

Maxim V. Fionin

**Pericope of the Canaanite Woman (Matthew 15:21–28)  
in a Byzantine Lectionary of the 12th c.  
from the IOM RAS Collection**

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*Abstract:* The article describes a liturgical note in the Lectionary D 227 from the IOM RAS collection. The manuscript has an interesting variant reading: instead of the conjunction γὰρ (for, because) we found the numeral ὅδ' (fifty-four). It can be assumed that the variant is not only a scribal error. It is possible that the original manuscript was corrupt at this point and the scribe instead of the conjunction γὰρ used the numeral ὅδ' denoting the number of weeks of the liturgical year. The article explains the reason for such use.

*Key words:* Byzantine lectionaries, Collection manuscripts of Gregory the 4th Patriarch of Antioch, New Testament minuscule, liturgical manuscripts

The Institute of Oriental Manuscripts of the Russian Academy of Sciences in Saint Petersburg holds a Byzantine manuscript lectionary, that is, a collection of liturgical readings from the Gospels.

This document dates to the 12th c., and it came from the collection of Patriarch Gregory IV of Antioch, who was invited to the festivities commemorating the 300th anniversary of the Romanov dynasty. Gregory IV arrived in Saint Petersburg and presented this lectionary, among other manuscript monuments of Arab Christianity, to Emperor Nicholas II.

The famous Russian paleographer B.L. Fonkich suggested that the lectionary was written around the second half of the 12th c., and he classified it as a manuscript of the Chicago-Karahisar group,<sup>1</sup> basing his deduction on

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© Maxim V. Fionin, Institute of Oriental Manuscripts, Russian Academy of Sciences (St. Petersburg, Russian Federation) (maximfionin@yandex.ru)

<sup>1</sup> Greek manuscripts written in the period from about 1150 to 1230. In the Russian-language scientific literature, it got the name Chicago-Karahisar group from its two typical representatives — Karahisar Evangelion (PHB. Греч. № 105) and the New Testament of Rockefeller-Mc-Cormick from the University library in Chicago (Ms. 965 (Gregory 2400), and in English literature — “Family 2400” and “decorative style manuscripts”. This is the

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the characteristic features of the lectionary's minuscule.<sup>2</sup> American paleographer N.F. Kavrus-Hoffman dated the manuscript to the second half of the 11th c., and he assumed that most likely it came from one of the Constantinople scriptoria.<sup>3</sup>

Arabic additions to the text show that in the 14th c. the manuscript was donated as *waqf* (religious propriety) to the Cathedral church of St. Sergius, Bacchus and Leontius in Bosra, Syria.

In the middle of the 19th c. the manuscript was found in the St. George monastery of Homeyra, Syria. Patriarch of Antioch Gregory IV took the lectionary from this monastery for his collection.

Now the lectionary belongs to the IOM RAS collection, and it has the shelf number D 227. The manuscript contains four sections:

The first section: συναξάριον “Synaxarion” (ff. 1–256) — a collection of the Gospel readings on Divine Liturgy from Easter until Great Saturday.

The second section: μηνολόγιον “Menologion” (ff. 256–302) — liturgical readings for each day of the church year according to the Julian calendar from September to August.

The third section: Ἑωθινὰ Εὐαγγέλια “The Eleven Morning Gospels” (ff. 302–306) — the eleven gospel passages that tell about the resurrection of Christ and his appearance after the Easter events to the disciples. In D 227 only the first, second, third, fourth, tenth and eleventh have been preserved in fragments.

The fourth section: Εὐαγγέλια εἰς διαφόρας μνήμας “the Readings for different purposes” (ff. 306v.–307). This section of the manuscript is badly damaged, but we can read a fragment of the Thursday reading for the 7th week of Luke’s cycle (Lk 11.47–12.1). This is a common reading for the holy prophets. We assume that this reading remained from the fourth section, “readings common to the saints and for different purposes”, but we cannot state this with absolute certainty.

Between the first cycles of the lectionary (Matthew and Luke) on ff. 104–104v. we can find a short liturgical note. It reads as follows:

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largest group of the interconnected illustrated manuscripts identified by researchers (about 100), which also includes approximately 50 manuscripts without miniatures, written in similar handwriting. The manuscripts are close to each other in the composition of texts, codicological and artistic features.

<sup>2</sup> From personal correspondence with B.L. Fonkich (a letter from November 12, 2013). I am grateful to him for his help.

<sup>3</sup> From a letter of N.F. Kavrus-Hoffman to Y.A. Pyatnitsky (Senior Researcher at the Sector of Byzantium and the Near East, Department of the Oriental Art of the State Hermitage), May 2017.

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Χρὴ γινώσκειν ὅτι τὸ εὐαγγέλιον τοῦτο τῆς χαναναίας διὰ τὸ πολλάκις συμβαίνειν γίνεσθαι τὸ Πάσχα ἔξω, ὥδε μὲν οὐ χωρεῖ ἀναγινώσκεσθαι εἰς τὰ σαββατοκυριακά τοῦ Ματθαίου, ὅτι οὐδέποτε ἀνεγνώσθησαν ΙΖ κυριακαί. ἀναγινώσκεται δὲ εἰς τὸν Λουκᾶν, κυριακῇ πρὸ τοῦ Φαρισαίου, ἔπερ ἄρα λείπει ὁ Λουκᾶς, ὡς ἔφην, διὰ τὸ μηκύνεσθαι τὸ Πάσχα.

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Δέον δε γινώσκειν, ὅτι ἄρχεται ὁ Λουκάς ἀναγινώσκεσθαι ἀπὸ τῆς κυριακῆς μετὰ τὴν ὕψωσιν, τότε γὰρ (νδ'), καὶ ἡ ἰσημερία γίνεται, ὃ καλεῖται νέον ἔτος.

That is:

Because <the so-called> beyond-Easter frequently happens when reading of Saturday and Sunday pericopes of St. Matthew, [it] is not enough to cover all 17 weeks). It must be known that the passage from the Gospel about the Canaanite woman is read (i.e. the passage from St. Matthew) in St. Luke's cycle on Sunday before the week dedicated to the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee. [It is read] when readings from St. Luke will indeed come to an end, as I have said, because Easter lengthens (i.e. beyond-Easter).

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It should be also known, that the reading of St. Luke's Gospel begins from Sunday after the Feast of the Cross (then [number] 54), and here comes (autumn) equinox, so-called New Year.

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It is well known, that liturgical notes of this kind may be found in other Byzantine lectionaries as well. Some of them were published in Christian Frederick Matthaei's edition of the New Testament.<sup>4</sup>

The readings of St. Matthew's Gospel for Saturdays and Sundays, that is St. Matthew's cycle in the manuscript's synaxarion, are mentioned in the note on the liturgy quoted above. That raises some questions. Firstly, why 17 readings are not sufficient? And, secondly, why should there be 17 readings at all?

The cycle of St. Matthew's Gospel includes 16 weeks, 11 of which are dedicated to the readings of St. Matthew's Gospel itself. The pericopes of St. Marc are read from Monday to Friday during the next 5 weeks, then the reading of the passages from St. Matthew's Gospel continues on Saturdays and Sundays. Altogether it makes 16 weeks. The 17th week stands apart.

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<sup>4</sup> MATTHAEI 1803: 725–727.

In Byzantine manuscripts there are no readings for the weekdays (Monday–Friday) of this week, there are only passages for Saturday and Sunday liturgy mentioned: the Parable of the ten virgins (Matthew 25:1–13) which should be read on Saturday of the 17th week, and the story of the Canaanite woman which is appointed for the Sunday of the 17th week.

Why does the manuscript not have instructions concerning readings during weekdays of the 17th week? This lack is caused by the convergence of the lunar and the solar calendars during the liturgical year.

The length of St. Matthew’s cycle is defined, on the one hand, by the date of Easter, which is counted according to the lunar calendar and, on the other hand, by the date of the Feast of the Cross which has the exact date — September 14th, according to the solar (Julian) calendar.

When the author says that “the reading of Saturday and Sunday pericopes of St. Matthew is not enough to cover all 17 weeks”, he is describing the range of situations when the pericope of the Canaanite woman is not read because there are not enough days for these readings.

The pericope of the Canaanite woman (as well as the parable of the ten virgins appointed for the Saturday of the 17th week) might be read in St. Matthew’s cycle only in one case: when Easter falls on the 22nd of March which is the earliest possible date.<sup>5</sup>

In all other cases when the date of Easter of the passing year lies within the period from the 23rd of March to the 25th of April, the number of weeks between the Monday of the Holy Spirit and the Feast of the Cross decreases, and, as a result, the pericope of the Canaanite woman happens to be removed from St. Matthew’s cycle.

Our next step should be to define what does τὸ Πάσχα ἔξω “beyond-Easter” mean.

Most likely, the author was talking about the range of situations when the number of readings in St. Matthew’s cycle decreases, and when at the same time there happens to be the lack of readings in St. Luke’s cycle.

It has already been shown that the length of St. Matthew’s cycle is defined by the date of Easter of the passing year. The length of St. Luke’s cycle depends on the Easter date of the coming year.

St. Luke’s cycle (together with the readings from St. Mark’s Gospel during weekdays of the six final weeks) lasts for 18 weeks. If Easter of the following year comes early, in other words, if it falls within the period from the 22nd to

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<sup>5</sup> It is well known that the border dates of the Easter are the 22nd of March and the 25th of April, according to the Julian calendar.

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31rd of March, then some readings from St. Luke's cycle should be omitted. If Easter comes late and falls on the period from the 1st to the 25th of April, then the number of weeks increases, and consequently there can be some years when the number of ascribed readings would not be sufficient, and in this case the pericope of the Canaanite woman should cover this lack.

Hence, τὸ Πάσχα ἔξω, or beyond-Easter, of the liturgical note (from the analyzed manuscript) is a variant of the liturgical year when, though the pericope of the Canaanite woman is omitted due to early Easter of the passing year, it is nevertheless read afterwards, due to the late Easter of the coming year which adds a week to St. Luke's cycle and enables the reading of the pericope of the Canaanite woman, which was earlier omitted, to be moved to this week.

A proof for such interpretation can be found in the manuscript D 227 itself where on the folio 161 is written:

Κυριακῆς ΙΖ' τῆς Χαναναί[ας]. Ζήτει ὁπισθ[εν] εἰς Ματθ[άιον] ἔγρα[φη], ἐκεῖσαι ΙΖ' κυριακῆς.

"Sunday the 17th of the Canaanite woman, look for the text written earlier in Matthew, go to the 17th Sunday".

A link to this reading is put after the week on the parable of the Publican and the Pharisee and before the Sunday pericope on the parable of the Prodigal Son. It means that the author of the manuscript saw the pericope of the Canaanite woman as an ordinary reading for the 17th week (Sunday) of St. Luke's cycle. (sic!) As we have pointed out earlier, St. Luke's cycle consists of 18 weeks and finishes on Friday of the Meat-Fare. In other words, in the years when the week is not omitted, the pericope of the Canaanite woman is read among others, as it was stated in the analyzed liturgical note, "before the week on the Publican and the Pharisee". It is also worth mentioning that the reading of the 17th week Sunday in St. Matthew's cycle is not supposed to be moved to St. Luke's cycle, as there is the pericope about the widow's mite (Luke 20.46–21.4) in its place in the manuscript. In modern lectionaries it is prescribed for the Saturday of the week dedicated to the parable of the Prodigal Son.

Returning to the analyzed note of the lectionary, we are going to concentrate on its last paragraph. It tells that the readings of St. Luke's cycle should begin on Monday after the Exaltation of the Holy Cross. We want to bring attention to the variant found in the text of a similar note published by C.F. Matthaei: in our manuscript lectionary D 227 we find the number *vδ'* (54), while the note published by Matthaei reads: *γὰρ* (for, because).

The text published by C.F. Matthaei is not difficult to understand. It underlines that the beginning of St. Luke's cycle falls on Monday following the Week (Sunday) after Exaltation of the Holy Cross, "for (γὰρ) then also comes (autumn) equinox, so-called New Year". In the manuscript D 227 the meaning is slightly different: "the reading of St. Luke's Gospel should begin from the Sunday after the Feast of the Cross (then 54), and here comes (autumn) equinox, so-called New Year".

We can assume that the text from which the copyist made our manuscript was damaged or else unclear to the copyist who, therefore, tried to make an amendment and added the number "54" linking the last paragraph with the text above it. The number "54" is not mentioned incidentally, as it is the number of weeks in the liturgical year when Easter is late (τὸ Πάσχα ἔξω). In other words, if the length of the liturgical year is 54 weeks, the pericope of the Canaanite woman should be certainly read in St. Luke's cycle.

In the conclusion it must be pointed out that the note analyzed in this article does not solve all the difficulties caused by convergence of the lunar Easter calendar and the solar civil calendar.

Instead, there are many cases when the pericope of the Canaanite woman does not appear either in St. Matthew's cycle or in St. Luke's cycle.

As we have mentioned above, the pericope is read in St. Matthew's cycle only when Easter of the passing year falls on the 22nd of March which happens very rarely. As P.M. Mironositsky has shown, the pericope is read in St. Luke's cycle only when beyond-Easter (τὸ Πάσχα ἔξω) falls within the period from the 22nd to the 25th of April which also does not happen very often. In all other cases the pericope of the Canaanite woman is omitted from both cycles.<sup>6</sup>

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<sup>6</sup> MIRONOSITSKY 1916: 25–30.

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