away...

– Our carriage driver will not come back for us?

– Carriage driver? Rider? – the girl smiled. – Don't worry, this one won't come back – another one will come. As long as you have money, someone will definitely pick you up.

– What does it say? – Eutychus pointed to the bulletin board next to the church.

– Let's read. Maybe we'll find out when the church is open.

They approached the board, they saw few notices.

– So, in the middle of the week there is some kind of Bible lesson, on Friday there is a service. Another health club and a family support group, one more club meeting... Look how many different clubs they have! And this, this is strange, – Varvara said, – it says the main service is on Saturday. Are they really Christians?

– What's so strange? – Eutychus asked. – Is there any other way?

– Sure! The rest gather on Sunday, and these are some... Jews. Are these really Christians?

– Wait, I'm confused, – Eutychus said. – What do you mean by saying they gather on Sunday? On the venerable Day of the Sun? It's a pagan holiday! God commanded to keep the Sabbath holy!

– Oh, I am not really good at knowing all the details. I know that Christians have the main service on Sunday. Jesus was resurrected on this day, wasn't he? That's why they keep this day holy.

– Yes, Jesus was resurrected on the first day of the week, because on Saturday he rested in the tomb according to the commandment, this is what the elders told in the house of Melania's father...

For a moment Eutychus remembered the face of the one to whom his heart was attracted. It would be great to see those curls again.

– What difference does it make what day to celebrate? – Barbara brought him back down to earth. – The main thing is that people are nice.

– No, it's a pagan holiday. We cannot unite with these atheists! Terrible things happen in pagan temples on Sunday...

– Hey, there are no pagans now, don't be anxious.

Suddenly the door opened, and a woman of about fifty showed up. She went out, took out the keys, slightly pressing the massive door with her knee, closed it and was about to leave without noticing the young people near the bulletin board.

– Good afternoon! – Barbara said loudly.

The woman turned her head definitely frightened.

– Oh, how you scared me! I did not see you.

Barbara and Eutychus came closer.

– I'm sorry we scared you.

– Never mind. I clean in the church, now I'm done and I was going home. Are you guys having a meeting with the pastor?

– No, we came by chance. We just thought it's always open here.

– Unfortunately, not always. As a rule, there is someone here in the evenings. You know, this virus... before it, almost every evening, someone was here. And, you know, people rarely come to us by chance, this is not the center of the city, and... well, how to say... not the most popular church in the city. Moreover, people are too busy now. By the way, my name is Valentina.

– I am Barbara, and this is Eutychus. So, the pastor comes in the evenings?

– Well, if someone wants to attend a Bible lesson. It's like a private Bible study.

– What else is interesting in the church?

– Lots of things! Come on Saturday.

– Yeah, we were just discussing what difference it makes on what day the service is held.

– Oh, it makes a huge difference! – The woman's eyes lit up. – After all, the Bible commands us to keep the Sabbath holy.

– Yes, I already understood that.

– Maybe that's why not so many people come here. Following the principles of the Bible is not a trend today.

– Of course, – Barbara nodded, – I study on Saturdays. How can I come to your church?

– Well, it's always a matter of priorities... But we don't always preach about Saturday. Many people think that we do not discuss any other topics. But we also believe that Jesus is coming soon.

– Maranatha! – Eutychus exclaimed. – This is true!

The woman looked at the young man in surprise, he had been silent all the time.

– Do you think so too?

– Of course, we only talked about this, and the apostles ...

Eutychus was embarrassedly silent. He was not going to retell his story – he is unlikely to be believed.

– It's good that you believe it. Yes, both Jesus and the apostles preached about it. But modern people think little about it, even after global shocks like fires or pandemics.

– Do you have a prophet?

The woman's eyes lit up again.

– Yes, we have. Although many people think it's strange. Her books do not replace the Bible, but we value them. The church has received many blessings through her ministry. And, despite the fact that she died more than a hundred years ago, her writings are still relevant.

– So... – Eutychus only realized that they were talking about a person who is no longer alive. – I didn't

mean that. I am in a difficult life situation, and I wanted the prophet to tell me what to do.

– So, talk to the pastor, he will tell you.

– Is he a prophet?

The woman smiled.

– Well, not only the prophets can help. God gives wisdom to other people as well.

– No, everything is too complicated with him,

– Barbara waved her hand, – no human help will be enough.

– I would not despair. In fact, the Bible has everything we need to solve our problems. Also, many things are revealed through the prophet.

– Well, let's say you, – Barbara decided to argue a little, – when you need to buy something expensive or make an important decision, for example, change a job, what do you do? The Bible doesn't say anything about your job or buying a laptop. I think that a hundred years ago the prophet did not understand anything in the current situation. Should I take a mortgage or not? How to choose a profession that brings good income?

The woman did not expect so much pressure.

– Well, I'm not a pastor, I just clean in the church and also sing in the choir. Maybe I don't know everything about these matters, but I think that the Lord still answers prayers today. In addition, there are universal principles in the Bible that help you make wise decisions.

Moreover, there is a community where we can share everything with our brothers and sisters. Many of them had rough life experience, they can tell how God answered their prayers. You can ask in the prayer group to write down your request and pray about it. You will see that God can do the impossible.

Barbara shook her head. It was all so... vague. She wanted specifics. What should she do with Eutychus? How to send him home? All these long procedures: pray, read the Bible, wait for the answer...

– Do you have home churches? – asked Eutychus, who was not participating in the discussion.

– Sure, we have. In different parts of the city. And not just here, all over the world. Our congregations can be found in almost every city, and they are all following the Bible, waiting for the soon Coming of Christ.

– Oh, just like the Way.

– Which way?

– Uh, he... he just remembered something, – Barbara cut in. – Well, thank you for your time. We will come by someday.

– Come, by the way, we have an account on social network. And youth meetings are held on Saturday evenings. Come, please come!

– Thank you.

A minute later they were alone again. The silhouette of Valentina disappeared.

– Um, what are we going to do next?

– Barbara, these Christians are like those in the “Way”! They have home churches too! And they are waiting for the return of Jesus!

– So what? How can they help us?

– Maybe we should really pray to God and He will work a miracle?

– You already prayed. Let’s go and eat, and then we’ll go to that big church in an expensive area. Maybe we’ll get some answers.

Eutychus nodded silently. Barbara ordered a taxi which arrived three minutes later. And in a moment, the young man felt his heart beating fast.

They got out near the monumental building in the center with an expensive advertising on the facade.

– We need the top floor. Come on, don’t be scared! – Barbara led Eutychus inside.

This time he faced a new challenge – an elevator overlooking the street. But, to Barbara’s surprise, now Eutychus was not frightened. His experience of fixing sails when he worked part-time in the port made itself felt – the young man was not scared of heights. The door opened and they went out onto the terrace with a wonderful view of the city. There was also one of the most expensive restaurants.

The waitress greeted them with a smile and pointed to the empty tables.

– I haven’t been here for so long, – said Barbara, but her face was sad because of not the most pleasant memories.

Students seldom visit such places, only the richest, and the place itself is not a party spot. But if students do come, there must be some good reason, some kind of event where you can afford a little more for grant money. Or someone can invite a young girl to such a restaurant, trying to impress her – the action that would be enough exactly until the next morning. Sometimes a little longer... But why did she bring Eutyclus here? She could have chosen another restaurant. Barbara did not know. Actually, no, she still found a reason. It was one of those expensive restaurants where they serve large portions. Really large. They must have saved money on something else, maybe the soap dispensers in the bathrooms were not gilded, but visitors had a chance to have a hearty meal.

– Well, what shall we order?

Eutyclus shrugged.

– Here’s the menu, take a look! What would you like to eat? The food here is very tasty. Let’s finally celebrate your coming, I don’t know...

Barbara laughed.

Eutyclus felt uncomfortable. Of course, when some of the rich people who joined the “Way” movement had a feast in their homes, they generously treated everyone, but

people ate only what was served on the tables. On his own, Eutychus chose only fish, vegetables, greens in the market, sometimes he bought meat when he could earn a little more. He picked up the menu and looked at it in surprise:

– Are there pictures of everything that you can try? Did someone draw it for us? They are like real.

– Oh, these are photos. Now only very assiduous people draw pictures. Now you take a smartphone, take a photo, printed it out – and that's it.

– Print it out?

– This is such a thing that draws pictures by itself. You just tell it what exactly you need.

– Marvelous!

– So, I think that most of the dishes are not familiar to you. Let me help you. Okay?

– Of course, I'll happily eat whatever you choose.

– Then, let's take these appetizers, this salad, this one... and this, – Barbara ran her finger over the menu. – And, of course, a dessert, their specialty. It is very tasty.

– Are you ready to order? – said the waitress who appeared as if from nowhere.

Yes, we'll take bruschetta with chicken pate – one serving, carpaccio with venison, panzanella with sardines, pork ribs – two servings and shrimp. We'll order dessert a little later. And a drink...

– Barbara, – Eutychus hesitantly tried to intervene.

– What? Do you want to order something?

– No, I just wanted to say that I don't eat pork.

Barbara looked at him in surprise.

– Well, at least you're not a vegetarian. Otherwise why am I ordering all these delicious things for you? Excuse me, can we replace pork ribs with something. Do you eat beef? She turned back to Eutychus.

– I do.

– What would you recommend, only without pork?

– I would suggest beef medallions.

– Fine. We'll have two servings.

– All right. What would you like to drink?

– Bring us lemonade. A pitcher.

– Sure. Thank you for your order. I'll leave the menu here for you.

– Yes, we will choose desserts a little later. One is enough.

– Okay.

The waitress left.

– Well, what kind of diet do you stick to? Tell me. You don't eat pork in your area?

– No, people do it pork, but it is prohibited in the "Way" movement.

– Oh, is that because of the Jews! – Barbara guessed. – Well, they may not eat it themselves, but why do they forbid you?

– The apostles taught us that Scripture is for all people, not only for Jews.

– Your Bible tells about offering sacrifices, and many other things. Should I do everything?

Eutychus was confused because of the pressure.

– The apostles...

– Apostles, apostles... You need to think for yourself, not what the apostles say.

– But the Bible that contains the letters of the apostles. After all, they learned from Jesus Himself, why should I not believe them?

– Aw, come on...

– It's just that there are some... universals in the Scriptures (Eutychus remembered the word that he heard several times in his life, but was not quite sure that he exactly understood its meaning). That is, some things that are suitable for all people. And there are some only for the chosen people, or somethings that what was fulfilled through Jesus – this is what the Apostle Paul said.

– Everything is so complicated, but one thing is clear: you won't try pork ribs. Okay, your loss. I'll come back in a minute, you too should go and wash your hands before eating, this is the trend now.

– Trend?

– A habit. Everyone does it, even students.

Barbara disappeared. A moment later, a carafe of lemonade and snacks were on the table. All accompanied by a smile of the waitress. The girl deftly poured lemonade and asked:

– Would you like something else?

Eutychus shook his head, feeling his mouth fill with saliva. Only now he realized he would not mind having some rest – this endless day exhausted him.

Barbara came back and pointed at the restroom. Fortunately, an older man in an expensive business suit was in this room at the same time. He glanced sideways at this young man who was dressed so well, but had tangled long hair. This guy glanced at him every time he opened the tap, took soap, and when the dryer turned on, he nearly fainted from fear. “Oh what times!” the man thought. “These IT junkies come to such expensive restaurants, is this one stoned or something? Now young people are kind of sluggish; they come alive in front of the computer, but in real life they are as slow as molasses.”

When Eutychus returned, salads had already been served table. Barbara was sipping lemonade and smiling.

– Oh, I forgot to explain you what is what. But I hope you handled it. Take the lemonade, it’s wonderful.

Eutychus nodded. The lemonade was really great.

– So, shall we eat? Main courses will be served a little later.

– We need to pray.

Barbara looked at Eutychus in surprise.

– Pardon?

– Thank the Lord for the food.

The girl sighed.

– In a restaurant? I hope you are not going to kneel or raise your hands?

– But it's God who gives us food. In the "Way" they teach to offer a prayer of praise before every meal.

– Way, way... Fine, pray now, just don't stand up.

Eutychus prayed, and soon they were enjoying appetizers and salad. The waitress helped to arrange everything on the plates. The young man quickly got used to using a fork, and after a few minutes there was nothing on his plate.

– Good enough for you?

– Yes, thank you.

– Well, it's your money, actually. So, thank you.

– Is this how much we bought with one coin?

– We haven't spent even 10% of what we have.

So, the most interesting is ahead.

Soon Barbara watched in surprise beef medallions disappear from the plate.

– Do you want shrimp?

– No, we don't eat that either.

– I'm shocked! Then we'll order another portion of medallions. Do you like it?

– Yes, I wouldn't mind. I think I can eat a whole cart of food.

The waitress was already standing nearby as Barbara looked up to call her.

- IN A RESTAURANT?
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- WAY, WAY... FINΞ,
PRAY NOW, JUST DON'T
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- Another portion of these goodies, please.
- Sure. It will take some time.
- No problem.

Eutychus did not remember ever eating such delicious food in his life. It was like an explosion of taste in his mouth. He felt new strength in his legs. The young man was ready to continue to search for the way home again. Looking out the window, he suddenly remembered his family, and got carried away thinking about them...

- Eutychus!
- Yes, Kalampedis!
- What do you say, we made good money unloading this Roman ship, didn't we?

Two comrades were on their way from the port, walking through dark streets. Their shoulders and knees ached, but they managed to earn several coins. It did not happen often, but on that day they were lucky. Eutychus dreamed of getting home and plopping down on his bed.

- Not bad. If only such ships sailed here every day...
- Did you see lots of good things there?
- Dozens of bags and boxes. And how much delicious food...
- Eupymides wanted to steal a pouch of spices, but received a good lash for it.

– He got off easy. Did you see the guards? I can't remember seeing so many guards.

– Big money, brother. You need to keep an eye on what you have. Well, I'll go this way. See you tomorrow!

– See you.

Kalampedis turned left, Eutychus went on past the houses of the poor area. Delicious smells of homemade stew were coming out of small windows and doorways covered with old burlap. Eutychus was hungry like the wolf and hoped to eat at least a piece of flatbread as soon as he gets home. Yesterday was a bad day for the longshoremen; he earned so little that he didn't even have enough to buy fish. But now... This money was enough for a whole week! Now they can even buy some dishes, since they had few left...

– Hey, young man! Come here!

Two drunken soldiers appeared as if out of nowhere. One of them grabbed Eutychus by the collar, the second took out a sword.

– What are you doing here? Are you going to steal something?

– I just finished my work at the port. I live here, not far away.

Without any warning, another soldier hit Eutychus on the neck.

– At the port, you say? You're a dirty thief, that's what you are. What did you steal there today?

– I’m not a thief. I was unloading the ship.

– It means you are a thief!

– I...

Another strike on the neck silenced Eutyclus.

– If you’re not a thief, get the soldiers a drink.

– I don’t have...

– Yes, you surely have a coin for us. Won’t you support the soldiers? Come on, don’t be greedy.

Eutyclus did not try to escape. The soldier’s strong hand squeezed his neck tightly. Another one searched him. Soon he was holding coins in his hand.

– Oh, you bastard! Look how many coins you have, and you didn’t want to share with the soldiers?

Another strike. Everything went dark.

Eutyclus came to his senses in a minute. The soldiers disappeared. His small sack for the coins lay on the ground. The young man bent down wearily and picked it up. Tears rolled down his dirty cheeks. His neck and ribs hurt, he was all in pain after the attack. He was exhausted by work which turned out to be completely in vain. “What will I tell my family? Again, no money – no food. My mom, brother and sister will go hungry again tomorrow.”

Weeping, Eutyclus sat down on the muddy road and leaned against the wall of someone’s house. But, remembering that his mother always worried about him, he found strength and went home.

His mother was already waiting for him at the door; brother and sister were sleeping. Seeing the question in her eyes, the young man shook his head without saying a word and, sighing, headed towards his bed. Rumbling made it difficult to fall asleep, but tiredness took over, and he fell asleep...

– Hey, what’s up? – Barbara looked at him in surprise.

Tears rolled down Eutychus’s cheeks. He shuddered, looked around and quickly wiped his eyes.

– I just remembered my family – my mother, my brother and sister. They will be hungry if I don’t earn money in the port, but I overeat here...

– Yes, but don’t worry so much. Is there no one to take care of them? Maybe your friends from the “Way” will help?

– They feed the hungry, but a person has to come and take the food when it is handed out.

– Anyway, you can’t do anything now. We won’t starve just because someone is starving, will we?

– I need to go back home. They need my help.

– We’ll work something out, don’t worry. Now let’s have some rest, have a snack and with new strength we can go and look for your “Way”.

Barbara herself did not believe that she could actually help this guy from the past in any way, but she was not going to spoil the day with problems that could not be solved.

– Now, it's time for the desserts, and we can hit the road. What would you like?

– What are desserts?

– Well, this is something sweet.

– Honey?

– Well, can be honey or sugar.

– I love flatbread with honey.

– Okay, I see. I'll order something for you.

– All right.

Barbara ordered two different desserts. When they were served, she divided them up evenly.

– You should try both. They are amazing. I wish we had some tea...

– Would you like tea? – the waitress looked at Barbara with a smile.

– Yes, bring us a teapot and two cups, please.

– Sure.

– And we would like to pay the check.

– Sure.

The desserts disappeared from Eutychus' plate even before a pot of tea appeared on the table.

– Yes... it's... really tasty. So sweet! What's the name? I would try this again.

– Now?

– No, another time.

– You turned out a sweet tooth. Creme brulee. Remember it.

– Creme brulee, creme brulee. And the other one?

– This is a brownie.

– Brownie. I think I can remember it.

– Don't worry, I won't leave you in trouble. I will remind you the names of your favorite dishes. You haven't tried cheesecake and eclairs yet... it's like to start life all over again. This is some fresh feeling. Sometimes I feel so bored of everything, I've already been everywhere, seen so much in this boring city...

– If you came to my city, I would treat you to flat-bread with figs. This is delicious!

– No, thank you. I think with my ability to get into all sorts of troubles my future would look grim in your city.

– I would help you. You could...

– I could what?

– Well... engage in trade.

– You mean sell cabbage in the market? My parents sent me to study in university so I could have a brighter future, but it seems like I will end up working as a secretary or... in the market. That's an option too.

– Is that bad?

– Secretary – yes. Market – so-so. If only...

– What would you like to do?

– I don't know. I love to travel. It is interesting to go somewhere in good company.

– Traveling is dangerous.

– It depends on where you go. I love it where there is no danger. The sea, light breeze in your face...

– But that's not work.

– Why? There is such a job. Travel blogger. Both work and rest. This is a dream job. Use your camera, poste the pictures, and get the money.

Eutyclus did not quite understand who and for what gets the money, but he would definitely change his job at the port for something easier. However, for this you need to be from a wealthy family, learn to read and write, then you can get a job as a merchant's assistant or even open your own shop in the market, have several slaves, a good house, and he could ask Melania's hand in marriage...

– Hey, you seem to be daydreaming. Shall we go now? There is still so much to do today. This day seems to be endless.

While Eutyclus was dreaming, Barbara paid the check and left a generous tip.

They went outside, the sun moved to the west.

– So, did you like the restaurant?

– Yes, I feel like I ate for the whole week ahead.

– Yes, I have this feeling too, but you yourself know that this is not true.

They both laughed.

– A person can't eat so much that he doesn't get hungry anymore. It would be great if one could eat a lot and have some reserves for at least a week ahead. You can work, study and not even think about food. That would be very convenient for students. While you have food, you make a good supply of it, because later there won't be any. But we are created in a different way, with no reserves for the future.

– The apostles taught that God always gives enough food for every day. So that we do not forget that we are totally dependent on Him and He sustains us. For a person may stock up on good things for a week and forget about God. Until he has a need for something.

– Maybe you're right. Although some supply does not hurt, especially money.

– Do we still have some money left? You can take them if you need.

– No, – Barbara said embarrassed, – you might need more. I need to think about my supplies myself. Now, let's take a walk to the corner of the street, and then we'll call a taxi and go to that big church.

They were walking down the street. Eutychus no longer tried to avoid people walking towards them. His eyes fell on a couple of neat people standing near some metal shield with bright pictures on it. They were quietly talking to each other, glancing at passers-by from time

to time. One image showed a praying man and a Bible.

– Who is this? – Eutychus asked his companion.

– Where?

– Over there.

– Don't point! These are witnesses.

– Witnesses? That's great! The apostles called us all witnesses. Do they tell people about God?

– Well, kind of... But they're a little weird.

– Why?

– They stand there all day long. They used to go from house to house and scare people.

– Are they dangerous?

– I don't think so, you just need to be careful that they don't drag you into a sect. But if you want, let's talk to them.

– Drag into a sect? What's that?

– Well, these small groups that meet in homes, know all the secrets and slowly impose their ideas on you. Then you will abandon your family, give them all the money... Something like this...

– People thought the same about the “Way” movement. But we were not hiding from anyone; anyone could come and join us. Let's talk to them. What if they help me?

– Okay. But I'll keep quiet. Talk to them yourself.

Eutychus and Barbara approached a stand with colorful magazines.

– Good afternoon. Are you interested in any topic? You can take a magazine, it's free. We have it in different languages.

– Yes, I...

Eutychus did not even notice when the latest issue of the magazine was in his hand. In amazement he was turning the pages that were so pleasant to the touch.

– This one tells about Jehovah's Kingdom. By the way, there is also a magazine for young people like you. It's about relationships and much more.

– No, this one is also interesting.

Eutychus continued flipping through the magazine. Barbara stood nearby, she was tense, shifting from foot to foot. It was difficult for her to meet new people.

– Do you know what the name of God is? – the woman asked.

– Of course, Jesus the Messiah.

The woman frowned in disappointment. The man took up the conversation.

– The Bible says that the name of God is Jehovah. And only He can accept worship from us. We cannot worship any created being.

– Of course, – Eutychus said enthusiastically, – the apostles taught that all these gods in the temples are just statues.

The young man checked himself, wondering if he said too much. The man and woman looked at each other.

– It's just that Jesus left us a wonderful example. He never demanded worship.

Eutychus finally began to understand what the point of this conversation was.

– You don't believe in the Lord Jesus, do you?

– No, why? We believe. It's just that only Jehovah can accept worship, not a created being. God could not die.

Eutychus and Barbara did not notice when another man approached and started listening attentively to their conversation. But suddenly he decided to join the conversation:

– Excuse me, I have just heard that you do not believe that Jesus is the Lord and that God Himself died for our sins.

– We have nothing against Jesus. But the Bible does not allow to worship created beings.

– So, God sent a created being to die for us?

– Jesus is the eldest son. He Himself agreed to this.

– Can I tell you a story?

The woman shrugged her shoulders. The man who approached did not wait for permission.

– Do you have children? – he asked, addressing the witnesses.

The man and woman nodded.

– Let's imagine that a mother has two sons. One is older, and the other is a little boy. The eldest is obedient,

kind and calm. The other is constantly making noise, disobeying and rebelling. And then one day, they are walking down the street, the youngest son lets go of his mother's hand and runs out onto a busy roadway. What do you think mom will do? Will she run to save him, or will she tell her eldest son: "Run and save him"?

– Why are you telling this? What does this have to do with God?

– But this is what it is: this is the unique love of God, that God Himself risked everything and came down to us to save us. He didn't look at us from above and didn't say to one of His created beings: "You go and try to do something. If it does not work out, I will create another one." You, my dear, do not understand God's love! And I was at your meetings – it was cold there. You sing songs about Jesus and never shed a tear, because God's love has not melted your hearts yet.

The woman shook her head.

– I think we all lost the essence of what we're talking about. I think you need to come to our meeting to understand that we all love Jehovah. But your story is not about it.

The man who approached waved his hand.

– I've been telling this story to the witnesses for fifteen years, but things haven't got forward an inch. Love cannot send another being to the world we live in. Love itself is the one who goes, it saves, it takes

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risks. When you understand this, all disputes about Jesus will disappear. Maybe we do not comprehend the divinity, but this is not meant for us to understand. However, the important thing is that God Himself came to save us.

Eutychus and Barbara listened attentively to this conversation, looking first at the witnesses, then at the man who told a story. Seeing that it was the dead end for the, he turned around and went on his way.

The man and woman turned to the young people.

– There are different people, and they tell different stories.

Barbara was silent, Eutychus fiddled with the magazine. He wanted to ask about prophets, but there was some awkward silence, and they decided to say goodbye to the witnesses.

– We'll take this magazine. Thank you!

– You're always welcome. If you are interested in anything else, we are often here, come and take more.

The young people turned around the corner.

– What was it? – Barbara asked in surprise. – You seem to have understood something.

– I guess these people do not believe that Jesus is the Lord, the true God. In my town they constantly argue about this when they hear about the “Way”. Some say that Jesus was just a leader of a small group of zealots, others say that He was a famous teacher who was

killed out of envy, but I know that Jesus is the Lord, the Messiah, the King of kings.

– Maybe in history there was such a person as Jesus. My teacher says that even some history books mention Him. That is, most likely He existed. But do you really believe that the virgin could become pregnant in such a way? This is like a fairytale. What if all these stories are just fiction?

– If so, then we have no chance to be saved.

– Saved from what? From whom? Nobody is chasing us.

Eutychus sighed.

– The apostles told that there is someone prowling around us like a lion, looking for someone to devour. Jesus took our sins upon Himself; if it were not so, there would be no hope for people.

– Really? So many years have passed, and we all still live.

– No, so many years have passed, and we still die. The Lord promises us His Kingdom, where there will be no illness, no death... I hope to see my father, – Eutychus looked somewhere into the distance.

– Okay, I don't really believe in the resurrection of the dead.

– You see, all these matters are of secondary importance. The man was right, everything starts with the love of God. When you understand that God Himself

suffered for you and took your sins upon Himself, then you believe other promises that He gave – about eternal life and about the land flowing with milk and honey.

– Milk and honey? Rainbows and unicorns? – Barbara laughed. – Okay, storyteller, come, we have a distance to walk. We still need to find a place for you to stay overnight.

They walked a little further down the street. The sun was getting close to the horizon. Eutychus felt that anxiety about his family chilled his heart again. Barbara, on the contrary, was in an excellent mood. Of course, this was the most interesting day in the last five years.

– Eutychus, you lived by the sea. Surely you could go on a journey with the sailors, am I right? You could see distant countries.

– I could, of course. Nearly every day we got an invitation to become part of a crew.

– So?

– Well, it was a good way to make money fast, but half of the guys never returned home.

– Oh, whoa!

– The most desperate agreed to go. You know, I thought to myself: if it weren't for my family, I would have tried. It might have worked out. I would buy myself a house, open a shop... But the apostles taught that we should be satisfied with our work and daily bread. Nothing is worth risking your life.

– This is how the church suppresses the ambitions of young people...

– No, what are you talking about? The apostles themselves traveled a lot, and there were accompanied by young people. Various things happened to them, they were in prison, the apostle Paul, for example, was beaten more than once. These people also risked their lives, but only for the purpose of preaching about Jesus. Some members of our congregation sold all their property and became traveling preachers.

– What a romance... Nowadays, to make their way in the world, some people pull out all the stops, but the majority simply risk money and invest.

– Invest?

– Well, yes, spend money on various projects hoping that it will bring a good percentage of profit.

– I see, nothing changes. Our merchants offered to invest money in their trade, promising mountains of gold. A neighbor believed one of them and gave him everything he had. When he heard that the merchant's galley sank during a storm, his grieving cry was heard across the street.

– Well, he shouldn't have invested everything he had. If I could, I would invest money in cryptocurrency.

– What is it?

– Just a new trend. How can I explain... it's a way to get rich fast. This is money. Ah, money... this is the

key, a code. I'm not good at explaining things. I'll try again. This is the key. And it's unique.

– And what does it open?

Barbara sighed. She should have told about real estate investments. Everything is simple.

– Look, you have a coin. Or, rather, you had one.

– Yes.

– We exchanged it for green pieces of paper.

– Right.

– In our society they are highly valued, that is, people believe that they can be used to buy and sell everything. On their own, of course, they have no power, unless you use them to start the fire, but no one in their right mind would do such a thing.

– I see.

– So, with the advent of smartphones and the Internet, thanks to which we can keep in touch with people around the world, it became possible to invent new money, and not necessarily paper money. These are just symbols on the phone.

– Oh...

– This is cryptocurrency. If people believe in it, it will become means of payment and its value will increase. I mean, the price of one has skyrocketed, and then fell... And not only of that one.

– And how much can you earn?

– It depends. In some cases, this much, – Barbara

pointed to the sky. – You had one coin, you changed it, made some other financial transactions, and received a thousand or ten thousand instead.

– That’s a lot!

– Yes, and it’s so simple!

– Why doesn’t everyone do this?

– They are probably afraid.

– And you?

– I’m just always late. I’m always the last to know about everything. And to foresee things in advance, I probably need to be a prophet.

– And in our time, people dreamed of finding treasures. When someone hears that a treasure was buried somewhere, in the hills or in the groves, they go there, search, dig up the ground.

– Do they find anything?

– It happened that the did find. But if you let it slip that you found it, robbers might kill you.

– It’s better to keep quiet about your successes. Did you ever dreamed of finding a treasure?

– Of course. I always pick up shiny things I find on the street or at the port. What if that is something valuable? But I don’t have high hopes.

– Maybe you should have asked your prophets?

– Such ideas appeared among some who came to the “Way” for the sake of profit. People know we give offerings, have some revelations. They think prophets

can tell them where to invest money...

– So what about it?

– No, prophets never did it. They told about where to go to preach Christ crucified.

– Eh, they could have told people where the treasure was. Money never hurts.

– Do you need money?

– Not that very much. But I would buy a coin for the future.

– Uh, what's the name...

– Cryptocurrency, yes. I have a university friend, he always persuades me to join.

– Then let's buy it! Is this money enough? Let it be a gift from me.

– Hey, don't rush to throw money away. And we don't have enough for serious crypto. You have to wait for the flashcrash, and then buy a lot and cheaper. And then wait until it grows again. And if it happens, you may never work again.

– Is this good?

– Good or not, it's okay. Just live, travel... that would suit me.

– And if this Internet disappears or this 'tablet' (= a phone) breaks, will it all be over?

– Not really. It won't disappear, and a person will buy a new smartphone first of all, and only then food. This is what life is like now. You can't do anything without it.

– And why does a hungry person need this tablet?

Barbara laughed.

– To call the nearest pizzeria and ask them to deliver him a delicious pizza.

– What if something interrupts this communication... the Internet?

– Then you'll be hungry. All right, let's close the topic. We will not invest in cryptocurrency for now. Let us invest in ourselves, in spiritual education. Let's go look for the next congregation. Although, to tell you the truth, I'm getting bored of talking about God; it would be better if we went bowling or to a quest room. Just don't be offended, but listening to all these discussions about "who believes what" is too much for one day.

– I'm sorry that you have to bother with me.

– It's fine.

– By the way, there's a quest room not far from here, let's go, I'll show you. That's fun!

– Okay, but I forgot...

– About what?

– We talked about money. Could we keep some money for the tithe and offerings?

– I see, you got your mind around this religious topic. Sure, no problem. You can give it all away.

– No, not all. But if we have so much, we can share it with someone and give God what belongs to Him.

– You think this is his money in your wallet?

Are you sure you did not mix anything up?

– God gives life, health, and an opportunity to earn money.

– Forget this. This topic is definitely not for me. Give as much as you want.

The conversation was interrupted. They stopped near a small garden square, Barbara was silently clicking something on her smartphone.

– The quest room is closed. We change the plan. The taxi will be here in about seven minutes. Until then, you can listen to something. Now I will immerse you in the world of modern dance music.

Barbara took out her earphones and handed one to Eutychus.

– Take it.

– What is this? –young man carefully examined the small thing in his palm.

– Orchestra. So tiny. There are people inside, playing musical instruments.

– Really?

Barbara burst out laughing.

– Of course not. I'm sorry, I'm just messing around. Well, there are no mini-musicians inside. Everything's simple. This is music record. As if someone plays, and you can listen to it later again. Or you can download the track from the web. Then invisible waves transmit sound to this thing... Anyway, just listen.

Barbara stuck the earphone into Eutychus's ear, chose a song and enjoyed watchin his pupils dilate.

– Yeah! How do you like it? Cool, right? Now hold the second one, this is my favorite song.

Eutychus was simply overwhelmed with emotions. He had never heard such a strong and clear sound that seemed to come from his head. Without noticing it, the young man began to tap his foot to the rhythm, feeling his whole body vibrate from this music.

Suddenly the sound stopped. Eutychus even shuddered.

– Was it good? Here's another cool track.

A different kind of enchanting music filled everything around. For a moment, Eutychus closed his eyes, and his memories took him to that door which was slightly open and beautiful sounds coming from there.

– Hey, kid!

– Yes, sir.

– Today you and the rest of the guys worked hard. But the work is not finished yet. Can you help me move some things to the temple? I'll give you another sester-tius, which is a lot. Deal?

– Thank you, sir, sure.

Eutychus could hardly move his hands. Unloading

the vessel was very hard, but he had no choice – he needed money more than ever. His sister got sick and had a fever, they needed to buy medicinal herbs. And if they have to call a doctor for help, then... Eutychus shuddered at this thought. They would have to give all the three silver coins that he had managed to save over the past month. But it was exactly for cases like that that he underate and worked until late. He had at least some supply for his poor family. After all, anyone can get sick or injured, for example, in the port. All it takes is one bag falling on your leg, a broken arm or leg, and you will have to stay at home for a month, starving, like the poor Cleon. He was crushed by the cart and his leg was broken. It is not certain if he can return to work at the port.

Eutychus sighed and silently walked towards the master's shop. There were already two guys waiting there, he had met them many times than when unloading vessels.

– Well, now there are three of you. Take these bales and go to the eastern side of the temple. There, at the very end of the wall, near the aqueduct, there is a small door. Knock. When they open, say that these are spices from Dimitrius. And come back here for payment. All right? And do not loiter! If you do a good job, tomorrow I might ask you for help again. But don't go through the poor area! If you are robbed or anything else happens

to these bales, I will sell you to the galleys! Do you understand?

– Of course, sir.

The guys tried to lift the heavy bags, but it turned out to be impossible to do it without mutual help. Gritting his teeth, Eutychus slowly carried his burden. The way seemed unbearably long. The guys were not going to stop for rest, otherwise they would have to lift the bales again. Thirty minutes later they reached the specified place and with relief dropped the load on the floor.

– I can't feel my legs, my back hurts so badly, – the youngest of their company said with a groan.

– I know how you feel, my friend. But this is your fate! – another friend patted him on the shoulder.

Eutychus knocked on the door. There was no answer. He was about to knock again, but suddenly the door opened and a strange man with a shaved head and dull eyes appeared.

– Who's that?

– Spices from Dimitrius.

– Ah... Put it here and get out.

But when he saw how heavy the bales were, he changed his mind.

– Um... I don't want to drag this to the storehouse myself. You, – he pointed at Eutychus, – the oldest and the strongest, will stay and help me. The rest are free.

The young man sighed. Other guys quickly ran back

to the port for the long-awaited payment. Eutychus got inside, the door slammed behind him and it was locked with iron bolt.

– So, take the bale and follow me.

The bald man turned out to be quite strong. He put the bundle onto his shoulder and walked forward.

They passed three turns, climbed several steps, went down to the cellar, passed by another room and found themselves in a large, high-ceilinged and bright room, filled with various goods and products.

– Put it here. While I'm unpacking this, go get the rest. Do you remember where we left it?

– Yes, sir.

– And don't even think about turning anywhere, you shouldn't be here at all.

– Of course, sir.

Eutychus quickly headed towards the exit to get the last bag. He so much wanted to get home! He turned right twice, and was hoping to see a familiar door. But he didn't understand how he found himself in a dark corridor, lit by torches on the walls. The young man tried to go back, but ended up in another dark room. Trying to find the turn he needed, he got completely confused and realized that he was lost in the labyrinths of the temple.

Continuing to wander in the semi-darkness, Eutychus suddenly heard the sounds of music. With every step it became more and more audible. After taking a few

steps, the young man saw another passageway, the music was now louder. A few more steps... Now he could feel some pleasant smells, so strong that he thought he was about to cough. Of course, Eutychus heard about what was happening in the temple. People at the port talked about it, winking at each other, and even invited him to join them. But, knowing that he would have to give the money that his family needed so much, Eutychus never went to the church holidays. And when he joined the “Way” movement, that was out of the question – it was condemned by all who believe in Christ. Eutychus looked around the corner and froze. His heart began to pound like crazy, and he had a lump in his throat because of what he saw. What’s going on here? In the haze he could see naked figures moving to this strange music, everything floated, swayed, fascinated. Some kind of ritual was being performed; the music got louder. From time to time someone made strange sounds, groaning either in pain or pleasure.

Although being terribly scared, Eutychus was drawn to look there again, but then he said to himself: “Get out of here, Eutychus. Now! If they catch you, you will end up in jail.” Feeling his legs like jelly, the young man dashed through several corridors, passages, steps, away from this music. Suddenly he heard in the distance: “Hey, lad! Where are you?” Soon the figure of a man appeared, and he frowned at Eutychus who was out of breath.

– What are you doing?

– I got lost.

– I thought so, bungler.

Looking at him, seeing his flushed face, the man asked suspiciously:

– Have you approached the shrine by any chance? You haven't entered the temple itself, have you?

– No, no, I was just walking fast, trying to find you, when I heard your voice, sir.

– Better watch yourself! You are not allowed to be here! I'll bring the goods myself!

A moment later, Eutychus was on the street, the door slammed. “Ohh, that's a fine kettle of fish!” – he had mixed feelings. No, he will never set foot in the temple again. But now he began to understand why everyone in the port was looking forward to holidays and went to church, and then they came with some strange sparkle in their eyes: “This music, smoking, bodies... All right, now I'll go to the port to get the coveted coin for this work.”

– Hey, are you with me? – Barbara pulled the ear-phone out of Eutychus' ear.

He as if woke up.

– Ah... yes. It's just the music...

– Yes, I see you are blown away. That’s fine. This is how music affects us.

– And you, do you listen to it all the time?

– Almost.

– How can you work or study?

– I can, I’m super-focused and persevering, – Barbara smiled. – It’s just the background, you get used to it, there’s noise on the streets, music, messages. This is what our life is like, Eutychus.

– I wouldn’t do it, honestly. This constant noise gives me a headache.

– You’re just not used to it. I will say this: when the noise is in your head, you don’t notice the noise on the streets as much.

– I didn’t quite understand.

– Forget it, you won’t understand. If only you received 500 messages in a day, reviewed all your YouTube subscriptions, then you would understand! Our car is here – get in, let’s go for a train ride.

Barbara simply ignored Eutychus’ doubtful look. She pulled him into the back seat.

– Let’s go!

– Did you tell the driver where to go?

Barbara showed Eutychus a smartphone. He sighed and shook his head:

– There is only one answer to all questions – this black plate.”

– Well, have you noticed how silent the car is?

– Yes, I'm not that scared.

– Enjoy, this is progress in action! Just don't ask anything, it's just a battery-powered chariot. Okay?

– Batteries?

– The secret power of elements.

– Is it magic? – Eutychus frowned.

– No, don't worry, no witchcraft. Look, just trust me. But I really can not explain this to you.

– All right.

They drove in silence. Eutychus was used to watching the sun and now he was a little tensed as the sun was going down: "How is my family there? When will I go back home?"

Billboards with smiling faces on them were flashing through the window.

– Barbara, who are all these smiling people? Are there so many happy people in your world?

– No, it's just advertising. If you want to sell something, you show your product in the best possible light and try to demonstrate that people love using it. That's why almost everyone in these pictures is happy and smiling. Nowadays, everyone tries to make himself look good, sell himself at a higher price. But this does not mean that all of them are happy. Now, look.

Barbara took out her smartphone.

– These are "pictures" of my friends, we call these

photographs. They are easy to make, I already showed you. Do you see how athletic, neat and happy they all are? But no one knows what is really in their hearts. They may be really happy... Or they are just trying to pretend... to present themselves in a better light.

– Don't you know how your friends live?

– I think I don't know. At least I don't know about these ones who are online. There are a few people with whom I communicate every day in real life, the rest are a mirage. They seem to be there, but who these people are, how they live and whether we need each other – I don't know.

– But in the “Way” movement we...

– Eutychus, don't start. I know you had friendly relations full of love with everyone, but I don't really care.

– Do you think there is no friendship like this in your world?

– I don't know... Every man for himself. But no, what am I saying? Of course, there are friends. Maybe it's just me...

– I wish you to find a good friend.

– Come on, I have friends. I just that I haven't heard from them today.

– Maybe we can pray to God that He will help me find my way home and send the right people to help?

– In a taxi? But we have already prayed. You can do it yourself. You can pray silently, right?

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Eutychus agreed. He turned away and looked off into the distance again. Barbara was thoughtfully scrolling through the Instagram feed, clicking on some photos. They didn't speak for the rest of the trip.

– Well, here we are!

Eutychus looked at the huge church building in astonishment. There were several cars in the parking lot. The doors were open and there were people inside.

– We'll see if they can help us here. Let's go, Eutychus.

Within a moment they were in the lobby. Eutychus looked with interest at a beautiful collage of photos about the life of the church community, and a minute later a smiling young man came up to them.

– Hello!

– Hi.

– Are you here for the youth choir rehearsal?

Barbara shook her head.

– To meet the pastor?

– No, we just popped in.

– That's great! We are glad to see you. Now we will have a big rehearsal for the holiday, you can stay and listen. Is this your first time here?

– Yes.

– Great! Come in, sit where you feel comfortable.

They sat in the back row and began to carefully watch what was happening on stage. Various musicians

appeared there, tuned the instruments, some videos appeared on a huge screen above the stage. Eutyclus watched all this with great interest. Barbara looked at the stage without much enthusiasm, while scrolling through something on her smartphone. But with the first sounds of a sing Eutyclus shrank again – the sounds were too loud and unusual.

– Is that too loud? – Barbara shouted in his ear.

– Yes... Maybe we should go out?

– Let's wait another minute and listen to what they will play. It's not loud at all, just normal.

Eutyclus agreed, but Barbara, seeing him put his palms to his ears, took him by the hand a minute later and led him into the lobby.

– Why are you so fragrant? Out of touch with the modern world! – she said with a smile.

– It can make you deaf! So loud!

– Hmm... You definitely shouldn't go to the club, you'll lose consciousness there.

Eutyclus was about to ask about the club, but then a man of about forty appeared in the lobby.

– Hello! Is this your first time visiting us?

– Well...

– Great! I am the elder of this church, Artem. Let me tell you what is happening here.

– Tell us, we would like to ask you something as well...

– What is this?

– This young man is looking for his way home...

The elder was a bit surprised, so he clarified:

– Do you mean you need some money for the ticket?

People with such requests came to them every day.

“They seemed such a decent couple...” the elder thought.

– No, no! You misunderstood, – Barbara began to explain when she realized what the man was thinking about. – We don’t need money at all, we are provided with everything. It’s just, actually... this guy, how to say... is in search.

– Oh, you mean this, – the presbyter smiled relaxedly again. – Those who seek, shall find. Let’s do it this way: I invite you to our home church in an hour. It’s very close.

Barbara frowned at the idea of visiting someone’s house, but Eutychus’s eyes simply lit up when he heard the phrase “home church.”

– Yes, of course, we will go. Do you have prophets?

“This guy is a bit strange,” a thought flashed through the elder’s mind again. “Maybe I shouldn’t have invited him right away?”

– We have prayers and prophecies – we have everything.

– Amazing!

– You wait a little. I have a few things to do now, and we will go there together. It’s not far from here, walking there will take five minutes.

Seeing Eutychus' enthusiasm, Barbara waved her hand.

– All right. We'll wait here, it's a little loud inside for my friend.

– Loud? It's not loud yet. On Sunday during worship we really praise God in a loud voice. Well, be sure to wait for me.

The man disappeared. Barbara turned to Eutychus and saw the light die away in his eyes.

– Sunday... Again, the venerable Day of the Sun. These people break God's commandment!

– Come on! You are such a bore! How can you be so fixated on one day? There is no other place to go in our city. We will have to find a hotel for you. So don't turn your nose up. Maybe they praise God, as he said, in a loud voice on Sunday and on Saturday. The sound must be so good!

– Is this good?

– Well, I don't know how you glorified God in your "Way" movement. These people do it this way. But their sound equipment is really cool. By the way, it costs a lot of money.

– More than we have?

– Ten times more.

– What about this building?

– It is worth a fortune. Did you see that screen?

In short, there are no financial problems here.

– Is this okay?

– I think so, but many people criticize religions for material things. You know, they collect money from people, tithe and everything...

– Tithe is established by God.

– Yes, I heard that, let's just skip this part. Let's go see what else they have here. Do you want to go up to the balcony? I think it is not prohibited.

A moment later they were already on the balcony. There it was much quieter – apparently, during the rehearsal they simply did not turn on the six speakers here. Eutychus and Barbara even decided to sit and listen to a few songs.

– I didn't quite get the meaning of the song. There's so much repetition... What is this song about?

– Well, you should know. Everything is about God. But it's just one line: God is great. Well, and three minutes of repetition.

– Why repeat so many times?

– You Christians know better. Maybe to remember or so that God would definitely hear. I would say, some cultural characteristics influence, let's say, the perception of music styles. What's next? Where should we look for your "Way"?

– That man promised to come back to us. Maybe he can tell us where to find the prophet?

– Okay, let's go downstairs. Maybe someone will come up to us. It will get dark soon.

– Do you need to go home now?

– Don't worry about me. I'm a student, I'm used to coming home late. Especially today, when the day turned to be so... unusual. I don't even regret missing the party.

– Party?

– Eutyclus, are you doing it again? Have you forgotten? You must have a remarkable memory, unlike us, modern people.

– Oh, this is the celebration where you were not invited.

– Yes, – Barbara sighed, – anyway, let's not be sad. All right, if things don't work out and we can't find the prophet, we will need to think about your overnight stay. With your money this is not a problem.

– Fine. But I want to go back so much. My mother, brother and sister are waiting for me.

– I don't know what to say, honestly.

When the young people were going down the stairs, Artem, with a smile on his face, was already waiting for them in the lobby, and next to him was another stylishly dressed man.

– Friends, I hope you liked the music?

Barbara and Eutyclus looked at each other and nodded with a smile.

– I want to introduce you to Vitaly. This is the leader of our home church for young people. We want to invite you there in the evening. Will you go?

The young people looked at each other again.

– Yes, – said Eutychus, – if only I could solve my problem...

– So, you are interested in prophets, did I understand you correctly? Today you can ask all sorts of questions, you will find out more.

Vitaly added:

– Yes, we have evenings of revelations. You can learn a lot about yourself and what to do next. Let's go, it will be interesting.

– Okay, – said Barbara.

– My house is very close, – Vitaly continued. – There is still a little time before the meeting, we can drink tea, have a talk, and then others will come. Let's go!

Eutychus and Barbara said goodbye to Artem and went outside. Vitaly began to tell them about everything that was happening in their church.

– Our building is located in a residential area, quite far from the center, but it has its advantages. This is a good area; many people find it convenient to come to worship services on weekends. My house is only ten minutes from here, I prefer to walk. Do you mind taking a walk?

– Not at all, though we've probably already walked ten kilometers today.

They walked for several minutes along a quiet street. It was starting to get dark, but the lights were still off.

– Eutychus. Such an interesting name... Where are you from? How did you get here?

Barbara interrupted them:

– Oh, it's a long story, we'll tell you someday. He's just visiting.

– I see. By the way, this is the house of one of our church members, – Vitaly pointed to a large mansion across the road.

– Wow, what a big house! Probably they have a home church there too?

– Well, no, not in this house.

– Why do you need such a big house if there is no home church in it? – Eutychus was surprised.

Vitaly laughed.

– Right. We have a beautiful church, not everyone needs to gather people in their home. And everyone is used to living in comfort, have plenty of space.

– But a house like this costs a lot, doesn't it? You can sell it and donate part of the money to help the poor.

– Well, why go to such extremes? You can simply donate money to charity, which, by the way, is what our brother in faith does. But at the same time you live in a beautiful house. There are a number of successful businessmen in our church. They donate regularly.

– Are you a businessman too?

– Me? Well, I wouldn't say, – Vitaly laughed again, surprised at Eutychus' frankness. – My house is not

that big, though I'm not complaining. I am an investor, I like to have a lot of free time for ministry. Thank God, everything goes well, so I can receive guests and attend worship services more often. We are too busy and do not notice what is really important.

– Do you have a family?

– Yes, a wife and a daughter. You will get to know them in just five minutes. They know that today we are having home church, so they are waiting for the guests.

– Thank you for the invitation, it's so exciting to visit someone's home.

– My pleasure! There is our street around the corner, I can already see the roof of my house. We need to walk just a little more.

– Good evening.

– Good evening. Come in, we're glad to see you. My name is Elena. And this is my daughter Sylvia, – a tall smiling woman wearing a hoodie and jeans was holding the hand of a girl of about four years old, who was did not really take her eyes off the phone in her other hand.

– Nice to meet you. This is Eutychus. And my name is Barbara.

– Sylvia, say hello, look up from the phone.

The girl glanced at the guests and said: “Hi.” Apparently, guests visited this house so often that she thought another couple is just not worth her attention.

– Come in, there’s no one else yet, but I think they’ll come up in about 20 minutes. Shall I make you some tea?

Barbara refused. Eutychus also shook his head. He looked around: it was so interesting to visit somebody’s house. Even compared to the rich house of Melania’s father, this one was much brighter, furnished with beautiful things, the purpose of which Eutychus did not even know. What impressed him the most were the LED lamps and beautiful ceiling lighting. And how does it all work? There are no torches, no candles, no smell of burning oil. Barbara tugged at his sleeve and whispered:

– Hey, let’s go. You’re standing here with your mouth open. It’s just a house.

– Ah... this light. It’s so beautiful.

– Yes, a nice house.

They walked into the living-room and sat down in comfortable chairs. Eutychus could not stop looking around with admiration: “How wonderful it is to live in such a house! What lucky people they must be to have it!”

His next discovery was a huge black wall, a moment later, music, along with enchanting views of nature, simply burst into the room.

– While we’re waiting for the others, you can listen to some music so you don’t get bored, – Elena said. – Vitaly will change clothes and come down to you. And I need to take Sylvia for a short walk so you can talk. We have our own schedule, sorry.

– Sure! It’s very cozy here, we can wait and watch something, – Barbara answered and, looking at the shocked young man, whispered: “Eutychus, pick up your jaw, it’s just a TV. A plate like mine, just bigger. How much it changed in the world! Cinema, news, politics... Before the Internet, this was the main force. Okay, that sounds like I’m seventy years old.

– It is so beautiful! These people inside...

– Oh, again... No little people, no little palm trees, oceans, mountains inside. Just a picture on a big screen. But I understand you, this diagonal of the screen impresses even me. If prophets don’t send you back home after this “home church”, we’ll go to the cinema. We can impress your sense organs even more. I wish I could see your reaction in the cinema! But wait, that will probably be too much. I feel sorry for you. No, we won’t go.

– Where? I did not hear what you said.

– Forget it, I was just thinking out loud.

Five minutes later Vitaly appeared. He turned down the sound on the flat-screen tv, and Eutychus as if awoke.

– So, how are you doing? Are you having a good time? Everyone will come soon. Now, tell me, how did

you find us? I take it Eutychus is a guest in our city, right?

– Yes, – Barbara answered with more confidence, she already made up a cover story about her companion to avoid annoying questions. – We were just walking around the city and accidentally saw your church. Eutychus is interested in spiritual things, so we decided to find out a little more about you.

– Fine. And you, Barbara, are you interested in the Bible?

– Honestly, no. Everyone has their own truth. And there are so many various religions.

– The Bible can help answer many questions. It's been tested by time.

– Well, how many Christian movements are there? If there is only one Bible, then why are there so many different denominations?

– Well, in the end everyone will be reunited. This is what Jesus said. We just need to put aside all extremes.

– What do you mean?

– At the initial stage of spiritual growth, it seems to a person that only he is right. He and his mentor, the teacher. Then he gets to know about the pluralism of opinions, so to speak, and starts to think bigger. This allows to consider and embrace the opinions of other people. Integral approach, have you heard of it?

– Is this really from the Bible?

– The Bible is an amazing book. It sets out the general principles of life. It's just that many people understand things they read about literally. It is important to understand the general principles. Integrate, so to speak, the worldview of other people into your picture of the world. Then the differences between denominations become less relevant. It is really possible, and I think many religions are on this path. If you try to understand those who are at a lower level of spiritual development, if you do not judge them, many questions will disappear. If a person gets fixated on something, it doesn't matter. If you give him time, he will grow spiritually and won't argue anymore.

– I think these disagreements are more a matter of who will be the leader, and not of what to believe.

– And this is true, but I would not underestimate the fact that people mostly argue about beliefs. And regarding leadership, sometimes there's division and arguments, and sometimes they have similar views.

– Eutychus, you're kind of there on your own. Are you enjoying the nature?

– It is so beautiful! It's like I went on a journey myself.

– I haven't seen anyone watch a video so carefully.

Vitaly and Barbara smiled, Eutychus was still staring at the huge screen, but after a moment he finally focused on the conversation.

– I BELIEVE THAT JESUS
IS THE MESSIAH, SENT BY
THE FATHER TO SAVE US.

I BELIEVE EVERYTHING
THE SCRIPTURES TESTIFY
OF HIM AND THIS IS TRUE.

HE ASCENDED AFTER
THE RESURRECTION AND
INTERCEDES FOR US IN THE
HEAVENLY TEMPLE. THAT
IF WE BELIEVE IN HIM, THEN
EVEN IF WE DIE, WE WILL
COME BACK TO LIFE. AND
I BELIEVE THAT JESUS WILL
SOON COME AS THE KING
OF KINGS. MARANATHA!

IIIIII

– Eutychus, so you are more interested in spiritual matters than Barbara. What do you already know about God?

– I believe that Jesus is the Messiah, sent by the Father to save us. I believe everything the Scriptures testify of Him and this is true. He ascended after the resurrection and intercedes for us in the Heavenly Temple. That if we believe in Him, then even if we die, we will come back to life. And I believe that Jesus will soon come as the King of kings. Maranatha!

– Wow! – it was Vitaly's turn to open his mouth in surprise. – And where did you learn this?

– At home church.

– Oh, so you're not a newcomer! I thought it was your first time.

– Eutychus doesn't know a lot, – Varvara put in, – it was a different home church.

– We all do not know a lot, but he knows the basics.

– Do you also believe that Jesus will come soon? – asked Eutychus.

– Well... The Bible says that He will come someday, but we are still here. You just need to help others, serve them, make the society around you better. Maybe Christians will eventually have enough authority and power to make this world a better place. We are already leaders in education, medicine, volunteering and other social services.

Soon more people came. Most of them knew each other, they warmly welcomed Barbara and Eutychus. After several karaoke songs and prayers, Artem presented the topic, then they had time for questions and answers. But Eutychus could not concentrate on the topic of conversation. The young man was looking at the people, considering the situation, staring at the big flat screen again, and he couldn't stop thinking about how much he wanted to return home. He finally realized how tired he was. He thought how great it would be if he could take a nap. But everyone continued to talk.

Then all sorts of pastries, sweets, tea were brought to the table. A moment later, having eaten a piece of cake, Eutychus felt a burst of energy and was ready to stay there a little longer, not knowing what to do next.

– Eutychus, will you come to the worship service this Sunday? – one girl asked him, whose name he did not remember.

– I don't know, I'm used to worshiping on Sabbath, that's what Scripture teaches. On Sunday idols are worshiped, but we prefer to stay at home on this day so as not to anger anyone.

– On Sabbath? Idols? Where are these traditions from? I've never heard of this.

Barbara had to intervene again.

– Well, there are different groups of believers... Maybe he just got a bit confused about idols.

– I heard you are visiting us. Where are you from, Eutychus, from what city?

– Um... yes, I've been traveling a while, it's hard to say.

Suddenly one guy who had a smartphone in his hand said loudly:

– Hey guys, let's play something.

– Play what?

– Well, Vitaly has plenty of board games. Let's liven up the atmosphere!

Eutychus turned to ask Barbara what "board games" were, when suddenly everything went dark, he felt as if he and the sofa under him were falling.

Alive, he's alive, – Eutychus felt dizzy, he saw the smiling face of the apostle above him.

Suddenly the silence gave way to joyful exclamations and cheers. Several people helped him up.

– How did I get here? – Eutychus still could not understand what happened and where he was.

– Look here, – the gray-haired man told him, pointing upward. – Do you see the window where you were sitting? You fell asleep and fell out of it. We thought you were dead. You were not breathing, but the apostle prayed and your breath returned to you.

– Did I fall out of the window?

– Yes, no one even blinked an eye. It's dangerous to sleep during the sermon, – the man scolded him.

Meanwhile, the Apostle was pushed away from Eutychus, all the people tried to touch him. The young man felt like his whole body was pierced by needles, but at the same time he felt an extraordinary burst of energy, and the dizziness went away. He felt so embarrassed that because of him everyone ran out into the street and the apostle himself prayed for him.

The Apostle, pushing through the crowd, approached him again:

– What is your name, young man?

– Eutychus.

– The Lord gave you a new life today. You were dead when we all came down. I believe you can be useful to the Lord and serve Him since He made you alive.

Eutychus's eyes filled with tears:

– Thank you, thank you!

– We will continue our meeting and someone will take you home to rest.

– No, no. I want to stay and listen. I am absolutely fine.

– So the Lord has completely healed you. Well, let's go then. Come to the front, sit next to me, we will glorify and praise the Lord for this miracle.

Epilogue

Barbara woke up. Yesterday she was wandering around the city all day, trying to wind down, staring at shop windows, looking for the joys of life, for example, something sweet, but nothing came of it. She was in a bad mood. All day, glancing at her smartphone, she was waiting for someone to send her a message: “Hi. Sorry, we almost forgot about you. Come, join the party, it will be fun.” But none of her groupmates contacted her. Mom called and stiffly asked if she was okay. She even had a phone call from the company selling filters for water purification. The girl angrily pressed on the red circle. She did not want anybody else. And now this strange dream. It was as if she and some guy were wandering around the city, but for some reason they went to churches instead of clubs and discos. And this intrusive thought: read the Bible. What Bible? What was it all about? Why would she do it? Although...

Barbara reached for her smartphone, pressed a few buttons, frowned, and waited until a new icon appeared on the screen. All right... what is this? Verse of the day?

What is this verse? It says ‘Is.’, what’s that? “So do not fear, for I am with you; do not be dismayed, for I am your God. I will strengthen you and help you; I will uphold you with my righteous right hand.”

Barbara looked out the window: “Is it really possible that now, when I’m completely alone and seem to have no friends, God is with me? Does He even exist?”

Suddenly the girl felt some warmth and peace filling her heart. She read the text one more time and looked out the window again.

They had been in the dungeon for three days without food and practically without water. There were literally a few hours left before the holiday, and Eutychus understood that this was the end. Holding the bars with both hands, he peered into the darkness of the corridor, recalling the events of recent months. Everything was happening so fast. The Apostle Paul was nearly killed after the clashes in Jerusalem, and now he was awaiting trial in some prison, no one even knew exactly where it was. The Romans dispersed their congregation right during the home church. Some people managed to escape in the confusion, but, unfortunately, now he and Melania.

The young man often recalled how God brought him back to life through the apostle. Walking along the

path of suffering, he felt like never before that the Lord was near. And not only he realized that... The Christians locked in this dungeon sang songs and prayed, though from time to time someone fainted from hunger.

It's not that Eutychus was not worried at all. Sometimes doubts crept into his heart. How come that because of the ambitions of a tyrant and his ridiculous decree, he and his brothers and sisters in faith became a target, hated by everyone? If God controls everything, why does He allow despots to rule? They start wars, slaughter hundreds of thousands of people, and infringe upon those they don't like. The time has come for Christians. Jesus the Messiah and the apostles warned about persecution, the prophets predicted that it was about to happen. But when he and Melania were thrown into the dust right in the market square, Eutychus's heart was broken. It seemed that so much was still ahead, so many plans, evangelism, using various gifts for ministry. When will the Lord come again? When will He put an end to evil? Maranatha? But the words of the apostles which they spread through the letters to all communities encouraged him now as never before. "The Lord is not slow in keeping his promise, as some understand slowness. Instead he is patient with you, not wanting anyone to perish, but everyone to come to repentance."

There is a time for everything. The Lord will definitely return. And for him and Melania it will be just a moment, after...

Eutychus lowered his head. There were so many things on his mind “It’s so ridiculous to die young. How will it be? Animal or cross? Torch or arrow? Who will be first, me or Melania? We need to stick together, maybe this way I will have a chance not to see my dearest person die. Die together... How can I stop thinking about it?”

While in jail, Eutychus thought about this several times. He had a lot of time. He realized: everything in this world has its own price. We may not realize that in quiet times, or we may comprehend the scale of it when we look death in the eye. The price for following the Lord will always be high. But this is the only way, when giving everything, you will not overpay.

Someone put a hand on his shoulder. Eutychus turned around.

– Brother, God encourages me to pray with you. Maranatha! The Lord is near!

– Maranatha! Pray with me, brother.

Eutychus squeezed her hand tightly:

– Are you scared?

– A little. I feel so sorry we didn’t do so many things together.

– We have our whole lives ahead of us.

– Yes, we will be separated only for a short while.
I love you!

– I love you very much!

Christians were scattered in groups throughout the arena. When the first wild animals appeared, someone began to sing quietly and hesitantly: “Maranatha, Jesus the Messiah will come from Heaven to bring justice, to return the home to the faithful. Maranatha!” Soon more and more martyrs took up the song, it was filled with power and was heard beyond the amphitheater.

It didn’t last long. The hungry animals cut off the last voice. But in fact, this song will sound forever!

Maranatha!

Amen, come, Lord Jesus!

