

Seventh Sunday of Easter  
Cycle C RCL

Acts 16:16-34

Philippi was named for Philip II of Macedonia who established the city in 356 BCE as a commercial center to serve his mining interests at nearby Mount Pangaeus. The population, as befits a mining town, was of mixed background and many cults flourished there. Paul established his first European church in the city near the middle of the first century CE (Acts 16:11-40). Our passage sets Paul and Barnabas over against an important-Hellenistic-Roman institution, that of magic and divination. Although Hellenistic philosophy and public sentiment disparaged magic and divination, both flourished during this period. By losing the power of divination, the slave girl lost her value to her owners, and this precipitated the arrest of Paul and Barnabas, an event that leads to a wondrous release from prison.

Psalm 97

Researchers like S. Mowinckel have characterized this *hymn* as an “enthronement psalm” because of the reference to Yahweh as ruler (Hebrew: *adonai malax*, 96:10). Mowinckel believed such enthronement psalms belonged to a New Year’s liturgy that enthroned Yahweh as king of Israel and, indeed, as king of the whole world. Modern investigators have not always chosen to adopt the idea of an enthronement festival, but all would agree that the *adonai malax* hymns are distinctive among the hymns of the Psalter. This “enthronement psalm” emphasizes Yahweh’s superiority both over the gods of the heavens and over gods made by human hands.

Revelation 22:12-14, 16-17, 20-21

The Apocalypse was been a book of comfort for those who suffered under Domitian’s persecution in Asia Minor. (95-96 CE). It is reasonable then that the book would close with blessings upon such martyrs (22:14) and with the promise that the Messianic age will soon begin (22:12-13). The invocation “Come, Lord Jesus!” in verse 20 is cited by Paul in Aramaic in 1 Corinthians 16:22 and in the next century by the unknown author of the *Didache* (10:6). Some have contended that the Aramaic *maran ’ata* might equally well mean “our Lord is the sign,” but this seems unlikely. Warnings against altering an apocalyptic book (22:18-19) are common in Jewish literature.

or

Acts 16:16-34

See above.

John 17:20-26

The conclusion of Jesus’ so-called “high priestly prayer” extends the unity of the community beyond the first followers to all who will believe through their preaching. In Hellenistic religion the glory or the vision of the god leads the worshiper to complete transformation. The author here uses that idea to suggest that the glory of God will continue to be borne by successive generations of believers and will thereby transform the world.

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