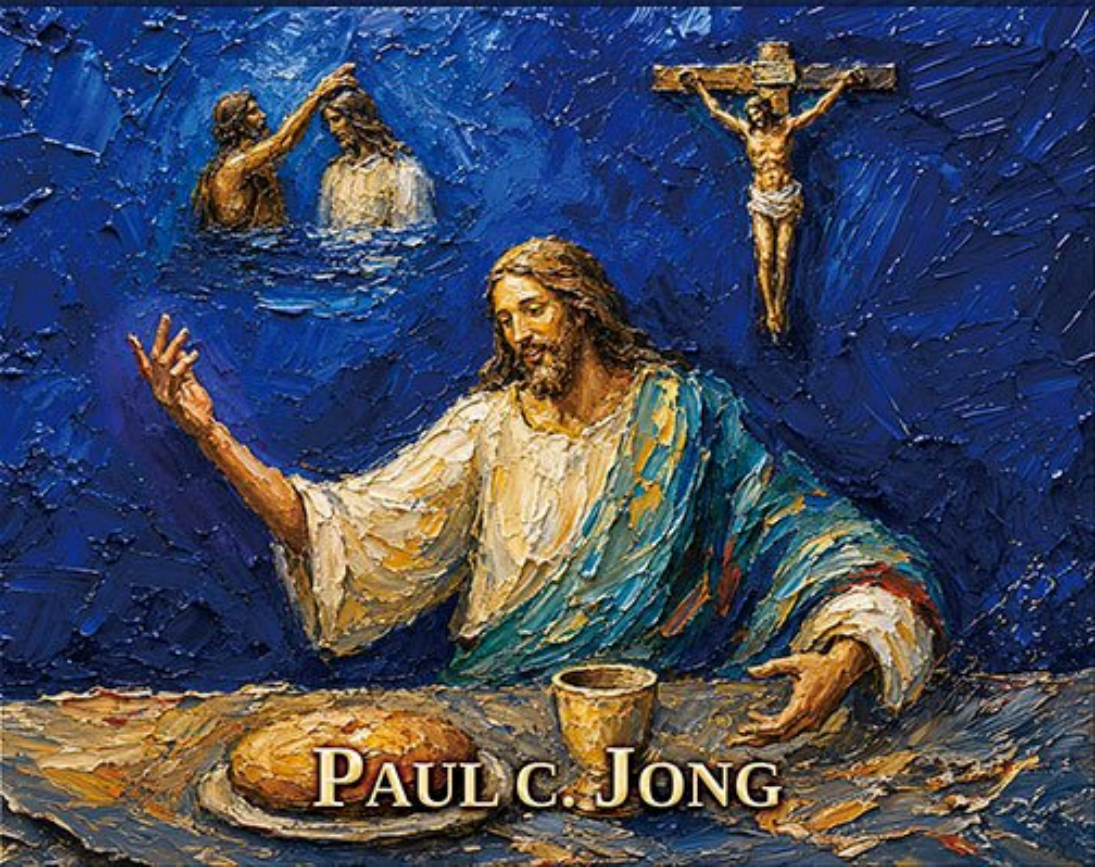
Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Mark

Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (IV)



Paul C. Jong





"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Mark 13:31)

The disciples marveled at the magnificent Temple in Jerusalem, built with massive stones. But Jesus said that this Temple, too, would be thrown down until not one stone was left upon another.

What matters is not the outward religious form that meets the eye, but believing the Word of the Lord, who has fulfilled everything perfectly. At the heart of that Word is the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, which has removed all the sins of sinners and given them eternal life. By receiving His baptism from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world once and for all; on the Cross He bore the judgment of those sins and shed His blood, thereby saving mankind from all sin; and by rising from the dead, He gave eternal life to all who believe.

Even when the world collapses and our circumstances change, the salvation the Lord has accomplished never changes. Do not rely on your own works or feelings, but believe in Jesus Christ, who through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit accomplished your eternal salvation once and for all.

This is a book that everyone must seek out

and read now,

before the Antichrist appears,

as this world is heading toward destruction.

<u>You must believe now.</u>

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Mark
Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit
(IV)

PAUL C. JONG



Hephzibah Publishing House
A Ministry of THE NEW LIFE MISSION
SEOUL, KOREA

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Mark seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (IV)

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We offer a prayer of thanks to the Lord for giving us the Word of salvation and blessing us with the gospel of being born again by water and the Spirit.

I would also like to thank God's servants and brothers and sisters for their invaluable service in publishing this book. We all worked hard to write this book.

I hope and pray that this book will help many souls be born again, and I would like to express my sincere gratitude once again to everyone who worked hard with me.

I sincerely hope that the Lord will allow the gospel of being born again by water and the Spirit to be spread throughout the world through those who believe in Jesus.

PAUL C. JONG

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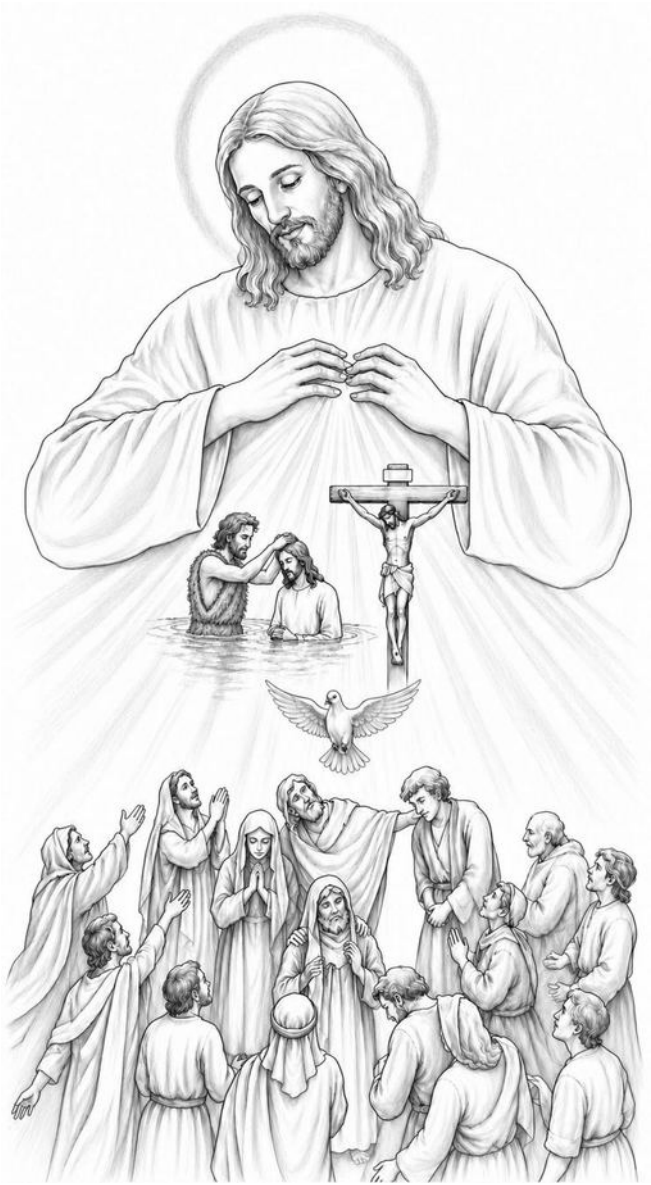

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Preface

Dear readers, the world speaks as though the power and the buildings and the institutions that are seen will last forever. But everything that man boasts of collapses in the end. Though heaven and earth pass away, the words of Jesus will not pass away. The last part of the Gospel of Mark awakens us to stand firm upon the eternal gospel, not letting our hearts be taken by the things that will disappear, and to wait by faith for the Lord who will come again.

The Word concerning the last times was not given so that we might calculate the dates of the future or spread fear. It is the Word given so that we may discern false christs and wrong teachings, keep our faith even in the midst of tribulation and persecution, and preach the gospel to every nation. To be awake is not to abandon the responsibilities of daily life and to look only at the end of the world. A life that is awake is to believe the gospel firmly in the place God has entrusted to us today, to serve the Lord, and to live faithfully according to His will.

A man cannot keep himself by good intentions and firm resolve alone. The disciples boasted that they would die together with the Lord, but when the trial came they fell asleep and fled, and Peter denied Jesus three times. Judas was in the place of a disciple, but in his heart he loved money more than the Lord. Outward belonging and a religious career cannot take the place of faith. We must not rely on our own resolve but must seek the help of the Word and of the Holy Spirit.

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The King of all mankind, who saved us who are like Barabbas

Unlike the disciples, Jesus knew all the suffering that would come upon Him and yet obeyed the will of the Father. Even in the face of false testimony and mockery and unjust judgment, He did not avoid the way of salvation in order to save Himself. The Cross was not an unexpected failure but the way that God had appointed in order to make sinners live. The evil of men drove Jesus to death, but even in the midst of it God accomplished the salvation He had promised.

Barabbas was clearly a sinner, yet he was released, and the sinless Jesus received the sentence of death in his stead. That very scene shows our own salvation. We deserved to be condemned because of sin, but Jesus stood in our place. It was not because He had no power that He did not come down from the cross. By not saving Himself from the cross, Jesus saved us who were bound by sin.

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body beforehand through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. On the Cross He received all the punishment for the sins He had thus borne, and He actually died and was buried. And on the third day He rose from the tomb and overcame sin and death. The person who believes this gospel, to which the water and the blood and the Holy Spirit testify, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and obtains a new and living way to come to God.

That the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom shows that God Himself opened the way that human religious effort could not open. Now the sinner does not come to God bearing his own deeds and merits, but comes believing the righteousness that Jesus Christ has accomplished. Salvation does not depend

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on how strong a man's resolve is, but on how perfectly the Lord has accomplished it.

Keep in mind that we have the resurrection

The empty tomb testifies that the Cross was not a defeat. The risen Jesus did not cast away the disciples who had failed and could not believe. While He rebuked their hardness of heart, He established them again as witnesses of the gospel. The work of the Lord is not accomplished only through perfect people. When a person who knows his own weakness and has been restored by grace preaches the salvation he has received, the Holy Spirit works together with him.

The person who believes the gospel does not wait for the end of the world only with terror. Because he believes that the judgment for sin has already been finished in Jesus, he waits in hope for the Lord who will come again. At the same time he does not turn away from souls who have not yet heard the gospel. Since the Lord told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, the person who has been saved must use the time and the strength given to him in preaching the word of life.

Dear readers, do not look upon the Cross merely as a sad religious story. Believe that the sin judged there was your own sin, and that the One who rose from the empty tomb is your Savior. Stand firm upon the complete gospel that is made up of the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. Discern deception and faithfully carry out the work entrusted to you, and, looking to the Lord who will come again, live boldly as a witness who preaches the good news of the remission of sins to the ends of the earth. ✉

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CHAPTER

13

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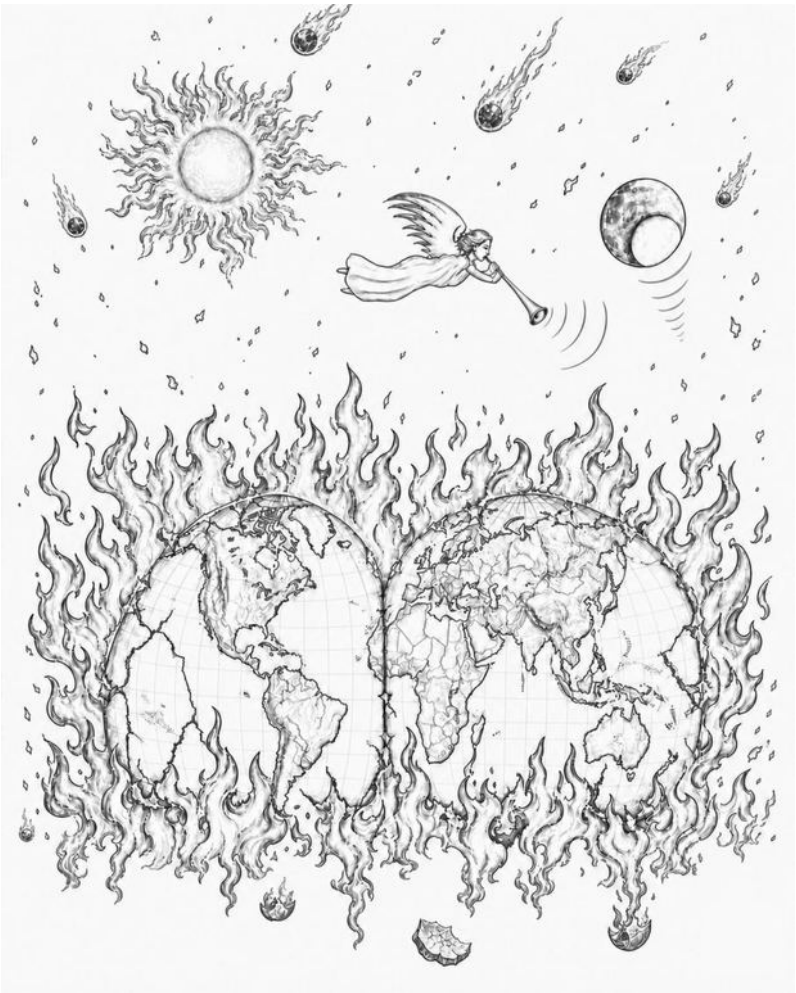

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Mark Chapter 13

< Mark 13:1-37 >

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. 'But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to

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be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 'So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 'Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. 'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. 'Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till

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all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. ‘But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!’”

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 13 is the chapter in which Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple and taught His disciples concerning the signs of the last days, the tribulation, and His second coming. When one disciple marveled at the magnificence of the temple, Jesus said that not one stone would be left upon another and that all of it would be thrown down. When Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked when that would happen and what sign there would be, Jesus first warned them not to be deceived by false christs. Wars, earthquakes, and famines would arise, but by these alone one must not conclude that the end has already come, and He said that these things are the beginnings of sorrows. The disciples might stand before councils, synagogues, and those in power because of the gospel, and might even be rejected by their families, but the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. After the great tribulation and the deception of false christs, the Son of Man

will come in the clouds with great power and glory and will gather those whom He has chosen. But since no one knows that day and hour, we must not calculate dates or be shaken by the rumors of the world, but must faithfully do the work entrusted to us and always stay awake.

1. The magnificence of the temple and the foretelling of its complete destruction (verses 1–2)

As Jesus was going out of the temple, one disciple looked at the huge stones and the magnificent buildings of the temple and marveled. The temple of Jerusalem at that time was a great and splendid building erected over a long period, and it was the center of faith and of the nation for the Jews.

But Jesus said that of the great buildings the disciple was looking at, not one stone would be left upon another and that all of them would be thrown down. Religious buildings and institutions that man relies on as though they were eternal can also fall down in the face of God's judgment.

What Jesus judged was not the beauty of the building itself. The temple was to be a place that showed forth the will of God and where people prayed, but the leaders used the temple as a means of protecting their own authority and profit. In the preceding chapters, Jesus rebuked those who had made the temple a den of thieves and the scribes who devoured widows' houses under a pretense of godliness.

The foretelling concerning the destruction of the temple was fulfilled historically in the event of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple by the Roman army in A.D. 70. At the same time this word shows that no institution or building made by man is eternal, and that in the end only the Word and the rule of God remain.

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2. The disciples who asked about the time and the sign on the Mount of Olives (verses 3–4)

When Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately. They wanted to know when the destruction of the temple would happen and what sign would appear when all those things were to be fulfilled.

In the disciples' question, interest in the destruction of the temple and in the last days was contained together. Jesus' answer likewise unfolds in a manner that looks together at the tribulation of Jerusalem that would happen in the near future and at the events of the last days.

Concerning the detailed relationship between these two events, various interpretations are possible. But the clear core of Jesus' teaching does not lie in making people calculate dates; it lies in preparing them to keep their faith and stay awake even in the midst of tribulation and deception.

3. Beware of false christs and deception (verses 5–6)

Before explaining the signs of the last days, Jesus first of all said to take heed that no one deceives us. He said that many would come in Jesus' name, claiming that they themselves were the Christ, and would deceive many people.

The greatest danger of the last days is not only wars or disasters but being deceived by false teachings. A false christ may openly deny Jesus, but he may also use the name of Jesus while claiming that he himself has a special authority of salvation.

If someone claims that he alone knows the secret of the last days, or says that no one can be saved except through him and tries to make people subject to himself, we must beware. The center of faith must be Jesus Christ and His Word, not any

particular human leader or organization.

To avoid deception, we must not follow only astonishing claims or experiences, but must examine whether they agree with the teaching of the whole of Scripture. Rather than by phenomena that look like a man's popularity and ability, we must discern by the standard of who Jesus is and what He has said.

4. Wars, earthquakes, and famines are the beginnings of sorrows (verses 7–8)

Jesus said that even when we hear of wars and rumors of wars, we should not be troubled. Nation will rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and earthquakes and famines will occur in many places, but He said that these things must surely happen and that the end is not yet.

Whenever a war or a natural disaster occurs, we must not set a particular date and claim that the end of the world is coming at once. Jesus did not say that such events are not serious; He taught that by these alone we must not conclude the exact time of the end.

Jesus called this the beginnings of sorrows. This shows that, just as when the pains of childbirth begin they gradually proceed toward the birth, so the suffering of the world is proceeding toward God's final judgment and a new age.

Rather than being swept along by fear and rumors as they see disasters, the saints must help those who suffer and believe that the history of the world is under God's sovereignty. Faith concerning the end must not make us evade our responsibility in reality; it must make us stay awake all the more and practice love and service.

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5. The gospel that will be preached to all the nations in the midst of persecution (verses 9–10)

Jesus said that His disciples must watch out for themselves. They would be delivered up to councils and beaten in the synagogues because of the gospel, and because of Jesus they would stand before governors and kings and bear witness.

The disciples' standing before those in power does not end merely as being tried unjustly. That situation becomes an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus and the gospel. The world seizes the disciples in order to block the gospel, but God uses that very place as a channel through which the gospel is delivered.

Jesus said that the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. The gospel must not remain only in a particular people or region. God wants people of every nation, language, and class to hear the Word of salvation.

On the way of preaching the gospel, opposition and persecution can follow. But the fact that there is difficulty does not mean that the preaching of the gospel has failed. God makes His Word to be preached even in the midst of suffering, and He opens the door of the gospel in ways that man does not expect.

6. The Holy Spirit gives the words with which to bear witness (verse 11)

Jesus said that when the disciples were arrested and brought to trial, they should not worry beforehand about what they should say. He said that they must speak whatever is given them at that hour, and that the one who speaks is not the disciples alone but the Holy Spirit.

This does not mean that one need make no preparation at all to learn the Scriptures or to preach the gospel in ordinary times.

Jesus promised the help of the Holy Spirit so that the disciples, dragged suddenly before those in power by persecution, would not be seized by fear.

The Holy Spirit helps the disciples to bear witness to Jesus boldly, not relying on their own wisdom and eloquence alone. In difficult situations the saints must not look only to their own ability, but must rely on God, who gives the wisdom and the words that are needed.

7. The rejection of family and the faith that endures to the end (verses 12–13)

Jesus said that brother would betray brother to death, that a father would betray his child, and that even children would rise up against their parents. The disciples could be hated by all people because of Jesus' name.

Opposition on account of the gospel may also arise within the closest family. We must love and respect our family, but we must not forsake Jesus and the truth because of our family's opposition. On the contrary, we must not despise our family or stir up needless conflict on the ground that we believe the gospel.

Jesus said that the one who endures to the end will be saved. This does not mean that one buys salvation with the human merit of enduring tribulation. True faith appears not as forsaking Jesus when tribulation comes, but as relying on Him and following Him to the end even in the midst of difficulty.

To endure to the end does not mean that one never fears or never falls. It means that even when one is weak and shaken, he lays hold of the Word of God again and, with the help of the Holy Spirit, returns to the place of faith.

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8. The abomination of desolation and the great tribulation (verses 14–20)

Jesus said that when they see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, those who are in Judea should flee to the mountains. He said that the one who is on the housetop should not go down to take anything out of the house, and that the one who is in the field should not turn back to get his clothes.

The words *"let the reader understand"* mean that this warning must not be passed over lightly. The abomination of desolation refers to the powers and events that blaspheme God's holy realm and make it desolate. In the near historical background one may think of Jerusalem and the temple being trampled by a foreign army, and it is also connected with the powers that oppose God in the last days.

The text does not explain in full who or what the abomination of desolation specifically is. Therefore, rather than hastily pointing to a particular person or event of the present, we must beware of every deception that opposes God and seeks to put itself in God's place.

That Jesus said to flee at once shows that the act of avoiding danger does not mean a lack of faith. A person who believes in God may also flee quickly to protect his life when an evident danger approaches. Faith is not recklessness but hearing and obeying Jesus' warning.

Since in those days the difficulty would be especially great for those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies, Jesus said to pray that that tribulation would not happen in winter. Jesus did not speak of tribulation only as an abstract event; He looked upon the circumstances of the weak people who would actually suffer in the midst of it.

That tribulation is very serious, but God will shorten those

days for the sake of those whom He has chosen. Even in the midst of tribulation, not everything proceeds according to the will of the evil powers. God limits the period and the extent of it and cares for His own people.

9. The signs of false christs and false prophets (verses 21–23)

Jesus said that even if in the midst of tribulation someone says that the Christ is here or there, we must not believe it. False christs and false prophets will show signs and wonders and will try to deceive, if possible, even those whom He has chosen.

By the mere fact that an astonishing sign has appeared, we must not judge that the teaching came from God. A false person can also make use of phenomena and claims that astonish people. More important than the sign is whether the content that the person delivers agrees with the Word of Jesus.

Since Jesus told these things beforehand, the disciples must be prepared. The teaching concerning the end was not given to throw people into fear, but so that when deception comes they may remember Jesus' warning and discern.

10. The Son of Man, who comes with great power and glory (verses 24–27)

Jesus said that after the tribulation the sun would be darkened, the moon would not give its light, the stars would fall from heaven, and the powers in the heavens would be shaken. This is not a mere political change; it shows God's decisive intervention, which affects the whole of the created world.

At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. The second coming of Jesus is not an event known secretly to only some people, nor a

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manner of His being hidden in a particular place. It is an event that appears so that no one can deny His authority and glory.

Jesus, who first came to this earth, was made low and suffered, but when He comes again He comes with the glory of the King and the Judge. Those who now believe in Jesus may look weak in the world or be persecuted, but in the end it will be clearly revealed that Jesus is the true Lord.

Jesus will send His angels and gather those whom He has chosen from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. God knows all who are scattered throughout the world or forgotten by people. When Jesus comes again, He will gather His own people without losing even one of them.

11. The parable of the fig tree and the discerning of the signs (verses 28–29)

Jesus said that just as one knows summer is near when the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and puts forth leaves, so when we see the things He spoke of happening, we should know that the Son of Man is near.

The direct core of this parable does not lie in matching the fig tree to a particular nation or year. It means that, just as one knows the time is near by seeing the change of the seasons, the disciples must remember Jesus' Word when they see the events He foretold.

To discern the signs is not to calculate dates or to force a prophetic meaning onto every event. It is to realize, while looking at the confusion of the world, the preaching of the gospel, and the deceptions, that history is moving toward God's final judgment, and so to live all the more awake.

12. The word of Jesus, which will surely be fulfilled (verses 30–31)

Jesus said that these things would happen before this generation passed away. Included in this word is the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, which the generation of the disciples of that time would experience. At the same time that event also has the character of showing beforehand the final judgment that will be completely fulfilled in the future.

Concerning the relationship between *"this generation"* and the whole of the prophecy there are various interpretations, but the clear fact is that the destruction of the temple of which Jesus spoke was actually fulfilled in history. This makes us certain that the words concerning the second coming and the final judgment, which still remain, will also surely be fulfilled.

Jesus declared that heaven and earth would pass away but that His words would not pass away. The universe and the civilizations that look eternal to man also pass away, but the Word of Jesus does not change or become void.

The saints must lay hold of the Word of Jesus more surely than the rumors of the age and the predictions of men. Even if the circumstances before their eyes look contrary to the Word, what God has said is surely fulfilled at the appointed time.

13. That day and that hour, which no one knows (verse 32)

Jesus said that no one knows that day and hour, that not even the angels in heaven nor the Son knows, but only the Father. This word clearly shows the fact that man cannot calculate the date and the time of the second coming.

If anyone claims to know the exact date of the second coming by calculating the numbers of the Bible or the events of the world, it conflicts with the Word of Jesus. The way of setting a date and then, when it is not fulfilled, changing the

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calculation again is not a biblical faith concerning the end.

The word in which Jesus said that not even the Son knows that hour must not be used to mean that He is not God. Jesus came clothed in the body of a man and carried out the work of salvation from the position of a servant, and in this word He showed that the authority to appoint the time belongs to the Father.

What the disciples need is not the work of finding out the hidden date but preparing themselves so that they may receive Jesus whenever He comes.

14. Do the work entrusted to you and stay awake (verses 33–37)

Jesus said to take heed and stay awake, because we do not know when the time is. To stay awake does not mean not sleeping at all or looking only to heaven while abandoning everyday life.

Jesus spoke the parable of a master who, going to a far country, gave authority to his servants, appointed to each one his work, and then commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Since the master may come in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning, the servants must be carrying out the work entrusted to them whenever he returns.

The right attitude in preparing for the end is not to forsake the responsibilities of home, workplace, and community. To do honestly the work God has entrusted to us, to believe His Word, to love our neighbors, and to preach the gospel is the life of staying awake.

We must see to it that the master does not come suddenly and find the servants sleeping. Here sleep does not mean mere physical slumber but spiritual indifference and carelessness. We must not let our hearts be taken captive by the desires and

cares of the world and so forget the Word of Jesus and the promise of His coming again.

Jesus made clear that He was saying this not only to the four disciples but to all people. The command *"Watch!"* does not apply only to the people of one age. It is a command that all the saints who wait for the second coming of Jesus must engrave on their hearts.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 13

First, even a magnificent temple and religious institution that man relies on as though it were eternal can be judged and fall down if it loses the will of God.

Second, before speaking of the events of the last days, Jesus first warned us to take heed lest we be deceived by false christs and wrong teachings.

Third, even if wars, earthquakes, and famines arise, by these alone we must not conclude the exact date of the end, and these events are the beginnings of sorrows.

Fourth, the disciples may be persecuted before religious leaders and political authorities because of the gospel, but that place can become an opportunity to bear witness to Jesus.

Fifth, the gospel must not remain in a particular people and region but must first be preached to all the nations.

Sixth, the Holy Spirit gives the persecuted saints the words and the wisdom they need and helps them to bear witness to Jesus boldly.

Seventh, even if the saints are rejected by their families and by the people of the world, they must not forsake Jesus and His Word but must keep their faith to the end.

Eighth, even in the midst of the great tribulation God rules over all things and limits the period of the tribulation for the sake of those whom He has chosen.

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Ninth, we must not judge a person to be true merely by the fact that he performs astonishing signs and wonders, but must discern whether his teaching agrees with the Word of Jesus.

Tenth, Jesus will come again at the end with great power and glory and will gather His own people from every direction.

Eleventh, even though heaven and earth pass away, the Word of Jesus does not pass away, and everything He has foretold will surely be fulfilled.

Twelfth, since no one can know the exact date and time of the second coming, we must not calculate dates or be shaken by rumors about the end.

Thirteenth, the life that prepares for the second coming is not the forsaking of everyday responsibilities but the carrying out, with faith and faithfulness, of the work God has entrusted to each person.

Fourteenth, all the saints must not fall asleep in spiritual indifference and worldly desire, but must always stay awake so that they may receive Jesus whenever He comes.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 13 is the chapter in which Jesus foretold the destruction of the temple and the wars, tribulation, and deception of the last days, made clear that after the gospel is preached to all the nations He Himself will come again with great power and glory, and taught the disciples, who cannot know that day and hour, to discern false teachings, to keep their faith even in the midst of tribulation, to do faithfully the work entrusted to them, and to stay awake always.

2) Mark chapter 13 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 13 is the chapter that speaks, beginning with the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem, of the deception, wars, and tribulation of the last days of the world, of the preaching of the gospel and of the second coming of Jesus, and that teaches the saints to stay awake. Jesus did not simply make known future events; He prepared those who have received the remission of sins to discern the age in which they live, to keep their faith even in the midst of tribulation, and to preach the gospel to all the nations.

The first work in preparing for the last days is not to calculate the date of the second coming but to confirm whether one has truly received the remission of sins. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead. The water testifies that the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus, the blood testifies to the judgment for those sins, and the Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and God Himself. The one who has believed this gospel and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit waits by faith for Jesus, who will come again.

1. The temple that will fall down and the foundation of eternal salvation (verses 1–2)

The disciple looked proudly at the huge stones and the magnificent buildings of the temple, but Jesus said that not one stone would be left upon another and that all of it would fall down. Religious buildings, institutions, and traditions that man relies on as though they were eternal can also fall down in the face of God’s judgment.

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Jesus' prophecy was fulfilled historically when Jerusalem and the temple were destroyed by the Roman army in A.D. 70. Jesus, who spoke knowing exactly what would happen in the future, is not a mere human prophet but God, who governs history. The destruction of the temple shows the fact that the Word of Jesus is surely fulfilled and the fact that the present world also is not eternal.

Splendid buildings and many religious activities cannot remove the sin that is in a person's heart. Even if a person enters the temple and offers many sacrifices and prayers, if sin remains in his heart he cannot become righteous before God by these things.

Because Jesus resolved all sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and with the Cross and the resurrection, the foundation of salvation is not a temple made by man but Jesus Christ. The Holy Spirit comes upon the person who has believed this gospel and had the sins of his heart washed away, and that person becomes the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

Even though the building that is seen falls down, the salvation that Jesus completed does not fall down. Therefore, rather than boasting of religious outward form and scale, the saints must examine whether in their own hearts there is faith in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and the Holy Spirit.

2. We must not be deceived by false christs and a false gospel (verses 3–6)

When the disciples asked when the destruction of the temple would happen, Jesus first said to take heed that no one deceives us. What is most dangerous in the last days is not only outward disaster but the deception that uses the name of Jesus while leading people into a wrong way of salvation.

A false christ does not mean only a person who directly claims that he himself is Jesus. We must also beware of anyone who takes the place of Jesus and makes people obey him absolutely, or who claims that one can be saved only through himself and a particular group.

A false gospel speaks of Jesus and yet makes the remission of sins that He accomplished incomplete. It may say that Jesus took upon Himself all sins, and yet teach that sin still remains in a person's heart and that he must keep washing away that sin through repeated confession and religious acts.

But Jesus took upon Himself all the sins that mankind commits throughout their lifetime with the baptism He received from John, paid the price of all those sins on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead. What man has to do is not to add his own merit to Jesus' salvation but to believe, just as it is written, the work that God has already accomplished.

The standard for discerning deception is not the popularity, the ability, or the religious position of the one who teaches. We must examine whether he rightly delivers the fact that Jesus completely removed all sins with the water and the blood, and whether he exalts Jesus as the true God and the only Savior.

3. We must not be afraid in the face of wars, earthquakes, and famines (verses 7–8)

Jesus said that there would be wars and rumors of wars, conflicts of peoples and nations, and earthquakes and famines in many places. But He said that because such things happen we must not immediately conclude that the end has come. That is the beginnings of sorrows.

The saints must not set a particular date and prophesy the second coming of Jesus whenever a war or a disaster occurs.

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The exact time belongs to God. The events of the world awaken us to the fact that history is moving toward the final judgment, but they do not give man the authority to calculate the date.

The words *"do not be troubled"* do not mean that we should take disasters lightly or make no preparation at all. The saints must look at the real dangers, protect their families and communities, and help those who suffer. However, believing in God, who is greater than the confusion of the world, they must not be ruled by fear and rumor.

For the one who has received the remission of sins, the death of the body is not eternal destruction. His soul has already been saved from sin and judgment, and when Jesus comes again his body also will rise in a glorious body. Because they have this hope, the saints do not despair even in the midst of disaster but live by faith.

4. The gospel must first be preached to all the nations (verses 9–10)

Jesus said that the disciples would stand before councils, synagogues, governors, and kings, and that that place would become an opportunity to bear witness to the gospel. The world seizes the saints in order to block the gospel, but God uses even that situation as a channel for the preaching of the gospel.

The most important work that the saints must carry out in the last days is not to spread rumors about the end but to deliver the gospel of life to all the nations. To those who have not yet heard the gospel, we must make known exactly how Jesus removed sins.

In the sin of the world that Jesus took upon Himself with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the sins of the people of every nation and every age are included. The

judgment He received on the Cross was also not for a particular people only, and the life He completed by His resurrection is given to whoever believes.

Therefore the preaching of the gospel must not be limited to a particular people, language, and culture. God wants all people to realize that they are sinners and, by hearing of the salvation Jesus completed, to obtain the remission of sins and eternal life.

The one who preaches the gospel must not make others subject to himself but must lead them to Jesus. He must not display his own name and achievements but must bear witness to Jesus, who accomplished salvation for sinners with the water and the blood.

5. The Holy Spirit, who speaks in the midst of persecution, and the faith that endures to the end (verses 11–13)

Jesus said that when the disciples were arrested and brought to trial they should not worry beforehand about what they should say. He promised that at that time the one who speaks is not the disciples alone but the Holy Spirit, and that the Holy Spirit would give them the words they needed.

The Holy Spirit is not one who simply gives religious power to a person who has not received any remission of sins at all. He comes into the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins by believing the fact that Jesus removed all his sins with the baptism He received from John and with the Cross and the resurrection.

The Holy Spirit testifies to the believer that God is his Father, and helps him to realize and preach the gospel. In the midst of persecution He gives him the words and the boldness to overcome fear and bear witness to Jesus.

Jesus said that family members would betray one another to death and that the disciples could be hated because of His name.

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A person who believes the gospel may be misunderstood and opposed even by his closest family and friends. At such times he must not hate the other person or condemn him carelessly, but must explain the gospel exactly and keep his faith.

The words *"he who endures to the end shall be saved"* do not mean that the act of enduring tribulation pays the price of the remission of sins. The remission of sins is received by faith in the salvation that Jesus completed. To endure to the end means the appearance of a person who truly believes that gospel and does not forsake his faith even in the midst of tribulation and deception.

Even a person who has been saved can fear or be shaken. But the Holy Spirit holds him fast, makes him remember the Word, and helps him to stand again upon faith. The saints must not trust in their own will alone but must rely on the Word of the gospel and the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

6. Discerning the abomination of desolation and the great tribulation (verses 14–20)

Jesus said that when they see the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, those who are in Judea should flee at once to the mountains. This word is connected in the near history with the event of Jerusalem and the temple being trampled by a foreign army, and it also looks at the powers that oppose God and the tribulation of the last days.

The text does not reveal in every detail what person or event of the last age the abomination of desolation is. Therefore we must not hastily conclude that a particular person, nation, or technology is the Antichrist. What is clear is the fact that powers will appear that stand in God's place, exalt themselves, and seek to destroy the faith of the saints.

Jesus said that when danger draws near, one should not go

back to get the things in the house or his clothes but should flee quickly. This shows that avoiding danger in order to protect one's life is not an act that lacks faith. Faith is not recklessly going into danger but realizing Jesus' warning and obeying it.

In the days of tribulation the suffering of those who find it hard to move, such as those who are pregnant and those who are nursing babies, will be all the greater. Jesus did not speak only of the survival of the strong but looked upon the circumstances of the weak as well. When the saints prepare for disaster, they too must first care for those who need help, such as little children, the aged, the sick, and the disabled.

He said that God would shorten the days of tribulation for the sake of the people He has chosen. Even in the midst of tribulation the evil powers do not decide everything as they please. God rules over its period and extent and protects His own people.

7. Discerning the false prophets who perform signs and wonders (verses 21–23)

Jesus said that even if someone says that the Christ is here or there, we must not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will show signs and wonders and will try to deceive, if possible, even those whom He has chosen.

We must not conclude that something is the work of the Holy Spirit merely because a miracle or a supernatural experience has appeared. Rather than a claim that a disease has been healed or a story that the future has been foretold, we must examine what kind of Jesus and what kind of salvation that person preaches.

The true Jesus has already come to this earth, taken upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, been judged on the Cross, and then risen

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from the dead. Jesus did not leave salvation in an incomplete state, nor did He make any human leader complete that salvation in His place.

If anyone claims that he himself has a special authority of salvation, or teaches that human merit and repeated acts of atonement must be added to the salvation Jesus completed, we must beware. The Holy Spirit testifies to the salvation that Jesus accomplished with the water and the blood and leads people not to a particular human being but to Jesus.

Since Jesus spoke of such deceptions beforehand, the saints need not be astonished or afraid. The one who knows the Word rightly and stands upon the foundation of the gospel discerns false signs and teachings.

8. Jesus, who comes again with great power and glory (verses 24–27)

After the great tribulation, changes will occur in the sun, the moon, and the stars, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. At that time all people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

The second coming of Jesus is not a manner of appearing secretly in a particular place and claiming that only he is the Christ. Jesus, who first came to this earth and was made low and suffered, comes in glory when He comes again, so that all people may know His authority.

Jesus has already completed the work of saving sinners with the baptism He received from John and with the Cross and the resurrection. When He comes again, He does not come to be sacrificed once more in order to take upon Himself sins; He comes as the King who gathers the people He has saved and judges the world that has not believed.

Jesus will send His angels and gather those whom He has

chosen from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Jesus knows those who have believed the gospel and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, wherever they live and in whatever circumstances they are. The Lord does not forget even one of those who are forgotten and despised in the world.

For the one who has been saved, the second coming is not only a day of terror but a day of hope on which the Savior he has been waiting for appears. On the contrary, for the one in whose heart sin remains it becomes a day of judgment. Therefore, rather than studying only the signs of the second coming, it comes first to believe the gospel now and receive the remission of sins.

9. Discerning the times through the fig tree (verses 28–29)

Jesus said that just as one knows summer is near when the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and puts forth leaves, so when we see the events He spoke of, we should know that the Son of Man is near.

One may also make the application of connecting the fig tree with the history of Israel and examining the flow of the times. But on the basis of this parable we must not calculate a particular year or the length of a generation and fix the date of the second coming. The clear core of the parable lies in staying spiritually awake as we see the signs Jesus spoke of, just as we recognize the change of the seasons.

To discern the times is not to force a prophetic meaning onto every event in the world. It is to remember, as we see wars, disasters, and false teachings increasing, the fact that the world is not eternal, and to realize that the opportunity to preach the gospel does not always continue.

The saints must prepare beforehand while things are

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relatively peaceful and the way to preach the gospel is open. They must use their time, talents, and material things for the preaching of the gospel, and must responsibly prepare their life both spiritually and physically so that even if a difficult age comes they may continue in faith and in the work of the gospel.

10. The word of Jesus, which does not pass away (verses 30–31)

Jesus said that before this generation passed away the things He spoke of would be fulfilled. The word concerning the destruction of the temple was actually fulfilled within the history of that time. This shows that the words concerning the second coming and the final judgment, which have not yet been completely fulfilled, will also surely be fulfilled.

Jesus declared that even though heaven and earth pass away, His words would not pass away. The nations, civilizations, and religious institutions of the world change and disappear, but the Word of Jesus is eternal.

It is the same with the Word concerning salvation. When one looks at his own feelings and deeds he may feel like a sinner, but the Word that Jesus took upon Himself all sins and was judged does not change. The assurance of salvation must be founded not on human feelings, which change daily, but on the Word of Jesus, which does not pass away.

No matter what new teachings and ideas become popular in the world, the saints must judge by the standard of the Word of God. The manner of delivery may change according to the age, but the content of the salvation that Jesus accomplished cannot be changed or revised.

11. The time of the second coming, which no one can know (verse 32)

Jesus said that not even the angels know that day and hour, and that only the Father knows. Therefore anyone who claims that he has found out the exact date and time of the second coming is saying something different from the Word of Jesus.

The work of calculating the date of the second coming not only gives people fear and confusion, but it can also turn them away from the life and the preaching of the gospel that Jesus has now entrusted to them. Rather than trying to find out the date God has hidden, we must do the work God has clearly commanded.

The word in which Jesus said that He does not know the hour does not mean that He is not God. Jesus came clothed in the body of a man and carried out the work of salvation from the position of a servant, and in this word He showed that the authority to determine the time belongs to the Father.

What the saints must know is not the exact date but the fact that Jesus will surely come again. We cannot know when He will come, but we must believe and prepare, knowing the fact that His promise does not change.

12. Keeping the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart and staying awake (verses 33–37)

Jesus commanded again and again, *"Take heed, watch and pray."* To stay awake is not to go without sleep and look only to heaven, nor to give up everyday life. It is to discern the age in which one lives and one's own spiritual state, and to do faithfully the work entrusted to him while preparing for the time when the master returns.

Even if a person who has not received the remission of sins knows many of the signs of the end, he has not fully prepared

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for the second coming. He must first believe the fact that Jesus removed all his sins with the baptism He received from John the Baptist and with the Cross and the resurrection. To pile up only knowledge about the end while there is no remission of sins and no Holy Spirit in the heart cannot be an actual preparation for receiving the Lord.

For the one who has received the remission of sins, the word to stay awake does not mean to obtain salvation again by his own effort. It means not to forget the grace of the salvation he has already received, not to let his heart be taken captive by false teachings and worldly desire, and to live following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

The master who left his house gave each of his servants the work entrusted to him. In the same way, to the one who has been saved there is also entrusted the work of preaching the gospel, caring for his family, faithfully carrying out his occupation and social responsibility, and serving the weak. The one who stays awake does not merely wait for some special event of the end but faithfully does the work now entrusted to him.

If one's heart is completely captivated by the pleasures, riches, and honor of the world, he can fall asleep spiritually. Even a person who has been saved, if he keeps away from the Word of the gospel and follows only the desires of the flesh, can forget what age he is living in and lose the opportunity to serve the gospel.

Therefore the saints must keep engraving the gospel on their hearts, learn the Word, pray, be united with the community of faith, and preach the gospel of life to others. They must also responsibly prepare their time, health, and living so that they may serve the gospel even in the midst of the difficulties that will come.

The life of staying awake is not a life held captive by fear. It is a life that hopes for the coming again of Jesus, who saved him, and that does by faith the work he must do today. Whenever the Lord comes, we must receive Him in the place entrusted to us, believing and serving the gospel.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 13 seen at the level of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, just as even the magnificent temple of Jerusalem fell down, the religious institutions and buildings of the world are not eternal, and the foundation of eternal salvation is Jesus Christ.

Second, the Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the person who has believed this gospel and received the remission of sins, and that person becomes the temple of God in which the Holy Spirit dwells.

Third, since in the last days many deceptions that use the name of Jesus will arise, we must discern by the standard of the Word of the salvation Jesus completed rather than by the authority of a human leader.

Fourth, wars, earthquakes, and famines awaken us to the fact that the end of the world is drawing near, but by these alone we must not fix the exact date of the second coming.

Fifth, rather than fearing disaster and tribulation, the one who has received the remission of sins must rely on God, prepare wisely for real dangers, and help those who suffer.

Sixth, since the gospel Jesus completed is for all the nations, the saints must deliver the way of the remission of sins to all people while there is still time to preach the gospel.

Seventh, the Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who has believed the gospel and received the remission of sins, and gives him the wisdom and the boldness to bear witness to

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Jesus even in the midst of persecution.

Eighth, to endure to the end is not to obtain the remission of sins by human patience; it is that the person who believes the true gospel does not forsake that faith even in the midst of tribulation and deception.

Ninth, since false christs and false prophets can make use of astonishing signs and wonders, we must examine whether the content of the salvation they preach agrees with the Word of God rather than looking at the phenomena.

Tenth, Jesus does not come again in order to take upon Himself sins once more; He comes as the glorious King who gathers the people He has saved and judges the world.

Eleventh, for the one who has been saved, the second coming of Jesus is not only a day of fear but a day of hope on which he meets the Lord who saved him and rises in a glorious body.

Twelfth, even though heaven and earth pass away, the Word of Jesus and the salvation He completed do not change forever.

Thirteenth, since no one can know the exact date of the second coming, we must not be absorbed in calculating dates but must believe and preach the gospel and faithfully do the work entrusted to us.

Fourteenth, to stay awake is not merely to pile up knowledge about the end; it is to engrave the grace of the gospel on the heart, to beware of the deception of the world, and to prepare beforehand and carry out the preaching of the gospel and the responsibilities of everyday life.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 13 is the chapter that teaches the fact that even though the religious institutions and civilizations of the world fall down and deception and tribulation arise, the salvation Jesus completed

with the water and the blood and His Word are eternal, and therefore the person who has believed this gospel and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit must discern false teachings, preach the gospel to all the nations, and, hoping for Jesus, who will come again, faithfully do the work entrusted to him and always stay awake. ✉

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Mark Chapter 13

Watch

Introduction

Mark chapter 13 begins with the scene in which the disciples look at the magnificent temple building and marvel. But Jesus said that not one stone would be left upon another and that it would all fall down. No matter how firm a building and a religious institution may look, they cannot be eternal if they refuse the will of God. On the other hand, the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished and His Word do not disappear even though heaven and earth pass away. Those who believe must build their faith upon the unchanging gospel rather than upon outward scale and glory.

The disciples asked when the temple would fall down and what sign would appear. Jesus spoke of false christs, wars, earthquakes, and famines, and first said to take heed lest we be deceived by anyone. These events show that the world is not eternal, but they themselves are not immediately the end. The saints must not calculate dates or be shaken by rumors whenever there is a disaster, but must discern deception by the Word.

Those who believe in Jesus may be dragged before councils and those in power, and may be rejected by their families. But persecution is not the failure of the gospel; rather it becomes an opportunity to bear witness to the gospel before many people. The Holy Spirit helps those who believe in the midst of difficulty, and the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. To endure to the end is not to boast of one’s own

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strong will but to believe the salvation Jesus accomplished and not to depart from it in any circumstance.

In the time of tribulation false christs and false prophets will put forward signs and wonders and try to deceive people. Therefore we must not judge something to be the work of God merely by seeing an astonishing phenomenon. Jesus, who is the true Christ, took upon Himself all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead on the third day and completed salvation. The one who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit and discerns false saviors.

At the end of history Jesus will come again in the clouds with great power and glory and will gather those whom He has chosen from every direction. Since only the Father knows that day and that hour, no one can set the date of the second coming. To stay awake is not to forsake everyday life and look only to heaven but to keep one's faith and serve the gospel in the place the Lord has entrusted to him. Mark chapter 13 teaches us not to be seized by fear and curiosity, to lay hold of the Word that does not pass away, and to stay awake and be faithful so that we may receive the Lord with joy whenever He comes.

Even though the temple that is seen falls down, the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished never falls down

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon

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another, that shall not be thrown down.'" (Mark 13:1–2).

After Jesus had taught in the temple, as He was leaving that place, one disciple pointed to the stones and the buildings of the temple and marveled. To the disciple's eyes the huge and beautiful temple came first into view. The temple was the center of the faith of Israel and was a magnificent building erected with much time and much wealth. That such a firm-looking building would fall down was something the disciples could not easily imagine.

That the disciple said, *"see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"* is an expression of wonder that urges Jesus to look at its scale and beauty. His heart was taken captive by the glory of the temple that was before his eyes. But Jesus saw an entirely different side from what the disciple was looking at. The disciple saw the size and firmness of the building, but Jesus saw the unbelief of the people surrounding that temple and the judgment of God that would come upon it.

The temple was originally a place that showed the fact that God dwelt among the people of Israel and met sinners there. There the sacrifices for the atonement of sins were offered, and the priests served God on behalf of the people. Therefore the temple and the sacrificial system themselves were not wrong. Through them God taught the principles of sin and judgment, of atonement and salvation.

But people could think that they were safe merely because the temple existed. While offering sacrifices in the temple and performing religious rituals, they disobeyed the Word of God and rejected the Christ whom God had sent. Earlier Jesus rebuked the hypocrisy of the scribes, who devoured widows' houses while enjoying the respect of people. Outwardly there was a magnificent temple and lively religious activity, but within it pride, greed, and unbelief were being revealed.

Even if it is a place God has set apart as holy, if the people who gather there do not believe God and disobey His Word, the building itself cannot save them. The size and beauty of the temple, its long history and its many religious rituals cannot become a shield that covers sin. God is not bound by the outward scale that man has made, and He judges religious forms from which truth and faith have disappeared.

After asking, *"Do you see these great buildings?"* Jesus said that not one stone would be left upon another and that all would be thrown down. This is the declaration that no matter how great and firm the temple may look, it cannot be eternal in the face of God's judgment. Even the temple that people relied on as though it would never fall down was to be destroyed according to the Word of God. This prophecy was actually fulfilled in history when Jerusalem and the temple were later destroyed by the Roman army.

The destruction of the temple does not mean that God lacked power and could not protect His own house. Rather it shows the fact that God surely judges sin and unbelief and that He exactly fulfills what He has said. People could think that because the temple existed they would not be judged, but God judged not their religious confidence but the reality of their faith and obedience.

The fact that Jesus spoke this word as He was going out of the temple also has meaning. The Son of God had come to His own people, but the religious leaders refused His authority and tried to kill Him. To boast only of the temple building while rejecting Jesus, the true owner of the temple, was to hold on to the shell and cast away the substance. A temple without Christ cannot save sinners, and in the end it is placed under the judgment of God.

The temple and the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed

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to Jesus Christ, who was to come, and to the atonement that He would accomplish. That the sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial animal and passed his sins on to it, and that the animal shed its blood and died, showed beforehand the work of Jesus taking upon Himself the sins of mankind and being judged. Therefore, to know the true meaning of the temple and the sacrifices, we must look to Jesus Christ, who fulfilled all those promises.

Jesus had already taken upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. By the sinless Son of God receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, overcame sin and death, and completed salvation.

When Jesus died on the Cross, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. This shows that the age in which man draws near to God relying on a building and on repeated sacrifices had ended, and that the way had been opened for man to come to God by believing in the complete atonement Jesus accomplished. The sinner is not saved by going to a particular place or by performing many religious rituals; he is saved by believing in his heart the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ accomplished with the water and the blood.

The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, has all his sins remitted once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Since the Holy Spirit dwells in his heart, the person who has been saved becomes the temple of God. This does not

mean that a church building or a place of worship is unnecessary; it means that God is not one who is only inside a building, but that He dwells in the heart of the saint who has received the remission of sins.

Therefore the church also must not make the size and splendor of its building the standard of faith. Just because there is a large sanctuary, much money, a long history, and a great many people, it does not follow that true faith is automatically there. On the contrary, just because a building is small and the number of the saints is few, it does not follow that there is no work of God. What is important is whether the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished is delivered exactly, and whether people have believed that gospel in their hearts and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit.

Man is easily overwhelmed by what he sees. When he sees a magnificent building, a well-equipped institution, a famous leader, and a great many people gathering, it is easy to think that these are evidence of the truth. But outward success does not necessarily guarantee God's approval. Every teaching and every work of service must be discerned by the standard of the Word of God, and we must examine whether at its center there is the gospel that Jesus Christ accomplished with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection.

The prophecy concerning the destruction of the temple also awakens us to the fact that everything that looks as though it will remain forever in this world will in the end disappear. Man stakes his security on buildings and possessions, on power and institutions, but these cannot be eternal in the face of God's judgment and the passing of time. The sinner must not entrust his own soul to the things of the world that will fall down but must rely on Jesus Christ, who accomplished eternal salvation.

This does not mean, however, that the saints may treat the

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church building or the material things they now use carelessly. The place and the finances God has entrusted to us so that we may serve the gospel must be managed with thanksgiving. However, we must not regard them as our own possession and glory, nor put the work of protecting a building ahead of the work of protecting the gospel. A building is a tool for preaching the gospel and serving the saints and our neighbors; it is not itself the goal of salvation.

The Word of Jesus also makes us look back at our personal faith. Even if one has a record of attending church for a long time, much service, an office, and knowledge of the Bible, if he has not believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart, these cannot remove his sins. The religious appearance built up outwardly may look like a firm temple, but in the face of God's judgment all of one's own righteousness falls down. Man must lay down his own merit and receive the righteousness that Jesus completed.

This passage teaches that we must believe in Christ and His Word rather than in religious glory that is seen. Even the magnificent temple did not escape the judgment of God in the midst of sin and unbelief. But the salvation Jesus accomplished with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection never falls down. The one who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and had all his sins remitted does not rely on buildings and institutions that will disappear, but follows the guidance of the Holy Spirit who dwells in his heart, keeps and serves the gospel, and looks to the eternal kingdom of God.

Those who see the signs of the end must not fall into fear and the calculating of dates, but must discern deception and stand firm on the gospel

"Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows" (Mark 13:3–8).

After Jesus said that not one stone of the temple would be left upon another and that it would fall down, He went to the Mount of Olives and sat facing the temple. At that time Peter, James, John, and Andrew, in a place apart from the others, asked Jesus quietly. Since the word that the magnificent temple before their eyes would fall down was so shocking to them, they wanted to know when that would happen and what sign would appear first.

The disciples' question began from the word about the destruction of the temple, but Jesus' answer makes us look beyond that event to the things that the saints who wait for the end of the world and for the Lord's second coming will experience. The destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and the tribulation of the last days cannot be divided as matters that have nothing to do with each other, nor can all the content be simplified into the events of one period. Jesus did not make the

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disciples calculate only the order of the events that were to happen; He first taught them with what kind of faith they must live in the midst of them.

The disciples asked *"when will these things be"* and *"what will be the sign,"* but the first word Jesus spoke was, *"Take heed that no one deceives you."* Man wants to know the exact time and the special sign of the future, but Jesus saw that the work of discerning the truth was more urgent than that curiosity. More important than knowing much information about the end is not falling for false teaching but believing the true Christ and the gospel.

Deception does not always come only in the form of an outright lie. It can use the name of Jesus and the expressions of the Bible and yet bind people to a particular leader and group rather than to Jesus Christ. There may appear people who claim that God has given a special revelation to them alone, or who say that one cannot be saved unless he goes through them, or who exalt their own interpretation and experience above the Bible. By the mere fact that a person uses the name of Jesus, his teaching does not become the truth.

Jesus warned that many would come in His name saying, *"I am He,"* and would deceive many people. A false christ does not mean only a person who openly calls himself Jesus. If a man tries to sit in the place of Savior and Lord, which Jesus alone must occupy, that too is a deception of the same character. A true preacher of the gospel does not make people submit to himself but leads them to believe the salvation Jesus accomplished.

To discern such deception, we must not follow only the eloquence or the popularity of the one who teaches, or phenomena that look like miracles. We must examine whom he testifies Jesus Christ to be, and how he teaches that a sinner

receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. If he puts forward human merit or religious acts as the condition of salvation, or obscures the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, then no matter how astonishing the experiences and powers he speaks of, we must not receive it as the truth.

Jesus said not to be troubled when we hear of wars and rumors of wars. Not only will wars actually happen, but also the rumors that a war has broken out somewhere will shake people's hearts. But the saints must not fall into fear as though the world had immediately come to an end whenever they hear a rumor, nor spread unverified stories. War is certainly a serious disaster, but by that one event alone we cannot conclude the exact time of the last day.

The words *"such things must happen, but the end is not yet"* do not mean that we should take wars and disasters lightly. They mean that although such events show the instability of a world fallen into sin and the fact that the judgment of God is drawing near, it is not that everything comes to an end the moment they appear. Therefore, to set a particular date and declare the second coming of the Lord whenever some war or disaster occurs is to run ahead of the Word of Jesus.

Jesus said that nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom. Man promises peace and prosperity, but because of the greed and pride, the hatred and the lust for domination in his heart, he ceaselessly quarrels and makes war. Even though technology and civilization develop, since the sinful nature of man does not disappear, the world cannot by itself produce complete peace. War, beyond a mere political conflict, reveals the fact that man and the world under sin need a true Savior.

The earthquakes and famines that will be in various places

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also show that by man's strength alone this world cannot be made eternally safe. The buildings and institutions, the wealth and the technology that man has piled up can fall down in the face of a single moment of disaster. Yet we must not carelessly judge that those who have suffered disaster went through such things because they had more sin than others. Rather than using disasters to condemn people, the saints must help those who suffer and preach to them the gospel of eternal life.

Jesus called all these things *"the beginnings of sorrows."* This shows that, just as when the pains of childbirth begin the time finally comes for the child to be born, so the suffering of the world is not repeated eternally without any purpose but is moving toward the completion God has appointed. But the *"beginnings"* are not immediately the same as the *"end."* When the saints see the signs, rather than hastily calculating dates, they must stay awake, keep their faith, and do the work of preaching the gospel entrusted to them.

The purpose of the word concerning the end does not lie in driving people into terror. That Jesus said *"do not be troubled"* means that we should believe that He is the Sovereign of history and that everything is under God's permission. Those who believe may also suffer physical pain in the midst of wars, earthquakes, and famines. Believing the gospel is not a guarantee that one will escape every disaster, but in any situation the eternal life that has been saved from the judgment of sin cannot be taken away.

The ground on which a person can stand without fear in the face of the final judgment is not his own preparation and good deeds. Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world, including the past, the present, and the future, with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By the sinless Son of God receiving the baptism from John the Baptist,

the representative of mankind, all sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment of sin in our place.

Jesus was buried and rose from the dead on the third day and overcame sin and death, and He will come again, judge the world, and complete the kingdom of God. Therefore the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection, has all his sins remitted once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Even though the signs of the end appear, the ground of salvation is not one's own feelings or the circumstances of the world but the righteousness Jesus completed, and so the saints stand by faith.

False christs and false teachings can give people fear and use that fear to demand submission and wealth. We must beware of teaching that says, "If you do not come to us right now you cannot be saved," or that controls people by presenting a particular date and place. The true gospel does not bind people to any human leader; it makes them believe the fact that Jesus removed all sins with the water and the blood and so makes them stand boldly before God.

This does not mean, however, that we may ignore the word about the end and live absorbed only in the affairs of the world. The fact that we cannot know the exact date of the end is not a reason for carelessness but a call to live with a faith that can receive the Lord at any time. The one who has received the remission of sins does not chase after wealth and desire alone as though he would stay in the world forever, but keeps the gospel and preaches it to those who have not yet heard it until the day the Lord comes again.

When the saints hear news of war and disaster, they must not remain in terror and curiosity but must pray and help those

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who suffer. They must not spread unverified rumors or boast of their own interpretation of the end by using disasters. They must look at history and the circumstances of the world, but rather than trying to force every event to fit some particular prophecy of the Bible, they must keep faith and discernment within the Word that is clearly written.

This passage teaches that the most important way of preparing for the last days is to know and believe the true gospel. Wars, earthquakes, and famines show the fact that the world is not eternal, but those events are not the way of salvation. The one who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, discerns the deception of men, is not seized by excessive fear even at news of disaster, and stays awake and serves the gospel until the day the Lord comes again.

The persecution received because of the gospel becomes an opportunity for testimony, and the Holy Spirit helps the saints to keep their faith to the end

"'But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up

against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mark 13:9–13).

After speaking of wars, earthquakes, and famines, Jesus warned the disciples, *"But watch out for yourselves."* What the saints had to take heed of in the last days was not only the disasters that occur in the world. Since they could receive religious and social persecution for the reason that they believed in Jesus and preached the gospel, they had to examine their own faith and stay awake. This does not mean always suspecting people and trembling in anxiety; it is the word to prepare their hearts so that they would not forsake the gospel when difficulty came.

Jesus said that the disciples would be delivered up to councils and beaten in the synagogues. The council was a religious institution that interrogated and passed judgment on people, and the synagogue was originally a place where the Word of God was read and taught. But the people who refused the Son of God would condemn the disciples of Jesus in the name of religion and do violence to them. Just because one has a religious name and institution, it does not follow that he always does the will of God.

The disciples were also to stand before rulers and kings. This means that opposition to the gospel does not remain only in the religious realm but can be extended even to the powers of the world. Those in power would try to judge the disciples like criminals, but in fact that place becomes a place where the gospel is testified. People set them in court in order to silence them, but God rather uses that very thing to deliver the truth to those who ordinarily had no opportunity to hear the gospel.

The words *"for a testimony to them"* do not mean that the saints must go about looking for persecution itself. We must

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not deliberately provoke people or act without wisdom, create conflict, and then call it persecution received because of the gospel. The saints must live at peace with all people as far as possible, but they cannot yield to a demand that they deny Jesus Christ and the true gospel. When they come to be tried and to suffer disadvantage on account of that, they must not appeal only to their own injustice but must make it an opportunity to testify to the gospel.

Jesus said, *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations."* Even the opposition and persecution of the world cannot block God's plan for the preaching of the gospel. The gospel is not news for a particular people or region only but the Word of salvation for all the sinners of the whole world. Even the suffering by which the disciples were scattered to various regions and made to stand before those in power could become an occasion for the gospel to be preached more widely.

The word that the gospel must be preached to all the nations also teaches the fact that the saints must not merely wait while calculating the date of the end. The one who believes that the Lord will come again does not remain watching the events of the world and fearing them, but must deliver the Word of salvation to those who have not yet heard the gospel. The life that prepares for the Lord's second coming is not the forsaking of everyday responsibility and gathering in one place to wait for a date; it is faithfully serving the gospel during the time given to us.

When people arrest the disciples and deliver them up, they cannot help being anxious about what they should answer. For if they speak wrongly before those who have authority, they may be beaten or even lose their lives. But Jesus said that they should speak whatever is given them at that hour. For even if the disciples do not rely on their own wisdom and eloquence

alone, the Holy Spirit will give them the words and the boldness they need.

The words *"it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit"* do not mean that there is no need to learn the Scriptures or to put the gospel in order in ordinary times. This promise means that the Holy Spirit will be with the disciples, who must suddenly be seized and bear witness in the midst of persecution, and will give them the words they need. The saints must know the gospel exactly in ordinary times and keep the Word in their hearts, and when they actually bear witness they must not boast of their own ability but must rely on the Holy Spirit.

The Holy Spirit is not one who makes people speak of a new way of salvation. He makes them testify to who Jesus is and what He accomplished for sinners. He helps them to speak boldly, not of man's philosophy and religious merit, but of the righteousness of God that Jesus Christ completed. Therefore the testimony of the Holy Spirit always exalts Jesus and clearly reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Persecution can also arise within the closest family relationships. Jesus said that brother would betray brother and a father his child to death, and that children would rise up against their parents. Family members ought to protect one another, but when hatred toward the gospel grows strong, it can break even the ties of flesh and blood. For the saints, being rejected by a beloved family member can be a deeper pain than the pressure of the state or society.

This does not mean, however, that on the basis of this word one may regard family members who do not believe the gospel as enemies or carelessly cut off the relationship. Even if his family opposes him, the saint must not hate them but must be patient and treat them with love. However, even if it is his family's demand, he cannot follow a word that tells him to

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deny Jesus and the gospel. He must love his flesh and blood, yet not put his family in a higher place than God.

Jesus said that the disciples would be *"hated by all for My name's sake."* What is important here is the reason for being hated. Being blamed because of one's own rudeness and lies, greed and wrong behavior cannot be called persecution for the gospel. When one is hated for the reason that he rightly preaches and believes the name of Jesus and the salvation He accomplished, that is the persecution of which the text speaks.

Because the world thinks that man can become righteous by his own strength and good deeds, it finds it hard to accept the gospel that Jesus completely removed all the sins of man. Religious people also try to put forward their own repentance and merit as the condition of salvation, and so they can dislike the word that tells them to rely on the righteousness of God alone. Because the gospel of the water and the Spirit does not exalt human righteousness but declares that only the righteousness God accomplished is complete, it can be opposed.

Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By the sinless Son of God receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, overcame sin and death, and completed salvation.

The one who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, has all his sins remitted once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who has been saved and testifies that this gospel is the truth.

He also holds him fast so that he does not forsake his faith in the midst of persecution and suffering, and gives him the strength and the wisdom to testify to the gospel when it is needed.

We must not understand the words *"he who endures to the end shall be saved"* to mean that one obtains salvation by the merit of having long endured suffering. The length of time a person has endured persecution or the greatness of his pain cannot become the price that washes away sins. The One who took upon Himself sins, was judged, and accomplished salvation is Jesus Christ alone. Endurance is not the price of salvation but the appearance of a person who believes the true gospel and, receiving the help of the Holy Spirit, does not forsake that faith to the end.

Nor does this salvation mean that one's physical life will surely be preserved in the midst of persecution. Some saints may even be killed because of the gospel. But even if they lose the life of the body, the eternal life and the remission of sins they have received in Jesus Christ cannot be taken away. Even if the courts of the world may pronounce the saints guilty, God acknowledges as righteous the one who believes the righteousness of Christ, and on the last day He receives him into the eternal kingdom.

To endure to the end does not mean that one feels no fear at all or is never once shaken. The disciples too could fear and fall, but the Holy Spirit raised them up again with the Word. The one who believes must not rely on his own strong will but must lay hold of the salvation Jesus completed. In the midst of difficulty it is also necessary that the church and the saints encourage one another, pray, and guard their hearts with the Word of the gospel.

This passage teaches that persecution does not mean the

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failure of the gospel. People try to silence the saints, but God uses even that place as a channel for preaching the gospel. The one who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not deny Jesus even in the face of men's hatred and threats, but relies on the Holy Spirit and testifies to the Word of salvation. And he does not make his own patience the merit of salvation but believes in Jesus Christ, who saved him completely, and keeps and serves the gospel until the day the Lord comes.

In the time of the great tribulation we must not follow the words of men and astonishing signs, but must lay hold of the Word given beforehand and the true gospel

"'So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 'Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible,

even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand" (Mark 13:14–23).

After speaking of the fact that the temple would fall down, Jesus taught in detail how the disciples were to act when that judgment came. This word first looks at the destruction that Jerusalem and the temple would suffer, and at the same time it also warns of the extreme tribulation and deception that would appear in the last days. Rather than limiting all the meaning to one event or forcing the details to fit particular persons and events of the present, we must pay attention to the warning and the attitude of faith that Jesus clearly emphasized.

The expression *"abomination of desolation"* indicates the work by which the powers of idolatry that defy God defile a holy place and bring desolation. *"Standing where it ought not"* means the holy place that such an abomination must never occupy. It is a warning that a situation would arise in which powers that oppose God would come into the temple and among the people, who ought to serve God, and would exalt themselves and trample on what is holy.

This word is connected with the historical judgment in which Jerusalem was surrounded by an enemy army and the temple was defiled and destroyed. But that event at the same time also has the character of showing beforehand the work by which, in the last days, powers that oppose God will exalt themselves and deceive people. Therefore we must not hastily conclude without ground that the *"abomination of desolation"* is some one person or some present event. We must discern carefully according to the clear signs Jesus made known and the Word of the whole of Scripture.

The words *"let the reader understand"* demand spiritual attention from the reader. The word of prophecy is not a riddle for satisfying curiosity or for calculating dates. It is a warning

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given so that we may realize the will God has spoken beforehand and act with faith and wisdom when the actual situation comes. Since one can miss the meaning if he puts his own thoughts first even while reading the Word, we must seek the guidance of the Holy Spirit and receive the Word just as it is.

Jesus said that when they saw that sign, those who were in Judea should flee to the mountains. After the judgment had begun, they were not to remain out of a human pride that they would protect the temple and the city. For even Jerusalem, which they thought holy and safe, was placed under the judgment of God. To flee at once when God says to flee was the act of believing the Word.

The one who was on the housetop was not to go down to get the things in the house, and the one who was in the field was not to turn back to get his clothes. This means that the danger was so urgent that they must not delay even a little. They were not to lose their lives because of lingering attachment to their property and household goods, but to act at once when they heard the warning of God. In ordinary times the work of managing possessions is necessary, but when judgment has come we must discern what is more important.

This word does not mean that a person of faith must unconditionally ignore danger. To flee from a disaster that can be escaped is not an act that lacks faith or is cowardly. Jesus Himself commanded them to flee to the mountains. Faith is not remaining recklessly in danger while testing God’s protection; it is wisely preserving one’s life according to the Word and continuing to carry out the mission entrusted to him.

Jesus said that in those days there would be woe to those who were pregnant and to those who were nursing babies. This does not mean that being pregnant or raising a child is a sin or

a curse. It is because in a tribulation from which one must flee quickly, those whose bodies are heavy and those who care for little children suffer greater difficulty. Even while explaining the tribulation, Jesus took into account the specific suffering that the weak would undergo.

The words *"And pray that your flight may not be in winter."* also show the fact that God cares for the real difficulties of the saints. In winter it was harder to flee quickly because of the weather and the condition of the roads. Even though the great plan concerning judgment has been determined, the saints may seek God's mercy and help in their specific situations. Prayer is not a denial of prophecy but an act of faith that relies on God's mercy even in the midst of tribulation.

Jesus said that those days would be days of tribulation so great as had not been before and would never be again. This shows that God's judgment on sin and unbelief is by no means a light matter. When man is at ease it is easy for him to regard the word of judgment as an exaggeration, but on the day God judges, he cannot protect himself with human strength, wealth, or religious position.

Yet even in the midst of tribulation God's mercy appears. He said that if the Lord had not shortened those days no flesh would have survived, but that for the sake of the people He had chosen He shortened those days. Here the words *"no flesh would be saved"* contain, in the context, the meaning that no one would preserve the life of his body. It is not a word explaining the way of salvation by which one obtains the remission of sins and is born again; it means that the tribulation is so severe that unless it were limited no one could survive.

God permits tribulation, but He does not leave it to go beyond the limit He has appointed. Even though to the eyes of man it looks as though the powers of evil rule over everything,

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the period and the extent of the tribulation are under the sovereignty of God. The word that He shortens those days for the sake of the people He has chosen shows the fact that the saints endure not by their own strength but by the protection and the mercy of God.

When tribulation grows severe, people become impatient to find a way to be saved. It is precisely then that if someone says, *"Look, here is the Christ!"* or *"Look, He is there!"* they can easily be shaken. But Jesus clearly commanded that we must not believe such words. The true Christ is not one who is hidden in a secret place known only to a few people and can be met only by receiving the guidance of a particular leader.

False christs and false prophets will show signs and wonders and try to deceive people. This word means that by the mere fact that an astonishing phenomenon has occurred, we must not judge that it is the work of God. Even if someone performs what looks supernatural or claims to have foretold a future event, if the content that person delivers is different from the Word of God we must not follow him. A sign is not the final standard for judging the truth, and every teaching must be discerned by the standard of the gospel that Jesus Christ accomplished.

The words *"to deceive, if possible, even the elect"* warn of the fact that the power of deception is very strong and skillful. False teaching can use the expressions of the Bible, call on the name of Jesus, and display a godly appearance. Therefore we must not proudly think that we will never be deceived, but must abide in the Word and be led by the Holy Spirit. God gives the word of warning beforehand and protects the saints so that they may discern the truth.

The heart of discerning the true Christ is to know the salvation He actually accomplished for sinners. Jesus took

upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By the sinless Son of God receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment of sin in our place.

Jesus was buried and rose from the dead on the third day and overcame the power of sin and death. Therefore the one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, has all his sins remitted once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. No false christ can become a Savior who took upon himself all the sins of the world, was judged, and rose from the dead. The One who completed this salvation is Jesus Christ alone.

A false prophet may add human works and sacrifices to the salvation that has already been completed, or teach that one can be saved only by belonging to a particular leader and group. Or he may try to seize people's hearts by putting forward miracles and blessings, the secrets of the end and terror, rather than the gospel of the remission of sins. But the true Holy Spirit does not bind people to a human leader; He makes them believe the fact that Jesus removed all sins with the water and the blood, and makes them exalt Christ alone.

Jesus said, *"But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand."* The purpose for which He told them beforehand was so that when the saints met tribulation they would not misunderstand and think that God had forsaken them. Even though suffering and deception appear, they are not things that Jesus did not know. The saints must not be astonished and follow just any word, but must remember the Word they have already received and keep their faith.

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This passage teaches that the work of preparing for the last days does not lie in guessing at the dates and the persons of disaster. When God's warning becomes clear, we must not cling to the things of the world but must obey the Word at once, and in the midst of tribulation we must seek God's mercy. Above all, we must not be deceived by false christs and false prophets who put forward signs and wonders, but must firmly believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The one who has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit by this gospel relies on the protection of God, keeps the truth to the end, and waits for the coming again of the Lord.

Jesus, who comes again after the tribulation, appears in glory that all can see and gathers those whom He has chosen

"'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven" (Mark 13:24–27).

After warning of the great tribulation and the deception of false christs, Jesus spoke of what would happen after that tribulation. History is not something in which wars, disasters, and persecutions are endlessly repeated and then disappear without any purpose. When the time God has appointed comes, Jesus Christ will come again, judge evil, and complete the work of salvation. At the end of the tribulation there is not the

victory of a false christ but the glorious second coming of the true Christ.

The text clearly makes known the setting of the second coming as *"after that tribulation."* The saints must not think that they have been forsaken by God merely because there is tribulation and difficulty. Jesus told the disciples beforehand that there would be tribulation, and He also promised that He would come again after passing through that whole process. Suffering is not evidence that God's plan of salvation has failed; it shows that the history the Lord spoke of is moving toward its completion.

At that time the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, and the stars will fall from heaven. The sun, the moon, and the stars are created things on which man relies when he judges the time and order of everyday life. But when the Lord comes again, even the order of the heavens, which until now has looked as though it continues unchanged, will be shaken. This shows the fact that the whole created world is placed before the final judgment of God the Creator and His work of making all things new.

We must not take this word to mean that every ordinary natural phenomenon — a solar or lunar eclipse, a meteor — is a definite sign of the second coming. What Jesus described is a cosmic event in which the sun, the moon, the stars, and the powers of the heavens are shaken together. We cannot fix beforehand by human calculation the specific manner and date of it, but what is clear is the fact that the Lord's second coming is an actual intervention of God that shakes the order of the world.

The words *"the powers in the heavens will be shaken"* show that every power man thinks firm is under the rule of God. Not only the power and the military strength of the world, but

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even the order of the heavens, which man considers beyond his control, cannot escape the command of the Creator. The powers of the world on which sinners relied are shaken, but the kingdom of God and the authority of Christ are never shaken forever.

At that time people will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. Here *"the Son of Man"* is the title Jesus used in referring to Himself. Jesus came as true man and stood in the place of sinners, but at the same time He is the Son of God, who has the authority of heaven and judges and rules. When He first came to this earth He came in a low and humble form, but when He comes again He will openly reveal the power and glory of the King.

The second coming of Jesus is not an event that takes place in a secret location known only to a few people. Just before this, Jesus warned that even if people say, *"Look, here is the Christ!"* or *"Look, He is there!"* we must not believe it. When the true Christ comes again, there is no need to receive the guidance of a man and go to some place. He comes in the clouds with great power and glory, and people will see that sight.

Therefore, if anyone claims that he himself is the Christ who has come again, or says that only by going to a particular place can one meet the Lord who has come again, we must not accept it. Even if he has astonishing signs and wonders, many followers, and religious authority, if it differs from the manner of the second coming of which Jesus spoke, it is false. The Lord of the second coming is not one who must barely be proved by the explanation of a human leader but one who ends all falsehood and Himself reveals His own authority.

The word that He comes in the clouds shows that the second coming of Jesus is a glorious and transcendent work of God. It is not that man brings the Lord to this earth by his own

strength, nor that the kingdom of God is completed by a political movement or by religious effort. Jesus Himself comes with the time and the power God has appointed, and judges and rules the world.

The first coming and the second coming are not works done by different saviors. The very same Jesus who was baptized in the Jordan River and was hung on the Cross comes again in glory. At His first coming He humbled Himself in the form of a servant in order to save sinners, but at His second coming He comes as the King who completes the salvation He has already accomplished and judges the world that has not believed. Therefore, to prepare rightly for the second coming, one must first believe the salvation that Jesus accomplished at His first coming.

Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By the sinless Son of God receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He went to the Cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the judgment of sin in our place. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day and overcame sin and death.

When Jesus comes again, a new way of salvation does not come into being. The way by which a sinner is saved now is to believe in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection. The one who believes this gospel has all his sins remitted once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God. The ground on which one can boldly receive the Lord on the day of the second coming is not his own good deeds and religious zeal but the righteousness Jesus completed.

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When the Lord comes again, He will send His angels and gather those whom He has chosen from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven. Even though they are scattered in the various nations and regions of the world, not one who belongs to Christ is forgotten. The Lord knows exactly even the saint who has kept his faith in a place unknown to men, and He sends His angels and gathers all of His own people.

That those whom He has chosen are gathered is not determined by human lineage or nationality, by denomination or social position. Whoever has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit is the people of God who belong to Christ, in whatever nation and region he may be. The reason the gospel must be preached to all the nations is also that God saves those who believe from all over the world and gathers them as one people.

The words *"from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven"* show the fact that the range the Lord's salvation reaches is complete. Even though the saints are scattered by tribulation and persecution and look like powerless people in the world, on the last day the Lord Himself gathers them. The power of the world can harm the body of a man, but it cannot take away the remission of sins and the eternal life Christ has given.

The same second coming becomes for some the completion of salvation and joy, but for the one who has refused the gospel it becomes a judgment that cannot be escaped. Now people may deny Jesus and ignore His Word, but on the day He comes with great power and glory it will be revealed that He is the Son of God and the true King. Therefore the word concerning the second coming is not merely information for predicting the

future but the calling of God to believe the gospel now.

While waiting for the Lord's second coming, the saints must not live in the world irresponsibly. Rather than spending time guessing when the Lord will come, they must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit while there is still opportunity and faithfully carry out the work entrusted to them. The glory of the world is shaken together with the powers of the heavens, but the work of the gospel that saves one soul is connected to the eternal kingdom of God.

Even when they see tribulation and the confusion of the world, the saints have no need to despair. If they look only at the circumstances before their eyes, it may seem that the evil powers are winning, but at the end of history the victory of Jesus Christ is waiting. God limits the days of tribulation and protects His own people, and when the time He has appointed comes He will gather them from every direction.

This passage clearly shows who Jesus is as the One who will come again. He is not a false christ who appears in a secret place but the Son of God, who comes in the clouds with great power and glory. Jesus, who came the first time and completely saved sinners with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, will come again, judge the world, and gather His own people. The one who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit waits for the Lord's second coming not with fear but with hope, and until that day he keeps the gospel and preaches it to the whole world.

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We must discern the signs of the second coming but not set a date, and laying hold of the Word that does not pass away, we must do the work entrusted to us and stay awake

"'Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 'But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'" (Mark 13:28–37).

After speaking of the tribulation and the cosmic signs, the glorious second coming of the Son of Man and the gathering of those whom He has chosen, Jesus said to learn the parable of the fig tree. When the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and leaves begin to come out, people know that summer is near even without looking at a calendar. In the same way, when the things Jesus spoke of appear, we must realize that God's plan of salvation is moving toward completion and that the Son of Man has come near.

To see the signs is not the work of forcing every event that

happens in the world to fit some particular prophecy. Nor must we calculate the date of the Lord's second coming and declare it definitively to people whenever a war or an earthquake occurs. Jesus made the signs known so that the disciples might remember the Word and discern the times even in the midst of deception, persecution, and tribulation. The purpose of the signs does not lie in satisfying curiosity but in awakening faith.

The words *"know that it is near—at the doors!"* mean that the saints must not regard the Lord's second coming as a vague story. Even though it feels as though the Lord is slow in coming, history is moving toward the time He has appointed. Just as a master who has come to the door may enter at any moment, the saints must receive the Lord's coming again as an actual promise and live with a prepared faith.

Jesus said, *"this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place."* This word first points to the fact that the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem would be fulfilled within the generation that directly heard the words of Jesus. In fact the temple the disciples were looking at was destroyed before that generation passed away. Jesus' prophecy was not a vague guess but the Word of God fulfilled in history.

At the same time the word of Mark chapter 13 looks beyond the destruction of the temple to the last tribulation and the second coming of the Son of Man. The near judgment of the temple and the far final judgment appear connected within one prophecy. We must not limit every detail of this passage to the events of one age, nor on the contrary assign it only to a distant future that has nothing to do with the disciples of that time. The destruction of the temple that was fulfilled in that generation becomes the guarantee that the words of Jesus concerning the end will also surely be fulfilled.

Jesus declared, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My*

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words will by no means pass away." Even the heaven and the earth that man thinks will last the longest can disappear at the time God has appointed, but not one of the words of Jesus passes away. This declaration shows that the Word of Jesus is not the opinion of a mere human teacher but the Word that has the authority of God the Creator.

The circumstances of the world and the interpretations of men keep changing, but the truth of salvation does not change. In some ages the gospel looks foolish, and some powers may try to do away with the Word of God. But the attacks of men or the passing of time cannot make the Word of God void. The saints must rely on the Word of the Lord, which never passes away, rather than on the stability of the world that is seen or on popular claims.

But Jesus said that no one knows that day and hour. Not even the angels of heaven know, and not the Son, but only the Father knows. This means that discerning through the signs that the time is near and finding out the exact date of the second coming are two different things. The one who makes up a calculation that is not in the Bible and fixes a particular year and date is claiming to know what Jesus has kept hidden.

The words *"nor the Son"* do not mean that Jesus is not the Son of God or that He is a mere created being. Jesus, clothed in a body and in the position of a servant, carried out the work of salvation and obeyed the will of the Father completely. The focus of this word lies in the fact that the time of the second coming is in the authority of the Father and that neither angels nor men can find it out or determine it at will. Rather than digging out the hidden date, the disciple must obey the command that has been clearly made known.

Since we cannot know the exact time, Jesus said, *"Take heed, watch and pray."* To stay awake does not mean to go

without sleep and look at the sky all night. It means the state of not being spiritually careless, of believing the true gospel, of discerning false teaching, and of faithfully doing the work the Lord has entrusted to us. The body must sleep, but the heart must not be intoxicated with the greed and sin of the world and so forget the Word of the Lord.

Jesus spoke the parable of a master of a house who was going to a far country. The master gave authority to his servants and appointed to each one his work, and he commanded the doorkeeper to watch. It was not that the servants had nothing to do while the master was away. Rather, until the master returned, each one had to carry out responsibly the work entrusted to him.

In this parable the master makes us think of Jesus, who will come again, and the servants of those who wait for the Lord. Jesus ascended into heaven, but He entrusted to the saints the work of preaching the gospel, serving the church, and loving their neighbors. The gifts and circumstances each person has received and the role entrusted to him may differ, but He has given no one the right to live irresponsibly. The faith that waits for the Lord's second coming does not forsake present responsibility but makes us carry out the work entrusted to us all the more faithfully.

The servants did not know whether the master would come in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning. Because they did not know at what hour he would come, they had to be prepared at every hour. If a man knew the exact time, he might live as he pleased right up to the last and then try to prepare only at the final moment. By hiding that day God made the saints live by faith day by day.

In the word that the master should not come suddenly and find the servants sleeping, *"sleeping"* means spiritual

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carelessness. It is the state of forgetting the gospel and chasing only after the wealth and pleasure of the world, or of abandoning the work entrusted to us as though the Lord would not come. Since one's heart can grow distant from the gospel and the work of God even while he outwardly continues his church life, the saints must keep examining their own faith and life.

Yet the life of staying awake is not the condition for obtaining the remission of sins. Even if a man does much praying and serving, good deeds and a life of tension, he cannot remove his sins by those acts and so prepare for the second coming. True preparation begins from knowing exactly and believing in the heart the salvation Jesus Christ accomplished for sinners.

Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By the sinless Son of God receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so received the judgment in our place. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, and so overcame sin and death and completed salvation.

The one who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was accomplished by the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, has all his sins remitted once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. This person stands boldly before the Lord of the second coming, not because his own deeds are perfect but because he believes the perfect righteousness Jesus accomplished. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the one who has been saved, makes him remember the Word, and leads him to live with a faith that waits for the Lord.

That the one who has been saved stays awake and does the work entrusted to him is not a price paid to maintain his salvation. Just as a servant faithfully does the work his master has entrusted to him, it is the fruit of a life that serves the gospel out of thankfulness for the salvation and grace he has already received. The saints must deliver the Word of salvation to those who have not yet heard the gospel, be united with the church, love their families and neighbors, and honestly carry out their everyday responsibilities as well.

The command *"Watch!"* was not given only to the first four disciples. Jesus said, *"And what I say to you, I say to all."* Regardless of age and place, all who wait for the Lord's second coming must receive this word as a command given to themselves. No one can receive the Lord by leaning on another person's faith and preparation.

This passage teaches us to see the signs but not to set a date, and to wait for the second coming but not to forsake our present mission. Even though heaven and earth pass away, the Word of Jesus and the salvation He accomplished never change forever. The one who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not prepare for the Lord's coming with fear and calculation. Laying hold of the Word that does not pass away and discerning false teaching, he faithfully does the work of the gospel and of service entrusted to him and lives awake, so that whenever the Lord comes he may receive Him with joy. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 13

[Question] 1. What did Jesus teach concerning the end in Mark chapter 13?

Mark chapter 13 is the Word in which Jesus taught His disciples on the Mount of Olives about the destruction of the temple of Jerusalem and the signs of the last days of the world, the persecution the saints would receive and the preaching of the gospel, the great tribulation and the deception of false christs, the second coming of the Son of Man and the gathering of those whom He has chosen, and the watchful faith that the one who waits for that day must have. This Word is not meant to make people calculate the date of the end; it is meant to make them know beforehand what will happen, not fall into deception and fear, and live by faith to the end.

First, the disciples looked at the stones and the buildings of the magnificent temple of Jerusalem and marveled. But Jesus said that not one stone would be left upon another and that all would fall down. This shows the fact that no matter how large and firm a religious institution and building may be outwardly, it cannot escape judgment if it disobeys the will of God. This prophecy points in the first place to the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and ultimately it looks ahead to the end of all human glory and order in the world and the coming of God’s judgment.

When the disciples asked when these things would happen and what sign there would be, the first word Jesus spoke was,

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"Take heed that no one deceives you." In the last days there will appear those who use the name of Jesus and claim that they themselves are the Christ, and they will deceive many people. Therefore we must not follow someone merely because of signs and wonders or human authority, but must discern whether what he preaches agrees with the written Word of God and the true gospel.

There will also arise wars and rumors of wars, the opposition of nation against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and earthquakes and famines in various places. But Jesus said that when we hear such news we must not immediately conclude that the end has come, nor be afraid. These things are not the end itself but *"the beginnings of sorrows."* Just as the pains of childbirth grow stronger and stronger, they show that as the sin and the disasters of the world grow severe the end is drawing near; but the one who believes must not be seized by terror and must lay hold of the Word of God.

Jesus said that the disciples would be delivered up to councils and beaten in the synagogues, and would stand before rulers and kings. There would even arise the things that family members betray one another to death and that they are hated by all people because of the name of Jesus. But such persecution does not mean only that the gospel is blocked. That those who believe stand before those in power rather becomes an opportunity to testify to them of the gospel, and when they are anxious about what they should say, the Holy Spirit gives them what to speak.

The important work that must surely be accomplished in the course of the end is that the gospel is first preached to all the nations. The mission of the one who believes is not merely to watch for the signs of disaster or to flee from the world, but to

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preach the gospel of the remission of sins to all the nations that do not yet know the gospel. To endure to the end in the midst of tribulation and hatred does not mean to pile up merit by one's own will in order to obtain salvation. It means not forsaking the gospel one has already received, keeping the faith, and standing on the side of the Lord and the gospel to the end by relying on the Holy Spirit.

Jesus said that when they see *"'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not,"* those who are in Judea should flee at once to the mountains. At that time there will arise a great tribulation such as has not been since the creation, and unless God shortens those days for the sake of the people He has chosen, it will be so severe that no one could endure it. This Word shows, together with the fact that the judgment of God is actual and fearful, the fact that even in the midst of tribulation God remembers and protects His own people.

In the midst of the great tribulation false christs and false prophets will show signs and wonders and try to deceive, if possible, even the people He has chosen. Therefore, even if someone says, *"Look, here is the Christ!"* or *"Look, He is there!"* we must not believe it. The second coming of Jesus is not an event known secretly to only some people, nor an event that happens hidden in a particular place. When the Son of Man comes in the clouds with great power and glory, people will see that sight, and He will send His angels and gather those whom He has chosen from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven.

At that time a cosmic change occurs in which the sun is darkened, the moon does not give its light, the stars fall, and the powers of the heavens are shaken. The second coming of Jesus is not a mere mental experience or a symbol but an actual

and public event that ends the present order of the world and completes the kingdom of God. When He first came, Jesus accomplished salvation in the low and humble form of a servant, but when He comes again He comes as the Judge and the King of glory whom all people can see.

Jesus said that just as one knows summer is near when the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and puts forth leaves, so when we see the signs He spoke of happening, we should know that the Son of Man is near, at the doors. But to discern the signs and to fix the date of the second coming are different things. No one knows that day and that hour, and only the Father knows. Therefore a claim that sets a particular date and throws people into fear does not agree with the Word of Jesus. Since heaven and earth pass away but the words of Jesus do not pass away, the one who believes must believe the Word of the Lord, which will surely be fulfilled, rather than the calculations of men.

Finally Jesus commanded repeatedly, *"Take heed, watch and pray."* To stay awake does not mean not to sleep or to abandon all of everyday life. Just as a master, going to a far country, appointed to each of his servants his work, it is to carry out faithfully the work of faith, of the gospel, and of service entrusted to us until the Lord comes again. The life that is awake is a life that does not let the heart be taken captive by the cares, the greed, and the pleasures of the world, but believes the Word of God, prays, and preaches the gospel.

The most fundamental way of preparing for the end is to believe the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished. Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead. The righteous man who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit,

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had all his sins remitted, and received the Holy Spirit does not wait for the Lord of the second coming with fear alone but waits in hope. On the other hand, even if one knows many of the signs of the end, if he has not received the remission of sins he is not prepared to receive the Lord with joy.

Therefore the central teaching of Mark chapter 13 is not to calculate the events of the end out of curiosity, but not to be deceived, not to be afraid, to keep the gospel firmly, and to preach it to all the nations. It is also the Word that tells us to believe the protection of God and the help of the Holy Spirit even in the midst of the great tribulation, and to do faithfully the work entrusted to us and always stay awake so that we may receive the Lord, whose coming we cannot know.

[Question] 2. In Mark 13:1–2, what did Jesus say to the disciple who asked about the stones and the buildings of the temple?

As Jesus was going out of the temple, one disciple pointed to the magnificent stones and buildings and said, *"Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!"*

To this Jesus said, *"Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down."* The disciple marveled at the outward scale and beauty of the temple, but Jesus foretold the judgment that would come upon the temple and Jerusalem, which had disobeyed God and rejected His Son.

[Question] 3. In Mark 13:3–4, what did Peter, James, John, and Andrew ask Jesus privately?

When Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives facing the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew came quietly and asked, *"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?"*

They wanted to know when the destruction of the temple of which Jesus spoke would happen, and what sign would appear before that thing was fulfilled. To this Jesus taught, together with the destruction of the temple, concerning the deception and the disasters of the last days, the persecution and the preaching of the gospel, the great tribulation and the second coming.

[Question] 4. In Mark 13:5–8, what did He answer the disciples who asked about the time and the sign of the destruction of the temple?

Jesus first said to the disciples, *"Take heed that no one deceives you."* He warned that many would come in the name of Jesus, claiming that they themselves were the Christ, and would deceive many people.

He also said that even if they heard of wars and rumors of wars they should not be afraid. For these things must surely happen, but that does not immediately mean the end. He went on to say that nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and that there would be earthquakes and famines in various places.

Jesus called these things *"the beginnings of sorrows."* Therefore the one who believes must not conclude that the end

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has come or fall into fear whenever a war or a disaster occurs, but must lay hold of the Word of God so as not to be deceived by false teaching.

[Question] 5. In Mark 13:5–6, what are the characteristics of those who come in Jesus' name and deceive people?

Those who come in the name of Jesus and deceive people do not appear outwardly as persons who have nothing to do with Jesus; they put forward the name and the authority of Jesus and claim that they themselves are the Christ. Jesus said that they would say, *"I am He,"* and would deceive many people.

Their central characteristic is that they do not lead people to the true Jesus Christ and His Word but exalt themselves as saviors or as persons who have received a special authority, and make people follow them. Even if a man speaks the name of Jesus, if he puts his own claims, experiences, and authority ahead of the written Word and binds people's hearts to himself, he is a false one.

Therefore the one who believes must not follow someone merely because he uses the name of Jesus or displays an astonishing power. He must examine whether the content that person testifies agrees with Jesus and the gospel recorded in the Bible, and must discern whether he exalts a man or leads people to Jesus Christ.

[Question] 6. In Mark 13:7–8, besides the appearance of the Antichrist, what events happen in the last days?

In the last days wars and rumors of wars will be heard, and there will arise wars and conflicts in which nation opposes nation and kingdom opposes kingdom. Earthquakes will also occur in various places, and famines will happen.

But Jesus said that when we hear such news we must not be afraid. For these things must surely happen, but by them alone the end of the world has not immediately come. Jesus said that wars, earthquakes, and famines are *"the beginnings of sorrows."*

Therefore these events are signs that make known that the end is drawing near, but they are not ground for the one who believes to fix a date or to fall into terror. Rather he must beware of deception, believe the Word of God, and continue to carry out the mission of preaching the gospel entrusted to him.

[Question] 7. In verse 9, what persecution did Jesus warn that the saints would receive in time to come?

Jesus warned that the saints would be seized by people and delivered up to councils, and would be beaten in the synagogues. He also said that for the reason that they believe in Jesus they would stand before rulers and kings and be interrogated.

But standing before those in power does not end only as persecution; it becomes an opportunity to testify to them of Jesus and the gospel. Therefore the one who believes must not regard persecution as a strange thing or be ashamed of the

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gospel out of fear, but must have the faith that God makes him testify to the gospel even in that place.

[Question] 8. In Mark 13:10, what does the word that the gospel must first be preached to all the nations even in the midst of tribulation mean?

The words *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations"* mean that before the end of the world comes, the gospel by which God saves sinners must be testified to all the nations. Even though wars, famines, earthquakes, and persecution arise, God's plan of salvation and the preaching of the gospel are not stopped, and God preaches the gospel to the whole world even in the midst of tribulation.

In the text the word *"first"* means that the preaching of the gospel is the mission God has appointed as having priority in the course of the end, and that it is a work that will surely be accomplished. Merely because there are wars or disasters, the end of the world does not come at once; before God judges the world He gives each nation an opportunity to hear the gospel. This shows the longsuffering and the mercy of God, who desires that no one perish but that all hear the gospel and receive the remission of sins.

The gospel that must be preached to all the nations here is not simply the making known far and wide of a religion or a denomination called Christianity. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead, and so saved sinners. The one who believes this gospel has all his sins remitted once and for all and

receives the Holy Spirit and becomes a child of God.

After saying that the saints would be dragged before councils and synagogues and rulers and kings, Jesus said that the gospel must be preached to all the nations. This shows that persecution does not mean the failure of the preaching of the gospel, but rather that it can become an opportunity to testify even to people and to those in power who ordinarily could not hear the gospel. Man can seize and persecute a preacher of the gospel, but he cannot imprison or block the Word of God itself.

Therefore the one who believes and lives in the last days must not merely wait in fear while calculating the signs of the end. In the place God has entrusted to him he must preach the gospel by word and writing and various means, and must pray and serve so that the gospel may be delivered to other languages and peoples. Not putting first only the work of preserving his own life, but delivering the Word of salvation to the souls who have not yet received the remission of sins, is an important mission of the saint who waits for the Lord's second coming.

This Word does not mean either that man can hasten the date of the second coming by his own effort. The Lord of the work by which the gospel is preached to all the nations is God, and the Holy Spirit uses the church and the preachers of the gospel to fulfill that promise. The one who believes must not try to produce the result by his own strength but must faithfully do the work entrusted to him, believing that God will open the door for the preaching of the gospel and make it bear fruit.

In the end this Word teaches that the last history of the world does not depend on disasters or on the Antichrist but is proceeding within God's plan of salvation. God has the gospel preached to the end, and then at the time He has appointed He judges the world and completes the kingdom of the Lord.

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[Question] 9. In Mark 13:11, when people arrest those who believe and deliver them up, what must they not worry about beforehand?

When those who believe are seized because of the gospel and are brought to trial and interrogation, they must not worry beforehand about what they should say in that place. Jesus said, *"do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that."*

This Word does not mean to make no preparation at all; it means not to be afraid, relying on one's own wisdom and eloquence, in the moment of persecution. For when he must testify to the gospel, the Holy Spirit gives him the words he needs and helps him to testify. Therefore the one who believes must rely on God rather than on the threats of men, and must boldly testify to the gospel he believes in the place given to him, without hiding it or compromising. At that time the one who speaks is not the believing person alone but the Holy Spirit, who speaks through him.

[Question] 10. In Mark 13:12–13, what is the suffering that those who believe will undergo, and what does the one who endures to the end receive?

Those who believe can receive rejection and persecution even from their closest family because of the name of Jesus. There will also arise the things that brother betrays brother and a father his child to death, and that children rise up against their parents and cause them to be put to death. They will also be hated by the world and even have their lives threatened. This is a grave warning that for the reason of believing the gospel,

human relationships may collapse and one may undergo social persecution and even death.

But Jesus said, *"But he who endures to the end shall be saved."* To endure to the end here does not mean that one obtains the remission of sins by the act of having borne suffering. It means that the person who has already believed the gospel does not deny Jesus and His Word even in the midst of tribulation and deception, but keeps his faith. True faith does not forsake the gospel because difficulty comes, but relies on the promise of God and endures to the end.

Therefore the salvation that the one who endures to the end receives means that God preserves that faith, keeps him in the midst of tribulation, and at the last makes him enter the eternal kingdom of God. The one who believes must not make suffering itself the merit of salvation, but neither must he give up his faith because of suffering. What is required is to hold firmly to the name of Jesus by relying on the Holy Spirit and to keep the gospel to the end.

[Question] 11. In Mark 13:14, what is the sign Jesus spoke of in connection with the destruction of Jerusalem?

The sign Jesus spoke of was seeing *"the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not."* This refers to the work by which a place set apart as holy to God is invaded and defiled by powers that oppose God. Jerusalem and the temple being trampled by a foreign army and by idolatrous powers became the mark of imminent destruction.

Jesus said that when they saw this sign, those who were in

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Judea should not delay but flee to the mountains. This means that they should not remain there believing that the city and the temple would protect them, but should realize God's warning and flee at once. This Word historically warns of the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, and at the same time it gives the lesson that in the time of the last tribulation also we must discern the Word and obey it quickly.

[Question] 12. In Mark 13:14–16, explain the word that when one sees the abomination of desolation standing where it ought not, he must not delay but flee.

Jesus said that when they see *"the abomination of desolation, spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not,"* those who are in Judea should flee at once to the mountains. This means to realize that when a holy place belonging to God is invaded and defiled by powers that oppose God, the judgment and tribulation that will come upon Jerusalem and Judea are very near.

At that time the one who is on the housetop has not even the leisure to go down to get the things in the house, nor the one who is in the field to turn back to get his clothes. Jesus commanded that they should not miss the time to flee while taking care of their property and household goods, but should depart to preserve their lives as soon as they saw the sign He spoke of. After destruction has begun, the temple and the city walls, wealth and human preparation cannot protect a man. Therefore we must believe and obey the warning of the Lord alone.

This Word must first be understood as an actual command to flee from the destruction that would come upon Jerusalem

and Judea. At the same time it also contains a warning about the last tribulation, in which powers that oppose God occupy the holy place and persecute those who believe. Only, we must not expand this Word to mean that those who believe in every age must unconditionally hide in the mountains literally. It is that He taught in detail how those who are in Judea must act when the sign He spoke of appears.

There is also an important spiritual lesson here. The one who believes must not miss the opportunity to obey the Word by lingering over worldly wealth and the safety of the flesh when the judgment of God is imminent. He must not put his own calculation and circumstances ahead of the Word of the Lord, but must obey at once by faith when he has realized what He has said. The word not to go down from the housetop and not to turn back in the field teaches the resolute attitude of faith that cuts off attachment to the world, does not take God's warning lightly, and entrusts even one's own life to God.

[Question] 13. In Mark 13:17, on what kind of people did Jesus say there would be woe in the midst of the tribulation?

Jesus said, *"But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days!"*

A woman who is pregnant and a mother who is nursing find it hard to move quickly or to flee far, and since they must care not only for themselves but also for a little life, they undergo the suffering of the tribulation all the more greatly. This Word does not mean that they have more sin; it shows the fact that the tribulation to come is so severe as to be especially harsh on the weakest people, who need protection.

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[Question] 14. In Mark 13:18, for what did Jesus say to pray concerning the tribulation to come?

Jesus said, *"And pray that your flight may not be in winter."* This means to pray that the work of having to flee quickly from the tribulation may not happen in the winter season.

In winter the roads become rough because of the cold and the rain, movement and flight are difficult, and it also becomes hard to obtain the food and the shelter that are needed. Jesus made known the seriousness of the tribulation that would come, and at the same time He taught that those who believe must entrust the circumstances of that time to God and seek His mercy and protection even in the midst of the tribulation.

[Question] 15. In Mark 13:19, what does the word about a tribulation such as has not been since the creation and will never be again mean?

This Word means that the tribulation of that day is so extreme and terrible that it cannot be compared with an ordinary war or disaster. By saying, *"such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be,"* Jesus emphasized that it is a decisive tribulation that is hard to find a parallel for in history and that will not be repeated again.

That tribulation includes terrible sufferings such as the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple, war and death, flight and hunger. The flow of the Word also makes us look ahead to the persecution by the powers that oppose God and to the great tribulation of the last days. Therefore, that Jesus said to flee at once to the mountains and not to look back is not an

exaggerated warning; it is that He made known the fact that a judgment comes that is hard to endure by man's strength or wealth.

This Word gives the lesson that the one who believes must not take the tribulation of the last age lightly or rely only on the circumstances of the world. Only, rather than being seized by the fear of the tribulation alone, he must believe the warning Jesus gave beforehand, beware of deception, and keep his faith to the end. God does not forget the people He has chosen even in the midst of the tribulation, and in the following verse 20 He says that for their sake He shortens the days of the tribulation.

[Question] 16. In Mark 13:20, what does the word that unless the days of tribulation were shortened no flesh would be saved mean?

This Word means that if the tribulation continued without limit, its destruction and slaughter would be so severe that no man having a body would survive. Here the words "no flesh would be saved" must be understood in the context to mean not the remission of the sins of all people but that there would be no one who would preserve his life and survive the tribulation.

But God said, *"but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days."* It means that the power and the period of the tribulation do not come to an end of themselves, but that God by His own sovereignty limits and shortens those days. No matter how strongly the evil powers work and how extreme the tribulation is, it cannot go beyond the bounds God has appointed.

Therefore this Word shows the mercy and the protection of God together with the terribleness of the tribulation. The

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people He has chosen also undergo tribulation, but they have not been forsaken by God, and God shortens the days of the tribulation so that they are not completely destroyed. The one who believes must not think that he can overcome the tribulation by his own strength, but must rely on God, who rules even over the time and the extent of the tribulation, and keep his faith to the end.

[Question] 17. In Mark 13:21–23, what is the reason we must beware of false christs and false prophets in the last days?

In the last days we must beware because people will say, *"Look, here is the Christ!"* or, *"Look, He is there!"* and will connect a particular person or place with the Christ and try to deceive those who believe. The more extreme the tribulation becomes, the more people look for a powerful leader who will save them and for a sign that can be seen, and so it is easy for false christs and false prophets to make use of such fear and expectation.

They do not merely claim in word that they are the Christ; they also show signs and wonders and make their claims appear to be true. Jesus warned that their deception is so strong that they will try *"to deceive, if possible, even the elect."* Therefore we must not judge something to be the work of God merely by the fact that an astonishing phenomenon or a supernatural power has appeared. Signs and wonders are not the final standard for judging the truth, and we must examine whether the teaching agrees with the written Word of God.

In particular, the true Christ is Jesus, not a being who newly appears through a man's claim or in a secret place. He already

came to this earth, took upon Himself all the sins of mankind with the baptism He received from John, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead. We must not accept anyone who corrupts this gospel, exalts a man as savior, or makes people submit to himself by signs and experiences.

That Jesus said, *"But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand."* is that He warned those who believe in advance so that they might avoid deception. Therefore the one who believes in the last days must not move here and there following rumors, but must firmly keep and discern the true gospel within the Word. Since the second coming of Jesus is not a secret event known only to some group, nor a thing that appears only in a particular place, but will be accomplished in power and glory so that all people may know it, we must not be shaken by the claim that *"here is the Christ"* or *"He is there."*

[Question] 18. In Mark 13:22–23, what must we do in order not to be deceived by those who perform false signs and wonders?

In order not to be deceived by false signs and wonders, we must first engrave on our hearts the warning Jesus gave, *"But take heed."* Since in the last days there appear those who seem to display an astonishing power, we must not receive that person and his teaching as having come from God merely because a sign has occurred. Not the size of the sign or the reaction of people, but the written Word of God must be the standard that judges what is true and what is false.

We must examine whether that person exalts himself as a special savior or as the Christ who has come again, whether he

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makes people submit to himself rather than to Jesus, and whether he adds to or corrupts the Word of God. Also, if he puts forward healings, prophecies, and mysterious experiences and yet does not rightly preach the gospel of the remission of sins, we must not let our hearts be taken captive by that power.

The true gospel is the Word that Jesus Christ took upon Himself all the sins of the world with the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead and completed salvation. The person who has believed this gospel, received the remission of sins, and obtained the Holy Spirit must not accept a new sign or a secret revelation as a condition of salvation. The Holy Spirit does not lead people with a teaching that contradicts the written Word.

Therefore the one who believes must remember the Word Jesus warned beforehand, learn the Bible rightly, and stand firm within the true gospel. When he puts the Word ahead of the phenomena that are seen, and compares and discerns the teaching within a church that believes the gospel rather than judging alone, he avoids the deception of false christs and false prophets.

[Question] 19. How do Mark 13:24 and 25 speak of the changes that will appear in the natural world after the tribulation?

Jesus said that after the tribulation the sun would be darkened and the moon would not give its light, that the stars would fall from heaven, and that the powers in the heavens would be shaken.

This indicates a cosmic change in which, beyond a mere

local disaster, the order of the heavenly bodies and of the natural world is greatly shaken. All the order of the world on which people relied is shaken, and a fearful and majestic sign appears that makes known that the second coming of the Son of Man is near. All things of heaven and earth are under the rule of God, and in the last days the natural world also reveals the completion of God's judgment and His work of salvation.

[Question] 20. In Mark 13:26, what did He say would happen when the powers of the heavens are shaken?

He said that when the powers of the heavens are shaken, people would see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory.

This refers to the second coming of Jesus Christ. The second coming of Jesus is not, as false christs claim, a thing that appears secretly in a particular place; it will be accomplished in great power and glory so that people can clearly see it. At first He came low and humble as the Savior, but when He comes again He will reveal His glory as the King and the Judge of the whole world.

[Question] 21. In Mark 13:27, when Jesus comes again, what does He do with those whom He has chosen by sending His angels?

When Jesus comes again, He sends His angels and gathers those whom He has chosen *"from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."* This

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means that He calls and gathers the people of God scattered throughout the world without leaving out even one person.

At that time those who believed and have died rise again, and those who believe and are alive are also gathered to the Lord, and they come to be with Jesus, who has come again. The people of God, who were scattered while receiving tribulation and persecution in the world, are at last gathered before the Lord. The second coming of Jesus is a time of judgment for those who do not believe, but for those who have believed the gospel and kept their faith to the end it is the time when salvation and hope are completed.

[Question] 22. What is the lesson Jesus gave through the branch and the leaves of the fig tree in Mark 13:28?

Jesus said, *"Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near."* Just as people know that summer is near when the branch of the fig tree, which looked hard and dry through the winter, becomes soft and leaves come out, so it means that when we see the signs Jesus spoke of before appearing, we must discern that the second coming of the Son of Man has drawn near.

The direct emphasis of this parable lies not so much in interpreting the fig tree itself as in realizing, by seeing the change that appears before our eyes, that the time has drawn near. When things such as wars, famines, and earthquakes, the worldwide preaching of the gospel, the great tribulation, and the deception of false christs happen, we must not regard them merely as accidental events but must compare them with the

signs Jesus spoke of beforehand and discern the times.

Some also connect the fig tree with the people of Israel and understand the rising again of the scattered Israel and the unfolding of the prophesied events centered on that nation as a sign that the second coming is near. But the center of what Mark 13:28 directly teaches is not to calculate the date of the second coming on the ground of a particular event. Since Jesus went on to say that only the Father knows that day and that hour, the one who believes must, rather than concluding a year and a date, examine the changes of the times that come about according to the Word and stay awake.

Therefore the lesson that the branch and the leaves of the fig tree give is that we must not be spiritually asleep and have our hearts taken captive only by the affairs of the world, but must believe the Word of Jesus and prepare for the second coming. We cannot know the exact date of when the Lord will come, but while discerning through the signs He spoke of that the time is drawing near, we must firmly keep the gospel and faithfully do the work entrusted to us.

[Question] 23. In Mark 13:30, when did Jesus say these things would be fulfilled?

Jesus said, *"this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place."*

This Word points first to the fact that before the generation of that time, which heard Jesus' warning, passed away, the destruction of Jerusalem and the temple would be fulfilled. At the same time, in the flow of the Word concerning the last days, it can also be understood to mean that within the generation that actually witnesses the signs Jesus spoke of, the events of

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the end will proceed quickly and be completed.

The central lesson is not to calculate the date of the second coming but to believe the fact that the things Jesus prophesied will surely be fulfilled. Therefore the one who believes must not be indifferent or careless even while seeing the signs, but must believe that the Word of the Lord will be fulfilled and stay awake and prepare.

[Question] 24. In Mark 13:31, how did Jesus explain the fact that His words will surely be fulfilled?

Jesus said, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away."* To the eyes of man, heaven and earth look the firmest and most unchanging, but it means that though the created world has an end, the words of Jesus never disappear or fail.

This Word is the guarantee that all the prophecies and warnings Jesus gave in Mark chapter 13 will surely be fulfilled. The destruction of the temple and the persecution the disciples would receive, the preaching of the gospel to all the nations, the appearance of false christs and false prophets, the great tribulation and the second coming of the Son of Man, and the work of gathering those whom He has chosen are not the guesses of men but words the Lord Himself spoke.

Therefore the one who believes must make the Word of Jesus a more certain standard than the circumstances of the world or the predictions of men. The various claims concerning the end must also be discerned by the written Word, and we must not be excessively shaken by the events before our eyes or forcibly fix a date that the Bible does not make clear. Since

in the very next verse He said that only the Father knows that day and that hour, the one who believes the certainty of the Word must, instead of calculating dates, prepare for the coming again of the Lord and live faithfully.

[Question] 25. In Mark 13:32, who is the one who knows the day and the hour when Jesus Christ comes again?

Jesus said that the one who knows that day and that hour is God the Father alone. Not even the angels in heaven know, and not the Son, but only the Father knows.

Therefore, if anyone claims to know exactly the date and the time of Jesus' second coming, we must not believe that word. What is required of the one who believes is not the work of calculating a date but believing the Word and staying awake and prepared, so that he may receive the Lord whenever He comes.

[Question] 26. In Mark 13:33, how must the saints, who do not know the time of the second coming, live?

To the saints, who do not know the time of the second coming, Jesus said, *"Take heed, watch and pray."* This does not mean to be anxious while calculating the date of the second coming; it means to keep the faith and live so that we may receive the Lord whenever He comes.

To stay awake is to discern the deception of false christs and false prophets, not to let the heart be taken captive by the cares and the greed of the world, and to keep firmly the gospel

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one has believed. It also means not forsaking everyday life and the responsibility entrusted to us on the ground that we are waiting for the Lord's second coming, but serving the church and the gospel and faithfully doing the work God has entrusted to us.

Therefore the saints must not make the fact that they cannot know the exact day and hour a reason for carelessness. Rather, with the heart that the Lord may come even today, they must examine their own faith and prepare for the second coming while being led by the Holy Spirit within the Word and prayer.

[Question] 27. In Mark 13:34–37, what person's parable did Jesus give in order to explain the attitude of waiting for the second coming?

Jesus gave the parable of a master of a house who leaves his house and goes to a far country. As he left, the master gave authority to his servants and appointed to each person his work, and he commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

Since the servants did not know whether the master would return in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning, they had to wait without falling asleep, doing the work entrusted to them. In the same way the saints do not know when Jesus will come again, but they must faithfully carry out the mission and the responsibility entrusted to each of them and stay awake.

The word Jesus spoke, *"Watch!"* was given not only to the disciples of that time but is a command given to all who believe. When the Lord comes suddenly, we must be found not in a spiritually sleeping form but in the form of keeping the gospel and the faith and serving faithfully.

[Question] 28. According to Mark 13:34, what did the master who leaves his house entrust to his servants?

The master who leaves his house and goes to a far country gave authority to his servants and entrusted to each one the work he had to do, and he commanded the doorkeeper to watch.

This means that after Jesus ascended He entrusted to the saints each one's office and mission. The saint must not be absorbed in judging another person's work or in calculating the date of the second coming, but must faithfully do the work of preaching the gospel and serving the church that the Lord has entrusted to him, and wait awake.

[Question] 29. What do the four times listed in Mark 13:35, that is, the evening, midnight, the crowing of the rooster, and the morning, indicate?

The evening, midnight, the crowing of the rooster, and the morning indicate the division of time by which the night was divided into four parts at that time. Roughly, the evening points to six to nine in the evening, midnight to nine until twelve, the crowing of the rooster to twelve until three in the morning, and the morning to three until six.

That Jesus listed all four of these times is in order to emphasize the fact that the servants could not know at what time of the night the master of the house would return. In the same way, since the second coming of Jesus is not accomplished according to the time man expects, the saint must not prepare only for a particular period or calculate the date of the second coming.

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There is no need to interpret these four times by matching each of them to a different age or a special event. The center of the parable lies in staying spiritually awake at all times so that we may receive the Lord whenever He comes.

[Question] 30. In Mark 13:36–37, in what form must the servants be when the master returns?

When the master suddenly returns, the servants must be in the form of being awake and not asleep. This does not mean not to sleep physically; it means not to fall into the spiritual sleep in which faith becomes slack and one forgets the Word of the Lord and the mission entrusted to him.

The servant who is awake faithfully does the work entrusted to him even while the master is not seen. In the same way the saint must not, thinking that the second coming of Jesus is delayed, let his heart be taken captive by the world or become slack in the work of serving the gospel and the church. Whenever the Lord comes, he must receive Him in the form of firmly keeping the gospel he has believed and faithfully doing the work entrusted to him.

The command *"Watch!"* is the Word given not only to the disciples but to all people. Therefore all the saints must actually wait for the Lord's second coming, examine their own faith within the Word and prayer, and live following the guidance of the Holy Spirit.

[Question] 31. In Mark 13:37, does Jesus' word *"Watch!"* apply only to the disciples?

No. Jesus said, *"And what I say to you, I say to all."* Therefore the command *"Watch!"* does not apply only to the disciples who were in that place; it is the Word given to all who believe and wait for the Lord's second coming in every age.

To stay awake here does not mean not to sleep physically, nor does it mean to find out the date of the second coming by calculating the events of the world. It means to keep the faith so as not to be deceived by false teaching and the temptation of sin, to examine the heart with the Word and prayer, and to carry out faithfully the work the Lord has entrusted to each person.

The person who has been saved does not fall into fear or forsake all the affairs of the world because he does not know when the Lord will come; he must hold firmly to the gospel he has believed and live serving the church and the preaching of the gospel. Staying awake is not human merit for obtaining salvation but the attitude of faith that the one who has been saved shows because he believes in the living Lord and in His coming again. ✉

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Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

The faith we must prepare in the last age

< Mark 13:1-8 >

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows."

In the last days those who deceive become many

Jesus, taking the temple of Jerusalem as a parable, spoke to us about the last days, when all the religions of this world will be united into one and each religion will lose its distinctive

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character. The disciples asked when such a thing would happen. At that time the temple of Jerusalem was destroyed, but in this present age it seems that all religions are collapsing. Let us look at verses 4 and 5. *"Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?" And Jesus, answering them, began to say: "Take heed that no one deceives you" (Mark 13:4–5).* Jesus said to take heed that we are not deceived by anyone, and by this He said that in the last days such deceptions become many. Of course, someone may say that if a man comes and claims that he is Jesus Christ, who among those who are born again would believe him; but the Lord is not saying this word now in order to test our faith. If the Lord said to beware of the deception of men, it means that when the last days come, such a world arrives.

Making some image in one's thoughts, looking only at it, and praying repeatedly, so that it speaks to him as though it were alive—that is called contemplative prayer. In our country as well, a well-known pastor is leading such a prayer movement. We look at the Word of God and believe it; but just as Buddhist believers make an image of Buddha and bow and pray before it, Christians do not make an image, yet they make an image in their thoughts and say that if they pray to it repeatedly and continually, they come into communication with the object of that prayer. There are also people who, not knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit and not having had the problem of the sin of their hearts resolved, make an image of Jesus in their thoughts and believe that if they pray and meditate repeatedly they can converse with that object. That is precisely Satan the Devil, who was cast out of heaven, putting on the image of Jesus Christ and coming into people's hearts and communicating with them.

When I first believed in Jesus, I experienced many very strange phenomena. I was going to church and believing in Jesus,

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and at first the Word of the Bible was so good to me that I read it, and after I read it I remembered all of it. But one day, while my eyes were open, the sky stretched out before me. A hole opened in the deep blue sky, and from it the face of Jesus appeared, small at first, and then the form of the body also appeared, and it came down from up there toward me. As the small form came before me it drew nearer and grew larger, and in my heart I thought, "That is not right," and I firmly refused what was trying to come into my heart. Then it came before me, turned aside, and went around; and the front was clothed in a white and shining garment, but the back was pitch black. "I knew it." Such a thing is the evil Satan the Devil, which puts on the image of Jesus and tries to enter the hearts of those who believe in Jesus. If it enters, that person is possessed by an evil spirit and says that he is the Christ. After that, they perform signs and miracles, and when they lay hands on the sick, they are healed. Many such things will happen in the future. That is why we must be careful about these matters. The Devil deceives many people, and those who are deceived communicate with the Devil and are made to oppose those who are born again.

It is the beginning of sorrows, and it is not yet the end

The Lord went on to say, *"But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows" (Mark 13:7–8).*

Recently a new president was elected in the United States,

and he appointed unusual people. Among them is an entrepreneur who makes much use of virtual currency. Since the whole world keeps raising the value of the dollar, it may become a world in which something other than the dollar is used from now on. Our country as well is changing into a unified government. Several provinces are becoming special self-governing provinces, regions are being bound into one, religion is also becoming a mixed religion, and everything is being unified. So our country too says it will carry out economic exchange with electronic money. Already a great part of it has become electronic money. Most payments can be made with a smartphone, and it works when taking a bus and when buying goods; but they intend to do away with paper money altogether. That has the purpose of managing tax matters well, and it has other purposes as well.

Let us read Revelation chapter 13 from verse 16 to verse 18. *"He causes all, both small and great, rich and poor, free and slave, to receive a mark on their right hand or on their foreheads, and that no one may buy or sell except one who has the mark or the name of the beast, or the number of his name. Here is wisdom. Let him who has understanding calculate the number of the beast, for it is the number of a man: His number is 666" (Revelation 13:16–18).*

At the last a king of the world comes out, and that king takes hold of the world. To take hold of the world, one must take hold of money. It is said that there are more than a hundred kinds of the virtual currencies we know of; and if it becomes a world in which one cannot circulate, sell, or buy unless he joins under the name of the one who has taken hold of money, then that person becomes the one who rules the whole world. Now the world circulates with the dollar, and without the dollar one cannot export. Some countries tried to break away and circulate their

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own currencies, and were sanctioned, and they were sanctioned, so that an economy that had been climbing suddenly collapsed. When the exchange rate rises so that one dollar becomes 1,400 won in our country's money, our country does not export well and does not earn money well. We have to buy materials abroad and make goods, but since the price of the materials must be paid with expensive dollars, the price of goods goes up, and as a result we come to live poorly. It is because we must buy dollars with our country's money and buy goods with those dollars. In this way, if a strong nation unifies all the means of payment into its own, there is no nation that can stand against it, and they must obey and submit to it, and all the people of the whole world come under the rule of that nation.

Moreover, Revelation 13:15 says this: *"He was granted power to give breath to the image of the beast, that the image of the beast should both speak and cause as many as would not worship the image of the beast to be killed" (Revelation 13:15)*. The Antichrist appears, and he is assassinated or something and dies and comes back to life, and people make a great statue of him, and that statue speaks and moves. And everyone who does not bow to this idol, everyone who does not acknowledge him as God and worship him, is killed. He also causes them to receive a mark on the right hand or on the forehead, and does not let anyone buy or sell goods except the one who has this mark. This mark is the name of the beast, that is, the name of the Antichrist, and the number of his name. That number is the number of a man, 666. Just as the Triune God is one God within the universe, it means that a man is trying to take the place of God. When it becomes such a world, it is the end.

Since they alone make virtual currency and do not let other countries make it, in the end one must join their country and receive the mark of the name of their country's leader; and if he

cannot belong to it he cannot sell or buy goods, so as a result is he not attached to it and made a slave? Then is it not ruin? The world has already begun that way. Some countries are said to be using only electronic money already. If they do that, it is a profit to the state but a loss to us. There ought to be the pleasure of paying with paper money and buying a meal, but if one must hold only electronic money, there are many inconveniences and many things that are not good.

Even if that day comes, we have nothing to fear

What I wish to say at this time is that before that day returns there are wars and rumors of wars and things in which nation opposes nation, and the Lord said that this is the beginning of sorrows and is not yet the end of the world. We can still preach the gospel, and we can work until that day returns. Even if our country becomes electronic money, it is not yet the end of the world. Now every nation still has its own leader; but when one leader of the whole world comes out and announces that all who do not join his government will be killed, and the work of seizing and killing people by administration arises, at that time we have no need to try to live longer in this world.

At that time, when we look into the eyes of those who are not born again, it appears that an evil spirit is working within them. And it appears that evil spirits harass us and oppose us and try to kill us. When it becomes such a world, our faith becomes all the more firm and all the stronger, and being filled with the Holy Spirit we boldly crush it down. If we say, “How dare one who is possessed by a demon try to rule over another; Satan, get behind me,” it cannot move at all. They cannot move, but the world government will not leave alone those who do not submit to its

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government, that is, you and me who are born again. They set up a statue of him and tell us to bow and give praise to it—can we do it? We cannot. Then they seize us, put us on trial, and execute us publicly. At that time, because within the one who has received the remission of sins the Holy Spirit burns like fire, saying that the time has come to give glory to God, he can boldly be martyred with joy.

The emperor Nero of Rome was a man who lived while Peter and the apostle Paul were alive. Already at that time, in order to persecute the Christians, he himself set fire to the city of Rome and then said that the Christians had set the fire, and he seized all the Christians and had them eaten and killed by lions and tigers in the amphitheater, nailed them to crosses and killed them, and burned them to death. But the Christians who were killed at that time were killed while praising God all together, saying that the time had come to meet the Lord, that the time had come for them to depart. The citizens of Rome who were watching this were moved, saying that the God those people believed in was truly God and that they were truly people of faith, and they became Christians. They believed in Jesus Christ as their own Savior and received salvation. So the Christians in Rome were about to become more numerous than their own people.

Rome was afraid of that. Until then they had persecuted and killed the Christians; but they thought, what will happen if these people turn their backs on Rome and become enemies, will the country not be taken away and will we not be killed, and rather than that, let us embrace the Christians; and so they made Christianity their state religion. Only, they brought in the gods they had been believing in just as they were, and they put into the Apostles' Creed the false articles that the saints have fellowship with one another and that sins are remitted—that is, that if one prays a prayer of repentance he receives the remission

of sins, and that both those who served foreign gods and those who believe in Jesus all receive the remission of sins if they pray prayers of repentance. As a result Rome, because its own power was weak, embraced Christianity and became like a nation that believes well in Jesus, and this is what became the Roman papacy and the Catholic Church.

Just as the Christians rather became more numerous at that time, at the last we will be killed by them, but when we are killed many people of the world will see it. People who until then had been uncertain about which is right faith will come to believe when they see the Christians being martyred, and at the last people as many as the sand of the sea receive the remission of sins just as we did and go to the kingdom of heaven. It is receiving the remission of sins through faith by accepting that Jesus received the baptism from John and had the sin of the world passed on to Him, and that bearing that sin He shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose from the dead.

That is the Word of Revelation chapter 7 from verse 13 to verse 17. *"Then one of the elders answered, saying to me, 'Who are these arrayed in white robes, and where did they come from?' And I said to him, 'Sir, you know.' So he said to me, 'These are the ones who come out of the great tribulation, and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. Therefore they are before the throne of God, and serve Him day and night in His temple. And He who sits on the throne will dwell among them. They shall neither hunger anymore nor thirst anymore; the sun shall not strike them, nor any heat; for the Lamb who is in the midst of the throne will shepherd them and lead them to living fountains of waters. And God will wipe away every tear from their eyes'" (Revelation 7:13–17)*. A great multitude of heaven praises God, and one of the elders asks the apostle John who these arrayed in white robes are, and then says that these

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are the ones who come out of the great tribulation and washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb. We must not, looking only at the word that they washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb, misunderstand and think that the baptism Jesus received from John has nothing to do with salvation. That Jesus received the judgment of sin on the Cross is because He first received the baptism from John and took upon Himself the sin of the world. If He had not received the baptism, He could never have died. Jesus received the baptism from John and had our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood on the Cross and was judged and died, and He rose from the dead and completed our salvation. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. In the last days many people who believe this and are saved come out.

When we think of being martyred in the last days it is fearful and makes us tremble, but I hope you know the fact that at that time we rather become stronger. Even now, it is only that we do not deal strongly with people; even now, if a person possessed by a demon hinders us, we can oppose him strongly and drive him away strongly. We are not pressed down by false ones. We are not pressed down by evil spirits either.

After martyrdom a happy ending is waiting

Now nation opposes nation and kingdom opposes kingdom and there are famines, but since He said it is the beginning of sorrows, the disasters also have a long way to go. When the disasters become full-scale, in each country, because of climate disasters, farming cannot be done and food runs short, and wars break out and there is nothing to eat and people cannot live, and such things happen in every country and in every place. At that

time the Antichrist can rule the world while solving these problems. It will be so when that time comes; but until then we preach the gospel, and until the very time we are martyred, even while being martyred, we preach the gospel much.

Those who believe are martyred through the strength of the Holy Spirit; and how long must they wait after being martyred? The tribulation is for seven years. When three and a half years have passed, from that time the Antichrist appears and seizes and kills us. After he seizes and kills, the time that remains is three and a half years; and since that work will take about a year, two and a half years remain, and the Lord said that He shortens this as well. He promised that after we die Jesus Christ comes, and that He comes riding on the clouds with the hosts of heaven and the angels. Whether it is the cloud we know of or not we do not know, but since the Lord is the almighty God, He is One who actually does so. And He raptures us. He raises us again and draws us up, and the Antichrist and the false prophet who remain on this earth He casts alive into the lake burning with brimstone, and the old serpent, that is, Satan, He puts into the bottomless pit that has no end and shuts him up for a thousand years, and He makes His own people reign as kings for a thousand years. When the thousand years have passed, He brings them out and holds the great white throne judgment, and divides the evil ones into the hell whose fire is never quenched and the righteous into the eternal kingdom of heaven, and so makes a happy ending.

So there is no need to fear because of that day; it is still the beginning of sorrows and not yet the end. Therefore there is still much work to be done. Knowing this, we must prepare our faith. Since the Lord will come in a little while, the one who has been saved by the gospel of the water and the Spirit serves the work the Lord has entrusted to him within the church and waits by faith for His coming again, and so is not bound by anxiety. But

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if, after being saved, one completely casts away the salvation he received and hides it in his heart and lives as though he had not been saved, then when the Lord comes and settles accounts He says to cast this unprofitable and wicked servant out into the outer darkness. He is treated the same as one who is not born again. We must not become such people.

If we know and prepare it is all right, but otherwise, this is now an age in which sin is forming a flood. In Revelation we see that God, in the time of the last tribulation, puts His own people in one place and teaches them and refines their faith; but the serpent pours out too much water on the earth so as to sweep away all the people on the earth and to make even us the righteous all die, and so in the last age he makes a flood of sin flow. Those who are not born again drink all of that flood. They themselves commit all those sins and they themselves die. But we, through serving the gospel and through the blessing the Lord has granted us, can live until the last day, and it can be a happy ending. We must know this.

If we do not have this faith in the last days, our faith is shaken and we die. Now many strange diseases are going around on the earth. What we must be alert about is that a disease in which one coughs for a hundred days is going around, so that people suffer and the number of patients keeps increasing. A mask is essential when going outside. If one wears a mask, colds are prevented and all diseases are prevented; and this is exactly like those who have been saved serving the gospel within the church. It is living together with the gospel and together with the righteous. If we live that way and meet the Lord, we can meet the Lord without great problems. Dear fellow believers, we must become such people.

Saying that the time for the world to perish has fully come, that the end of the world has fully come, we should not say,

"What will happen now; should we not enjoy what there is to enjoy in the world and then die?" When it becomes such a world, the Lord makes us all live within the church. It is the Lord who does so. We must wait and see how God will do it. I believe that God also grants that I do this business and that business in this world and employ many people of the world as well, and those among them who are ready to receive salvation so that they are saved and come into the church, and that we are joined together in that way. I believe that if we challenge it by faith it will be so. Now, even if one stranger comes in, people look only at the outward appearance, saying that the manner of worship is unfamiliar, and do not receive him well. But in the future there are many among those who have believed in Jesus, among those who are not born again, who will believe in Jesus. There are many who will believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that we believe. For the true gospel is this. Dear fellow believers, let us have faith and not be shaken in our hearts, and let us live well by faith and prepare and make ready. ✉

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Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Let us know what age I am living in and what position I am in

< Mark 13:1-27 >

"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!' And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down.' Now as He sat on the Mount of Olives opposite the temple, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him privately, 'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?' And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. 'But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or

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premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved. 'So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days. 'Then if anyone says to you, 'Look, here is the Christ!' or, 'Look, He is there!' do not believe it. For false christs and false prophets will rise and show signs and wonders to deceive, if possible, even the elect. But take heed; see, I have told you all things beforehand. 'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven."

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"Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down"

As Jesus was going out of the temple, one of His disciples asked Him. *"Then as He went out of the temple, one of His disciples said to Him, 'Teacher, see what manner of stones and what buildings are here!'" (Mark 13:1)*. From here the Lord speaks with one theme. It is the scene in which He speaks of how this world falls down in the last days, of what becomes of the one who has received the remission of sins, and of what we must beware.

That the disciple asked in this way was in fact boasting of the temple. The temple of Jerusalem was built by Herod, while he was king, for the people of Israel as though he were doing them a favor, and its scale was enormous. Among the stones with which the foundation was piled up and the wall raised, there were stones more than ten meters long and several meters high. Since the temple was built with great blocks of stone that cannot be compared with the stones of the old palaces and fortress sites we know of, the people of Israel had a tremendous pride in this temple. The disciple asked Jesus as though he were boasting of it. But Jesus answered, *"And Jesus answered and said to him, 'Do you see these great buildings? Not one stone shall be left upon another, that shall not be thrown down'" (Mark 13:2)*.

If you had been at that place, how would you have received that word? "Then does it mean that this nation perishes? Is it saying that it disappears?" The word that not one stone will be left resting upon another and that all will be thrown down means that it is completely crushed, that it completely disappears. We can hear the Word of God merely as an event that happened long ago. But the Lord, taking the matter of that place at that time, is speaking to you and me, who were born two thousand years later,

using it as audiovisual teaching material about what will become of this world in the future. An ordinary man argues from what he knows, and when the age changes, what he has determined and his thoughts and his intentions all change. But because the Lord is God, He knew all of what would become of this world in the future, what would become of the nation of Israel, and that the temple of Jerusalem would be crushed and disappear without one stone left upon another, and so He spoke this way. Through this Word we know that Jesus is truly God, and we also know that the Lord wants to tell us how this world will fall down in the future.

The Lord speaks of the past, the present, and the future

One day, when Jesus was sitting on the Mount of Olives facing the temple of Jerusalem, Peter, James, John, and Andrew asked Him quietly. *"'Tell us, when will these things be? And what will be the sign when all these things will be fulfilled?'" (Mark 13:4).* It was because it was so enormous a thing that it could not possibly be understood by thought. Even if a nation is captured, that this temple would all be crushed is speaking of a most extreme situation, and so they quietly asked when on earth this thing would happen. When a man receives too great a shock, a loud voice does not come out. Rather he cannot help speaking in a small voice, and what is truly important comes to be spoken very quietly.

To the disciples' question Jesus answered by connecting the falling down of the temple of Jerusalem with the things that would happen at the end of this world. He said that many would come in the Lord's name saying that they were the Christ and

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would deceive people; that wars and rumors of wars would be heard, but that they should not be afraid; that such things must happen, but the end is not yet; that nation would rise against nation and kingdom against kingdom, and that there would be earthquakes and famines in various places, and that this is the beginning of sorrows. The disciples asked when and how the temple of Jerusalem would fall down, but Jesus connected the falling down of the temple of Jerusalem and the falling down of this world into one and spoke of them. Of course, in terms of time, the temple of Herod falls first. But because the Lord is God, He wanted to tell His children, His own people, about the things that would happen in the last days.

That actual matter about which the disciples asked was fulfilled just as it was. After Jesus was hung on the Cross and died, in A.D. 70 the Roman general Titus led his soldiers and actually did this thing. He did not leave one stone upon another, he killed all the people, and those who were fit for labor. The temple of Jerusalem was dug up to its foundation and completely removed. So even now people, looking at buried stones or stone steps, only say by conjecture that this was probably the site of the temple, and there are few who can say exactly. Because Jesus Christ is God, He showed that what He has spoken is clearly fulfilled just as it is.

If we let this Word today pass through our hearts, thinking, "It must be some such word," there is no profit at all. We must actually enter into this Word and see how the Lord is speaking to us. Through such a Word we must know the past, the present, and the future exactly, know exactly the circumstances and the time we have met, and so know how we must conduct ourselves and with what faith we must live. We must learn this wisdom.

It is the beginning of sorrows, and it is not yet the end

So our Lord spoke of several things. Those who deceive will rise up, there will be wars and rumors of wars, things in which nation opposes nation and kingdom opposes kingdom will happen, and earthquakes and famines will arise in various places, and this is the beginning of sorrows. In Revelation there appears the plan of God sealed with seven seals, and among them the fourth age, that is, the age in which the Antichrist appears and kills all mankind, arrives. But the phenomena that are happening now are the beginning of that, and it is not yet that that time has come.

The Lord dealt with practical matters as well. In verses 9 and 10 He said, *"'But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations'" (Mark 13:9–10)*. Such things happened at that time as well, and it is the word that after the gospel has all been preached, in the last days the saints and the servants of God undergo such tribulation. He said that when people seize you and try you and try to kill you, do not worry beforehand about what you will say, and do not prepare. For at that time the one who speaks is not you but the Holy Spirit, and the Holy Spirit will make you speak through your mouth the word He wishes to speak at that time. What kind of thing happens at that time? He said, *"Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved" (Mark 13:12–13)*.

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In recent days such things as the Lord said would happen at the beginning of sorrows are being seen much throughout the world. Because we hear such news every year through world news, we merely pass it by thinking that it is so; but their intensity is growing more and more severe. When the disasters begin, earthquakes and famines and those who deceive rise up in great numbers, and at last the Antichrist appears. That story means that an age is coming in which it becomes hard to live. In some region of Africa there has been famine for five or six years and the condition is beyond words, yet each nation finds it hard even to solve its own country's problems and so cannot help them well. In some country a great landslide occurred and a whole village was buried and thousands of people were killed or injured. Are not many things also happening in which nation opposes nation and kingdom opposes kingdom, nationalists rise up, and people are killed if they are not of one's own people? The economy also is becoming very difficult. In each nation living becomes tight, and even the great nations are running enormous trade deficits. In some great cities the exhaust fumes of automobiles cannot escape, so that it is said one can hardly see ahead. When I went to a hot country in the past, many people were wearing masks even though it was summer, and I thought they were people who had caught some disease; but it was not that—it was because if one simply went about, the exhaust fumes settled black on the nose and the skin. When we see such things, it is becoming exactly as He said, that it is the beginning of sorrows.

When such things arise, it is the beginning of sorrows. But it is not yet the end. The Lord is now telling us in what order the end of this world comes. Therefore, since we are Christians, we must at the least have an interest in this part and learn step by step, like the disciples of Jesus, what Jesus Christ, who is God,

teaches us about the end. Setting aside the last days, we must also learn from this Word how we must now manage our business, how we must live our life at work, and how we must design our present life. Who will teach us that this age is changing? People usually think it is much if they look about ten years ahead. Cartoonists imagine the age that is coming and draw pictures of it beforehand; and is not the age in which robots speak and act like men, as in the cartoons, actually coming?

If we listen attentively to these words the Lord has spoken to us, it is absolutely profitable both in carrying on our life of faith and in living our life. Even if the world is shaken, one is not shaken oneself. How many businesses of the world are shaken and go bankrupt? Those who knew how difficult it would become and prepared survive, and those who lived thinking, "It will turn out that way," have to give up even what they have. Just as the Lord said, *"For whoever has, to him more will be given, and he will have abundance; but whoever does not have, even what he has will be taken away from him,"* so it becomes for the one who has not prepared. Just as living in the world is ruined if one does not prepare, so it is with the life of faith. If one has not established the time exactly through the Word, his faith also falls down. In the end he takes a false step and falls from the cliff, and though he regrets it when the time is late, no one can help him and he cannot come up. Therefore we must not treat the Word of the Lord as the word of a man, but must establish our own faith through that Word.

The gospel must first be preached to all the nations

The Lord said that before such things happen the gospel must first be preached to all the nations of the whole earth. I think that

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to grown people the gospel is being preached much throughout the world. It is being preached a very great deal. But what I am concerned about is the children. I mean the little children who are learning to speak and growing up. Of course, if the parents receive the remission of sins they will tell their children; but for children as well we must teach at a level that suits children and preach the gospel at that level. In the past we put out a book for young students, and in fact such a book is very useful to the young people of the world. Because the sins they are committing are great, ethical and moral sermons telling them to live well and not to lie are of no use to them. So I think we must make literature that preaches this gospel to children. Not only in our country but also to the little children abroad we must preach the gospel in the last days. We will give attention to that part.

The time comes when the abomination of desolation stands

The Lord also spoke of what kind of things happen when the disasters begin and the last days come. *"'So when you see the 'abomination of desolation,' spoken of by Daniel the prophet, standing where it ought not' (let the reader understand), 'then let those who are in Judea flee to the mountains. Let him who is on the housetop not go down into the house, nor enter to take anything out of his house. And let him who is in the field not go back to get his clothes. But woe to those who are pregnant and to those who are nursing babies in those days! And pray that your flight may not be in winter. For in those days there will be tribulation, such as has not been since the beginning of the creation which God created until this time, nor ever shall be. And unless the Lord had shortened those days, no flesh would*

be saved; but for the elect's sake, whom He chose, He shortened the days'" (Mark 13:14–20). Then from verse 24 He said, *"'But in those days, after that tribulation, the sun will be darkened, and the moon will not give its light; the stars of heaven will fall, and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. Then they will see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then He will send His angels, and gather together His elect from the four winds, from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven'" (Mark 13:24–27).*

As to what the *"abomination of desolation"* is, people's theories are divided. They conjecture that it is Hitler, that it is Napoleon, that it is some famous president of the present time, or that it is the pope. But such things are only one theory, and if we look at the context before and after, this is a word spoken looking at a man, that is, the Antichrist, and it has to do with the Jews. I think of it this way. He is not one who believes in Jehovah God; in word he seeks God in all things, but after he actually becomes king he completely ignores and blasphemes God, and he makes a decree and kills all who believe in God. And we may think of him as a leader who has authority not only over the nation of Judea but over the whole world. If he were an easy leader, when people rose up and told him to step down he could not keep that seat. But the Word said to flee to the mountains, and that the one who is on the housetop must not even go down. It means that one stands who is so extremely harsh that he cannot possibly be overcome. So the Lord, while speaking in connection with the Jews, is at the same time speaking to all the people of the world. And the Lord shortened those days so that such a thing would not last long, and Revelation says that that period is three years and six months.

When the Antichrist appears and those things are fulfilled, what happens to the environment? He said that the sun will be

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darkened and the moon will not give its light, that the stars of heaven will fall, and that the powers in the heavens will be shaken. If a star falls from heaven and strikes, will there not be destruction? People of old were very bold. They said that from ancient times until now this earth has never once been destroyed. But now even scientists are putting forward theories, with scientific proof, that a meteorite fell and its dust covered the sun so that there was a great change on the earth. The Bible said that God destroys this earth with fire. What happens if a great star comes down and falls? If it strikes and fire breaks out, then just as soil melts away when it is put into fire, this earth disappears. Now science has developed much, so it is an age in which such talk is understood. Have we not all seen the attempts to blow up a star falling toward the earth for fear that it would strike? Because Jesus Christ is God, He knows all the things that will be at the last as well, and He is telling this to you and me.

If we receive this by faith, we come to deal with it by faith, and it becomes a great profit of faith to ourselves. But if we do not receive it by faith, we lose something tremendous, and we become alone. That is why we must establish our faith through such a Word. Rather than listening to someone's word and being deceived and led about, we must stand before God one to one, and before that Word learn and believe that Jesus Christ is God and that the word He has spoken is truth, and abide in what is certain. When we do so, we become people of complete faith, and we finish this short life well by faith and come to stand before God. Dear fellow believers, do you believe?

Some scientists say that in the last age there will be an ice age and everything will freeze and perish. In fact that word also has some reason in it. If the sun loses its light and the moon loses its light, it becomes dark, and if the sun does not shine, the temperature goes down so that plants cannot live and people

freeze to death. But the Lord said that He judges with fire. When the stars fall and strike, and even all the enormous nuclear weapons the world now has explode, then just as a body burns in fire and is dissolved, this earth disappears. And at that time people come to see the Son of Man coming in the clouds with great power and glory, and He said that the Lord sends His angels and gathers His elect from the farthest part of earth to the farthest part of heaven, from the four winds. When such things happen and the Antichrist appears, at that time the Lord comes and does this.

The four Gospels testify of Jesus each from a different angle

I am reading the Gospel of Mark and speaking the Word, and scholars regard the Gospel of Mark as the most original among the four Gospels. Mark records very simply. Man is a strange thing: though they followed their teacher and saw and heard the same things at the same place, the angle from which each sees is different. Luke, I think, seems to be a man rich in feeling. Luke looks very intensively at man's humanity and weakness and records that Jesus helped such people. In reality He came as the Savior and removed sins as well, but Luke speaks of Jesus as One who touches the weak parts of people. Mark sees Jesus as a laborer sent by God the Father. He saw Jesus as One who works like a laborer, working silently as the master tells Him, like an ox. Matthew sees Jesus as the King of kings, the absolute King. It is like the fact that if you tell people to speak about one event, every person is different. Just as with the same herbs there is one who seasons them with soybean paste, one who seasons them with red pepper paste, and one who seasons them well with

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sesame oil and sesame salt and salt and mixes them by hand with glutinous-rice red pepper paste, so that the taste of each is different, so, though it is the same Word, the taste of the record is different.

But certainly the Holy Spirit was in their hearts, and the Holy Spirit ruled their hearts and made them record it so. Mark is explaining the things that will be at the last by threading them into one so that they may be well established in our minds; and Matthew as well, because Jesus is now speaking about the nation of Israel, records here together the word to learn the parable of the fig tree. John sees Jesus as the Son of God who has existed from the beginning. So if we compare the records of the four men in detail, we can know more fully. And the four Gospels are the same Word of God.

We must know what age we are in and what position we are in

When the things by which this world perishes take place, and when in the nation of Israel one who is not a believer in God but a tyrant stands as leader, we must know that the end has come. At that time the Antichrist is already standing, and when that happens, in this world, environmentally and economically and in the world of faith, endless persecution and difficulty come, and already there is nothing to eat. In such a time, when the Antichrist appears and kills people and slaughters and torments them, at the same time the sun is darkened and the moon does not give its light and the stars of heaven fall, and at that time the Lord comes again and the event of the rapture happens, in which He gathers His people from the end of heaven and from the end of the earth. After that this world is destroyed, and the Lord

makes all things new and makes the heaven and the earth new, and the millennial kingdom begins. It is not this present heaven and this earth, that is, not the first heaven and the first earth. This must be established in our minds.

So through such a Word we must know what kind of age this is. The Lord said it is the beginning of sorrows. As I say again and again, disasters are striking very much. There was a case in which heavy rain fell for a week and a mountain that had soaked up the water collapsed as a whole and swept away a village, and more than a thousand people were buried under the earth so that even their bodies could not be found. In the future the sea level will rise and the matter of cities being submerged in water will also become more and more severe. As the ice of the South Pole and the North Pole melts and the water level rises, it is said that in some city, when the water comes in, the roads and the shops are submerged up to the knee, and when the water goes out, salt settles in a thick crust on the walls. The world is now being submerged in water, and its intensity is growing more and more severe. What does this mean? It means that the disasters have now begun. But He said that the end is not yet, and He said that the gospel must be preached to all the nations, and He said that for the end of the world to come the Antichrist must appear and the world must be ruined; so you and I are now living in the age in which the disasters have begun, at this very point before they become full-scale. We must live knowing this. When a disaster happens, when some problem arises, if only we know exactly where our own position is, we can prepare from there. What age am I now living in and in what position am I—that is what we are to know.

I deliver the Word to you, but through this Word I also compare what the Lord has said with this present age and so know and learn that this is the age in which the disasters have

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begun. It is not that I tell only you to believe; I myself think about this age and believe so. Even just knowing the age exactly is a help in many parts. It is not that we are to do something in a particular way because we know the age. If we know the age, we automatically respond and come to live well by faith, and there is no taking of a false step because we do not know the time well. If we do not know the time, we come to do useless things, and that is a loss only to ourselves. Serving this gospel with you day by day, I have together both the heart that wishes the Lord would come quickly and the heart that says we have not yet preached the gospel completely. As the world keeps becoming difficult, what must we do; must we not live in order to preach the gospel; must we not be free of difficulty in order to have something to give to others; must we not be free of poverty in order to have something to give—I think such things and conduct myself accordingly.

There are few people in whom the gospel is completely absorbed into the heart at one time. I hope you too will once examine your own heart. The Lord received the baptism from John and had our sins passed on to Him and bore them, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and by rising from the dead He saved you and me with the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as a man and a woman marry and become one body, I hope you will see whether this truth by which the Lord saved us has come into your heart and become one with it. We must see whether you are really a believing one, whether you are really one who has received the remission of sins. We must see it always in the present tense. The Lord said that a tree is known by its fruit. If one says he has received the remission of sins and yet cannot live by faith and cannot possibly follow and something is strange, he must see whether his own faith is complete or not complete. Rather, the one who is weak

within the church looks at the faith of those who go before him, and when the Word is preached in the church the Holy Spirit gives faith to his heart so that he is better led. Who is the one who cannot follow well? It is not the one who is weak, but the one who says he believes well, as though he alone were exalted in heaven and on earth—the self-confident one. There are many cases in which such a person cannot be united with Jesus, and decides and acts on his own, and then departs.

Some people do believe, but if they have many talents of their own flesh they rely on them. That talent also was given by God, and, to put it plainly, even if it is a talent, it is used because God uses it; yet he thinks he is a great man. When people come into the church, we develop and use everyone's talents. One of those who develop them is I, and many who go before also look at a person and, thinking it would be good to use him in this field, develop him. When it is tried, it goes well. But if he thinks he is good at that field, he absolutely does not do as he is told. It is not that the one who tells him knows everything; but when he is told to try doing it this way, it works if he does it, and he does not do it and only does it later. Even that would be all right if he repented and turned; but the heart that says, "I have such ability, and I am rotting away in here," makes him proud and puffs him up greatly, and in the end it makes him think that being together with the church of God is a great loss, that he is in a place where he ought not to be, and so it makes him depart. I am not trying to speak about those who have departed; I mean that the one who is here is the problem. Have I truly received the remission of sins before God—we must start from there.

When your heart is stirred up and boiling so that you think you cannot possibly carry on the life of faith, there is something you must check. What appears outwardly is because of this and because of that, but we must see the real cause. We must see

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exactly whether we have truly received the remission of sins or not. If we have received the remission of sins, the rest is not a problem. In our believing the Lord and following Him, the most important thing is whether one truly believes or does not believe; the rest is one appearing phenomenon, so it is enough if it changes a little. It is like the change of the seasons: when it is so cold that we say we cannot live, and then spring comes, it is simply good even though no money has come in; and a little later, when summer comes, we say we cannot live because of the heat. Because this is a phenomenon, it is enough if it changes a little, and it is nothing. What is important is whether, whether it be spring or summer or autumn or winter, you and I truly believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, whether we have become one with the Lord and become one body. If we have become one body, the rest is not a problem. The rest the Lord covers and makes beautiful for us, and works all things together for our good and gives us more blessing.

That I speak these words is also a word to myself. It is the same for you. The one who preaches does not finish with preaching; since the Lord has spoken in this part, he chews this Word over and takes hold of the center of his own heart once more, and you also, by hearing the Word, take hold of the center of your heart once more. This is the word the Holy Spirit speaks at this time, in this age, to the church, to you. I give thanks before God. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Who in this age will be awake?

< Mark 13:28-37 >

“Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. ‘But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming— in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!”

Who in this age will be awake

The Lord said in Mark 13:28–37 to stay awake, but who indeed will be awake? Those who have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that is, the gospel Jesus accomplished

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by receiving the baptism from John and having our sins passed on to Him, and bearing those sins shedding His blood and dying on the Cross and rising from the dead—and have received the remission of sins, the righteous and the workers who live by faith, are awake. Apart from them I know that all are sleeping. Who in this age will be awake?

The Lord said, *"'Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors!'" (Mark 13:28–29)*. Just as the rose of Sharon is the flower of our country, the fig tree is the tree that represents Israel. Through the history of Israel the Lord spoke to us about these last days. He spoke so, and I know that there is no age as pressing as this age, no age in which this Word is being fulfilled as it is now. The Lord spoke at that time looking ahead to the future, but we are now living in this age in which that Word is being fulfilled.

These days, no matter how much it is threatened, Iran, which is near Israel, has declared that it will make nuclear weapons and has operated nuclear facilities, and there have been matters in which the great powers warned it several times and came forward saying they would impose sanctions. Now there are places all over the world saying they will make nuclear weapons; and if we ask why Iran in particular is brought up, it is because Iran is near the nation of Israel. It means that the nation of Israel becomes the object of attack by the countries around it. Israel and the countries around it are enemies to one another. For the son of Abraham's first wife is Isaac and the son of the second wife is Ishmael, and the descendants of Ishmael and the descendants of Isaac are fighting as peoples.

If we explain the nation of Israel by the parable of the fig tree, that the nation disappeared and then came into being again is like

a dead tree putting out new shoots again, its branch becoming tender and putting forth leaves. Israel re-established its nation in 1948 and recovered its national sovereignty, and it is a country that has many points similar to our country, which was liberated in 1945. But what will happen if the countries around it make nuclear weapons? When we look at such world affairs and think of the parable of the fig tree, we must know that the Son of Man is near, at the doors.

To stay awake means to be awake in mind and to prepare for what lies ahead

Our Lord said in verses 32 and 33, *"'But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is'" (Mark 13:32–33),* and He goes on in verses 34 and 35, and in verse 37 as well, to say continually to stay awake. When the Son of Man comes near, many people are sleeping and no one knows the exact time; but since the doorkeeper does not know when the master of the house will return, it is fitting that he remain awake. When the Lord returns, we must be people who are awake. Since He said that He says this word not only to you but to all people, I believe it is a word spoken to us as well.

Who is there that is awake? Those who have not received the remission of sins are living intoxicated with the world, so they cannot be awake. When they are pressed even to keep up with the changing of the world, who is there that can prepare for the future? Here the word to stay awake is not a story about not sleeping and keeping one's eyes open. It is a word saying to be awake in mind, and a word saying to prepare beforehand for

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what lies ahead.

For example, when much rain falls, water pours gushing down into the basement of a building where goods are stored. When winter has passed and spring has come, if the entrance where the water goes down is not blocked beforehand, then when much rain falls that basement becomes like a pool of water. We do not know what will come in summer, whether it will be too hot or whether too much rain will fall. So if we waterproof a tent beforehand and prepare it, then even when in midsummer the rooftop heats up to forty or fifty degrees, so that if one goes up barefoot the soles of his feet are scorched, work can be done underneath it. The one who is awake prepares beforehand for the things that are coming like this. The one who knows how the world will change in the future and beforehand stays awake and prepares and deals with it is the one who is awake. Further, the one who knows such a part beforehand and pioneers it is called in the world a forerunner.

The world is asleep

Now the whole world is in an uproar because of abnormal weather. I also saw news that the seawater became too cold so that the fish of the fish farms froze to death and were pulled out. That the Lord comes is certain; but I hope you will once look around you. Look once at the people of the world. There is no one who is awake. They are now completely sunk in the world. The young people are sunk in entertainers. The fees commanded by entertainers soar sky-high, and the mental thought and current of young people is leaning entirely in that direction. If something appears even a little on television, at once the signboards of all the streets follow it. Those who are in high-technology industries

prepare, saying that the age will change this way in the future and let us make money by doing it this way, and so they seem to be somewhat awake; but in fact they too are not awake. They are awake only in the field of making money; would they even think about the part that the Lord is coming? Would they even think that this earth perishes? They only think that it existed long ago and that it will simply go on existing.

But to us the righteous the Lord said, saying that He speaks this story not only to us but to all people, "Stay awake, stay awake." You and I, the saints, must stay awake. If we are not awake we are eliminated, and if we are not awake we die. You may have thought at some time, "Does not the one who sleeps also live and the one who is awake also live, and does not the one who is diligent also live and the one who is not also live?"; but this present age is not so. We must be awake physically, and we must be awake spiritually as well. We must absolutely be awake.

In the old days all people lived plainly and similarly, so there could occasionally be someone who prospered by good luck. In the days when a small apartment in a big city cost tens of millions of won, it is said that those who knew beforehand and bought made money because the price jumped several times over. It is said that those in real estate knew beforehand and made money. But in the future there is no such good luck. Because this present age is an age in which, from high in the sky, information is obtained even about a single ant crawling down below, and data is examined and things move accordingly, it is absolutely impossible for such a thing to happen unless one looks ahead and stays awake and prepares. The one who is not awake will have even what he has taken away from him.

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Only when we are awake and prepared both spiritually and physically can we serve the gospel

It is the same spiritually. If you and I are not awake now, we cannot live on. In order in these last days both to keep our faith and to serve the gospel well and to live well before God both spiritually and physically, we must be awake and must prepare. Then in what part must we, the people of Christ who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, be awake? We must be awake in the part of preaching the gospel while knowing what will come and preparing for it beforehand. When the world becomes difficult, one cannot make money well. Now it has become an age in which the poor grow poorer and the rich grow richer, so that the rich are too rich and those who cannot earn cannot earn at all—why is that? It is because money is not made merely by effort, but because it is the one who is awake and prepares beforehand who makes money. So in such an age we must be awake and preach the gospel while the world situation is still quiet and great difficulty has not yet broken out, and we must prepare now while it is peaceful so that we may preach the gospel unchangingly even when difficulty strikes. It is that we must prepare so as not to be in want, so that while living through the last age we may not come to keep away from the Lord because of the problem of food, clothing, and shelter. Since the Lord said in the four Gospels that in the last days there can arise such things by which one cannot believe God well and cannot follow well, we must be awake in that part.

So I too am preparing. These days it is said that many goods are going into consignment sales, and I am in the midst of preparing to make somewhat large goods and sell them on consignment. Since the capital is not much, I am starting in the most modest way, with only ten of them. But just as there is the

Word of Job, *"Though your beginning was small, Yet your latter end would increase abundantly" (Job 8:7),* I believe the Word and am preparing. I have this aspiration: that when our company expands and business goes well, I will give wages so that the children who are growing up may live while doing the work of God when they graduate from school and must go out into society. It is that I will make them work harder than the people of the world and give them more so that they can live. Also, if the business grows, I want to employ as staff those who have not yet received the remission of sins and use them as workers, and if an opportunity arises I want to preach the gospel to them as well. If they receive the remission of sins, they still go on with their working life and live on their wages while also offering worship. I do not know what you may think of me, but I have such a heart, and I believe that if I actually prepare, God will do so. Since faith is the substance of things hoped for, I am preparing. And I believe that doing so is right and correct. I want God to help me and to bless what is in this heart.

With what we have prepared while awake we do today's work

We must become people who are spiritually awake. The Lord said to stay awake so that when He comes again He may not see us sleeping, and I believe this Word is a word spoken to us. Then it is enough if we prepare. Before doing some work, it is enough if we prepare. Look once. Now literature mission work is being done worldwide, and I thought of this from the very beginning. Even when I preached with two or three people seated before me, I had a recorder set up and had it recorded. At that time there were very many people who laughed when I said I would preach

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this gospel worldwide. But now, about fifteen years later, has it not actually come about? If those recording tapes had not existed in the old days, we would still have to preach from the beginning even now. Because the saints have already grown up considerably and we must not preach as though speaking to new believers, those documents and tapes of that time are needed. Because we gathered them step by step and prepared them, we are doing this work now. The saints who organized those tapes and made a list this time labored much, and since we can work just by looking at the list, it is truly good and I am thankful. That is precisely what it is to be awake. It is to prepare something for the Lord, for the preaching of the gospel, for you and me. We are now printing more books, and this year we have printed books in large quantity and already sent them to the world. It means that we must always be awake.

Our children too, and we ourselves, must stay awake

It is the same with the children who are growing up. When they graduate from school, that is not the end. They must know beforehand how they must live in the next course and be awake. It is not that they may simply go and simply attend. The life of faith is likewise: it is not that one may simply do it, but he must do it while knowing how this age will change in the future and preparing.

Children must be raised strictly by faith from the time they are little. I heard the story of a certain athlete who became the best abroad. His mother is a Korean, and because she had a child of mixed parentage she was severely despised by people and so went abroad, and it is said that she worked fourteen hours a day

and earned a few dollars and raised her child. When that son became the best player and the reporters asked to whom he would give this glory, he said he would give it to his mother. When the reporters asked that mother how she had raised her child, she answered that she had raised him strictly. It is that she raised him strictly for fear that if she did not raise him strictly his heart would become proud and he would not listen when he grew older. Children must be raised strictly when they are little. When they grow older they are already hardened and there is nothing to be done. If a child keeps away from the church, it becomes a great wound to the parents, who are the righteous who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and he becomes a child who later makes his parents very hard-pressed. Therefore, if it is at all possible, we must have them live the life of faith from childhood.

Even if you are ten-some years old, even if you are twenty-some or thirty-some years old, if your mind is not awake, your heart comes to sink deeply into the world. In particular, such things as lewd videos must be deliberately avoided. Even if someone shows them, one must deliberately not look. When one is not yet of an age able to bear and rule and govern such a thing, if he sees such a thing when he is little, the brain receives a shock. If we ask why drugs are bad, it is because they give too strong a stimulus to the brain. A brain that has received a strong stimulus feels pleasure only when a stimulus of that degree comes. So although it is good at first, as one does it twice and three times, later he becomes a slave of it, so that he does not even think of food and does not think at all of anything else and thinks only of that. That is how a life is ruined. Lewd videos are exactly like drugs. They must be deliberately avoided. Only then does one become a person who is awake.

We must have preparatory knowledge. It is not that we know

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by experiencing it ourselves; we must learn from other people's mistakes. Do we not see that people who used drugs, even when the state helps them to stop, cannot endure the temptation and do it again, and in order to get that money they commit robbery and go to prison and their lives are ruined? Such things we must know as knowledge and must not get caught in them at all. We must watch such things as the news carefully and know them well. If we have no preparatory knowledge, we make a mistake and get caught and die.

It is the same with adults. Because if I do not do the work of the Lord I cannot help doing something absurd, I deliberately keep working. Since if I do not do spiritual work I come to do fleshly work, even in order to control myself I keep seeking out and doing the work of God, and if there is none I make some and keep on. Is it only I? It is the same with you. That is why we must be awake. We must know why the Lord said to stay awake. Since this present age is like this, we must hear the Word once more and know that the Holy Spirit is telling us to stay awake. Especially when one comes to the age of adolescence and fleshly thoughts keep arising, he must do the work of God all the more. Then there is no leisure to give attention to such a part, and so he must pass through that time well in that way. When we hear the Word we must hear it well, and when we sing praise we must sing loudly. If we sing praise, our heart is soaked in the words of it and comes to answer from the heart, so that the heart is soaked toward the Lord. For faith does not die suddenly in one morning; it grows feeble and feeble and then one day dies.

At any rate, our Lord said to stay awake. *"Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning—" (Mark 13:35)*. We do not know when He will come, but what is certain is that the time for Him to come has fully

drawn near. The branch of the fig tree has become tender and has put forth leaves, and all the affairs of the world are turning that way, and the climate and the economy are turning that way as well. The door for the preaching of the gospel is still open until now, but if things go wrong and war breaks out, we will not be able to do it. So let us stay awake and do the work of the Lord, and stay awake and do such things as our business as well, and even if the end comes, let us live well and comfortably both spiritually and physically and do the work of the Lord well, and let us meet the Lord as those who are awake. Let us do so. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The greater the fear grows, the more the gospel must first be preached

< Mark 13:5-13 >

"And Jesus, answering them, began to say: 'Take heed that no one deceives you. For many will come in My name, saying, 'I am He,' and will deceive many. But when you hear of wars and rumors of wars, do not be troubled; for such things must happen, but the end is not yet. For nation will rise against nation, and kingdom against kingdom. And there will be earthquakes in various places, and there will be famines and troubles. These are the beginnings of sorrows. 'But watch out for yourselves, for they will deliver you up to councils, and you will be beaten in the synagogues. You will be brought before rulers and kings for My sake, for a testimony to them. And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations. But when they arrest you and deliver you up, do not worry beforehand, or premeditate what you will speak. But whatever is given you in that hour, speak that; for it is not you who speak, but the Holy Spirit. Now brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child; and children will rise up against parents and cause them to be put to death. And you will be hated by all for My name's sake. But he who endures to the end shall be saved."

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The disciples saw the great and beautiful stones of the temple. To the eyes of man it was a building that looked as though it would remain long. But Jesus spoke of its falling down without one stone left upon another. What the disciples wanted to know was when that thing would happen and what sign would appear. But Jesus' first answer was neither a date nor a method of calculation. The Lord first said to take heed that we are not deceived by anyone. It means that when the world is shaken, the first place we must guard is not the calendar or our property but our heart and our faith.

When a man meets an uncertain situation, he wants to lay hold of an explanation that looks certain. If someone says he will unravel the meaning of every event at one stroke, the ear is inclined toward him. Especially if that person uses the name of Jesus, one can give his heart over all the more easily. But because a man speaks the name of the Lord, it does not follow that every word of his is the Word of the Lord. Neither does showing a strong conviction make it truth, nor does showing an astonishing phenomenon make one the Christ. So the Lord tells us, before we examine what will happen, to examine whose word we are believing.

Deception does not come only as an outright lie. It also comes in the way of speaking loudly of a part of the Bible while covering the central command of the Lord. Such are words that stir up people's fear and bind them to oneself, or that point to a particular event and claim that one alone knows the final timetable God has appointed, or that make the authority of the interpreter greater than the name of Jesus. Such words do not turn the eyes of the hearer to the Lord but fix them on a man. On the contrary, the true Word makes us return to Jesus Christ, makes us believe the gospel He accomplished, and makes us live faithfully in the place entrusted to us.

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The Word that says it is not the end but the beginning

The Lord said not to be afraid when we hear of wars and rumors of wars. Going on to speak of the clashing of peoples and nations and of earthquakes and famines, He nevertheless called them the beginning of sorrows. This Word does not mean to take suffering lightly. Neither is it a word to ignore the tears of the one who suffers. It is only that we must not conclude at once that it is the end because we have heard some shocking news. The Lord does not let terror take the place of our judgment.

In the Word, *"such things must happen, but the end is not yet" (Mark 13:7)*, there is a power that holds the heart of the disciple. The rumor of the world cries out that everything has ended right now, but the Lord says that it is not yet. Rumor drives us to one side, but the Word makes us stop and discern. Faith is not an attitude that denies that there is danger. It is the attitude of hearing the Word of the Lord, who is greater than the danger, and of not hastening to make a conclusion the Lord has not commanded.

Therefore we must not determine the direction of our faith by the size of an event. It is not that we believe today because we are at peace and forsake faith tomorrow because difficulty comes. Neither is it that we are intoxicated with the world when our circumstances are comfortable and are seized by terror when our circumstances are dark. Whether in peace or in tribulation, we must examine our present place by the standard of the Word of Jesus. We must look back at whose voice we are now following, what we fear most, and for what we are using our time.

The reason the Lord spoke of such things beforehand is not to frighten us. It is so that when the thing comes we may not regard it as a strange thing but may stand by faith. It is not that

the world is shaken without God's knowing. Jesus, though He knew the deception and the suffering that would come, entrusted to the disciples the way they were to walk. Therefore the saint is not one who lives only when he can explain every change of the world, but one who lives according to the clear Word of the Lord even at the time when he cannot explain.

The Lord said in verse 5 to take heed that we are not deceived by anyone, and in verse 9 He said again to watch out for ourselves. If the first heed is to examine the false teaching that comes from outside, the second watchfulness makes us examine even our own heart, which is shaken in the face of that pressure. It is not safe merely to know the fact that there are people who deceive. If within me there is a greed that covets an easy answer, an impatience that wants to escape quickly from fear, or a heart that wants to be acknowledged as having special knowledge, it is easy to lay hold of a false conviction.

Therefore to take heed is not an attitude of always doubting and believing no one. It is discerning other voices in order to believe the Word of Jesus more clearly. We must not conclude as fact what the Bible has not made clear, must not hastily proclaim one event to be the fulfillment of prophecy, and must examine whether the result of the interpretation leads to the gospel and to love and to faithful obedience. The purpose of taking heed does not lie in closing the heart but in hearing exactly the voice of the true Shepherd.

The place where one is seized becomes the place of testimony

From verse 9 the focus of the Word moves from the great events that happen in the world to what the disciples will

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themselves undergo. People will deliver the disciples up to councils and beat them in the synagogues and set them before rulers and kings. For the reason of following the Lord they can be hated and can undergo the pain of even their closest relationships collapsing. Jesus did not promise that on the way of discipleship there would be no suffering at all. Rather He spoke without hiding of what they would undergo.

But the Lord did not call that place only a place of defeat. He said that their being made to stand before those in power is for a testimony to them. The place made in order to silence the disciples rather becomes the place where the gospel is spoken. Man thinks that the door for preaching the gospel has closed, but the Lord opens the way of testimony even before a door that looks closed. The work of the gospel is not a work that is possible only under good conditions.

Here testimony is not eloquence that defeats the other person. Neither is it a defense aimed at fully explaining how one has been wronged. It is making clear who Jesus is and what He has accomplished. The Christian is not one who uses the gospel in order to protect his own honor, but one who reveals the grace of Christ even in the place where his own honor is trampled. Even if people's questions are hostile, our answers need not be hostile as well. For the center of the testimony is not ourselves but Jesus our Savior.

The Lord said not to worry beforehand about what we will say when we are seized. This does not mean that there is no need to learn the Word or to put the gospel in order in ordinary times. It means that, facing the moment when one must be dragged away by force and bear witness, we must not rely on human wisdom alone and fall into fear. He said that the One who makes us speak is the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit is within the one who has received the remission of sins, and He brings to

remembrance the truth Christ accomplished and helps him to speak the words that are needed.

For our mouths to become instruments of the Holy Spirit, our hearts must abide in the Word of the Lord in ordinary times as well. We cannot keep piling up false information and anger and then expect the words of the Holy Spirit only at the decisive moment. We must hear the gospel day by day, set our thoughts right before the Word, exhort one another within the church, and train ourselves to confess the gospel in our own words. Such preparation is not merit for obtaining salvation, but it is the attitude of faith that treasures the truth already received.

Verse 12 shows that persecution can divide even family relationships. The pain of the relationship that ought to be the safest becoming a channel of betrayal can pierce the heart more deeply than a public trial. We must not read this Word as a command to suspect our family. The Lord spoke beforehand so that even when the collapse of relationships comes we may not be astonished and forsake our faith. The saint does not repay hatred with hatred because he is hated, but must speak the gospel clearly while seeking peace as far as he is able.

At such a time all the more the church must not leave the one who testifies standing alone. One person may stand before a council, but behind that person there must be a community that prays together and holds him up with the Word. If someone is misunderstood at his workplace or in his home because of the gospel, we must not merely evaluate his courage but must listen to his words and help with his actual needs. When we endure together and testify together, the world sees that the gospel is not merely the claim of an individual but the life that binds into one those who have received the remission of sins.

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The gospel comes first

In the very midst of the Word concerning suffering the Lord said, *"And the gospel must first be preached to all the nations" (Mark 13:10)*. This short Word clearly establishes the priority of the disciple. The more confused the world is, the easier it is for a man to think only of his own safety. But the Lord makes us look first at the gospel even in the midst of fear. It is not a gospel we preach only after we have solved every problem. Neither is it a gospel we serve with the time that is left after all our circumstances have become stable.

Here *"first"* does not mean that the gospel is to ignore all other responsibilities. To care for family and neighbors and to carry out the responsibilities of everyday life are also important. But the reason and the direction of all those works must be clear. Maintaining life, using our talents, and helping one another must not be a purpose that covers the gospel but must become a channel that serves the gospel. The saint is not one who is dragged about by the anxiety of the world but one who knows what news the soul most needs.

Then what is the gospel that must be preached to all the nations? It is not the news that a man obtains salvation by living well. Neither is it the teaching that if one endures to the end by his own strength God removes his sins as the reward for it. The gospel is the good news of the salvation Jesus has already accomplished. The sinless Son of God came to this earth and took upon Himself the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, and because of the sin He had taken upon Himself He shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment of sin in our place. And He actually rose from the dead and overcame sin and death and opened the way of new life.

The greater the fear grows, the more the gospel must first be preached

If we think of the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross separately, how sin was dealt with becomes obscure. The Cross is not a vague symbol of sacrifice but the actual judgment for the sin Jesus took upon Himself with the baptism He received from John. And the resurrection is not a moving conclusion attached after a sorrowful death but the fact that the Savior overcame sin and death. The one who believes in his heart this salvation of the baptism and the Cross and the resurrection has all his sins removed once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a born-again child of God.

The gospel does not exalt human merit. Rather it reveals that we cannot wash away our sins by ourselves, and it proclaims that Jesus accomplished everything. Therefore the one who preaches the gospel cannot boast of his own godliness. Because he too received the remission of sins by grace, he preaches the same grace to others. That the one who has received the gospel preaches the gospel is not a price he pays in order to maintain his salvation but the fruit of faith by which the life he has received flows out.

The word “all the nations” widens our eyes beyond the people we are familiar with. People whose language and culture and circumstances are different also need the same gospel. To children and young people we must preach in words they can understand, and to those who have never once clearly heard the gospel we must explain carefully from the beginning. We must also help those who have heard it long to confirm whether the gospel has fully settled in their hearts. To preach the gospel widely is not the work of boasting of numbers but the work of delivering exactly to each person’s heart the salvation Jesus accomplished.

Neither must we turn the Word that the gospel must first be preached to all the nations into a formula by which man hastens

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the end. We cannot calculate that if we preach to a certain region the last day comes at once. *"First"* is not a key for finding out the time He has hidden but the priority the Lord has entrusted to the church. The result and the time belong to the Lord, and we have been entrusted with the responsibility of entering the door that is open today and preaching the right gospel to even one soul.

Also we must not lose the content of the gospel while emphasizing only the speed of its spread. The work of making it known to many people in a short time is also necessary, but we must explain so that the hearer understands how Jesus took upon Himself sins and was judged and rose from the dead. It is not merely changing the language; we must look at the questions and the circumstances of the hearer so that the truth is not obscured. The wide view toward all the nations and the carefulness that tends one person's heart must be together.

The faith that has been saved lays hold of the Lord even in the midst of tribulation

Verse 13 says that the one who endures to the end obtains salvation. If we read this verse as though man's patience were the condition that buys salvation, the grace of the gospel is overturned. Man cannot remove his own sins by enduring suffering perfectly. Neither does our patience supplement the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross and the resurrection. Salvation is a gift God has given, and it is received by believing what Jesus accomplished.

Then what is endurance? It is not a good work for obtaining salvation but the fruit by which the faith that has been saved lays hold of the Lord in the midst of tribulation. Even the one who

has received the remission of sins may fear and may fall, since his flesh is weak. But the Holy Spirit holds him fast with the Word so that he does not follow a false christ and depart, brings him back before the gospel, and helps him not to deny the name of the Lord. The boast of endurance is not in man but in the Lord, who holds him fast.

This distinction is very important. If we teach that one is saved only if he endures, the person who is in the midst of suffering examines only his own strength and falls into despair. On the contrary, if we say that since salvation is grace one may live any way at all, we come to ignore the fruit of faith. The Bible permits neither of the two extremes. Salvation does not come from works, but the one who has been saved, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, lays hold of the gospel and testifies and serves one another. It is not that the root receives the price of the fruit, but that fruit comes out of a living root.

Therefore, when you meet suffering, do not try to prove your own strength. First engrave again on your heart the salvation Jesus accomplished. Before you ask how long you can hold out, remember how the Lord saved you. And do not try to endure alone, but hold one another up within the church with the Word and prayer. Do not hide your fear, but neither entrust the decision to your fear. Stand before the Word so that the Holy Spirit may lead you into the truth.

Our position today

Mark chapter 13 is not a Word given to us so that we may point to a particular event and fix the last date. Rather it is a Word given so that we may beware of such deception, may not be ruled by fear in the face of the rumor of wars, and may testify

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to the gospel in any circumstance. The discerning of the times that the Lord desires is not knowledge that satisfies curiosity but wisdom that gives birth to present obedience. To know what age one is in means to know what one must do first today.

Whenever we hear news of the world, rather than increasing our calculations of terror, we must examine the door of the gospel. We must think of who it is that has not yet heard the Word, who it is among the saints that has become discouraged and closed his mouth, and with what words we will preach the gospel to the next generation. Our time and material things and talents can also be put in order within this priority. It is not only the one who has much who preaches. Each person can take part in the preaching of the gospel from the place he has received, by praying, explaining, translating, caring, and sending.

The discerning of the times is connected with everyday responsibility as well. The one who is seized by terror easily throws away all the work he was doing or seeks a way for himself alone to live. But the one who stands on the Word cares for his family and does the work entrusted to him honestly, and in that place prepares the way of the gospel. The purpose of preparing for the future also does not lie in making one's own safety absolute, but in helping his neighbors and continuing to serve the work of the gospel even in the midst of difficulty. The faith that waits for the Lord appears not as an escape from reality but as faithfulness within reality.

Also, in order to avoid deception we must not believe our own conviction alone. We must learn the Word of Jesus together, examine whether the teaching we have heard agrees with the gospel, and confirm whether its fruit draws people to Christ. If someone uses terror to demand absolute submission, or claims that he alone knows a secret, or binds the heart to the interpretation of events rather than to the gospel, we must take

heed. The Lord did not call the disciples to be slaves of men but called them to be witnesses of the truth.

When the world is shaken, the peace of the saint does not come from an optimism that says nothing will happen. It comes from the faith that Jesus has already overcome sin and death and that the Lord who will come again is the Master of history. Therefore we do not deny the possibility of tribulation, and yet we do not despair. For in the Lord who rose from the dead there is new life, and He does not forsake His own people.

Dear fellow believers, hear the Word more loudly than the rumor. Lay hold of the gospel of Jesus more surely than the confidence of the one who deceives. Do not close your mouth because of fear, but rely on the Holy Spirit and speak of what the Savior has accomplished. Do not turn our patience and evangelism and service into the price of salvation, but offer them as the fruit of the remission of sins and the new life we have already received. Until the day the Lord comes, let us stand together with the church and walk faithfully the way of the gospel toward all the nations. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Because we do not know the time, keep the place entrusted to you

< Mark 13:28-37 >

"'Now learn this parable from the fig tree: When its branch has already become tender, and puts forth leaves, you know that summer is near. So you also, when you see these things happening, know that it is near—at the doors! Assuredly, I say to you, this generation will by no means pass away till all these things take place. Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away. 'But of that day and hour no one knows, not even the angels in heaven, nor the Son, but only the Father. Take heed, watch and pray; for you do not know when the time is. It is like a man going to a far country, who left his house and gave authority to his servants, and to each his work, and commanded the doorkeeper to watch. Watch therefore, for you do not know when the master of the house is coming—in the evening, at midnight, at the crowing of the rooster, or in the morning— lest, coming suddenly, he find you sleeping. And what I say to you, I say to all: Watch!'"

When the branch of the fig tree becomes tender and leaves come out, a man knows that the season is changing. The Lord told the disciples to learn that parable. It means not to pass by

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what is seen without any thought, but to discern it in the light of the Word. But the Lord went on to draw a clear line, saying that no one knows that day and that hour. What the saint needs is neither an indifference that thinks of nothing nor a curiosity that manufactures a date He has not made known.

Discernment and calculation are different. Discernment believes that the Word of the Lord will be fulfilled and rightly establishes today's life. Calculation forcibly finds out what the Lord has hidden and tries to become the master of tomorrow. The one who discerns obeys the Lord, but the one who calculates tries to put the dates and the signs under his own control. So one can speak much of dates and yet be negligent of the responsibility entrusted to him today. The Lord did not set us up as masters of the timetable; He set us up as servants entrusted with the house.

The Lord told us to discern the nearness and at the same time said that we do not know the date. These two words do not conflict with each other. Knowing the nearness keeps us from losing our tension, and not knowing the date prevents proud conclusions. If we lay hold of only one side, a problem arises. If we forget the nearness, we think the master is slow in coming and fall asleep; and if we are deceived into thinking we know the date, we frighten people or abandon today's responsibility. Biblical waiting holds expectation and humility together.

Being awake is not a physical state of not sleeping. It is not that one is spiritually awake because he keeps his eyes open all night. On the contrary, even if the body is resting, if the heart is examining the will of the Lord within the Word and is preparing the work entrusted to him, he can live an awake life. That the Lord said repeatedly to stay awake is not a command to stay up all night trembling with fear, but a command not to lose the heart and the responsibility of a servant even while the master is not seen.

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What passes away and the Word that does not pass away

The Word, *"Heaven and earth will pass away, but My words will by no means pass away" (Mark 13:31)*, holds the center of this passage. The world we see looks firm. Man expects that buildings and institutions and property and health will continue long. But not even heaven and earth are eternal. On the other hand, the Word of the Lord, which is not seen, does not pass away. Faith is not seeking the Word after what is seen has fallen down; it is making the Word the most certain foundation from the time when what is seen is still standing.

When our circumstances become good, it is easy for us to believe our circumstances rather than the Word. When things are solved according to plan and what is needed is supplied, we think our own judgment was right. On the contrary, when our circumstances become dark, we feel as though the Word has become weak along with them. But the Word of the Lord does not become strong or weak according to our mood. Even if the evaluation of the world changes, even if the fashion of the age changes, even if a man breaks his promise, the Word of Jesus remains as it is.

For that reason the one who is awake examines day by day what is holding his heart. He looks back to see whether he is holding on to what will pass away as though it were eternal, and whether he is lowering the Word that does not pass away to the level of advice to be consulted for a moment. It does not mean to despise property or occupation or relationships. It means not to put them in a place higher than the Lord. All possessions and roles are entrusted things, and they find their right place when they are used under the Word.

The assurance that the Word of the Lord does not pass away

eases our terror. The saint is not one who is at peace only when he knows the whole future. He is at peace because the Word of the Lord, who knows the future, does not change. Even if he does not know when and what will happen, he knows whose promise he must lay hold of. Even though there is much he does not know, because the Word he is to obey is clear, he walks one step today by faith.

The certainty of the Word does not depend on the amount of information we know. Even if we gather much material and receive news quickly, if we do not believe the Word of the Lord our heart can be shaken all the more. On the contrary, even if we do not know all the circumstances of the world, if we believe what Jesus has said, the direction of our life becomes clear. Information is a tool that helps judgment, but it cannot become a master that takes the place of the Word. The awake saint does not stop at consuming news but asks, before that news, how he is to love and to serve.

Not knowing does not remove responsibility

Verse 32 says that only the Father knows that day and that hour. This Word keeps us from being ashamed of the fact that we do not know the date. Not knowing is not unbelief. To acknowledge that we do not know what the Lord has not made known is rather the attitude of obeying the Word. Even if someone puts forward a calculation and claims to have discovered a secret, we have no reason to go beyond the clear Word of the Lord.

But it does not mean that we may live indifferently on the excuse that we do not know. Because we do not know the time, the Lord commanded, *"Take heed, watch and pray" (Mark*

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13:33). The thought that if one knew the date he would move in time for the last moment is not the attitude of a servant. To offer the same faithfulness whenever the master comes is the attitude of a servant. Not knowing does not reduce responsibility; rather it makes us live each day honestly.

Just as a student does not give up learning because he does not know the date of the examination but studies in ordinary times, and just as the one who manages a house does not leave the drainage alone because he does not know when the rain will come but examines it beforehand, so the saint makes the preparation he can make today because he cannot exactly predict the future. Only, we must not misunderstand such preparation as a formula for worldly success. Not all preparation guarantees the result we want. The purpose of preparation does not lie in ruling the future but in being faithful to the responsibility entrusted to us.

Being awake is not revealed only in grand plans. It is revealed in gathering our hearts during the time we hear the Word, in turning back when we find a wrong thought, in not turning away from a person who needs help, and in honestly finishing the work entrusted to us. To put materials in order today for the work of the gospel that must be done tomorrow, to raise up people, and to prepare a language that the next generation can understand is also being awake. Small faithfulness piles up and makes us care for the house the master has entrusted to us.

We must also not forget the fact that preparation has its limits. No matter how carefully we prepare, we cannot block every danger, nor is every plan fulfilled as we intend. So the saint's preparation is not insurance that trusts in his own ability but obedience that entrusts itself to the Lord and fulfills its responsibility. Even if our expectation goes astray, our faith need

not collapse along with it. Plans can be revised, but the Word that does not pass away has no need of revision.

If our preparation makes us lose love, we must examine the direction again. For the reason that the future is uncertain, we can endlessly pile up what we need and turn away from our neighbor's difficulty. But in the house the master has entrusted to us, it is not only I who live. The awake servant thinks of the whole community. While wisely caring for his own needs and his family's, he also helps those in difficulty and leaves a portion to share for the way of the gospel.

He entrusted authority and work together

Jesus spoke the parable of a man who left his house and went to a far country and gave authority to his servants and appointed to each one his work. The servants were not left as beings who could do nothing. They received authority to carry out work. At the same time they did not receive only authority; each had work entrusted to him. The fact that authority and responsibility were given together rightly establishes the life of the church and of the saints.

If a man thinks only of authority, it is easy for him to exalt himself. He thinks that since he can decide and he has much, he may use it as he pleases. On the contrary, if he thinks only of the work, he can regard every task as a heavy burden and be pressed down by fear. But the master gave authority as well, so that they could carry out the work entrusted to them. Our time, talents, material things, relationships, and opportunities to learn are all not possessions for our own boasting but tools given to serve the work entrusted to us.

The word that He appointed to each one his work is also

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important. Not all the servants were entrusted with the same work. There is the work of the doorkeeper and the work of caring for the inside of the house, and each has a place for which he is responsible. If one envies or imitates another's work and so abandons his own, the whole house suffers difficulty. Within the church as well, the one who preaches the Word, the one who teaches, the one who cares, the one who records, and the one who supplies what is needed are different from one another. Though the work is different, the master is one, and the purpose also lies in serving one gospel.

Do not regard the work entrusted to you lightly because it looks small. If the doorkeeper does not guard the door, the safety of the house is shaken. Preparation and care that are not easily noticed guard the way of the gospel. The Lord does not look only at how famous one was before men; He looks at how he carried out the work entrusted to him. The will of the master, rather than the applause of men, must be the standard of the servant.

Also we must not carelessly judge another's work. Since the One who entrusted it is the Lord, we must respect and cooperate with one another's roles. If we claim that our own work is more important, the community becomes a house of competition. But when each person uses the authority he has received under the will of the Lord and fills up what the others lack, the house of the gospel stands firm. Being awake is not taking all the work for oneself but keeping one's own place while being connected with the other members.

For the church to be awake together, we must divide the entrusted work transparently and prepare the next person. If all the work depends on the zeal of one person, when he grows weary the work stops. We must share the knowledge and experience we have received, give opportunity to the young, and help at their side so that mistakes can be corrected. The time in

which it feels as though the master is slow in coming is not a period for monopolizing the work but an opportunity to raise up faithful servants and make the house stronger.

The doorkeeper's eyes do not look only outside the door

The doorkeeper must be awake because he does not know when the master will return. He watches for the danger that comes from outside and waits for the master's return. But the spiritual doorkeeper does not watch only the events outside. He must also watch what comes into his own heart. If the greed and vain boasting of the world, lewdness and anger, and false teaching take possession of the heart, he comes to forget the work entrusted to him.

To guard the door of the heart does not mean not to look at the world at all or to fear every culture. It means to discern what is ruling my thoughts. We must examine whether, beyond obtaining the information we need, our heart is being taken captive by endless news; and whether, beyond obtaining rest, we are being seized by pleasure and forgetting the Word and prayer. The one who is awake does not boast loudly that he has no temptation, but acknowledges his own weakness and avoids what is to be avoided.

The best way to guard the heart is not to hold out with an empty heart but to fill it with the work of the Lord. When we learn the Word, sing praise, pray, think of the person to whom we will preach the gospel, and care for a member who needs help, the heart faces the Lord's direction. Of course, the quantity of activity does not automatically guarantee spiritual life. One can be busily working and yet the heart can be asleep. Therefore all

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activity must come out of a heart that believes the gospel and out of a motive that loves the Lord.

The Lord said that we do not know whether it is in the evening or at midnight or at the crowing of the rooster or in the morning. At whatever hour, the doorkeeper receives the same mission. In life also there are bright times and dark times. There are times when strength overflows and times when one is weary and can hardly do anything. Being awake is not the ability always to accomplish the same amount of work, but the faith that in each circumstance does not forget the Lord and does not leave the place entrusted to him. When we are weary we must seek help and rest, and having received strength again we must carry out the work.

The appearance of sleeping refers not to simple rest but to the state of having forgotten the master. If one keeps putting off obedience, puts his own desire ahead of the gospel, and does not turn back even after realizing his fault, it is a sign that his heart is falling asleep. On the contrary, we must not condemn as a sleeping servant the one who, being weak, rests for a while or seeks help in tears. The Lord does not tell us to drive a weak body, but tells us that the heart is to be awake toward Him.

Therefore to awaken one another is not the work of pouring out rebuke alone. It is letting the discouraged hear the gospel again, sharing an overly heavy task, and gently turning back the one who has fallen into temptation. When I acknowledge that I too am one who can fall asleep, I can awaken another with mercy. The church must not be a house that watches one another but a house that waits together for the master's return and tends one another's lamps.

The salvation received first enables us to carry out the work entrusted to us

When we emphasize the entrusted work and being awake, we must surely keep the order of the gospel. We do not become children of God by doing our work well. Neither do service and evangelism and sacrifice wash away sins. The remission of sins is received by believing in the heart the salvation Jesus accomplished. The one who believes that Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world with the baptism He received from John, and received the judgment of that sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead, has all his sins removed once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Therefore the reason the righteous one who has received the remission of sins does the work entrusted to him is not in order to buy salvation. Because he has already become a child of God and belongs to the house of the Lord, he serves with thanksgiving. Faith comes first, and works are the fruit that comes out of that faith. If this order is reversed, the work becomes a transaction rather than grace, and being awake becomes anxiety rather than hope.

Some people think that if they serve zealously the Lord will save them the more. Then at every moment of rest they are pressed by guilt and come to compare themselves with the activity of others. And some people, having heard that works are not the condition of salvation, try not to bear any responsibility at all. But grace is not a permission that makes a man lazy. The one who has been saved freely gladly gives his time and talents to the Lord because that grace is precious.

When the master returns, the boast the servant will present is not his own merit. It is thanksgiving that he served faithfully with the grace that was entrusted to him. The strength to work,

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the opportunity, and the members to work with were all given by the Lord. If there is fruit, it came out of the life the Lord gave; and if a lack is revealed, it is enough to rely on grace and correct it. The saint neither falls asleep intoxicated with his own achievement nor abandons his place pressed down by failure.

Waiting makes today faithful

The one who believes in the Lord's coming again does not forsake reality. Rather he lives reality more honestly. He preaches the gospel to the person he meets today, keeps the work he has promised, teaches the next generation, and helps a member in difficulty. The fact that this world is not eternal does not make present responsibility light but makes it more precious. For the time the Lord has entrusted to us is limited.

Waiting is not the work of looking only at heaven in terror. It is the work of caring rightly for the house while hoping that the master will return. When the doorkeeper guards the door and each servant carries out his work, that house shows the will of the master. It is the same with the church. When the saints exactly keep the gospel they have received and love one another and preach to the people they meet, the world comes to see the goodness of the master, who is not yet seen.

It is easy for us to think that only great works are preparation. But the work of exactly recording one message of the Word and delivering it to the next person, the work of repeatedly explaining the gospel to a young child, the work of visiting a sick saint and praying together, and the work of looking at the needs of the church and quietly filling them are also work the master has entrusted to us. Such work, even though it does not receive the attention of the world, does not pass away before the Lord.

Examine your own work today in detail. What is the responsibility entrusted to you within your family? What is the door I must guard within the church? What must I learn for the sake of the gospel, and what habit must I lay down? Do not try to do everything at once, but begin faithfully with the one thing the Lord has entrusted to you at present. The awake life is not a vague tension but a life that carries out a clear responsibility today.

Finally, the Lord said that this word is spoken not only to some disciples but to all people. It is not that only pastors or special workers are to be awake. Whether one is old or young, whether the work entrusted to him is noticeable or hidden, it is a command given to all who believe the gospel. Before we demand that another be awake, I myself must first be awake before the Word.

Dear fellow believers, do not let your hearts be taken by voices that claim to know the time. Neither be discouraged because you do not know the time. Lay hold of the Word of the Lord, which does not pass away, and examine the authority and the work entrusted to you today. Do not work by compulsion in order to obtain salvation, but serve with thanksgiving as one who has believed the salvation Jesus accomplished and received the remission of sins. I hope that whenever the Lord comes, you may be found as servants who love the Word, serve the gospel, and keep your own place. ✉

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CHAPTER

14

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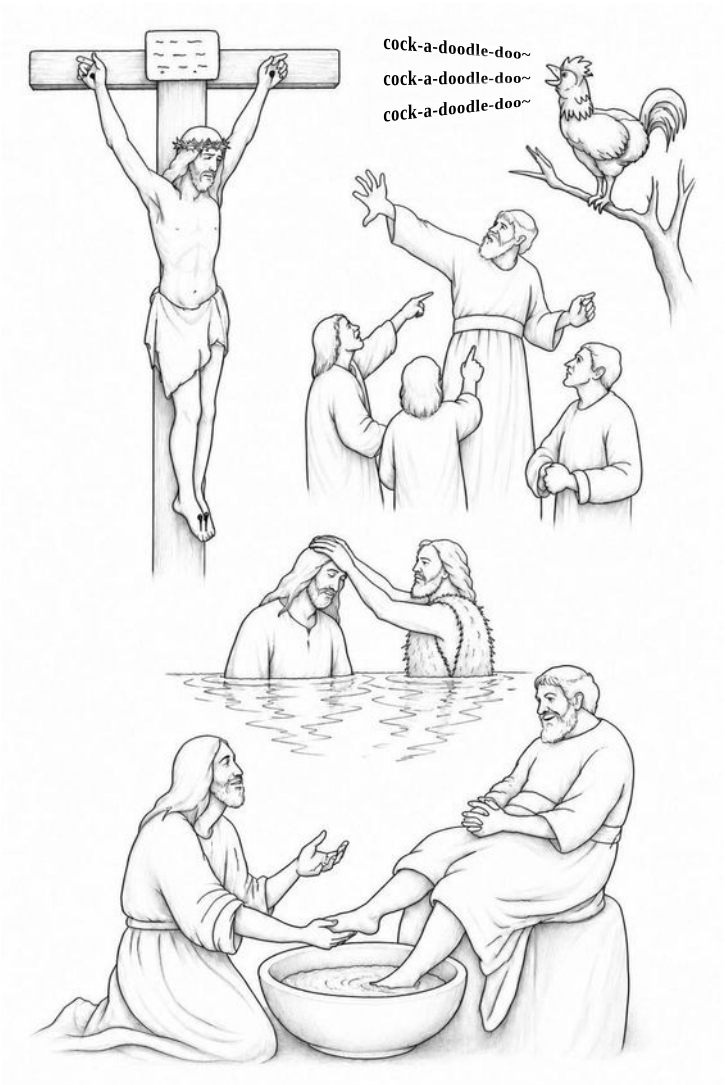

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Mark Chapter 14

< Mark 14:1-72 >

“After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, ‘Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people.’ And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, ‘Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.’ And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, ‘Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.’ Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him. Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, ‘Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?’ And He sent out two of His disciples and said to

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them, ‘Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, ‘The Teacher says, ‘Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?’’ Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.’ So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, ‘Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.’ And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, ‘Is it I?’ And another said, ‘Is it I?’ He answered and said to them, ‘It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.’ And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, ‘Take, eat; this is My body.’ Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, ‘This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.’ And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives. Then Jesus said to them, ‘All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: ‘I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.’ ‘But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.’ Peter said to Him, ‘Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.’ Jesus said to him, ‘Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before

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the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise. Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.' And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.' As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, 'Rabbi, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood

by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' Then they all forsook Him and fled. Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked. And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'' But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold

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Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!' And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands. Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept."

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 14 records the betrayal that arose as Jesus faced His death, the Last Supper, the prayer of Gethsemane, His arrest and trial, and Peter's denial. The chief priests and the scribes sought a way to seize Jesus secretly and put Him to death, and Judas Iscariot promised them that he would deliver Jesus up. In contrast to this, a woman of Bethany poured very costly fragrant oil on Jesus' head and showed the devotion of preparing beforehand for His burial. At the Passover meal Jesus spoke of the bread as His own body and of the cup as the blood of the covenant which is shed for many, and thus revealed that His death was a sacrifice for sinners. Jesus

foretold that all His disciples would forsake Him and that Peter also would deny Him three times, but He promised that after He rose from the dead He would go before them to Galilee. In Gethsemane, even in the midst of extreme sorrow and agony, He obeyed the will of the Father rather than His own will. Jesus, who was arrested through the kiss of Judas Iscariot, clearly revealed at the trial of the religious leaders that He was the Christ and the Son of God, and He received the verdict that He was deserving of death, and insult as well. At the same time Peter denied Jesus three times, and when the rooster crowed a second time he remembered the word of Jesus and wept. This chapter clearly testifies that Jesus, knowing all of man's betrayal and weakness, nevertheless walked the way of suffering and death of His own will in order to save sinners.

1. The religious leaders who plotted to kill Jesus (verses 1–2)

Two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread, the chief priests and the scribes sought a way to seize Jesus by trickery and put Him to death. Rather than realizing their own wrong through the words of Jesus and turning back, they tried to remove Jesus in order to protect their own position and authority.

But they thought that if they carried out the matter during the feast the people might riot, and so they tried to avoid arresting Him openly. Their concern was not the will of God or the question of whether Jesus was innocent, but public opinion and the political consequences.

Having religious knowledge and office does not automatically mean that one follows the will of God. When a man puts his own authority and profit before the Word of God, he can oppose the Son whom God has sent while saying that he serves God.

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The leaders made a plan to kill Jesus, but the death of Jesus was not simply an event in which their plot succeeded. Jesus already knew what would happen to Him, and according to the will of God, who saves sinners, He walked the way of suffering of His own will.

2. The woman who poured fragrant oil on Jesus' head (verse 3)

While Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of pure spikenard. She broke the flask and poured the fragrant oil on Jesus' head.

The name of this woman is not recorded in the text of Mark. We may look into the person by comparing the records of the other Gospels, but we must not conclude her name on the basis of Mark alone.

The woman did not use only a little of the fragrant oil and keep the rest. Her act of breaking the flask and pouring it on Jesus was a complete devotion in which she did not spare the precious thing she had. Rather than by words or explanations meant to win people's recognition, she showed by her action a heart that counted Jesus precious.

This action stands in contrast to the action of the religious leaders who plotted to kill Jesus and of Judas Iscariot who was about to deliver Him up. Having the same Jesus before them, some betrayed Him for their own profit, but this woman gave the precious thing she had and exalted Him.

3. The people who criticized the fragrant oil as wasted (verses 4–5)

Some who were there saw the woman's action and were indignant. They criticized her, asking why she had wasted the

fragrant oil when it could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.

The saying that we should help the poor is in itself right. But they needed to look back and ask whether they said this in order actually to help the poor, or whether they were judging the woman's devotion by their own standard. A man can use a right cause and yet recklessly criticize the true faith of another person.

Three hundred denarii was a large sum, equivalent to a long period of a laborer's wages. Looked at by economic calculation alone, the act of pouring out the fragrant oil at once could appear to be waste. But the woman used an opportunity that could not be obtained again, at the special time when the death of Jesus was near.

The devotion that is offered to God cannot all be evaluated by amount and efficiency alone. Yet neither must we justify all unplanned spending or irresponsible action as devotion. What is important is to discern the will and the time of God and to act in true faith.

4. The good work of preparing beforehand for Jesus' burial (verses 6–9)

Jesus told the people not to trouble the woman. He said that she had done a good work for Him and that, doing all that she could do with her own strength, she had prepared beforehand for the burial of Jesus.

The text does not explain in detail to what degree the woman understood the meaning of Jesus' death and burial. But Jesus connected her action with His own burial and received it as precious.

Jesus said that the poor are always near and can be helped whenever one wishes, but that He would not always be with

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them. This does not mean that one need not care for the poor. Jesus did not deny the responsibility to help the poor; He said that this moment, with His death before Him, was a special opportunity that would not come again.

The woman did not boast of what she could not do, but did *"what she could."* Rather than requiring of all people work of the same scale, God looks at the work each person has done in faith within the circumstances he has.

Jesus said that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman had done would also be told and she would be remembered. In fact her action has been recorded in the Gospels and has been handed down for long ages. Even a devotion that looks small to people is not forgotten when Jesus receives it.

5. Judas Iscariot, who determined to deliver Jesus up (verses 10–11)

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the chief priests in order to deliver Jesus up to them. He was a disciple who had gone about with Jesus and experienced His words and miracles at close hand, but in the end he betrayed his teacher.

The chief priests heard Judas' proposal, were glad, and promised to give him money. From that time Judas sought a suitable opportunity to deliver Jesus up.

The text does not explain in detail all the inward motives that led Judas to betray Him. That money was promised is clear, but rather than concluding his action from one psychology alone, we must see it as the result of his putting his own thoughts before the words and the way of Jesus.

The mere fact that one belongs to a community of faith and has long heard the words of Jesus does not guarantee true faith. Even though a man hears the Word at close hand, if he does not

cast away his own desires and thoughts, he can use Jesus for his own purpose or betray Him.

6. Having the Passover meal prepared (verses 12–16)

On the first day of Unleavened Bread, the day when they killed the Passover lamb, the disciples asked Jesus where He wanted them to prepare the Passover meal. Jesus sent two of His disciples into the city and told them to follow a man carrying a pitcher of water.

He said that if they asked the master of the house that the man entered where the guest room was in which Jesus and His disciples might eat the Passover meal, he would show them a large upper room already prepared. When the disciples went, everything was just as Jesus had said, and there they prepared the Passover.

Jesus knew the place and the circumstances in which He would eat with His disciples for the last time. He was not dragged along by events without knowing what would happen; knowing all things, He prepared for His own death.

The Passover is the feast that commemorates the event in which the people of Israel escaped the judgment of death by the blood of the lamb and were set free from slavery in Egypt. At this Passover Jesus gave His own body and blood and thus became the true Passover sacrifice who saved those who had become slaves of sin and death.

7. Speaking of the one who would betray Him (verses 17–21)

When evening came Jesus ate with the twelve disciples. During the meal Jesus said that one of those eating with Him would betray Him.

The disciples were sorrowful and asked one by one, *"Is it I?"* This question shows that none of them could be completely

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confident concerning the weakness within himself. Rather than looking only for the faults of others, we must examine the fact that we too are people who can fall.

Jesus said that one of the twelve who dipped his hand in the dish with Him would betray Him. In that the one who delivered Jesus up was a person in the close relationship of sitting at the same table and sharing bread, the pain of the betrayal was all the greater.

The Son of Man goes the way of suffering and death just as it is written concerning Him, but the man who betrays Jesus also bears responsibility. The fact that the plan of God's salvation is accomplished does not justify the sin of Judas. Even though God uses even the evil actions of man to accomplish His will, the responsibility of the one who has done the evil is not removed.

Jesus said that woe would be to the man who delivered Him up, and that it would have been better for him if he had never been born. This shows how serious it is to betray Jesus deliberately and never to turn back to the end.

8. Giving the bread and saying that it was His body (verse 22)

During the meal Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, *"Take, eat; this is My body."*

Jesus came to this earth clothed with a body in order to save sinners. And through the baptism He received from John the Baptist He took all the sins of mankind upon His own body, and bearing those sins He went to the Cross. Therefore the bread that stands for the body of Jesus points to the flesh of Jesus, which He gave up in order to bear the sins of mankind, and to the salvation He accomplished.

That the disciples received and ate the bread Jesus gave

them was not simply looking upon His sacrifice. To eat the flesh of Jesus does not mean actually to eat His flesh; it means to believe in one's heart the fact that Jesus came in the flesh and bore the sins of mankind through His baptism. To drink the blood of Jesus means to believe the fact that, bearing those sins, He shed His blood and was judged on the Cross.

Therefore the rite of eating the bread and drinking the cup of the Lord's Supper does not in itself automatically wash away sins or give eternal life. The Lord's Supper is the remembering of the salvation that Jesus accomplished by His baptism, by the blood of the Cross, and by His resurrection, and the confessing and commemorating of the faith that believes that salvation.

9. The blood of the covenant which is shed for many (verses 23–25)

Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples, and they all drank from that cup. Jesus said that this was His own blood of the covenant, which is shed for many.

Since the wages of sin is death, in order to resolve sin, blood, which stands for life, had to be shed. The blood of Jesus is not blood He shed because of His own sin; it is the redeeming blood He shed by being judged in the place of sinners.

The word that it is shed *"for many"* shows that the death of Jesus was not merely a personal martyrdom or tragedy, but a sacrifice to make others live. Jesus gave His own life and opened the way for sinners to enter into a new covenant relationship with God.

The blood of the covenant shows that God's promise to save sinners was confirmed by the sacrifice of Jesus. The promises and the will of man may be shaken, but the covenant

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that Jesus established with His own blood does not change.

Jesus said that He would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day when He drinks it new in the kingdom of God. This shows that although His death was before Him, death was not the end, and that He was looking to the resurrection and to the completion of the kingdom of God.

10. Foretelling that all the disciples would fall away (verses 26–28)

Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn and then went out to the Mount of Olives. Quoting the word of Zechariah, Jesus said that just as the sheep are scattered when the shepherd is struck, so all the disciples would forsake Him and fall away.

The disciples confessed that they would follow Jesus, but when the threat of arrest and death came upon them they all fled. Even though the resolve and the loyalty of man look strong, they collapse easily in the face of fear.

But Jesus did not foretell only the failure of the disciples. He promised that after He rose from the dead He would go before them to Galilee. The disciples forsook Jesus, but the risen Jesus did not forsake them; He met them again and restored them.

The hope of the disciples did not lie in their never failing. It lay in the faithfulness of Jesus, who, knowing their failure beforehand, promised nevertheless that He would come to them again.

11. Peter, who declared that he would never deny Him (verses 29–31)

Peter said that even if all the disciples fell away, he would not. He thought that his own faith and loyalty were stronger than those of the other disciples.

Jesus said specifically that on that very night, before the rooster crowed twice, Peter would deny Him three times. But Peter declared vehemently that even if he had to die with Jesus he would never deny Him. The other disciples said the same thing.

In Peter's words there was a sincere love for Jesus, but there was a lack of right recognition of his own weakness. He trusted his own resolve more than the warning of Jesus.

Faith is not being confident of how strong one is; it is acknowledging that one is a weak person and relying on the words and the help of Jesus. When a man thinks that others may fall but he himself is all right, he can rather fall into greater danger.

12. Jesus, who was exceedingly sorrowful in Gethsemane (verses 32–34)

Jesus went with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane. After telling the disciples to sit while He prayed, He took Peter, James, and John and went farther.

Jesus was greatly troubled and sorrowful, and said that His soul was in anguish to the point of death. Even Jesus, the Son of God, did not meet the suffering and death that lay before Him without any emotion.

Jesus had no sin, but He had to bear the pain of being judged in the place of sinners and forsaken by God. His sorrow shows how heavy and fearful a judgment the death of the Cross was.

Jesus told the three disciples to remain there and watch. The disciples should have shared in the suffering of Jesus and prayed, but they soon fell asleep.

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13. Obeying the will of the Father rather than His own will (verses 35–36)

Jesus went a little farther, fell to the ground, and prayed that, if it were possible, that hour might pass from Him. Calling God *"Abba, Father,"* He entreated Him to take this cup away from Him, since all things were possible.

Here the cup stands for the suffering, the death, and the judgment of sin that Jesus would bear. Jesus did not deny His pain as though it were not pain. He told the Father honestly of His own fear and sorrow.

But the prayer of Jesus went on: *"nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."* Jesus did not go to the Cross because He desired suffering; He accepted that way in order to obey the will of the Father, who saves sinners.

True obedience is not the absence of the feeling of pain. It is telling God one's own desire and yet entrusting the final decision and the outcome to the will of God. Through prayer Jesus did not try to change the will of the Father but entrusted Himself wholly to that will.

14. The disciples who could not watch and pray but fell asleep (verses 37–42)

When Jesus came back to the disciples they were asleep. Saying to Peter that he could not watch even one hour, He told them to watch and pray so that they would not enter into temptation.

The word *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"* shows both the sincerity and the limits of the disciples. They wanted to follow Jesus, but they could not overcome the weariness and weakness of the flesh.

The fact that the flesh is weak must not become an excuse that justifies disobedience. The more a man knows his own

weakness, the more he must not boast of his own resolve but ask for the help of God in prayer.

Jesus prayed three times with the same words, and all three times the disciples fell asleep. Peter had declared that he would follow to the death, but at the moment when he should have prayed and prepared he was not awake.

At last Jesus said that the hour had come for the Son of Man to be delivered into the hands of sinners, and told them to rise and go with Him. Jesus did not run away to avoid arrest; in order to accomplish the will of the Father He went toward the people who were coming to seize Him.

15. The kiss of Judas Iscariot and the arrest of Jesus (verses 43–46)

While Jesus was still speaking, Judas Iscariot appeared with a multitude carrying swords and clubs. They were people sent by the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders.

Judas had arranged a signal beforehand, that the one he kissed was Jesus and that they should seize Him and lead Him away safely. He came to Jesus, called Him *"Rabbi!"* and kissed Him.

A kiss is generally an action that expresses respect and closeness, but Judas used it as the signal of betrayal. While acting outwardly as though he honored Jesus as his teacher, he actually delivered Him into the hands of His enemies.

Words and actions that look religious can also be used in a way different from the truth of the heart. If a man exalts Jesus with his mouth while using Him for his own profit, it can become the same hypocrisy as the kiss of Judas.

The multitude laid hands on Jesus and seized Him. Jesus was not arrested because He had no power; in order to fulfill the Scriptures and to save sinners He Himself accepted the way

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of being seized.

16. The man who used a sword and the disciples who fled (verses 47–52)

One of those standing by drew a sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Mark does not record who this man was, and so we must not conclude his identity from this text alone.

The way of Jesus was not a way established by the sword and by violence. Jesus did not accomplish the work of salvation in a manner in which His disciples used force to protect Him.

Jesus pointed out their contradiction: when He taught daily in the temple they did not seize Him, yet they had come out with swords and clubs as against a robber. But He said that all these things were happening in order to fulfill the Scriptures.

In the end all the disciples forsook Jesus and fled. Their declaration that they would be with Him to the death collapsed in the face of danger. The loyalty and the courage of man cannot be maintained to the end by his own strength alone.

A young man, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body, followed Jesus, and when he was seized he left the linen cloth and fled naked. The text does not reveal the name of this young man, and so rather than concluding who he was, we must focus on the fact that when Jesus was arrested everyone around Him fled in fear.

17. Jesus, who was led away before the high priest (verses 53–59)

The people led Jesus away to the high priest, and the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes all assembled. Peter followed Jesus at a distance, went right into the courtyard of the high

priest's house, and warmed himself at the fire with the servants.

The religious leaders sought testimony to put Jesus to death, but they did not obtain suitable testimony. Many bore false witness, but their testimonies did not agree with one another.

Some testified that Jesus had said He would destroy the temple made with human hands and in three days build another temple not made with hands. But not even this testimony agreed.

They did not investigate the facts fairly and then give judgment; they had already decided to kill Jesus and sought testimony to fit that conclusion. They kept the form of a trial, but justice and truth were disregarded.

Jesus had shown by the word concerning the temple that His own body would be put to death and would rise again on the third day, but the people distorted its meaning and used it as the ground of accusation. A man who has no heart to receive the truth can change the words of Jesus to fit his own purpose.

18. Revealing that He is the Christ and the Son of God (verses 60–62)

The high priest stood up and asked Jesus whether He answered nothing concerning the false testimony. But Jesus kept silent. He did not waste words trying to defend Himself against false testimonies that did not agree with one another.

Again the high priest asked Jesus, *"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"* To this Jesus answered clearly, *"I am."*

Jesus revealed that He was not merely a prophet or a moral teacher, but the Christ whom God had promised and the Son of God. He also said that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven.

Now Jesus looked like an accused man standing before the

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judgment seat of men, but the One who will judge the world with the authority of God is Jesus. The people who were judging Jesus will in the last day rather stand before His judgment seat.

Jesus did not hide His identity in order to avoid death. Knowing that the confession that He was the Christ would lead to the sentence of death, He spoke the truth clearly.

19. Receiving the sentence of death and insult (verses 63–65)

When the high priest heard the words of Jesus he tore his own clothes and said that they needed no more witnesses. He defined the confession of Jesus as blasphemy and asked the people what they thought.

They all condemned Jesus as deserving of death. Jesus, the Son of God, revealed His true identity, but the religious leaders did not receive that truth and rather judged it to be a sin worthy of death.

Some spat on Jesus, covered His face, struck Him with their fists, and mocked Him, telling Him to guess who had struck Him. The servants also struck Jesus with the palms of their hands.

Jesus had the authority to judge at once those who insulted Him, but He endured all that shame and violence. This was the obedience by which He would accomplish salvation by suffering and dying in the place of sinners.

Jesus, who was forsaken and condemned by men, was in fact without sin. The meaning of redemption lies in this: that the One who was without sin received condemnation, shame, and punishment in the place of sinners.

20. Peter, who denied Jesus three times (verses 66–72)

While Peter was warming himself in the courtyard below,

one of the servant girls of the high priest saw him and said that he was a man who had been with Jesus of Nazareth. Peter denied it, saying that he did not know what she meant, and went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed.

The servant girl saw Peter again and said to those around her that he belonged to the same company as Jesus. Peter denied it again.

A little later those standing by said, on the ground that Peter was from Galilee, that he was a disciple of Jesus. Cursing and swearing, Peter denied Him a third time, saying that he did not know the man of whom they spoke.

Peter went beyond merely keeping silent or fleeing, and denied again and again that he knew Jesus. His confidence that he would follow to the death collapsed completely once his own life was in danger.

At that moment the rooster crowed a second time, and Peter remembered the word of Jesus, that before the rooster crowed twice he would deny Him three times. He realized his own failure and wept.

Peter's tears themselves did not become the price that removed his wrong. His tears express the sorrow of realizing the difference between his declaration and his actual condition. He learned that he could not rely on his own strong will and that he was a person who needed the grace of Jesus.

Jesus, knowing Peter's denial beforehand, nevertheless promised that after He rose from the dead He would meet them again in Galilee. The grace of Jesus and the promise of restoration were greater than Peter's failure. True repentance is not despairing over one's own failure and leaving Jesus; it is acknowledging one's wrong and returning again to the grace of the Lord.

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The core meaning of Mark chapter 14

First, the chief priests and the scribes made a plan to kill Jesus in order to protect their own authority and profit rather than the will of God.

Second, the woman of Bethany poured costly fragrant oil on Jesus and did all that she could do with her own strength, and Jesus received this as a good work that prepared beforehand for His burial.

Third, even the right cause of helping the poor must not be used as a tool for criticizing the true faith and devotion of another person.

Fourth, Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve disciples, but he determined to deliver Jesus up to the chief priests and sought an opportunity to betray Him.

Fifth, Jesus knew the place where the Passover meal would be prepared and the things that would happen, and according to the will of God He prepared for His death of His own will.

Sixth, by saying that the bread was His body, Jesus revealed the salvation by which He came in the flesh and bore all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John; and by saying that the cup was the blood of the covenant which is shed for many, He made clear that He would receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

Seventh, although He knew that all the disciples would forsake Him and that Peter would deny Him three times, Jesus promised that after He rose from the dead He would meet them again in Galilee.

Eighth, Peter's declaration came out of a sincere heart, but it was a word that did not know his own weakness and trusted his own resolve excessively.

Ninth, Jesus was sorrowful in Gethsemane to the point of death, but He asked that the will of the Father, not His own will,

be accomplished, and obeyed the way of the Cross.

Tenth, the disciples could not watch and pray but fell asleep, and this shows that the good resolve of the heart alone cannot overcome the weakness of the flesh and temptation.

Eleventh, Judas Iscariot used the kiss, a sign of closeness, as the signal of betrayal, and showed that religious words and actions can differ from the truth of the heart.

Twelfth, the disciples all fled when danger came, but Jesus was arrested alone in order to fulfill the Scriptures and the plan of God's salvation.

Thirteenth, the religious leaders sought testimony to put Jesus to death, and many bore false witness, but their testimonies did not agree with one another.

Fourteenth, Jesus clearly revealed that He is the Christ and the Son of God and the Judge who will sit at the right hand of the Power and come with the clouds.

Fifteenth, Jesus, who was without sin, silently bore condemnation, spitting, beating, and mockery in the place of sinners.

Sixteenth, after Peter denied Jesus three times he remembered His word and wept, and he realized that what he needed was not his own resolve but the salvation and the grace of Jesus.

To put it in one sentence, Mark chapter 14 is the chapter of salvation and obedience in which Jesus, knowing the betrayal of Judas Iscariot, the flight of the disciples, and the denial of Peter, nevertheless revealed at the Passover meal that He would give His own body and the blood of the covenant for sinners, and in Gethsemane obeyed the will of the Father rather than His own will and of His own will bore His arrest, an unjust trial, and insult.

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2) Mark chapter 14 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 14 shows the course in which Jesus gave His own body and blood in order to save sinners, and in obedience to the will of God accepted arrest, trial, and insult. The religious leaders plot to kill Jesus, Judas Iscariot betrays Him, and all the disciples flee, but the evil and the weakness of man cannot overthrow the plan of God's salvation.

Before He was hung on the Cross, Jesus had already taken all the sins of the whole of mankind upon His body through the baptism He received from John. That He said at the Passover meal that the bread was His body shows the salvation by which He came in the flesh and bore the sins of mankind, and that He said the cup was the blood of the covenant shows that He would receive on the Cross the judgment of the sins He had borne. By rising from the dead, Jesus overcame the power of sin and death and accomplished perfect salvation.

1. The plan of God's salvation, which is higher than the plots of man (verses 1–2)

The chief priests and the scribes sought a way to seize Jesus secretly and put Him to death. Their purpose was not to accomplish the will of God but to protect their own religious position and authority.

But the death of Jesus is not merely an event in which the plot of the religious leaders succeeded. Jesus already knew what would come upon Him, and in obedience to the will of God, who would save sinners, He walked the way of death of His own will.

Because Jesus had borne the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He had to go to the

Cross in order to pay the wages of those sins. The religious leaders tried to kill Jesus with evil intent, but God accomplished the work of saving sinners even in the midst of their evil actions.

That does not mean that the responsibility of those who killed Jesus is removed. The fact that the plan of God is accomplished does not justify the evil of man. God did not agree with the evil actions of man, and yet with power greater than that evil He accomplished His will of salvation.

2. The woman who poured fragrant oil and prepared for Jesus' burial (verses 3–9)

A woman broke an alabaster flask containing costly spikenard oil and poured it on Jesus' head. The people criticized the woman, saying that it could have been sold to help the poor, but Jesus said that she had done a good work that prepared beforehand for His burial.

The woman's action did not complete the remission of sins accomplished by Jesus, nor did it pay the price of salvation. Salvation is the work that Jesus accomplishes, and the devotion of man can add nothing to that salvation. The woman's action was an expression of the faith and the service that counted Jesus precious and prepared for His death.

Serving the gospel and Jesus is not merit for the sake of being saved. It is that a person who has first received the grace of Jesus gives thanks and uses his time, his material things, and his ability for the gospel. The woman did not try to offer what she did not have, but did to the utmost of her strength the work that she could do.

The word of Jesus that the poor are always with us does not mean that we need not help the poor. Helping the poor is also necessary, but this moment, with the death of Jesus at hand,

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was a special time that would not come again. Neither must anyone unconditionally criticize true service for the gospel under the cause of helping people.

3. Judas Iscariot, who exchanged Jesus for money (verses 10–11)

Judas Iscariot was one of the twelve disciples, but he determined to deliver Jesus up to the chief priests. The chief priests were glad at this and promised to give him money, and Judas sought a suitable opportunity.

Judas Iscariot heard the words of Jesus at close hand and saw a great many of His works. But the outward condition of having been with Jesus for a long time did not guarantee true faith in his heart.

Even while a man says that he believes in Jesus, if he does not cast away his own desires and thoughts he can use Jesus as a means of accomplishing his own purpose. And when what he expected is not accomplished, he can also leave Jesus or betray Him.

True faith is not fitting Jesus to one's own desires but standing oneself before the words of Jesus. The one who believes the gospel must not treat Jesus only as one who gives worldly profit, but must believe in Him as the God who has saved him from sin and judgment.

4. The Passover and the true Lamb of God (verses 12–16)

Jesus had His disciples prepare the Passover meal. When the disciples went into the city, everything was prepared just as Jesus had said. Jesus knew what would happen, and He took the lead in preparing His own last meal.

At the Passover of the Old Testament a lamb died and its blood was applied to the doorposts and the lintel. When God

judged the firstborn of Egypt, the judgment of death did not come upon the houses where the blood of the lamb was.

But the blood of the Passover lamb itself did not complete the salvation of the New Testament. It pointed to Jesus Christ, who would come and save sinners. In the sacrifices of the Old Testament, sin passed on to the sacrificial offering, and then that offering shed its blood and died.

Jesus received all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and on the Cross He paid the wages of those sins with His blood. Therefore Jesus is the true Lamb of God, who bore sin and died in our stead.

Just as the judgment of death passed over the houses where the blood of the Passover was applied, so the person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished is saved from the eternal judgment for sin. This is not because a man is righteous and good, but because Jesus paid the wages of sin in his stead.

5. The man who ate with Jesus and yet betrayed Him (verses 17–21)

During the meal Jesus said that one of the disciples would betray Him. The disciples were sorrowful and asked one by one whether it was he.

Jesus said that one of the twelve who dipped his hand in the dish with Him would deliver Him up. The fact is thus revealed that the closeness of the table and outward fellowship cannot take the place of the faith of the heart.

Belonging to a community of faith and taking part in worship and in the Lord's Supper does not automatically bring salvation. What is important is whether one believes in his heart the salvation that Jesus accomplished. A man can take part in outward rites and yet reject Jesus in his heart.

The suffering of Jesus is accomplished just as it is written

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in the Scriptures, but Judas Iscariot had to bear the responsibility for his own action. That God uses the evil of man to accomplish His will does not mean that the man who did that evil is made righteous.

6. The meaning of eating the flesh of Jesus by faith (verse 22)

Jesus broke the bread, gave it to the disciples, and said, *"Take, eat; this is My body."* This word does not mean that they should actually eat the flesh of Jesus.

Jesus came to this earth clothed with a body and took all the sins of mankind upon His body through the baptism He received from John. Therefore to eat the flesh of Jesus means to believe in one's heart the fact that He came in the flesh and took the sins of mankind upon His own body.

The act of receiving and eating the bread does not by itself automatically wash away sins or obtain eternal life. One must know and believe the meaning of the salvation that the bread stands for. One must receive by faith the fact that Jesus bore all sins with His own body.

A man cannot by his own effort transfer his sins to Jesus. God had the sins passed on to Jesus through John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. A man receives the remission of sins by believing, just as the Word says, this work that God has already accomplished.

The flesh of Jesus is the food of life that a sinner may eat and live forever. Food for the body makes one hungry again, but the person who believes the gospel that Jesus bore all his sins obtains the eternal remission of sins and life.

7. The blood of the covenant which is shed for many (verses 23–25)

Jesus gave the cup to the disciples and said that it was His own blood of the covenant, which is shed for many. Blood is life, and the wages of sin is death. For sin to be resolved, the price of life for that sin must be paid.

The blood of Jesus on the Cross is not blood He shed without having borne any sin. Jesus first bore the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He was judged on the Cross, shed His blood, and died.

To eat the flesh of Jesus is to believe the work of the water by which He bore the sins of mankind, and to drink His blood is to believe the fact that He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. To eat and drink the flesh and the blood together means to believe in one's heart the perfect salvation that Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood.

The blood of the covenant shows that what God promised, that He would save sinners, was fulfilled by the sacrifice of Jesus. The resolve and the works of man are shaken, but the salvation that Jesus accomplished with His own life does not change.

The water testifies to the work by which the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus, the blood to the judgment of those sins, and the Holy Spirit to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and is God. The water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit do not speak of different salvations; they testify to the one perfect salvation that Jesus accomplished.

The Lord's Supper is not a rite that newly repeats and produces this salvation. It is a rite in which we remember the salvation Jesus has already accomplished, confess our faith, and commemorate it in order to preach that gospel.

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8. The resurrection and the restoration promised before the failure of the disciples (verses 26–31)

Jesus said that all the disciples would forsake Him and be scattered. Peter declared that even if everyone else fell away he would not, but Jesus foretold that before the rooster crowed twice he would deny Him three times.

Peter loved Jesus, but he did not know his own weakness. He trusted his own resolve and loyalty more than the words of Jesus. Faith is not being confident that one will never fail; it is knowing one's own weakness and relying on the words and the grace of Jesus.

But Jesus did not speak only of the failure of the disciples. He promised that after He rose from the dead He would go before them to Galilee. Although He knew that the disciples would forsake Him, He said that after His resurrection He would meet them again and restore them.

The hope of salvation does not lie in the believing person's never falling. It lies in the fact that Jesus bore all sins, was judged, and then rose from the dead and completed eternal salvation.

Even a person who has received the remission of sins can fail in the flesh. But because he has failed he must not try to wash away his sins again by his own works. He must acknowledge his wrong and turn back, and yet believe that the ground of his salvation lies in the perfect work of Jesus.

9. The cup of Gethsemane and the obedience of Jesus (verses 32–42)

In Gethsemane Jesus said that He was exceedingly sorrowful and in anguish to the point of death. Jesus did not regard the suffering that lay before Him as a light thing. The Cross was an actual judgment of pain, of curse, and of death.

The cup that Jesus prayed might be taken away was the cup of judgment for the sins of mankind. Because Jesus had borne all sins through the baptism He received from John, He had to bear the judgment of curse and death in the place of sinners.

Jesus prayed, *"nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."* He did not hide His own pain but told the Father honestly, and yet in the end He obeyed the will of the Father, who would save sinners.

The obedience of Jesus shows at how great a price salvation was accomplished. The remission of sins is not the result of God's overlooking sin without any condition. It is a grace made possible because Jesus, who was without sin, received the judgment of sin in our stead.

The disciples heard the word to watch and pray, but they fell asleep three times. In their hearts they wished to follow Jesus, but they could not overcome the weakness of the flesh. Since a man cannot overcome temptation by his own good resolve alone, he must rely on God and pray.

Prayer is not merit for obtaining the remission of sins. It is an act of faith in which one believes the salvation that has already been completed, acknowledges his own weakness, and asks for the strength and the wisdom to live according to the will of God.

10. Jesus, who did not avoid arrest but gave Himself up (verses 43–52)

Judas Iscariot used a kiss as a signal and had Jesus arrested. He used an action that expresses closeness and respect as a means of betrayal. This shows how serious is the hypocrisy of exalting Jesus with the mouth while actually using Him for one's own desires.

One of those standing by used a sword, but Jesus' work of

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salvation was not accomplished by human force. Jesus did not have His disciples fight in order to protect Him.

Jesus was not seized because He had no power. In order to be judged in the place of the sins of mankind, which He had borne through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and in order to fulfill the Scriptures, He Himself accepted the way of arrest.

All the disciples forsook Jesus and fled. Human loyalty and courage collapsed in the face of danger, but Jesus remained alone and walked the way of salvation to the end. Salvation was not completed by the loyalty of the disciples but by the obedience of Jesus.

11. The true identity of Jesus revealed in the midst of false testimony (verses 53–65)

The religious leaders sought testimony to put Jesus to death, but not even the false testimonies agreed with one another. They used the form of a trial in order to kill the sinless Jesus, but in that course there was neither justice nor truth.

When the high priest asked Jesus whether He was the Christ and the Son of God, Jesus answered clearly, *"I am."* Jesus did not hide His identity in order to avoid death.

Jesus came to this earth as true man, but at the same time He is fundamentally God. A mere man cannot bear the sins of the whole of mankind, be judged in our stead, and then rise from the dead. Only Jesus, who is God, is the Savior of all people.

That Jesus bore all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist is because He is the sinless Son of God. Jesus was condemned in the place of sinners, but He Himself was without sin.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and is

God. Now He appears to be condemned before the judgment seat of men, but the One who will sit at the right hand of the Power, come with the clouds, and judge the world is Jesus.

The people who spat on Jesus, struck Him, and mocked Him did not know whom they were insulting. Jesus could have judged them at once, but in order to save sinners He endured the shame and the violence.

12. Peter, who denied Jesus three times, and true repentance (verses 66–72)

Peter denied Jesus three times. At the last he cursed and swore and said that he did not know Jesus. His declaration that he would follow to the death collapsed once his own life was threatened.

When the rooster crowed a second time, Peter remembered the word of Jesus and wept. His tears express the sorrow of realizing how different his own confidence was from his actual condition.

But the tears themselves were not the price that washed away Peter's sin. The act of weeping repeatedly or of confessing sin cannot pay the wages of sin in our stead. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus had to be judged in our stead.

Through the baptism He received from John, Jesus had already borne even the sin of Peter's denial, and bearing that sin He would be judged on the Cross. What Peter needed was not to make his own resolve strong again, but to believe the grace of Jesus and His perfect salvation.

True repentance is not seeing one's own failure, despairing, and leaving Jesus. It is acknowledging that one's own righteousness and trust in oneself were wrong, and returning to the salvation of Jesus, who has removed all sins.

Jesus, knowing Peter's failure beforehand, nevertheless

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promised that after He rose from the dead He would meet him again. Jesus' grace of salvation and restoration was greater than Peter's sin and failure.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 14 seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, the religious leaders and Judas Iscariot delivered Jesus up to death with evil intent, but in obedience to the will of God, who would save sinners, Jesus went the way of the Cross of His own will.

Second, Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the wages of those sins with His blood on the Cross, and then rose from the dead and accomplished perfect salvation.

Third, the devotion of the woman who poured the fragrant oil was not merit that paid the price of salvation, but an expression of the faith that counted Jesus precious and served His death and the gospel.

Fourth, Judas Iscariot experienced the words and the works of Jesus at close hand, but because he did not cast away his own desires and thoughts he betrayed Jesus.

Fifth, just as the blood of the Passover lamb protected the people of Israel from the judgment of death, so Jesus is the true Lamb of God, who received the judgment of sinners in their stead.

Sixth, to eat the flesh of Jesus means to believe in one's heart the fact that He came in the flesh and took the sins of mankind upon His own body.

Seventh, to drink the blood of Jesus means to believe the fact that, bearing the sins of mankind, He was judged in our stead on the Cross and shed His blood.

Eighth, the Lord's Supper is not a work that washes away

sins by the rite of eating the bread and the cup itself; it is the believing, confessing, and commemorating of the salvation that Jesus completed by the water and the blood.

Ninth, the water testifies to the work by which the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus, the blood to the judgment of those sins, and the Holy Spirit to the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and is God.

Tenth, the cup of Gethsemane stands for the judgment for the sins of mankind, and Jesus, while telling the Father of His own pain, obeyed the will of the Father, who would save sinners.

Eleventh, the declaration and the loyalty of the disciples collapsed in the face of danger, but Jesus walked the way of salvation alone to the end.

Twelfth, the sinless Jesus received an unjust trial, condemnation, spitting, beating, and mockery, and bore suffering in the place of sinners.

Thirteenth, it was not the tears and the confession of sin of Peter that paid the wages of sin; Jesus was judged in his stead and thus removed even his sins.

Fourteenth, true repentance is turning back from the way of trusting one's own resolve and righteousness, believing the salvation that Jesus completed, and returning to that grace.

To put it in one sentence, Mark chapter 14 is the chapter that shows the fact that Jesus, having taken the sins of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John, gave His own body and the blood of the covenant in order to receive the judgment of those sins by the blood of the Cross as the true Lamb of the Passover, and, even in the midst of the betrayal and the failure of man, obeyed the will of the Father to the end and saved sinners. ✉

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Mark Chapter 14

Jesus, who gave Himself up

Introduction

Mark chapter 14 begins with the scene in which the chief priests and the scribes seek a way to put Jesus to death. People tried to remove Jesus by a scheme, but that plan could not overthrow the plan of God's salvation. Jesus did not die because He was seized and had no other choice; He gave Himself up as the true Passover Lamb. A woman of Bethany poured fragrant oil and prepared for His burial, but Judas took money and sought an opportunity to deliver the Lord up.

Jesus shared the Last Supper with His disciples and said that the bread was His own body and that the cup was the blood of the covenant which is shed for many. Jesus had already taken all the sins of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John. Bearing those sins, He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and so paid the wages of sin, and on the third day He rose from the dead and completed salvation. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and becomes one of the people of the new covenant.

The disciples were confident that they would not forsake the Lord, and Peter declared that he would not deny Him even if he had to die. But Jesus, knowing their failure, promised that after He rose from the dead He would go before them to Galilee. Salvation and restoration depend not on the resolve of man but on the grace of the Lord, who holds fast even the

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disciples who would fall. The believing person must not boast of his own loyalty but must rely on the Holy Spirit through the Word and prayer.

In Gethsemane Jesus was sorrowful and asked that, if it were possible, the cup might pass from Him. But He did not insist on His own will; He obeyed the will of the Father. That cup was the agony of receiving in our stead the judgment for the sin of the world. Even when Judas betrayed Him with a kiss and the multitude came with swords and clubs, Jesus did not resist with violence but walked the way of fulfilling the Scriptures. The disciples ran away, but Jesus walked the way of salvation alone.

The council condemned Jesus by false testimony, and the people mocked and beat Him. Jesus testified that He was the Son of the Blessed and the Son of Man, who would come with the clouds. Meanwhile Peter, after denying the Lord three times, remembered the word of Jesus and wept. Mark chapter 14 shows that even in the midst of man's betrayal and fear and the failure of self-confidence, Jesus obeyed the will of the Father to the end. True faith is not relying on one's own loyalty but holding fast to Jesus Christ, who gave Himself up for sinners, and to His Word.

People tried to kill Jesus secretly, but God gave Him up as the true Passover Lamb and accomplished salvation

"After two days it was the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread. And the chief priests and the scribes sought how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death. But they said, 'Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the

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people.’” (Mark 14:1–2).

Mark chapter 14 begins with the word that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread were two days away. This word does not merely announce by time that the death of Jesus was near; it shows that His death was deeply connected with the Passover. Jesus was not one who was arrested and died by chance; as the true Savior to whom the Passover of the Old Testament pointed, He gave Himself up at the time He had appointed.

The Passover was a feast that commemorated the deliverance of the people of Israel from slavery in Egypt. When God judged the firstborn of Egypt, the people of Israel killed a lamb without blemish and applied its blood to the door. God saw that blood and passed over that house, and so the people inside escaped the judgment of death. Salvation was given not because those who lived in that house were better than others, but because they believed and relied on the blood of the lamb that God had appointed.

At the Feast of Unleavened Bread, which followed the Passover, they ate unleavened bread. This made Israel remember that they had come out of Egypt in haste, and it also contained the lesson that they must cast away sin and corruption and live set apart to God. But the outward act of keeping the feast and eating unleavened bread did not make the sin in a man’s heart disappear. The true meaning that the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread expressed had to be completed in Jesus Christ, who would save sinners and give new life.

Yet the chief priests and the scribes, who ought to have been preparing for the Passover, were discussing how they might put Jesus to death. The chief priests were men who offered sacrifices to God on behalf of the people, and the

scribes were men who studied and taught the Scriptures and the Law. They should have known better than anyone the meaning of the Passover lamb and the promise concerning the Christ, but they rejected Jesus, who had come to fulfill that very promise.

The fact that a man knows the Scriptures well and holds a religious office does not of itself produce true faith. When a man exalts his own authority and thoughts above the Word of God, he can study the Word and yet oppose Jesus, the Lord of that Word. The chief priests and the scribes thought that they were keeping the temple and the sacrificial system, but in fact they tried to kill the Son of God, who was the Lord of the temple and who would complete every sacrifice.

They did not try to examine Jesus openly and justly, but sought *"how they might take Him by trickery and put Him to death."* The word *"trickery"* contains the meaning of deceit and secret scheming. Since there was no clear evidence that Jesus had sinned, they sought a way to seize Him and kill Him out of the sight of the people. Not only was their purpose evil; the method by which they sought to accomplish that purpose was also false and unjust.

A religious cause does not make an evil means righteous. If a man lies or falsely accuses another on the ground of protecting the work of God, or suppresses the truth in order to keep his power, that is not serving God. True faith does not use the Word in order to accomplish one's own purpose; it lets one's own thoughts and actions be judged before the Word of God.

Their saying *"Not during the feast, lest there be an uproar of the people"* does not mean that they feared God and turned back from their evil plan. They left their intention to kill Jesus just as it was and worried only about the possibility that the

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people might riot. Their standard was not whether this matter was right before God, but whether they could carry out their plan without trouble. They feared the reaction of men, but they did not fear the judgment of God, who sees all things.

A man can try to avoid only the consequences that would be exposed, while not casting away his sin. Rather than being pained in heart for having done wrong, he worries that people may find out, and he thinks of his own reputation and position before the will of God. But true repentance is not merely avoiding the situation in which sin is exposed; it is laying down one's own judgment and returning to the Word of God. The religious leaders should have cast away the very intention of killing Jesus.

They judged that if they killed Jesus during the feast many of the people might riot. This was because people had gathered in Jerusalem from many regions to keep the Passover, and there were many who had heard the words of Jesus and followed Him. The leaders tried to avoid the eyes of the people and choose the time most advantageous to themselves. But in the end the death of Jesus came about not merely by their calculation but at the time of salvation that God had appointed.

This fact does not mean that God regarded their falsehood and murder as good. The people who hated Jesus and tried to kill Him are responsible for their own evil choice. But neither could the wickedness of man make the plan of God's salvation fail. God did not agree with their evil scheme; beyond it He accomplished the good will of saving sinners.

Just as the Passover lamb died and its blood protected the people from judgment, so Jesus was the true Lamb, who would give His life for sinners. The chief priests, not knowing to whom the sacrifices they served pointed, tried to kill Jesus, who was the substance of them. But Jesus was not a helpless

victim whose life was taken from Him by force. He foretold His death and resurrection several times, and according to the will of the Father He walked the way of salvation of His own will.

Just as the Passover lamb of the Old Testament had to be without blemish, so Jesus was the Son of God, who had no sin at all. But being without sin does not by itself complete the redemption of sinners. Just as the sacrificial offering had to bear the sin of the sinner and then die, so Jesus also first had to take all the sins of mankind upon His own body.

Jesus bore the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He received upon His own body all sins, including those of the past, the present, and the future, and as the Lamb of God who bore those sins He went toward the Cross. Therefore the baptism of Jesus is not a rite separated from the Cross; it is the work of salvation that makes clear whose sins He bore when He died.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross, and thus received in our stead the punishment for all sins. Just as the blood of the Passover lamb kept back the judgment of death, so the blood of Jesus shows that the judgment that sinners had to receive was completely paid. And Jesus was buried, and on the third day He rose from the dead, overcame the power of sin and death, and completed eternal salvation.

The person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which consists of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. For this person no judgment for sin remains any

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longer. This is not because he is better than others or has kept religious rites well, but because he has believed the Word of God, that Jesus bore all his sins and was judged.

The picture of the leaders who kept the feast of the Passover and yet tried to kill Jesus shows the fact that religious form and the faith of the gospel are not the same. Even though a man attends worship, keeps the feasts, and holds an office, if he does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart he can oppose Jesus, following his own righteousness and greed. God looks not at the godly appearance that is shown outwardly, but at whether that person believes in the Son of God and in the righteousness He accomplished.

Neither must this text be used as a ground for condemning an entire people. That they tried to kill Jesus was the specific sin of the leaders who appear in the text, and the fundamental reason that Jesus had to bear the Cross was the sin of the whole of mankind. We too, had it not been for the grace of God, are sinners who would put our own thoughts and righteousness first and reject Jesus. Therefore, rather than condemning others, we must acknowledge that because of our own sin the Passover Lamb was needed.

The person who has received the remission of sins must fear God rather than the evaluation of men. He must not calculate whether the matter will be exposed and cause an uproar, but must examine whether the thought and the action themselves are right before God. Under the cause of serving the gospel he must not use deceit and unjust methods, but must act truthfully even if there is loss.

This passage shows that even in the midst of man’s most evil plan the promise of God’s salvation did not collapse. The chief priests and the scribes tried to kill Jesus secretly, but God gave Jesus up as the true Passover Lamb and removed the sin

of the world. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, is set free from sin and judgment, escapes from the life of scheming according to the eyes of men, and serves God truthfully, following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The service of the woman who poured fragrant oil on Jesus was not merit that paid the price of salvation but the fruit of the faith and the thanksgiving that prepared for the death of the Lord

"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'" (Mark 14:3–9).

While the chief priests and the scribes were seeking how they might take Jesus by trickery and put Him to death, in Bethany a woman poured very costly fragrant oil on Jesus. On

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one side a scheme to remove Jesus was going forward, and on the other side there was a service in which a person counted Jesus precious and gave what was dear to her. Having the same Jesus before them, entirely different responses appeared according to where a man's heart was turned.

Jesus was eating at the house of a man called Simon the leper. The text does not explain in detail whether Simon was still suffering from leprosy at that time or who had healed him. What is clear is the fact that Jesus went into the house of a man with a name that people would easily shun and ate with him. Jesus did not keep a man at a distance merely by looking at his past and at society's evaluation of him.

At that time a woman whose name is not recorded came with an alabaster flask containing pure spikenard oil. Spikenard oil was very costly, and the text says that it could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii. This was a value so great that a man would have to work for a long period to gather it. The woman broke the flask so that nothing remained and poured the fragrant oil on Jesus' head.

This action was not the wasting of a costly thing according to a momentary emotion. The woman gave to Jesus what she counted precious, and showed by her action that He was far more honorable than her own possessions. To others the price of the fragrant oil was seen first, but to the woman the worth of Jesus, who would receive the fragrant oil, was seen first.

Some who saw this were indignant rather than glad. They judged that the fragrant oil had been wasted and said that it could have been sold and given to the poor. The saying that we should help the poor is in itself right and sounds godly. But using a right expression does not mean that the judgment and the heart behind it are always right as well. Without knowing enough of the woman's circumstances and heart, they

condemned her service by their own standard.

A man can easily evaluate the devotion of another. Without giving anything himself he may call what another has given a waste; or on the contrary, he may judge unconditionally that a person's faith is good because he has given something large. But the value of the service offered to God cannot be judged by outward scale alone. We must examine with what faith and thanksgiving a person gave, and whether it was fitting for the will and the time of God.

They did not talk with the woman calmly but criticized her sharply. Being confident that their own judgment was right, they troubled the sincere heart of one person. This shows the fact that a man can attack a person who serves in faith while putting a religious cause first. Even when we speak of a good purpose, we must look back and see whether pride and blame are mixed in with it.

Jesus protected the woman, saying, *"Let her alone. Why do you trouble her?"* People called her action a waste, but Jesus evaluated it, saying, *"She has done a good work for Me."* What determined the value of the woman's service was not the majority opinion of those around her or economic calculation, but the judgment of Jesus.

That Jesus said, *"For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good,"* does not mean that caring for the poor is unimportant. Rather it is a word in which He acknowledged that the disciples had the responsibility and the opportunity to help the poor at any time. Loving Jesus and helping the needy neighbor do not stand opposed to each other. The person who truly loves the Lord must also look after the weak neighbor whom the Lord counts precious.

But the time in which Jesus was with His disciples in the

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flesh, with the death of the Cross before Him, was a special time that would not be repeated. Jesus said, *"but Me you do not have always,"* and thus spoke of the nearness of His own death. The woman poured fragrant oil on the body of Jesus, and Jesus interpreted that action as preparing beforehand for His burial.

The text does not reveal in detail how exactly the woman understood the death and burial of Jesus. Therefore there is no need to conclude that she acted knowing the whole plan of salvation perfectly. But Jesus received her action and used the faith and the love contained in it to have His own death prepared beforehand. Even when a man does not know everything, the Lord uses preciously, within His own will, the service offered in faith.

The word *"She has done what she could"* does not mean that the woman did the most work in comparison with others. She did at that time the work that she was able to do. The service of faith does not lie in imitating the ability and the circumstances of another, but in being faithful within what God has entrusted to a person and the opportunity He has given. The Lord does not require of a man what he does not have; He knows the work that he has done in faith.

The word that the woman's fragrant oil prepared for the burial of Jesus shows that this event is connected with the death of the Lord, which is the center of the gospel. Jesus did not receive the fragrant oil merely as a respected teacher. He was the Savior who would soon die and be buried in the place of sinners. The woman's fragrant oil could not prevent the death of Jesus, but it became a service that revealed that death to be the sacrifice of an honorable Savior.

That Jesus had to die was not only because the scheme of the chief priests was strong. It was because, in order to save sinners, He had to bear all the sins of the world and receive

their judgment in our stead. Jesus received upon His own body all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And so, as the Lamb of God who bears sin away, He went toward the Cross.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received all the punishment of sin, and He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. The woman prepared beforehand for the burial of Jesus, but death was not His end. Jesus rose from the dead, overcame sin and death, and showed that He is the Son of God and the perfect Savior.

The person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which consists of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. It was not because the woman offered costly fragrant oil that she obtained the remission of sins; it is because Jesus gave His own body and life and accomplished salvation that the believing person is saved. It was not that man first gave something great to God, but that God first gave His only begotten Son for sinners.

Therefore offerings and service, sacrifice and devotion are not a price paid in order to obtain salvation. They are the fruit of faith that a person who has already believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins offers in thanksgiving for the love of the Lord, who saved him. If a man offers great wealth and sacrifice without knowing the grace of salvation, it is easy for him to make it his own righteousness; but the person who has believed the gospel knows that everything is what he has received from the Lord and serves with thanksgiving.

Jesus said that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole

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world, what this woman had done would also be told and she would be remembered. This does not mean that the woman is to be exalted as a savior or that her action itself is to be worshiped. It means that when the gospel is preached, the worth of Jesus, who died for sinners, and also the service of the woman, who responded in faith to that grace, will be remembered together.

Her name was not recorded, but what she did was handed down together with the gospel. Even though a man does not seek to make his name known to people and to be praised, the Lord remembers the work done out of love for Him. On the contrary, even if a man is greatly recognized by people, if he has no faith and love toward the Lord, that fame has no eternal value. The saints must seek the approval of the Lord rather than the memorial of men.

Neither must this word be used to force upon the saints wealth or sacrifice beyond their circumstances. Jesus received the woman's willing service; He did not command that others take away her possessions. True devotion does not come out of fear, competition, or the pressure of a leader, but out of a heart thankful for the grace received through the gospel. Nor must anyone turn away from a poor neighbor under the cause of serving the Lord.

This passage shows what kind of service the faith that knows the worth of Jesus brings forth. People evaluated the woman's fragrant oil as waste, but Jesus said that it was a good work that prepared for His burial. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus accomplished by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, and has received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, does not put forward his own devotion as merit for salvation. He serves the Lord and the gospel according to what he has and

the opportunity given him, cares for the poor and weak neighbor, and counts the judgment of Jesus more precious than the praise of men.

Judas, who was beside Jesus, exchanged Him for money, but Jesus, knowing that He would be betrayed, went the way of saving sinners

"Then Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve, went to the chief priests to betray Him to them. And when they heard it, they were glad, and promised to give him money. So he sought how he might conveniently betray Him" (Mark 14:10–11).

Just before this, a woman poured costly fragrant oil on the head of Jesus. The woman broke what was precious to her and gave it to Jesus, but Judas Iscariot sought to deliver Jesus up and receive money. The one counted Jesus more precious than possessions; the other put his own desire and profit before Jesus. Mark records these two events side by side and shows how different the heart that deals with Jesus can be.

The text does not call Judas simply a certain man but reveals him as *"one of the twelve."* He belonged to the twelve disciples whom Jesus Himself had chosen. Together with the other disciples he heard the words of Jesus and saw His miracles, and he was even sent out to preach the gospel. Outwardly he was a man closer to Jesus than anyone.

But the fact that a man was near Jesus and believing in his heart the salvation that Jesus would accomplish are not the same. Remaining long within the church, hearing many words, and holding an office and a ministry does not of itself bring the remission of sins and the new birth. What is important is what kind of person one knows Jesus to be, and whether he believes

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the gospel that He accomplished as his own salvation.

Judas went to the chief priests in order to deliver Jesus up. It was not that the religious leaders first seized him and forced him; Judas went to them by his own will. The chief priests and the scribes were seeking a way to take Jesus by trickery and put Him to death, but they feared an uproar of the people. For such men, the coming of Judas, who was near Jesus, was a good opportunity to arrest Him secretly.

The chief priests heard Judas' words and were glad. Their gladness was not a gladness that came from realizing the will of God or from a sinner's being saved. They were glad because a way had opened for them to seize Jesus, whom they wished to remove. Even a man in a religious position, if he puts his own desire and purpose first, can regard opposing the truth as success and be glad about it.

They promised to give Judas money. In these two verses Mark does not explain in detail all the psychological motives by which Judas sought to deliver Jesus up, so there is no need to conclude that money was the only reason. But the fact that he agreed to receive money as the price for delivering Jesus up is clear. He exchanged for financial profit the Lord who had gone about with him and taught him the Word.

Money itself is not evil, but if a man loves wealth more than God he can sell even truth and conscience. When wealth becomes the master of the heart rather than a tool for living, a man comes to judge people and faith by the standard of whether it profits him. Even while appearing to follow Jesus, if he thinks that he is not obtaining the profit he expected, he can at any time forsake the gospel or use the Lord for his own purpose.

After agreeing to receive money, Judas sought an opportunity to deliver Jesus up. His betrayal was not merely a

matter of saying something wrong in a moment. He kept watching for when, where, and by what method he could deliver Jesus up. The desire he had cherished in his heart developed into a concrete plan and action. When sin is left as a thought in the heart and allowed to grow, it meets a suitable opportunity and appears as actual action.

Since Judas was a disciple who knew the schedule of Jesus and the places where He stayed, he could use that closeness and knowledge for betrayal. Even an office received from God and knowledge concerning the gospel can be turned into a tool for one's own profit if the heart goes wrong. The more a man knows the Word, the more he must not exalt himself but must use that knowledge and authority to serve God and souls.

The chief priests and Judas were in different positions, but they joined hands in the purpose of removing Jesus. The religious leaders sought to keep their own authority, and Judas sought an opportunity to deliver Jesus up. An evil purpose can bind together even people whose interests differ. But the fact that people decided something together does not make that matter right. Even if the majority agrees and religious authority approves, if it goes against the will of God it is sin.

Jesus was not seized without knowing of Judas' betrayal. He had already said several times that He would suffer and be killed and then rise from the dead. Judas and the religious leaders thought that they were accomplishing their own plan, but God, while not agreeing with their evil actions, accomplished beyond them His will of saving sinners. The betrayal of man could not make the plan of God's salvation fail.

That does not mean that Judas' responsibility disappears. The fact that God knows an evil work and accomplishes a good purpose through it does not exempt from guilt the man who did the evil. Judas sought by his own will to deliver Jesus up and

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looked for an opportunity. The sovereignty of God and the responsibility of man do not contradict each other. God does not command sin, but with power greater than the sin of man He fulfills His promise of salvation.

Judas tried to sell Jesus, but Jesus was not by nature a helpless victim whose life was taken away by men. In order to save sinners He gave His own life of His own will. Judas delivered Jesus up in order to obtain money, but Jesus gave His own body and blood without price in order to make alive sinners who could pay no price at all.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world, including the betrayal of Judas. The sinless Son of God, by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, received all the sins of the past, the present, and the future. And so, as the Lamb of God who bears away the sin of the world, He went toward the Cross.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the punishment for all sins, and He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. People thought that they had killed and removed Jesus, but Jesus overcame sin and death. Betrayal and falsehood, murder and greed could not overthrow the salvation He completed.

The person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which consists of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Jesus bore the sins of the whole of mankind, but if a man rejects that fact and does not believe it, he cannot receive and enjoy that grace of salvation as his own. What is needed is not the name of a disciple or a religious career, but

the faith that believes the gospel in the heart.

The picture of Judas becomes a warning that we must not follow Jesus only as a means of accomplishing the purpose we desire. A man may follow Jesus expecting only material blessing, success, and the solving of problems. Then, if he is led on a way different from his own expectation, he may be disappointed and leave the gospel. True faith is not making Jesus a tool for accomplishing one's own desire, but believing that He is the Lord and Savior who has completely removed one's sins.

Moreover, the person who preaches the gospel must not distort the salvation of Jesus in order to obtain money and honor. If in order to gain popularity with people he does not speak of sin and judgment, or hides the gospel of the water and the Spirit and promises only worldly blessing, he is exchanging the truth for his own profit. To receive proper help for the ministry is not in itself wrong, but wealth must not be allowed to determine the content and the direction of the gospel.

The saints must not stop at condemning Judas but must examine their own hearts as well. They must look back and see whether they hide the truth in order to gain some small profit, or are ashamed of the gospel in order to be recognized by people, or put wealth before the will of the Lord. Since even a person who has received the remission of sins can be drawn by the desires of the flesh, he must hear the voice of the Holy Spirit and turn back by the Word.

The difference between the woman who offered the fragrant oil and Judas, who delivered Jesus up, did not lie merely in the way they used money. The woman counted Jesus more precious than her own possessions, and Judas exchanged Jesus for his own profit. Because the person who has believed the gospel knows the great salvation that Jesus has bestowed on

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him, he counts the Lord and the gospel more precious than wealth and honor.

This passage teaches that a man is not saved merely by the fact that he is outwardly near Jesus. Judas, who was one of the twelve, also became one who delivered Jesus up when he followed his own desire rather than the gospel. But Jesus, even in the midst of being betrayed, did not draw back, and by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection He saved sinners. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not make Jesus a means of his own profit, but lives counting the Lord and the gospel He has entrusted to him more precious than the wealth of the world.

Jesus prepared even the place of the Passover meal exactly and went on accomplishing the work of salvation as the true Passover Lamb

"Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'' Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover" (Mark 14:12–16).

The first day of Unleavened Bread was the day when they

killed the Passover lamb. Year by year the people of Israel kept the Passover and remembered the work by which God had saved their fathers from slavery in Egypt and from the judgment of death. When the lamb died and its blood was applied to the door, the judgment of death passed over that house. The Passover was not simply a national memorial day but a feast that showed beforehand that a true Savior would come and be sacrificed in the place of sinners.

That Jesus prepared the Passover meal with the Cross before Him was not an accidental coincidence of time. It was because the substance to which the Passover lamb of the Old Testament pointed was Jesus Christ. Jesus was the true Lamb, who would give His own body as the sacrifice for sin in order to save those who had become slaves of sin and death. The scene in which the last Passover meal of Jesus is prepared on the day when the Passover lamb was killed shows that His death was coming about within the plan of God's salvation.

The disciples asked Jesus, *"Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?"* To eat the Passover meal they had to fix a place and prepare the necessary food and goods. The disciples did not decide of themselves what Jesus would do, but first asked where they should prepare. The work of serving the Lord begins not in going ahead according to one's own thoughts, but in asking the will of the Lord and acting according to His Word.

Jesus sent two of His disciples into the city and told them that when they met a man carrying a pitcher of water they should follow him. If they told the word of Jesus to the master of the house that the man entered, he would show them the guest room in which they would eat the Passover. The disciples were not first given the exact address of the house or the name of the master, but they were given a concrete sign by which

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they could recognize it when they went into the city.

The word of Jesus was not vague. He said that they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water, that they would give a fixed word to the master of the house he entered, and that in that house they would see a large upper room already prepared. Even in the midst of the scheming of those who sought to kill Him and the betrayal of Judas, Jesus knew the place where He would eat the Passover and the room that had been prepared. He did not passively meet death, swept along by events; knowing all the circumstances, He went on accomplishing the work of salvation.

From this text alone there is no need to determine whether Jesus had made an arrangement with the master of the house beforehand or made all things known by supernatural knowledge. What is clear is that the disciples met the man and the place exactly as Jesus had said. There was no error in the word of Jesus, and the Passover meal was prepared just as He had directed.

The master of the house showed them a large upper room, furnished so that Jesus and His disciples might eat the Passover. His name is not recorded, but the place he gave became an important setting in which Jesus taught His disciples the meaning of His own death. Even a service that is not widely known to people can be used preciously for the work of salvation when the Lord uses it.

The disciples heard the word *"there make ready for us"* and went out accordingly. They did not obey after understanding all the circumstances beforehand; they believed the word of Jesus and went into the city. And they met things just as He had said and prepared the Passover. Faith is acknowledging that the word of the Lord is more right than one's own thoughts, and following it in actual action.

The disciples' preparing of the Passover required the actual labor of arranging the meal and the place. It is not that in a spiritual work only prayer and preaching are needed. The service of arranging a place, preparing food, and taking charge of the necessary tasks is also important in accomplishing the work of God. Only, such labor must be borne not by boasting of it as one's own merit, but with a heart that obeys the word of the Lord.

But the disciples' preparing of the Passover meal and God's preparing of salvation for sinners are of different dimensions. The disciples prepared a place to eat together with Jesus, but Jesus prepared His own body and blood in order to deliver all the sinners of the world from judgment. In order to be saved, a man did not first produce something or pay a price; he receives by faith the salvation that God has completed.

If there had been no blood of the lamb at the Passover of the Old Testament, the people of Israel could not have escaped the judgment of death. It was not their lineage or their good works but the blood of the sacrifice that God had appointed that became the sign of salvation. In the same way a sinner today also cannot escape judgment by his own religious zeal and good deeds. He must believe in Jesus Christ, who bore sin and was judged in his stead.

Before He ate the Passover meal, Jesus had already taken upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. The sinless Son of God, by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, received all sins. By this Jesus became the Lamb of God, who would bear the sin of the world and go to the Cross.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the

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punishment for all sins. Just as the Passover lamb died and its blood protected the people, so Jesus paid the wages of sin completely with His own blood. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, and thus overcame the power of sin and death and completed eternal salvation.

The person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which consists of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. It is not the rite of eating the Passover food that saves a man; what is needed is the faith that believes the salvation of Jesus Christ to which that Passover pointed. The shadow of the Old Testament has been completed as actual salvation in Jesus.

The fact that Jesus prepared the place of the Passover exactly makes us think that our salvation also was not a work accomplished on the spur of the moment. God knew that a sinner could not be saved by his own strength, and He sent Jesus Christ. He set up John the Baptist as the representative of mankind and had Jesus bear all sins, and through the Cross and the resurrection He completed salvation. What God promised and prepared came about just as His Word said.

The saints must not calculate their own circumstances before the word of Jesus. The disciples did not know the whole course of how they would find the man in the city, but they followed the Word, and they met things just as Jesus had said. If the work God has entrusted to us agrees with the Word, we must obey step by step in faith even though there are parts we cannot yet see.

That said, we must not call it faith to act unconditionally without preparation. Jesus also made known to His disciples a concrete sign and place and had them prepare the Passover.

Faith is not disorder or lack of planning; it is faithfully preparing what is needed under the will of the Lord. The work of preaching the gospel also must be carried out responsibly, learning the Word exactly and preparing the necessary people, places, and material things.

The preparation and the obedience that a saved person performs are not a condition for obtaining the remission of sins. Since Jesus completed salvation by the water and the blood, the believing person takes part in the work of the Lord in thanksgiving for the grace he has already received. He does not treat lightly even the small task entrusted to him if it is for the Lord, and rather than trying to be seen by others, he must do it faithfully just as the Lord has said.

This passage shows that even with His death before Him, Jesus knew all things and sovereignly prepared the work of salvation. While the disciples were preparing the place of the Passover meal, Jesus was walking the way of giving Himself up as the true Passover Lamb. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus completed by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, is saved from the judgment of death, and trusting the word of the Lord, he faithfully prepares and carries out the work of the gospel and of service entrusted to him.

Jesus knew the betrayal of a disciple close to Him and yet went the written way of salvation, and He held the one who betrayed Him responsible for that choice

"In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who

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eats with Me will betray Me.' And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' He answered and said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.'" (Mark 14:17–21).

When evening came Jesus took the twelve disciples and entered the upper room that had been prepared beforehand. The Passover meal was a setting in which they remembered the work by which God had saved Israel from slavery in Egypt and from the judgment of death. Eating food together had a meaning beyond a simple meal and expressed a close relationship of belonging to one another. But within that close table there sat together one who would deliver Jesus up.

While they were all sitting and eating, Jesus said, *"one of you who eats with Me will betray Me."* Jesus was not one who did not know who would betray Him. He already knew the fact that Judas had gone to the chief priests, promised to receive money, and was seeking an opportunity. Jesus was not one who suddenly met death without having anticipated betrayal and arrest.

The word that *"one of you who eats with Me"* would sell Jesus reveals the seriousness of the betrayal even more greatly. For the one who betrays Him is not an enemy who does not know Jesus at all, but a close disciple who heard His words and shared food at one table. Judas received the love and the teaching of Jesus at close hand, but he tried to use that relationship to deliver Jesus into the hands of His enemies.

The mere fact that they sat at one table did not mean that all had the same faith. Today as well, even though people worship in the same church, take part in the Lord's Supper, and hear the

Word, the faith of their hearts can differ from one another. The fact of belonging to an outward community is important, but it cannot take the place of believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit in the heart. Judas, who ate with Jesus, also needed a personal faith in the gospel.

The disciples who heard the word of Jesus were sorrowful. Rather than immediately pointing at another and suspecting him, they asked one by one, *"Is it I?"* They did not declare that they were absolutely not such people; before the word of the Lord they examined their own hearts. This response shows the fact that a man must not treat his own weakness and sinfulness lightly.

When we hear the Word, if we first look only for the faults of others we can miss the warning given to our own hearts. Rather than concentrating only on finding out who Judas is while hearing the word concerning betrayal, we must acknowledge that we too are people who can go against the will of the Lord because of greed and fear. Before condemning another, the Word of God makes us examine our own thoughts and actions.

But the question *"Is it I?"* must not lead to endless anxiety and self-condemnation. The purpose of realizing one's own weakness lies in acknowledging that one cannot save himself and in relying on the perfect salvation of Jesus Christ. We must examine our own hearts, and yet not make our feelings and works the ground of salvation; we must confirm exactly what the gospel is that Jesus accomplished.

Jesus said that the betrayer was one of the twelve and was the man who dipped his hand in the dish with Him. Dipping the hand in the dish together emphasizes again the close relationship of sharing a meal. Outwardly Judas was sitting in the same place as the other disciples and eating the same food,

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but in his heart he cherished a plan to deliver Jesus up. Though a man can hide it from human eyes, he cannot hide the plan of his heart before Jesus.

This word was also a solemn warning that revealed to Judas that his plan was already known to Jesus. He could have heard that word, stopped his action, and returned to the Lord, but afterward he continued on the way of betrayal. When sin is revealed through the Word, if a man does not acknowledge his own wrong and turn back, his heart becomes all the harder. It is not enough merely to hear the warning; he must respond to that Word in faith.

Jesus said, *"The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him."* The suffering and death of Jesus were not the result of God's plan failing because of the scheming of men. Long before, through the Scriptures, God had said that the Christ would be rejected and would suffer for sinners. Jesus went in obedience to the will of the Father in order to fulfill that written Word.

That He "goes just as it is written" does not mean either that Jesus was dragged along by fate with no other choice. Knowing what would come upon Him, Jesus chose that way of His own will in order to save sinners. People sought to sell Jesus, seize Him, and kill Him, but within the will of God, which is greater than their evil, Jesus gave His own life as the sacrifice for sin.

But the fact that the plan of God's salvation is accomplished through the action of Judas does not make his sin righteous. Jesus said immediately, *"but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed!"* That God accomplishes good salvation beyond the evil choice of man, and that the man who chose evil bears responsibility, are separate facts. The foreknowledge of God did not force Judas to betray Him.

Judas determined to deliver Jesus up according to his own desire, and he had to bear responsibility for that action. God did not call the evil of Judas good, but neither did He leave the plan of salvation to collapse because of that evil. The sovereignty of God is not an excuse that permits the sin of man; it shows that no evil can overcome the salvation of God.

The word *"It would have been good for that man if he had never been born"* expresses how fearful the result of the betrayal is. Jesus was not speaking of the degree to which Judas would suffer for a little while on this earth; He meant that the judgment that will come upon the man who rejects the Son of God and does not believe to the end is that severe. Neither does a career of having been close to Jesus deliver him from the responsibility of having rejected the gospel.

But this word must not be used to mean that for a man who has committed a particular sin like that of Judas there was no way of salvation from the beginning. In the sin of the world that Jesus bore there are included also the sins of betrayal and greed, of falsehood and murder. Whatever sinner he may be, if he acknowledges his own sin and evil and believes in his heart the salvation that Jesus accomplished, he receives the remission of sins. The problem is holding on to one's own sin and rejecting the Savior to the end.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world, including the betrayal of Judas. The sinless Son of God, by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, received all sins, and bearing those sins He went the way of the Cross just as it was written. The death of Jesus was not a simple martyrdom that happened without His having borne sin; it was a redeeming death in the place of sinners.

By shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, Jesus

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received the punishment for all the sins He had borne, and He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which consists of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. Not one's own loyalty and will, but the righteousness that Jesus completed just as it was written, becomes the ground of salvation.

Even a person who has received the remission of sins can go against the will of the Lord in his living and do wrong to others. At such a time he must not rationalize or hide his action, but must acknowledge his wrong before the Word of God. He must confirm again the gospel of Jesus, who has already borne even that sin, and turn back to the right way following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Acknowledging one's wrong is not a price for obtaining the remission of sins again; it is the attitude in which a saved person has fellowship with God in the light.

The case of Judas becomes a warning that we must not rely on spiritual office and activity alone as the proof of salvation. Even though a man was chosen as a disciple and took part in the ministry of Jesus, if he does not believe the true gospel in his heart he can betray the Lord, following his own desire. The saints must not remain in the thought, "I am inside the church, so I am all right," but must examine whether they believe the fact that Jesus removed all their sins by His baptism and the Cross.

Moreover, putting one's own heart before the Word is more important than finding out the possibility of another's betrayal. When a problem arises within a community, before suspecting and condemning one another we must examine our own greed and faults. At the same time we must not cover up manifest

evil in the name of love, but must discern and correct it according to the Word of God.

This passage shows that Jesus, knowing even the betrayal of a close disciple, did not draw back from the way of saving sinners. The Son of Man accomplished the righteousness of God through His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection just as it was written, but the man who sold Him had to bear responsibility for his own choice. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not boast of his own religious career but examines himself before the Word, acknowledges his wrong and turns back, and lives truthfully within the grace of the Lord.

Through the bread and the cup Jesus taught His disciples the perfect salvation that He would accomplish by His own body and by the blood of the covenant

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.' And when they had sung a hymn, they went out to the Mount of Olives" (Mark 14:22–26).

While eating the Passover meal Jesus took bread. The Passover was a feast commemorating that the people of Israel escaped the judgment of death by the blood of the lamb and

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were set free from slavery in Egypt. But now Jesus turned the eyes of the disciples from the Passover lamb of the past to His own body and blood. For the true sacrifice to which the Passover of the Old Testament pointed was Jesus Christ Himself.

Jesus blessed the bread, broke it, and gave it to the disciples. In this order there appears the work by which Jesus would give His own body for sinners. His body was not taken from Him by force by men; it was a body given of His own will according to the will of the Father. Jesus was not one who did not know the death that would come upon Him; while breaking the bread and giving it, He taught beforehand the meaning of that death.

The word *"Take, eat; this is My body"* does not mean that the disciples actually ate the flesh of Jesus on the spot. Jesus was before them in the flesh, and through the bread He taught of His own body, which He would soon give up on the Cross. The bread became a visible sign of the body of Jesus, which was sacrificed for sinners. As the disciples received the bread, they were to believe and remember the grace of the Lord, who gave up His body for them.

The word by which Jesus said *"Take"* concerning the bread is also important. Salvation is not something a man produces by his own strength; it is receiving by faith what God has given. Just as a hungry man must receive and eat bread in order to keep his life, so a sinner must receive into his heart the salvation that Jesus accomplished with His own body. Knowledge alone, that one knows of the sacrifice of Jesus, is not enough; he must believe that it is the salvation for his own sin.

Next Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples. They all drank from that cup. That they received one bread and one cup together shows the fact that they take part in

one covenant that would be established by the sacrifice of Jesus. Even though their origins and circumstances differ, saved people believe the same gospel that Jesus Christ accomplished and become one people of God.

Pointing to the cup, Jesus said, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."* The blood of Jesus is not simply the blood of a righteous man who died unjustly. It is the blood of atonement, shed in the place of the life of sinners, and the blood that confirms the new covenant by which God saves sinners. Since the wages of sin is death, Jesus, who had borne sin, had to shed His blood and die and so pay that price.

The word *"for many"* shows that the death of Jesus did not come about because of His own sin but was a redeeming death for others. Jesus did not die only for a particular people or for outstanding persons. He gave Himself up for all the sinners of the world, and that salvation takes effect for everyone who believes the gospel in his heart.

The covenant is not a promise that if a man offers many merits to God He will give him salvation in return. It is a promise of grace by which God Himself resolves the problem of sin, remembers no more the sins of the person who believes that salvation, and makes him His own people. The certainty of this covenant rests not on the easily changing resolve of man but on the blood that Jesus actually shed.

But in order to know why the blood of Jesus was shed, we must know how He first bore the sin of the world. If the sinless Jesus had died without having borne any sin at all, that death could not be fully explained as taking the place of the punishment of sinners. The baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross are not separated events; they are one work of salvation in which He bore sin and received the judgment of that sin.

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Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. By being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He received all our sins of the past, the present, and the future. And so Jesus became the Lamb of God, who bears away the sin of the world, and He gave up on the Cross the body that bore those sins.

Because of the sins He had borne, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the punishment for all sins. The blood of the Cross must be understood together with the fact that sin passed on to Jesus. If the baptism He received from John was the work of bearing the sin of the world, the blood of the Cross is the work of paying completely the wages and the judgment of the sins He had borne.

Jesus did not end in death; He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. The resurrection shows the fact that His sacrifice did not fail and that the power of sin and death was defeated. If any one of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus is left out, the salvation He accomplished cannot be fully explained. The water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit together testify how a sinner obtains the perfect remission of sins.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and is born again. That person does not receive the remission of sins because of the act of eating the bread and drinking the cup. He is saved because he believes the salvation that Jesus has already completed with His own body and blood. The Lord’s Supper is not another way of salvation that takes the place of that gospel; it is a rite in which the believing person remembers and confesses the salvation of Jesus.

Therefore we must not think that there is in the bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper themselves a power to wash away a man's sins. Taking part in the Lord's Supper many times does not bring the remission of sins in proportion to the number of times, nor is Jesus sacrificed again in that place. Jesus bore all sins at one time and was judged once and for all, and thus completed eternal atonement. Through the Lord's Supper the saints remember in faith that grace, which has already been accomplished.

On the contrary, neither must the Lord's Supper be treated lightly as a form with no meaning. The bread and the cup proclaim the love of Jesus, who gave up His body and blood for sinners. When the saints take part in the Lord's Supper, they must not boast of their own merit but must confess with thanksgiving the fact that they were sinners who should have been judged, but Jesus died in their stead. They must also count precious as members of one body the brothers and sisters who believe the same gospel.

Jesus said that He would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day when He drinks it new in the kingdom of God. This shows that the death of the Cross is not the end of all things. Jesus would rise from the dead and come again and complete the kingdom of God, and He looked to the joy that He would share with His own people in that kingdom.

Therefore in the Lord's Supper the past, the present, and the future are contained together. The saints remember the salvation that Jesus accomplished in the past by His baptism and the Cross, give thanks in the present for the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit they have received by believing that gospel, and hope for the kingdom of God that will be completed in the future and for the second coming of the Lord. The Lord's Supper is not a place for remembering only a

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sorrowful death; it is also a place of hope that looks to the resurrection and the eternal kingdom of God.

After the meal Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn and went out to the Mount of Olives. Jesus knew that He would soon suffer betrayal and arrest, suffering and the Cross, but He praised God. Praise is not offered only when there is no difficulty at all. The person who believes that the will and the promise of God will surely be accomplished trusts God and praises Him even with suffering before him.

The saints also, after taking part in the Lord's Supper, must show forth in their living the grace they have received. Remembering the love of Jesus, who gave Himself up, they must not seek only their own advantage but must serve their neighbors and preach the gospel. But such service is not a price for obtaining or maintaining salvation; it is the fruit that a person who has already received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit bears in thanksgiving.

This passage teaches that the body and the blood of Jesus are the ground of the new covenant for sinners. The bread and the cup point to the salvation by which Jesus bore all sins with His baptism and received the judgment of those sins on the Cross. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit remembers through the Lord's Supper the sacrifice of the Lord, confesses the gospel together with his brothers and sisters, and waits in hope for the eternal joy he will enjoy with the risen Jesus in the kingdom of God.

The disciples fell because of their own self-confidence, but Jesus, knowing their failure, first promised the grace of meeting them again after His resurrection

"Then Jesus said to them, 'All of you will be made to stumble because of Me this night, for it is written: 'I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered.' 'But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee.' Peter said to Him, 'Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be.' Jesus said to him, 'Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' But he spoke more vehemently, 'If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!' And they all said likewise" (Mark 14:27–31).

On the way to the Mount of Olives after the Passover meal, Jesus said that all His disciples would forsake Him. Only a little before, the disciples had together received the bread and the cup that Jesus gave, and they had set out on the way singing a hymn. But a few hours later, when Jesus was arrested, they would fall into fear and be scattered. Even right after a godly confession and a moving worship, a man can easily fall if he relies on his own strength alone.

The word *"All of you will be made to stumble because of Me"* was not a reproach meant to insult the hearts of the disciples. Jesus knew that they did not yet know their own weakness. The disciples thought of how much they loved Jesus, but they did not know how weak they could become in the face of the threat of death. By making known beforehand the failure they would actually experience, Jesus made them believe the word of the Lord rather than their own will.

Jesus said that the scattering of the disciples was already written in the Scriptures. In the prophecy *"I will strike the*

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Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered," the Shepherd points to Jesus and the sheep to the disciples who followed Him. When Jesus was seized, suffered, and died, the disciples would be afraid and scattered like sheep that have lost their shepherd. Even their failure was not an unexpected event that Jesus did not know.

The word that the Shepherd is struck makes us think that the sinless Jesus would stand in the place of sinners and receive the judgment of God. Jesus was not judged because of His own sin; because He had borne the sins of all the people of the world He had to be hung on the Cross. Just as a shepherd gives his own life to save the sheep, so Jesus gave Himself up in order to save the disciples who would be scattered and would fall, and all sinners.

That the disciples forsook Jesus was not a matter to be passed over lightly. They confessed that they would be with the Lord, but when danger came they fled to protect their own lives. In a time of peace a man may think that his faith is strong, but when loss and shame, persecution and death draw near, the fear that was hidden in his heart is revealed. Testing does not newly create a weakness that was not in a man; it reveals the actual condition that he had not seen until then.

But Jesus did not end by speaking only of the failure of the disciples. He promised, *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee."* Immediately after speaking of their scattering, He made known His own resurrection and their meeting again. Before judgment and reproach, He had prepared the way of grace by which He would restore them.

In the words *"after I have been raised"* there appears the certainty of the resurrection of Jesus. Jesus did not say that there was a possibility of His dying; He declared that after being put to death He would surely rise again. The Cross is not

the defeat of Jesus, and neither can the tomb hold Him. Jesus would rise from the dead, overcome sin and death, and gather again the scattered disciples.

Galilee was the place where many of the disciples first received the calling of Jesus and began to follow Him. The word that Jesus would go before them to Galilee is a promise that He would not forsake the failed disciples but would meet them again. The disciples forsook the Lord, but the risen Lord did not forsake the disciples. The true Shepherd seeks and gathers the scattered sheep again and restores to them the mission He will entrust to them.

Peter heard the word of Jesus and answered, *"Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be."* In his words there was a sincerity that loved Jesus and wished to follow Him to the end. But mixed into that sincerity there was also a heart that trusted himself excessively. He regarded the judgment of his own loyalty as more certain than the word of Jesus.

Peter thought that he alone would be different from the other disciples. In the words *"Even if all are made to stumble"* there is a comparison, that even though others fall he would not fall. A man can look at the weakness of another and think that his own faith is better. But at the moment he boasts of his own strength he can rather become vulnerable to temptation.

Jesus did not say to Peter vaguely that someday he would deny Him. He said concretely, even as to the time and the number, *"Assuredly, I say to you that today, even this night, before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times."* Peter should have received the word of Jesus, who knew Peter perfectly, rather than his own heart. The Lord knows our weakness more exactly than we know it ourselves.

Even so, Peter spoke all the more vehemently. In the face of the warning of Jesus he did not lower his own thoughts but

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declared, *"If I have to die with You, I will not deny You!"* Peter's problem did not lie only in his not loving the Lord. The problem was that he believed he could overcome any temptation by his own love and resolve alone.

The other disciples also said the same thing as Peter. The strong declaration of one person can affect a whole community. That everyone says the same thing does not mean that the judgment is right. The word that Jesus spoke is true, rather than the united confidence of people. Faith does not lie in many people expressing confidence together; it lies in laying down one's own thoughts and receiving the word of the Lord.

The declarations of Peter and the disciples show that salvation does not depend on the will and the loyalty of man. Even though a man resolves, "I will never forsake the Lord," by the strength of the flesh alone he cannot keep that promise perfectly. A sinner is saved not by his own unchanging loyalty, but by believing the righteousness of Jesus Christ, who obeyed to the end and completed salvation.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body all the sins of the world, including Peter's denial and the disciples' flight. The sinless Son of God, by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, received all sins. And so Jesus, as the Shepherd, bore the sins of the sheep and went toward the judgment of the Cross.

Because of the sins He had borne, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and paid the wages of all sins, and just as He had said, He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day. The person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which consists of the baptism He received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and

receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. The certainty of salvation lies not in a man's never failing, but in the fact that Jesus accomplished salvation perfectly.

The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins has become a righteous man without sin in his heart, but the weakness of his flesh has not all disappeared. He can be shaken by fear or do wrong in his living. Yet that does not mean that whenever he fails he becomes a sinner again and must receive salvation anew. Believing the righteousness of Jesus, who has already borne even that sin, he must acknowledge his own wrong and turn back following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

This truth does not make the faults of the saints seem light. To say, "Jesus has removed all sins, so it does not matter how I live," is to turn the grace of the gospel into an excuse for the desires of the flesh. The person who acknowledges his own weakness does not boast of his own strength; he stays awake through the Word and prayer, avoids temptation, helps other saints, and lives in faith.

It is also necessary to see the failure of Peter and the betrayal of Judas as distinct. Both did wrong to Jesus, but Judas deliberately sought an opportunity to deliver Jesus up, while Peter tried to follow Jesus but collapsed in the face of fear. We cannot mechanically decide the question of salvation by the difference of the acts alone, but what is important is whether after failing a man acknowledges his own sin and weakness and returns to the grace of Jesus.

Jesus, knowing that the disciples would fall, did not forsake them beforehand. He gave the promise that He would meet them again in Galilee after His resurrection before their failure. This shows that the grace of the Lord went ahead of the loyalty of the disciples. Greater than the strength by which we hold

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fast to the Lord is the salvation of the Lord, who holds us fast and restores us.

The saints must not despise the weakness of others because their own faith is strong. Rather than declaring like Peter, *"Even if all are made to stumble, yet I will not be,"* they must know that they too are men weak in the flesh, and be humble. When someone has fallen, they must not only condemn him but must clearly deliver the truth and help him to stand again in faith within the gospel.

This passage teaches the fact that self-confidence and the faith of the gospel are different. Peter and the disciples believed their own will and declared that they would follow to the death, but they were people who would soon be scattered. Yet Jesus, knowing their failure, completed salvation by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection, and promised that He would meet them again. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not boast of his own firm resolve, but lives relying firmly on Jesus Christ, who accomplished salvation perfectly and who raises up the weak again.

Jesus of Gethsemane knew the agony of receiving the judgment of sin and yet obeyed the will of the Father and chose the way of the Cross

"Then they came to a place which was named Gethsemane; and He said to His disciples, 'Sit here while I pray.' And He took Peter, James, and John with Him, and He began to be troubled and deeply distressed. Then He said to them, 'My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death. Stay here and watch.' He went a little farther, and fell on the ground, and prayed that

if it were possible, the hour might pass from Him. And He said, 'Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me; nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will.' Then He came and found them sleeping, and said to Peter, 'Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour? Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak.' Again He went away and prayed, and spoke the same words. And when He returned, He found them asleep again, for their eyes were heavy; and they did not know what to answer Him. Then He came the third time and said to them, 'Are you still sleeping and resting? It is enough! The hour has come; behold, the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners. Rise, let us be going. See, My betrayer is at hand.'" (Mark 14:32–42).

Jesus came with His disciples to a place called Gethsemane. Judas was coming, leading a multitude, and arrest and interrogation, mockery and the Cross were drawing near before His eyes. Jesus did not avoid this matter and hide Himself; He went to the familiar place of prayer. With the greatest suffering before Him, rather than displaying His own power He prayed to God the Father.

After telling the disciples to sit, Jesus took Peter, James, and John and went a little farther. These three had seen at close hand the important moments in which the special power and glory of Jesus appeared, but now they also saw His deep sorrow and agony. A disciple is not one who looks only at the glory of the Lord; he must share in His suffering and His will as well.

Jesus was greatly troubled and sorrowful and said, *"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death."* This does not mean that Jesus lacked faith or tried to give up His mission in the face of death. Since Jesus came as true God and at the same

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time as true man, He actually felt pain and sorrow. His suffering was not acted out on the surface; it was suffering that He fully underwent in heart and in body.

The agony of Jesus cannot be seen as fear only of the physical pain He would suffer on the Cross. He had to receive the righteous judgment of God because of all the sins of the world that He had borne. The Son of God, who had no sin at all, had to stand in the place of curse and death, bearing the sins of the whole of mankind, including murder and falsehood, immorality and greed. Jesus knew fully how heavy was the cup of judgment that He had to drink.

Jesus went a little farther and fell on the ground. Jesus, the Son of God, humbled Himself before the Father and prayed earnestly. Prayer is not a religious action that only a weak man performs. It is an action of faith in which one lays down his own will and ability, relies on God the Father, and obeys His will.

Jesus called God *"Abba, Father."* Even in the midst of extreme agony He did not lose His trust in and closeness to the Father. He did not blame God or doubt His love because a difficult thing had happened. When the saints meet a suffering hard to understand, they too must not draw away from God but must tell the Father honestly of the pain of their hearts.

The prayer *"all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me"* shows that Jesus believed the power of the Father. Jesus did not hide His own distress, and He asked that, if it were possible, that cup might pass. The prayer of faith is not pretending not to hurt or pretending to have no desire. A man may tell God honestly of his own wish, his fear, and his pain.

But the prayer of Jesus did not end in speaking His own wish. He said, *"nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will."*

The purpose of prayer is not to persuade God to move according to one's own will, but to place one's own will under the will of God. Knowing the fact that the cup of the Cross was painful, Jesus nevertheless obeyed fully the will of the Father, who would save sinners.

The will of the Father was not that He took pleasure in making the sinless Son suffer. It was the will by which, while accomplishing the justice of God, who surely judges the wages of sin, He loved sinners and saved them. If sin is simply passed over, the justice of God collapses; and if all sinners are judged, no one can be saved. Because Jesus bore sin and was judged in our stead, the justice and the love of God were accomplished together.

When Jesus had prayed and returned, the disciples were sleeping. A little before, Peter had declared that he would not deny Him even if he had to die with the Lord, but he could not stay awake even one hour. His words were strong, but his flesh had no strength to follow those words. Peter believed his own resolve, but Jesus knew his actual weakness.

Jesus called Peter *"Simon"* and asked, *"are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?"* What Peter needed was not a greater declaration but to acknowledge his own weakness and to pray. If a man thinks that he will never fall, he does not feel the need of prayer; but the man who knows that by his own strength he cannot overcome temptation asks for the help of God.

The word *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation"* does not remain only in the meaning of asking that temptation may not come at all. It is a word telling us to be spiritually awake and to ask the help of God so that, when temptation comes, we may not be seized by fear and by the desires of the flesh and deny the Lord. The saints must not believe their own

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will alone but must keep their hearts through the Word and prayer.

The word *"The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak"* shows exactly the weakness of man. In the hearts of the disciples there was a will to be with Jesus, but they lacked the strength to overcome their weary flesh and their fear. The mere fact that a man has cherished a good will does not mean that the will is accomplished of itself. If he does not rely on the Holy Spirit, the weakness of the flesh can overthrow the resolve of the heart.

This word must not be used as an excuse that justifies laziness and disobedience. It does not mean that we should say, "The flesh is weak, so there is nothing to be done," and give up prayer and obedience. It is a word saying that precisely because the flesh is weak we must watch and pray. Acknowledging one's own limits is not casting away responsibility; it is the starting point of asking for the power of God.

Jesus went away again and prayed with the same words. The fact that He prayed repeatedly with the same content shows that praying several times over one matter is not in itself wrong. Repeating words without meaning, and prayer in which one keeps telling God of a heavy pain and entrusts his will to Him, are different. Each time, Jesus subjected Himself to the will of the Father.

When Jesus came again, the disciples were sleeping once more. Their eyes were very heavy, and they did not know what to say to Jesus. When his failure is exposed, a man may find no words of excuse. What is needed at that time is not an explanation that adorns oneself, but acknowledging one's wrong and weakness and relying on the grace of the Lord.

Returning the third time, Jesus said, *"It is enough! The hour has come."* The time of praying and preparing had passed,

and now the time had come to meet the betrayer and the multitude that would arrest Him. Jesus no longer sought a way of escape. After fully setting His heart on the will of the Father through prayer, He said, *"Rise, let us be going,"* and went forward toward suffering.

The word *"the Son of Man is being betrayed into the hands of sinners"* shows the paradox in which sinners seize the Son of God. They thought that they were arresting Jesus by their own authority, but in fact Jesus was giving Himself up in order to save sinners. Jesus is not a helpless victim who was seized, but the Savior who went forward of His own will in order to accomplish the will of the Father.

Before He came to Gethsemane, Jesus had already taken upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Because He received all our sins by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, there was a cup of judgment that He had to drink on the Cross. The agony of Gethsemane shows that Jesus was actually bearing the sin of the world.

In obedience to the will of the Father, Jesus bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross. By the baptism He received from John He bore sin, by the blood of the Cross He received in full the judgment of that sin, and He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day and overcame sin and death. This baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection are one perfect work for saving sinners.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and is born again. Salvation is not received as the merit of having prayed without dozing even one hour, as the disciples failed to do; it is

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received by believing the righteousness of Jesus, who obeyed the will of the Father to the end. Even when men slept and failed, Jesus alone received the cup of salvation and completed all things.

A person who has received the remission of sins also has the weariness and the fear, the desire and the weakness of the flesh. But because the Holy Spirit is in his heart he can acknowledge his own weakness and ask for the help of God. There is no need to condemn as spiritual laziness the fact that healthy rest and sleep are necessary; but we must take care that, even with an important test before us, our hearts do not fall asleep through neglecting the Word and prayer.

When the saints pray, they must speak their own wishes honestly and yet entrust the final judgment to God. They must not distrust God because the result they desire does not come, but must believe the fact that the will of God is good and is most right for the gospel and for souls. To obey the will of the Father does not mean that there is no feeling and no pain; it means choosing the Word of God even when there is pain.

This passage shows clearly by whose obedience the salvation of sinners was accomplished. The disciples wished in their hearts to be with Him, but they were weak in the flesh and fell asleep, while Jesus, though exceedingly troubled, obeyed the will of the Father. Jesus, who bore all sins by His baptism, did not avoid the judgment of the Cross, and by His resurrection He completed salvation, and we have been saved by believing this salvation. The person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not boast of his own will but watches and prays, exalts the will of God above his own, and walks in faith the way entrusted to him.

Even in the face of a false kiss and an armed arrest Jesus did not resist but went the way of fulfilling the Scriptures and saving sinners

"And immediately, while He was still speaking, Judas, one of the twelve, with a great multitude with swords and clubs, came from the chief priests and the scribes and the elders. Now His betrayer had given them a signal, saying, 'Whomever I kiss, He is the One; seize Him and lead Him away safely.' As soon as he had come, immediately he went up to Him and said to Him, 'Rabbi, Rabbi!' and kissed Him. Then they laid their hands on Him and took Him. And one of those who stood by drew his sword and struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Then Jesus answered and said to them, 'Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me? I was daily with you in the temple teaching, and you did not seize Me. But the Scriptures must be fulfilled.' Then they all forsook Him and fled" (Mark 14:43–50).

When Jesus said in Gethsemane, *"Rise, let us be going,"* Judas appeared at once, leading a multitude. Jesus already knew the fact that the betrayer had come near, and He did not flee. Having finished His prayer, Jesus set His heart on the will of the Father and met the people who had come to seize Him. The arrest was not a sudden event that Jesus had not anticipated; it was a course of salvation that He accepted while knowing it.

The text again reveals Judas as *"one of the twelve."* He was not an outsider who did not know Jesus at all, but a disciple who had been called by Him directly, had heard His words, and had lived together with Him. He used the trust and the knowledge he had received at close hand not to protect Jesus but to have Him seized. The mere fact that a man was

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outwardly near the Lord does not guarantee the faith of his heart.

The multitude that came with Judas was sent from the chief priests, the scribes, and the elders. The religious leaders did not come forward themselves but sent people to arrest Jesus. That multitude came with swords and clubs. Although Jesus taught the Word openly in the temple every day and had never raised a riot, they treated Jesus like a dangerous robber.

The picture of mobilizing many weapons and men shows that they moved according to their own fear and hostility rather than according to the actual actions of Jesus. If a man does not receive the truth, he can drive out as a dangerous being the person who preaches the truth. Having much power and many weapons does not make that side righteous. A power that goes against the Word of God, though it looks strong outwardly, is unjust before God.

Judas had already arranged a signal with the multitude. He said that the one he kissed was Jesus and that they should seize Him and lead Him away safely. It was a signal for identifying Jesus exactly in the darkness, but for that signal he chose the kiss, which expresses closeness. An expression of love and respect was turned into a tool of betrayal.

Judas came to Jesus, called Him *"Rabbi!"* and kissed Him. With his lips he acted as though he honored his teacher, but his heart and his plan lay in delivering Jesus into the hands of His enemies. Words and actions that look godly and close outwardly cannot take the place of the truth of the heart. If a man expresses love to the Lord while actually using the gospel for his own profit, that too is hypocrisy.

The saints must not stop at calling Jesus Lord with their lips but must believe His Word in their hearts. Worship and praise, prayer and service can become marks that make one's faith

look good to people, while in his living he goes against the will of Jesus. God looks not at the kiss that is seen outwardly but at the faith and the motive within it.

Judas directed them to seize Jesus and *"lead Him away safely."* He may have thought that Jesus would flee or offer strong resistance. But in fact Jesus did not avoid them or drive back the multitude by His own power. Jesus was seized not because the weapons and the strength of the multitude were greater than He, but because He gave Himself up in order to save sinners.

When the multitude laid hands on Jesus and seized Him, one of those standing by drew a sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear. Since Mark does not reveal in this passage the name of the man who wielded the sword, there is no need to identify him in explaining the text either. What is clear is the fact that, although he may have wished to protect Jesus, he tried to resolve the situation by human strength without asking the will of the Lord.

The act of using the sword may look brave, but it was a response that did not understand the way of the Cross that Jesus had to go. Jesus was not one who had to win in a fight and avoid arrest; He was the Savior who had to be seized and to die in the place of sinners. Even if a man puts forward a good purpose, if he uses a method different from the will of God he can rather hinder the work of the Lord.

There is no need to expand this word into a direct rule concerning the lawful enforcement of the state or every form of self-defense. What the text shows is the fact that the work of salvation of Jesus cannot be accomplished or kept by the sword of man. The gospel is not preached by violence and compulsion. Under the cause of keeping the truth the saints must not harm or threaten people, but must testify to the gospel

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by the Word and by love.

Jesus asked the multitude whether they had come out to take Him as against a robber. Jesus was in the temple every day and taught openly. If there had been sin in His words and actions, they could have raised the matter justly in the light. But the leaders feared the reaction of the people and sent armed men by night to arrest Him secretly. Their very method revealed that their work was not upright.

When a man cannot refute the truth head-on, he may try to stop that voice by power and false accusation. But seizing a man and silencing him does not make the Word of God false. The people who arrested Jesus thought that they had taken control of the situation, but in fact the time of salvation that Jesus had already spoken of was being accomplished.

Jesus said, *"But the Scriptures must be fulfilled."* His betrayal and arrest, His suffering and death were things that had long been prophesied in the Word of God. Jesus was not dragged along by the evil scheming of men; He obeyed in order to accomplish the plan of the Father's salvation written in the Scriptures. Everything that happened to Him was not by chance.

The fact that the Scriptures were fulfilled does not justify the sin of Judas, of the religious leaders, and of the armed men. They chose falsehood and violence by their own will and are responsible for those actions. God did not acknowledge their evil as good, and yet He did not let the plan of salvation fail because of the sin of man. Rather, beyond that evil action He completed the will of saving sinners.

When Jesus was seized, all the disciples forsook Him and fled. The words of the disciples, who only a little before had declared that they would die together with Him, collapsed. One man tried to fight with a sword, and the rest were scattered as

danger drew near. The fact was revealed that by human courage and will alone one cannot follow the Lord to the end.

The flight of the disciples fulfilled the prophecy that Jesus had spoken beforehand: *"I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered."* But Jesus did not forsake beforehand the disciples who would be scattered. He promised that after He rose from the dead He would go before them to Galilee. The disciples forsook the Lord, but the Lord prepared the way to restore them.

In the fact that Jesus was seized and led away alone there is the meaning of redemption. Not one of the disciples could bear the sin of the world together with Jesus or receive its judgment in His stead. The one perfect sacrifice that could take the place of sinners was the sinless Son of God alone. While the disciples were scattered, Jesus walked the way of the Cross alone.

Before He was arrested, Jesus had already taken upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world, including the betrayal of Judas, the violence of the multitude, and the flight of the disciples, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Because He received all our sins by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He had to give Himself up into the hands of sinners and go to the Cross.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the punishment for all sins. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, overcame sin and death, and completed salvation. Betrayal and violence and cowardice also could not overthrow the righteousness of God that Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the

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water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, and is born again. Salvation does not depend on whether a man was brave enough to take up a sword at the moment of crisis, or whether he did not flee to the end. Even when all the disciples failed, salvation is received by believing the perfect righteousness of Jesus, who alone obeyed the will of God.

A person who has received the remission of sins can also be shaken by fear or put human methods first. At such a time he does not become a sinner again; he must acknowledge his own wrong and weakness, believe the gospel of Jesus, who has already borne all sins, and turn back following the leading of the Holy Spirit. Grace does not make a man rationalize his fault; it makes him lay down his own strength and obey the Word.

In order to keep the gospel, the saints must not use false closeness or secret scheming. Neither must they justify violence and compulsion on the ground that it is for the truth. Jesus did not save Himself by using a sword; He fulfilled the Scriptures and saved sinners. The power of the gospel lies not in a force that presses men down, but in the love and the truth of Christ, who gave Himself up for sinners.

This passage shows that even in the midst of man’s betrayal and violence and the failure of the disciples, Jesus did not give up the work of salvation. Judas delivered the Lord up with a kiss, the multitude seized Him with swords and clubs, and all the disciples fled. But Jesus, bearing all the sins He had borne by His baptism, went to the Cross according to the Scriptures. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit casts away hypocrisy and human strength, serves the gospel with truth and love, and even when he has failed stands again in faith by the grace of the Lord.

The picture of the young man who fled leaving even his linen cloth when he was seized reveals the weakness of man and the obedience of Jesus, who walked the way of salvation alone

"Now a certain young man followed Him, having a linen cloth thrown around his naked body. And the young men laid hold of him, and he left the linen cloth and fled from them naked" (Mark 14:51–52).

When Jesus was arrested, all the disciples forsook Him and fled. Then Mark records that a certain young man, wearing only a linen cloth, followed Jesus, and when he was seized he left even that cloth and fled naked. It is a very short event, but it vividly shows how hurriedly those who followed Jesus were scattered in the face of the threat.

The text does not reveal the name of this young man. Some suppose that he was Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark, but the Bible does not confirm his identity. Therefore we must not conclude a possibility as though it were a fact. What is important is not finding out the name of the young man, but examining within the text the purpose for which the Holy Spirit had this scene recorded.

The young man came following Jesus even after the other disciples had been scattered. At least he had a heart to follow after Jesus in order to see what was happening. But the picture of his not being fully clothed and wearing only a linen cloth makes us think that the situation was very urgent. It is possible that he came out in haste on hearing the news that Jesus had suddenly been arrested, but the text does not explain why he was in such a condition.

In his action of following Jesus there appears a certain degree of concern and courage. In a situation in which

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everyone had fled, to follow after the arrested Jesus was dangerous. But having a heart to follow Jesus and remaining to the end in an actual threat were not the same. When the multitude seized him, he left even the cloth that covered his body and ran away.

The young man was different from Judas, who followed in order to betray Jesus from the beginning. But when danger came directly upon his own body, he chose the way of preserving his own life rather than being seized together with Jesus. A man thinks that at a safe distance he can follow the Lord, but when loss and shame and pain become reality he realizes how weak his own resolve is.

That he left the linen cloth shows how hurriedly he fled. He ran away with his body bare, without even the leisure to recover the garment that had been seized or to cover himself. For a man of that time, to flee naked would have been a great shame, but his fear of arrest was greater than that shame. It was a moment in which the human instinct of self-preservation overwhelmed a resolve of faith.

That said, there is no need to assign excessively to the young man's naked body a complex symbolism of which the text does not speak. Neither must we conclude by connecting it directly with a particular doctrine or with the spiritual state of some person. What the text clearly shows is the fact that he followed Jesus, was seized, and fled in haste, leaving everything behind.

This scene shows more concretely the immediately preceding word, "*Then they all forsook Him and fled.*" As not only the twelve disciples but also the young man who followed after were scattered, Jesus was left alone without the help of man. No one could be arrested together with Jesus and bear the sin of the world or share the judgment of the Cross.

Jesus knew that the disciples and the young man were all fleeing, but He Himself did not flee. After praying in Gethsemane to obey the will of the Father, He stood before the multitude that had come to seize Him. The young man left his garment and sought to keep his life, but Jesus gave up His own body and life in order to save the lives of sinners.

This contrast shows that salvation was not accomplished by the loyalty and the courage of man. If salvation had depended on how well the disciples kept their place beside Jesus, salvation would have failed that night. The disciples were scattered and the young man fled naked, but Jesus alone accomplished the will of the Father. Even in the midst of the failure of man, the obedience of the Lord was not shaken.

Before He was betrayed and forsaken by men, Jesus had already taken upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The fear of the disciples and the flight of the young man, and our cowardice and self-centered sin as well, passed on to Jesus when He was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. He had no sin at all, but He was seized as the Savior who bore our sins.

Bearing all the sins He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the punishment of sin. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day and overcame sin and death. Even when all the disciples failed, Jesus completed salvation perfectly by His baptism, the Cross, and His resurrection.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not saved because he showed perfect courage at the moment of crisis. By believing the fact that Jesus bore even all his sins and shame and was judged, he

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receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. And he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again as a child of God.

Looking at the picture of this young man, the saints must not easily declare, “I would not have fled like that.” Peter and all the disciples also said that they would follow Jesus to the death, but in the face of an actual threat they were scattered. Rather than being overconfident of one’s own courage and will, one must acknowledge the weakness of the flesh, stay awake through the Word and prayer, and rely on the Holy Spirit.

But acknowledging the weakness of man must not become a pretext for taking all cowardice for granted or for avoiding responsibility. We must acknowledge that being ashamed of the gospel or forsaking the truth for one’s own advantage is wrong. At the same time we must not fall only into our own failure and despair, but must believe the righteousness of Jesus, who has borne even that failure, and turn back again to the right way.

A person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins can also make a wrong choice because of fear. Yet that does not mean that at every such time he becomes a sinner again and must obtain salvation from the beginning. Acknowledging that he has become a righteous man without sin in his heart while there is still weakness in his flesh, he must confess his wrong before God, hold fast to the gospel already completed, and stand again following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

Neither is it necessary to understand this event as a command that in every dangerous situation one must unconditionally not flee. Jesus also said earlier that when tribulation comes they should flee to the mountains. We must distinguish between wisely avoiding danger and denying Jesus

and the gospel because of fear. The saints do not recklessly go looking for suffering, but neither must they yield to a choice in which they can be safe only by forsaking the truth.

The young man lost his linen cloth and ran away in a shameful condition, but Jesus remained in order to bear all the shame of sinners. Man was in haste to cover his own body and keep his life, but Jesus gave up His own body on the Cross. Our salvation was accomplished not by the heroic action of a man who did not flee, but by the love of Jesus, who remained alone for the people who fled.

This passage shows that by human resolve alone one cannot follow Jesus to the end, nor can salvation be accomplished. The nameless young man followed Jesus, and when he was threatened he fled leaving even his linen cloth; but Jesus was seized alone and, bearing the sins He had borne by His baptism, went to the Cross. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not boast of his own courage but relies on the perfect salvation of the Lord, and even when he has fallen he rises again within grace and follows without being ashamed of the gospel.

The unrighteous council condemned the sinless Jesus as deserving of death, but He is the Christ, the Son of God, who received our condemnation in our stead

"And they led Jesus away to the high priest; and with him were assembled all the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes. But Peter followed Him at a distance, right into the courtyard of the high priest. And he sat with the servants and warmed

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himself at the fire. Now the chief priests and all the council sought testimony against Jesus to put Him to death, but found none. For many bore false witness against Him, but their testimonies did not agree. Then some rose up and bore false witness against Him, saying, 'We heard Him say, 'I will destroy this temple made with hands, and within three days I will build another made without hands.'' But not even then did their testimony agree. And the high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? What is it these men testify against You?' But He kept silent and answered nothing. Again the high priest asked Him, saying to Him, 'Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?' Jesus said, 'I am. And you will see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power, and coming with the clouds of heaven.' Then the high priest tore his clothes and said, 'What further need do we have of witnesses? You have heard the blasphemy! What do you think?' And they all condemned Him to be deserving of death. Then some began to spit on Him, and to blindfold Him, and to beat Him, and to say to Him, 'Prophesy!' And the officers struck Him with the palms of their hands" (Mark 14:53–65).

The people seized Jesus and led Him away to the high priest, and the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes assembled. These were religious leaders who knew the Law of God and ought to have given righteous judgment. But their purpose did not lie in bringing the truth to light. Having already made up their minds to kill Jesus, they were seeking testimony to justify that conclusion.

A righteous trial should first examine the facts and the evidence and then judge whether there is guilt. But the council sought testimony against Jesus in order to put Him to death. They fixed the verdict first and then sought evidence to fit it.

Even though a place has religious authority and the form of a trial, if it puts the desired conclusion before the truth, that place becomes an unrighteous instrument.

Peter could not completely leave Jesus, and he followed at a distance. He went as far as the courtyard of the high priest's house, but he did not stand beside Jesus; he warmed himself at the fire with the servants. He kept a distance between his heart that loved Jesus and his fear that sought to protect his own life. His picture of following *"at a distance"* becomes the background of the denial that would soon follow.

In the life of faith as well, a man can try to keep a distance great enough not to be noticed by people, while not completely forsaking Jesus. It is a heart that, when it seems he will suffer loss because of the gospel, hides the fact that he belongs to Jesus and tries to stay in the same place as the people of the world. The saints must not boast of their own courage but must ask the help of the Holy Spirit so that even in fear they may not be ashamed of the gospel.

The council did not obtain testimony against Jesus. It was because Jesus had in fact never committed sin. He kept the Law of God perfectly, and no one could present a just charge. In the court where sinners were to be judged, the Son of God, who had no sin at all, stood as the accused.

There were many who bore false witness, but their testimonies did not agree with one another. The fact that people are many does not change falsehood into truth. Even if many people accuse the same person, if the testimony does not accord with the facts it cannot be the ground of a righteous verdict. God looks at the truth rather than at the voice of the majority.

Some testified that Jesus had said He would destroy the temple made with hands and in three days build another not

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made with hands. But even that testimony did not agree. Without understanding exactly the words of Jesus, they changed some of the expressions and tried to drive Him out as a destroyer of the temple. If a man takes another's words out of their context or changes the expressions, he can create an accusation entirely different from the actual meaning.

In the words of Jesus, the temple and the three days make us think of His death and resurrection. Men would kill the body of Jesus, but He would rise again on the third day. Moreover, by the sacrifice of Jesus a new way would be opened by which sinners might come to God. But the accusers did not try to know that meaning of salvation; they used His words in order to make the charge they wanted.

The high priest stood up in the midst and asked Jesus why He answered nothing. Jesus did not defend Himself one by one against the false testimony but kept silent. This was not because He had no words to answer. The testimonies did not agree with one another and had already been shown to be false, and Jesus was going of His own will the way of being condemned in the place of sinners.

We must not apply the silence of Jesus as a rule that we must give no explanation at all against every unjust accusation. The saints may, when it is necessary, bring the truth to light, protect the weak, and defend themselves according to just procedure. The core of the text lies in the fact that Jesus did not try to escape the trial by His own power but obeyed the way of redemption that the Father had appointed.

When guilt could not be established by false testimony, the high priest asked Jesus directly, *"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?" "the Blessed"* is an expression that exalts God, and the question was asking whether Jesus claimed to be the Son of God and the promised Christ. In the end the center of

the trial gathered around the matter of the true identity of Jesus.

Jesus was silent at the false accusations, but to the question that asked His identity He answered clearly, *"I am."* Jesus did not say that He was merely a good teacher or one of many prophets. He publicly declared that He is the Christ whom God sent to save sinners and the Son of God.

Jesus also said that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. At that moment Jesus looked like a bound defendant, and the religious leaders appeared to hold the right of judgment. But it will be revealed hereafter that Jesus is the King who has the authority at the right hand of God and the One who will come again to judge the world.

The court of men thought that it was judging Jesus, but in the last day Jesus judges them. The people who now mock Him and condemn Him as deserving of death will also see the Son of Man coming in glory with the clouds of heaven. The lowering of Jesus was not an eternal defeat; it was His standing for a while in the place of a servant in order to save sinners.

When the high priest heard the answer of Jesus he tore his own clothes and declared it blasphemy. If Jesus had been an ordinary man and had falsely claimed to be the Son of God and the Christ, it would have been blasphemy. But Jesus was in fact the Son of God and the Christ. The high priest judged the truth to be falsehood and condemned the true Son of God as one who blasphemed God.

The council condemned Jesus as deserving of death. They had not obtained agreeing testimony, but they took as the charge the word in which Jesus truthfully revealed His identity. The appearance of a fair trial vanished, and only the sentence of death, which they had wanted from the beginning, remained. If religious zeal is not joined with faith in the truth, a man can

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oppose the Son of God in the name of God.

After the sentence of death there followed public insult and violence. Some spat on Jesus, covered His face, struck Him with their fists, and mocked Him, saying *"Prophesy!"* with the meaning that He should guess who had struck Him. The servants also struck Jesus with the palms of their hands. The sinless Creator suffered shame and violence at the hands of the people He had made.

That Jesus, even while being struck, did not destroy them at once was not because He had no power. In order to save sinners He endured their mockery and violence. In order to bear with His own body the condemnation, the shame, and the punishment that we should have received, He suffered in silence. His patience was not a powerlessness that yielded to evil; it was the love and the obedience that accomplish salvation.

Before He stood at this trial, Jesus had already taken upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world, including false testimony and unrighteous judgment, mockery and violence, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Because He received all our sins by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He stood in the place of sinners and received the sentence of death.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the righteous judgment of God. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, showed that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and overcame sin and death. The righteousness of Jesus, which God made clear by the resurrection, is the final truth, rather than the false verdict that the council gave.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the

water and the Spirit does not receive a verdict of innocence by his own good works. By believing the fact that the sinless Jesus bore all his sins and was condemned in his stead, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. He receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, becomes a righteous man without sin in his heart, and looks toward the last judgment without fear.

That does not mean that the saints may judge others unrighteously. The person who knows that his own sin has disappeared through the sacrifice of the Lord must not harm others with false testimony and distorted words. He must beware of fixing the conclusion first and fitting the evidence to it, of taking a man's words out of context and condemning him, and of silencing the weak by the power of the majority.

The church and its leaders as well must take as a mirror the picture of the council that tried Jesus. If a man uses knowledge of the Scriptures and his office as a means of protecting his own authority, he can oppose the person who speaks the truth. Every judgment must be made fairly according to the Word of God and confirmed facts, not according to personal feelings and interests. When a fault has been revealed, one must acknowledge the truth and turn back rather than protect his authority.

This passage shows that men condemned Jesus as deserving of death, but that in fact He is the Christ, the Son of God, who sits at the right hand of the Power and will come again. The sinless Jesus bore all our sins by His baptism, endured a false trial and shame, and then completed salvation by the Cross and the resurrection. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit stands before God not by his own righteousness but by the righteousness of Christ, and casting away falsehood and violence, he treats others with truth and justice.

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Peter denied Jesus three times because of fear, but when the word of the Lord came to his mind he realized the failure of his self-confidence and wept

"Now as Peter was below in the courtyard, one of the servant girls of the high priest came. And when she saw Peter warming himself, she looked at him and said, 'You also were with Jesus of Nazareth.' But he denied it, saying, 'I neither know nor understand what you are saying.' And he went out on the porch, and a rooster crowed. And the servant girl saw him again, and began to say to those who stood by, 'This is one of them.' But he denied it again. And a little later those who stood by said to Peter again, 'Surely you are one of them; for you are a Galilean, and your speech shows it.' Then he began to curse and swear, 'I do not know this Man of whom you speak!' A second time the rooster crowed. Then Peter called to mind the word that Jesus had said to him, 'Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times.' And when he thought about it, he wept" (Mark 14:66–72).

While Jesus was being examined before the high priest and the council, Peter was in the courtyard below. Above, Jesus clearly revealed that He is the Christ, the Son of God; below, Peter denied the fact that he had been with Jesus. Jesus spoke the truth even in the face of the sentence of death, but Peter hid the truth because of the fear that sought to protect his own life.

Peter did not flee far away completely as the other disciples did, but followed Jesus into the courtyard of the high priest's house. Yet he was not beside Jesus; he was sitting with the servants and warming himself at the fire. He loved the Lord and wished to see what would happen, but he was afraid that the fact of his being a disciple of Jesus would be revealed. The heart that wished to follow the Lord and the heart of the flesh

that wished to avoid danger were colliding.

At that time one of the servant girls of the high priest looked at Peter, who was warming himself. She said, *"You also were with Jesus of Nazareth."* This word was not the interrogation of a formal judge or the threat of an armed soldier. But since Jesus had already been seized and placed in a situation of receiving the sentence of death, even the word of one servant girl sounded to Peter like an accusation that could put him in danger.

Peter denied it, saying, *"I neither know nor understand what you are saying."* He did not simply avoid an answer; he acted as though he did not even understand the other person's words. In order to hide the clear fact that he had gone about with Jesus, he denied even his own knowledge and relationship. When fear rules the heart, a man can begin by hiding a fact a little and go on to a greater lie.

Peter went out on the porch in order to get away from that place. He may have thought that if he moved he would no longer be questioned. But the servant girl saw him again and said to those around her, *"This is one of them."* The fact that Peter belonged to Jesus did not disappear because he moved a little.

Peter denied it a second time. In order not to admit the first lie he had to keep maintaining the same lie. Sin does not end with one action; it can give birth to another sin for the sake of hiding and keeping it. If a man does not quickly acknowledge his wrong and turn back when it is revealed, his heart becomes all the more stubborn and his actions grow worse.

A little later those standing by said that since Peter was a Galilean he truly belonged to the company of Jesus. The question of one person expanded into the conviction of those around. As the situation Peter feared became more and more

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real, he denied his relationship with words all the stronger.

The third time, he cursed and swore, saying, *"I do not know this Man of whom you speak!"* At first he said that he did not understand the other person's words, but at the last he asserted that he did not know the person Jesus at all. Peter, who only a little before had said vehemently that he would die with Jesus, now denied Him even with an oath.

In the expression "*this Man*" also there appears Peter's heart that sought to keep a distance from Jesus. He did not call Jesus Lord or Teacher, but spoke of Him as a person with whom he had no relation at all. In order to become safe before the eyes of men, he acted as though he had cut off the relationship between himself and Jesus. When fear rules a man, he can even be ashamed of the truth he once confessed as most precious.

The failure of Peter does not mean that the heart with which he said he loved Jesus was entirely false. He really did love Jesus and had a heart that wished to die with Him. But the problem was that he believed his own love and resolve to be strong enough to overcome temptation. By the sincerity of man alone one cannot completely overcome the fear of the flesh and the threat of death.

Jesus had already told Peter that on that night, before the rooster crowed twice, he would deny Him three times. At that time Peter trusted his own judgment more than that word. He declared that even if all the other disciples forsook Him he would not. But what actually happened came about not according to Peter's confidence but just as Jesus had said.

Immediately after Peter denied Him the third time, the rooster crowed a second time. When he heard that sound, the word that Jesus had spoken came to his mind. It was not that there was a spiritual power in the crowing of the rooster itself;

through that sound the word of the Lord shone upon his heart. The Word exactly revealed the failure that Peter had wished to hide.

Peter remembered the word of Jesus, thought about it, and wept. He could no longer insist, "I am absolutely not such a man." He realized the pride by which he had believed himself to be more right than the word of the Lord, and the wrong of having denied Jesus three times. His tears show that his self-confidence collapsed and that he came to acknowledge his own actual condition.

But it was not because Peter wept much that his tears paid the wages of sin. However deeply a man regrets and however many tears he sheds, the tears of a man cannot wash away sin or receive the judgment of God in his stead. To realize a wrong and be sorrowful is necessary, but the ground of the remission of sins is not the regret of man but the salvation that Jesus Christ accomplished.

Jesus, knowing that Peter would deny Him, had already promised that after His resurrection He would meet them again in Galilee. Before the failure of Peter there was the grace of the Lord and the promise of restoration. Peter said that he did not know the Lord, but the Lord did not fail to know Peter. Knowing his weakness, He bore even that sin and prepared the way of salvation and restoration.

While Peter was denying Jesus in the courtyard below, Jesus above was being condemned for sinners, including Peter. Peter denied his relationship with Jesus in order to preserve his own life, but Jesus, in order to save Peter's life, did not hide the fact that He is the Christ, the Son of God, and received the sentence of death.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus took upon His own body even Peter's three denials and

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all our falsehood and fear. The sinless Son of God, by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, received all the sins of the world. Therefore the failure of Peter also did not remain outside the salvation of Jesus.

Bearing the sins He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the punishment for all sins. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, overcame sin and death, and accomplished perfect salvation. The baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are the ground of the salvation of Peter and of all sinners.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not saved because his own courage and loyalty are perfect. By believing the fact that Jesus bore all his sins and was judged, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. It is when his own righteousness collapses that he clearly realizes how absolutely necessary the perfect righteousness of the Lord is.

A person who has believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins has become a righteous man without sin in his heart, but there is still weakness in his flesh. Because of fear he may speak wrongly or be ashamed of the gospel. Yet that does not mean that whenever he fails he becomes a sinner again and must receive salvation anew. He must acknowledge his own wrong, confirm the gospel that has already removed even that sin, and turn back following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

The confession by which one acknowledges a wrong is not an act for newly receiving the remission of a sin that Jesus failed to remove. It is acknowledging by the Word of God that

one's action was wrong, and setting right one's fellowship with God within the grace of the Lord, who has borne even that sin. Just as Peter remembered the Word and wept, so the saints also, when they receive the rebuke of the Word, must not make excuses but must acknowledge their own wrong.

On the contrary, we must not treat lightly the denying of the gospel on the ground of Peter's failure. That he denied Jesus three times was a manifest wrong, and Peter also wept because of that fact. Grace does not make a man rationalize sin as acceptable; it makes him acknowledge sin as sin and yet return to the Lord without despairing.

The saints must not say proudly, when another has fallen, that they themselves would never do so. Even a man who declared as strongly as Peter collapsed in the face of fear. He must not trust his own flesh but must stay awake through the Word and prayer, and rely on the Holy Spirit to give him boldness not to be ashamed of the gospel.

This passage shows the fact that in the place where self-confidence has collapsed the word of the Lord awakens a man and leads him to the grace of the gospel. Peter denied Jesus three times, but when the rooster crowed he remembered the word of the Lord, acknowledged his own failure, and wept. Jesus bore even the sin of that denial by His baptism and removed it by the Cross and the resurrection. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit does not boast of his own strength, but when he has fallen he acknowledges his wrong before the Word and, relying on the perfect righteousness of the Lord, stands again in faith. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 14

[Question] 1. Explain briefly why Mark chapter 14 is important.

Mark chapter 14 is important because it records the decisive course in which the earthly ministry of Jesus passes over into the suffering of the Cross. The chief priests and the scribes seek a way to put Jesus to death, and Judas Iscariot looks for an opportunity to deliver Jesus up. In contrast to this, a woman pours costly fragrant oil on the head of Jesus and prepares beforehand for His burial.

At the last Passover meal Jesus divided and gave the bread and the cup and spoke of His own body and of *"My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."* This is a word in which He revealed beforehand that after bearing all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, He would bear those sins, shed His blood, and die on the Cross, and thus complete salvation.

Moreover, in Gethsemane Jesus prayed, even in the midst of great agony, that not His own will but the will of the Father might be accomplished. Then there are recorded the betrayal of Judas Iscariot and the arrest of Jesus, the flight of the disciples, the false testimony and condemnation in the Jewish council, and the three denials of Peter.

Therefore Mark chapter 14 shows that Jesus, while receiving the betrayal and the unjust condemnation of men, went forward of His own will on the way of suffering in order

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to fulfill the Scriptures and to save mankind. At the same time, by contrasting the faith of the woman who served the Lord preciously with the weakness of the disciples who trusted themselves and collapsed, it teaches that the believing person must rely on the Word and prayer rather than on his own will.

[Question] 2. In Mark 14:1, at what time did the chief priests and the scribes plan to take Jesus by trickery and put Him to death?

The time when the chief priests and the scribes sought a way to take Jesus by trickery and put Him to death was two days before the Passover and the Feast of Unleavened Bread.

They were concerned that if they seized Jesus openly an uproar would arise among the people, and so they tried to avoid the eyes of men and to arrest Him and kill Him by using deceit.

[Question] 3. In Mark 14:2, why did they think that they must not seize Jesus and kill Him during the feast?

The chief priests and the scribes were concerned that if they seized Jesus and killed Him during the feast an uproar would arise among the people.

At the Passover many people from various regions gathered in Jerusalem, and among them there were also many who heard the words of Jesus and followed Him. Therefore they judged that if they arrested Jesus in the sight of the people, the crowd might resist and an uproar might arise. What they were concerned about was not the will of God or the innocence of

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Jesus, but the shaking of their own position and of the social order.

[Question] 4. In Mark 14:3 and 5, what kind of fragrant oil did the woman bring, and how costly was it?

What the woman brought was *"an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard."* Spikenard was a fragrant oil made from a precious spice, and what the woman brought was pure, with nothing else mixed in.

The value of that fragrant oil was more than three hundred denarii. If one denarius is taken as about a day's wages of a laborer at that time, three hundred denarii was a very large sum that one could earn only by working for nearly a year. The woman did not spare such precious fragrant oil or use only a part of it; she broke the flask and poured it on Jesus.

[Question] 5. In Mark 14:3–9, what lesson does the event in which a woman poured fragrant oil on Jesus give us?

A woman came with an alabaster flask of very costly pure spikenard oil while Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. She broke the flask and poured the fragrant oil on Jesus' head. Breaking the flask was the act of offering all the fragrant oil without leaving any, and it was a service in which she counted Jesus as precious beyond anything that could be exchanged for Him and offered the best that she had.

Some rebuked the woman, saying that the fragrant oil could

have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor. But Jesus protected her, saying, *"She has done a good work for Me."* To the eyes of men it looked like waste, but Jesus saw the heart of the service offered in faith and love. The time, the material things, and the labor offered for the Lord and the gospel cannot be evaluated by worldly calculation alone, and true service offered to the Lord is never in vain.

That Jesus said the poor are always with them but He would not always be with them does not mean that we need not help the poor. It means that since the death of Jesus had come near, the opportunity to pour fragrant oil on His body was only at that time. The woman did not miss the time given to her, and she did *"what she could,"* and Jesus received that act as preparing beforehand for His own burial. The service of faith requires the attitude of discerning the opportunity God has given and acting without delay.

Jesus bore all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He died on the Cross and then rose from the dead, and thus completed salvation. Because the woman's pouring of the fragrant oil was a service performed just before that death and burial, it was worthy to be handed down together with the gospel. Therefore this event does not give the lesson that one obtains salvation by material things or by sacrifice; it gives the lesson that the person who knows and believes the grace of the Lord, who gives the remission of sins, must serve the Lord and the gospel with thanksgiving and faith.

Jesus said that wherever the gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman had done should also be told as a memorial to her. This means that God does not forget the service of faith offered out of love for the Lord. The believing person also, rather than judging or criticizing the service of

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another by fleshly calculation, must do to the utmost of his strength the work he can do for the Lord and the gospel within the circumstances entrusted to him.

[Question] 6. In Mark 14:4–5, why did the people rebuke the woman, saying that the fragrant oil had been wasted?

The people rebuked her because they thought that the fragrant oil could have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and distributed to the poor, but that the woman had poured it out all at once on Jesus' head. In their eyes, using such costly fragrant oil in that way looked like an economic waste.

But they did not know that Jesus would soon die and be buried, or the meaning of the woman's counting the Lord precious and serving Him in faith. Calculating only the price of the material thing and the efficiency that appeared outwardly, they judged the service offered to the Lord to be waste.

[Question] 7. In Mark 14:6–9, how did Jesus say that what the woman had done would be remembered wherever the gospel is preached?

Jesus said that the woman had done a good work for Him. She had done what she could, pouring fragrant oil on His body to prepare beforehand for His burial. And He said, "*wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.*"

This does not mean that her name or a human achievement

is to be exalted, but that her faith and love, by which she counted the Lord precious and served Him to the utmost of her strength with the death of Jesus at hand, are to be remembered. People judged that work to be waste, but Jesus acknowledged it as a service precious enough to be handed down together with the gospel.

Therefore, wherever the gospel is preached, what this woman did is handed down as evidence that the service of faith for the Lord is never in vain and that God remembers it.

[Question] 8. In Mark 14:10–11, for what purpose did Judas Iscariot go to the chief priests?

Judas Iscariot, one of the twelve disciples, went to the chief priests in order to deliver Jesus up to them.

The chief priests heard the words of Judas, were glad, and promised to give him money. After that Judas sought an opportunity to deliver Jesus up so that they might seize Him at a suitable time when there were no people. He was in the close position of a disciple of Jesus, but in the end he betrayed his teacher, following money and his own greed.

[Question] 9. In Mark 14:12, how is the Passover, on which the lamb is killed, connected with the death of Jesus?

The Passover is a feast that commemorates the event in which the people of Israel were saved out of Egypt. When God judged the firstborn of Egypt, the people of Israel killed a lamb without blemish and applied its blood to the door. God saw that

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blood and passed over the judgment of that house, and so the lamb became a sacrifice offered in the place of the people who should have died.

This Passover lamb shows beforehand Jesus Christ, who would bear the sins of the people of the world and die. That Jesus prepared for the death of the Cross just before the Passover was not an accidental coincidence of time; it shows that He had come as the true Passover Lamb. Just as by the blood of the lamb the people of Israel escaped the judgment of death and came out of Egypt, so by the sacrifice of Jesus the believing person is saved from the judgment of sin and becomes one of the people of God.

However, the death of Jesus on the Cross must not be understood apart from the work by which He bore the sins of mankind. Because Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John, He went to the Cross bearing those sins and shed His blood and died. The blood of the Cross is the evidence that Jesus paid in our stead the judgment and the wages of the sins He had borne, and by rising from the dead He completed salvation.

Therefore the killing of the Passover lamb is a figure of the sinless Jesus becoming the sacrificial offering that bore sin and being judged in the place of mankind. A man is not saved by keeping the rite of the Passover or by his own works; he obtains the remission of sins and eternal life by believing in his heart the salvation that Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood.

[Question] 10. In Mark 14:13–16, how did Jesus have the disciples find the place where they would eat the Passover?

Jesus sent two of His disciples into the city and told them that they would meet a man carrying a pitcher of water and that they should follow him.

He told them that if they said to the master of the house he entered, "The Teacher says, *'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'"* he would show them a large upper room furnished and prepared, and that there they should prepare the Passover meal.

When the disciples went into the city, everything came about just as Jesus had said, and they prepared the Passover in that upper room. This shows that Jesus knew beforehand what would come upon Him and that He prepared even the last Passover meal within the plan of God.

[Question] 11. In Mark 14:17–21, what did Jesus say to the disciples before the supper?

While Jesus sat and ate with the twelve disciples He said, *"one of you who eats with Me will betray Me."* The disciples who heard this word were sorrowful and asked one by one, *"Is it I?"*

Jesus revealed that the one who would betray Him was one of the twelve disciples and was the one who dipped his hand in the dish with Him. He warned that the Son of Man goes the way of suffering and death just as it is written in the Scriptures, but that woe would be to the man who betrayed Jesus, and that it would have been better for that man if he had never been born.

The death of Jesus was not a sudden accident or the result

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of His being dragged along by the plot of men; it was an event in which the plan of God's salvation written in the Scriptures was accomplished. But the fact that the plan of God is accomplished does not remove the betrayal and the responsibility of Judas Iscariot.

[Question] 12. In Mark 14:22–24, what did Jesus say when He broke the bread and gave it to the disciples?

Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, gave it to the disciples, and said, *"Take, eat; this is My body."* Then, giving them the cup, He said that it was His own blood of the covenant, which is shed for many.

The bread stands for the body of Jesus, which He would give up for the salvation of mankind. Jesus, the Son of God, came to this earth clothed with flesh, and with that body He bore all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John. And He gave up on the Cross His own body, which bore sin, and received the judgment of sin. Therefore the body of Jesus is not simply flesh that suffered; it is the body of sacrifice offered to God in order to bear our sins and accomplish salvation.

The act of eating the bread does not itself remove a man's sins. The sharing of the bread is a sign of remembering and receiving by faith the salvation that Jesus accomplished with His own body. When the saints take part in the Lord's Supper, they must not merely repeat a rite; they must believe in their hearts and give thanks for the fact of salvation, that Jesus bore all sins with His own body and received the judgment of the Cross.

[Question] 13. In Mark 14:24, when Jesus gave the cup of wine to the disciples, what did He say that it stood for?

Jesus said that the cup of wine stood for *"My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."* This blood is the blood that Jesus would shed on the Cross, and it shows the fact that the remission of sins and the eternal life that God promised are accomplished through the sacrifice of Jesus.

The blood of Jesus must not be understood apart from the course by which He bore sin. Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and bearing those sins He went to the Cross, shed His blood, and received the judgment of sin. At the baptism He bore sin, on the Cross He received the judgment of that sin, and by rising from the dead He completed salvation.

Therefore the blood of the covenant does not mean that God covered sin over carelessly; it is the evidence that Jesus actually bore the judgment of sin that mankind had to receive and so completed salvation. It is not the rite of drinking the cup that gives the remission of sins; when a man believes in his heart the sacrifice of Jesus and the completed salvation that the cup stands for, he receives the remission of sins and new life.

[Question] 14. In Mark 14:26, where did Jesus and His disciples go after they finished the supper?

After finishing the supper, Jesus and His disciples sang a hymn together and went out to the Mount of Olives. On the Mount of Olives there was the garden of Gethsemane, where Jesus prayed and was arrested.

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[Question] 15. What is the content of the conversation between Jesus and His disciples recorded in Mark 14:27–31?

Jesus told His disciples that they would all forsake Him. This was the fulfilling of the word of Scripture, *"I will strike the Shepherd, And the sheep will be scattered."* But Jesus also said that after He rose from the dead He would go before the disciples to Galilee, and thus He spoke together of His resurrection and of their meeting again.

Peter declared that even if all the other disciples forsook Jesus, he would not do so. To this Jesus said that on that very night, before the rooster crowed twice, Peter would deny Him three times.

But Peter said vehemently that even if he had to die with Jesus he would never deny the Lord, and all the other disciples said the same. This conversation shows the confidence of the disciples and their actual weakness, and at the same time it shows that Jesus knew beforehand both the failure of the disciples and His own death and resurrection.

[Question] 16. In Mark 14:34 and 37–42, Jesus told them to watch, but what did the disciples do?

Jesus told the disciples to remain with Him and watch, but the disciples could not overcome their weariness and fell asleep. Every time Jesus prayed and returned they were sleeping, and their eyes were very heavy, so that they did not even know what to answer Him.

Jesus said to Peter, *"Simon, are you sleeping? Could you not watch one hour?"* and told them to watch and pray so that

they would not enter into temptation. But the disciples fell asleep three times, and at last they were not spiritually prepared until Jesus said that Judas Iscariot and the multitude that would arrest Him had come near.

In their hearts the disciples wished to be with Jesus, but relying on their own resolve they could not overcome the weakness of the flesh and failed. The believing person also must not trust his own resolve alone, but must watch and prepare through the Word and prayer before temptation comes.

[Question] 17. In Mark 14:32–42, what lesson can we obtain from the prayer in which He asked that not His own will but the will of the Father be done?

In Gethsemane, with the suffering of the Cross before Him, Jesus was greatly troubled and sorrowful, and He said, *"My soul is exceedingly sorrowful, even to death."* This shows that Jesus did not bear the Cross formally as one who feels no pain, but that as true man He actually underwent the weight of the suffering and the death that were coming.

Jesus told the Father without hiding His own pain and desire, saying, *"Abba, Father, all things are possible for You. Take this cup away from Me."* Here *"this cup"* points to the judgment and the agony of death that Jesus, who had borne the sins of mankind, would receive on the Cross. Because Jesus had borne all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He had to drink the cup of the Cross in order to receive the judgment of those sins.

But the prayer of Jesus did not end in asking that His own wish be accomplished. By saying, *"nevertheless, not what I will, but what You will,"* He subjected His own will fully under

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the will of the Father. True prayer is telling God honestly of one's own desire, and yet not making God follow one's own will but laying down one's own will and obeying the will of God. Even if the will of God is a way that passes through suffering, it is true faith to believe that that will is good and righteous.

After praying three times with the same content, Jesus did not avoid those who had come to seize Him but said, *"Rise, let us be going."* Through prayer He accepted the will of the Father and went boldly on the way of the Cross. By this obedience Jesus received the judgment of sin on the Cross and rose from the dead, and thus completed the salvation of mankind.

Meanwhile the disciples had declared that they would die with Jesus, but they fell asleep when they should have prayed. Jesus said, *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak."* This gives the lesson that one cannot overcome temptation by good intentions and a strong resolve alone, and that he must acknowledge his own weakness and rely on God and watch and pray.

Therefore, when the saints meet difficulty they must not pray only that the suffering be unconditionally removed, nor insist on their own thoughts. While telling God honestly of their circumstances and their desires, they must seek the will that the Word of God teaches and pray for strength to follow that will. The strength by which a saved person lives in obedience does not come out of his own will; when he relies on the Holy Spirit within the Word and prayer, the Holy Spirit supplies it.

[Question] 18. In Mark 14:43–45, by what method did Judas Iscariot make known the one whom they were to seize?

Judas Iscariot had arranged a signal beforehand with the multitude who would make the arrest, saying that the one he kissed was Jesus and that they should seize Him and lead Him away securely.

Judas came near to Jesus, called Him *"Rabbi!"* and kissed Him. He used the greeting by which a disciple expresses respect and closeness toward his teacher as the signal of betrayal, and thus made known in the darkness who the man was whom the multitude was to seize.

[Question] 19. In Mark 14:46–47, when Jesus was seized, what did one of the disciples standing by do?

When the multitude laid hands on Jesus and seized Him, one of those standing by drew a sword, struck the servant of the high priest, and cut off his ear.

The text of Mark does not reveal the name of that man but records him as *"one of those who stood by."* He tried to protect Jesus, but he did not realize the meaning that Jesus was going the way of suffering of His own will in order to fulfill the Scriptures, and he responded with human strength and force.

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[Question] 20. In Mark 14:48–49, what did Jesus say to the multitude that had come out to seize Him as a robber?

Jesus said, *"Have you come out, as against a robber, with swords and clubs to take Me?"*

He also pointed out that He had been with them daily in the temple teaching, and that at that time they had not seized Him. Jesus was not a criminal who fled about or used violence, and so the fact that the multitude came armed by night and arrested Him reveals their fear and their evil intent.

But Jesus said that all this was so that *"the Scriptures must be fulfilled."* This means that Jesus was not seized because He had no power, but that He Himself accepted the way of suffering in order to accomplish the plan of God's salvation written in the Scriptures.

[Question] 21. How does Mark 14:50 report the condition of the disciples when Jesus was seized?

When Jesus was seized it is recorded, *"Then they all forsook Him and fled."*

Only a little before, the disciples had declared that they would die together with Jesus, but when the threat of arrest actually came upon them they were all seized with fear and ran away. By this the word of Jesus, that when the shepherd is struck the sheep will be scattered, was fulfilled just as He had said. By the resolve and the confidence of man alone one cannot overcome temptation. Therefore the believing person must stay awake through the Word and prayer.

[Question] 22. In Mark 14:51–52, who is thought to be the young man who followed Jesus and fled leaving his linen cloth?

It is generally held that this young man may have been John Mark, who wrote the Gospel of Mark. Since this event is not in the other Gospels and is recorded very vividly only in Mark, it is supposed that Mark recorded his own shameful experience without giving his name.

But the text records him only as *"a certain young man"* and does not reveal his name, and so we cannot conclude that he was Mark. The view that takes this young man to be John Mark is widely known, but historically there have also been views that take him to be another person, and there is no direct record of Scripture that proves his identity. Therefore the explanation that he was Mark must be seen as one supposition among several views.

Therefore it is safest to answer that "he is traditionally taken to be John Mark, but who exactly he was cannot be known." The clear lesson of this record lies in the fact that when Jesus was seized, not only the disciples but also the young man who was following were so seized with fear that they forsook everything and fled.

[Question] 23. In Mark 14:53, where was the seized Jesus led away to, and to whom did they lead Him?

The seized Jesus was led away to the place where the high priest was. There the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes were all assembled.

These were the leaders who made up the council, the

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highest deliberative body of the Jews, and they had gathered in order to examine Jesus and to find a charge on which to put Him to death.

[Question] 24. In Mark 14:55–65, in what manner was the trial before the council carried out, from the false testimony to the sentence of death?

The chief priests and all the council did not fairly investigate whether Jesus was guilty; from the beginning they sought testimony against Him with the purpose of putting Him to death. Many people bore false witness against Jesus, but since their testimonies did not agree with one another they did not obtain a ground for a verdict of guilt.

Some testified that they had heard Jesus say that He would destroy the temple made with hands and in three days build another not made with hands. But even this testimony did not agree. When the evidence did not hold, the high priest demanded that Jesus stand up and answer, but Jesus kept silent concerning the false accusation.

The high priest asked Jesus directly again, *"Are You the Christ, the Son of the Blessed?"* Jesus clearly revealed, *"I am,"* and said that they would see the Son of Man sitting at the right hand of the Power and coming with the clouds of heaven. Jesus was silent at the false testimony, but He did not hide the fact that He is the Christ and the Son of God.

Then the high priest tore his own clothes and said that they needed no more witnesses, and he defined the word of Jesus as blasphemy. The members of the council did not examine the words of Jesus or confirm the truth, but all condemned Him as deserving of death. After that, people spat on Jesus, covered

His face, struck Him with their fists, and mocked Him, telling Him to prophesy, and the servants also struck Him with the palms of their hands.

This trial was not a fair trial in which the truth is brought to light through evidence; it was an unrighteous trial in which men who had already decided to kill Jesus drew out the conclusion by using false testimony and religious accusation. The council condemned Jesus as deserving of death, but for the actual carrying out of the death sentence the verdict of the Roman governor was afterward necessary. The sinless Jesus silently received the false evidence and the violence of men and went the way of suffering written in the Scriptures.

[Question] 25. In Mark 14:66–72, why did Peter, who had declared that he would follow Jesus to the end, deny Him three times?

The greatest reason Peter denied Jesus three times is that, not knowing his own weakness, he trusted his own will and loyalty excessively. He declared that even if all the other disciples forsook Jesus he would not forsake Him, and that even if he had to die with the Lord he would not deny Him. But when Jesus warned him that he would deny Him three times, he did not receive that word.

Moreover, Peter did not watch and pray with the test before him. Jesus said, *"Watch and pray, lest you enter into temptation. The spirit indeed is willing, but the flesh is weak,"* but Peter fell asleep in Gethsemane. He had a heart that wished to follow the Lord, but since he did not rely on God in prayer, when the actual threat came he could not overcome the fear of the flesh.

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When the people in the courtyard of the high priest's house pointed him out as one who had been with Jesus, he was seized with the fear that he too might be arrested and put to death. At first he denied it, saying that he did not know what they were talking about; when he was pressed again, he said that he did not belong to the company of Jesus; and at the last he cursed and swore and even said that he did not know Jesus. One denial that yielded to a small fear led on to a stronger denial.

Peter did not deny Jesus because he did not love Him; he fell because the heart that trusted himself was still strong and because he did not fully understand the meaning of the suffering of Jesus and of the Cross. But when the rooster crowed a second time, the word that Jesus had spoken came to his mind, and he realized his own failure and wept. He did not treat his own wrong lightly, and his heart was broken before the word of the Lord.

This event teaches that even a believing person can fall in the face of fear and temptation if he relies on his own strength. But salvation does not depend on the strong resolve of man or on a life without failure. Jesus knew the weakness of Peter and even the wrong he would commit, and through the baptism He received from John He bore the sin of the world, including all of Peter's sins, and was judged and died on the Cross and then rose from the dead. Therefore, when the believing person fails he must not give himself up or leave the gospel, but must acknowledge his wrong, believe again the righteousness of the Lord that has already been accomplished, and follow the Lord through the Word and prayer.

[Question] 26. In Mark 14:72, when the rooster crowed a second time and Peter realized his denial, what did he do?

When the rooster crowed a second time, Peter realized that the word of Jesus, *"Before the rooster crows twice, you will deny Me three times,"* had been fulfilled just as He had said. Mark records that the word of Jesus came to him and that *"when he thought about it, he wept."*

In the tears of Peter there was not only a heart that grieved over his own denial but also a deep realization concerning his having wrongly trusted himself. He had declared that even if all the disciples forsook Jesus he would not forsake Him, and that even if he died with the Lord he would not deny Him. But when the threat of death actually drew near he denied Jesus three times, and at the last he cursed and swore and even said that he did not know Jesus. At the moment he heard the crowing of the rooster, it was revealed that the word of Jesus was right and that his own confidence was vain.

His tears show a heart that did not hide or rationalize his wrong but acknowledged his own weakness before the word of the Lord. But the act of shedding tears did not itself pay the wages of sin or obtain the remission of sins. The ground on which Peter could rise again was not his own tears and resolve, but the grace of Jesus, who did not forsake him although He knew his failure beforehand. Jesus had already said, *"But after I have been raised, I will go before you to Galilee,"* and thus promised that He would meet the scattered disciples again after His resurrection.

Jesus bore all the sins of the world, including the sin that Peter would deny Him, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He received the judgment of those sins on

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the Cross and died and then rose from the dead. Therefore Peter was not forsaken forever because of his failure; by believing the salvation that the Lord accomplished, he rose again and followed the Lord.

This event gives the lesson that when a believing person has done wrong he must not despair and run away from the Lord, nor try to pay for his sin by his own strength. He must acknowledge his own wrong before the Word, take hold again of the righteousness and the grace of the Lord, who saved him, and rely on the Lord through the Word and prayer rather than on his own will. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Only when we serve is the gospel preached

< Mark 14:3-9 >

"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'"

A woman poured fragrant oil on the head of Jesus

The saints who have been born again and become righteous must serve the gospel and the Lord. This is an entirely natural thing.

In the Bible there appears a woman who poured fragrant oil on Jesus. Whether she poured the fragrant oil on the head of

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Jesus or on His feet, the Lord counted this work precious, and Matthew, Mark, and John all recorded it. In Luke there appears a woman who had many sins, who poured fragrant oil on the feet of Jesus, wet those feet with her tears, and wiped them with her own hair. At that time the Pharisees said, "If you were really a prophet you would know who this woman is who is washing your feet." This was because that woman was notorious in that town. But Jesus said, "When I came in you did not even give Me water to wash My feet, but this woman has washed My feet with her own tears and her hair," and He said that the person who has received the complete remission of his sins will do as this woman did, but that the person who has not received the remission of his sins, the person who says that he has no sin, will not receive the Lord.

The Word we have read today is a thing that happened while Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. The Bible does not speak of some particular woman but simply says that "*a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head" (Mark 14:3)*. An alabaster flask of pure spikenard—this fragrant oil was extremely expensive. The daily wage of a young and healthy man was one denarius, and three hundred denarii was the price one could buy only after working three hundred days. She broke that flask of fragrant oil and poured it out on the head of Jesus, so that the people beside her, when they saw it, thought, "What a pity; a year's wages are flying away just to wet His head once." Historians say that this fragrant oil was extracted from a fragrant tree of the Himalayan range and was therefore extremely costly; but that is the historians' story, and the point is that this one woman broke the bottom of a flask holding a year's wages and poured it all out at once on the head of Jesus. That costly fragrant oil was all poured out and consumed in a moment.

Jesus had a different perspective

There were also those who thought that it had been wasted. *"But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply" (Mark 14:4–5).* People saw what this woman did as waste. They said that rather than pouring it on the head of Jesus it would have been better to sell it and distribute it to the poor. But Jesus did not see that service in that way. He said that this woman had prepared beforehand for His death, that is, for His burial, and that she had done a good work for Him. And He said that wherever this gospel is preached, what this woman had done would also be told as a memorial to her.

Here we discover what right service is. The people who were together in the house of Simon the leper thought of the poor. Would not many poor people have received benefit if this had been sold and given to them? These people had their eyes opened to serving men, and they looked with such eyes and judged with such eyes. But Jesus said that this woman had done a good work for Him, and that the poor are always with them but He is not always with them, and thus He told us what kind of service is right service. Of course serving people is also a precious thing. How good it would be to distribute food to the poor with three hundred days' wages! But the Lord is teaching us this part: which is right, serving men or serving the gospel?

Look at verse 8. *"She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial."* This woman prepared for the gospel to the utmost of her strength. While we live on this earth we must think carefully about what we will serve. People used the word "wasted," saying, *"Why was this fragrant oil*

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wasted?" but in fact, if we look at it strictly, it is what is done for men that is waste. However much you help a man, he is not satisfied. There is even an old proverb that if you help an animal it repays the kindness, but if you help a man he pays you back with revenge. It must be a saying that came out of the experience of people long ago.

Shall we serve men, or shall we serve God?

Who must be the object of our service? The Bible says that it is right to serve God. Jesus said that the poor are always in this world and can be helped whenever one wishes, but that the pouring of oil on the head of Jesus now, with the Cross before Him, was the preparing of the burial of Jesus. The opportunities to serve the gospel are not so many. In all our life, are there many opportunities to serve the gospel? In fact there are not many. Serving men has no end. However much you help, there is no end.

Now the whole world is sending an immense amount of relief food to countries where there is famine. Our country also helps a great deal, and the large countries help even more. Even though they help like that, why are those people still starving? Merely to help men is vain. If you really want to help those people, you must preach the gospel to them. You must preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, that is, this gospel that Jesus accomplished by being baptized by John and thus receiving our sins passed on to Him and bearing them, by bearing those sins and shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and by rising from the dead. If they do not serve idols but serve God, flowers will bloom in that land, diseases will disappear, and grain will become abundant.

These people who thought of the poor said that a flask had been wasted, but in reality what is waste? We must know the fact that serving men is waste. If we serve God, God gives His people the things they must have and that are truly necessary. The point is that the viewpoints differ. The viewpoint of the man of faith and the viewpoint of the man who does not believe differ, and the viewpoint from which Jesus saw it and the viewpoint of the people who were there together differed. The viewpoint from which Jesus saw it was that this woman had done a right thing and had prepared for His burial, that is, for the gospel. The Bible says that in the work of saving all people she offered one flask and preciously served the Lord. Those people said that it had been wasted, but Jesus said the opposite.

Therefore in our lives we must choose well the object we will serve. Someone may say, why is serving the poor a waste; is that not love? Of course it is love. But as I have said again and again, charity requires skill. When a man helps a man there must be skill, and he must not help unconditionally. One may pity a certain man and help him with a large sum of money. If that man can do business with that money, stand on his own feet, and live honorably, then one can help him. But if, whenever the money is given, he drinks it away and the man becomes more ruined, then helping him rather becomes an aiding of his ruin. So I very coldly send away people who come to the church to get something. It is because we cannot pay for that man's drink with what the saints have offered. We can say that serving is right, but we cannot say that all serving is unconditionally good. If we serve an evil man and support a man who uses drugs, it becomes a serious matter. We must serve the One who is truly to be served. To serve the One who is most right and to serve the right work is right service.

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God gives blessing to the one who serves the gospel

If we serve God and serve the gospel, the gospel of God is preached and bears fruit a thousandfold, ten thousandfold, a hundred millionfold, and people become happy. People who have sin receive the remission of sins and begin a new life, and people who would have perished because of sin are saved and live a right life with a new hope. But the poor of the world will not disappear until this earth comes to its end. It is said that even in the midst of wealth there is poverty. Even in prosperous countries there are far too many poor people. On the other hand, some people spend more than a young man's monthly wage on one meal, on one bath, on one cup of coffee. What is that person serving? According to what a man serves, the value of that man is set.

The Bible records that this woman, who poured oil on the head of Jesus and served the gospel, performed right service. It does not end with the fact that she brought a year's wages and offered them; the point is that this woman, as one who had been saved, set right service.

We can also prove it practically. From the time of the apostles long ago there were people who had the same gospel as we have. When the Emperor Constantine issued the Edict of Milan and made Rome a country that officially recognized Christianity, anyone at all became a Christian merely by making a confession of faith, and Christianity fell into complete ruin. Even in the midst of that, a very small number of people held this faith and had meetings among themselves. As the years passed and Catholicism gained power, they persecuted and seized and killed the people who believed according to the Bible; and even in the midst of that there were brothers and sisters and servants of God with right faith in England. When they were

preaching the gospel in that country, England was called the country on which the sun never set. It was the most highly regarded country in the world, which only won when it fought a war and continued to enjoy wealth. But when England persecuted the people who had the gospel, they could not endure it, and hearing news of the new continent they took ship and crossed over to America. After that England became a country on which the sun set. It no longer won its wars, and it had to give up all its colonies. But America was changed into a country on which the sun rose. When the brothers and sisters who crossed over from England preached the gospel to the whole world from America, America became the greatest power in the world in a little more than two hundred years after it was founded. Even countries with five thousand years of history became countries that could do nothing before it. Why did it become so? It is because when the people who had this gospel preached the gospel, God gave blessing to that country.

Whether a country becomes a country on which the sun never sets is determined by how many people there are in that country who preach the gospel and serve God. Our country also lives very well. The economists of the world say that it is strange that our country, which has no resources and possesses nothing, lives so well. The reason our country can live so well is that there are people who serve the gospel, and so God gives blessing to our country. Dear fellow believers, do you believe that fact? It is true.

Because this woman served the gospel, the Lord said that wherever this gospel is preached, what this woman had done would be remembered. It is because this is most right. That does not mean that we should not love and should not eat. It means that while serving the gospel we should do this and that as well. *"But seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness, and all these things shall be added to you" (Matthew 6:33)*. This is

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a word telling us to put the priority here first. Even if God does not make us prosper, we must live serving God and serving the gospel. And if I may teach you one secret for you yourselves and your families to prosper, live serving the gospel. Then, even if you wanted to be ruined, you would not be ruined. That is a certified check. God repays you in one direction or another. The blessing of God is given to the person who serves God and serves the true gospel, to such a degree that he says, "I have not done much, so why has this been given to me?" But if a man does not serve the gospel and does not serve God, then however much he pretends to be good in this world, donates scholarships, and provides food for the rest of their lives to pitiable people, he himself is ruined and his descendants also are ruined. The clear thing that you and I must remember is that we must live serving God and serving the gospel. If you learn this one thing clearly and it becomes the motto of your life, your life is a successful life.

Long ago, after the war in our country, there was a certain foreign businessman who took charge, as it were, of the overseas adoption of mixed-race orphans. That man was a person who had been born again. He was a man who had not even properly finished school, but he took over factories and mountains that others had failed with and put up for a low price, and when he did business it began to go so well that he became a great rich man. That man served God in his business and in all his living. And he did that adoption work also in order to preach the gospel. He brought the children of our country and had them adopted into families that truly believed in Jesus, and thus taught them the faith that believes in Jesus.

We must establish what we will serve and so live

Beloved fellow believers, let us gather up the Word. God says that serving God and serving the gospel is our proper duty. Through this Word today we must clearly establish what we are now serving and what we must serve, and so live. Especially if a person who has received the remission of sins does not know well about serving, his life of faith also becomes a mess. If he does not accurately find the object he is to serve, he becomes far from happiness and far from God as well. Only when he chooses the object of his service clearly and serves rightly does his life of faith become rich and his own life happy, and does he come to do work that is worthwhile before God.

This woman was not a special woman. She was one woman among the many women around Jesus, whose name the Bible does not even reveal. But the point is that this woman knew the right thing. She knew what she would do and live for in her life, and what she would serve and live for. Even though we cannot bring a year's wages and offer them to God, even though we have no wealth and no particular ability, we must clearly know whom we must serve and what we must serve as we live from now on. Do not think that I say such things merely because I am a pastor. I too am one of you. The revival-preacher pastors of Korea say that because of them our country has been evangelized like this, but I can tell you that because of those revival preachers our country has been utterly ruined. They were busy squeezing out, for a moment, the money in people's pockets and the money in their bank accounts. Before their audiences they could not tell these people how to set the course of their lives, what to serve, and how to live rightly; they did not teach the course of life, but made it their own merit to have squeezed out so much money and built so large a chapel of red

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brick. How much they extorted from people—that is what the revival preachers in Korea did. I am not telling you this because I am a pastor.

What I mean is that you should live knowing, "Now I have no material things to offer and my time is too tight. But in my whole life it is right to serve God and it is right to serve the gospel." If you know this, you become very happy. If you live without knowing this, you suffer unhappiness in a great many areas. Even if you pile up material things, a swindler comes and sickness comes and swallows it all up. If you live serving God, God acknowledges you and your life becomes rich. I am not saying this Word to someone else; I too, as I go on living, resolve once more in my own heart what I must serve and live for, and that it is right to live serving God. I also worry whether, being too busy with work, I may go wrong by serving myself and serving the world. I cannot know all of the life to come, but I am confident that the life in which I serve God and serve the gospel is the right and most worthwhile life. It is the same for you.

Beloved fellow believers, the Bible is speaking to us about service through this one woman. We must know that our Lord is saying to us who live having received the remission of sins that it is right to serve God first and then to look after the things we ourselves need, and that we are to live so. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Now is the time when we must serve God

< Mark 14:3-9 >

"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'"

A heart that fears God appears in material things

Today I will speak a little about material things. You may think that I looked as though I would never speak about material things in all my life, and that at last I am doing it. But I will not speak uselessly about giving offerings. This week we have given the Word concerning the life of a disciple of Jesus Christ, that in

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order to follow the Lord one must sacrifice and must learn faith through sacrifice. The Word we have read today is the account in which, while Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany, a woman poured on the head of Jesus a bottle of fragrant oil worth three hundred denarii and so prepared for the burial of Jesus.

The disciples of Jesus Christ must have a heart that fears God in ordinary times. They must have a heart that fears God and honors Him and loves Him, a heart that knows that God is the Creator who made them and the One who saved them from all their sins, and that He rules over our living and our dying, our happiness and our curse and all things, and that therefore worships before Him. Even though the disciples of Jesus Christ cannot keep one hundred percent of the Word of God, they are people who basically know how to respect and love and fear God, who know that God is high, and who live by the faith that so believes.

When we read this Word today it is easy to think that it is a word telling us to give material things. But it is not that we should weigh whether one gives much or little. It is that I wish to speak of that part in which, in the heart that offers material things to the Lord, one truly fears God and offers in order to serve God and to carry out the command of the Lord. The Lord said, *"For where your treasure is, there your heart will be also" (Matthew 6:21)*. In reality, the people who fear and honor and love God offer the material things most precious to them before the Lord. This is because one of the ways in which all that faith that respects and loves and highly reveres God can be expressed is the offering of material things. Rather than offering much, offering with all one's might within the range God has permitted—that is one way of fearing God and a sign that one honors Him.

This woman too broke the flask of very costly fragrant oil, which was the whole of a year's wages that an adult obtains by laboring three hundred and sixty-five days, and poured it out at once on the head of Jesus. The fragrant oil flowed down. People saw that and said the strange thing that this woman was wasting the fragrant oil. Was this woman's pouring of fragrant oil on the head of the Lord and so serving the Lord a waste, or was it truly a good work that she did? Our Lord said: the poor are always with you and can be helped at any time, but Me you do not have always. And He said that in all the world, wherever the gospel is preached, what this woman had done would be remembered.

After being born again, the people who do not serve the Lord with what is most precious to them, whether with material things or with the body or with time, in whatever form, are people who have been saved but do not fear God. I mean that they are people who do not honor God and do not love Him.

The faithful shall overcome

God has something prepared for the people who fear Him. It is that He makes them escape the hour of tribulation. In Revelation 3:10 God spoke to the church of Philadelphia. *"Because you have kept My command to persevere, I also will keep you from the hour of trial which shall come upon the whole world, to test those who dwell on the earth" (Revelation 3:10)*. There will be an hour of testing those who live in the whole world, and the Lord will keep those who have kept the word of perseverance and make them escape that hour of trial. The hour of trial speaks of the tribulation. It is that hour of tribulation which appears in Revelation chapter 13, in which the Antichrist comes out and makes people receive a mark on the right hand or

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on the forehead, and those who do not receive the mark are killed.

Let us look at Revelation 17:12 through 14. *"The ten horns that thou sawest are ten kings, who have received no kingdom as yet; but they receive authority as kings, with the beast, for one hour. These have one mind, and they give their power and authority unto the beast. These shall war against the Lamb, and the Lamb shall overcome them, for he is Lord of lords, and King of kings; and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful–ASV" (Revelation 17:12–14)*. In the age of the ten horns and the ten kings, Satan the Devil gives authority to a certain man, and the nations and peoples that belong to him oppose Christ; but since Jesus Christ is the King of kings, He overcomes them. And He said, *"and they also shall overcome that are with him, called and chosen and faithful."* Here the word "faithful" speaks of those who in ordinary times feared God and served the Lord well. It is that the heart is faithful and the faith is faithful—that even though one may err and be lacking once or twice, in the deepest center of the heart he honors God, does not set another god before God, and loves and follows God most of all. He said that such people overcome. To overcome does not mean that they are not killed. It means that they are not defeated.

Only when we fear God in ordinary times do we overcome even in the time of tribulation

Fearing God is a thing that must be done from ordinary times; it is not a thing one does after growing old or in the hour of tribulation. The person who does not have in the center of his heart a heart that fears God in ordinary times is all the more bewildered when that time comes. He is already having a hard

time, and even if he tries at that point to have a heart that truly fears God, he is too distracted. Only the person who in ordinary times has in the center of his heart a heart that fears God, who therefore knows how to reckon what is most precious, who knows how to sacrifice, who, though lacking, knows how to follow the Lord, and who knows how to offer what is costly—only such a person overcomes as a faithful one even in that hour of tribulation. Other people do not overcome that hour of tribulation. I look ahead to that by faith. That is why God makes some people escape the hour of trial, and permits trial to others and lets them suffer terribly in it.

But the person who fears God is not so. Because he always fears God in ordinary times, even when that time comes it becomes a natural thing for him still to fear God and to fight and oppose the Antichrist. Without anyone prompting him from behind, he says, "Since you oppose God, I cannot believe your word and cannot follow you," and whether the other side kills him by force or not, in his heart he never submits. But the person who in ordinary times had little heart of fearing and revering and loving God, when that hour comes around, has all the more fear and is rather broken. The faithful overcome—and what is the opposite of that? It means that those who are not faithful are defeated.

Therefore if one would become a disciple of Jesus Christ, he must have such faith, which honors and loves God and knows how to offer to the Lord the precious things he has, and not merely follow the Lord with his body. He must learn that in ordinary times. If he does not do it in ordinary times, he is distracted when tribulation suddenly comes. Fear comes upon the people who do not fear God. The hearts of the people who do not love God are not settled, and so, drifting about as the wind blows and as the waves beat, they fall away into some strange place.

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Saying “material things, material things” does not mean that only material things are required. It is the heart that is required. It is not that the Lord requires it because He has no money; even though God’s side would not require it, on our side, because we love the Lord, we offer the most precious thing as an expression of that. Material things can be the measure of a man’s heart. We cannot fully discern a man’s heart by material things alone, but generally, where material things go the heart goes, and it is said that where the treasure is, there the heart is. This woman thought of how the Lord had forsaken the throne of heaven, come to this earth clothed with a human body, been baptized by John for a sinner like her and so had sin passed on to Him, been nailed to the Cross and died, and risen again; and being so thankful for the grace by which He saved her completely, she broke a flask of the most costly fragrant oil and poured it on the head of Jesus. She performed beforehand the burial of Jesus, that is, the burial of the salvation by which He saves sinners.

Now is the time when we must serve the Lord

The Lord said that the poor can always be helped, but that He is not always with us. In fact the opportunities in which we can serve the Lord are not always there. Moreover, in this age we do not know how many more years we can serve the Lord. It is short. I work in any case in order to serve this gospel together with the workers and the saints. It is because I have the thought that if we do not serve the gospel in this present age, we will not be able to serve the gospel. So although it has not yet come before our eyes, I look ahead by faith and serve the Lord with all my might. As I go on doing so, it is hard and there are times when I am disappointed. When I see the lukewarm faith of some

of the saints I am frustrated. It is not that we can serve the Lord at any time; now is the time when we can serve the Lord, and although we do not know how suddenly the world may be overturned from now on and although the signs of it appear far too plainly, I think how very much at ease they are. Sometimes, because of such people, I am rather about to fall into temptation. "Am I the one who is mad, or are we who live for the Lord mad, and are those people the normal ones?" If one does not look at the Word of God and does not get a spiritual sense of things, the temptation rather comes the other way round.

But the clear thing is that the sound of the footsteps of the Lord drawing near is heard more and more. That sound is heard so plainly that I cannot turn away from it. I can serve now, but if I put this off, if I miss this present moment, I will regret it forever. When the time of tribulation comes, what can we do? Because we have money, can we make books? Can we send them abroad? We can do nothing at all. We can only eat and drink under restriction in our own town. If this world really had, say, ten years left, we might hum an old song and take our ease. But we must do it now. If we offer material things, we must offer them now; if we spend material things, we must spend them now.

The time really is drawing near when the Lord will give an hour of trial to this earth, and before this comes we must preach the gospel to the whole world; and after we have preached the gospel, we entrust to God however He may work at the last. The work we can do, we must do now. Dear fellow believers, if you wish to serve the Lord, serve Him now. Do not even think of serving Him after a few years. When that time comes, it will be of no use even if you bring money. Just as in farming there is a time to sow the seed and a time to give water and a time to give fertilizer, so there is a time. If you would serve now, serve now. Do not try to serve later. We do not know about tomorrow. To

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do at present what God desires at present, to do faithfully the works God has entrusted, and to honor and love God more than men and more than material things—that is to fear God.

I reckon that we will finish making the foreign booklets within two years, and that within three years at the longest we will preach the gospel to the whole world. It is not that I preach it alone; because we have our workers, though they are not many, like the three hundred mighty men of Gideon, this number is more than enough to preach it all. It is not that the work gets done only when there are many workers. I say this to you and I say it to myself as well: if you would serve, serve now; do not save up your strength and try to serve later, but serve now.

If there is no heart that fears Him, in the end we come to leave the Lord

The people who do not know how to fear God now, but who, simply because they have been saved, fix their minds and say, "I will do only this much at my own level," are people who have no heart that fears God. That is like doing it as a duty, and it is dull. "Lord, I am thankful that You saved me, but do not require too much of me. If You require too much I will not do even this much, so do not upset me; I will do well ten years from now, twenty years from now, so wait until then." This is entirely to control the Lord as one pleases, and to treat the Lord as though one were admonishing his own youngest brother. Is our serving the Lord like stamping in at a company, working out of duty, stamping out, and drawing a salary? We serve the Lord because we are thankful that He saved us from sin, because we are thankful that the Lord saved the whole of mankind. Offering material things and serving souls—all of this is done because we

love the Lord.

What I am saying is that the people who do not fear God must be prepared to leave the church from now on. Do you think that a person leaves because he wants to leave? Do the boats that drift on a river or on the sea drift because they want to drift? The engine breaks down and they drift, or the rope that tied them at the riverside comes loose and they wander about without an owner. Then, when they meet a reef, they strike it and are broken and the water comes in, and enduring and enduring, at last they sink. The conclusion is this. If there is no heart that fears Him, then even though we have been saved we cannot but leave the Lord. If a man does not count Jesus truly precious in his heart, and does not acknowledge and honor and love and fear and thank Him for the fact that Jesus Christ is his Lord and his God, then with the one thing of having been saved he is pushed along by circumstances and held captive by his own weakness, and because of the heart that loves himself more than Jesus he is gradually pushed out and drifts and drifts away. In the end he disappears from the church and does not overcome the world.

There must be in our hearts a heart that fears God. There must be faith that believes that God is alive, that He made us and saved us, that He gives us also the kingdom of heaven and is the Master who rules over all things, and that gives thanks and honors and exalts Him and prays and serves that God as one's own God. Only then can we live a life of faith until the Lord comes, and follow the Lord though we are weak, and live as disciples of the Lord. Even though one is weak, he says, "Lord, I am so lacking," and behaves like a child before Him and gives thanks and serves; but if he makes light of the Lord nothing at all comes of it. The people who fear God serve the Lord even in small matters. This woman who poured fragrant oil on the head of Jesus did not do this because she had not been saved. She was

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a woman who knew who Jesus was, why Jesus was baptized by John, why He died on the Cross, and why He rose again. That is why she poured the fragrant oil. Jesus said that she had poured fragrant oil on His body for the time when He would die and be buried, and that she was one who had prepared beforehand for His burial. I mean that she offered material things because she was one who feared God.

The gospel is going out now to the whole world

The Bible speaks countless times of preaching the gospel with material things. It said to make friends with unrighteous mammon, and it said to sow the seed without watching the wind. Our English booklets really have been made and have gone out. We made contracts with the four largest distributors in America. Those people are not simple people. Their specialists inspect a book, and if it looks like a copied book they do not accept it at all. Moreover, they immediately place a book written about Christianity by an Oriental a rank lower. I wrote this in the book: this book is the first book in the world under this title since the age of the apostles; you also examine the content; let theologians see it and let the high men of the denominations see it and let laymen and all the prisoners in the jails see it; that Jesus came to this earth and was baptized by John, and so had the sins of mankind passed on to Him and bore them all, and bearing the sin of the world died on the Cross, and rose from the dead and saved all sinners from sin—this is the truth and the true gospel of the water and the Spirit; see it, believe it. We preached the gospel like that. Even now countless people pass those booklets around and works of receiving the remission of sins are taking place.

Countless e-mails come from abroad. In a certain country they say that they have seen such a book for the first time, that it is so amazing, and ask whether we can come and hold meetings. They say that they will print our booklets cheaply themselves and distribute them to their own people and to their pastors. People who have received the remission of sins and say that they will translate them into their own language have arisen, and we have entrusted the translation to them. Those people with whom we exchange e-mails are not ordinary people; they are people fairly well recognized in their field in their country. Is this gospel that we have something to be ashamed of? Was the offering of material things to serve this gospel a waste? It is absolutely not a waste.

Books have gone into China as well. Sending books to a worker there, I told him to stand in front of a church and, when people were going in and coming out, to say nothing but only hand out the books and leave the place quickly. It is because it is a place where, if things go wrong, one is arrested. But contact comes from the people who received the books. They say that there is such a good book, that they have clearly come to know why Jesus was baptized by John and bore sin and died on the Cross and rose again, this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and they ask for more books and ask who on earth we are. Contact even came asking us to send just thirty books so that each of the thirty people meeting in an underground church could be given one. We were anxious in case they might be public security officers, but we said that if things went wrong and a fine had to be paid we would send the money for the fine, so meet them; and the books were delivered. So far seven hundred books have gone in, and they keep going in, cut into units of a few books a week. As long as those books are not thrown away carelessly, they keep circulating. In China a craze for believing in Jesus has

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arisen and there are many believers, but there is no true gospel. If the Lord continues to permit it in the days ahead, we may reckon that the preaching of the gospel will be completed in China as well. It is the same in the English-speaking world. In Central Asia too there are far too many places to work, and we must print a great many books.

The European side has been covered over by Catholicism. Even so, Christianity will bloom once more. This time a book has gone into Germany for the first time. What kind of country is Germany? It is the country where Luther was, who cried out that the just shall live by faith. But Luther also did not preach this gospel. He came out of Catholicism and brought about a liberation, but by Luther's time the kernel of this gospel had already disappeared. It was a gospel in which, believe as one might unto death, sin was not removed. In this last age God has bestowed special grace and, through us who are lacking, has received our service and accomplished His will and entrusted these works to us in order to give us reward and blessing. It is only because I do not tell it all, lest it be called boasting, that you do not know; there are tremendously many amazing things. Dear fellow believers, do not turn away. Take part in serving this gospel with material things also, and serve. If you do not do it, God will do it through other people. Those who have gone ahead are laboring until their mouths are all sore and their hair falls out. Let us do it together.

Serve the Lord now with what is most precious

Now is the time to serve the Lord. The time in which we can serve the Lord is not always there; perhaps there may be only a few years. The very fact that one says he is a person who fears

God and yet does not serve the Lord with material things is already evidence that he has no heart that loves the Lord. If he cannot serve because he has no material things, that cannot be helped; but if the heart itself is there, he can pray before God. He comes to pray, "God, let me be able to serve You," and to ask, and to obtain, and to challenge himself, and to offer to the Lord. Rather than telling you to offer much money, I am telling you that there must be a heart that fears Him in your heart. If only the heart is there, what is there that cannot be done? Living in this urgent age, ought there to be saints who only look on while the gospel is preached? The servants of God do not directly entrust the hard work to you, but work through the night and go abroad and labor; yet in fact we are all alike serving the Lord. It is only that you support from the rear and those who have gone ahead do their best in front.

What the people of the world would do in a hundred years we can do in one year. Even what they would do in five hundred years we can do in one year. It is because this gospel is the truth. If only the book gets into their hands and is read, if only their questions are answered when they come asking with doubts, they clearly know and believe why Jesus is their Savior, how He saved them from sin, and why they go to heaven if they believe this. Let us serve the gospel. Like this woman, who broke an alabaster flask of very costly pure spikenard oil and poured it on the head of Jesus, I hope that you will truly offer your precious things to the Lord. You may say that in the end this is a story about giving money, but it is not a story about giving to me; it is about offering the most costly things for the preaching of the gospel before that Lord who saved you and saved all the people of the world. I have not the least shame in my conscience in telling this story.

Let us serve. Your service will absolutely not be in vain. It is

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worthwhile. The opportunity is now. Let us serve now. From now on also we will set up bases in every part of the world and go on preaching the gospel in each language area. Let us take part. Let us do it together, and go together to a good place, and when difficulty and tribulation come, let us overcome by faith and by fearing God. Let us live by faith. I have finished. Let us pray. ✉

Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Serve the Lord with all your strength

< Mark 14:3-9 >

"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'"

The Lord goes to the house of Simon the leper

Today we have read Mark chapter 14. It is a record concerning a thing that happened while Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. It seems that our Lord really liked to eat at the house of Simon the leper. It must have been because it was a meal served with thanksgiving. The Lord

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really likes the hospitality of the saints. The Lord goes more readily to a leper than to a man who is not a leper. To a man who is lacking and full of mistakes and full of sin—to such a man our Lord goes and bestows grace and removes all his sins. If that is so, then we too were lepers long ago. In this world there is no one who is not a spiritual leper. It is because we are lepers that Jesus came in order to heal us.

To that house of Simon the leper a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly pure spikenard oil, and she broke the flask and poured it on the head of Jesus. This fragrant oil is extremely expensive. It is the price one could buy only by working hard for a year as an adult and saving without spending a penny. Think of it. She broke that whole sum and poured it out on the head of Jesus. If it were we, how much we would grudge it! Moreover, that was an age in which they lived as a subject state of Rome and really had nothing to eat. If we think of how our own country had its grain and its brassware and even its spoons all taken away under Japanese rule, we can know how precious material things must have been in that age. In that age she poured out on the head of Jesus all the money earned in a year, and so not only some of the people beside her but even among the disciples of Jesus a man like Judas thought that she was uselessly wasting it. How good it would have been, they said, if it had been sold for three hundred denarii and given to the poor; it is precious fragrant oil, so that even one drop would give off a strong scent, and she poured out that expensive thing whole—so it was a waste.

But Jesus did not think so. *"She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Mark 14:8–9)*. Jesus Christ was well pleased

and received that fragrant oil very gladly. We must know how important it is to know the heart of Jesus Christ. If we know the heart of Jesus Christ, we cannot speak of waste.

For you have the poor with you always

The core of what the Lord said is here. *"For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always."* In this world there are very many poor people, and we can help them whenever we wish. But the work of God cannot be done whenever we wish. Also, the word that the poor are always with us is at the same time a word that we ourselves are always poor. Go and ask the man who has the most money in this world. Is that man's heart not poor? For that man there is always something more that he needs. The greed of a man's heart can never be filled. If we try to serve the Lord after all the poverty of our hearts has been satisfied, we can never serve the Lord. It is the same if we try to serve the Lord after we have helped all the poor.

In reality we see that on this earth. Many countries pour grain into the countries where there is famine. Our country also has helped in ways beyond counting. But however much is poured in, do those countries now say that they are full? They still starve, and are always pressed for lack of necessities. As the old saying goes, that not even the state can stop poverty, however much the government helps it does not work. In prosperous countries too there are more beggars than one can count. From the time Jesus Christ came until now, on this globe the poor and the sick and the weak have not disappeared. However good the policies of a nation may be, they do not disappear.

If this woman had thought of the poor more than of Jesus

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Christ, she would not have prepared the burial of Jesus Christ, that is, the gospel. Fragrant oil is a thing whose fragrance overflows, and so it speaks precisely of the gospel. If we think first of the work of men, we cannot serve Jesus Christ. But if we truly think of men, then by doing the work of Jesus Christ first we can serve both the Lord and men.

The greatest righteousness is the gospel, and what we know we must apply

We have been born again and live the life of the righteous as new creatures. Then for what must the life of the righteous be lived? We must know what righteousness is and what kind of life is a righteous life. Righteousness is a right thing. Then what is the greatest righteousness in this world and in heaven? The greatest righteousness is that gospel by which God came to this earth and removed the sins of us human beings and made us children of God. Just as, when Jesus was baptized, He said to John, "Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness," so removing the sins of human beings is the most right thing. Jesus was baptized by John and so had all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross, and by rising again He fulfilled all righteousness. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the greatest righteousness. Therefore to live for this gospel is the most right thing in our lives, and there is nothing in this world greater than this.

We know how precious this gospel is, and we also know how it is right for us to live. But if it ends with knowing, it is nothing. In reality the use and the application of what one knows is the most important thing. There was a clever man I once saw in the

newspaper, who had taken dozens of doctoral degrees. That man lived for the pleasure of taking doctorates, and without ever once applying it to his life he fell ill and died while writing a thesis. On the other hand there are people who have only finished elementary school and yet give great benefit to society and succeed. There are also people who, though they graduated from a good university, are ashamed to do work with their bodies and find it wounding to their pride to bow under another, and so can do neither this work nor that work and idle at home and eat. They lived without applying what they had learned. We know the righteousness of God, and we know for what and how it is right to live. Then how do we take part in it, how do we live serving what is right and so finish our lives—this is the task of our lives.

This Word does not mean that only this woman, like Mary, does so. Long ago we were lepers, but now we have been changed into Marys. This woman served the Lord with the whole of her life and with all the strength she had. The Bible recorded this in order to tell us what kind of life we must live. If we try to serve the Lord according to circumstances—if we serve a little when we have material things and do not serve when we have none, and one drops out because he is a student, and one drops out because he is doing military service, and one drops out because she is a mother with a baby, and all drop out—then who will serve? In the Old Testament it is said that when they paid the ransom before God, the rich were not to give more and the poor were not to give less. The rich and the poor and the students and the young people, everyone alike, serve the Lord alike and take part alike in this right work of the gospel. There is no one at all who is excluded here. In an ordinary church the pastors are easily excluded, but among those who have received the remission of sins before God, whether pastor or evangelist or whoever, all take part alike and uniformly. To serve the Lord

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with all one's might from whatever position one is in—that is to take part in the work of righteousness.

Do you love Me more than these?

After He rose again, our Lord came to Peter. Peter had followed the Lord for three years but did not know well about serving, and the disciples even quarreled with one another over the higher place. What was the first question the Lord asked such a Peter? *"Simon, son of Jonah, do you love Me more than these?" (John 21:15)*. This is an extremely important and practical question. A man has most of his relations with men, and lives loving men. Yet the Lord asked, do you love Me more than these? Peter answered, *"Yes, Lord; You know that I love You."* If the Lord asked you this, how would you answer?

I applied that question to myself and thought about it. After I first met the Lord, I said very forcefully, "Since You saved me, I love the Lord more." But as I went on in the life of faith, I came to know that in my heart there was a loving of people and a loving of the world, and especially, more than anything else, I came to discover that I loved myself, that there was in me a heart that loved myself more than God. So I thought about it. Is this self of mine that I love so much really worth that much? When I set the Lord and myself side by side, which is it right to love more? When I thought about it, compared with the love with which the Lord loved me, my loving of myself had no value either. The love with which the Lord loved me is so great that it cannot be expressed in words, and it does not change, and the more the days pass the more precious it is, and it is so perfect and eternal. Because that love is greater, I knew that it is right for me to serve the Lord rather than to serve myself. So I

understand that Peter could give that answer boldly. Even when we do wrong, even when we make mistakes, the Lord with unchanging love regards us the more preciously and loves us the more, the weaker we are. The love of men cannot be compared with that love. So we cannot but love the Lord and come to love Him, and cannot but believe and come to believe, and follow Jesus Christ because it is of worth and precious and right.

Because we human beings are small, when we love something we fall completely into it. Love cannot be divided among this and that. It cannot be that one loves the world and loves the Lord as well. So we must think beforehand. Where we must set our hearts and what we must follow after, what we must serve and in what work we must take part—it is because, according to where we invest the whole of ourselves, the profit of the business remains. If we would live a beneficial life and not live our lives in vain, only by investing in the right place is there no regret, and do we come to receive blessing from God and live enjoying it.

Some people may think that if they follow the Lord they lose everything. At first there are many things lost because of the Lord. But what is business? It is investing in order to leave a profit. It is because one reckons what will remain that the money that goes in is not grudged. In the same way, if we love the Lord and follow Him, at first there are many things lost—time or body or material things—but afterward what is gained through the Lord is inexhaustible. Five barley loaves and two fish were brought before the Lord, and after they had eaten there remained an inexhaustible amount. The Lord said, *"Assuredly, I say to you, there is no one who has left house or brothers or sisters or father or mother or wife or children or lands, for My sake and the gospel's, who shall not receive a hundredfold now in this time—houses and brothers and sisters and mothers and children and*

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lands, with persecutions—and in the age to come, eternal life" (Mark 10:29–30). The one who has forsaken for the Lord receives persecutions along with it, but receives a hundredfold in this time and eternal life in the age to come. This is not a joke but the truth. If one knows this he follows the Lord, and if he does not know it he can only mark time like a man who does not know how to do business.

Service is done through the church

We have received the remission of sins before the Lord, but other people also must receive the remission of sins. Our families also, our friends also, all the people around us must receive the remission of sins. If we truly love those people we must serve them, and not serve them in any way at all but, first of all, serve them through the church. The way of loving and following the Lord also comes from this service. If there is no such service in the life of a Christian, he will surely come to serve the world. Even in loving God, wisdom is needed. Please keep in mind the fact that apart from the church, however much money one has personally, he cannot serve the Lord completely. The church of God surely goes forward toward the gospel. Therefore to look at what is needed for the church to preach the gospel, and to serve in that part with material things or with service or with prayer or in various ways, is to serve God. If one truly wishes to love and follow the Lord, he must have eyes that look at the church.

At the last our Lord becomes the Judge and separates the sheep from the goats. To the people on one side He says that when He was hungry they did not give Him food and when He was thirsty they did not give Him drink, and to the people on the

other side He says that when He was hungry they gave Him food. In reality that Word is a matter of whether, when a born-again church goes forward toward the gospel, one took part or did not take part in the prayer and the material things and the service needed for the gospel. The Lord is saying that that taking part was done to whom—it was done to our Lord.

The gospel is not preached with the mouth alone. Even when we would show hospitality to our elders, it is not accomplished merely by saying with the mouth that we love them; service must go in and the heart must go in and labor must go in. And however much labor and service and prayer and heart go in, if material things do not go in, no mark of it appears. Our Lord desires that your hearts take part in serving the gospel, and that your labor and devotion and material things and prayer and time take part. Of course we cannot offer the whole of ourselves. We must have what we shall eat and drink. But if there is something needed for the church to preach the gospel, we are not to say, "I have no money, so I will drop out," but all the members are to put in their hearts and their material things and their time, however little, and take part. When we do so, that work goes up before God. As I serve the gospel I experience that material things are needed in very great quantity. There are brothers and sisters who serve the Lord with material things and look after the church, and it is not a thing that is done once and finished, but done again and again. Because a man is a material being, it is not too much to say that in fact the whole of a man's heart is contained within his material things. If you truly love someone, do you not first of all want to buy him a present? To say that one loves the Lord, and to say that this is right, and yet not do it—that does not make sense.

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The church needs the mighty men of David

Although Catholicism went the wrong way, it exists so firmly to this day because within it there were people who in their own way devoted themselves and put in material things. How much more, when in the church of God, which has the true gospel, there are young men and grown men and sisters and students who live for the Lord, does the church of God become prosperous and flourishing.

In the Bible David appears. How did David become king? The Bible says that there were mighty men who laid down their lives for David. When David was pushed to one side in a battle and death was at hand, one of his men came out and struck down that enemy; and when the enemy army swarmed like ants and the spirit of his own army was broken, one mighty man went out and stirred up the fight alone, and by that spirit the whole army would win. In 2 Samuel chapter 23 it says, *"These are the names of the mighty men whom David had" (2 Samuel 23:8)*, and it records one by one the names and the deeds of those mighty men, and says that the total was thirty-seven men. Before David died, he recalls who fought for him and how. The Bible says that David could unite Israel and take control of the surrounding nations because under him there were mighty men who laid down their lives and lived entirely for the king. David was not a man who fought well but a man whose heart was joined with God. And to fight for the king is precisely to fight for Jesus Christ. It is because David fought not for himself but in order to establish the kingdom of God.

How many mighty men there are in a church who serve the Lord and live for the Lord—God looks at that. The standard of whether that church is a strong church or a weak church is there. Do you know who the mighty men in the church are? They are

the people whose hearts are pure. The people whose hearts are pure advance when the king advances and retreat when he retreats. Without calculating whether they will live or die, they live in submission to that command. That is a mighty man. The young people and the students are precisely the mighty men in the church. Grown men have much to measure with a ruler and many worries, and so there are times when they tremble even while knowing a thing is right. But if the young people say a thing is right, may they not push ahead like a bulldozer, without even having to worry about wife and children?

Learn to serve the Lord in the time of your youth

From the time of the young people's group, from the time of the students' group, one must learn to serve the Lord. Only then, when you become grown men, does God give you blessing. This time is extremely important. If one cannot serve the Lord in the time of his youth, when will he serve Him? When one becomes a grown man there are crying children and the responsibility of supporting them, and he cannot do as he pleases. But when one is young there is nothing to hinder him and he can live entirely for the Lord. There is no need to worry about how one will live afterward. If in the time of his youth he lives for the Lord and the Lord gives him blessing, then afterward he can live even if he marries empty-handed. If one obtains within his heart the faith that believes in the Lord, that is better than obtaining any wealth of this world. Material things may be there and then disappear, but faith is not so. Faith that has once come through the Lord is more precious than gold.

Serving is a thing one must keep doing. The person who keeps doing it can do it, but the person who has not done it

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cannot do it. Just as it is said that the one who has much comes to have more and the one who has little has even what he has taken away, so the person who serves the Lord well comes to serve more, and the person who does not serve has even his heart of loving the Lord all taken away, and afterward he does not even know well whether he has received the remission of sins or not. The Lord said, *"You are the salt of the earth; but if the salt loses its flavor, how shall it be seasoned? It is then good for nothing but to be thrown out and trampled underfoot by men" (Matthew 5:13)*. It is not that the salt changes and becomes not salt, but that its value is determined according to whether it is useful or not. If a born-again person loses the right heart, he is only trampled by the world.

When the servants of God incline their hearts toward the gospel and announce it, the young people in the church and all the saints join their hearts in that part and put in material things and fight the fight together. Must there not be soldiers in order to fight? One cannot go out alone and do all the fighting. If you and I do not serve the Lord, we receive the remission of sins among ourselves and it ends among ourselves. But if we serve the Lord, in the spiritual war we never lose. Because Jesus Christ has overcome, if we fight we surely win. Even the clubs of society gather dues and use them for volunteer activities. If we are young people in our church, we must not expect the church to do something for us, but must ask how we may gather our strength and our material things and our prayer and our hearts and serve the work by which souls are saved. Let the young people gather dues as well and start up the enterprises of the young people. If a church does nothing at all, it is asleep and it is dead. If one says that he loves the Lord and yet does not do the work in which the Lord delights, he does not love Him. We must start up an enterprise of preaching, and start up an

enterprise of praying, and start up an enterprise of putting in material things. We will also carry out literature evangelism in practice. If you save a little from your pocket money and offer it before the Lord, and if each of the organizations gathers in that way and serves the part needed for the gospel, that strength is mighty. Just as, when a small barley loaf was offered before the Lord, the Lord raised up a great work, so the Lord does not desire a great thing at first but desires a small thing. And He takes that and multiplies it greatly.

Serve the Lord. If you follow the Lord and love the Lord and serve the Lord, God Himself supplies you with all the things a man needs. This is not theory and it is not sugarcoating. *"Blessed are those who hunger and thirst for righteousness, For they shall be filled" (Matthew 5:6).* And He said, *"Blessed are the meek, For they shall inherit the earth" (Matthew 5:5)*. It is a word that if we receive the meaning of the Word of the Lord meekly just as it is and do just as it says, God makes him rich. The Word of the Lord is actually fulfilled. In the days when I first began my ministry I wanted very much to do a righteous work and to live a life of righteousness all my life, but no conditions were prepared at all. Yet when I hungered and thirsted for righteousness and sought and asked for righteousness, God opened a way for me to do this work of righteousness until I was filled. I obtained fullness. Do you believe that fact? The Bible said that the righteous never come to beg. *"I have been young, and now am old; Yet I have not seen the righteous forsaken, Nor his descendants begging bread" (Psalm 37:25)*. God gives blessing to the righteous man and to the man whose heart is meek, and gives blessing to his descendants also, and even when he falls He Himself upholds him and raises him up so that he is not utterly cast down.

After being born again there is no secret of succeeding in the

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world. There is only the secret of succeeding in the Lord. If a born-again person goes out into the world, at first it seems to go well, but afterward he is shaken about by Satan the Devil and cannot endure. The people of the world, before they are born again, live that way in any case; and Satan the Devil, just as one warms slop and feeds it to fatten a pig in order to eat it, uses every means to feed the people of the world in that way and send them to hell. But a born-again person is different. Even if he flees to the end of the sea, the Lord follows him and chastens him and holds him until he returns. The secret of our succeeding is to serve the Lord and to receive the Word of the Lord meekly and believe it and follow it, and to take part in the work of God.

Finally I say it once more. I hope that you will serve the Lord. If you and I do not serve the Lord, there is no one on this globe to serve the Lord. But if you and I serve the Lord, the Lord takes that and does business with it and makes tens of millions of people receive the remission of sins, and through them makes yet more people receive the remission of sins, and repays us and our descendants for everything in which we served the Lord. That does not mean that you should quit school. Studying also for the Lord, earning material things also for the Lord, living family life also for the Lord—everything can be done for the Lord. When we do so, the Lord draws in all the things of the world and fills you with them. Do not desire to receive, but serve. Within the limit of the strength with which you can serve, I hope that you will serve souls, and brothers and sisters, and the church, and the gospel. I hope you know the fact that this is precisely blessing for you. I will close the Word. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Eat the flesh and drink the blood

< Mark 14:22-24 >

"And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many.'"

< John 6:53-58 >

"Then Jesus said to them, 'Most assuredly, I say to you, unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you. Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed. He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him. As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever.'" (John 6:53–58).

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The Lord's Supper commemorates the salvation by which He saved us

One of the last things our Lord spoke to us when He came to this earth is the Lord's Supper. When He was on this earth, at the feast of the Passover, the Lord *"took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body,'"* and taking the cup He said, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."* Through the Lord's Supper God spoke of the salvation by which God saved us, and of the promise and the plan He promised to mankind, and of the love and the righteousness of God, and He said that all the people who believe the righteousness of God should preach the gospel while they live on this earth and perform the Lord's Supper and so commemorate this salvation.

What is the blood of the covenant here? In the Old Testament, in Genesis and Leviticus and elsewhere, God promised that He would send the Messiah, that is, the Savior, through the seed of the woman, and that our Lord would bear sin and die for us and so save us. Just as He promised, in the age of the New Testament our Lord came to this earth and gave up His own body, and was baptized by John and so received our every sin passed on to Him and bore it, and bearing the sin of the world went to the Cross and was nailed there and shed His blood and died, and rose from the dead and saved us—this is what He is speaking of.

God has saved us and has given us the righteousness of God. The Lord told us to commemorate the Lord's Supper, and what we are to do when we come to the Lord's Supper is to believe and to remember once more that the Lord gave us His own body and gave us His own blood and so remitted all our sins and saved us from all sin, and to preach the gospel to the whole world.

To eat His flesh is to believe the baptism that Jesus received from John

Our Lord said in John chapter 6, *"unless you eat the flesh of the Son of Man and drink His blood, you have no life in you" (John 6:53)*. Then He said, *"Whoever eats My flesh and drinks My blood has eternal life, and I will raise him up at the last day. For My flesh is food indeed, and My blood is drink indeed" (John 6:54–55)*. Then how can we eat the flesh of Jesus and how can we drink the blood of Jesus? We eat the flesh of Jesus by the faith that believes the baptism which Jesus received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River in order to bear all our sins on His own body. Otherwise there is no way to eat the flesh of Jesus. Bearing the sins passed on to Him by that baptism, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and rose again, and so accomplished our salvation.

That the Lord said My flesh is food indeed and My blood is drink indeed means that the Lord came to this earth and, in order to give us eternal life and make us children of God and give us the righteousness of God that never changes forever, was baptized by John and so had all the sins of you and me passed on to Him and bore them, and bearing those sins died on the Cross and rose again. So we eat the flesh of Jesus by the faith that believes that through the baptism Jesus received all our sins passed over to Him, and that Jesus took away all our sins and made us without sin. To eat and drink His flesh and blood is to do so by faith in the baptism Jesus received and in the blood He shed on the Cross to save us. This is the greatest truth of Christianity. Before He rose again and ascended, the Lord charged them to make disciples of all the nations and to baptize them in the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit, and the other thing is the Lord's Supper. The Lord's Supper

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contains, compressed within it, all of the salvation by which He saved us.

Jesus came to this earth clothed with a body, and by the baptism Jesus received and by the blood of the Cross He saved you and me. Therefore the Lord's Supper must not be approached without the faith that believes that the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross saved me. First there must be a heart that believes that Jesus, by being baptized by John, bore the sins of you and me. Do you acknowledge that you and I sin all our lives, and that because of that sin we cannot but die before God and cannot but be cursed and cannot but go to hell? That is the fact. If we think about it a little, we are people who cannot but sin even though we do not wish to, and cannot but die. Yet our Lord, in order to save us from sin and make us children of God, came to this earth and for you and me was baptized by John and shed the blood of the Cross and rose from the dead. We believe that with thanksgiving in our hearts.

In the Word of God it is said that the wages of sin is death. The man who sins and yet does not know that sin is sin, and cannot acknowledge the Word of God that the wages of sin is death and hell, must think about it before God. And he must believe. It is that we are people who cannot but die and cannot but go to hell because of the sins we commit. Yet our Lord loved us, and in order to make us without sin was baptized by John and shed the blood of the Cross and rose again—how then can we not be thankful? The righteousness of God is a thing to be thankful for, and the love of God is a thing to be thankful for. The almighty God, who made all the universe, forsook His own glory and came to this earth in order to save you and me. The One who came is precisely Jesus, and the word Jesus means Savior. The method by which He came as the Savior of mankind and saved us from sin, from destruction, from hell, is precisely

the baptism that Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection from that death. It is this that we are to commemorate.

The blood of Jesus is drink indeed

If we do not believe the fact that the baptism Jesus received from John bore our sins, we cannot receive the remission of sins. We receive the remission of sins by faith. We pass over all our sins by faith. God did not ask us; on God's side, in order to make us without sin, He had Him be baptized by John and so receive our sins passed over to Him. And bearing those sins, He was nailed on the Cross and received the punishment for sin for us, and by rising from the dead He saved us.

Therefore the blood of Jesus is drink indeed. Just as, when the throat is dry, drinking a cool drink makes one refreshed inside, would it not be refreshing if someone bore my sins in my place and received all the punishment? It is a matter of the heart. Because the heart too belongs to our personhood, the heart itself is refreshed. The Lord was baptized by John and so bore all our sins, and bearing the sin of the world He went and was beaten in the place of you and me, and His flesh was torn and His whole body became covered with wounds. *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5)*. Because He bore our sins through the baptism, He was pierced and bruised and nailed and poured out all the blood in His heart, and on the third day rose from the dead. He did so in order to save the lives of you and me. Because of the sins we commit all our lives in heart and in thought and in body, He was baptized by John and died on the Cross and rose

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again and saved you and me. The Lord saved us in this way, and this is what we are to commemorate.

This week, as we have preached the Word and heard it, we have heard the whole gospel. Dear fellow believers, do you believe? Have you believed and received the remission of sins? Do you have the righteousness of God? However lacking you and I may be, we have no sin. It is this that we commemorate.

A faith that does not eat the flesh but drinks only the blood is wrong

"He who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me, and I in him" (John 6:56). In the Bible eating the flesh is extremely important. But present-day Christianity does not eat the flesh and keeps drinking only the blood. Even while singing of the precious blood of the Lord, they do not know the baptism that Jesus received from John. In order to save us, Jesus came to this earth clothed with a human body and lived a life of thirty-three years, and the Creator was despised by the creature and struck on the cheek and underwent unspeakable humiliation, and for us He was baptized by John and so bore all our sins and died on the Cross and rose again and saved us. Yet while saying that they believe what He did, they do not eat the flesh of Jesus and speak only of the blood of the Cross. This is exactly the same as when the people of Israel made a golden calf and said that this was the god that had led them out of Egypt, and danced and served an idol. If a man does not know and does not believe that Jesus bore all our sins by the baptism He received from John, and yet discusses only the blood of the Cross, that is no different from offering a sacrifice while smearing the blood of an animal—it is the same as offering a sacrifice to an idol.

He said that he who eats My flesh and drinks My blood abides in Me. In order to save us, the Lord was baptized by John and bore all our sins and died on the Cross and rose again. It is God who saved us; it is not we who did it. *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1). "For God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that whoever believes in Him should not perish but have everlasting life" (John 3:16).* God did not ask us before He made all the universe, and He did not ask us before He took away our sins. In order to make us children of God, God made all the universe, and in the world of spiritual beings also He gave free will so that they might praise God with thanksgiving and not by compulsion, and He set everything in righteousness. In that way He saved us. He who eats the flesh of the Son of Man and drinks the blood of the Son of Man must have that believing faith. Because Jesus, through the baptism He received from John, had all our sins passed on to Him and bore them, He died on the Cross and rose again, and so He saved you and me and made the hearts of you and me clean and without sin. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Dear fellow believers, do you have sin, or do you not? We do not.

He who eats this bread will live forever

"As the living Father sent Me, and I live because of the Father, so he who feeds on Me will live because of Me. This is the bread which came down from heaven—not as your fathers ate the manna, and are dead. He who eats this bread will live forever" (John 6:57–58). That is why at the Lord's Supper we eat the bread and the wine together. If one were not to eat the bread and were to drink only the wine, there would be a great

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problem. This is the love of God that cannot be fully expressed in words, and it is the salvation by which God saved us, and we commemorate this and once more make the confession of our faith. If we had unlimited time, this salvation by which God saved us is a thing of which it would not be enough to cry out and praise forever. We must commemorate this until the day the Lord comes. Some churches commemorate it once a week, but for us, since there is much to say even about the bread alone and far too much to say even about the blood and eternal life alone, we do it twice a year, but we all gather and do it very intensively. It is a very thankful thing.

Jesus saved us by the baptism He received from John and by the blood of the Cross and by His resurrection. We believe this. By faith we commemorate it, and we will commemorate it from now on as well. To preach the gospel is to save life, and the Lord's Supper is to commemorate this salvation through a rite. We believe that Jesus saved us by the baptism He received from John and by the Cross and by the resurrection. ✉

Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

Not a waste but a good work that prepared for the burial of the Lord

< Mark 14:3-9 >

"And being in Bethany at the house of Simon the leper, as He sat at the table, a woman came having an alabaster flask of very costly oil of spikenard. Then she broke the flask and poured it on His head. But there were some who were indignant among themselves, and said, 'Why was this fragrant oil wasted? For it might have been sold for more than three hundred denarii and given to the poor.' And they criticized her sharply. But Jesus said, 'Let her alone. Why do you trouble her? She has done a good work for Me. For you have the poor with you always, and whenever you wish you may do them good; but Me you do not have always. She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial. Assuredly, I say to you, wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her.'"

Two judgments divided within one room

Jesus was eating at the house of Simon the leper in Bethany. At that time a woman whose name is not recorded came with an alabaster flask of very costly pure spikenard oil. The woman

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broke the flask and poured the fragrant oil on the head of Jesus. The people who were in the same room saw the same action, but they did not judge its meaning in the same way. Some were indignant and called it a waste. Jesus called that work a good work. On the calculation sheet of men it was a loss, but within the word of the Lord it was a service that prepared for His burial.

What is to be noticed here first is not the price of the fragrant oil but the difference of the evaluation. The fragrant oil was costly enough to be sold for more than three hundred denarii. So the words of the people sound, on the surface, very realistic and reasonable. It is the calculation that if the fragrant oil had been sold and given to the poor, it would have been a help to many people. If we hear only that calculation, the woman's action looks like a waste that is hard to explain. They saw the outward form of the action and the price of the market, but they did not see Jesus, who had the Cross before Him, and the service that could be done only at that time.

Jesus first said, *"Let her alone. Why do you trouble her?" (Mark 14:6)*. After pouring the fragrant oil the woman had to receive even the rebuke of the people. The people pressed the woman by the standard of their own calculation, but the Lord protected the woman from that pressure. True service toward the Lord does not always receive the understanding or the praise of the people around. Sometimes one can be misunderstood as doing a vain thing and treated as a person who does not know a better way. But the final evaluation of service depends not on the public opinion of the people with loud voices but on the word of the Lord.

That said, we must not make this text a shield that refuses all criticism. To give the name of a work for the Lord to everything we wish to do, and then to block the questions of others, is different from the action of the woman. The text does not say

that the woman used the fragrant oil for her own satisfaction. Jesus Himself made clear the meaning of that action. Therefore the important question is not whether people acknowledge me, but whether my service is directed toward the will of the Lord and the work of the gospel. To exalt only one's own zeal without the word of the Lord is not the good work of which this text speaks.

In that room no one is recorded as having made a long defense on the woman's side. Neither is it said that the woman herself overcame the people who rebuked her. Jesus interpreted that action and protected her. This fact frees the person who serves the gospel from the burden of having to resolve every misunderstanding with his own words. Let him give the explanation that is needed, but let him not change the purpose of his service in order to gain the recognition of people. At the same time, just as the Lord protected the woman, the church also must not carelessly trouble the person who quietly serves according to the will of the Lord, nor compare people by amounts and results. The community of faith must not be a place that drives the zealous person into a corner, nor a place that uses his zeal, but a place that discerns together and protects, so that that service is directed toward the gospel.

The broken flask revealed the direction of the heart

The woman did not open only a part of the flask and pour a little. She broke the flask. The text does not record her long explanation or her self-defense; it shows the action. At the moment the flask was broken, the fragrant oil became a thing that could not be put back or sold again. In that irreversibility the

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people saw waste. But Jesus saw within it a service done with all her strength. The woman's action was not an event of boasting of the size of a costly object, but an event in which the direction of her heart toward the Lord appeared in action.

The word *"She has done what she could. She has come beforehand to anoint My body for burial"* is the key that interprets the woman's action. Jesus did not praise the price of the fragrant oil; He said that that work had prepared beforehand for His burial. Now Jesus had before Him the way of being seized and put to death. While people did not yet properly know that way, the woman's fragrant oil became a service that prepared for the death of the Lord. The woman's action was directed toward the central event of the gospel, and therefore it was a good work.

Therefore this Word must not be changed into a command that one must necessarily offer a year's income. If we make the woman's fragrant oil the standard for the amount of an offering, or teach that only by giving great material things is one remembered by the Lord, we miss the emphasis of Jesus. The Lord did not say how wealthy the woman was, nor did He command every disciple to bring the same fragrant oil. What the Lord made clear is the fact that she did what she could, and that that strength was used in preparing for the burial of the Lord. The weight of true service lies not in an amount compared with others, but in a heart that knows the grace received and in faith directed toward the will of the Lord.

What we have also differs from person to person. Some have time and health; some have words and experience with which to preach the gospel; some have hands that quietly help and time to pray. It is not that service is impossible because one has little, nor that it automatically becomes a good work because one has much. The fact that the woman's name was not recorded also

makes us humble. The Lord is not one who uses only the great achievements of famous people. He knows the service of the person who counts the death of the Lord and the gospel precious and uses in faith the opportunity given to him.

The word “wasted” and the word “a good work”

In the judgment of the people there was a standard of efficiency. It is the claim that they could have produced a more visible result than three hundred denarii. To consider efficiency is not in itself evil. It is necessary to use the finances of the church and our time and strength wisely. But when efficiency is placed above the will of the Lord, we come to measure the work for the gospel by numbers alone. We begin to reckon how many people recognized it at once, how quickly the result is seen, and what I obtained through that work. Then the service that cannot be counted before our eyes soon looks like waste.

In the work of serving the gospel there is much time that is not immediately converted into numbers. Such is the time of quietly preaching the gospel to one soul, the time of waiting for a discouraged brother or sister to stand again on the Word, and the labor of preparing and putting in order the work of the gospel when no one is watching. If that work follows the will of the Lord and is directed toward the gospel that gives life, it is not vain because the result is not immediately seen. On the contrary, even if the praise of men and a great result follow, if it is a work that exalts one’s own name rather than the Lord, it cannot be concluded to be a good work. What one serves determines the direction of the service.

The word of Jesus does not mean that we should not help the poor. The Lord said, *“For you have the poor with you always,*

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and whenever you wish you may do them good." He did not abolish the work of helping; He spoke of the unique time of the service that this woman was now performing. The poor can be helped afterward as well, but this moment of preparing beforehand for the burial of Jesus, who had the Cross before Him, does not come again. The text does not make the caring for one's neighbor and the gospel enemies of each other. It only awakens us not to miss the opportunity of the gospel that the Lord has now entrusted to us by putting forward every good cause.

Therefore we must actually help people, and yet not end it in the satisfaction of the one who gives the help. The hand that shares food and lightens difficulty is precious. At the same time we must not regard it as enough to solve only the need before our eyes while turning away from the deepest problem of a man's sin. The gospel delivers to the man who was under sin the remission of sins and the way of new life. Neither must material help be made the bait for preaching the gospel, nor must only good deeds be left while one is ashamed of the gospel. The heart that serves the Lord does not treat the neighbor carelessly, but seeks together the way that truly makes the neighbor live.

The service that prepared for the burial and the way of the gospel

Mark chapter 14 shows the action of this woman at the time when the plan to kill Jesus is moving. In the very midst of a dark plan going forward, one person poured fragrant oil on the body of Jesus. Some tried to remove Jesus, and some rebuked the woman's action as waste, but the woman prepared for the burial of the Lord. This contrast shows that the work of serving the gospel is not always done in a comfortable setting. Even when

the current around him is going against the Lord, the man of faith turns toward the Lord.

There is no need to conclude even the part the text does not speak of, namely how far the woman understood the death of Jesus. What is important is the fact that Jesus received that action as a work that prepared beforehand for His own burial. Rather than filling in the woman's heart with imagination, we must hold fast to the Lord's interpretation. The death of the Lord was not an accident that happened unexpectedly. Jesus knew that He would soon give up His own body, and He declared the woman's fragrant oil to be a preparation for that burial. The fragrance of the fragrant oil did not become an action that would disappear but a memory connected with the death of the Lord.

To serve the gospel is not vaguely to do many religious activities. It is to count precious the work of salvation that Jesus accomplishes and to bear the portion entrusted to oneself so that that news may be delivered. Some preach the Word; some look after the actual needs so that the one who preaches may concentrate on the ministry; some serve so that a soul who has newly heard the gospel may grow within the church. No role must become a place for one's own boasting. Only when all are directed toward the burial of the Lord and the gospel that would be proclaimed afterward does it become service in one direction.

Here we must discern the opportunity. The work of helping the poor could be done afterward as well, but the opportunity of pouring fragrant oil on the body of Jesus at that time did not return once it had passed. We too have service that can be done only today. It is the work of answering the person who asks about the gospel now, the work of holding up a discouraged saint now, the work of not putting off the work of the gospel entrusted to us now. Because we cannot do everything, we must discern all the more. Rather than being dragged along by the work that

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looks urgent, we must examine before the word of the Lord what is the good work now entrusted to us.

Out of the grace received comes service with all one's strength

As we look at the woman's action there is something we must certainly make clear. It is not that the woman bought salvation because she poured the fragrant oil. Service and ministry and offerings cannot become the price of the remission of sins. Even if a man does all he can, he cannot take the place of the judgment of his own sin, and even if he piles up many good deeds, he cannot demand salvation from God. Salvation is not wages for human labor but the grace of God, received by believing in one's heart the work that Jesus accomplished. Service is not the cause for obtaining salvation but the fruit that comes out of the grace already received.

If this order is reversed, the story of the fragrant oil becomes a tool of fear and competition. It comes to press people, saying that one must give more in order to be recognized by the Lord, that one must serve longer in order for salvation to be secure, and that one must make a greater sacrifice in order to prove his faith. Such teaching does not make a man thankful to the Lord but makes him calculate his own works. The people who rebuked the woman also calculated, and the man who tries to obtain salvation by works keeps calculating. But the service of the person who believes grace is not a transaction of repaying a debt in order to maintain salvation. It is offering oneself in thanksgiving because the Lord who gave salvation is precious.

The saint who has received the remission of sins, even though the weakness and the insufficiency of the flesh remain,

no longer tries to become righteous by his own works. If by believing the salvation Jesus accomplished all sin has been removed at once from his heart and he has become righteous, then now service is not labor for obtaining a status but fruit borne from a new status. Just as fruit does not make the root, service does not make salvation. Just as fruit comes out of a living root, so out of the heart that believes the grace received come thanksgiving and obedience toward the gospel. Therefore the saint cannot boast, and at the same time cannot remain in indifference.

Neither must we judge one another's faith by outward quantity alone. We cannot finally determine a man's faith merely by how much he offered, how many hours he served, or whether he took a conspicuous role. The woman's fragrant oil is not a standard for competing in amounts. The Lord knows the circumstances and the heart of each person and the work He has entrusted to him. The service offered in thanksgiving following the leading of the Holy Spirit can sometimes be small and quiet. What is important is not the fear that tries to fill the conditions of salvation, but whether out of the faith that has received grace there comes actual obedience toward the Lord and the gospel.

The person who is remembered together with the gospel

Jesus said, "*wherever this gospel is preached in the whole world, what this woman has done will also be told as a memorial to her" (Mark 14:9)*. The text does not say that the woman set up her own monument or planned to make her own name widely known. Rather it does not even record her name but says "a woman." Yet the Lord made her action to be remembered

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together with the gospel. The person who tries to exalt his own name uses the gospel, but the name of the person who serves the gospel is known to the Lord.

To say that she is remembered together with the gospel does not mean that the woman's action had the same power of salvation as the gospel. The One who saves us is Jesus, and the woman's fragrant oil did not remove the sins of men. The woman's action was not the event that accomplished salvation but a work that prepared for and served that event. We must keep this difference between the ministry of the Lord and the service of the saints. The Lord accomplishes salvation, and the saints, believing that grace, preach the gospel and help. The reason the service of the saints is precious is not that that service takes the place of the salvation of the Lord, but that it points to that salvation.

What do we wish to be remembered for in our lives? We may seek to be remembered by people as a capable man, a man who had much, a man who accomplished a great work. But such memory grows faint as time passes. The work of serving so that the gospel is preached and one person receives the remission of sins and lives as a child of God leaves fruit deeper than the evaluation of the world. It is all right if the name is not made known. If the gospel we preached is clear, and if the service we did did not bind people to us but turned them toward the Lord, that is enough.

The good work to be done today with all our strength

Beloved fellow believers, let us first examine the calculation sheet of our hearts. Even when we look at the work of the Lord,

do we not first ask about the profit that comes back at once? While reckoning who recognizes it, what reward there is for my labor, and whether the result appears quickly, are we not wasting the opportunity to serve the gospel? On the contrary, are we not pushing our own will without prudence and wrapping it up as the faith of the woman? When we stand before the word of the Lord, both calculation and zeal find their proper place. We must discern what the Lord calls a good work and put all our strength into that work.

Our flasks are not all of the same shape. Material things are not the only kind of flask we have to offer. Time, talent, health, what we have learned, relationships, prayer, and opportunities to speak can also be used by the Lord for the work of the gospel. Let us not draw back because what we have now is little, nor feel superior because we have much. Even though the woman had no name, the Lord knew her action. Let us not compare ourselves with anyone but find the portion entrusted to us today. Let us truthfully deliver the Word to the person to whom we are to preach the gospel, serve the church and the saints, and care with wisdom and love for the neighbor who needs help.

And let us not make service the price of salvation. Let us first believe the grace that Jesus has bestowed, and serve within that grace. Let us not break the flask driven by fear, but offer it with thanksgiving. Let us offer it not in order to buy the praise of men but in the hope that the gospel of the Lord may be preached. After we have served, let us not hold on to our own merit but give the glory to the Lord. When we do so, even our small hand is used for a good work directed toward the gospel, like the action of the woman who prepared for the burial of the Lord.

People said that it was a waste, but the Lord said that it was a good work. People saw the price of the fragrant oil that had disappeared, but the Lord saw the direction of the faith that

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prepared for the burial. In the text the woman's name does not remain, but the Lord made that work to be remembered together with the gospel. Today we too must clearly settle what we will serve and live for. Holding in our hearts the grace of the salvation we have received, discerning the opportunity of the gospel that will not return once it has passed, let us become saints who bear with all their strength the good work the Lord has entrusted to us.

Let us not be discouraged even though our labor looks small in the calculation of men. Let us examine by the Word whether it is service directed toward the gospel, and let us take hold with thanksgiving of the opportunity of today that the Lord has given us. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The blood of the covenant which is shed for many

< Mark 14:12-25 >

"Now on the first day of Unleavened Bread, when they killed the Passover lamb, His disciples said to Him, 'Where do You want us to go and prepare, that You may eat the Passover?' And He sent out two of His disciples and said to them, 'Go into the city, and a man will meet you carrying a pitcher of water; follow him. Wherever he goes in, say to the master of the house, 'The Teacher says, 'Where is the guest room in which I may eat the Passover with My disciples?'' Then he will show you a large upper room, furnished and prepared; there make ready for us.' So His disciples went out, and came into the city, and found it just as He had said to them; and they prepared the Passover. In the evening He came with the twelve. Now as they sat and ate, Jesus said, 'Assuredly, I say to you, one of you who eats with Me will betray Me.' And they began to be sorrowful, and to say to Him one by one, 'Is it I?' And another said, 'Is it I?' He answered and said to them, 'It is one of the twelve, who dips with Me in the dish. The Son of Man indeed goes just as it is written of Him, but woe to that man by whom the Son of Man is betrayed! It would have been good for that man if he had never been born.' And as they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed and broke it, and gave it to them and said, 'Take, eat; this is My body.' Then He took the cup, and when He had given thanks He gave it to them, and they all drank

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from it. And He said to them, 'This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many. Assuredly, I say to you, I will no longer drink of the fruit of the vine until that day when I drink it new in the kingdom of God.'"

The place of the Passover prepared according to the Word

It became the first day of Unleavened Bread, the day when they killed the Passover lamb. The disciples asked Jesus where they should prepare the Passover. Jesus sent two disciples into the city and told them that when they met a man carrying a pitcher of water they should follow him. He told them to ask the master of the house that the man entered about the guest room, and to prepare the Passover in the large upper room, furnished and prepared. When the disciples went, everything was as Jesus had said. They prepared the Passover there.

The text shows that the Passover meal was not a setting prepared by chance. It was not that Jesus did not know where He would eat and left it to the improvising of the disciples. He knew the man they would meet and the large upper room that had been prepared. The disciples did not obey after first understanding all the circumstances; they followed the Word given to them concretely. And on the spot they saw that the word of the Lord was fulfilled just as He had said. The decisive night of salvation was not pushed along in the confusion of men but proceeded at the time and in the place that the Lord knew and had prepared.

The preparation of the disciples was also important, but that preparation did not make salvation. They went to the place the Lord had made known and prepared the Passover food and made ready the setting. But the One who would soon call the bread His

own body and the cup the blood of the covenant is Jesus. The disciples obeyed and prepared the setting, but the One who establishes the promise of salvation and gives up His own body and blood is the Lord. We must not confuse the obedience of man with the work of salvation of the Lord. We obey the Word, but our obedience does not complete the salvation of the Lord.

We too often cannot see the whole way beforehand. But we do the work entrusted to us today within the range the Lord has spoken. The disciples did not receive a plan for the whole city; they received the word to follow the man they would meet and to confirm the guest room. The obedience of faith is not a skill for completely controlling the future. It is believing the word of the Lord and faithfully doing the work entrusted now. Only, this scene must not be changed into a formula that if one follows some sign like a code, everything will succeed. What the text emphasizes is Jesus, who rules over the night of salvation, and the certainty of His Word.

The betrayal revealed at the table where they ate together

When evening came Jesus came to the upper room with the twelve disciples. All were sitting in one place and eating. In the setting of an intimate meal Jesus said a shocking word. *"One of you who eats with Me will betray Me" (Mark 14:18)*. The one who would sell Jesus was not an enemy far away but one of those eating with Him. The outward nearness of sitting at the same table and dipping the hand in the same dish did not automatically guarantee the faith of the heart.

The disciples were sorrowful and asked one by one whether it was themselves. This question makes us look back at ourselves

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instead of hastily pointing at another. As we read of the betrayal of Judas it is easy to blame only the wickedness of one man and end there. But the text shows the scene in which all twelve men were sorrowful before the word of Jesus. The mere fact that one has been long in the church and has taken part in worship and in the rites cannot take the place of the faith of the heart. The appearance of being near the Lord and the heart that believes the word of the Lord must be distinguished.

Jesus said that the Son of Man goes just as it is written of Him. Betrayal is an evil act for which the betrayer is responsible, but that evil cannot overthrow the plan of God's salvation. Neither, however, does the responsibility of the betrayer disappear on the ground that it is a written thing. Jesus said solemnly that woe is to the man who sells the Son of Man. We must not erase against each other the fact that the will of God is accomplished and the responsibility for the evil of man. The Lord does not call betrayal good, and yet He goes the written way of salvation beyond that betrayal.

The tension of this table teaches us the difference between rite and faith. Sitting in the same place, receiving the same bread and cup, speaking the same language of faith—by these alone life does not come into the heart. The rite helps us to remember and confess the salvation the Lord accomplished, but the rite itself does not have power to wash away the sin of the heart. If a man does not believe the word of Jesus in his heart and holds only to outward participation, then even at the table where he eats with the Lord his heart can cherish a calculation to hand the Lord over.

The body of the Lord, given in the bread He broke and gave

Even after foretelling the betrayal Jesus did not stop the meal. As they were eating, Jesus took bread, blessed it, broke it, and gave it to the disciples. And He said, *"Take, eat; this is My body."* The Lord did not first require the disciples to offer something; He broke the bread and gave it. The gospel does not begin with a story in which man first offers his own body to God and so obtains salvation. It begins where the Son of God gives up His own body for sinners.

The bread points to the body of the Lord. But the act of eating the bread with the mouth does not itself automatically make a man without sin. We must believe the body of the Lord to which the bread points and the salvation He performed with that body. A record of having taken part in the Lord's Supper, or the number of times, cannot be the ground of the remission of sins. If while eating the bread a man does not believe why Jesus gave up His body, only the form of the rite remains. Through the visible symbol of the bread the Lord makes us believe in our hearts the truth of salvation to which that bread points.

The body of Jesus is not a tragic body that was put to death without relation to sin. The Lord bore the sins of sinners and gave up His own body in order to receive the judgment of those sins. Therefore, if we speak of the body and leave out the bearing of sin, and speak of the blood and leave out the judgment of the Cross, the meaning of the bread and the cup becomes obscure. On the contrary, if we think of the body and the blood only as a mysterious efficacy of the material things themselves, we also miss the word of the Lord. What is important is to receive by faith who the Lord is and what He accomplished.

Before the word "Take," the disciples receive with empty

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hands. Salvation is not a product exchanged for merit that man has prepared. But receiving is also different from looking on with indifference. There must be faith that receives into the heart, just as the Lord's Word says, what the Lord gives. Jesus completed salvation, but the man who holds only to his own works and does not believe what He accomplished cannot receive the remission of sins. Faith is not an act that pays the price of salvation but a heart that accepts as true what has already been given.

The blood of the covenant for many

Jesus took the cup, gave thanks, and gave it to the disciples, and they all drank. Pointing to the cup the Lord said, *"This is My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many" (Mark 14:24)*. This blood is not blood that flows from an accidental death but blood that is shed for many. The Lord made clear for whom His own death was. It is blood shed in order to receive in their stead the judgment that sinners had to receive, and it is the blood of the covenant that fulfills the will by which God said He would accomplish salvation.

The word covenant shows that salvation does not depend on the mood or the resolve of man. A man makes up his mind and is shaken, and promises and breaks it, but the Lord accomplishes the promise of salvation with His own body and blood. One of the disciples would betray Him and the other disciples also would soon reveal their weakness, but their failure cannot make the body and the blood of the Lord void. The certainty of salvation lies not in the strength of the loyalty of the disciples but in the faithfulness of Jesus, who gives Himself up.

At the same time the word "for many" must not be changed

into the meaning that all people are automatically saved regardless of faith. The Lord gave the bread and said to take it. We must believe in our hearts the salvation to which the blood of the covenant points. Faith is not a merit that man adds to salvation but the channel by which he accepts what God has accomplished. If a man does not acknowledge his own sin and rejects the work by which Jesus bore sin and was judged, sin is not removed merely because he drinks the cup.

The blood of the covenant does not make us treat sin lightly. Rather it shows that the wages of sin is death. The fact that Jesus had to shed His blood makes clear that sin is a problem that cannot be erased by a few words of human apology or by good deeds. At the same time that blood does not leave only despair. Because Jesus bore the judgment we had to receive, the person who believes is delivered from condemnation. To see sin as grave and yet to obtain boldness within the completed salvation of the Lord—this is the faith that stands before the blood of the covenant.

The salvation accomplished by the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection

Now we must once clearly examine the whole flow of the salvation to which the bread and the cup point. When Jesus came clothed with the body of a man and was baptized by John, He Himself bore all the sins of mankind. This is not a rite with the same function as the water baptism a believer receives in the church. The baptism He received from John the Baptist is the event of salvation in which the sinless Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world. Therefore to believe the body of the Lord is not to believe only the fact that He shed His blood on the Cross

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taken by itself, but to believe together with it the work by which He bore all our sins on that body.

Jesus went to the Cross bearing the sins He had thus borne. The blood of the Cross is not a symbol of suffering without cause or of a mere spirit of sacrifice. It is the blood by which He received in our stead the punishment and the judgment for all the sins He had taken upon Himself by the baptism. Because the Lord Himself received the death that the sinner had to receive, it became the blood of the covenant. And the Lord actually died and then rose from the dead. The resurrection is not a hopeful ornament attached after the Cross but an event that shows that He overcame sin and death and completed salvation, and it is the ground on which new life is given to the person who believes.

The baptism Jesus received from John, His being judged and dying on the Cross, and His rising from the dead are one salvation that cannot be divided. The person who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission, once and for all, not only of a few sins of the past but of all the sins of his whole life. The remission of sins is not newly completed or repeatedly obtained every time one takes part in the Lord's Supper. It is received by believing the salvation that Jesus accomplished once and for all. The person who believes receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again and becomes a child of God, and lives in new life as a righteous man without sin in his heart.

This truth does not say that the weakness of the flesh disappears for the person who has been saved. Even after receiving the remission of sins we discover our insufficiency and must examine ourselves before the Word and turn back from our faults. But at each such time we do not offer the body and the blood of Jesus again as a sacrifice. We confirm by the Word the remission of sins that has already been completed and live by faith. Not to make the completeness of salvation an excuse for

license, but rather to follow the will of the Lord in thanksgiving for the grace received without price—this is the life of the person who has been born again.

We commemorate by faith the salvation to which the bread and the cup point

The bread and the cup of the Lord's Supper make us remember the salvation of the Lord. We receive the visible bread and drink the cup and confess the fact that Jesus gave up His own body and shed the blood of the covenant. But we must not exchange the bread and the cup, which are symbols of commemoration, for the substance of the salvation to which they point. The bread itself does not take the place of the baptism of Jesus, the cup itself does not take the place of the judgment of the Cross, and the rite itself does not automatically give the life of the resurrection. The bread and the cup point to the substance of salvation, and faith receives into the heart the work of salvation that Jesus completed.

Therefore, when we take part in the Lord's Supper, rather than boasting first of the number of times or the exactness of the form, we must examine what the heart is believing. We must confirm whether, looking at the bread, I believe the body that was baptized in the Jordan River and bore sin; whether, looking at the cup, I believe the blood of the covenant that received in our stead on the Cross the judgment of the sins He had borne; and whether I believe the Lord who died and rose again and gave new life. If we merely repeat the rite without faith, familiarity may arise but the problem of the sin of the heart is not resolved.

On the contrary, the fact that the rite itself is not salvation does not mean that we may treat the Lord's Supper lightly. The

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bread and the cup the Lord has given are a precious commemoration that turns our hearts back to the completed gospel. In that place we lay down our own merit and remember with thanksgiving the body and the blood the Lord has given. We also confess the grace of the Lord together with the saints who have become one body by believing the same gospel. The commemoration is not the repeating of an empty form but the believing in our hearts and giving thanks today also for the fact that the Lord accomplished.

The work of preaching the gospel and the work of commemorating are also connected. The Lord's Supper does not end in our sharing an emotion among ourselves. The person who believes the blood of the covenant, shed for many, desires that that news be delivered to those who do not yet know the gospel. But preaching also is not a price paid in order to maintain salvation. It is the fruit borne in thanksgiving by the person who has already received the remission of sins and new life. The hand that has received the bread and the cup must not boast of its own righteousness but become a hand that delivers to another the salvation the Lord has given.

The table that looks to the new thing of the kingdom of God

Jesus said that He would not drink again of the fruit of the vine until the day when He drinks it new in the kingdom of God. The table points not only to the death that was soon coming but also looks to the days ahead of the kingdom of God. While speaking of giving up His own body and blood, the Lord did not say that death was the end. He spoke of the day when He would drink it new in the kingdom of God. This hope is directed toward

the kingdom of God, which will be completed beyond the death and the resurrection of the Lord.

Verse 25 must not be reduced to a word that guarantees present abundance or success. Fear and failure would soon come upon the disciples. Jesus also would pass through arrest and interrogation and the Cross. Even so the Lord speaks of the day of the kingdom of God. The hope the gospel gives is not a promise that there will be no suffering at all, but the promise that the Lord overcomes the power of death and sin and leads His own people into the completion of the kingdom of God.

The person who has received the remission of sins does not judge salvation by his present circumstances alone. It is not that he believes the covenant only when things go well and forsakes it when things are hard. The ground of the covenant lies not in changing circumstances but in the body and the blood of the Lord. Even in the weakness of the flesh and the suffering of the world, we live by the new life the risen Lord has given and wait for the completion of the kingdom of God. The table of the Lord's Supper makes us remember the Cross of the past, confirm the faith of the present, and hope for the kingdom that is to come.

This hope does not make us run away from the responsibility of today. The person who waits for the kingdom in which the Lord will come again believes and preaches the gospel today, loves the saints, and faithfully bears the work entrusted to him. He is not indifferent to the pain of the world on the ground that he is waiting for the day of salvation. Rather, remembering the heart of the Lord, who gave Himself for many, he serves his neighbor. Only, he does not make all that service a condition of salvation but leaves it as the fruit of the person who has received the grace of the covenant.

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Engrave on your hearts the body and the blood of the covenant you have received

Beloved fellow believers, let us look again at the upper room of the Passover. Everything was prepared according to the word of the Lord. At the table where they ate together the betrayal was revealed, but the evil of man could not block the written way of salvation. Jesus broke the bread and called it His own body, and gave the cup and called it the blood of the covenant which is shed for many. It was not the loyalty of the disciples that established salvation; the Lord established the covenant with His own body and blood.

We must not be satisfied with outward nearness. Let us not make the fact that we are inside the church, the fact that we have taken part in the Lord's Supper many times, and the fact that we know the words of the gospel familiarly take the place of the faith of the heart. Like the disciples who looked back at themselves one by one, we must examine our hearts before the word of the Lord. Am I still holding on to my own good deeds and religious career as the ground of salvation? While receiving the bread and the cup, am I rejecting in my heart the baptism of Jesus in the Jordan River and His bearing of sin and the judgment of the Cross and the resurrection, to which they point?

Let us receive by faith what the Lord has given. Let us engrave on our hearts the completed salvation to which the bread and the cup point. Let us now not try to supplement salvation with a rite, but commemorate and give thanks for what the Lord accomplished once and for all. Let us not return, because of the insufficiency of the flesh, to the old status of a sinner, but live in faith as children of God and righteous men who have received the Holy Spirit.

And let us not shut up this covenant within ourselves. Jesus

shed His blood for many. To those who are still pressed down by their own works, bound by a repeated consciousness of sin, and who know only the Cross but do not know how Jesus bore the sin of the world, let us preach the whole gospel to which the body and the blood of the covenant point. Let us preach it not as a forced duty but in thanksgiving for the life we have received. Looking to the day when we shall drink it new in the kingdom of God, let us become saints who today also believe the word of the Lord and prepare the place entrusted to us. ✉

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CHAPTER

15

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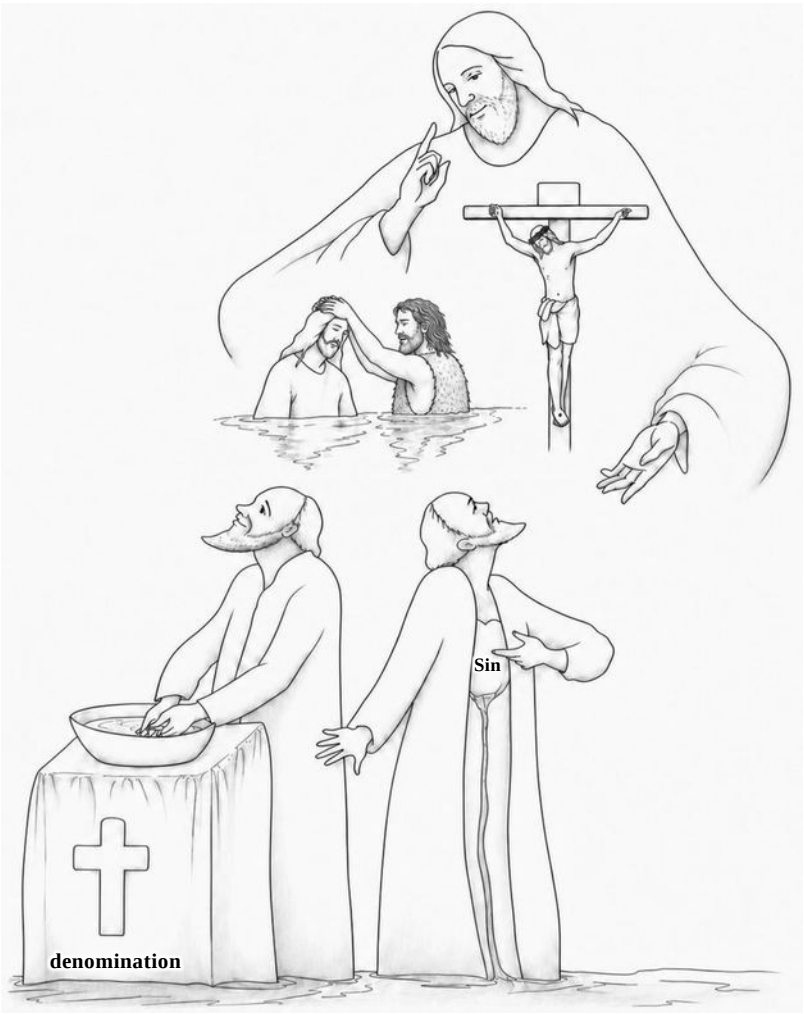

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Mark Chapter 15

< Mark 15:1-47 >

“Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, ‘Are You the King of the Jews?’ He answered and said to him, ‘It is as you say.’ And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, ‘Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!’ But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, ‘Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?’ For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, ‘What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?’ So they cried out again, ‘Crucify Him!’ Then Pilate said to them, ‘Why, what evil has He done?’ But they cried out all the more, ‘Crucify Him!’ So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified. Then the soldiers led Him

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away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying,

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‘Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?’ which is translated, ‘My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?’ Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, ‘Look, He is calling for Elijah!’ Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, ‘Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.’ And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, ‘Truly this Man was the Son of God!’ There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. Now when evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid.”

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 15 records that Jesus was delivered to Pilate and tried, was mocked by the soldiers, and then was crucified and died at Golgotha, and was buried in the tomb of Joseph of Arimathea. The religious leaders accused Jesus as though He were a rebel against Rome, and Pilate, although he could not confirm in Jesus any offense deserving of death, released Barabbas and delivered Jesus to the cross in order to gratify the crowd. The soldiers clothed Jesus with purple and put a crown of thorns on Him and mocked Him as the King of the Jews. At Golgotha they divided the clothes of Jesus by casting lots, and crucified Him together with two robbers. Those who passed by, the religious leaders, and even the men crucified with Him insulted Jesus. From noon until three in the afternoon darkness came over the whole land, and Jesus cried out with a loud voice and then breathed His last. At that moment the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom, and the centurion who watched this confessed that Jesus was truly the Son of God. Mary Magdalene and several other women watched this from afar, and Joseph of Arimathea asked Pilate for the body of Jesus, wrapped it in fine linen, and laid it in a tomb hewn out of the rock. This chapter shows that the sinless Jesus bore the unjust verdict of men, their mockery, and the agony of the Cross, and by His death gave His own life as a ransom for many.

1. Delivered from the religious leaders to Pilate (verse 1)

When morning came, the chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the whole council held a consultation in order to put Jesus to death. They bound Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

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The Jewish religious leaders had condemned Jesus for blasphemy, but at that time it was difficult for them to carry out the death penalty by their own decision alone. Therefore they tried to accuse Jesus before the Roman governor as a political criminal and so obtain a sentence of death.

They did not judge according to the Word of God and justice; they first determined to kill Jesus and then went through the procedures for accomplishing that purpose. They kept the religious offices and the form of a council, but in their judgment there was neither truth nor justice.

2. Pilate, who asked, *"Are You the King of the Jews?"* (verses 2–5).

Pilate asked Jesus whether He was the King of the Jews. This was a question meant to confirm whether Jesus had tried to become a political king in opposition to the Roman emperor.

Jesus answered, *"It is as you say."* Jesus is in fact the King, but He was not a political king who was trying to establish an earthly kingdom by force against Rome.

The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Pilate told Jesus to defend Himself, but Jesus answered nothing further. Pilate marveled at Jesus, who kept silent even in the face of so many accusations.

The silence of Jesus was not because He acknowledged guilt. Rather than being caught up in false accusations and delivering Himself, He accepted the way of suffering in order to save sinners.

3. The crowd that chose between Barabbas and Jesus (verses 6–11)

At the feast there was a custom of releasing one prisoner whom the people requested. At that time there was in the

prison a man named Barabbas, who had committed murder during a rebellion.

When the crowd asked that one prisoner be released according to the custom, Pilate asked whether they wanted him to release the King of the Jews. Pilate knew the fact that the chief priests had handed Jesus over because of envy.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that they asked for the release of Barabbas rather than Jesus. Between the sinless Jesus and Barabbas, who had taken part in murder, the crowd chose Barabbas.

Barabbas was set free from the punishment he should have received, and Jesus was delivered to death as though in his place. This scene clearly shows the picture of redemption, in which the sinner is released and the sinless One takes the place of the sinner.

4. Pilate, who delivered Jesus up in order to gratify the crowd (verses 12–15)

Pilate asked the crowd what they wanted him to do with the man they called the King of the Jews. The crowd cried out that Jesus should be crucified.

Pilate asked what evil Jesus had done, but the crowd did not present any specific offense and cried out all the more loudly that He should be crucified. Their demand did not rest on evidence or on fair judgment.

Although Pilate knew the fact that there was no just ground for sentencing Jesus to death, he released Barabbas in order to gratify the crowd. And after he had scourged Jesus, he delivered Him up to be crucified.

Pilate had the authority to give the final verdict, but he chose his own political safety and the satisfaction of the crowd rather than justice. To do a thing while knowing that it is

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wrong, because of the pressure of people, is not a reason for escaping responsibility.

5. The soldiers who mocked Him with purple and a crown of thorns (verses 16–20)

The soldiers led Jesus into the hall of the governor's residence and called together the whole garrison. They clothed Jesus with purple, which was a symbol of a king, and made a crown of thorns and put it on Him.

The soldiers saluted Jesus, saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews!"* But this was not true worship; it was an action meant to mock Jesus.

They struck the head of Jesus with a reed and spat on Him and bowed the knee to Him. They imitated the way one treats a king, but in fact they insulted and assaulted Jesus.

After they had mocked Jesus to the full, the soldiers took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him again, and led Him out to crucify Him. Jesus was the true King, but people made His kingship an object of mockery.

6. Making Simon a Cyrenian bear the cross (verse 21)

The soldiers seized Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming from the country and passing by, and made him bear the cross of Jesus.

Jesus was already greatly weakened in body by the scourging and the beating. The soldiers did not bring Simon because they pitied the suffering of Jesus; they forced him into service in order to carry out the execution.

Mark introduces Simon as the father of Alexander and Rufus. This makes us think that the readers of that time may have known his family, but the text does not explain his later life in detail.

Simon came to bear the cross of Jesus in a way he had not planned. However, we must not interpret this event as meaning that Simon bore the sins of Jesus in His stead. The One who bore the suffering and the death of redemption for sinners is Jesus.

7. Crucified at Golgotha (verses 22–26)

The soldiers brought Jesus to Golgotha. Golgotha, when translated, means the place where there is a skull.

People gave Jesus wine mingled with myrrh, but Jesus did not take it. Jesus did not meet His death in a way that avoided the pain of the Cross or dulled His consciousness.

The soldiers crucified Jesus and cast lots to decide who would take His clothes. Even while Jesus was suffering, their interest was in the clothes of Jesus.

The time when Jesus was crucified was the third hour, that is, about nine in the morning. Above the cross there was fastened the inscription of accusation, *"THE KING OF THE JEWS."* People fastened that inscription with the meaning of mockery, but Jesus was in fact the King whom God had sent.

8. Crucified together with two robbers (verse 27)

People crucified two robbers together with Jesus, one on His right and one on His left. The sinless Jesus was treated as though He were one among criminals.

The clear fact is that Jesus was executed together with people who had actually committed crimes. In the eyes of men Jesus looked like a criminal who had failed and been forsaken, but He stood in the place of death in the stead of sinners.

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9. Mocked concerning His power to save while on the cross (verses 29–32)

Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted Jesus. They said that the man who had said he would destroy the temple and build it in three days should save himself first and come down from the cross.

The chief priests and the scribes also mocked among themselves and said that Jesus had saved others but could not save Himself. They said that if Jesus came down from the cross they would see and believe.

But it was not because He had no power to save Himself that Jesus did not come down from the cross. It was because only by not saving Himself and remaining in death could He save sinners.

They thought that coming down from the cross was the power of a savior, but the true saving power of Jesus appeared in His bearing the suffering and the death to the end in the stead of sinners.

Those who were crucified with Him also insulted Jesus. Jesus stood in a place of utter forsakenness, mocked not only by His enemies but even by the men who were undergoing the same execution.

10. The darkness that came over the whole land and the cry of Jesus (verses 33–34)

From the sixth hour, that is, from noon, until the ninth hour, three in the afternoon, darkness came over the whole land. At the time of day when the sun should have been brightest, darkness continued.

This darkness shows that the death of Jesus was not an ordinary execution but an event connected with the judgment of God. When Jesus, the Creator, met death on the Cross,

darkness came upon the created world as well.

About three in the afternoon Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"* This means, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* and it is the word of Psalm 22:1.

Jesus had no sin, but in the place of sinners He bore the agony of the judgment of being forsaken by God. This cry shows that the suffering of the Cross was not only physical suffering.

11. The people who misunderstood that He was calling Elijah (verses 35–36)

Some of those who stood by heard the word of Jesus and thought that He was calling Elijah. They mistook the word *"Eloi,"* which Jesus called out, for the name of Elijah.

One man filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to Jesus to drink. And he said that they should see whether Elijah would come and take Him down.

To the last moment they did not realize the meaning of the words of Jesus and of His suffering, and tried to watch and see whether some strange thing would happen. A man can look upon the Cross at close hand and still not know its meaning.

The Cross of Jesus is not a mere miracle or a spectacle. It is the event in which the sinless Jesus bore in our stead the death and the judgment that sinners had to receive.

12. The death of Jesus and the torn veil of the temple (verses 37–38)

Jesus cried out with a loud voice and then breathed His last. It looks as though people took the life of Jesus away by force, but Jesus gave up His own life in order to save sinners.

When Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the temple was

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torn in two from top to bottom. The fact that it was torn from the top shows that this was not the action of man but a work that God performed.

The veil of the temple stood between the Most Holy Place, where God was present, and man. That the veil was torn shows symbolically that through the death of Jesus a new way was opened for sinners to come to God.

It is not that man piled up sacrifices and religious acts and so made a way to come to God. Jesus opened that way by giving up His own body and shedding His blood and dying.

13. *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"* (verse 39).

The centurion who stood facing Jesus saw Jesus cry out with a loud voice and breathe His last, and then confessed, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"*

The centurion was not a Jewish religious leader but a Roman soldier who had been in charge of the execution of Jesus. Seeing the death of Jesus and the things that happened at that time, he acknowledged that the One whom they had crucified was not an ordinary man but the Son of God.

From the beginning the Gospel of Mark declares that Jesus Christ is the Son of God. Even at the moment when He seemed to die helplessly on the Cross, the true identity of Jesus was confessed again through the mouth of the centurion.

Jesus did not become the Son of God because He obeyed to the end on the Cross. Jesus, who is fundamentally the Son of God and is God, endured insult and suffering and gave up His own life in order to save sinners.

14. The women who watched the Cross from afar (verses 40–41)

Several women watched the death of Jesus from afar.

Among them were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome.

These women had followed and served Jesus from the time when He was in Galilee. Besides them there were many other women who had come up to Jerusalem with Jesus.

The male disciples all fled at the arrest, but these women watched the Cross of Jesus even in a dangerous situation. The fact that they were far off shows that fear and danger existed, but they did not leave the place altogether.

The women went on to confirm where the tomb of Jesus was and became important witnesses who first received the news of the resurrection. Mark clearly records the service and the testimony of women, who were not easily noticed in the society of that time.

15. Joseph of Arimathea, who asked for the body of Jesus (verses 42–45)

When evening came it was the Preparation Day, the day before the Sabbath. Joseph of Arimathea, a respected council member who was waiting for the kingdom of God, took courage and went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Because Jesus had been treated as a man executed for treason, to ask for His body was an action that required the taking of a risk. Joseph acted in spite of the possibility that his honor and position might be damaged because he was a disciple of Jesus.

Pilate marveled at the fact that Jesus was already dead. It was because there were cases in which a man who received crucifixion suffered for a long time before he died.

Pilate summoned the centurion and confirmed whether Jesus had been dead for some time. After confirming the death through the report of the centurion, he granted the body to

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Joseph.

This procedure of confirmation clearly shows the fact that Jesus had not merely lost consciousness for a while but had actually died.

16. Buried in a tomb hewn out of the rock (verses 46–47)

Joseph of Arimathea bought fine linen, took the body of Jesus down from the cross, and wrapped it in the linen. And he laid Jesus in a tomb that had been made by hewing out the rock.

Joseph rolled a stone against the entrance of the tomb. The death and the burial of Jesus were not a symbol or a vision but an event that happened within actual history.

Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses watched where the body of Jesus was laid. They did not later go to the wrong tomb; they themselves confirmed the location of the tomb of Jesus.

Mark chapter 15 ends with the scene in which Jesus is buried in a tomb. To the eyes of men everything looks as though it has ended in failure and death, but this tomb becomes the place for the resurrection that will appear in the next chapter.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 15

First, the religious leaders used false accusation in order to kill Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

Second, Pilate could not confirm in Jesus any offense deserving of death, but he chose the satisfaction of the crowd and his own political safety rather than justice.

Third, Barabbas, who had taken part in rebellion and murder, was released, and the sinless Jesus was delivered to death in his stead.

Fourth, the soldiers clothed Jesus with purple and a crown

of thorns and mocked Him as the King of the Jews, but Jesus is in fact the King whom God sent.

Fifth, Jesus was crucified together with two robbers and was treated as though He were one among criminals.

Sixth, people said that they would believe if Jesus came down from the cross and saved Himself, but Jesus saved sinners by not saving Himself and remaining in death.

Seventh, the darkness that came from noon until three in the afternoon shows that the death of Jesus was an event connected with the judgment of God upon sin.

Eighth, Jesus bore in the place of sinners the agony of being forsaken by God, and cried out with the word of Psalm 22.

Ninth, that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom when Jesus breathed His last shows that through His death the way to come to God was opened.

Tenth, the Roman centurion who watched the Cross confessed that Jesus was truly the Son of God.

Eleventh, the several women who had followed and served Jesus from Galilee became important witnesses who watched the Cross and the burial.

Twelfth, Joseph of Arimathea took the risk to his own position and safety and asked Pilate for the body of Jesus.

Thirteenth, that Pilate confirmed the death through the centurion makes clear the fact that Jesus actually died on the Cross.

Fourteenth, Jesus was actually buried in a tomb hewn out of the rock, and Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses confirmed the location of the tomb.

Fifteenth, Mark chapter 15 seems to end with a tomb and with death, but this burial leads on to the resurrection of Jesus, which will appear in the next chapter.

To put it in one sentence, Mark chapter 15 is the chapter of

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redemption and sacrifice in which the sinless Son of God, Jesus, was delivered to the cross in the place of Barabbas through the envy of men and an unjust trial, bore mockery and forsakenness and the judgment of death, tore the veil of the temple and opened the way to come to God, and was then actually buried in a tomb.

2) Mark chapter 15 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 15 records the course in which Jesus was tried before Pilate, was scourged and mocked, and was crucified and died at Golgotha and buried in a tomb. This event does not remain a tragedy in which one righteous man died unjustly. It is the event of redemption in which Jesus accomplished salvation by receiving in our stead, on the Cross, the judgment for all the sins of mankind, which He had borne through the baptism He received from John.

Jesus was not judged because of His own sin. Because Jesus, who is God and the Son of God, came in the body of a man and bore the sins of sinners, He was scourged and shed His blood and died. Therefore the Cross is the place where the love and the justice of God appeared together. God did not let sin pass but judged it; yet He did not bring that judgment upon the sinner but upon Jesus, who had borne the sin.

1. Jesus, who was examined although He had no sin (verses 1–5)

The chief priests, the elders, the scribes, and the whole council bound Jesus and delivered Him to Pilate. They had already set their will to kill Jesus and tried to use the power of

the Roman governor to carry out the death penalty.

Pilate asked Jesus, *"Are You the King of the Jews?"* Jesus answered, *"It is as you say,"* but He made no further defense against the many accusations of the chief priests. Pilate marveled that Jesus did not actively defend Himself.

That Jesus kept silent was not because He acknowledged guilt. Jesus had no sin at all, but because He had borne the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He accepted the way of being judged in the place of sinners. Jesus could have defended Himself and driven back His enemies as much as He wished, but if He had done so He could not have accomplished the work of salvation in the stead of sinners.

Jesus was not seized because He had no power; He gave Himself up of His own will in order to save us. In His silence there are contained love toward sinners and obedience to the will of the Father.

2. Releasing Barabbas and delivering Jesus to the cross (verses 6–15)

At the feast Pilate followed the custom of releasing one prisoner whom the people requested. At that time there was in the prison Barabbas, who had committed murder during a rebellion. Because Pilate knew that the chief priests had handed Jesus over out of envy, he tried to release Jesus.

But the chief priests stirred up the multitude so that they asked for Barabbas to be released and for Jesus to be crucified. Pilate asked what evil Jesus had done, but the multitude cried out all the more loudly, *"Crucify Him!"* In the end Pilate released Barabbas in order to gratify the multitude, and after scourging Jesus he delivered Him to be crucified.

Barabbas was a sinner who had actually taken part in

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rebellion and murder, yet he was released, and Jesus, who had no sin at all, received the sentence of death. Looked at from the perspective of the gospel, in this scene the truth of redemption clearly appears—that the sinner is released and Jesus is judged in the stead of that sinner.

We too are beings who must be judged before God because of sin. But because Jesus bore our sins through the baptism He received from John and received in our stead the punishment for those sins, the person who believes this salvation has been released from sin. Just as Barabbas was not released by his own merit, so our remission of sins also is not obtained by good works or by religious effort.

3. The true King, who was mocked as the King of the Jews (verses 16–20)

The soldiers clothed Jesus with purple and twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head. And mocking Him, saying, *"Hail, King of the Jews!"* they struck His head with a reed and spat on Him and imitated bowing before Him.

The purple robe and the crown and the bowing were originally signs of honor offered to a king, but the soldiers used them as means of insulting Jesus. They did not know the fact that the One before their eyes was the God who created all things and the true King.

Jesus did not become King by being mocked. He is fundamentally God and the King of kings. But in order to save sinners He went down to the lowest place and silently bore the insult and the pain that men inflicted.

The crown of thorns of Jesus reveals the picture of the Savior, who bore even the curse and the pain that came from sin. Jesus, who bore the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received in our stead not

only physical pain but also the curse and the judgment for sin.

4. Simon a Cyrenian, who bore the cross in His stead (verse 21)

The soldiers forced Simon a Cyrenian, who was passing by, to bear the cross of Jesus. Simon is introduced as the father of Alexander and Rufus. He was given the task of carrying the wooden cross of Jesus.

But the fact that Simon bore the wooden cross in His stead does not mean that he also bore the sins of mankind. The only One who bore the sins of all the people of the world is Jesus, who is without sin and is God.

The weight of sin cannot be resolved by the resolve or the sacrifice of man. Jesus received the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He went toward Golgotha. Simon bore the wooden cross for a while, but the judgment of God for sin had to be borne by Jesus alone.

5. Jesus, who was crucified at Golgotha (verses 22–26)

The soldiers led Jesus to Golgotha. Golgotha, when translated, means the Place of a Skull. They offered Him wine mingled with myrrh, but Jesus did not take it. And they crucified Jesus and cast lots and divided His clothes among themselves.

Above the cross of Jesus there was fastened the inscription of accusation, *"THE KING OF THE JEWS."* People recorded this as the charge against Jesus, but as a result it became a word that revealed the fact that He is the true King.

The blood of the Cross stands for the judgment for sin. Jesus did not suddenly bear the sin of the world at Golgotha. Because Jesus had already borne the sins of mankind through

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the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He received on the Cross the punishment for those sins.

Just as in the Old Testament the sacrificial offering that had received sin passed on to it shed its blood and died, so Jesus, as the Lamb of God who bore the sin of the world, shed His blood and died. If the water stands for the work by which sin passed on to Jesus, the blood of the Cross stands for the fact that that sin was actually judged.

6. The sinless One, who was crucified with sinners (verse 27)

On the right and the left of Jesus two robbers were crucified with Him. To the eyes of men Jesus also looked like one among criminals. But Jesus was not a sinner like the robbers.

Jesus did not become a sinner in His essence; He stood in the place of sinners as the Savior who had borne the sins of sinners. The Righteous One received judgment in the stead of unrighteous people.

If Jesus had not borne our sins through the baptism He received from John, the death of the Cross would have remained the unjust death of one righteous man. But because Jesus was hung on the cross in the state of having borne all sins, that death became the judgment of redemption for the whole of mankind.

7. Jesus, who did not save Himself but saved sinners (verses 29–32)

Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted Jesus. They mocked Him, saying that if He was the man who had said he would destroy the temple and build it in three days, He should come down from the cross and save Himself. The chief priests and the scribes also laughed at Him, saying, *"He saved others; Himself He cannot save."*

It was not that Jesus had no power to come down from the cross. If Jesus had come down from the cross in order to save Himself, He could not have saved sinners. Jesus gave Himself up to death in order to make us live.

People said that they would believe if a miracle happened before their eyes, but true faith is not receiving a Jesus who performs miracles according to one's own demand. It is acknowledging and believing the way of salvation of which God has spoken.

That He bore to the end the sins He had borne through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and remained on the Cross is not the powerlessness of Jesus but the power of salvation. Because Jesus did not save Himself, He saved us from sin and judgment.

8. The darkness over the whole land and the cry of forsakenness (verses 33–36)

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness came over the whole land. Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"* This means, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"*

This darkness shows how solemn the judgment of God upon sin is. The wages of sin is death, and sin must surely be judged. The God of love did not deal with sin as though nothing had happened.

Jesus was not forsaken because of His own sin. Because of all the sins of mankind, which He had borne through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He underwent in the place of sinners the agony of judgment and of being forsaken. Because Jesus received in our stead the judgment we had to receive, the person who believes this fact is not forsaken by God but becomes His child.

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Those who stood by misunderstood that Jesus was calling Elijah. They were near the Cross, but they did not know the meaning of that event. Today also, if one looks at the Cross only as a religious symbol or as a tragic death, he cannot know why Jesus had to die. When we believe the relation of the water and the blood, we clearly come to know the true meaning of the Cross.

9. The death of Jesus and the torn veil of the temple (verses 37–38)

When Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The veil of the temple stood between the holy God and the sinner. A man who had sin could not enter the Most Holy Place as he pleased.

That the veil was torn from top to bottom shows that man did not make a way to come to God by his own effort, but that God Himself opened that way. Because Jesus completely received the judgment for sin, the wall of sin that blocked the way between God and the sinner was removed.

In the sacrifices of the Old Testament the sinner laid his hands on the sacrificial offering and passed his sin over to it, and that offering shed its blood and died in his stead. In order to fulfill this promise of salvation, Jesus bore the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John and received on the Cross the judgment for that sin.

Therefore the way to come to God is not opened by the good deeds of man or by the keeping of the Law or by repeated prayers of repentance. By believing the fact that Jesus completely resolved sin by the water and the blood, we come boldly before God. That the veil was torn does not mean that a possibility arose for salvation to be accomplished in the future;

it means that Jesus resolved sin and actually opened the way to come to God.

10. The centurion, who confessed that He is the Son of God (verse 39)

The centurion who stood facing Jesus saw Jesus breathe His last and confessed, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"* He was a Roman soldier who supervised the execution of Jesus, but seeing the death of Jesus he confessed that He is the Son of God.

Jesus did not become the Son of God for the first time by dying on the Cross. He is fundamentally God and the Son of God. The Gospel of Mark proclaimed Jesus Christ as the Son of God from the beginning, and at the place of the Cross that fact was testified again.

That Jesus is the Son of God appears not only in the manner of avoiding suffering and destroying His enemies. His divinity and His love appeared also in His obeying to the end and giving up His life in order to save sinners.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and the Son of God. He also makes us believe that the salvation Jesus accomplished by the baptism He received from John the Baptist and by the blood of the Cross is the truth of God. The testimony of the Holy Spirit does not speak of a new salvation separated from the water and the blood; it testifies to the same salvation that Jesus completed.

11. The women who watched the Cross (verses 40–41)

Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, Salome, and several other women watched the death of Jesus from afar. These were people who had followed and served Jesus from the time when He was in Galilee.

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Even in a situation in which the disciples were scattered, these women watched the death and the burial of Jesus. Afterward they became important witnesses who received the news of the empty tomb and of the resurrection. The gospel is not a vague idea or a legend but an event accomplished within actual history, and there were people who witnessed that event.

The service by which they followed Jesus was not a price for obtaining the remission of sins. It was the fruit of faith borne by a person who has received the grace of Jesus and believes in Him. The remission of sins is not given according to how much a man has served Jesus; it is received by believing the salvation that Jesus has completed.

12. The actual death of Jesus is confirmed (verses 42–45)

Joseph of Arimathea was a respected council member and a man who was waiting for the kingdom of God. He boldly went to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus.

Pilate marveled at the fact that Jesus was already dead and summoned the centurion and confirmed it. Only after confirming the death of Jesus from the centurion did he grant the body to Joseph. This shows that the death of Jesus was not merely a fainting or a temporary loss of consciousness.

Jesus came in the body of an actual man, actually suffered, and actually died. The punishment for the sins He had borne through the baptism He received from John the Baptist also was accomplished not as a symbol or as something imaginary but as the actual death of the Cross.

Only if the death of Jesus is certain is the resurrection also a true resurrection. It is not that a man who had not died awoke again; it is that the Son of God, who actually died and was buried, overcame death and rose again.

13. Jesus, who was buried in a tomb (verses 46–47)

Joseph bought fine linen, took the body of Jesus down from the cross, and wrapped it in the linen. And he laid Jesus in a tomb made by hewing out the rock and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where Jesus was laid.

The burial of Jesus confirms again the fact that He actually died. To the eyes of men it looked as though all the ministry of Jesus had ended in the tomb. But the tomb does not mean the defeat of Jesus. Jesus received the whole judgment for sin, and in Mark chapter 16 He overcomes death and rises again.

Because the wages of sin was completely paid on the Cross, there was no longer any reason for Jesus to be held by death. The resurrection shows that Jesus is God and the Lord of life, and it confirms the fact that the salvation He accomplished is perfect.

14. The perfect salvation to which the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit testify

The Cross of Mark chapter 15 cannot be understood apart from the work of bearing sin that began in the Jordan River. Because Jesus bore all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, He received on the Cross the judgment for those sins.

The water stands for the work by which the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus, and the blood stands for the fact that those sins were judged on the Cross. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and the Son of God, and testifies that the salvation Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood is the true salvation of God.

The water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit do not speak of three different salvations. They testify to the one perfect

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salvation that the one Jesus Christ accomplished. Jesus bore the sin of the world, received the judgment for that sin, and rose from the dead, and thus overcame the power of sin and death.

This salvation is not completed when a person comes to believe. Rather, a person receives by faith the salvation that Jesus has already completed. The person who believes this gospel is washed of all his sins and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a child of God.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 15 seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, Jesus had no sin at all, but because He had borne the sin of the world He received trial and judgment in the place of sinners.

Second, in the scene in which Barabbas was released and Jesus was condemned, the truth of redemption clearly appears—that the sinner is released and Jesus is judged in his stead.

Third, Jesus did not become King by being mocked; He is fundamentally God and the King of kings.

Fourth, Simon a Cyrenian bore the wooden cross, but he could not bear the sins of mankind or receive in our stead the judgment for those sins.

Fifth, because Jesus bore all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the death of the Cross became the judgment of redemption for the sin of the world.

Sixth, the blood of the Cross shows that sin was actually judged and that the wages of sin was completely paid.

Seventh, Jesus did not remain on the cross because He had no power to save Himself; He accepted death of His own will in order to save sinners.

Eighth, the darkness of the Cross and the cry of forsakenness show that Jesus received the judgment of God in the stead of sinners.

Ninth, that the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom shows that Jesus resolved sin and opened the way to come to God.

Tenth, Jesus did not become the Son of God by the obedience of the Cross; as the One who is fundamentally God and the Son of God, He gave up His life in order to save sinners.

Eleventh, the Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is God and the Son of God, and testifies that the salvation accomplished by the water and the blood is the true salvation.

Twelfth, the death and the burial of Jesus are an event accomplished within actual history, and the resurrection that follows shows the victory over sin and death.

Thirteenth, the remission of sins is not obtained by the good deeds and the sacrifice and the religious effort of man; it is received by believing in one's heart the gospel of the water and the blood, which Jesus has already completed.

To put it in one sentence, Mark chapter 15 is the chapter that clearly testifies to the fact that Jesus, bearing all the sins of mankind, which He had borne through the baptism He received from John, received in our stead on the Cross the judgment for those sins and so tore the veil of the temple and opened the way to come to God, and that the person who believes the salvation which He, who is God and the Son of God, completed by the water and the blood receives the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit. ✉

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Mark Chapter 15

Jesus, who received judgment on the Cross in the place of sinners

Introduction

Mark chapter 15 begins with the scene in which Jesus is delivered to the court of Pilate. The religious leaders accused Jesus, and although Pilate could not find in Him an offense worthy of death, he delivered Him to the cross in order to gratify the demand of the multitude. Jesus did not argue against the false accusations in order to save Himself. Although He had no sin, He stood in the place of sinners and bore in our stead the condemnation that we were to receive.

Barabbas was a sinner who had been seized for rebellion and murder, but he was released, and the innocent Jesus received the sentence of death in his stead. This scene shows the principle of the gospel—that the sinner is released and the Righteous One dies in his place. Pilate knew what was right and yet, pressed by public opinion, gave an unjust verdict, and the multitude, being stirred up, cried out that Jesus should be crucified. Truth is not determined by the number of people or by the loudness of a voice.

The soldiers clothed Jesus with purple and put a crown of thorns on Him and mocked Him as the King of the Jews. But the One who was mocked and beaten was in fact the King of kings. Jesus was mocked even on the Cross with the demand

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that He save Himself, but He did not come down. It was not because He had no power; it was because He bore the suffering to the end in order to save the people who were bound by sin.

Jesus had taken all the sins of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. The darkness that came upon the Cross and the agony of being forsaken were His receiving in our stead the judgment of God for those sins. When Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom. This shows that the way to come to God, which had been blocked by sin, was opened by the sacrifice of Jesus. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit, and comes boldly before God.

The centurion saw the death of Jesus and confessed that He was truly the Son of God. The women watched the Cross from afar, and Joseph of Arimathea received the body of Jesus and buried it in a tomb. The death of Jesus was not a symbol or a vision but an actual event that many people witnessed and whose tomb they even confirmed. Mark chapter 15 shows that the sinless King bore condemnation and mockery and death in the stead of sinners. True faith is looking upon the Cross, realizing the weight of one's own sin and the love of God, and receiving Jesus Christ, who died in one's stead, as Savior and King.

Even in the face of unjust accusation Jesus did not try to save Himself but is the true King, who took the sinner's place for us

"*Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a*

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consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'It is as you say.' And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled" (Mark 15:1–5).

When morning came, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and the scribes, that is, with the whole council. Although they had examined Jesus during the night and had not obtained testimonies that agreed with one another, they had already condemned Him as one deserving of death. The consultation at dawn also was not to examine fairly whether Jesus had sinned, but to decide how they would carry out the verdict of death they had already fixed.

The religious leaders bound Jesus and led Him away. They bound the sinless Son of God as though He were a dangerous criminal. Jesus was the Lord of power, who calmed the wind and the sea with a word and cast out demons, and so He was not bound because He lacked the power to break the ropes of men and escape. In obedience to the will of the Father, who would save sinners, He was seized and led away of His own will.

They delivered Jesus to Pilate, the Roman governor. Even though the council had judged Jesus to be guilty of blasphemy, under the rule of Rome the verdict of the governor was necessary in order to carry out a death sentence. Therefore they tried to change a religious matter into a Roman political charge and so accuse Jesus.

What the high priest had asked Jesus was whether He was the Christ, the Son of God, but the question of Pilate was, *"Are*

You the King of the Jews?" To a Roman governor a claim to be the King of the Jews could sound like a political matter that might challenge the rule of the emperor or raise a rebellion. The religious leaders tried to make Jesus appear to be a person who was a threat to the power of Rome.

A person can alter another person's words to suit the audience in order to accomplish his own purpose. In the religious setting they accused Him of having spoken blasphemy, and in the political setting they accused Him of trying to become a rebel. They were not trying to bring the truth to light but were looking for the expression most effective for killing Jesus. To take a part of a fact and change it into another meaning is also false testimony.

When Pilate asked, *"Are You the King of the Jews?"* Jesus answered, *"It is as you say."* Jesus did not deny that He is the King. He is the Christ, who came as the descendant of David, and the true King whom God has established. But the kingship of Jesus was not like the kingship of a worldly politician who raises an army in order to seize the power of Rome.

Jesus did not come to establish a kingdom with sword and army but came to save the people bound by sin and death and to make them the people of the kingdom of God. His kingship does not come from the votes or the military strength of man but from the authority that is originally His as the Son of God. At that time He stood like a bound defendant, but He was the eternal King, who would rise again and sit at the right hand of God and rule the whole world.

The answer of Jesus was short but clear. He did not respond one by one to the false accusations, but neither did He hide His true identity. Jesus did not lie and say that He was not the King in order to avoid death. Even in the face of danger He did not change the truth.

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The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Since they could not prove one clear crime, they poured out many accusations. The fact that the accusations are many does not guarantee the truthfulness of their content. In the council before this also there were many false witnesses, but their testimonies did not agree with one another. Truth is not determined by the loudness of a voice or by the number of accusations.

Pilate asked Jesus why He answered nothing to so many accusations. Ordinarily a man in danger of death would have defended himself actively and pointed out the faults of his accusers in order to save himself. But Jesus again answered nothing. Pilate found this attitude of Jesus difficult to understand and marveled at it.

That Jesus kept silent was not because the accusations were true and He could not refute them. He had no sin, and the testimony of His accusers was false. Rather than defending Himself and avoiding the Cross, Jesus was determined to stand in the place of the sinner and receive condemnation. He put the accomplishing of the will of redemption entrusted to Him by the Father before an argument for His own survival.

That said, this text must not be applied as a rule that the saints must always keep silent in the face of every unjust accusation. The saints may bring the facts to light, protect the weak, and defend themselves according to just procedure. The focus of the text lies in the fact that Jesus kept silent of His own will in order to accomplish especially the mission of the Savior, who is judged in the stead of sinners.

Jesus was bound in the form of a sinner although He was not a sinner, and He was accused like a political criminal although He was not a rebel. This was in order that He might bear in our stead the condemnation that we were to receive. Man is an actual sinner who has rebelled against God and

served his own desire as king, but Jesus stood in the place of receiving the sentence of death in order to save such sinners.

Before He stood before Pilate, Jesus had already taken the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. By being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He received our falsehood and rebellion, our unjust accusations and all our self-centered sins. Therefore, although He had no sin, He was tried as the Lamb of God, who had actually borne the sin of the world.

Bearing the sins He had borne through the baptism He received from John, Jesus shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the righteous judgment of God. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, and thus overcame sin and death and showed that He is the true King and Savior. The court of men treated Jesus as a sinner, but God revealed His righteousness and His identity by the resurrection.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit does not obtain a verdict of innocence by his own defense and good works. By believing the fact that Jesus bore all his sins and was condemned in his stead, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. He receives the Holy Spirit as a gift, becomes a righteous man without sin in his heart, and serves Jesus Christ as his own King.

To believe in Jesus as King does not stop at calling Him by that title with the mouth. It is not making one's own thoughts and desires the final authority of one's life, but receiving the words of Jesus as right. We must not change the truth or falsely accuse another in order to obtain worldly advantage, but must live honestly, following the leading of the Holy Spirit, even if there is loss.

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The scene before the council and Pilate shows that both religious power and political power can be used for injustice. A religious leader can distort the truth in order to keep his own position, and a political leader can turn away from fair judgment according to public opinion and interests. Therefore the saints must not regard a man's judgment as unconditionally right merely because of his position, but must discern by the standard of the Word of God and of the facts.

Neither must this text be made a ground for condemning an entire people or group. The leaders who accused Jesus and the men in power who gave the verdict each bear their own responsibility, but the fundamental reason Jesus bore the Cross is the sin of the whole of mankind. We too must acknowledge that, had it not been for the grace of God, we were sinners who would go against the truth for our own profit.

Pilate marveled when he saw the silence of Jesus, but within that silence there were the love of God, who would make sinners live, and the obedience of the Savior. Jesus could have saved Himself, but in order to save us He did not argue. The true King did not force sacrifice upon His people; He gave up His own life in order to make His people live.

This passage shows why the sinless Jesus received an unjust accusation and a political trial and stood in the place of the sinner. He is the King of the Jews and the true King of the whole world, who bore all our sins by His baptism and completed salvation by the Cross and the resurrection. The person who has believed this gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit is not shaken by the judgments of men but relies firmly on the righteousness of God, and, having Jesus as the King of his life, casts away falsehood and injustice and lives according to truth and honesty.

The scene in which the guilty Barabbas is released and the sinless Jesus is delivered to the cross vividly shows the salvation of the Lord, who took the place of the sinner

"Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified" (Mark 15:6–15).

At the feast there was a custom of releasing one prisoner whom the people requested. According to this custom the multitude asked Pilate to release one prisoner. Pilate tried to use this opportunity to set Jesus free. He knew the fact that the reason the chief priests had handed Jesus over was not fair judgment or zeal for justice but envy.

The text clearly reveals what kind of man Barabbas was. He was a man who had plotted a rebellion and in the course of it had even committed murder, and had been seized. From the standpoint of the Roman government of that time Barabbas

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was a dangerous prisoner who had actually taken part in a violent rebellion. Jesus, on the other hand, had never killed anyone or raised a rebellion. Jesus made sinners live and healed the sick and preached the gospel of the kingdom of God. On the one side there was Barabbas, whose guilt was clear, and on the other side there was Jesus, who had no sin.

Pilate asked the multitude, *"Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?"* He had not found in Jesus any evil deserving of death, but rather than judging according to the truth he was watching the reaction of the multitude. A judge should have decided the guilt or innocence of the accused according to the evidence, but Pilate did not carry out by his own judgment the responsibility of releasing Jesus and left it to the choice of the crowd. If a man knows what is right and does not act accordingly, in the end he cooperates with injustice.

The chief priests stirred up the multitude so that they asked for the release of Barabbas rather than Jesus. The text does not say that all the Jews killed Jesus with the same mind and the same responsibility. Certain religious leaders who envied Jesus moved the multitude, and the multitude, influenced by them, raised their voices, and Pilate, who had the final authority of judgment, accepted that demand. Each person came to bear responsibility for the unjust verdict from a different position.

That the crowd is many and their voice is loud does not make their claim the truth. The multitude demanded the release of Barabbas, whose guilt was clear, and cried out that the sinless Jesus should be crucified. If a man entrusts his own thinking to the incitement of a leader or to the mood of the majority, he can fail to discern rightly what is right and wrong. In faith also, we must not conclude that something is the truth merely because many people claim it or because it has been handed down for a long time. We must examine whether it

agrees with the Word of God.

That Pilate asked, *"Why, what evil has He done?"* reveals again the fact that he had not found in Jesus a sin worthy of a sentence of death. But the multitude gave no reason and cried out all the more loudly, *"Crucify Him!"* Anger and shouting took the place where just evidence and explanation had disappeared. When the sin of man cannot overcome the truth by reasoning, it tries to suppress the truth by force and by numbers.

The fault of Pilate did not lie only in his not knowing the truth. He knew the envy of the chief priests and asked again what evil Jesus had done, but in the end he gave an unjust verdict in order to gratify the multitude. He regarded his own position and political stability as more important than justice. When a leader fears the reaction of people and forsakes right judgment, that authority becomes not a tool for protecting the weak but a tool for carrying out injustice.

At last Barabbas was released, and Jesus, after being scourged, was delivered up to be crucified. Barabbas should have received punishment for the sin he had committed, but he was set free, and the sinless Jesus stood in that place and received the punishment. Historically Barabbas was one prisoner, but this scene shows before our eyes the picture of redemption, in which the sinner is released and the righteous Jesus is delivered to death in his stead.

That said, we cannot conclude from the mere fact that Barabbas was released that he spiritually received the remission of sins and was born again. The text tells only the fact that his body was released from punishment. But the principle of the gospel—that Jesus bore in our stead the punishment the sinner had to receive—is clearly revealed through this scene. Not every person has committed the same

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crime as Barabbas, but every man has sinned before God and is in the same condition as Barabbas in that he cannot by himself escape the judgment of his own sin.

That Jesus received the punishment of the Cross was not because on that day He suddenly took upon Himself the sins of another. When Jesus began His public ministry, He took the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. When the sinless Son of God was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all the sins of sinners passed on to Him. Therefore Jesus was tried bearing the sins He had borne, and was scourged and delivered to the cross.

The baptism of Jesus and the Cross are not separated events. Jesus bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John, and by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He received in our stead the judgment for those sins. Because the wages of sin must surely be paid, God did not close His eyes to sin without any ground but caused that punishment to come upon Jesus, who had borne the sin. By this the justice of God was accomplished, and at the same time the love of God toward sinners appeared.

Just as Barabbas was not released by his own good deeds, so a sinner cannot be saved by his own merit. In the action of Barabbas there was no righteous condition deserving of release. His being released came about in a situation in which another was delivered to the cross. In the same way our salvation also is not obtained by offering prayer and good deeds, religious zeal or sacrifice as the price of salvation. It is the grace received by believing the righteousness that Jesus Christ accomplished by standing in the place of the sinner.

After Jesus died on the Cross He was buried and rose again on the third day. His resurrection shows the fact that the wages

of sin was completely paid and that the power of sin and death was defeated. The person who believes in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which was completed by the baptism of Jesus and the blood of the Cross and the resurrection, receives the remission of all his sins once and for all. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the person who has received the remission of sins and makes him born again as a righteous child of God.

This salvation does not mean that a man has come to act without any sin at all; it means that, because Jesus bore all sins and was judged, there no longer remains in the heart of the believing person any sin to be paid for. Even for a born-again person the insufficiency and the weakness of the flesh remain, but because of that insufficiency he does not return under condemnation or need to receive salvation anew. He acknowledges his fault and turns back, and yet, not taking his own feelings or works as the ground, he must stand firm again within the gospel that the Lord has completed.

Moreover, the picture of Pilate warns how the desire to gratify people distorts the truth. The person who preaches the gospel must not hide sin and judgment in order to gain the approval of the crowd, nor deliver only the words that people like to hear. On the contrary, neither must he threaten or compel people in order to force through his own claim. The Holy Spirit awakens the heart of a man and makes him believe not through violence and agitation but through the truthful word of the gospel.

This passage shows that in order to make the guilty man live, the sinless Jesus stood in the place of punishment in his stead. In the place where Barabbas was released and Jesus was delivered to the cross, the gospel of redemption is vividly revealed. Even within the unjust verdict of men, God

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accomplished His will of saving sinners. Therefore the sinner must acknowledge that he himself, like Barabbas, is one who deserves to be judged, and must believe the fact that Jesus resolved all his sins and punishment in his stead by His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who believes this gospel is set free from sin and judgment and lives serving God in the Holy Spirit.

The soldiers mocked Jesus as a false king, but He was the King of kings, who bore the humiliation in order to save sinners

"Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him" (Mark 15:16–20).

When Pilate had scourged Jesus and delivered Him to be crucified, the soldiers led Him into the hall called Praetorium. The Praetorium refers to the space connected with the residence of the governor. The soldiers did not take Jesus straight to the cross but made Him an object of mockery in the midst of the whole garrison they had gathered. Upon a man who had received the sentence of death they inflicted not only physical punishment but also public shame.

The soldiers clothed Jesus with purple. Purple was a color that expressed the authority and the status of a king, but they

did not clothe Him because they honored Him as an actual king. Using the fact that Jesus had been called *"the King of the Jews"* before Pilate, they imitated the appearance of a king in order to mock Him. To them Jesus looked like a helpless prisoner with no army and no servant to save Him.

Instead of a king's crown they twisted a crown of thorns and put it on the head of Jesus. A crown originally expresses the glory and the authority of a king, but the crown the soldiers made was an instrument that gave Jesus pain and insult. Thorns bring to mind the curse that came upon this earth after the fall of man, but the clearest meaning in the text is that the soldiers mocked the kingship of Jesus with a crown of thorns.

The soldiers said, *"Hail, King of the Jews!"* This was a mockery that imitated the greeting by which honor is paid to a king. They even performed the action of bowing the knee before Jesus, but they did not acknowledge Him as King in their hearts. Speaking words of exaltation with the mouth and bowing outwardly does not make it true faith and worship. We offer true worship when we know who Jesus is and believe in our hearts the salvation He accomplished.

But the title *"the King of the Jews,"* which the soldiers used in mockery, was in fact the truth. Jesus is the King of Israel, who came as the descendant of David, and at the same time He is the King of kings, who rules over the whole of mankind and all the universe. He is not merely an excellent man or a religious leader who was unjustly sacrificed, but the Son of God, who was from the beginning and who created all things. That honorable God came to this earth clothed with a human body in order to save His people from sin.

The soldiers struck the head of Jesus with a reed and spat on Him. The act of striking the head that wore the crown of thorns added physical pain, and spitting was an action that

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utterly despised the person of another. They bowed the knee before Jesus and yet did not worship Him but mocked Him. The robe and the crown and the greeting and the bowing of a king were all present, but at the center of them there was not faith but contempt.

This picture shows that the sin of man does not stop at a few wrong actions. Man, who is a creature, did not recognize the God who created him, and rather struck and mocked the God who had come before him. The soldiers did not know whom they were making sport of. But their ignorance does not change the evil of the action into good. If a man departs from the Word of God and judges only by what appears to his eyes, he can despise the truth even while it stands before him.

That Jesus endured all this humiliation was not because He had no power to resist the soldiers. He is the Son of God, who calmed the sea and the wind and made even the dead live. If He had wished it, no one could have held Jesus. But Jesus gave Himself up in obedience to the will of the Father, who would save sinners. He did not submit to the mockery and the violence of men; He Himself bore that suffering in order to accomplish the work of salvation.

When we read of the suffering of Jesus we must not merely pity Him or remain in human sympathy. Jesus is not a helpless victim who must receive our sympathy but the Savior from whom we must receive grace. What is important does not lie in thinking only of how painful it was for Him, but in knowing who the One who suffered is and why He went that way. We must believe the fact that the King of kings, who is God, bore this humiliation in order to make sinners live.

At this time Jesus had already taken the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. Jesus

had no sin, but by being baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, He received all sins passed on to Him. Therefore the Jesus who is now mocked and beaten by the soldiers is not a prisoner receiving punishment because of His own sin, but the Savior, who bore in our stead the curse and the shame that we were to receive.

The crown of thorns and the purple robe were instruments of mockery to the soldiers, but seen in the light of the gospel they reveal the picture of the true King, who bears the curse of sin. The kings of the world try to keep their own thrones by sacrificing others, but Jesus gave up His own body in order to make His people live. Worldly power tries to subdue people by force, but Jesus saves and rules sinners by truth and love. His kingship was not established by political violence or military strength; it appeared in the righteousness and the sacrifice of God.

When the soldiers had finished mocking Him, they took off the purple robe and put the original clothes of Jesus on Him again. The royal procession they had made was over, and now they led Him out to crucify Him. They thought that they were going to execute one prisoner, but Jesus was going to Golgotha in order to bear the judgment for the sins of the whole of mankind. Even within the evil actions of men, God accomplished His will of saving sinners.

Jesus bore all our sins through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross and received in our stead the punishment of sin. And He was buried and rose from the dead on the third day, and thus overcame the power of sin and death and completed salvation. The baptism of Jesus, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are one work of salvation that cannot be separated from one another. If the baptism is the event in which He bore

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sin, the Cross is the event in which He paid the wages of that sin, and the resurrection shows that that salvation was perfectly accomplished.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, not relying on his own works and merit. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the person who has received the remission of sins and makes him born again as a child of God. The saved person does not remember Jesus simply as a saint who suffered, but believes in Him and serves Him as his own Creator and Savior and eternal King. Thanksgiving and obedience are not a price for obtaining salvation but the fruit of faith that comes out of the salvation already received.

The fact that Jesus silently received violence must not be applied to mean that every victim must not resist unjust violence or ask for help. The silence and the patience of Jesus belong to the unique work of salvation in which He bore the sin of the whole world in our stead. The believing person must not justify violence or compel a weak person to endure unconditionally; rather he must prevent injustice and protect those who suffer.

This passage teaches us not to judge Jesus merely by the appearance that is seen outwardly. To the eyes of the soldiers Jesus looked like a prisoner with no power at all, but in fact He was the God who had created even their lives. The One who wore the crown of thorns and was spat upon was not a defeated king but the true King, who saves His people from sin and curse.

Therefore we must not, like the soldiers, call Jesus King only with our mouths while in our hearts serving our own thoughts and desires as king. We must believe in our hearts that Jesus is the Son of God and the Creator, and the Lord who has

completely saved us by His baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. The person who has this faith counts the word of the Lord more precious than the mockery or the evaluation of the world, and lives giving thanks to Jesus Christ, who bore all the humiliation for him, and following the leading of the Holy Spirit.

By not saving Himself on the Cross Jesus became the true King, who saves all the people bound by sin

"Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him" (Mark 15:21–32).

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As the soldiers were leading Jesus out to crucify Him, they met Simon a Cyrenian. Mark introduces him as the father of Alexander and Rufus. This shows the possibility that his family was known to some degree among those who first read the Gospel of Mark, but the text does not explain in detail what they did afterward. Therefore we must not conclude from this event alone that Simon believed in Jesus on the spot and was born again.

Simon did not step forward of his own will; he was seized by the soldiers and forced to bear the cross of Jesus. The text does not directly explain why the soldiers made him bear the cross. We may consider the possibility that Jesus had become very weak in body because He had been scourged and beaten beforehand, but we cannot conclude that as though it were a fact the text states. The clear fact is that Simon, who was passing by, came to take part in the execution procession of Jesus at a moment he had not expected.

We must distinguish between Simon's bearing the wooden cross in His stead and Jesus' bearing the sins of mankind. Simon carried the wooden cross on the way to Golgotha, but he did not share in bearing the work of salvation of Jesus. The only One who bore all the sins of the world and received their judgment in our stead is Jesus Christ, the sinless Son of God. The sacrifice or the suffering of a man may be precious, but by it he cannot wash away his own sins or the sins of another.

The soldiers led Jesus to the place called Golgotha. Mark translates Golgotha as *"Place of a Skull."* That place was a place of death where Roman executions were carried out. To the eyes of men Jesus was dragged there like a prisoner who had failed, but in reality it was the place where the plan of God's salvation was accomplished, to destroy the power of sin and death and to make sinners live.

People gave Jesus wine mingled with myrrh, but Jesus did not take it. The text does not explain in detail who gave it with what intention, or for exactly what reason Jesus refused it. It may generally be understood as a drink meant to lessen pain, but what can certainly be said from the text is the fact that Jesus did not take it and bore the suffering of the Cross in a state in which His consciousness was not dulled.

The soldiers crucified Jesus and cast lots in order to divide His clothes among themselves. While Jesus was suffering extreme pain, the interest of the soldiers was in who would take His clothes. The sin of man makes him seek only his own profit even in the face of the suffering of another. Moreover, the dividing of the clothes of Jesus by lot is connected with the word of the Old Testament, which showed that the Righteous One would suffer shame and plunder. People acted according to their own greed, but the Word of God was fulfilled just as it was.

At the third hour Jesus was crucified. By the reckoning of time in that day the third hour points to about nine in the morning. Crucifixion was a punishment that publicly shamed a man and made him die in agony. That the sinless Jesus received the punishment inflicted on the most wicked criminal was not because of any wrong of His own, but because He bore in our stead the curse and the judgment that sinners were to receive.

On the inscription of accusation fastened above the head of Jesus was written, "*THE KING OF THE JEWS.*" To the Roman soldiers this writing was a charge that defined Jesus as a political rebel, and it was also a sign by which they mocked Him. But the words they wrote in order to laugh at Him testified to the truth without their knowing it. Jesus is truly the King of the Jews, and He is the King of kings, who rules not

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only the Jews but the whole of mankind.

Jesus did not try to become King by seizing worldly power. His kingdom is not a kingdom established by violence and military strength. Jesus is the King, who gives up His own life for sinners and rules by truth and by the Holy Spirit the hearts of the people who have been saved from sin and death. The kings of the world sacrifice others in order to keep their own place, but Jesus sacrificed Himself in order to make His people live.

Two robbers also were crucified with Him, on His right and on His left. The sinless Jesus was treated as though He were one among criminals. Jesus had never actually committed a sin like that of the robbers, but He received punishment in the place of sinners. By having the most righteous One numbered together with sinners, God opened the way for sinners to receive His righteousness and be saved.

Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted Jesus. They mocked Him, saying that He had said He would destroy the temple and build it again in three days; but in the trial before this also the testimonies concerning this did not agree with one another. Jesus did not come to destroy a temple built by the hands of men but to open a new way to come to God through His own death and resurrection. But people did not realize the meaning of that word and used a distorted accusation as material for mockery.

They cried out, *"save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"* It was a demand that if Jesus was the Son of God and a king, He should come down from the cross by His own power. But for Jesus to come down from the cross would not have been a proving of His power; it would have been a stopping of the work of saving sinners. Jesus did not remain on the cross because He had no power to come down; He did not come

down because He would bear the punishment of the sinner to the end.

The chief priests and the scribes also mocked Him, saying, *"He saved others; Himself He cannot save."* They could not deny that Jesus had healed the sick and made the dead live, but seeing Him hanging on the cross they judged that He could not save Himself. Yet their words paradoxically explain the work of salvation of Jesus. Because Jesus did not avoid the Cross in order to save Himself, He saved others.

The words *"Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe"* were a conditional demand that they would believe if they saw a miracle. But true faith is not a man's commanding God to present the sign he desires and then acknowledging Him when that condition is met. It is laying down one's own judgment before the Word of God and receiving who Jesus is and what work He accomplished. Not coming down from the cross but bearing the Cross to the end is the true sign that Christ showed.

Mark records that even those who were crucified with Him reviled Jesus. Even the men who faced death upon a cross mocked Jesus. This emphasizes that in that place there was almost no one who understood Jesus and took His side, and that He walked the way of redemption alone. A man can be so darkened by sin that even facing his own death he does not see his own sin and blames another.

Before He was nailed to the cross, Jesus had already taken the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist in the Jordan River. When the sinless Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins of the past, the present, and the future passed on to Him. Therefore the Jesus who was nailed at Golgotha is not one who merely died

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unjustly in a sinless state, but the Savior, who received in our stead the judgment for the sins of mankind, which He had borne through the baptism.

Jesus bore our sins through the baptism He received from John, and by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross He paid the whole wages of sin. And He was buried and rose again on the third day, and thus overcame sin and death and completed salvation. If any one of the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus is left out, we cannot fully explain how a sinner has been made righteous. The water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit together testify to the perfect salvation of God.

The person who believes in his heart this gospel of the water and the Spirit is not saved as the price of his own good deeds or suffering, but has all his sins remitted by the righteousness that Jesus accomplished in his stead. God gives the Holy Spirit to the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins and makes him born again as a child of God. To look upon the Cross is not to remain in emotional pity for the pain of Jesus, but to believe the fact that the Son of God bore one's own sins and was judged in one's stead.

We must not teach, on the ground that Simon a Cyrenian carried the cross of Jesus, that a man must suffer much in order to be saved. The cross that a believing person bears is not the cross of redemption that pays the price of the remission of sins. To lay down one's own will and bear loss and difficulty in the course of believing and following the gospel is the fruit of a saved life. The cross that saved man from sin was borne by Jesus alone.

This passage teaches the fact that Jesus saved us by not saving Himself on the Cross. People said that they would believe if He came down from the cross, but Jesus did not

come down and bore the punishment of sin to the end. He is not a defeated king but the true King, who gave up His own life and made His people live. The person who believes this King is set free from all sin and judgment and receives the Holy Spirit, and even in the midst of the mockery of the world he believes and preaches the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which Jesus Christ accomplished.

Because Jesus received the judgment of sin in our stead and actually died and was buried, the way to come to God and the hope of the resurrection were opened

"Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!' There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem. Now when

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evening had come, because it was the Preparation Day, that is, the day before the Sabbath, Joseph of Arimathea, a prominent council member, who was himself waiting for the kingdom of God, coming and taking courage, went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate marveled that He was already dead; and summoning the centurion, he asked him if He had been dead for some time. So when he found out from the centurion, he granted the body to Joseph. Then he bought fine linen, took Him down, and wrapped Him in the linen. And he laid Him in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock, and rolled a stone against the door of the tomb. And Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses observed where He was laid" (Mark 15:33–47).

From the sixth hour, that is, from about noon, until the ninth hour, about three in the afternoon, darkness continued over the whole land. This darkness, which came at the time when Jesus hung on the Cross, is not a mere background but clear evidence showing how solemn the judgment of God upon sin is. Because the sinless Son of God was being judged as the One who had borne all the sins of the world, darkness covered the land in the daytime, when it should have been light.

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"* This means, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* and it is connected with the word of Psalm 22. This cry does not mean that Jesus despaired because He could not believe the Father. Neither does it mean that the Son of God lost His divinity or that the triune God was divided. It shows that Jesus, as the Redeemer who had borne sin, actually bore the agony of the judgment and the forsaking that were to come upon the sinner.

The ones who should have been forsaken by God were originally we ourselves. Man followed his own desire rather

than God and committed countless sins in heart and in action, and so could not escape the judgment of God. But Jesus stood in the place of the sinner and received in our stead the judgment we were to receive. The cry of Jesus shows that the punishment of sin was not merely declared in word but was actually carried out upon Him.

Those who stood by heard the word of Jesus and thought that He was calling Elijah. One man filled a sponge with sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to Him to drink, saying that they should see whether Elijah would come and take Jesus down. They did not realize the suffering of Jesus as the work of God's salvation but looked upon it as a kind of spectacle. If a man hears the Word of God only with his own thoughts, he can misunderstand its meaning even while seeing the very place where salvation is being accomplished.

Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last. The death of the Cross was not a fainting or a temporary loss of consciousness but an actual death. That the Son of God came in the flesh and underwent a death like ours was in order to bear in our stead the death that is the wages of sin. He did not die merely as a helpless victim whose life was taken from Him; according to His will to make sinners live, He gave up His own life.

At the moment Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The veil of the temple was a boundary showing that a sinner could not come carelessly before the holy God. Yet together with the death of Jesus that veil was torn from the top. It is revealed that man did not tear it from below and go up to God, but that God opened the way for the sinner.

This event shows that the salvation to which the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed was fulfilled in Jesus Christ. By

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repeatedly offering the blood of animals it was not possible to remove the sin of man forever. Because Jesus bore all the sins of the world and on the Cross completely paid the wages of those sins, the wall of sin that had blocked the way between God and the sinner was removed. Now whoever believes the gospel that Jesus accomplished comes before God.

The centurion who stood facing Jesus saw Him breathe His last and confessed, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"* He was a Roman soldier who had watched the execution of Jesus at close hand. The religious leaders condemned Jesus on the ground that He was the Son of God, but from the mouth of a Gentile centurion came the confession that He is the Son of God. Through this confession Mark reveals again the true identity of the One who was hung on the cross.

But there is no need to conclude everything about this centurion's later state of faith from this one word alone. What the text clearly testifies is that the death of Jesus appeared to him entirely different from the death of an ordinary prisoner, and that he confessed Jesus to be the Son of God. True salvation comes about when a man knows the meaning of this confession within the gospel of the water and the Spirit and believes it in his heart.

Among the women who watched from afar were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome. They had followed and served Jesus from the time when He was in Galilee and had come up with Him as far as Jerusalem. Even in a situation in which the disciples were scattered, these women watched the death of Jesus, and afterward they confirmed even the place where He was buried. Their witness becomes an important testimony that connects the death of Jesus, His burial, and the empty tomb.

When evening came, Joseph of Arimathea went in to Pilate

and asked for the body of Jesus. He was a prominent council member and a man who was waiting for the kingdom of God. From the mere fact that he belonged to the council we cannot conclude that he took part in the earlier condemnation with the same mind. What Mark emphasizes is the fact that he took a risk and went boldly before Pilate in order to ask for the body of Jesus.

To ask for the body of a man executed on a cross was an action that publicly revealed one's relationship with Jesus. Joseph asked for the body of Jesus only after He had been forsaken by many and had died. It was not that he tried to make use of the miracles or the popularity of Jesus while He was alive; in a situation in which it was hard to expect any worldly advantage, he honored Jesus and prepared for His burial. His action was a picture in which the faith that waits for the kingdom of God appeared in an actual choice.

Pilate marveled at the word that Jesus was already dead and summoned the centurion and confirmed it. Only after confirming the death of Jesus from the centurion did he grant the body to Joseph. This procedure clearly testifies that Jesus actually died on the Cross. The resurrection of Jesus is not an event in which a man who had not died recovered in a tomb, but an event in which One whose death was confirmed and who was buried rose again on the third day.

Joseph bought fine linen, took down the body of Jesus from the cross, and wrapped it in the linen. And he laid Jesus in a tomb hewn out of the rock and rolled a great stone against the door of the tomb. The burial of Jesus shows that His death was certain, and at the same time it prepares the historical foundation for the resurrection that will appear in the next chapter. The very Jesus who died on the Cross was buried in a tomb, and in that very body He rose from the dead.

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Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where the body of Jesus was laid. Therefore we cannot say that after the resurrection the women went to the wrong tomb. They watched the death of the Cross and confirmed the place of burial as well. Through many witnesses God caused it to be testified that the death and the burial and the resurrection of Jesus were not the imagination or the symbol of men but an event of salvation that actually happened.

That Jesus received this judgment is because beforehand, in the Jordan River, He had taken the sins of all the people of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. When the sinless Jesus was baptized by John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, all our sins passed on to Him. Therefore the blood of the Cross is not blood shed without relation to the passing on of sin, but blood by which He received in our stead the punishment for the sins He had borne through the baptism.

Jesus bore all sins through the baptism He received from John and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and He was buried and rose again on the third day. This baptism, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection are one work of salvation that cannot be separated from one another. By the baptism He bore sin, on the Cross He paid the wages of that sin, and by the resurrection He showed the victory over sin and death. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which perfectly saves the sinner.

The person who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and comes to God. As the torn veil shows, between the person who has received the remission of sins and God there no longer remains a wall of sin. God gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to the person who has believed this gospel and received the remission of sins, and

makes him born again as a child of God. Salvation is not a work in which a man tears the veil by his own merit and enters; it is the grace of receiving by faith the way that Jesus has opened.

This passage shows that the death and the burial of Jesus were not the failure of salvation but a thing that had to be accomplished in order to make sinners live. In the midst of darkness the judgment of sin was carried out, and when Jesus breathed His last the veil of the temple was torn and the way to come to God was opened. His death was confirmed by the centurion, He was buried by Joseph, and the women saw the place of the tomb. Now there remains the work in which the Son of God, who is stronger than death, will rise from that tomb and complete salvation. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 15

[Question] 1. In Mark 15:1, what did the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes do in the morning?

In the morning the chief priests, together with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole council, consulted together as to how they would deal with Jesus. They bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate, the Roman governor.

Even though the Jewish council had condemned Jesus as deserving of death, the authority of the Roman governor was needed in order actually to carry out the death penalty, and so they delivered Jesus to Pilate.

[Question] 2. In Mark 15:2, when Pilate asked whether He was the King of the Jews, how did Jesus answer?

When Pilate asked, *"Are You the King of the Jews?"* Jesus answered, *"It is as you say."*

Jesus did not deny the fact that He is King. But the kingship of Jesus is not the authority of a king of this world who raises a political rebellion against Rome; it is the kingship of Christ, who rules the kingdom of God.

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[Question] 3. In Mark 15:3–5, how did Jesus respond when the chief priests accused Him of many things?

Although the chief priests accused Jesus of many things, Jesus gave no answer at all. Pilate asked why He did not answer even though He had heard so many accusations, but Jesus again said nothing, and Pilate marveled at this.

The silence of Jesus was not because He acknowledged the accusations or because He had no word with which to defend Himself. Jesus was without sin, and He also knew all the falsehood and the evil intent of those who accused Him. Yet He did not argue in order to save His own life, nor did He avoid the way of the Cross. Jesus willingly accepted suffering in order to accomplish the will of salvation that the Father had determined.

Because Jesus had borne all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John, He stood in the place of sinners even though He was the One without sin. And He kept silent in order to receive in our place the accusation, the condemnation, and the judgment that we ought to have received. The silence of Jesus was not powerlessness; it was the love and the resolve of One who obeyed the will of the Father to the very end in order to save mankind.

[Question] 4. In Mark 15:6–15, what proposal did Pilate present in order to release Jesus?

At that time there was a custom of releasing to the people one prisoner whom they wanted whenever the feast came. Using this custom, Pilate asked the crowd, *"Do you want me to*

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release to you the King of the Jews?" and tried to set Jesus free. He knew the fact that the chief priests had delivered Jesus up out of envy.

But the chief priests stirred up the crowd so that they would demand the release of Barabbas, who had been arrested for rebellion and murder, and not of Jesus. When Pilate asked what he should do with Jesus, the crowd cried out to crucify Him. Pilate asked what evil Jesus had done, but the people cried out all the more to crucify Him.

In the end Pilate did not release Jesus according to justice, but chose to satisfy the crowd. He released Barabbas, and after scourging the sinless Jesus, he delivered Him up to be crucified.

[Question] 5. In Mark 15:10, what was the reason the chief priests sought to kill Jesus?

The direct motive for the chief priests' delivered Jesus to Pilate and sought to kill Him was envy. Pilate also knew that they had delivered Jesus up out of envy.

When Jesus taught the Word with authority, healed the sick, and received the support of many of the people, the chief priests feared that their own religious authority and influence would grow weak. The fact that Jesus had exposed the sin by which they had made the temple a place of trading, and the hypocrisy and greed of the religious leaders, also made their hatred all the greater.

They knew much of the Word of God and held religious positions, but before the Word they did not acknowledge their own sins and faults. Rather than repenting and receiving Jesus as the Christ, they sought to remove Jesus in order to keep their own place and their own righteousness. This shows that even

though a man has religious knowledge and office, if he does not cast away pride and envy, he can stand against the will of God.

Yet God was not ruled by their evil plan. They sought to kill Jesus out of envy, but God accomplished His will to save mankind through the suffering and the death of Jesus. This does not mean that their sin was justified; it shows the providence of God, who accomplishes His own plan of salvation even in the midst of the evil deeds of men.

[Question] 6. In Mark 15:15, what verdict did Pilate give before the demand of the crowd to crucify Jesus?

In order to satisfy the crowd, Pilate released Barabbas, and after scourging Jesus, he delivered Him up to be crucified.

Pilate knew that Jesus had committed no sin deserving of death and that the chief priests had delivered Him up out of envy. Nevertheless he did not give a just verdict, but chose the pressure of the crowd and his own political stability and delivered the sinless Jesus to death on the Cross.

[Question] 7. In Mark 15:15, what kind of punishment was the scourging that Jesus received before He was crucified?

Mark 15:15 records that Pilate, *"after he had scourged Him,"* delivered Jesus *"to be crucified,"* but it does not specifically state the form of the scourge that was used or the number of blows He received.

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The Roman scourging of that time was a cruel punishment that, before crucifixion, weakened the body of the prisoner and gave him extreme pain and shame. The body of the prisoner was bound so that he could not move, and he was beaten with a scourge made of leather thongs; among the Roman scourges there were also some that had pieces of bone or hard objects attached to the leather thongs. As a result severe bruises and wounds, bleeding and exhaustion could occur, and at times it was so brutal that life was in danger even before the cross.

Since this punishment was carried out by Roman soldiers, we must not conclude that it was the same as the Jewish regulations for beating. In particular, exactly how many blows Jesus received is not recorded in the Bible, nor can it be determined historically. Therefore we must not speak of a specific number of blows or of the degree of the wounds as though it were a fact recorded in the Bible.

The scourging that Jesus received was the suffering and the humiliation that the sinless Son of God Himself bore in order to save mankind. Jesus bore all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He received the scourging and the judgment of the Cross, and then rose from the dead. Jesus did not receive punishment because of His own sin; He received this suffering in order to bear in our place the judgment of sin that we ought to have received.

[Question] 8. In Mark 15:16–20, how did the Roman soldiers act in order to mock Jesus?

The Roman soldiers led Jesus away into the hall called the Praetorium and called together the whole garrison. They put on Jesus a purple robe in imitation of the robe of a king, and

instead of a crown they twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head.

The soldiers said, *"Hail, King of the Jews!"* and pretended to pay Him respect falsely. Then they struck Jesus on the head with a reed and spat on Him, and bowing the knee before Him they made a show of worshiping Him, mocking and insulting Jesus, who is King.

When they had finished mocking Him, they took off the purple robe and put His own clothes on Jesus again, and then led Him out in order to crucify Him. They mocked Jesus as though He were a false king, but Jesus was in truth the real King who rules the kingdom of God.

[Question] 9. In Mark 15:21, who was Simon of Cyrene, who was compelled to bear the cross of Jesus?

Simon was from Cyrene in North Africa, and he was the father of Alexander and Rufus. Cyrene was a large city in what is today the northeastern part of Libya, and it was a place where many Jews also lived.

Mark records that when Simon was passing by, coming from the country, the Roman soldiers seized him and compelled him to bear the cross of Jesus. It is possible that he was a Jew who had come to Jerusalem to keep the Passover, but the text does not directly state the purpose of his visit. Also, it is commonly understood that the cross was laid on Simon because Jesus had become very weak from the scourging, but verse 21 does not explain the specific reason the soldiers chose him.

That Mark introduced Simon as the father of Alexander and

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Rufus shows the possibility that his sons were people known to the readers of Mark at that time. But what work they did, or whether Rufus is the same person as the Rufus who appears in Romans, cannot be determined from the Bible alone. Concerning the historical identity of Simon and his two sons as well, there are various views.

Simon bore the cross not of his own will but by compulsion, yet as a result he directly took part in the way of the suffering of Jesus and became a witness of that scene. This event shows that Simon took part in the way of the suffering of Jesus in a place he had not expected, and it also gives the believing person the lesson that he must bear by faith the service entrusted to him.

[Question] 10. In Mark 15:22, to what place was Jesus led away?

Jesus was led away to the place called Golgotha. Golgotha, when translated, means *"Place of a Skull,"* and it is the place where Jesus was crucified.

[Question] 11. In Mark 15:23, why did Jesus not receive the wine mingled with myrrh?

Mark only records that people gave Jesus wine mingled with myrrh but that Jesus did not receive it; it does not directly explain the reason He refused it. Therefore, we must distinguish between what is clearly stated in the text and what is interpretation concerning the reason for His refusal.

Traditionally it has been understood that wine mingled with

myrrh was a drink given in order to dull the pain and the consciousness of the one receiving crucifixion. According to this interpretation, Jesus refused it in order not to avoid the pain or to cloud His mind, but to bear the suffering and the death of the Cross with full consciousness. However, there is also the view that there is not enough clear ground to conclude that wine mingled with myrrh was used as a painkiller, and the possibility is also raised that it was an act of mockery, pretending to give a king fragrant and costly wine.

Therefore the safest explanation is that by not receiving the wine mingled with myrrh, Jesus did not avoid the way of the Cross given to Him nor escape it by some other means. Jesus bore all the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and in order to receive fully the judgment of those sins, He bore the way of suffering and death to the very end with a clear mind. This shows His obedience to the end to the Father's will to save mankind.

[Question] 12. In Mark 15:24, what did the soldiers who crucified Jesus do?

After crucifying Jesus, the soldiers divided His clothes among themselves. They cast lots in order to decide who would take which garment.

They showed no compassion at all toward Jesus, who was suffering on the Cross, and beside Him they gave their attention only to taking His clothes as their own share.

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[Question] 13. In Mark 15:25, how does Mark record the hour at which Jesus was crucified?

Mark records, *"Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him."*

Since the Jewish reckoning of time at that time regarded the hour around sunrise as the first hour of the day, the third hour corresponds to about nine o'clock in the morning by today's time.

[Question] 14. In Mark 15:26, how was the accusation against Jesus written on the inscription above the cross?

On the inscription of the accusation that was put above the cross of Jesus it was written, *"THE KING OF THE JEWS."*

Rome used this expression as a charge that Jesus was a political rebel who called himself a king against the rule of the emperor. But that word, written in order to mock, paradoxically revealed that Jesus is truly the King of the Jews and the Christ.

[Question] 15. In Mark 15:29–32, how did those who passed by insult Jesus, who hung on the Cross?

Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted Jesus. They mocked Him, saying, *"Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!"*

The chief priests and the scribes also mocked among themselves and said that Jesus had saved others but could not

save Himself. They also spoke of Jesus sarcastically as *"the Christ, the King of Israel,"* and said that if He would come down now from the cross, they would see and believe. Those who were crucified with Jesus also reviled Him.

But that Jesus did not come down from the cross was not because He had no power to save Himself. It was that He gave His own life and bore the suffering of the Cross to the very end in order to save mankind from sin. People mocked what they saw as powerlessness, but through that very Cross Jesus was accomplishing the work of salvation.

[Question] 16. In Mark 15:33, from when until when was the darkness that came over the whole land?

The darkness that came over the whole land continued from the sixth hour until the ninth hour.

By the reckoning of time at that time the sixth hour is about noon of today and the ninth hour is about three o'clock in the afternoon, and so darkness came over the whole land for about three hours.

[Question] 17. In Mark 15:34, what was the word that Jesus cried out with a loud voice at the ninth hour?

At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?"*

This word means, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* It is a word in which Jesus expressed the pain

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of bearing the sins of mankind and receiving the judgment of those sins on the Cross.

[Question] 18. In Mark 15:35–36, how did those who heard the loud cry of Jesus misunderstand it?

Those who were standing by heard the word that Jesus cried out, *"Eloi, Eloi,"* and misunderstood that Jesus was calling for Elijah.

One of them ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and gave it to Jesus to drink. And he said that they should watch whether Elijah would come and take Jesus down from the cross. They did not perceive the true meaning of the word that Jesus cried out as He bore the judgment of sin in which He was forsaken by God.

[Question] 19. What relation does the event of the death of Jesus on the Cross have to our salvation?

The death of Jesus on the Cross is the substitutionary death in which He received in our place the judgment of sin that mankind ought to have received and paid the wages of sin in full. Every man commits sin before God, and judgment and death must certainly follow sin. Since a man cannot bear the judgment for his own sin on his own through good deeds, religious effort, or repeated prayers of repentance, he cannot save himself.

But the Cross is not an event in which Jesus died apart from our sins. Jesus first bore on His own body the sin of the world, including the sin that has continued from Adam and all the sins

that a man commits throughout his life, through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. That the sinless Jesus received the punishment of sin on the Cross is because He had taken upon Himself the sins of mankind through that baptism. Therefore the baptism by which He bore the sins and the Cross on which He was judged for those sins are one work of salvation that cannot be separated.

Jesus said that He came *"to give His life a ransom for many,"* and at the Last Supper He spoke of His own blood as *"My blood of the new covenant, which is shed for many."* A *"ransom"* means the price paid in the place of another in order to set him free. Jesus received in our place the scourging, the curse, and the judgment of death that we ought to have received, and by giving His own life He paid the wages of sin in full.

The word that Jesus cried out on the Cross, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* is also related to this judgment. Jesus was not forsaken because of His own sin; He received the judgment of God in the place of sinners because of the sins of mankind that He had borne. In the place of us, who ought to have been forsaken by God and punished because of sin, Jesus bore that forsaking and that punishment.

When Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn from top to bottom, and thus the barrier that had kept men from coming to God because of sin was removed. It was not the deeds and the merits of men that opened the way; God opened the way of salvation from above. Since Jesus bore the sins and received fully the judgment of those sins, the person who believes the gospel comes boldly before God.

But our salvation does not end with the death of Jesus. After dying on the Cross, Jesus rose from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus confirms that He overcame the power of

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sin and death and that He completely accomplished the work of salvation. Not only the Jesus who died but the Jesus who rose again is our eternal Savior, and He gives new life and the hope of resurrection to the believing person.

Therefore a man must not stop at pitying the pain of the Cross or at acknowledging the death of Jesus as a historical fact. He must believe in his heart the gospel of the water and the Spirit—that Jesus bore all his sins through the baptism, that He received in his place the judgment of those sins and died on the Cross, and that He rose from the dead. The person who believes this gospel receives the remission of all his sins once for all and becomes righteous, and he receives the Holy Spirit, is born again as a child of God, and obtains eternal life.

Therefore the Cross is not a place that demands that a man wash away his sins by his own effort; it is the evidence of salvation that Jesus has already borne the judgment for our sins. The righteous person who has received the remission of sins does not make this grace an excuse to treat sin lightly, but must live a life of thanksgiving to the Lord, who gave His life to save him, and of serving the gospel and other souls.

[Question] 20. In Mark 15:38, what happened to the veil of the temple when Jesus breathed His last?

When Jesus breathed His last, the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. The veil divided the holy place from the Most Holy Place and kept sinful men from coming carelessly before the presence of God. In the time of the Old Testament only the high priest could enter within it at the appointed time with the blood of the sacrifice.

That the veil was torn from top to bottom and not from

bottom to top shows that it was not men who made the way to come to God, but that God Himself opened that way. By the death of Jesus the work of salvation to which the sacrifices of the Old Testament pointed was fulfilled, and it shows that the problem of sin that had stood between God and man was solved.

Jesus bore all the sins of mankind through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, and He received the judgment of those sins on the Cross and died. Therefore, the person who believes in that salvation comes before God relying not on his own righteousness or merit, but on the righteousness that Jesus completed. The event of the tearing of the veil shows that there is no need to repeat yet another sacrifice for sin, and it is the evidence of salvation showing that the person who believes in Jesus has received the remission of sins and has been reconciled with God.

[Question] 21. In Mark 15:39, what did the centurion say when he saw Jesus breathe His last?

The centurion who stood opposite Jesus saw Him breathe His last in that way and said, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!"*

The centurion, a Roman soldier, witnessed Jesus as He died and the things that happened at that time, and acknowledged that Jesus, who hung on the Cross, was not an ordinary man but the Son of God.

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[Question] 22. In Mark 15:40–41, who were the women who looked on from afar as Jesus breathed His last?

Among the women who were looking at Jesus from afar were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome.

These were women who had followed Jesus and ministered to Him from the time when He was in Galilee. Besides these, many other women who had come up to Jerusalem with Jesus also looked on at His death there.

[Question] 23. In Mark 15:42–46, who was it that took the body of Jesus and buried it?

The one who took the body of Jesus and buried it was Joseph of Arimathea. He was a prominent council member and a man who was waiting for the kingdom of God.

On the evening of the day before the Sabbath, Joseph took courage and went in to Pilate and asked for the body of Jesus. Pilate called the centurion and confirmed the fact that Jesus had already breathed His last, and then gave the body to Joseph.

Joseph bought fine linen, took the body of Jesus down from the cross and wrapped it in the linen, and laid it in a tomb which had been hewn out of the rock. And he rolled a great stone against the door of the tomb. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Jesus, the King of all mankind, saved us who are like Barabbas

< Mark 15:1-15 >

"Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'It is as you say.' And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to

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them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified."

Why was Jesus accused?

In this Word there appears the scene in which Jesus is dragged to the court of Pilate and receives judgment from the governor Pilate. Those who accused Jesus were the chief priests, the elders, and the scribes, who led the Jewish people. It says that these men held a consultation together with the whole council, bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate.

Why did the religious leaders and the Pharisees hate Jesus so much? It was because, though in their eyes Jesus did not look like anything great, He said that He was the Son of God and the Savior, and He worked with power. Many of the people followed Jesus and received healing from their diseases; when there was nothing to eat, Jesus performed a miracle and they were filled; and in that very difficult age they heard the Word concerning the kingdom of heaven and received great comfort.

This became a political problem. At that time Israel was a subject nation of Rome. When our country was taken by Japan, the Japanese controlled all the politics of our country, and the people were no different from slaves. In the same way Israel also became a subject nation of Rome and was no different from a slave. Rome set up the governor Pilate and ruled Israel. What Rome feared most was that the people would rise up, set up a leader, and that a liberation movement to escape from Rome would arise; and that was exactly what became the problem.

Within Israel, what was the problem for the religious leaders,

that is, for the chief priests, the scribes, and the Pharisees? It was that people believed and followed Jesus more than the Jewish teachers who taught the Law. So the name of Jesus became a great problem both within and without. Within Israel the chief priests were the most displeased, and so were the scribes, the religious leaders, and the Pharisees. Until then they had been popular, but after Jesus appeared their popularity was gone.

In their eyes that young man called Jesus had nothing at all to be admired. Isaiah chapter 53 records concerning Him that He is like a root out of a dry ground and has no beauty that we should desire Him. Yet people praised such a Jesus, crying Hosanna, and followed Him; and so outwardly there was the fear that a riot might arise and that Rome would lead an army and wipe out Israel altogether, and inwardly there was the anxiety that a new religious founder would appear and that Judaism, which regarded the Law as important, would collapse.

Therefore the religious leaders disliked Jesus, and they accused Him before Pilate, saying that Jesus called Himself a king and that countless people were following Him, so that if things went wrong a riot against Rome might arise. When such an accusation came in, it became a great problem also for the Roman governor who ruled Israel with an army.

Jesus, who made no defense at all

When Pilate, having received the written accusation, looked at Jesus, he could see that Jesus was not a man who would incite others. If He were a man who would raise a riot, there ought to have been a murderous look in His eyes and a sign of hostility, but in Jesus there was no murderous look, and He was exceedingly gentle. Yet the religious leaders of Israel not only

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said that Jesus called Himself the King of the Jews but brought forward every kind of charge, saying that He had tried to raise a rebellion and an insurrection.

But in Pilate's eyes Jesus was not such a man. Even though the other side accused Him in that way, Jesus made no answer and no argument at all. Even when Pilate told Him to make some defense, since so many people were accusing Him with so many charges, Jesus did not answer. Pilate marveled.

An ordinary man, when he is accused, brings a counter-accusation. But Jesus Christ, even while He was being accused, made no defense and no resistance at all.

As we know well, why was Jesus Christ hung on the Cross? Because Jesus received the baptism from John the Baptist and thus had the sin of the world passed on to Him once for all, He was hung on the Cross bearing those sins, and rose from the dead, in order to save us; that is why He was hung on the Cross. Jesus did not have the least desire to commit sin, or to incite the people and become the king of Israel, or to found a new religion and become its head. Because Jesus Christ, who is God, came to this earth in order to save all men from sin, He stood in the court of Pilate in order to accomplish that work. That is why He made no answer at all.

Barabbas was released and Jesus was crucified

Every nation has its feasts, and when a great feast comes around there is a law by which the nation, commemorating the good day, grants a special amnesty to prisoners.

In Israel also the feast of the Passover drew near. The Passover is a very great feast that commemorates Israel's escape from Egypt. At this feast there was a custom of releasing one

prisoner according to what the people requested. The people asked Pilate that, since the previous governors had done so for them, he too would do the same.

Pilate asked whether they wanted him to release Jesus, who was called the King of the Jews, but the crowd asked that Barabbas be released. Barabbas was a man who had led a rebellion, raised an insurrection, and gathered soldiers in order to stand against Rome. He was a very wicked man who had seized the people, done deeds like those of a robber, and set fires.

The crowd asked that such a wicked and sinful man be released. Pilate asked whether he should release Jesus, but the people of Israel cried out that Jesus should be crucified and that Barabbas should be released. In the end Pilate accepted that demand.

"So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified." The Word we have read today has such content. Jesus Christ was found guilty in the court of Pilate. Seen by the law of Rome, there was indeed a charge. It was because He had said that He was the King of the Jews.

It says, *"Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'It is as you say.'"* People accused Jesus of having said that He was the King of the Jews, and when Pilate asked, Jesus acknowledged that it was as he said. Since Judea was under the authority of the Roman emperor, a claim to be 'King of the Jews' could be interpreted as a political challenge to Roman rule." He is an obstructer and must be put to death—and so a verdict of guilt deserving death was fixed.

Although Jesus said that it was as he said, Pilate knew. When a man meets another man he can tell. Even if the other says nothing, he can tell. When Pilate saw Jesus, he knew that He was not one who would raise a riot or a rebellion.

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Granting the demands of the people is what politicians do. Because Pilate had come as governor, he could not lose the hearts of the people of Israel, and he also had to satisfy the heart of the Roman emperor who had appointed him. Since the people clamored that Jesus should be crucified and that Barabbas should be released, Pilate delivered Jesus up to be crucified and released Barabbas. What does this tell us?

Barabbas, spiritually speaking, means you and me

Jesus is the King of the Jews. That He is the King of the Jews means that He is the King of you and me. Jesus Christ, who is God, is the Savior who came to save mankind from sin. He made the universe, and when His own people sinned and were about to go to hell, He is God and Savior who came clothed in the body of a man in order to save that people from sin. That God came to this earth in order to save us, and He received judgment for us.

Barabbas was released and Jesus was crucified; and Jesus received thirty-nine stripes, one less than forty. On the end of that leather scourge there was something like a hook, so that when it struck, the scourge wound about the body and its end lodged in the flesh, and pieces of flesh were torn away. Such a scourge was brought down upon the prisoners.

After beating with the scourge in that way, they laid the cross on Him and nailed Him to death on the wood of the cross, on which the most wicked were put to death. Because the law of Rome had determined that whoever stood against the emperor should be nailed to a cross and put to death, Jesus, who had said that He was the King of the Jews, came to be nailed to a cross and put to death.

If we look at the Old Testament, it says that everyone who is hanged on a tree is accursed. Even by the national law of Rome, Jesus was the most wicked man. It was because, while there was a Roman emperor, He said that He Himself was king. So they nailed Him to a cross and put Him to death.

On the other hand, Jesus, who is God, had the sins of you and me passed on to Him, bore them, and received judgment in our place. Because He received the baptism from John the Baptist and thus had all our sins passed on to Him, He was nailed in our place, received the punishment of sin, was put to death, rose from the dead, and saved us. That is why it was necessary for Him to receive the punishment of the Cross, dying hanged on a tree.

Why was a wicked man like Barabbas released while Jesus received the punishment of the Cross? It is because Jesus came in order to save you and me from sin, from destruction, and from punishment. In order to give new life to you and me and to take away our sins, Jesus was hung on the Cross and Barabbas was released.

Barabbas, spiritually speaking, is you and me. He is one who stands against God and sins every day, who is lacking, weak in thought, and wicked. Barabbas spiritually means all mankind. Jesus is God and Savior, who came to save that mankind. By receiving the baptism He had our sins passed on to Him, and it says that by His stripes we are healed. Because He bore our sins, He was nailed to the Cross bearing those sins, shed all the blood that was in His heart, and died for us.

Because Jesus had our sins passed on to Him, died in our place, and rose from the dead for us, we who are like Barabbas came to be saved. That is why Jesus accepted this judgment. It was not a fair trial, but spiritually it was a very fair trial. Because Jesus had the sin of the world handed over to Him by the baptism

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from John, He had to be scourged and to die hanging on the Cross, and only by rising from the dead could He save us. That is why He did so.

Barabbas is you and me. We are men who are wicked and who could only be put to death because of our own sins, but through Jesus we have been saved. This Word is a word spoken concerning you and me.

Jesus came to this earth to save us, who are like Barabbas; He received the baptism from John the Baptist; and He had to die hanging on the Cross. That is why He made no defense before the governor Pilate. 'It is not so. That I say I am King is a spiritual thing, not a fleshly one. I have not the least mind to rule over those men. They have accused me out of religious envy.' If Jesus had argued for Himself in this way before Pilate, there would have been no occasion for Him to be hung on the Cross. But because He had already had the sin of the world passed on to Him through the baptism, He made no defense. It says, "*For the wages of sin is death, but the gift of God is eternal life in Christ Jesus our Lord" (Romans 6:23)*. Because Jesus Christ received the baptism from John and thus had our sins passed on to Him and bore them, according to the righteous law He had to be nailed to the Cross and die for us, and then rise again and save us. Only so could He accomplish our complete salvation. Therefore He let Barabbas be released, and even while He Himself was nailed to the Cross He made no argument at all.

Why did Jesus have to be hung on the Cross? It was in order to save you and me from sin, and to receive in our place the punishment of sin and the death that we were to receive. Because Jesus Christ received the baptism from John the Baptist and thus had all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, it was fitting that He should die hanging on the Cross. That is why Jesus was hung on the Cross.

But Jesus rose again. And so He made it so that everyone who believes this Word is set free from all sin and saved. Jesus is our true Savior. Jesus certainly saved us from sin, but He became the Savior for those who receive and welcome Him in their hearts, and He made it so that the effect does not reach those who do not receive Him.

Who fundamentally is Jesus? Jesus Christ is God. Jesus Christ, the King of kings, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man, received the baptism from John and thus had our sins passed on to Him, was hung on the Cross, rose from the dead, and saved us. Jesus Christ, who is God, came as our Savior and saved us by water and blood, that is, by the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Jesus Christ, who is God, originally had no need to receive such suffering and disregard and contempt and pain. Yet He received such pain and contempt in order to save you and me from sin and punishment. Knowing that His own people would suffer because of their own sins, and in order to save all mankind from sin and restore them again as the people of God, God, who is our King, came to this earth clothed in the body of a man, bore the sins Himself, and received in their place on the Cross the punishment that His own people were to receive.

The righteous salvation accomplished according to the law

Let me give one illustration. In a certain country long ago the people were so disorderly and committed so many sins that the king held a council with his officials and decided to establish the law strictly. He determined and proclaimed a very severe law: that if a man stole, his hand would be cut off, and if he committed

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the sin of adultery, his eyes would be gouged out. A notice was posted saying that from the day of the proclamation, whoever committed such sins would have this law applied to him.

People were afraid. Thinking of the punishment they would receive if they sinned, even those who had always sinned held themselves back; but of all people it was the king's son, the prince, who committed the sin of adultery, and the first accusation came in. The king gathered his officials and said that if an exception were made to this law the law would have no value, and so they should bring the prince and deal with him according to the law.

The prince was to have both his eyes gouged out. The king's heart was exceedingly pained. The law had to be kept, and his heart was pained that his son's eyes should be gouged out, and so the king made a decision. Since if both eyes were gouged out he could not rule the country, he decided that one eye of the prince and one eye of the king himself would be gouged out. When he opened the court according to the law and carried this out in the sight of the people, it is said that the law of that country became firm and those who committed sins were greatly reduced.

Judgment must be given according to the law. God gave us the Law. To repay eye for eye and tooth for tooth is the Law. We are all men who commit sin. But we are fundamentally men who were made according to the image of God. So it was with Adam and Eve, and we also were made as the children of God.

When men who were made for such a purpose received the temptation of Satan the devil and committed so many sins, God did not leave us to perish, but sent His own Son to this earth to this earth, had Him nailed to the Cross and put to death and raised Him from the dead, and restored those who believe in the love of that Son and of God the Father.

Why was Jesus hung on the Cross? He was hung on the Cross

in order to save you and me from sin. Why did He, who is God, have to come to this earth clothed in a body just like a man's? He did so in order to save us righteously, to make us the sinless children of God, and to let us live well forever.

We ought to think about the fact that Jesus was hung on the Cross. We ought to think about the fact that Jesus Christ, who is God, received such punishment in order to save us from our sins, and that He bore that severe suffering and punishment. We must know that this is exactly the love of God. We must know that this is the entirely fair salvation by which God saved us. When we believe in Jesus Christ, who saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, as our Savior, Satan the devil cannot trouble us. Because Jesus Christ had the sins of you and me passed on to Him by the baptism, bore that severe pain, died in our place, rose from the dead for us, and saved us fairly, however lacking we may be, we become the sinless people of God and the children of God.

Today's Word is telling that story. Among so many prisoners, why of all people was Barabbas released? Barabbas was one who incited others and was a ringleader even among sinners. That Barabbas was released and Jesus was nailed to the Cross tells us that Jesus, in the place of you and me, received the baptism from John, received in our place on the Cross the punishment for our sins, and saved us by rising again.

Let us give thanks to the Lord, who suffered for us

This is a part that you know well and believe, but I speak of it again. Do you and I think about how great a sacrifice Jesus, who is God, bore for us? Because the gospel of the water and the Spirit is so truly the truth, we think only of the fact that we

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believed it and received the remission of our sins; we hardly think about how wretched a pain Jesus bore in our place, and how great a love that is. Those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit are especially like this. But we ought once to think deeply.

How greatly must the Lord have loved us, that He was stripped of His clothes, was beaten with the scourge until He was covered with blood, and wore a crown of thorns and shed blood? With His whole body covered with wounds, He was bound to the wooden frame, nails were driven into His wrists and ankles, and the frame was set up. His flesh was torn and holes were made in His arteries, so that with every breath and with every beat of His heart the blood poured out. All the blood in His body flowed out, and though His heart was beating there was no blood, and so He was dying of excessive bleeding. In that state He said that it was finished, and He died.

Whether Jesus died early or late is not the important thing. We must remember that because Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him and bore them, He had to shed His blood and die in that way on the Cross; and we must meditate on that part, and think about it, and give thanks. We open our mouths and give thanks before God, who received such suffering because He loved us. We must not stop at feeling thankful in our hearts; we must also know how to open our mouths and say that we give thanks for His having suffered for us. When a man has received grace, he ought to know how to be grateful, and he ought to know how to say that he is thankful, and he ought not to forget but to remember.

Our Lord lives in the hearts of you and me. Whenever we remember this Word and think about it once again, we give thanks, and whenever we confess that thanksgiving with our mouths, God will be pleased. We give thanks before our God. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

Do you know that Jesus Christ is the precious God?

< Mark 15:16-41 >

"Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' And those who passed by blasphemed Him, wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come

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down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!' There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."

Saved souls becoming as many as the stars of heaven

I believe that through our literature mission our fellow workers abroad also preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and that many souls who are being saved are rising up. I believe

that the word of the Lord, that your descendants shall become as many as the stars of heaven, is being fulfilled.

When God spoke this word to Abraham, the population of the world was very small. In the earliest times men were born and lived very long, but as the ages went down disease grew severe, and those who died early became more than those who lived long.

At that time the population was small, but in this present age the gospel of the water and the Spirit is being preached and many people in every nation are receiving the remission of sins. I believe that the word that He would make your descendants as many as the stars of heaven will actually be fulfilled just so.

If we look at the Word of Revelation, it says how many are those who come before the Lord—that a great multitude which no man could number comes out clothed in white robes. That is, it speaks of those who have been saved. Since those people are actually receiving the remission of sins and rising up in this age, we give thanks before the Lord. I believe that such things are happening in every nation of the whole world, as in the time of the early church.

However, God first raises up elite soldiers who preach the gospel, not people who merely receive salvation and then live only for their own flesh. If all the people of the whole world lived only for their own flesh, the gospel could not be preached; rather they would hinder the preaching of the gospel. I believe that God is at work in this way.

Word is coming in from many places in the world, and those who visit our homepage are also increasing day by day. Many more people will come in the days ahead. To the thinking of men it seems an impossible story, but by faith it is a fact.

There are people who think it is megalomania to say that we will preach the gospel to the whole world. A man like Hitler was

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truly caught in megalomania. But that we say we will preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world is not megalomania but faith. We obey this by faith and uphold it by faith. Since it is said that in the last days a number of people too great to be counted will receive the remission of sins, if it is said that we, who work upholding the will of the Lord, are caught in megalomania, then it comes to mean that our Lord, who spoke that Word, is so.

Jesus, who was mocked before He was hung on the Cross

The Roman soldiers led Jesus away into the hall called the Praetorium, called together the whole garrison, clothed Jesus with purple, and twisted a crown of thorns and put it on His head. And they said, *"Hail, King of the Jews!"* and struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him and bowed the knee and worshiped Him. When they had thus finished mocking Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him again, and led Him out to crucify Him.

When we hear that Jesus was nailed to the Cross, we first think of that pain. We think how greatly it must have hurt Him, since nails were driven into Him on the Cross. We feel so sorry that it is almost shameful to eat food with enjoyment, and a heart of sympathy and a heart of thanksgiving are mixed together. When we ourselves are in pain we think of the Cross and receive comfort, saying, is my pain anything compared with the pain Jesus suffered on the Cross? But if we merely sympathize in that way, would Jesus be pleased?

Jesus was handed over from the court of Pilate to the Roman soldiers, was stripped of His clothes, and was clothed with

purple. Since you have said that you are the King of the Jews, you are a traitor against the Roman emperor—that is the meaning. To pass a sentence of death there must be a charge, and because they laid on Him the charge of having rebelled while calling Himself the King of the Jews, they were able to pass the sentence of death.

But as we face this scene in which Jesus is hung on the Cross, we must know what we really ought to think and what we ought to know before that. Before Jesus went to be hung on the Cross, He received mockery and contempt, was clothed with purple, was struck on the head with a reed that grows in the fields, and was spat upon. That men struck His head with a reed and spat on Him and bowed the knee and worshiped Him was mockery. They mocked Him, saying, are you really the King of the Jews? How can one who is a king be so powerless?

Purple is the clothing that kings wear. That they put a crown of thorns on Him and struck His head with a reed and spat on Him and bowed to Him was all mockery. And then they led Jesus out to the Cross.

When we face this Word in which Jesus is hung on the Cross, it is good to have a sorry heart and a grateful heart and a loving heart, but there is something we must know before that. It is that we must know who this Jesus Christ is who is now being mocked. Jesus Christ is the Son of God whom God the Father sent, and He is the King of kings who created the universe. Though He is the true God, He is bearing such humiliation in order to save His own people from sin. Knowing that the identity of Jesus Christ is that He is God, we must face the suffering of the Cross of Jesus.

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Jesus Himself testified that He is God

In John chapter 8 Jesus said to the woman who was caught in the very act of adultery that neither did He condemn her. And when He said to those who were about to stone that woman, *"He who is without sin among you, let him throw a stone at her first" (John 8:7)*, the people all withdrew.

When our Lord said, *"I am the light of the world. He who follows Me shall not walk in darkness, but have the light of life" (John 8:12)*, the Pharisees said that since He bore witness of Himself His witness was not true. Then Jesus spoke: *"Even if I bear witness of Myself, My witness is true, for I know where I came from and where I am going; but you do not know where I come from and where I am going" (John 8:14)*.

The Lord also spoke. He said that they are of this world and that He is not of this world; that He works just as the Father taught Him and that He who sent Him is with Him; that because He always does the things that please Him, He has not left Him alone. And He said that even if He bears witness for Himself His witness is true, and He said that they are from beneath and He is from above, and that He is before Abraham.

Jesus called Himself God. In John chapter 9, after He opened the eyes of the blind man, when people disregarded and opposed Him because He had done that work on the Sabbath, He told that man who had been cast out that He Himself is the Son of Man. In John chapter 10 He said that He is the door of the sheep and the shepherd. He said, *"I am the good shepherd; and I know My sheep, and am known by My own. As the Father knows Me, even so I know the Father; and I lay down My life for the sheep" (John 10:14–15)*. It means that He, as God who made us, came to this earth in order to save us from sin when we had fallen into sin.

It is the same with prayer. Jesus said, *"If you ask anything in*

My name, I will do it" (John 14:14). We were skilled at praying to God the Father, but we did not know well how to pray to our Lord. Yet the Lord said that if we ask Him in His name, He will hear and answer.

If an ordinary man said such a thing, it would be called megalomania. But because Jesus is fundamentally God, who became a man for a time and came to save you and me from sin, He is the God of power who hears and answers when we pray to Him.

When we call Jesus "Lord," we are acknowledging that He is our Master. Jesus is our master and our shepherd, who made us and saved us from sin. He is the Lord who saved us from sin by the gospel of the water and the Spirit and who gives us eternal life. We were born into this world by this Lord, we received the remission of sins by the gospel of the water and the Spirit which this Lord gave, and we were saved through this Lord.

What the Lord wants is not sympathy but a faith that knows Him rightly

Our Lord is mocked before He is nailed to the Cross; but who is this Jesus? How do we know and how do we believe in the Jesus who is hung on the Cross? Because the Lord received the baptism from John the Baptist and had the sins of mankind passed on to Him, He could not but be hung on the Cross; and He came to death and rose again and saved us.

But what the Lord wants from us is not that we sympathize with Him who was hung on the Cross. 'Whom do you say that I am? Do you know Me as God? Do you know that I am the Master who created all things in the universe? Do you really know and so believe that I am your Savior?' He asks this.

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Our Lord, while He was hung on the Cross, did not appeal to us to understand what He was doing. Instead He spoke to us countless times before He was hung on the Cross. He said that He is with the Father and that even if He bears witness for Himself His word is true; that He does what the Father does; that He also has authority to judge; that He gives salvation to the man who knows Him and believes the truth, and that He came to judge those who do not acknowledge Him as Savior and as God.

What the Lord really wants from us is that we become people who know and believe and give thanks that Jesus is our Savior and the God of you and me and our Master, and that He is God who loves and protects you and me and takes responsibility for us to the very end forever. Because the Lord had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism and bore them, He was hung on the Cross and received suffering, and came to death and rose again and saved us. So it is not that He asks for sympathy; He wants us to know rightly and to acknowledge Him.

You and I may first have the fleshly thought of how greatly it must have hurt Jesus, who was hung on the Cross. Jesus was hung on the Cross and nails were driven into Him, and He shed through His arteries all the blood that was in His heart, and being severely parched He said that He was thirsty. And He cried out with a loud voice, *"Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?" which is translated, "My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Because our Lord had the sins of you and me passed on to Him through the baptism, according to the word that the wages of sin is death, in order to pay the price of sin He bore our sins and died on the Cross in our place. And this was a process for rising from the dead and saving us.

What the Lord wants from us is that we know that the Lord is God and that He is our Savior. Because the Lord, in order to save us, received the baptism from John and had our sins passed

on to Him, He had to receive the judgment for sin in our place; and because He is our God and our Savior, He received such pain and humiliation and set us free from sin. It says, *"But He was wounded for our transgressions, He was bruised for our iniquities; The chastisement for our peace was upon Him, And by His stripes we are healed" (Isaiah 53:5),* and the Lord actually did this work for you and me. We must know and give thanks and believe that, because Jesus Christ came to this earth and received the baptism from John, and bore mockery, and died hanging on the Cross and rose again, He delivered you and me from the curse and from pain and from judgment.

The Lord does not demand sympathy from us. We must acknowledge that He is truly the Son of God the Father and God who created the universe. We must acknowledge that though He is God, He did such things in order to save you and me from sin. If a man with no money went to some wealthy man and said how greatly grieved he must be at having to pay so much tax this time, that rich man would rather be displeased.

There was a time when a certain large company had to pay an enormous fine. People worried about what would be done, but the chairman of that company is said to have replied that he had expected it and had already prepared everything. If one went to that chairman and worried on his behalf, he would rather tell him to worry about himself. It is because, compared with what that company earns, that fine is a very small thing.

If we only sympathize with the Lord's having been hung on the Cross, the Lord will rebuke us. 'I had to do this in order to save you. I want you to know rightly who I am and to believe. So I want you to receive the remission of sins and obtain eternal life.' If we do not rightly understand and believe that the Jesus who was hung on the Cross is truly God, and that in order to bear our sins He came to this earth for a time and received the baptism

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from John the Baptist and had the sins of mankind passed on to Him, and bore mockery and humiliation and pain, and died hanging on the Cross and rose again, the Lord will say that we have read the Word in vain and believe in Him in vain.

We are not people who are to sympathize with the Lord but people who must receive grace. How do you and I know Jesus Christ? Do you know that He is the Creator who created this galaxy and the earth and the world of all the stars and the plants and the animals and the spiritual world? Do you believe so? If we do not have this faith, we become no more than people who sympathize with Jesus for dying on the Cross.

He is the Creator, but when the people He had made transgressed and fell into sin, He came to this earth and bore such humiliation in order to save His own people from their sins. What you and I are to do is to know Him rightly and believe.

What does the Lord dislike most? It is that people do not believe that Jesus came to this earth as the Savior, and that Jesus is the Son of God, and that Jesus is God equal with God the Father. Jesus had to say this Himself. When He said that He is before Abraham, people opposed Him, saying, Abraham was a man of several thousand years ago; do you mean that you were before him? How can anyone say such a thing unless he is possessed by a demon? Because of such things the Lord was always striving and struggling. The Bible speaks hundreds and thousands of times that Jesus is God. If we do not acknowledge this, we believe in Jesus in vain.

If we do not know that Jesus is God, and if we do not know that in order to save us He came clothed in the body of a man and had our sins passed on to Him by the baptism through John and came to death hanging on the Cross and rose again, we believe in Jesus Christ in vain. By knowing His origin and believing that origin, we must know that everything He did was

all for you and me. We must know and believe that He did these things in order to save you and me from sin and judgment and destruction and to give us eternal life and every blessing.

If we do not have such knowledge, we must learn. This is the reason I speak countless times that Jesus is God. That He said, ask Me in My name and I will do it, means that He is God. Anyone can say such words, but a man who has no power, even though he says such words, cannot actually accomplish them.

Faith is looking up to what He has done and believing

It says, *"In the beginning God created the heavens and the earth" (Genesis 1:1),* and it says, *"All things were made through Him, and without Him nothing was made that was made" (John 1:3)*. Without Him nothing was made. Jesus is God. He is God and also the Savior and our shepherd. He is the God who gives us eternal life, and the God who solved for us the problem of our sin and the problem of judgment. He is such a God to you and me. I hope that you will believe.

On such knowledge and such faith we must read the Bible, and believe in Jesus, and pray to Him. This is true life of faith. Faith is looking up to the things He has done and believing. Religion is something I myself make up with my own thoughts and then believe, and so in the end it is a false image that is no more than the thought of man. So great is the difference between faith and religion.

What does Sakyamuni of Buddhism say? He says that you must attain Buddhahood, that you must attain deliverance, that you must cast away desire, and that if you want to go to a good place you must do good. The core of it all is that you yourself

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must do it. It is all the thought of man.

But Jesus says, ask Me in My name and I will do it for you; believe in Me and I will save you from sin; I am your Savior and your shepherd. It is entirely different. We all know this and believe so. But do we really believe?

Jesus is God and the Creator. Not only did He come to save you and me from sin, but His origin is God. Jesus made both you and me. The name Jesus means Savior, and the words Jesus Christ mean the One who is God, the Creator of the universe, and who came as the Savior.

Do you know that Jesus made all things? Do you believe it? This is what we must know.

The precious God who said that it is finished

Men nailed Jesus to the Cross, and on either side of Him robbers were nailed together with Him. The robber on one side sneered, saying that since He had saved others He should try once to save Himself. The robber on the other side rebuked him, saying that they were receiving this punishment because they had sinned, but that this Man had never sinned and that this Man is the Son of God; and he asked Jesus to remember him when He came into His kingdom. The Lord said to him, *"Assuredly, I say to you, today you will be with Me in Paradise" (Luke 23:43)*.

Why was our Lord not nailed alone but nailed together with the robbers on either side? He is showing that in this world there are people who recognize Jesus and believe, and there are people who do not recognize Him and not only do not believe but mock and deride Him. That Jesus, who is God, came to this earth in order to save us from sin, and had our sins passed on to Him by the baptism and bore them, and bore humiliation and mockery,

and died hanging on the Cross and rose again, is in order that we may know and believe and receive the blessing—that He saved you and me from sin and judgment and destruction and the curse, so that we may enjoy the remission of sins and eternal life and the boundless blessings of heaven forever.

What we must strive at most in believing in Jesus Christ is, together with the gospel of the water and the Spirit, to know who He is in His origin. We must know why He had to come to this earth, why He received the baptism from John and died hanging on the Cross and rose from the dead—we must know the thought and the plan and the purpose of His origin. And we must believe.

That He received the baptism from John and was hung on the Cross and rose again is important, but the point is that, though He is God, because His own people had fallen into sin and come to death, He came to you and me in order to save His own people from their sins and to make them obtain eternal life, and He is still knocking at the door of our hearts. He knocks at the door of the hearts of you and me, saying, I am your Lord, and in order to save you I came clothed in the body of a man and received the baptism from John and had all sins passed on to Me and bore them, and I came to death on the Cross and rose from the dead; I am your shepherd and your God.

We must open the door of our hearts and believe by the gospel of the water and the Spirit that God came to save His own people. We must know and believe so.

This is truly a matter that concerns life. When Easter comes, people say that since Jesus rose again, let us also help the pitiable people around us. But that is not it. Jesus came to save us. When we are saved, the Lord is satisfied. The purpose of the Lord is not in our doing good deeds and helping others; the purpose is in you and me being saved from sin and obtaining eternal life. We must set our purpose there.

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When Jesus received the sentence of death and bore the cross and went up the hill of Golgotha, countless people followed behind and wept. Saying that He is not such a person, and grieving more themselves whenever Jesus was in pain, they wept, and tried to bear the cross in His place, and tried to bring Him water.

At that time Jesus said, *"do not weep for Me, but weep for yourselves and for your children."* The Lord came for the work He was to do, and He did the work He was to do. He was mocked, was stripped of His clothes, was clothed with purple, was spat upon in the face, and was struck on the head with a reed. Though men mocked and scourged Him and told Him to save Himself, the Lord said nothing at all, but was dragged away and nailed to the Cross. On the Cross, shedding His blood and in such great pain, He said, *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* and at last He said, *"It is finished!"* He is God who created the universe, but upholding the will of God the Father He came to this earth clothed in the body of a man, and He worked in order to save His own people from their sins, and He accomplished all that work. And because He is the God of power, He rose from the dead by Himself. He spoke all of this and showed it.

The Lord requires of you and me that we know and believe that Jesus is God and our Creator and our Savior and our shepherd, and the Lord who gives all the blessings of eternal life. We do believe, but He wants the depth of that faith to become deeper. We must acknowledge and believe that everything the Lord did when He came to this earth has meaning, is something to be thankful for, and is precious.

The Lord is indeed God in His origin, and in order to save us who are lowly from sin, and in order to bear all the sins of men, He came to this earth clothed in the body of a man, received the baptism from John the Baptist, and died hanging on the Cross

and rose again. What He did in coming to this earth is truly precious because He is God. If He had not been God, He would be no more than one among many men who have done such things.

A certain doctor saved a man who had fallen onto the railway and was about to be struck by a train, and lost his own life. It cannot be compared with what Jesus did, but it was truly a righteous deed. Yet though a thing that a man does for a man is also precious and good and right, a thing that God has done for man is more right and more precious.

Because God came to this earth for us who are men, and received the baptism from John, and was mocked hanging on the Cross, and bore severe suffering, and rose from the dead and saved us, this work is more precious. That the Creator became the same as His own creature and, in order to take away sin, was clothed in a body and received the baptism from John and died for us and rose from the dead—there is nothing more precious than this. So what the Lord did became the symbol of love. The Cross is the symbol of the love with which God loved us. We must know and believe this and become those who please God. That all the people of the whole world should know and believe this, and have their faith acknowledged before God, and be saved from sin, and live receiving all the good blessings and grace that the Creator gives—this is the purpose for which God came to you and me. I hope you will receive it.

If Jesus Christ, who is God, had not done this work for us, I could not have preached the Word so passionately until now. If I were one who preached some heroic general who saved a nation, I might preach his life and wisdom and understanding for about a year, but no more than that. But the things Jesus did for you and me are not enough even if we preach them again and again forever.

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I truly give thanks by faith. The Lord said that it is finished and died on the Cross. *"And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!'" (Mark 15:37–39)* When Jesus said on the hill of Golgotha that it is finished and died, the thick veil of the holy place, which was far away, was torn. The veil of the holy place was so thick that it would tear only if four horses were tied to its four corners and made to run. Such a veil, at the moment Jesus breathed His last on the Cross, was torn from top to bottom. What does this mean? It means that the precious God accomplished everything He purposed to do in order to save mankind. That is, He made it possible to receive the remission of sins, and He opened the door of heaven so that whoever believes it may enter the kingdom of heaven.

Those who believe in Jesus, those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit, those who believe in that precious Jesus Christ as Savior, can enter the kingdom of heaven because they have received the remission of sins. I believe.

The centurion saw Jesus breathe His last in that way and believed. The man who was carrying out the execution confessed that this Man was truly the Son of God. Some men, as they die, at the last scream and curse. But Jesus was not so. Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses and Salome, who followed the Lord, were watching that whole scene from afar.

Everyone, this is a historical fact. That precious God came to this earth in order to save you and me from sin, and He saved us. Our Lord came to death and rose again on the third day. The Lord's Day that we keep is the very day the Lord rose again, and

Friday is the day the Lord died on the Cross. Because Jesus is the Master of life, He accomplished all the work of saving us and rose from the dead and lived again. And so He became the Savior of you and me. We give thanks before our Lord, who is truly precious. We desire to preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit to the whole world. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

The verdict that satisfied the crowd, the King who saved the sinner

< Mark 15:1-15 >

"Immediately, in the morning, the chief priests held a consultation with the elders and scribes and the whole council; and they bound Jesus, led Him away, and delivered Him to Pilate. Then Pilate asked Him, 'Are You the King of the Jews?' He answered and said to him, 'It is as you say.' And the chief priests accused Him of many things, but He answered nothing. Then Pilate asked Him again, saying, 'Do You answer nothing? See how many things they testify against You!' But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled. Now at the feast he was accustomed to releasing one prisoner to them, whomever they requested. And there was one named Barabbas, who was chained with his fellow rebels; they had committed murder in the rebellion. Then the multitude, crying aloud, began to ask him to do just as he had always done for them. But Pilate answered them, saying, 'Do you want me to release to you the King of the Jews?' For he knew that the chief priests had handed Him over because of envy. But the chief priests stirred up the crowd, so that he should rather release Barabbas to them. Pilate answered and said to them again, 'What then do you want me to do with Him whom you call the King of the Jews?' So they cried out again, 'Crucify Him!' Then Pilate said to

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them, 'Why, what evil has He done?' But they cried out all the more, 'Crucify Him!' So Pilate, wanting to gratify the crowd, released Barabbas to them; and he delivered Jesus, after he had scourged Him, to be crucified."

Today's Word begins in the court at dawn. Jesus, who had been bound all night, stands before the Roman governor Pilate. The chief priests, after holding a consultation with the elders and the scribes, that is, the whole council, deliver Jesus up. Many accusations pour out. Among them, the question that Pilate took hold of was the one concerning a king. *"Are You the King of the Jews?" (Mark 15:2)* To that question Jesus answers, *"It is as you say."*

This answer opens the door for reading the whole of today's text. Jesus is King. But that King is not a king who incites the crowd in order to keep his own place. Nor is He a king who sacrifices another in order to save himself. He is a King who is bound, and delivered up, and receives the verdict of the Cross, in order to save sinners. The court of the world set Him in the place of a prisoner, but in that very place it is revealed what kind of King Jesus is. He is not a king who takes away the life of the people in order to establish his own power, but the true King who gives His own life in order to save sinners.

Jesus, who kept silent amid the voices of accusation

The chief priests accused Jesus of many things. Pilate asks Jesus why He does not answer even though He hears so many accusations. But it is recorded, *"But Jesus still answered nothing, so that Pilate marveled" (Mark 15:5)*. An ordinary man, when

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he hears words that wrong him, immediately tries to defend himself. If it is an accusation that is not true, he tries all the more to make his innocence clear and to expose the fault of the other. Pilate would also have expected such an answer. Yet Jesus did not speak before the many accusations, and Pilate marveled at that sight.

We must not read this silence as powerlessness on the part of Jesus. It was not that Jesus could not refute because there was sin in Him. In the text even Pilate asks, *"Why, what evil has He done?" (Mark 15:14)* He knew that the chief priests had delivered Jesus up out of envy. The silence of Jesus was not the silence of a man whose sin has been discovered. It was the silence shown by the Savior, who goes to the very end on the way of judgment in the place of sinners.

It was not because Jesus had no word by which to deliver Himself that He kept silent. He came to this earth to save us. The sinless Son of God came clothed in the body of a man, and by the baptism He received from John He bore the sins of all mankind. Now He had to receive the judgment of those sins on the Cross. If Jesus had sought only His own safety, there would have been no reason for Him to stand to the end in the place of sinners. But the Lord did not avoid that way, in order to accomplish the work of salvation by which He bore in our place our sin and punishment and death. Therefore in the silence of Jesus we see not defeat but the firmness of His will to save.

How much self-defense comes out of our mouths! Even when we have done wrong, we blame our circumstances and blame other people. If we are wronged even a little, our whole heart is taken up with proving our own righteousness. Yet the sinless Jesus stood in the place of a prisoner for us who are full of sin. What we must see first is not the work of establishing ourselves as right before men. It is the question of who stood in

that place for me, who was actually a sinner before God. The silence of Jesus makes us stop for a moment the voice that asserts our own righteousness and look instead to the Lord, who was judged in our place.

Barabbas, whose sin was clear, and Jesus, in whom no evil was found

The text sets Barabbas beside Jesus. What the Bible tells us concerning Barabbas is clear. He was one of those who had plotted a rebellion and had committed murder in that rebellion and had been bound. Concerning Jesus there were many accusations, but Pilate asked in return what evil He had done. On the one side there is Barabbas, whose sin is recorded, and on the other side there is Jesus, for whom not even Pilate could present an evil deed. Yet the man the crowd demanded was Barabbas. They did not ask that Jesus be released; they asked that Barabbas be released.

Pilate asks again. He asks what he should do with Him whom they call the King of the Jews. The answer that came back was the cry to crucify Him. When Pilate asked the reason, that cry grew louder. The text does not say that the verdict was rightly given according to the truth. Rather it makes the decisive reason clear in one sentence. It says that he did so *"wanting to gratify the crowd."* He released Barabbas and, after scourging Jesus, delivered Him up to be crucified.

A verdict that seeks to satisfy the crowd cannot be a righteous verdict. Pilate followed what people wanted rather than what was right. He chose how to quiet the voice of the crowd rather than what evil he had found in Jesus. When the desire to satisfy men pushes out the truth, there came a reversed

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verdict in which the man who had sin was released and the One who had no sin was delivered up to punishment.

Seeing this scene, we cannot simply rebuke Pilate alone and move on. It is because in our hearts also there is the desire to satisfy men. Even when we know right from wrong, we can keep silent for fear of loss. We can listen to the opinion of those around us more loudly than to the Word of God. When we ought to take responsibility, we can hide behind the choice of the majority. We can hand over the truth in order to keep our own place. We cannot easily say that we are more righteous than Pilate. Nor can we exalt ourselves as better than Barabbas. Even if outwardly we have not committed the same sins, we are sinners who have lived against God and according to our own desires.

Barabbas shows us the place of the sinner before our eyes. The Bible does not say what he thought after he was released. Therefore there is no need to invent his feelings or his later life. But one fact is certain. In the place of a prisoner who was to be put to death there was Barabbas, and he was released. On the contrary, Jesus, for whom no charge was presented before the question of what evil He had done, was delivered up to the Cross. The contrast between the sinner who was released and the righteous One who was delivered up shows the heart of the gospel clearly.

We ought to set ourselves in the place of Barabbas

When we read the name of Barabbas, if we push him away merely as a particularly wicked sinner of long ago, this Word cannot shine into our hearts. This event, in which Barabbas was released because of Jesus, shows the substitution in which Jesus

bears in the place of the sinner the punishment the sinner ought to receive. We cannot say that we have lived exactly the same life as Barabbas. But in the point that we too must be judged for our own sins before God, we also are people who need to be released. We cannot make ourselves innocent by our own deeds, and we cannot take away the judgment of past sins by our own good works.

Men commonly compare themselves with other men. They think that they are not as wicked as that person. They regard themselves as all right, since they are more honest than others, serve more than others, and have not done any great harm to others. But in a court the fact that one is less bad than another prisoner cannot be the ground of a verdict of innocence. It is the same before God. A relative goodness compared with other people cannot take away our sin. Not loving God, not believing the Word, and the sins committed in heart and thought and deed are actual sins. Before we gather material to defend ourselves, we must see who the King is that saved sinners.

Just as Barabbas did not open the prison door by his own strength, the sinner cannot come out of the judgment of sin by his own strength. In the text the decision to release Barabbas and the decision to deliver Jesus up are interlocked within one scene. While Barabbas goes out without receiving punishment, Jesus goes toward the scourging and the Cross. This contrast shows that salvation is not the merit of man but the grace of Jesus, who received the punishment in his place. Salvation is not a reward that the sinner obtains by paying the price himself. It is a gift in which the sinless Savior bore the price in the place of the sinner.

Therefore, rather than a heart that says we are different from Barabbas, what is needed is the honest confession that we are sinners who cannot be released from judgment apart from Jesus. If we see our sin as small, the grace of the Cross also looks small.

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If we hold our own righteousness greatly, we come to feel that we have no need of the place of Jesus, who was delivered up in our stead. But the man who acknowledges his own sin before the Word of God knows that the exchange of places between Barabbas and Jesus is not another man's story. He comes to believe that the place of that sinner was the very place where he himself should have stood, and that Jesus went that way of punishment for him.

Jesus first bore the sin of the world by the baptism

Then how could the sinless Jesus receive the judgment of sinners? We must not look only at the scene of the Cross and leave out how sin was transferred to Jesus. When Jesus began His public ministry, He received the baptism from John in the Jordan River. That baptism was not a rite for washing away Jesus' own sin. Jesus had no sin of His own. Nor must it be confused as having the same meaning as the water baptism that a believer receives today. By the baptism He received from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind, Jesus bore on His own body the sins of all mankind and fulfilled the righteousness of God.

Not only our past sins but also the sins we will commit in the present and the future, all the sins of heart and thought and deed, are included in the sin of the world. Jesus bore all those sins once for all by the baptism. That is why the sinless Jesus received the judgment of sin on the Cross. The death of the Cross is not an event that ends as a political sacrifice or a moving martyrdom. It is the substitutionary death in which He received in our place the righteous judgment of God for the sin of the world that He bore by the baptism He received from John.

The wages of sin is death. If He had not taken sin upon Himself, we could not rightly explain the meaning of Jesus dying in our place. But because Jesus bore our sins by the baptism, He was delivered up to the Cross, and He received the punishment of sin and shed His blood and died. And He did not remain in death but rose again. The baptism Jesus received from John, His being judged and dying on the Cross, and His rising from the dead are one complete work of salvation that cannot be torn apart from one another.

This gospel does not say that Jesus only began salvation and entrusted the rest to us. The Lord bore the sins, the Lord received the judgment, and the Lord accomplished salvation by rising from the dead. The remission of sins is not a work that we complete by adding a new price every day. When we believe in our hearts the work that Jesus accomplished once for all, all our sins disappear once for all. The person who believes this gospel receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again and becomes a child of God. It is not that the sinner becomes righteous by his own strength, but that by believing the righteous salvation Jesus accomplished he becomes a righteous man who has no sin in his heart.

That does not mean that the person who has received the remission of sins never does wrong again in the flesh. We may still be weak and lacking. When we do wrong, we must acknowledge that wrong and turn from it. But our confession and our tears and our resolve do not complete the substitution of Jesus over again. Jesus has already borne all sins and received their judgment once for all. The assurance of the believing person lies not in the height or lowness of his own feelings or in today's report card, but in the work of the Lord that was completed by the baptism and the Cross and the resurrection.

This salvation must be preached to all men, but it is not

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enjoyed automatically without faith. Neither does the sin in the heart disappear merely by knowing the historical event in which Barabbas was released. We must believe in our hearts that Jesus bore all my sins also by the baptism and that He received that judgment in my place on the Cross and rose again. The person who receives Jesus as his Savior no longer remains in the standing of a sinner who waits for judgment. Because of Jesus, who was delivered up in his place, he is a righteous man who has received the remission of all sins, and a child of God.

The way of satisfying men and the faith that pleases God

Pilate delivered Jesus up in order to satisfy the crowd. This one sentence makes us look back on our own faith. Whom do we live to satisfy? Do we not blur the gospel in order to gain the praise of men? While striving to be believers who look good in the eyes of men, are we not in our hearts failing to believe the salvation Jesus accomplished? What pleases God is not our contriving a religious appearance, but the faith that receives as true the salvation the Son accomplished.

A religion that seeks to satisfy men keeps trying to show something. It feels as though one must weep much to be saved, as though one must do many works to maintain the remission of sins, as though one's faith is good only when others acknowledge it. But sin does not disappear by such deeds. On the contrary, neither does it mean that the person who believes the gospel may live any way he pleases. Good deeds and service and obedience and the preaching of the gospel are not conditions for obtaining salvation but fruit that the person who has already received the remission of sins bears in thanksgiving. It is not the

fruit that makes the root; the fruit comes out of a living root.

If we believe in the King who was bound in our place, we come to count the will of the Lord more precious than the praise of men. Rather than handing over the truth in order to keep our own profit, we come to hold on to the gospel even at a loss. Rather than wrapping ourselves in excuses when we have done wrong, we acknowledge it in the light and turn from it. Rather than despising other sinners, we remember that we also are people who were released by grace. Even when we serve, we do not try to pile up merit, but serve in thanksgiving for the salvation we received without price. This is not the price of salvation but the new life of the person who has been saved.

The one who has been released remembers the King who was delivered up in his place

Today's text does not ask us only how bad a man Barabbas was. Nor does it make us examine only how cowardly Pilate was. The Word sets us before two places. One place is the place of Barabbas, who waits for punishment because of sin, and the other place is the place of Jesus, who is delivered up to the Cross in the place of sinners. In which place were we? We were in the place of the sinner who cannot save himself. Who stood in our place? The sinless true King, Jesus, stood there.

Jesus was not an impromptu sacrifice for saving Barabbas. He is the Son of God who came to save all men from sin. By the baptism He received from John He bore the sin of the world, and bearing those sins He went to the court of Pilate and to the Cross. On the Cross He was judged and died, and He rose again and gave complete remission of sins and new life to the person who believes. The judgment of men delivered up a righteous man in

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order to satisfy the crowd, but even within that evil verdict God accomplished His will to save sinners. That does not mean that unrighteousness is changed into righteousness. It means that the unrighteousness of men could not overthrow the plan of salvation of God.

The person who knows this grace does not take the suffering of Jesus lightly. There is no need to swell the physical pain by imagination in order to stir the emotions. What the Bible says is enough. Jesus was bound, He received the scourging, and He was delivered up to the Cross. What is more important is why He went that way. Because He bore our sins, He received the judgment in our place. If we know that love and that righteousness, we come to give thanks in our hearts and to confess the grace of the Lord with our mouths.

Are you perhaps still living inside the prison of your own deeds? Are you shaking, as though you are righteous when you do well today and a sinner again when you fall tomorrow? Just as the ground on which Barabbas was released was not the good deeds of Barabbas, the ground on which we receive the remission of sins is not our good deeds either. The ground is the sin Jesus bore, and the judgment Jesus received, and the resurrection of Jesus. Believe that completed salvation. Set yourself in the place of Barabbas and believe in Jesus, who was delivered up in your place, as your Savior.

And if you are one who has already believed this gospel and received the remission of all sins, do not forget the grace of your release. We have no reason to exalt ourselves while condemning other people. Neither have we any reason to change the truth for the satisfaction of men. We have reason to serve the King who saved us, to preach the gospel He accomplished, and to love our weak neighbors. This is not a price for obtaining salvation again but the thanksgiving offered by the one who has already

obtained freedom.

The crowd demanded Barabbas, and Pilate delivered Jesus up in order to satisfy the crowd. But in the deepest place of that scene there is the King who saves sinners. Jesus did not save Himself by excuses; He stood in the place of a sinner in order to save us. Barabbas was released and the true King was delivered up. By the baptism and the Cross and the resurrection of that King we have been released from all sin. I hope that we may all be those who believe this gospel in our hearts and live giving thanks to the Lord, who was delivered up in our place. ✉

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Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

The Son of God who did not come down, the veil torn from above

< Mark 15:16-41 >

"Then the soldiers led Him away into the hall called Praetorium, and they called together the whole garrison. And they clothed Him with purple; and they twisted a crown of thorns, put it on His head, and began to salute Him, 'Hail, King of the Jews!' Then they struck Him on the head with a reed and spat on Him; and bowing the knee, they worshiped Him. And when they had mocked Him, they took the purple off Him, put His own clothes on Him, and led Him out to crucify Him. Then they compelled a certain man, Simon a Cyrenian, the father of Alexander and Rufus, as he was coming out of the country and passing by, to bear His cross. And they brought Him to the place Golgotha, which is translated, Place of a Skull. Then they gave Him wine mingled with myrrh to drink, but He did not take it. And when they crucified Him, they divided His garments, casting lots for them to determine what every man should take. Now it was the third hour, and they crucified Him. And the inscription of His accusation was written above: THE KING OF THE JEWS. With Him they also crucified two robbers, one on His right and the other on His left. So the Scripture was fulfilled which says, 'And He was numbered with the transgressors.' And those who passed by blasphemed Him,

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wagging their heads and saying, 'Aha! You who destroy the temple and build it in three days, save Yourself, and come down from the cross!' Likewise the chief priests also, mocking among themselves with the scribes, said, 'He saved others; Himself He cannot save. Let the Christ, the King of Israel, descend now from the cross, that we may see and believe.' Even those who were crucified with Him reviled Him. Now when the sixth hour had come, there was darkness over the whole land until the ninth hour. And at the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice, saying, 'Eloi, Eloi, lama sabachthani?' which is translated, 'My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?' Some of those who stood by, when they heard that, said, 'Look, He is calling for Elijah!' Then someone ran and filled a sponge full of sour wine, put it on a reed, and offered it to Him to drink, saying, 'Let Him alone; let us see if Elijah will come to take Him down.' And Jesus cried out with a loud voice, and breathed His last. Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom. So when the centurion, who stood opposite Him, saw that He cried out like this and breathed His last, he said, 'Truly this Man was the Son of God!' There were also women looking on from afar, among whom were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses, and Salome, who also followed Him and ministered to Him when He was in Galilee, and many other women who came up with Him to Jerusalem."

The soldiers led Jesus away into the hall of the Praetorium and called together the whole garrison. They clothed Jesus with purple and put a crown of thorns on Him. As though giving a greeting to a king they said, *"Hail, King of the Jews!"* and they

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bowed the knee. But that was not worship; it was mockery. They struck His head with a reed and spat on Him. The robe of a king and the crown of a king and the greeting given to a king all became instruments of mockery.

In the eyes of men it was the moment when Jesus looked farthest from being a king. It seems that a king ought to show his authority and ought to subdue the man who insults him. Yet Jesus, surrounded by the soldiers, is mocked and dragged away to the Cross. The soldiers treated Him as though He were a false king. But Mark reveals in this very suffering who Jesus truly is. On the inscription of the accusation it was written that He is the King of the Jews, and after Jesus breathed His last the centurion confessed Him to be the Son of God. The word of kingship that was used in order to mock is rather bearing witness to the truth.

Today we must not remain in pitying Jesus while looking only at the pain of the Cross. This is not to say that we should regard the suffering of Jesus lightly. It means that we must first know who it was that received that suffering and why He received it. The Jesus who was nailed to the Cross is not a powerless man. He is the Son of God and the Savior who came to save us from sin. We are not people who stand in a position to sympathize with the Lord, but people who must receive the grace of the Lord.

The King who was mocked is truly the Son of God

The soldiers clothed Him with purple and put a crown of thorns on Him and then bowed to Him. When they had finished mocking Him, they took off the purple and put His original clothes on Him and led Him out to crucify Him. After mocking Him as much as they wished, they sent Him to the place of death.

But their mockery could not change the identity of Jesus. Even though men do not acknowledge Him, Jesus is the Son of God. Even though a soldier spits on Him, His holiness does not disappear. Even though they put a crown of thorns on Him in mockery, the fact that He is the true King is not taken away.

How we know Jesus is a matter that concerns life. If we know Jesus only as an excellent teacher or a pitiable victim, we cannot fully know the meaning of the Cross. It is also precious when one man sacrifices himself for another. But the gospel proclaims a far greater thing. The Son of God came clothed in the body of a man and lowered Himself in order to save from sin the creatures He Himself had made. He bore our sins and received in our place the judgment we were to receive. That the Cross is precious is not explained by the greatness of the pain alone. Who it is that hung on that Cross, and for whom and what He accomplished, is what makes the value of the Cross clear.

If Jesus were not the Son of God, He could not become the Savior of all mankind. It is because one man who has sin cannot bear in another sinner's place all of that sinner's sins. But Jesus is the sinless Son of God. He was not seized because of His own sin; He came in order to bear our sins. Therefore, when we see the sight of His being mocked, we must not stop merely at being pained in heart, but must confess. We must believe that He is my God and my Savior, and that He went that way in order to deliver me from sin.

The world still judges Jesus by the power that is seen with the eyes. If a problem is removed at once, they say that He has power; and if difficulty remains, they think that the Lord is not working. They say that they will acknowledge Jesus as King only if He answers at the time they want and in the way they want. This resembles the way the soldiers fixed the appearance of a king by their own standard and mocked Jesus. Faith is not

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the work of fitting Jesus to my expectations. It is the work of knowing through the Word who He is, and of believing the authority of the Son of God, which does not change even in the midst of suffering.

The temptation to come down from the cross

Jesus came to Golgotha and was nailed to the Cross. His garments were divided, and on the inscription of the accusation it was recorded that He is the King of the Jews. Two robbers were nailed together with Him on the right and on the left. Those who passed by wagged their heads and insulted Jesus. The word they repeated was, *"come down from the cross!" (Mark 15:30)* The chief priests and the scribes also said that if the Christ would come down now from the cross, they would see and believe.

By their standard a king and a savior had first to be able to save himself. If He came down from the cross they would acknowledge His power. But if Jesus had come down from the cross, the work of saving us from sin could not have been accomplished. It was not because the Lord had no power that He did not come down. He did not come down in order to bear the judgment of sin to the very end. Instead of showing the power to save Himself, He accomplished the salvation that saves sinners.

The mockery, *"He saved others; Himself He cannot save" (Mark 15:31)*, reveals the paradox of the gospel. By not choosing the way of delivering Himself from the cross, Jesus saved other people. By not preserving His own life but giving it up, He gave life to sinners. By not answering the voice that told Him to come down, but remaining on the Cross, He completed the work of salvation. Men called it failure, but by that way God brought the problem of sin and judgment to an end.

We also at times set up a visible sign as a condition. We say that if He solves this problem now we will believe. We say that if He lets us come down from suffering at once we will acknowledge the Lord. But the Cross shows that the power of God does not always appear only in the way of avoiding suffering. The greatest power of Jesus was not used to avoid the Cross. It appeared in accomplishing to the very end, according to the will of God, the work of saving sinners.

That does not mean that we should regard all the sufferings of a believer as the same thing as the substitution of Jesus. Neither is the suffering we undergo a paying of the price of sin in another's place. The substitution for sin was accomplished by Jesus alone, once for all. However, looking at the Lord, who did not come down from the Cross, we learn not to tie our faith only to the changing of our circumstances. Even if the difficulty before our eyes does not disappear at once, we do not doubt the salvation that has already been completed. We believe that the Lord is the Son of God who saved me from sin, and with that faith we walk the way entrusted to us today.

In the darkness and the forsaking He bore the judgment of sin

From the sixth hour until the ninth hour darkness continued over the whole land. At the ninth hour Jesus cried out with a loud voice. *"My God, My God, why have You forsaken Me?"* Before this Word we cannot make the Cross a scene of light emotion. It is because it was the place where the judgment of sin was actually carried out. Jesus bore our sins and took upon Himself the judgment of being forsaken by God.

Jesus had no sin of His own. The reason He was judged on

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the Cross is that beforehand, by the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He bore the sin of the world. The baptism of Jesus is not the same event as the water baptism of a believer, nor is it merely a rite that showed humility. It is the event of salvation in which He took over all the sins of mankind and fulfilled the righteousness of God. Bearing the sins He had thus taken upon Himself, the Lord came to the Cross and received in our place the punishment of sin and death.

The Cross is not separated from the baptism. If we repeat only the Cross while leaving out how sin passed over to Jesus, the order of the substitution is blurred. The Cross is also not separated from the resurrection. Jesus bore the sins by the baptism He received from John, was judged for those sins on the Cross and died, and rose from the dead and completed salvation. The person who believes this work in his heart receives the remission of sins in which all sins disappear once for all, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift. He becomes a righteous man who has no sin in his heart and becomes a child of God.

In today's text we concentrate especially on the judgment of the Cross. The Son of God bore in our place the forsaking and the punishment that we were to receive. Therefore the believing person has no need to live in fear that God will demand the price of sin again. It is because Jesus received in full the judgment for those same sins. Our lack cannot make the judgment of the Lord void. This does not mean that we should regard our wrongdoing lightly or persist in it; it means that even when we turn from it, we should not try to pay the price of sin anew by our own punishment and merit, but should believe the complete substitution.

The cry of Jesus shows how heavy sin is, and at the same time it shows how great is His love toward us. God did not close His eyes to sin as though it had never happened. He fulfilled

righteousness by having His Son bear the judgment of sin. The Son of God obeyed that will and died on the Cross. On the Cross the judgment of God against sin and the love of God that saves sinners are revealed together. Therefore before the Cross we neither regard sin lightly nor make the salvation of the Lord incomplete by saying that sin is too great.

The veil was torn from top to bottom

When Jesus cried out with a loud voice and breathed His last, immediately afterward the veil of the temple was torn. Mark records its direction clearly. *"Then the veil of the temple was torn in two from top to bottom" (Mark 15:38)* It was torn not from below upward but from above downward. It shows that man did not go up to God by his own effort and make a way, but that God opened the way for the sinner to come near through the death of His Son.

The tearing of the veil is not an ornament separate from the death of the Cross. It happened at the very moment Jesus breathed His last. Sin was blocking the way between God and man, but by Jesus bearing the judgment of sin and dying, He solved that blockage. It is not that a small crack was opened through which only a man with sufficient religious merit might enter. To the person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished, the way to come to God has been opened.

Men try to tear the veil by their own strength. They try to gather the merit of long prayer, much service, large offerings, tears and fasting, and a good life, and so to make for themselves the qualification to go to God. But such things cannot bear sin or receive the judgment of sin in another's place. The ground for coming to God is the substitution of Jesus alone. Prayer and

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service and obedience are not the price that opens the way, but the thanksgiving of the person who has received the remission of sins and goes forward on the way that Jesus opened.

Man must not sew up again the veil that has already been torn from top to bottom. If, though Jesus has opened the way, one says that he cannot go because his own merit is still insufficient, he is covering with his own deeds the work the Lord accomplished. On the contrary, to say that since the way is open one may sin as one pleases also distorts the gospel. The person who believes that the Son of God was judged for us hates sin and desires to live in the light. But he does not put forward that life as the price of salvation. The ground of the opened way is Jesus from beginning to end.

This faith is needed in prayer as well. We do not come before God because we have done well. We come because Jesus opened the way. When we have fallen, instead of hiding and waiting for our own condition to improve, we believe the substitution and come honestly before God and acknowledge our wrong and turn from it. Even in the midst of difficulty we believe that the Son of God is my Savior and ask for grace. The torn veil gives to the person who has received the remission of sins both boldness and deep thanksgiving at the same time.

The confession of the centurion who stood facing the Cross

The centurion who stood facing Jesus saw the Lord breathe His last in that way. And he said, *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)* The soldiers mocked Jesus as a king, but out of the mouth of the centurion who stood at the place of the execution came the confession that He is the Son of God. Mark

makes us confess the identity of Jesus not through the sight of His coming down from the Cross but through the sight of His breathing His last on the Cross.

The confession of the centurion becomes a question to us today. What do we say when we look at the Cross? Do we say only that a pitiable man died unjustly? Do we say only that it is a great example of love? Or do we believe that He is the Son of God who bore my sins and was judged? If we miss His deity while looking at the death of Jesus, we miss the center of the gospel. If He were not the Son of God, that death could not become the substitution for all mankind. Because the Son of God bore our sins, that death became a sufficient judgment that takes away all the sins of the believing person.

The text also records the women who were looking on from afar. There were Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of James the Less and of Joses and Salome, and many women who had come up to Jerusalem with Jesus. These were people who had followed and ministered to Jesus from the time when He was in Galilee. The death of the Lord was not a story invented in hiding but an event that people watched. In the next paragraph, from verse 42 to verse 47, it is recorded that Joseph of Arimathea received the body of Jesus and wrapped it in linen and laid it in a tomb of rock and rolled a stone against the door, and that Mary Magdalene and Mary the mother of Joses saw where He was laid. Jesus actually died and was actually buried.

But the tomb is not the end. The Son of God rose from the dead. That He did not come down from the Cross was not because He was defeated by death. It was in order that, after accomplishing to the very end the judgment of the sins He bore by the baptism, He might overcome the power of death and rise again. The Cross, the burial, and the resurrection bear witness that Jesus' work of salvation was actually accomplished in

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history. Our faith stands not on a vague comfort but on the events that God accomplished through His Son.

Beyond sympathy, to faith and worship

When we meditate on the Cross we may be pained in heart and give thanks. But emotion alone is not enough. Jesus is not One who must receive our pity but the Son of God who is to receive faith and worship. More important than how vividly we imagined the pain of the Lord is whether we believe who He is and what He accomplished. Even without adding details of suffering that the Bible does not speak of, the gospel is strong enough. The King was mocked, He was nailed to the Cross, He bore in the darkness the judgment of being forsaken, He breathed His last, and the veil was torn from top to bottom.

If we believe in Jesus as the Son of God, we must also believe that the remission of sins He accomplished is complete. Like the demand of the people that He come down from the cross, we must not say that we will believe only if there is more evidence that we want. The Lord has already borne the sins by the baptism, and has been judged on the Cross and died, and has risen again. No further event needs to be added for salvation. Neither is there any merit that I can add in order to wash away my sin. What is needed is the faith that receives the completed gospel in the heart.

This faith changes the direction of our life. It makes us acknowledge Jesus as Master and obey the Word. When we pray, we do not go out holding our own righteousness but rely on the way the Lord opened. Even when suffering comes, we do not judge the authority of the Lord by our visible circumstances alone. When we serve others, we do not try to earn points for salvation, but serve in thanksgiving for the grace by which the

Son of God served me and saved me. When we preach the gospel also, we do not try to move only the feelings of men, but preach clearly who Jesus is and how He took away sin.

If you are still looking at Jesus only as a pitiable figure of the Cross, stand before the confession of the centurion. *"Truly this Man was the Son of God!" (Mark 15:39)* Do not leave this confession as another man's word. Believe that the Jesus who was mocked is my God, and that He who did not come down from the Cross is my Savior. Believe that because He bore my sins and was judged, all my sins have disappeared. Believe that He tore the veil from top to bottom and opened the way to come to God.

If you are one who has already received the remission of sins by this faith, come to know the preciousness of the Lord more deeply. Do not regard the grace as small because the Cross is familiar. The Son of Almighty God bore mockery and judgment and death for us. Because He opened the way, we can call God Father and come near. Even though the flesh is weak, the salvation of Jesus does not shake. Whenever you fall, do not hide in your own righteousness, but go forward on the opened way and stand before the Word of the Lord.

The false bowing of the soldiers mocked the kingship of Jesus. Those who passed by said that if He came down they would believe. But Jesus did not come down. He bore the judgment of sin to the very end and breathed His last. At that time the veil was torn from top to bottom, and the centurion confessed Him to be the Son of God. In the eyes of men it looked like a defeat in which He could not come down, but by that very death the way was opened for sinners to come to God.

Therefore let us not remain in sympathy before the Cross. Let us believe that Jesus is the Son of God and worship Him. Let us believe the will by which He saved us by not coming down.

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Looking at the veil that was torn from top to bottom, let us lay down our own merit and go to God by the way the Lord opened. I hope that we may live giving thanks to our precious Lord, who delivered us from sin and judgment, and believing and preaching His gospel. ✉

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CHAPTER

16

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Mark Chapter 16

< Mark 16:1-20 >

“Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, ‘Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?’ But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, ‘Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.’ So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their

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unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

1) Summary of the entire content

Mark chapter 16 begins with the event in which, after the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome went to the tomb in order to anoint the body of Jesus with spices. The women were worried about who would roll away for them the great stone that blocked the tomb, but when they arrived, the stone had already been rolled away. The young man clothed in a white robe who was in the tomb told them that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, had risen and was not in the tomb. He told the women to tell His disciples and Peter that Jesus was going before them into Galilee. The women were amazed and afraid, and they fled from the tomb.

In the record that follows, the risen Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, and He also appeared to two men who were

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walking along the road and to the eleven disciples. Because at first the disciples did not believe the news of the resurrection, Jesus rebuked their unbelief and their hardness of heart. Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person, and He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. The disciples went out to many places and preached the gospel, and the Lord worked with them and confirmed the word that was preached by the signs that followed. This chapter clearly testifies that Jesus, who died on the Cross and was buried, actually rose from the dead, and that He established the disciples who had been afraid as witnesses of the resurrection and as preachers of the gospel.

1. The women who went to the tomb with spices (verses 1–3)

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices to anoint the body of Jesus. Very early on the first day of the week, about the time when the sun had risen, they went to the tomb.

The women did not go to the tomb because they expected that Jesus would rise. They went in order to anoint the body of Jesus, who had died. In their action there was love and respect toward Jesus, but they did not yet fully understand the Word that Jesus would rise from the dead.

As they went to the tomb, they were worried about who would roll away for them the stone at the entrance of the tomb. That stone was so large that it would be hard for the women to move it even if they joined their strength together. But when they arrived at the tomb, the problem they had been worried about had already been solved.

2. The great stone that had already been rolled away (verse 4)

When the women looked up, the great stone that had blocked the tomb had already been rolled away. The text does not say that the women moved the stone or that they asked someone else to do it. Before they arrived, the door of the tomb was open.

That the stone was rolled away does not mean that Jesus received the help of men in order to come out of the tomb. The open tomb made it possible for people to look inside it and to confirm the fact that the body of Jesus was not there.

On the way to the tomb the women were worried about the stone, but when they actually arrived at the tomb, they met with something far more amazing than they had expected. In faith we can look only at the obstacle before our eyes and so fail to see the thing that God has already done.

3. The news of the resurrection that the young man clothed in white brought (verses 5–6)

The women entered the tomb and were alarmed when they saw a young man clothed in white sitting on the right side. He told them not to be alarmed, and said that he knew that the One whom the women were seeking was Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified.

He declared, "*He is risen! He is not here.*" Then he told them to see the place where the body of Jesus had been laid. The tomb to which the women had come was the right one, but the body of Jesus was not there.

The One who rose was not some other being unrelated to the Cross; He was the very Jesus of Nazareth who had been nailed to the cross and had died. The One who actually died and was buried overcame death and rose again.

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The resurrection of Jesus does not mean that the disciples remembered Jesus in their hearts. It is the event in which Jesus actually rose from the dead. The death and the burial that were confirmed in Mark chapter 15 lead on to the empty tomb and the resurrection of Mark chapter 16.

4. The command to tell His disciples and Peter (verse 7)

The young man clothed in white told the women to go and tell the disciples of Jesus and Peter the news of the resurrection. They were to tell them that Jesus was going before them into Galilee, and that there, as He had said to them before, the disciples would see Jesus.

That it says specifically, *"His disciples—and Peter,"* has meaning. Peter had denied Jesus three times, and he realized his own failure and wept. He may have thought that he could no longer be received as a disciple.

But the news of the resurrection had to be delivered to Peter as well. Jesus did not cast away Peter, who had denied Him, but sought to meet him again. The grace of Jesus and the promise of restoration were greater than the failure of Peter.

The Word that Jesus was going before the disciples into Galilee was also the fulfillment of the promise He had made before He was arrested. All the disciples had forsaken Jesus and fled, but Jesus did not cast away the promise He had made to them.

5. The women who left the tomb in amazement and fear (verse 8)

The women trembled and were greatly amazed, and they went out from the tomb and fled. Because of fear they said nothing to anyone.

That they said nothing to anyone cannot be understood to

mean that afterward they never delivered the news of the resurrection at all. When we look at the record that follows and at the other Gospels, they did deliver the news to the disciples. Mark 16:8 emphasizes the shock and the fear that the women experienced immediately after they left the tomb.

The resurrection was not a thing that the women had expected and were waiting for. They went to seek the body of the dead Jesus and instead met with the empty tomb and the news of the resurrection. At first, amazement and fear came before joy.

The work of God can go beyond the range of the plans and the expectations that men have set up beforehand. What the women needed was not to remain in fear, but to deliver to the disciples the news of the resurrection that they had heard and seen.

6. A note concerning the text of Mark 16:9–20

Some Bible editions set off the whole of Mark 16:9–20 with brackets or include a textual note concerning these verses. This indicates that this passage is textually distinguished from the preceding portion.

When we read the whole of Mark chapter 16, we can hold clearly to the empty tomb and the declaration of the resurrection that verses 1–8 deliver, and at the same time examine the appearances of the resurrection, the command of mission, and the ascension that appear in verses 9–20.

7. Appearing first to Mary Magdalene (verses 9–11)

After Jesus rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene. She was the one out of whom Jesus had formerly cast seven demons.

Mary Magdalene went to the place where those who had

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been with Jesus were mourning and weeping, and told them that Jesus had risen and that she had seen Him. But the people did not believe the news that Jesus had risen or the testimony that Mary had seen Him.

The unbelief of the disciples shows that the account of the resurrection was not something produced out of their expectation and longing. From the beginning they were not people who believed the resurrection easily; they were people who doubted even after hearing several testimonies.

Mary Magdalene was not a person who had high position or power in the society of that time, yet she met the risen Jesus first and became a witness who delivered the news. God uses not the social position of a person, but the faith that receives grace and delivers the Word entrusted to it.

8. Appearing to two men who were walking along the road (verses 12–13)

After that, Jesus appeared in another form to two men who were walking into the country. They went back and told the other disciples of this, but the disciples did not believe their testimony either.

We may consider this event in connection with the event of the two disciples who were going to Emmaus, which is recorded in Luke. However, Mark does not record the place and the content of the conversation in detail; it focuses on the fact that Jesus appeared to the two men and that their report also was not received.

The news of the resurrection did not remain a personal experience delivered to only one person. Different people met the risen Jesus and testified to that fact. Even so, the disciples continued not to believe.

9. Rebuking the unbelief and the hardness of heart of the eleven disciples (verse 14)

Later Jesus appeared while the eleven disciples were eating. Jesus rebuked the unbelief and the hardness of heart of the disciples, who had not believed the words of those who had seen His resurrection.

The disciples had followed Jesus for a long time and had seen many miracles, and they had also repeatedly heard the Word that Jesus would rise after His death. But when Jesus actually died, they could not believe that Word.

Jesus did not pass over the unbelief of the disciples as though it were no problem at all. He rebuked the hardness that refuses the testimony God has given on the ground that it does not fit one's own thoughts and experience.

Yet Jesus did not cast them away after He had rebuked them. He entrusted to the disciples who had not been able to believe the mission of preaching the gospel to all the world. The witnesses of the resurrection were not people who had possessed perfect faith from the beginning; they were people who were rebuked for their unbelief and who were established upon faith by meeting the risen Jesus.

10. The command to preach the gospel to all the world (verse 15)

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. The gospel was not to remain with only a particular people, a particular region, or a particular class.

At first the disciples followed Jesus chiefly in the regions of Galilee and Judea, but the command of the risen Jesus widened their view to all the world. The news concerning the death and the resurrection of Jesus must be delivered to every nation and

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to every person.

To preach the gospel is not to make people subject to a particular preacher or community. It is to make known who Jesus is and what He has accomplished for sinners, and to help people believe Him and follow Him.

The disciples were not to preach ideas or moral teachings that they themselves had produced; they were to testify to Jesus Christ, who actually died and rose from the dead.

11. The Word concerning faith, baptism, and salvation (verse 16)

Jesus said that he who believes and is baptized will be saved, but that he who does not believe will be condemned. Faith is to hear the gospel and to receive Jesus Christ as Savior, and baptism outwardly confesses that faith and shows that one will live as a disciple who belongs to Jesus.

This verse does not make faith and baptism unrelated to each other. The person who has believed the gospel must not hide his faith, but must confess through baptism that he is a person who belongs to Jesus.

But we must also observe that when He spoke of the reason for condemnation, He said, *"he who does not believe."* It is not the merit of performing the rite of baptism itself that saves a person, nor is the unbelief of the heart resolved merely by the act of going down into the water and coming up out of it.

At the center of salvation is faith in Jesus Christ and in the work He has accomplished. The person who truly believes the gospel receives baptism according to that faith and must live as a disciple of Jesus.

12. The signs that follow those who believe (verses 17–18)

Jesus said that signs would follow those who believe. He

said that in the name of Jesus they would cast out demons, would speak with new tongues, would take up serpents or drink poison and yet not be harmed, and that if they laid hands on the sick, the sick would recover.

When we look at the Acts of the Apostles, it is recorded that the disciples cast out demons in the name of Jesus, preached the gospel in various tongues, and healed the sick. In the course of the gospel being preached for the first time to various regions and peoples, God used such signs to confirm the word that the apostles preached.

This Word is not a command that a person must deliberately take up a serpent or drink poison in order to prove his own faith. To use the Word that God will protect us as an occasion for deliberately doing dangerous things can be not faith but the tempting of God.

Nor should it be used to mean that every believer must perform the same miracles, or that if a disease is not healed there is no faith. The purpose of the signs is not to make a person boast of his own power, but to show the name of Jesus and the truthfulness of the gospel.

13. Ascending and sitting down at the right hand of God (verse 19)

After Jesus had spoken to His disciples, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. The ascension does not mean that Jesus left His disciples and ceased to exist.

To sit at the right hand of God means that Jesus rules in the authority and the glory of God. Jesus, who was mocked on the Cross and died as though He were a criminal, is the Lord and the King who rose from the dead and ascended into heaven.

The work of Jesus did not end in the tomb. He overcame

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death and rose again, and He ascended into heaven and rules all the world. He will come again and gather the people who have been saved and will judge the world.

14. Working together with the disciples and confirming the word (verse 20)

The disciples obeyed the command of Jesus and went out to many places and preached the gospel. Those who at first had been afraid and had not been able to believe the testimony of the resurrection now became witnesses who preached the death and the resurrection of Jesus to all the world.

It was not the disciples alone who worked. The Lord worked with them and confirmed the word by the signs that followed. Jesus had ascended, but He was not One who was far away and unrelated to the work of the disciples.

The power of the preaching of the gospel did not come from the eloquence and the human ability of the disciples. Because the risen Jesus worked with them, the gospel was preached to many regions through weak disciples.

Today also the person who preaches the gospel must not rely on his own wisdom and ability alone. He must faithfully preach the Word of the Bible, and must entrust to God the work of changing those who hear and of making them believe.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 16

First, the women went to the tomb in order to anoint the body of Jesus with spices, but the great stone that had blocked the tomb had already been rolled away.

Second, the young man clothed in white declared that Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, had risen and was not in the tomb.

Third, the resurrection does not mean that the teaching of

Jesus continued to remain in the hearts of the disciples; it is the event in which Jesus, who actually died and was buried, rose from the dead.

Fourth, Jesus did not cast away Peter, who had denied Him three times, but had the news of the resurrection and the promise that He would meet them again in Galilee delivered to him as well.

Fifth, the women were greatly amazed and afraid in the face of the empty tomb and the news of the resurrection, which they had not expected.

Sixth, since some Bible editions set off verses 9–20 with brackets or a textual note, we should keep this textual distinction in mind while examining the content of the passage.

Seventh, Mary Magdalene and the two men who were walking along the road told the disciples after they had met the risen Jesus, but at first the disciples did not believe their testimony.

Eighth, Jesus rebuked the unbelief and the hardness of the disciples, but He did not cast them away; He established them as witnesses of the resurrection.

Ninth, the risen Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person.

Tenth, faith is to receive Jesus Christ and the salvation He has accomplished, and baptism is the response of a disciple who outwardly confesses that faith.

Eleventh, the signs that follow those who believe are not for boasting of human ability, but for confirming the gospel and showing the authority of Jesus.

Twelfth, the Word about taking up serpents or drinking poison must not be used as a ground for dangerous actions meant to test one's faith.

Thirteenth, Jesus ascended and sat down at the right hand of

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God, and He is the Lord and the King who rules all the world.

Fourteenth, the disciples went out to many places and preached the gospel, and the risen Jesus worked with them and confirmed the word that was preached.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 16 is the chapter of the resurrection and of mission, in which Jesus, who died on the Cross and was buried, broke the power of death and actually rose again, met the disciples who had failed and had not been able to believe and restored them, established them as witnesses who preach the gospel to all the world, and then ascended and works with them at the right hand of God.

2) Mark chapter 16 seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

Mark chapter 16 records that Jesus, who died on the Cross and was buried, overcame death and rose again, and that He appeared to His disciples and commanded them to preach the gospel to all the world. The resurrection of Jesus is a historical event in which the One who died on the Cross rose again, and at the same time it shows that the work of saving sinners was perfectly accomplished.

Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The water testifies that the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus, the blood that those sins were judged, and the Holy Spirit that Jesus is the Son of God and is God Himself. The resurrection of Jesus confirms that the salvation accomplished by the water and the blood is perfect and that Jesus has overcome the power of sin and death.

1. Jesus, who rose on the first day of the week (verses 1–4)

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome prepared spices to anoint the body of Jesus, and very early on the first day of the week they went to the tomb. They did not expect the resurrection of Jesus; they intended to anoint the body of the One who had died.

The women were worried about who would roll away for them the great stone of the tomb. But when they arrived at the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away. God had already solved the problem that they could not solve.

Seen from the perspective of the gospel, the resurrection of Jesus shows that true rest has been given to the person who was anxious because of sin and judgment. If a person tries to solve his own sin by himself, he must fight against sin without ceasing and seek the remission of sins over and over again, and so he cannot obtain perfect rest in his heart.

But because Jesus took all sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, paid the price of those sins completely on the Cross, and then rose again, the person who believes this salvation has no need to fear that sin still remains. When he believes the fact that Jesus has already solved all sins, he obtains in his heart the peace and the rest of the remission of sins.

There is no need to conclude that the stone of the tomb itself is a symbol of sin. What is clear is that the stone which the women could not move by their own strength had already been rolled away, and that the tomb of Jesus was empty. This clearly testifies that God has already accomplished the work of salvation that man cannot do.

2. *"He is risen! He is not here"* (verses 5–6).

The women were alarmed when they saw the young man

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clothed in white inside the tomb. He knew that they were seeking Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified. And he declared that Jesus had risen and was not in the tomb.

The One who rose is not some other being unrelated to the Cross. He was the very Jesus who was nailed to the cross, actually died, and was buried in the tomb. Therefore the resurrection is not a figure of speech meaning that the disciples brought the spirit of Jesus back to life in their hearts, but the event in which Jesus, who had died, actually rose again.

Jesus did not receive the punishment of death because He had sin. He was judged in the place of the sinner because of the sins of mankind that He had taken upon Himself through the baptism He received from John. Because He paid the whole price of those sins on the Cross, Jesus could not continue to be held by death.

The resurrection of Jesus shows that He is the Son of God and God, the Lord of life. Jesus did not become the Son of God by rising again; He overcame the power of death as the One who from the beginning is the Son of God and is God.

The resurrection also confirms the fact that the salvation Jesus accomplished is perfect. If Jesus had not risen from the dead, the Cross might appear to be a defeat. But by rising again He showed that the judgment for sin was finished and that the way of life had been opened.

3. The news of restoration delivered to His disciples and Peter (verse 7)

The young man clothed in white told the women to deliver the news of the resurrection to the disciples and to Peter. He said that Jesus was going before the disciples into Galilee, and that there they would see Him, as He had said to them before.

Peter had boasted that even if everyone else forsook Jesus

he himself would follow Him even to death, but when danger actually came, he denied Jesus three times. He had been overly confident of his own faith and loyalty, but in fact he was a weak man.

But the risen Jesus did not cast away Peter. Jesus came to Peter again, asked him three times whether he loved Him, and said, *"Feed My sheep,"* entrusting the mission to him once more. In the Word that told them to deliver the news of the resurrection to *"His disciples—and Peter,"* the will of Jesus to meet even the failed Peter and establish him again is revealed.

The sin of Peter's denial of Jesus and all the sins he would commit in the future had also already been taken by Jesus through the baptism He received from John. Jesus bore those sins and received the punishment on the Cross, and so He solved the price of the sins for which Peter had to be responsible.

This does not mean that the denial of Peter is made light of. Peter had to realize his own weakness through the collapse of his boasting. But he did not solve his sin by his own tears and resolve; he rose again by the grace of Jesus, who had borne even his sin and his weakness, and followed Him.

True repentance is not despairing while looking only at one's own failure, nor trying to make up for one's wrong by one's own resolve. It is turning from the heart that trusted in oneself, believing the Word of salvation that Jesus bore all sins, was judged, and then rose again, and following Him once more.

4. The gospel of the resurrection that must be preached even in the midst of fear (verse 8)

The women met with the empty tomb and the news of the resurrection, and they trembled greatly and were amazed. They fled from the tomb, and because of fear they could not immediately speak to anyone.

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The resurrection was not something they had expected and prepared for. Because they had gone to seek the body of the dead Jesus and instead found the tomb empty and heard the news that Jesus had risen, they felt fear and confusion.

But the news of the resurrection was not news to be hidden away in fear. The women had to tell the disciples and Peter the fact that Jesus had risen. The person who has heard the gospel must also not look only at his own fear and insufficiency, but must make known to others the work that Jesus has accomplished.

The preaching of the gospel is not the work only of those who are eloquent. The person who believes how Jesus removed his sins and how He overcame death and rose again must share with others the news of the salvation he has received.

5. The disciples who did not believe the testimony of the resurrection (verses 9–14)

The risen Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Mary told the fact that Jesus had risen to those who were mourning and weeping, but they did not believe.

After that Jesus appeared also to two men who were walking along the road. They too went back and told the other disciples, but the disciples did not believe their testimony either. At last Jesus appeared in person while the eleven disciples were eating, and rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart.

The problem of the disciples did not lie in there being no evidence at all concerning the resurrection. Before His death Jesus had said many times that He would rise on the third day, and the testimonies of those who had seen the risen Jesus continued as well. But the disciples did not believe, on the ground that it did not fit their own experience and thoughts.

The problem of not being able to believe the gospel of the

water and the Spirit is the same. A person may speak of the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus and yet not accept the fact that all his sins passed on to Jesus through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. This is because, when he looks at his own deeds and feelings, it still feels as though sin remains.

But faith is not to lift one's own feelings above the word of God. When God says that He passed all the sins of mankind on to Jesus and judged them on the Cross, we must lay down our own thoughts and accept that Word.

Jesus rebuked the unbelief of the disciples, but He did not cast them away. Rather, He entrusted to those who had not been able to believe the mission of preaching the gospel. The disciples did not become witnesses because their own faith was strong; they became witnesses because they met the risen Jesus and were established again by His Word.

6. The gospel of the water and the Spirit that must be preached to all the world (verse 15)

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person. The gospel is not news given only to the Jews or to a particular people or class.

The sin of the world that Jesus took upon Himself includes the sins of every people and of the people of every age. His Cross and resurrection also are not events for only a particular group of people. Whoever hears and believes this gospel receives the remission of sins and eternal life.

The gospel that the disciples had to preach was not only the fact that He shed His blood and died on the Cross. They had to preach the perfect salvation—that Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, bore those sins and was judged on the Cross, and rose from the dead.

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If any one of the water, the blood, and the resurrection is left out, it is hard to explain the course of salvation completely. In order to know why Jesus was judged in the place of the sinner, we must first know how the sins of mankind passed on to Him. And if we speak only of the death of the Cross and leave out the resurrection, we cannot preach the fact that Jesus overcame death and gave new life.

The purpose of preaching the gospel does not lie in making people subject to a particular leader or group. It lies in helping people believe the salvation Jesus has accomplished, receive the remission of sins, receive the Holy Spirit, and become children of God.

7. *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved"* (verse 16).

Jesus said that he who believes and is baptized will be saved, and that he who does not believe will be condemned. Here what one must believe is important.

Faith is not merely acknowledging the fact that Jesus existed or the historical fact that He died on the Cross. It is receiving in the heart the fact that Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and rose again and completed salvation.

The baptism of water that a believer receives is an outward confession that he believes the salvation Jesus has accomplished. Going down into the water shows that he died together with Jesus, and coming up out of the water shows that he rose with Jesus into new life. It is not the act of going down into the water and coming up that removes sin; it shows the faith that believes the salvation Jesus has accomplished.

Therefore one is not automatically saved simply by performing the rite of baptism. One cannot obtain the remission

of sins by formally receiving the baptism of water while not believing the gospel in one's heart. On the contrary, the person who truly believes the gospel must not hide the fact that he belongs to Jesus, but must confess it by baptism.

The Word, *"he who does not believe will be condemned,"* means that if a person refuses the salvation Jesus has completed, sin remains in his heart just as it is. Even though the fact of salvation is that the sins of all people passed on to Jesus, the person who does not believe that fact is not automatically saved.

Jesus has already completed salvation through the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection. A man does not supplement this salvation with his own good deeds or religious efforts; he must believe and receive the completed salvation just as the Word says.

8. The Holy Spirit and the new life given to the person who has received the remission of sins

The resurrection of Jesus shows that new life has been given to those who believe. Just as Jesus rose from the dead, the person who was spiritually dead because of sin also believes the gospel and obtains new life.

The Holy Spirit is not One who dwells together with sin in a heart in which sin still remains. He comes into the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins by believing the fact that Jesus took all his sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist and was judged on the Cross.

The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and is God Himself. He also makes us believe that the salvation Jesus accomplished by the water, the blood, and the resurrection is the true salvation of God.

To receive the Holy Spirit is not the same as experiencing

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strong emotions or special phenomena. We cannot conclude that a person has received the Holy Spirit merely because there were tongues or mysterious experiences. The foundation of receiving the Holy Spirit is to have received the remission of sins in one's heart by believing the gospel that Jesus removed all one's sins.

The Holy Spirit causes those who believe to call God Father, and leads them to realize the gospel and to preach it. He also makes them believe that, even though their deeds are insufficient, they are not condemned in Jesus, and He gives peace and rest to their hearts.

9. The signs that follow those who believe (verses 17–18)

Jesus said that signs would follow those who believe—that in the name of Jesus they would cast out demons, would speak with new tongues, would take up serpents, would drink poison and yet not be harmed, and that if they laid hands on the sick, the sick would recover.

When we look at the Acts of the Apostles, in the course of the gospel being preached for the first time to various peoples, works actually appeared in which demons went out, the sick were healed, and the gospel was preached in various tongues. Such signs confirmed the gospel that the apostles preached and showed the authority of Jesus.

At the same time, this Word must not be used as a ground for dangerous actions meant to test one's faith. To take up a venomous snake or to drink poison on purpose in order to test whether God will protect us is not faith. Jesus Himself said that we must not tempt God.

Applied in terms of the gospel, when the gospel of the baptism He received from John, the Cross, and the resurrection is preached, the work occurs in which a person who was held

by sin and by the evil spirit receives the remission of sins and obtains the Holy Spirit. The gospel sets people free from the false faith and the condemnation that had deceived them.

To speak with new tongues does not mean only to repeat sounds that cannot be understood. That a person who before believing the gospel spoke of worldly desires and of his own righteousness comes, after receiving the remission of sins, to speak of the kingdom of God and of the salvation Jesus has accomplished can also be seen as a life of new tongues.

The serpents and the poison make us guard against actual danger and also against false teachings that harm the soul. Those who believe the gospel may also encounter wrong teachings, but if they clearly know the gospel of the water and the Spirit, they discern by the Word the deceptions that deny the salvation Jesus has completed.

Nor should the Word about laying hands on the sick be used as a formula meaning that every disease will certainly be healed at once. God is able to heal the sick, but He does not answer in the same way in every case. Believers should pray for the sick and provide practical treatment and care, and entrust the result to God.

10. Jesus, who sat down at the right hand of God (verse 19)

After Jesus had spoken to His disciples, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. That He sat down at the right hand of God means that Jesus rules all the world in the authority and the glory of God.

Jesus is not a figure of the past who disappeared after dying on the Cross. He rose again and ascended, and He is God and Savior who is alive even now.

Jesus did not become God for the first time by rising again and ascending. He who is God from the beginning came in the

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body of a man, completed the work of saving sinners, and then sat down in His original glory.

The fact that Jesus is at the right hand of God is a great comfort to those who believe. The One who gave His life for sinners is alive even now, and He keeps those who believe the gospel and rules the work of preaching the gospel.

11. The Lord of the resurrection, who worked together with the disciples (verse 20)

According to the command of Jesus, the disciples went out to many places and preached the gospel. The Lord worked with them and confirmed the word that was preached by the signs that followed.

The disciples were not people whose faith was strong and perfect from the beginning. They heard the testimony of the resurrection and did not believe, and they were rebuked by Jesus. But as they met the risen Jesus and were led by the Holy Spirit, they became witnesses of the gospel.

The core of what the disciples preached was not the moral teaching of men, but the news of salvation—that Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged on the Cross, and then rose again.

The preaching of the gospel is not a work accomplished by human ability alone. When a person who has believed the gospel and received the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit preaches the Word, the Holy Spirit makes those who hear realize it and works so that they believe.

This does not mean that a man may do nothing at all. The disciples actually went out to many places and preached the gospel. The person who has been saved must use his time, his talents, his possessions, and his life to preach the word of life to those who do not yet know the gospel.

12. The resurrection of Jesus and the hope of the resurrection of those who believe

The resurrection of Jesus is not only His own victory; it is also the guarantee of the resurrection that will be given to those who believe. Because Jesus rose from the dead, for those who believe in Him also everything does not end with the death of the body.

The person who believes the gospel first comes alive spiritually. All the sin of his heart is washed away, he receives the Holy Spirit, and he becomes a child of God. After his body dies, he will rise in an incorruptible body when Jesus comes again, and will live in the eternal kingdom of God.

The hope of the resurrection is not a reward obtained because a man has lived a good life. It is grace given to those who belong to Jesus, because He overcame sin and death by the Cross and the resurrection.

Therefore the person who has received the remission of sins must not live as though the life of this world were everything. He must not live only for wealth, honor, and pleasure, but must serve the gospel while looking to the fact that he will rise again and will live forever in the kingdom of God.

Nor should a person who says he believes the resurrection neglect his present life and responsibilities. Rather, the person who has the hope of the resurrection should faithfully carry out the work entrusted to him in his family, his occupation, and his community, and should live a life of helping those who suffer and of preaching the gospel.

13. The perfect salvation to which the water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit testify

The resurrection in Mark chapter 16 joins the event at the Jordan River in Mark chapter 1 and the Cross in Mark chapter

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15 into one. Jesus took the sin of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the punishment for that sin on the Cross, and rose again and overcame the power of sin and death.

The water shows that all the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus. The blood shows that Jesus received the judgment for those sins in our stead. The resurrection shows that the price of sin has all been paid and that Jesus is the Lord of life. The Holy Spirit testifies that Jesus is the Son of God and is God.

The water, the blood, and the Holy Spirit do not speak of three different salvations. They testify to the one perfect salvation that Jesus Christ, who is God, accomplished for sinners.

This salvation is not completed only when a man believes. Jesus has already completed it, and a man receives the remission of sins by believing that fact in his heart. The Holy Spirit comes upon the person who has believed this gospel, and that person becomes a child of God and obtains new life and eternal rest.

14. A note for reading Mark 16:9–20

Some Bible editions set off the whole of Mark 16:9–20 or include a textual note concerning these verses.

Therefore, while taking this textual distinction into account, we should also examine the appearances of the risen Jesus, the command to preach the gospel, and the ascension recorded in verses 9–20.

In particular, the Word concerning serpents, poison, and signs must not be taken out of its context and out of the teaching of the whole Bible and used to justify dangerous actions or exaggerated miracles. The center of this portion lies in the fact that the risen Jesus sent His disciples out as

witnesses who preach the gospel to all the world, and that He worked together with them.

The core meaning of Mark chapter 16 seen in the dimension of the gospel of the water and the Spirit

First, Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead.

Second, the resurrection of Jesus shows that the judgment for sin has been finished and that He is the Son of God, who has overcome the power of sin and death.

Third, the risen Jesus gives to those who believe the remission of sins, rest of heart, new life, and the eternal hope of the resurrection.

Fourth, Jesus did not cast away Peter, who had denied Him three times, but met him again and restored him, and this shows the fact that the salvation and the grace of Jesus are greater than the failure of man.

Fifth, true repentance does not end in regretting one's own failure; it is to turn from one's own righteousness and unbelief and believe the salvation Jesus has completed.

Sixth, faith is not to make one's own feelings and thoughts the standard, but to accept the word of God, which says that all the sins of mankind passed on to Jesus and were judged.

Seventh, the baptism of water that a believer receives is not a merit that washes away sin; it is a sign that outwardly confesses the faith that one has been saved by the death and the resurrection of Jesus.

Eighth, if a person does not believe this gospel, he cannot receive the remission of sins that Jesus has completed, and so sin and condemnation remain in his heart just as they are.

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Ninth, the Holy Spirit comes into the heart of the person who has believed the gospel and received the remission of sins, and testifies that Jesus is God and that the salvation He has accomplished is the truth.

Tenth, the signs that follow those who believe are not for boasting of human ability, but for confirming the gospel and for rescuing by the word of life those who are held by sin and by the evil spirit.

Eleventh, the Word about taking up serpents or drinking poison cannot be a ground for dangerous actions that tempt God, and its meaning of discerning false teachings and spiritual deception must also be examined.

Twelfth, Jesus ascended and rules at the right hand of God, and He works by the Holy Spirit together with those who preach the gospel.

Thirteenth, the person who has received the remission of sins must not keep the news of the resurrection to himself, but must preach to every people the salvation Jesus has completed.

Fourteenth, the resurrection of Jesus is the ground on which the soul of the believer obtains new life, and it is the sure guarantee that his body also will rise again.

To sum it up in one sentence, Mark chapter 16 is a chapter that shows this fact: because Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and then rose again and perfectly overcame sin and death, the person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, new life, and eternal rest, and must preach this perfect salvation to all the world in the hope of the resurrection. ✉

Mark Chapter 16

Jesus, who rose from the dead

Introduction

Mark chapter 16 begins with the scene in which, very early on the first day of the week, the women went to the tomb of Jesus. They had prepared spices, but they were anxious about who would roll away the great stone that blocked the tomb. Yet before they arrived, the stone had already been rolled away, and the tomb was empty. The young man clothed in white proclaimed, *"He is risen! He is not here."* The resurrection is not a story that came out of the expectation or the imagination of the disciples, but an actual event that God accomplished.

The women were amazed and afraid, and the disciples did not believe the news of the resurrection even though it was delivered to them again and again. Jesus had spoken of His death and resurrection many times, but they saw the death before their eyes as greater than the promise of God. The faith of the resurrection is not a comfort that the disciples made up in order to endure their sorrow. The risen Jesus Himself appeared, rebuked their unbelief and hardness, and established them as witnesses.

The resurrection of Jesus is not an event that canceled the death of the Cross, but an event that confirmed the salvation accomplished by that death. Jesus took all the sins of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He shed His blood and died on the Cross and so received the judgment in our stead. By being buried and rising again on the third day, He showed that the price of sin

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had been completely paid and that the power of death had been defeated. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of sins and receives the Holy Spirit, and obtains the life and the hope of the resurrection.

The risen Jesus commanded His disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* The Lord did not choose only perfect men; He corrected the disciples who had revealed their failure and unbelief and sent them out as witnesses of the gospel. The person who preaches the gospel must not boast of his own experience or ability, but must clearly preach how Jesus saved sinners. The signs were not the content of salvation that takes the place of the gospel; they were the work by which the Lord confirmed the word as it was needed.

After Jesus had finished speaking, He was taken up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. The ascension does not mean that the Lord forsook His disciples; it means that He completed salvation and rules as King. When the disciples preached the gospel, the Lord worked together with them. Mark ends with the scene of those who received the command of the risen Lord going out into the world. Today also those who believe must rely on Jesus, who overcame death, and go beyond their fear to preach the gospel, and must be faithful in the place entrusted to them while looking to the Lord, who will come again.

The empty tomb and the appearances of the risen Jesus testify that the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which has overcome sin and death, has been completed

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary

the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe" (Mark 16:1–11).

When the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome prepared spices to anoint the body of Jesus. These were women who had followed and served Jesus from the time He was in Galilee and who had also watched His death on the Cross and His burial. Their love and devotion toward Jesus were sincere, but the fact that they went to the tomb with spices shows that they were not yet able to expect the resurrection of Jesus. They did not go to meet the risen Lord; they went to anoint a dead body with spices.

The women went to the tomb very early on the first day of the week. In the fact that they went as soon as the day dawned

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we can see their earnestness toward Jesus. But in their hearts there was anxiety about the great stone that was blocking the door of the tomb. The words, *"Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"* show that they were facing a real problem that they could not solve by their own strength.

Yet when the women looked up, the very large stone had already been rolled away. Before they could find someone or prepare a method, the obstacle had been removed. That the stone was rolled away was not to make a way so that Jesus could come out of the tomb. The risen Lord is not One who could be shut in by a stone. The stone that was rolled away served to let people look inside the tomb and confirm the fact that the body of Jesus was not there.

This scene clearly testifies that salvation is a work that God had already completed before the effort of man. The women prepared spices in order to do something for Jesus, but God had solved the problem of death before they arrived. It is not that a man rolls away the stone of sin and death by his own good deeds and religious zeal. God completed salvation through Jesus Christ, and a man hears of that work, which has already been accomplished, through the Word and believes and receives it.

The women were alarmed when they saw a young man clothed in white sitting on the right side inside the tomb. Mark records him as *"a young man,"* and he served as the messenger who delivered to the women the news of the resurrection of God. What is important is not speculation about his outward appearance, but the word that he delivered. The declaration, *"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here,"* is the center of this scene.

The young man made known that the One who had risen was the very Jesus of Nazareth who had been crucified. The

One who died and the One who rose are the same Jesus. The resurrection does not mean that only the teaching or the spirit of Jesus came alive again in the hearts of the disciples. The very Jesus who actually died on the Cross and was buried in a rock tomb actually rose from the dead.

The words, *"See the place where they laid Him,"* let the women confirm the empty tomb for themselves. The fact that the tomb was empty does not by itself make known the whole meaning of the resurrection, but the empty tomb, joined with the word of God, *"He is risen! He is not here,"* testifies to the resurrection. Then the fact that Jesus appeared in person to Mary Magdalene shows that the resurrection did not stop at being an event in which a body disappeared, but was confirmed by meeting the risen Lord.

The young man told the women to deliver this news to the disciples and to Peter. Peter was the disciple who had denied Jesus three times and who, when the rooster crowed, realized his own wrong and wept. Yet in the news of the resurrection his name was specially mentioned. This clearly reveals the grace that, even though Peter had failed, he was not forsaken by the Lord forever, and that the risen Lord met him again and restored him.

Even before the disciples failed, Jesus had said that after He rose again He would go before them into Galilee. The disciples fled in fear and Peter denied the Lord, but their failure could not nullify the promise of the Lord. The expression, *"as He said to you,"* emphasizes that the resurrection was not an event that arose suddenly, but the fulfillment of the promise that Jesus had spoken beforehand.

Those who have believed the gospel of the water and the Spirit and received the remission of sins can also do wrong and fall because of the weakness of the flesh. But that does not

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mean that they must receive salvation anew each time. They must acknowledge their wrong and turn from it, and return to the Word, which says that the Lord has already borne all their sins and completed salvation. The Lord of the resurrection, who called Peter again, establishes upon the gospel the person whose own merit has collapsed.

The women trembled and were greatly amazed, and they went out from the tomb and because of fear could not immediately speak to anyone. This does not mean that they hid the news of the resurrection forever; it is the first reaction they showed in the face of a sight they had not expected. It is recorded afterward that Mary Magdalene delivered the news of the resurrection to the disciples. A witness of faith is not someone who originally has no fear at all, but someone who, even in the midst of fear, received the word of the resurrection and came to deliver it.

Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had formerly cast seven demons. She was a person who had been set free from a serious bondage by the grace of the Lord. Jesus did not go first to those who were high and powerful in the world; He showed His risen form to Mary, who had received grace and had followed the Lord. This shows the fact that it is not the position and the merit of a person but the grace of the Lord that establishes a witness.

Mary went and delivered the news of the resurrection while those who had been with Jesus were mourning and weeping. The sorrow of the disciples was not because they did not love Jesus, but because they thought that His death was the end of everything. Jesus had spoken of the resurrection many times, but they were seized by the death and the loss before their eyes and could not remember the Word. When we see the present situation as greater than the promise of God, sorrow and fear

come to rule the heart.

The disciples did not believe even when they heard the news that Jesus had risen and the testimony that Mary had seen Him. This shows that the faith of the resurrection was not produced out of the expectation of the disciples or out of collective excitement. Rather, at first they showed a hard and doubting reaction to the news of the resurrection. Their faith was established when the risen Lord appeared and made them realize the Word.

The resurrection of Jesus is not an event that canceled the death of the Cross, but an event that confirmed the salvation accomplished by that death. First, at the Jordan River, Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. Bearing those sins, He was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the judgment of sin in our stead; and being buried and rising again on the third day, He perfectly overcame the power of sin and death.

If even one of the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, and the resurrection is left out, salvation cannot be completely explained. The baptism is the event in which all our sins passed on to Jesus, the Cross is the event in which the price of those sins was completely paid, and the resurrection shows that this salvation was completed and that death was conquered. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which gives to the sinner the perfect remission of sins and new life.

The resurrection of Jesus gives true rest to those who believe this gospel. If, in order to be saved, a man had to wash away his own sins without ceasing or to make up a lacking price with good deeds, there could be no perfect rest in his heart. But because Jesus bore all sins and received all the

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judgment for them and then rose again, those who believe are no longer bound by the fear that they themselves must pay the price of sin. In the righteousness that the Lord has completed, they stand boldly before God as the righteous who have no sin.

The person who believes this gospel in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again. The Holy Spirit dwells in the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins and leads him to live by the resurrection life of Jesus. To be born again is not for the body to become perfect at once; it is for the soul that was dead in sin to obtain new life by believing the gospel. Moreover, those who believe have the hope that their own bodies also will rise again and will live with the Lord in the eternal kingdom of God.

To believe the resurrection does not stop at commemorating the resurrection on a particular day each year. It is to believe in one's heart that Jesus bore all one's sins, was judged on the Cross, and actually rose from the dead. Out of this faith come the assurance of the remission of sins, peace of heart, and a hope that goes beyond death. Thanksgiving, service, and the preaching of the gospel are not conditions for obtaining the life of the resurrection; they are the fruit that appears in the person who has already received new life.

This passage shows that neither the great stone, nor death, nor the unbelief of the disciples could block the promise of God. When the women arrived at the tomb, the stone had already been rolled away, and Jesus, who had been crucified, had already risen. Even though the disciples could not believe at once, the fact of the resurrection did not change. The foundation of faith is not the emotion of man or the intensity of his conviction, but Jesus Christ, who completed salvation by the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and His Word.

The risen Jesus appeared to two men who were walking along the road in discouragement, but the rest of the disciples could not believe even the repeated testimony

"After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either" (Mark 16:12–13).

The words, *"After that,"* show that this was a thing that followed the event in which the risen Jesus appeared first to Mary Magdalene. Mary told the disciples, who were mourning and weeping, that Jesus had risen, but they did not believe her word. Even so, Jesus did not immediately cast away the disciples who did not believe; He revealed Himself to yet other people and added to the testimony of the resurrection.

The text does not make known the names of the two men to whom Jesus appeared or the exact location of the country to which they were going. We may understand it in connection with the records of the other Gospels, but what Mark itself clearly says is that they belonged among those who followed Jesus and that they met the risen Lord while they were on the road. Rather than speculating too much about details that are not recorded, we should see the contrast between the resurrection and unbelief that the text emphasizes.

It was not the two men who found Jesus; it was Jesus who first appeared to them. The disciples were discouraged and scattered by the death of Jesus, but the risen Lord knew where they were and came to them. The beginning of faith does not lie in a man finding God by his own wisdom, but in the grace by which God reveals Himself through the Word and the gospel.

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Mark records that Jesus appeared *"in another form."* This does not mean that Jesus changed into an entirely different person, or that His resurrection was nothing but a vision. It is an expression showing that the very Jesus who was nailed to the cross and died had risen, but that because of the glory of His risen body and the manner of His appearing, the two men did not recognize Him at once.

The resurrection of Jesus does not mean that only His soul survived, or that His teaching came alive again in the memory of the disciples. Jesus actually died on the Cross and was buried in a tomb, and in that body He rose from the dead. The risen body is a glorious body that is not bound by the former corruptible and mortal body, but the Jesus who was hung on the cross and the Jesus who rose again are the same person.

Neither should we make a doctrine on the basis of the expression *"another form,"* as though Jesus could change into the appearance of just any person. What the text emphasizes is not exactly how the outward appearance of the risen Jesus was, but the fact that He overcame death and rose again and actually appeared to His disciples. Faith must stand upon the facts that God has clearly testified rather than upon imagination that goes beyond the written Word.

After the two men met the risen Jesus, they went back to the rest of the disciples. They did not enjoy this joy by themselves; they shared with others the news that Jesus had risen. The person who has met the risen Lord tells others the fact that death is not the end and the news that Jesus has completed salvation. A witness of the gospel is not one who displays himself, but one who testifies to Jesus Christ, whom he has seen and heard and come to believe.

The fact that, after Mary Magdalene, two men testified to the same resurrection shows that the resurrection of Jesus did

not remain the personal claim of one person. Different people met the risen Jesus and delivered that news to the rest of the disciples. Through repeated testimony God was leading the disciples out of sorrow and unbelief.

Yet the rest of the disciples did not believe the word of the two men either. The expression, *"they did not believe them either,"* means that the unbelief that had refused the testimony of Mary was repeated. Jesus had foretold His death and resurrection many times, and different witnesses delivered the news of its fulfillment, but the hearts of the disciples were still held by the death and the loss before their eyes.

This makes it hard to think that the disciples so eagerly expected the resurrection that they made up the story themselves. Rather, they were not able to receive the news of the resurrection easily. Their unbelief was changed into faith when Jesus appeared in person and made them realize the Word. The faith of the resurrection is not a comfort produced by human longing, but the faith that receives an event that God accomplished and testified to.

A person does not automatically come to believe simply because he has once heard of a miraculous fact. If he regards his own experience and judgment as more certain than the word of God, he may not receive it even after hearing many testimonies. True faith is not thoughtlessly suppressing every question; it begins with acknowledging, in the face of the facts that God has already spoken and fulfilled, that one's own thoughts can be wrong.

Even so, this passage does not teach that for those who doubt or whose faith is weak there is no longer any hope. The disciples did not believe the repeated testimony, but afterward Jesus appeared to them in person, rebuked their unbelief, and even entrusted to them the mission of preaching the gospel.

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The Lord did not approve their unbelief as it was, but neither did He cast them away because of that failure alone. He rebuked them with the truth and established them again upon faith.

The resurrection confirms the fact that the work of salvation that Jesus had accomplished beforehand by the baptism and the Cross is perfect. At the Jordan River Jesus took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist. And bearing those sins He was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and so received the punishment of sin in our stead. If Jesus had remained in death, the perfect salvation that overcame sin and death could not have been testified to; but He rose again on the third day.

The baptism Jesus received from John, the death of the Cross, and the resurrection are one work of salvation. By the baptism He received all the sins of mankind, on the Cross He paid the whole price of those sins, and by rising again He overcame the power of sin and death. The resurrection shows the fact that Jesus is the Son of God and the Lord of life, and the fact that the redemption He accomplished is perfect.

The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again. The person who has received the remission of sins is set free from the fear that he will be forsaken by God because of sin, and obtains rest of heart. He also comes to have the hope of the resurrection—that just as Jesus rose from the dead, his own body also will rise again and live forever with the Lord.

Even if the one who preaches the gospel speaks the truth exactly, it is not that everyone who hears believes at once. Even though two men met the risen Jesus in person and told of

it, the rest did not believe. Therefore the preacher must not compel the other person by force, nor must he lay the whole result of their unbelief upon his own lack of ability. He must preach exactly the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus, and rely on the Holy Spirit to awaken the heart through that Word.

At the same time, the one who hears must lay down the attitude of saying that he will believe only if he himself sees a special sign. The disciples heard trustworthy testimony again and again and yet, because of their own thoughts, could not receive it. Today also salvation does not lie in first demanding a visible miracle or an emotional experience. It lies in receiving in one's heart, as a fact accomplished for oneself, the work of salvation of Jesus Christ that is recorded in the Bible.

This passage shows that even though the news of the resurrection was delivered repeatedly, the hard heart of man can refuse it. But the risen Jesus did not give up the disciples who were in unbelief; He continued to reveal Himself. Faith does not come out of the strong will of man; it arises when we hear the Word of the Lord, who overcame death, and receive the gospel of the water and the Spirit in our hearts. The person who believes this gospel knows that sorrow and death are not the end, and lives in the life and the hope of the resurrection.

The risen Jesus corrected the disciples who had no faith and sent them out as witnesses who preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to all the world

"Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen.

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And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.'" (Mark 16:14–18).

The risen Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples while they were eating together. Because Judas Iscariot was missing from among the twelve disciples, Mark records them as the eleven disciples. The disciples had repeatedly heard from Mary Magdalene and from the two men who were walking along the road that Jesus had risen, but they did not believe. Jesus came to such disciples in person.

Jesus rebuked the unbelief and the hardness of heart of the disciples. The problem was not so much that they had not understood the resurrection perfectly from the beginning, but their attitude of refusing even the testimony of those who had seen the risen Lord, of whom Jesus had spoken beforehand and who had actually risen. Faith is not an attitude of easily accepting anything; it is receiving in one's heart the facts that God has spoken and has confirmed through faithful witnesses.

The disciples were seized by sorrow and fear and were unwilling to believe until they confirmed it with their own eyes. If a man regards his own experience and judgment as more certain than the word of God, he can close his heart even after hearing sufficient testimony. Jesus did not leave such hardness as it was, but rebuked it. The rebuke of the Lord was not condemnation meant to cast the disciples away, but was meant to turn them from wrong thoughts and to establish them upon the truth.

The amazing fact is that Jesus immediately entrusted the mission of preaching the gospel to the disciples whose faith had been lacking. The disciples were not people who had believed everything perfectly from the beginning. They too doubted the testimony of the resurrection and had to be rebuked by Jesus. But after they met the risen Lord and were corrected by the Word, they became witnesses who preached to all the world the gospel they had heard.

This clearly testifies to the fact that the qualification for preaching the gospel comes not from the perfection of a man or from a record without failure, but from the grace that Jesus Christ has bestowed. The person who, even while knowing his own insufficiency, believes the salvation Jesus Christ has accomplished and follows the Word of the Lord preaches the gospel. Of course we must not justify wrong faith and hardness as they are. We must receive the rebuke of the Lord, correct our thoughts before the Word, and then deliver to others the grace we have received.

Jesus commanded, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* The gospel is not news for only a particular people or class. Because all men are born as the descendants of Adam and are under sin and death, all men need the same salvation. Regardless of differences of country and language, of status and of past, anyone must hear of the salvation that Jesus Christ has accomplished.

We need not understand the Word, *"Go into all the world,"* only as a command that every believer must personally visit every nation of the world alone. Some go in person to other regions, some preach to the neighbors close at hand, and others can serve the preaching of the gospel together through prayer, through material means, and through various instruments. What is important is that the church does not shut the gospel up

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within itself, but preaches it exactly to all the people it can reach.

Moreover, the command to preach the gospel to every creature does not justify compulsion or violence. The gospel is not a religious power that forces people into submission, but the good news that God has saved sinners. The preacher must clearly preach the Word while respecting the personhood of the other, and must not try to manufacture faith by force. It is the Holy Spirit who makes the heart of a person realize the truth and believe the gospel.

The content of the gospel that Jesus commanded them to preach must also be clear. It is not merely the story that God exists or that if we live good lives we will be blessed. It is the news that the Son of God came clothed in the body of a man, took upon His own body the sins of all the people of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and was buried and rose again on the third day and so completed salvation.

In the Word, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved,"* faith is not merely acknowledging in a vague way that Jesus exists. It is the faith that receives in the heart the fact that Jesus took all one's sins by the baptism and perfectly saved one by the Cross and the resurrection. The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit no longer tries to wash away his sins by his own deeds and merit, but relies on the righteousness that God has accomplished.

Here we must distinguish between the role of the baptism that the believer receives and the role of the baptism that Jesus received from John. The baptism that Jesus received is the work of salvation by which He took all the sins of mankind upon His own body. On the other hand, the baptism of water

that the person who has believed the gospel receives is an outward confession and sign showing that he has received the remission of sins by believing the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. It is not that a man washes away his sin by the rite of the baptism of water itself, or that he offers that act as the price of salvation.

The order in the text also is *"He who believes and is baptized."* First one hears the gospel and believes it in his heart, and then confesses that faith by baptism. If there is only the fact of having received the baptism of water and one does not believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit that Jesus accomplished, the rite cannot save that person. On the contrary, the person who has truly believed must not be ashamed of his faith, but must show through baptism his faith that he is united with Jesus Christ.

The Word that follows is, *"he who does not believe will be condemned."* Jesus spoke of not believing the gospel, rather than of not having performed the rite of baptism, as the cause of condemnation. A man is condemned not because God has failed to accomplish salvation, but because he refuses the righteousness that Jesus completed after bearing all sins, and so bears his own sin just as it is. What divides salvation and condemnation is not the merit of man, but faith in the gospel.

Jesus said that various signs would follow those who believe. The signs are not a purpose more important than the gospel; they are the work that the Lord bestows in order to confirm the word that is preached. It is not that the gospel serves the signs, but that the signs serve the gospel. Therefore we must not judge a teaching to be the truth merely because many strange phenomena have been shown; we must first examine whether the content that is preached agrees with the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus.

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The Word, *"In My name they will cast out demons,"* shows that Jesus Christ is greater than the authority of Satan and of the evil spirits. The name of Jesus is not a word to be used like an incantation; it shows the faith that believes His authority and His salvation. When the gospel is preached, a person is set free not only from the bondage of demons but also from false teachings and from the condemnation of sin. But we must not conclude that every problem is unconditionally the work of demons, nor make the act of casting out demons the center of faith.

The Word, *"they will speak with new tongues,"* makes us think of the gospel being preached beyond the barriers of many languages and peoples. As it is needed, God can bestow the sign of causing people to speak new languages for the sake of preaching the gospel. Moreover, the person who has believed the gospel comes to speak of the righteousness of God and the news of the kingdom of heaven with the mouth that formerly spoke only of his own desires and of the boasting of the world. But we must not conclude that the phenomenon of making sounds that cannot be understood is by itself the evidence of having received the Holy Spirit.

The Word, *"they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them,"* is by no means a command that one may deliberately take up a venomous snake or drink poison in order to prove his faith. Such an action is not believing God, but putting one's own life in danger and tempting God. While we believe that God can protect us as it is needed when we meet unexpected danger in the course of preaching the gospel, we must not create danger on purpose or ignore basic measures of safety.

We may also draw a lesson by connecting this Word with the spiritual poison that false teaching gives. The person who

exactly knows the gospel of the water and the Spirit must discern the teachings that leave out the baptism of Jesus or that mix the merit of man into salvation. Yet neither is it necessary to turn the actual promise of protection in the text into nothing but a figure. What is important is that in every case we do not display our own ability, but rely on the sovereignty of God, who keeps us when it is needed for the preaching of the gospel.

The Word, *"they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover,"* shows that the Lord is One who can heal even the diseases of the body. Those who believe may pray for the sick, care for them with love, and ask for the help of God. But we must not guarantee that every sick person will certainly be healed at once, nor lay the responsibility on those who are not healed by saying that they have no faith. Neither should we cause people to refuse medical treatment or condemn the receiving of treatment as unbelief.

The signs are neither a condition for being saved, nor do they mean that every believer must certainly show the same signs. The sure ground of the remission of sins is not the experience of having performed a miracle, but the gospel that Jesus Christ has accomplished. Even though a person has not experienced a sign, if he believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit he is a child of God who has received the remission of all his sins and has received the Holy Spirit as a gift. On the contrary, even though someone has shown amazing phenomena, if he does not believe the gospel, that cannot be evidence of salvation.

The person who believes in his heart the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit and is born again. The Holy Spirit gives to the one who has been born again the strength to discern and to preach the gospel, and

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bestows, as it is needed, gifts and help for the work of the Lord. Gifts and power are given not to raise the honor of an individual, but to serve the gospel that saves souls and to serve the church.

This passage shows that the disciples who had no faith were corrected by the Word of the Lord and were then sent out as witnesses of the gospel. What they had to preach was not their own ability or experience, but the salvation that Jesus completed by the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection. Today also those who believe must not have their hearts taken away with the pursuit of signs, but must preach exactly the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The person who believes this gospel is saved from sin and condemnation and is led by the Holy Spirit, and with the wisdom and the power that the Lord gives he preaches the news of life to other souls.

The Lord who ascended into heaven rules at the right hand of God and worked together with the disciples who preached the gospel

"So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen" (Mark 16:19–20).

Jesus commanded His disciples to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every person, and after He had spoken of the signs that would follow those who believe, He went up into heaven. The ascension does not mean that the risen Jesus parted from His disciples and no longer worked. Jesus completed the work of salvation that He was to accomplish on

the earth and went up to the place of glory where He rules as the Lord of all things.

Mark calls Him *"the Lord."* The very Jesus of Nazareth who was mocked and died on the Cross is the Lord who rose again and ascended. The soldiers mocked Him as though He were a false king, and people cried out for Him to come down from the cross and save Himself, but God exalted Jesus, who overcame death. It was revealed that the One who was forsaken by men is the true King who rules the whole universe.

That Jesus sat down at the right hand of God does not remain merely in the sense that God divides and uses the seat on His physical right side as a man would. In the Bible the right hand shows the place of authority, honor, and rule. Jesus, as the Son of God, has glory and authority together with the Father, and rules as the King who governs all things in heaven and on earth.

The expression *"sat down"* clearly testifies that Jesus perfectly accomplished all the work for saving sinners. The sacrifices of the Old Testament could not remove sin forever and so had to be repeated continually, but Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself once and for all and paid the whole price of them on the Cross. Because He completed salvation, there remains no price of sin that a man must supplement.

The ascension of Jesus does not mean that He cast off His body and came to exist only as a spirit. The very Jesus who died on the Cross and was buried in a tomb rose again in the body and went up into heaven. This also guarantees that for those who believe the gospel of the water and the Spirit there is the resurrection of the body and eternal life to come. The end of the believer is not the tomb, but the eternal kingdom of God together with the risen Lord.

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Neither did Jesus leave His disciples alone because He went up into heaven. The next verse records that when the disciples went out and preached the Word, *"the Lord working with them."* Unlike the way in which He had walked with the disciples in a visible body, Jesus was among them by the Holy Spirit and led the work of preaching the gospel. The Lord who ascended is not One who is far away and indifferent; He is the living Lord who works together with His servants.

After the disciples heard the command of the Lord, they actually went out and preached the gospel everywhere. They had once been rebuked because they did not believe the testimony of the resurrection, but after they met the risen Lord and received His Word, they became witnesses of the gospel. Faith does not end with understanding the Word; it leads on to a life of obeying that Word and delivering the news of life to others.

This does not mean that every believer must go to a distant country in the same way. Some go in person to other regions and preach, and some preach the gospel to family and neighbors in the place where they live. Others can take part in the preaching of the gospel through prayer and material means, through translation and literature, through care and various forms of service. Though the roles differ, those who have been saved can join their hearts together so that other souls may hear the gospel.

The gospel that the disciples preached was not a moral teaching of men or a method of religious success. It was the news of salvation—that the Son of God, Jesus Christ, came clothed in the body of a man, took all the sins of the world upon His own body through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, bore those sins and shed His blood and died on the Cross, and was buried and rose again on the third day. And

they preached also the fact that the risen Jesus went up into heaven and is alive and reigning even now.

The baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the Cross, the resurrection, and the ascension are not doctrines separated from one another. By the baptism He took the sins of mankind upon Himself, on the Cross He received the judgment of those sins, by the resurrection He overcame sin and death, and having ascended He sat down at the right hand of God as the King who completed salvation. Because Jesus accomplished all these things, the sinner has no need to supplement salvation with his own deeds.

The person who believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit in his heart receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again. The Holy Spirit, who is in the heart of the person who has received the remission of sins, makes him believe the fact that Jesus is the Lord who is alive even now, and leads him to obey His Word. Moreover, when the insufficiency of the flesh is revealed, instead of relying on his own deeds or falling again into condemnation, He causes him to return to the gospel that the Lord has completed.

The Lord worked together with the disciples when they preached. This Word testifies that it was not the disciples who changed people by their own ability and wisdom, but the Lord who worked through the word of the gospel. The disciples preached the gospel, but the One who made people realize that Word and led their hearts to faith was the Lord. In the preaching of the gospel the faithful labor of men is needed, but the power to save souls belongs to God.

In the expression, *"and confirming the word through the accompanying signs,"* the center is not the signs but the word. The signs were not a spectacle meant to take the place of the

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word or to satisfy the curiosity of men. On the scene where the gospel was being newly preached, the Lord bestowed signs as they were needed and so testified that the word the disciples preached was the truth of the salvation of God. It was not that the signs went first and the word followed after; when the word was preached, the Lord confirmed it by signs.

Therefore today also we must not set the standard of faith upon the number of miracles or upon amazing experiences. Even if someone shows a special phenomenon, we must examine whether the content he preaches exactly testifies to the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection of Jesus. On the contrary, we must not lightly regard the exact word of the gospel on the ground that there is no conspicuous sign. The fundamental power that makes a person born again out of sin is in the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who preaches the gospel must not force signs into being or try to prove his own ability. The gifts and the help that the Lord gives have their purpose not in raising the honor of the preacher, but in testifying to the gospel and saving souls. We must do all that we can in practical preparation and wisdom, but must not manipulate the result; we must be faithful with the faith that the Lord works through the Word.

Nor must we conclude that the Lord is not with us because the fruit of the gospel is not seen at once. The disciples were entrusted with the responsibility of preaching the Word, but they could not decide who would believe or when. While we sow the seed of the gospel and teach and wait, the Lord works in the heart of each person. The preacher must not change the gospel so that people will like to hear it because he is impatient; he must preach exactly and steadily the salvation that Jesus has accomplished.

Mark does not end only with the scene of the ascension of

Jesus; it ends with the picture of the disciples going out and preaching. The work of the gospel that Jesus began on the earth continued through the disciples who received the Holy Spirit. The Lord ruled in heaven and worked together with those who preached the Word on the earth. Therefore the preaching of the gospel is not the work of the disciples of the past alone; it is the mission that the church which believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit must carry on today.

This passage teaches that the salvation of Jesus is perfect and that He is the Lord who is alive even now. Jesus saved sinners by the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection, and sat down at the right hand of God. He gives to those who believe the gospel the remission of sins, the Holy Spirit, and eternal life, and He works together with those who preach the gospel. Therefore those who believe must not boast of their own ability or be discouraged because of their insufficiency, but must rely on the Lord, who rules as King, and preach this gospel of life to all people. ✉

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Questions and Answers on Mark Chapter 16

[Question] 1. How is the theme of Mark chapter 16 connected to our faith?

The central theme of Mark chapter 16 is the resurrection of Jesus Christ and the preaching of the gospel. Jesus, who was nailed to the cross and died and was buried in a tomb, rose from the dead, and He appeared to His disciples and commanded them to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. It then records that Jesus was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God, and that He worked together with the disciples when they preached the gospel.

The resurrection of Jesus shows the fact that our faith does not rest upon the memory of a dead man or upon the religious teaching of men. Jesus actually overcame death and rose again, and He is the Savior who is alive even now. The resurrection of Jesus is the sure evidence that the salvation He accomplished is perfect, that He gives to those who believe in Him the remission of sins and new life, and that He will accomplish even the resurrection of their bodies in the time to come.

But when Mary Magdalene and the two men told them that they had seen the risen Jesus, the disciples did not believe their word. Jesus rebuked *"their unbelief and hardness of heart."* This teaches us that faith is not an attitude of accepting only what one has seen and experienced with one's own eyes, but of receiving in one's heart the gospel that God has spoken and has

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delivered through faithful witnesses.

The gospel we must believe is not to believe the resurrection of Jesus alone, apart from the rest. Jesus took all the sins of all mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, and bearing those sins He was judged and died on the Cross, and then rose from the dead. The person who believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins once and for all, receives the Holy Spirit, and is born again as a child of God, and obtains true rest and eternal life in his heart.

The Word, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved,"* does not mean that the rite performed with water itself saves a person. Baptism is the obedience by which the person who believes the salvation Jesus accomplished by the water and the blood publicly confesses his faith. The ground on which a person is saved is not his own rite or deed but the gospel that Jesus accomplished, and the person who does not believe this bears his own sin just as it is and so is condemned.

The risen Jesus did not tell those who were saved to keep the gospel to themselves; He commanded them to go into all the world and preach it to every creature. Therefore true faith in the resurrection does not stop at the fact that one has received the remission of sins; it leads on to a life of preaching the word of salvation to those who do not yet know the gospel. Just as the Lord worked together with the disciples when they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord who is alive even now works together with those who believe and preach the gospel.

Therefore Mark chapter 16 leads our faith to believe the resurrection of Jesus as a fact, to live in the remission of sins and the new life obtained by the gospel of the water and the Spirit, and to preach the gospel to every creature while hoping for the Lord who will come again.

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[Question] 2. In Mark 16:1–2, who were those who went to the tomb on the first day of the week, and what were they intending to do?

Those who went to the tomb very early on the first day of the week, when the sun had risen, were Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome.

They went to the tomb with the spices they had bought beforehand in order to anoint the body of Jesus. They went with hearts that loved and desired to serve Jesus, but they did not think that Jesus had already risen from the dead.

[Question] 3. In Mark 16:3–4, what were the women worried about as they went to the tomb?

As they went to the tomb, the women were worried and said, *"Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?"* This was because the stone that blocked the tomb was so large that it was hard for them to move it by their own strength.

But when they arrived at the tomb and looked up, that great stone had already been rolled away. God had solved the problem that the women were anxious about before they arrived.

[Question] 4. In Mark 16:5–6, what did the young man clothed in a white robe say to the women, who were alarmed?

The young man clothed in white said to the alarmed women, *"Do not be alarmed."* And he said that although they were

seeking Jesus of Nazareth, who had been crucified, Jesus had risen and was not in the tomb.

He also told them to see the empty place where the body of Jesus had been laid, and so had them confirm the fact that Jesus had actually risen from the dead.

[Question] 5. In Mark 16:7, what did the angel tell the women to deliver to the disciples and to Peter?

The angel told the women to go and say to the disciples and to Peter, *"He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you."* This is the news that Jesus had risen from the dead and that, as He had promised before He was hung on the cross, He would meet His disciples again in Galilee.

That he said in particular, *"His disciples—and Peter,"* mentioning the name of Peter separately, has an important meaning. Peter had denied Jesus three times, saying that he did not know Him, and he realized his failure and wept bitterly. He may have thought that he could no longer stand in the place of a disciple. But the risen Jesus did not cast Peter away; He clearly showed His will to meet him again and to restore him.

This Word does not mean that the denial of Peter was regarded lightly or that repentance was unnecessary. Peter had to realize his own weakness and pride, but the grace and the promise of the Lord were greater than his failure. Jesus met the disciple who had failed, restored him, and entrusted to him the mission of preaching the gospel. Therefore the restoration of a believer depends not on his own perfection or his strong resolve, but on the faithfulness and the grace of the Lord, who rose from the dead.

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[Question] 6. According to Mark 16:9, to whom did the risen Jesus appear first?

The person to whom the risen Jesus appeared first was Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had formerly cast seven demons. Mary Magdalene had received the grace of Jesus and followed the Lord, and she was the first to witness the risen Jesus and became a witness who delivered that news to the disciples.

[Question] 7. In Mark 16:10–11, what did the disciples do when they heard the news that Jesus had risen?

Mary Magdalene went to those who had been with Jesus while they were mourning and weeping, and delivered the fact that Jesus had risen and had appeared to her. But even after they heard that news, the disciples did not believe.

This shows that although the disciples were sorrowing over the death of Jesus, they had not yet received by faith the promise of the resurrection that the Lord had spoken beforehand. Faith in the resurrection does not stop simply at hearing amazing news; it is receiving by faith the promise that Jesus spoke and the work that He actually accomplished.

[Question] 8. In Mark 16:12, after He appeared to Mary Magdalene, to whom did Jesus appear?

After He appeared to Mary Magdalene, Jesus appeared in another form to two of the disciples who were walking into the

country. The Gospel of Mark does not make known the names of these two men or their destination; it records that they met the risen Jesus while they were on the road.

[Question] 9. In Mark 16:13, when the two men who were going into the country told that they had seen the risen Jesus, did the other disciples believe their word?

They did not believe. After the two men who were going into the country met the risen Jesus, they went back and delivered that fact to the rest of the disciples, but the disciples did not believe their word either.

This shows that the disciples were in a state of such unbelief and hardness of heart that, even after hearing the testimony of the two men following the testimony of Mary Magdalene, they could not accept the resurrection of Jesus.

[Question] 10. In Mark 16:14, when Jesus appeared to the eleven disciples, what did He rebuke?

The risen Jesus appeared while the eleven disciples were eating, and He rebuked "*their unbelief and hardness of heart.*" This was because they had repeatedly heard the testimony of those who had themselves seen the resurrection of Jesus and yet had not believed.

Although Jesus had said many times that after He suffered and died He would rise again, the disciples looked only at the death and the sorrow before their eyes. Mary Magdalene and

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the two disciples told them that they had met the risen Jesus, but the disciples put their own experience and judgment first and did not accept that testimony. That the heart is hard means more than that one was slow to understand; it points to a state in which one cannot lay down one's own thoughts before the Word of the Lord.

The faith that believes the gospel is not an emotion produced by man or a vague optimism. It is receiving the word of God and the fact that has been accomplished—that Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross and died, and then actually rose from the dead. If one does not believe the resurrection, one cannot fully believe the fact that the work of salvation of Jesus has been completed.

But Jesus did not cast away the disciples whose faith had been lacking. Immediately after He rebuked them, He entrusted to them the mission of going into all the world and preaching the gospel. This shows that the rebuke of the Lord was not meant to condemn the disciples and throw them away, but was a rebuke of love meant to correct their wrong faith and to establish them as witnesses of the resurrection.

[Question] 11. In Mark 16:15, what did the risen Jesus command His disciples to do?

The risen Jesus commanded His disciples, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* The gospel is not news that should remain with only a particular people or region; it is the news of salvation that must be delivered to all the people of the world.

The gospel that the disciples had to preach is the news that

Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead and so completed salvation. The disciples were called not to preach their own ideas or religious teachings, but to testify to this work of salvation that Jesus actually accomplished.

Therefore this command was not given only to the eleven disciples of that time; it is a mission that continues to all who believe the gospel and have received the remission of sins. The person who has been saved must **testify to** the life and the grace he has received, so that others also may believe and be saved.

[Question] 12. In Mark 16:15, how far did Jesus say the gospel must be preached?

Jesus said that the gospel must be preached to every creature in all the world. This means that the gospel does not remain with Israel or with any one people and region, but must be delivered to all the people of the world, beyond country and language and status.

Therefore the church must continue to go forward, beginning with the neighbors close at hand and reaching to those at home and abroad to whom the gospel has not yet been preached.

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[Question] 13. In Mark 16:15, who are those who received the command, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature,"* and so are the ones who preach?

Those who directly received this command were the eleven disciples who were before the risen Jesus. But that mission was not limited to the eleven disciples; it continues on to the church that received the gospel they preached and to all who have been saved.

Therefore those who preach are not only some people such as pastors and missionaries, but all the saints who have believed the gospel and obtained the remission of sins and new life. The church works together for the preaching of the gospel, and each saint also must preach the gospel by every possible means—by word, by literature, and by service—in the place where he is. As Mark 16:20 testifies, the preacher preaches the gospel, but the One who works together with that preaching and confirms the word is the Lord.

[Question] 14. In Mark 16:16, what relation is there between believing and being baptized and obtaining salvation?

The Word, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved,"* does not mean that salvation is given as the reward for performing the rite of the baptism of water. Salvation is to believe in one's heart the gospel that Jesus Christ accomplished and so to receive the remission of sins, and the baptism that the saved person receives is a sign that outwardly confesses and shows that faith.

The gospel that must be believed is the fact that Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross and died, and then rose from the dead and so completed salvation. When a person believes this gospel in his heart, he receives the remission of all his sins once and for all and obtains salvation, and he receives the baptism of water as the confession of that faith. The baptism of water is not an act that produces salvation; it is the obedience that publicly confesses the salvation already received by faith.

This fact is clearly revealed also in the Word that follows, *"he who does not believe will be condemned."* Jesus did not say that it is the person who has not received the rite of baptism, but said that it is the person who does not believe who is condemned. Therefore the fundamental standard that divides salvation and condemnation lies in whether one believes the gospel or not, and baptism is the act that publicly testifies to that faith and that salvation.

[Question] 15. In Mark 16:17–18, what signs did Jesus say would follow those who believe?

Jesus said that these signs would follow those who believe: that in the name of the Lord they would cast out demons and speak with new tongues, that they would take up serpents and, if they drank anything deadly, would not be harmed, and that if they laid hands on the sick, the sick would recover.

These signs were things that appeared in order that, when the disciples went into all the world and preached the gospel, the Lord might work together with them and testify that the word they preached was true. This does not mean that every

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believer must perform each one of these signs in order to have been saved, nor is it a Word telling us to take up serpents on purpose or to drink poison and so tempt God. The center of the signs does not lie in displaying the ability of man, but in showing the authority of Jesus, who works together with the preaching of the gospel, and the truthfulness of the word.

[Question] 16. In Mark 16:19, what meaning do the ascension of Jesus and His sitting at the right hand of God have for our faith?

The ascension of Jesus shows that Jesus, who died on the Cross, truly rose again, and that He completed the work of salvation entrusted to Him on this earth and returned to the glory of heaven. Jesus is not One who remains in a tomb; He is our Savior who is alive even now.

That Jesus sat down at the right hand of God does not simply mean that He is in a seat on the right side of some space; it shows that He has glory and authority together with God and is the King who rules all things. Moreover, as the Word says, *"But this Man, after He had offered one sacrifice for sins forever, sat down at the right hand of God" (Hebrews 10:12),* that Jesus sat down shows that the work of removing sin has been completely finished. No other sacrifice for sin and no merit of man is needed any longer.

Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross, and then rose from the dead and completed salvation. Therefore the person who believes this gospel is assured of the remission of sins and eternal life by relying not on his own deeds but on the work

that Jesus completed.

Moreover, Jesus, who is at the right hand of God, is not One who is far from the church and the saints. As verse 20, which follows, shows, the Lord works together with the disciples who preach the gospel and testifies to the word. It is also Jesus who will come again and lead those who believe into the eternal kingdom and judge all things. Therefore faith in the ascension is not gazing only at heaven and turning away from reality; it is the faith that believes in the Lord who is alive and reigning, preaches the gospel, and waits for His coming again.

[Question] 17. How does Mark 16:20 speak of the relation between the signs and the preaching of the word?

When the disciples went out and preached the gospel everywhere, the Lord worked together with them, and by the signs that followed He surely testified that the word they preached was true. When we look at the order of the text, the disciples first preached the word, and the Lord worked together with that preaching and testified to the word by signs.

Therefore the signs are not for taking the place of the gospel or for boasting of the ability of men. The purpose of the signs lay in testifying that the word of salvation the disciples preached is the truth that came from God, and that the risen Jesus is alive and is working together with them. The word is the center, and the signs serve to confirm that the word is true.

The center of the word that the disciples preached is the gospel that Jesus took all the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, received the judgment for those sins on the Cross and died, and

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then rose from the dead and completed salvation. However amazing a sign may be, if it hides this gospel or leads people to another teaching, it cannot be called a sign that testifies to the gospel of God.

Nor does it mean that every believer must perform the same signs in order to have been saved. Salvation is not obtained by the power to perform signs; it is received by believing the gospel that Jesus completed. Those who believe must not follow after signs alone or tempt God, and must discern every teaching and phenomenon by the written Word. The preacher of the gospel is an instrument that delivers the word, and the One who works together with that word and saves souls is the living Lord. ✉

Sermon 1 by Paul C. Jong

Keep in mind that we have the resurrection

< Mark 16:1-20 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the

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rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

Easter is the day on which we call the faith of the resurrection to mind again

Today is Easter. From early dawn countless people gather in many places and offer up Easter worship. Easter is the day on which we set apart one day in the year to keep the day when Jesus rose again, and on which we call the faith of the resurrection to mind again and make it firm.

Resurrection means dying and then living again. Then when do we feel that dying and living again is real? We feel it most when someone in our family has died. In ordinary times Easter does not feel very real to us. When we hear that Jesus rose again, we just pass over it, thinking that it is so. But because the resurrection of Jesus is a work that He did for us, if Jesus rose

again, we also rise again. If we take no interest in it, it seems to be nothing; but when we send a family member away in a funeral, this Word comes to us most urgently.

When someone we love has died and we say that now we can never meet again, that this is the end, the person who has the expectation and the faith that he will live again is glad and joyful in heart. But to the person who has no such faith, death is nothing but sorrow. It is like the mournful sound that is sung while a bier is carried—that once one goes now, one can never return again. So death is a sorrowful thing, and living again is a delight and a joy. That we die and live again brings us hope.

The resurrection of Jesus is our resurrection

Jesus was born into this world clothed in the body of a man, and He received the baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sins of mankind passed on to Him; and He was hung on the cross and shed His blood and died, and He went into a tomb and rose again three days after His death. In this way the Lord saved us by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore His rising again is our rising again, **His bearing of sin was the bearing of our sins**, and His being hung on the cross is your being hung on the cross and mine. For God the Father sent His Son to this earth in order to deliver you and me, who are made in the image of God, from death, from sin, from destruction, and from the curse.

At Easter, even if we know nothing else, if we know only this content it is a meaningful thing. Everyone dies once. But just as the Lord rose again from the dead, God the Father will also make us live again. That is, we too become those who live again. That is why it is truly joyful and full of hope. To have hope means that we look for our rising again and rejoice in that

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expectation.

When we die, this body decays. But when the Lord comes again to this earth on the last day, He will make us live again and take us with Him. That is the rapture. It is called the rapture because He draws us up into the air. That event is for you and me. Just as the Lord lived again, you and I also live again.

The risen Jesus is our God

But there is something that people misunderstand about Jesus even while they believe in Him. If we say only that God raised Jesus, we come to think as though God is God and Jesus is not God but a created being. To speak of it exactly, we must say that God the Father raised His Son from the dead, and that the One who rose from the dead is your Savior and mine, your God and mine. Only then does this faith of dying and living again become complete.

If Jesus were a created being, how could we believe that a created being died and lived again? Jesus is the Son of God, but to us He is God. This is because He made all the things of this universe. The birds that sing, the light, the sun, the stars of the sky, this universe, the plants and animals that we see, your soul and body and mine, the air that we breathe in, and our life—all of these Jesus Christ made. He is our Creator and our God, our Savior, and the God who brought us new life. The Son, Jesus, that is, our God, came to this earth and accomplished the work that God the Father had planned, and so saved His people from their sins and gave new life to His people. This is the core of Easter. Therefore you and I, who are offering up worship, die once and live again.

We have the hope of the resurrection

We must think deeply about how great a thing it is to die and live again. If there were no dying and living again, and if the life that we now live in this world were all we have, we would be pitiable people. The people of the world live doing everything they want to do, but we live with self-control while carrying out the tasks entrusted to us because of the work of preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit. But you and I live again. We must always live keeping it in mind that we die and live again.

If it ended with dying, it would be a truly sorrowful thing. A certain song likens the life of a man to a flower and sings that he was born, lived sorrowfully, and went away. If there were no resurrection, life would be that sorrowful.

Easter comes around every year; last year's seems like yesterday, and yet a year has already passed and it has come around again. Life also passes by that quickly. When we listen to the words of the elderly, they say that life has already all gone by. A man is born once and dies once, and lives again. When we read the Word of Revelation, after we live again there is no pain, no curse, and no sorrow, and we live in the protection and the blessing of God. In the kingdom of heaven the water of life flows. When the Lord was on this earth He said that out of the belly of him who believes in Him rivers of living water would flow; and when we look at the Word of Revelation, a river of the water of life flows from the throne of God, and on either side of the river there is the tree of life, which bears twelve kinds of fruit and yields its fruit every month. To our ears it sounds like a fairy tale, but it is a fact.

You and I also will leave this world before long. Time passes more quickly than we think. But even though we die, we live again. Even though our flesh is cremated, the Lord makes us live

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again. This is because the Lord is the Lord of life.

Therefore we are not sorrowful people. We are very joyful people who have obtained new life by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Let us know this and live giving thanks before the Lord. ✉

Sermon 2 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord has given us true salvation

< Mark 16:1-20 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that, He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the

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rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

The Lord has given us rest

Today is the day on which we keep the feast as Resurrection Sunday. I hope that this occasion may be a good time for us to think once more about the resurrection of Jesus and about our faith. When we look from Mark 16:1, the words "the first day of the week" appear. The day on which Jesus rose again was the first day after the Sabbath was past, that is, early dawn on the Lord's Day. On the very day that we keep as the Lord's Day, at dawn, the Lord rose again.

Among the things that Jesus did when He came to this earth, one that He gave us is rest. Our Lord first of all gave us rest. God made all the things of the whole universe, and after He had made everything, even man, by the sixth day, He rested on the seventh

day. Rest is an exceedingly precious blessing to us. That He gave us rest means that He gave peace and rest to our hearts. It is like a peace agreement being made in a country at war, so that now the war has ended. That God has given us rest is a great blessing to you and me.

The Old Testament speaks of the Sabbath as exceedingly important. Among all the commandments, one of those regarded as most important is the Sabbath. There appear words saying that if they kept the Sabbath God would give them blessing, and that if they profaned the Sabbath He would send down a curse. To us who live in the age of the New Testament it seems hard to understand, but in the age of the Old Testament God spoke of it as exceedingly important.

In the Old Testament there is even the Word that if one did not keep the Sabbath he was to be stoned to death. But our Lord was born on this earth, and at the age of thirty He received the baptism from John and had all your sins and mine passed on to Him, and He died on the cross and rose from the dead and gave new life to you and me. That the Lord died on the cross and rose again was in order to give us new life. That the Lord came to this earth, received the baptism, died on the cross, rose from the dead, and sat at the right hand of God—all of this was in order to give us rest. What kind of rest? Rest of heart. It was not some outward rest, but in order to give rest within your soul and mine. Because the Lord came to this earth and removed all your sins and mine, all who rightly know Jesus Christ and rightly know and believe this truth receive the remission of sins in their hearts and, being without sin, obtain rest and peace and joy before God, that is, true rest.

Those who have not received the remission of sins are at war with sin because of the sin in their hearts. They are always defeated by sin, and because of sin they flee and fight. But Jesus Christ came and gave rest to you and me.

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The meaning of the Word that said to put to death the one who profanes the Sabbath

Let us look at the Word of Exodus 31:12–17.

"And the LORD spoke to Moses, saying, 'Speak also to the children of Israel, saying: "Surely My Sabbaths you shall keep, for it is a sign between Me and you throughout your generations, that you may know that I am the LORD who sanctifies you. You shall keep the Sabbath, therefore, for it is holy to you. Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people. Work shall be done for six days, but the seventh is the Sabbath of rest, holy to the LORD. Whoever does any work on the Sabbath day, he shall surely be put to death. Therefore the children of Israel shall keep the Sabbath, to observe the Sabbath throughout their generations as a perpetual covenant. It is a sign between Me and the children of Israel forever; for in six days the LORD made the heavens and the earth, and on the seventh day He rested and was refreshed"'" (Exodus 31:12–17).

When we look at the Old Testament, exactly as this Word says, there was an actual event in which a man who gathered wood on the Sabbath was judged and stoned to death, and in Jeremiah also God sternly warned them not to bear a burden and come in through the gates on the Sabbath. When I speak of such things, those who have come for the first time may perhaps wonder whether this is a Sabbatarian church. It is absolutely not. Since it is said that Jesus rose again on the first day of the week, that is, at dawn on the Lord's Day, we are considering biblically what rest means.

What is the reason that the Bible treats the Sabbath as so great a matter? The Sabbatarians say that in addition to believing in Jesus one must keep the Sabbath in order to be saved, and

people see that and call them a heresy. But that is what people say, and the point is this. The reason God treats the keeping of the Sabbath as a great matter is that our Lord came to this earth in order to make all the people of this world, that is, sinners, into people without sin, to make them the people of God, and to take them to the kingdom of heaven to live. Our Lord came to this earth and had all your sins and mine passed on to Him by receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, and He bore the sin of the world and went and received the punishment for sin on the cross. And three days after He died, He rose again and testified of Himself for forty days. The birth of Jesus Christ, His receiving the baptism, His death on the cross, His resurrection, His ascension, and His coming again in the future—the purpose of all these things is to remove your sins and mine and to make us righteous, the children of God. And the evidence that He has actually made us the children of God is the very rest that He has given to your heart and mine.

In order to give rest to you and me, the Lord came to this earth and received the baptism, and He bore the sin of the world and went and was nailed to the cross and received all the punishment for sin, and shed all the blood in His heart, and said, *"It is finished!"* and died, and rose from the dead and saved us. But God has clearly removed all our sins, and yet what if there is someone who, even after believing in Jesus Christ, goes before God bearing sin and saying, "God, I still have no rest in my heart. I have sin in my heart. I am still a sinner"? The Word, *"Everyone who profanes it shall surely be put to death; for whoever does any work on it, that person shall be cut off from among his people" (Exodus 31:14)*, means that spiritually such a person is not My people. It is the Word saying that God will surely judge such people of faith, who know that God has removed all their sins and yet say that they have sin in their hearts, and who, after

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receiving the remission of sins, after a while turn back and say again that they are sinners. That is why the Bible regarded the Sabbath as exceedingly important, and why it says that after God made all the things of the universe He rested on the seventh day and blessed that day and made that day holy.

That we receive blessing before God is because God gives us blessing. That there came to be no sin in our hearts is because God sent His only begotten Son to this earth, passed our sins on to that only begotten Son through the baptism, and had that only begotten Son nailed to the cross to receive the punishment for the sins of mankind. Because Jesus Christ received the baptism from John in our stead and had our sins passed on to Him, and received the punishment for sin on the cross in our stead, He caused us to receive the remission of sins by believing in that Jesus Christ as my Savior, and so gave us eternal rest. God has given us the blessing of rest, and the blessing of holiness, that is, the blessing of the remission of sins, and the blessing of peace in which our hearts can rest in peace. Among these, the greatest blessing is the blessing of having obtained holiness.

Easter is not a feast on which we merely sing that Jesus has risen and eat delicious food. That Jesus rose again means that He gave new life to you and me, and that Jesus rose from the dead means that He gave the complete remission of sins in the hearts of those who believe in Jesus Christ. It means that He had all sins passed on to Himself by receiving the baptism from John, and was nailed to the cross and received the punishment for sin in our stead, and died according to the law that the wages of sin is death, and by His own power fought with death and overcame it and lived again, and so gave rest of heart to those who believe in Jesus Christ, and saved them from sin, and gave them peace, and gave them the blessing of becoming the children of God. But if we do not know this gospel of the water and the Spirit, this

truth, in detail, we in fact cannot believe.

The perfect salvation that the pillars of the court of the tabernacle show

That Jesus rose again was in order to give new life to you and me. Let us look at the Word about making the tabernacle in the Bible, Exodus 27:9–19.

"You shall also make the court of the tabernacle. For the south side there shall be hangings for the court made of fine woven linen, one hundred cubits long for one side. And its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets shall be bronze. The hooks of the pillars and their bands shall be silver. Likewise along the length of the north side there shall be hangings one hundred cubits long, with its twenty pillars and their twenty sockets of bronze, and the hooks of the pillars and their bands of silver. And along the width of the court on the west side shall be hangings of fifty cubits, with their ten pillars and their ten sockets. The width of the court on the east side shall be fifty cubits. The hangings on one side of the gate shall be fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets. And on the other side shall be hangings of fifteen cubits, with their three pillars and their three sockets. For the gate of the court there shall be a screen twenty cubits long, woven of blue, purple, and scarlet thread, and fine woven linen, made by a weaver. It shall have four pillars and four sockets. All the pillars around the court shall have bands of silver; their hooks shall be of silver and their sockets of bronze. The length of the court shall be one hundred cubits, the width fifty throughout, and the height five cubits, made of fine woven linen, and its sockets of bronze. All the utensils of the tabernacle for all its service, all its pegs, and all the pegs of the court, shall

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be of bronze" (Exodus 27:9–19).

The tabernacle is the house of God on this earth. To build a house, one must set up pillars. In ancient times the house of God was built with a tent, and along the line of the fence that divided it from the world sixty wooden pillars about two and a half meters high were driven in. They were wooden pillars of what is called acacia wood. And white cloth was hung all around those pillars. Therefore an ordinary person could not look inside from the outside. God made it so that unless one went in through that gate, one could not know what was inside or what work was being done there. In the tabernacle this white cloth shows the holiness of God, and the wood points to Jesus Christ and to ourselves. Acacia wood is a kind of acacia tree, and the acacia wood of Israel has a good grain and is light. God had that material used.

Under those wooden pillars sockets were made of bronze, and on the top of the pillars caps were put of silver, and the bands and the hooks that joined pillar to pillar were also of silver. And so that the pillars would not fall, bronze pegs were driven into the ground and connected by cords to both sides of the pillars. Each and every thing of the tabernacle points to Jesus Christ; that is, it shows that He saved you and me in this way. In the Bible silver speaks of grace, gold speaks of faith, and bronze speaks of the judgment of God. Jesus Christ came to this earth and clothed us with the grace of salvation, but how did He clothe us with it? Jesus Christ received the baptism from John and had all the sins of this world passed on to Him, and bearing all those sins He went to the cross and received all the judgment for sin. That is why the very bottom socket of the wooden pillars of the tabernacle is necessarily made of bronze, which means judgment. And so that we would not fall, as though tying fast the salvation He accomplished by the water and the blood, He drove pegs into

the ground and bound both sides of the pillars with cords, and so that the pillars would not fall sideways, He joined pillar to pillar with bands overlaid with silver.

Having set up sixty wooden pillars firmly in that way, He made a house within it, and inside it He had them offer sacrifices to God and so receive the remission of sins. In each and every pillar of the tabernacle the salvation by which our Lord saved you and me from sin is shown just as it is. Jesus Christ came to this earth and received the baptism and bore all sins and died on the cross, and so saved you and me. If Jesus Christ had not borne all the sins that you and I commit, we could not be saved. But the Lord bore all the sins that you and I commit in this world and received all the punishment and the judgment for those sins on the cross, and He rose from the dead and gave new life to you and me who believe in Jesus Christ. The tabernacle tells us how perfect the salvation is that Jesus Christ has given us.

On Resurrection Sunday we must not stop at boiling and eating eggs and keeping a ceremony of saying that since Jesus rose again let us also become the light and salt of the world. Jesus truly was born on this earth, and when He was thirty He received the baptism in the Jordan River, and He died on the cross and rose again and became the true Savior of you and me. He received all the punishment for your sins and mine and clothed us with the grace of salvation. We must know and believe that the resurrection of Jesus Christ was in order to make us live. We must believe the promise of God that even though our flesh dies He will make it live again and take us to the eternal kingdom of God to live with Him, and set our hope on the kingdom of heaven, and have the faith of the resurrection that gives thanks by faith to God, who gave us new life. That Jesus died on the cross was because of the punishment for your sins and mine, and that Jesus Christ rose again is in order to give new life to you and me.

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The risen Lord has given the Holy Spirit

When we think that our Lord has removed all your sins and mine, we are exceedingly thankful. The Lord rose again and gave you and me not only rest and new life, but also the Holy Spirit. When we look at John, after the Lord rose again He appeared to His disciples and said that peace be to them, and He breathed on them and said, *"Receive the Holy Spirit" (John 20:22)*. The Lord gave us the remission of sins, and peace of heart, and eternal life, and the blessing of becoming the children of God, and He also gave us the Holy Spirit. Then how can we receive the Holy Spirit? If we believe the baptism that Jesus Christ received from John and the Cross, we not only receive the remission of sins but also receive the Holy Spirit. Let us look at the Word of Matthew 3:13–17 to see upon what kind of faith the Holy Spirit comes.

"Then Jesus came from Galilee to John at the Jordan to be baptized by him. And John tried to prevent Him, saying, 'I need to be baptized by You, and are You coming to me?' But Jesus answered and said to him, 'Permit it to be so now, for thus it is fitting for us to fulfill all righteousness.' Then he allowed Him. When He had been baptized, Jesus came up immediately from the water; and behold, the heavens were opened to Him, and He saw the Spirit of God descending like a dove and alighting upon Him. And suddenly a voice came from heaven, saying, 'This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased.'" (Matthew 3:13–17).

When Jesus received the baptism and came up from the water, the heavens were opened and the Holy Spirit of God descended like a dove and came upon Him. And a voice was heard from heaven, saying, *"This is My beloved Son, in whom I am well pleased."* The faith that receives the Holy Spirit is this. Upon the

person who believes that Jesus came to this earth and received the baptism from John the Baptist and had all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, and that He died on the cross, and that He rose again, and who therefore believes that this Jesus Christ is my Savior and my Lord, the Holy Spirit comes at the same time as the remission of sins. Just as in the Old Testament sin passed over when a sinner laid his hands on the sacrifice, so Jesus bore all the sins of mankind by receiving the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. His going into the water speaks of the death of the Cross, and His coming up out of the water speaks of the resurrection.

Do you know when Jesus bore your sins? When Jesus received the baptism in the Jordan River, He bore your sins and the sins of your descendants and the sins of all people. That Jesus died on the cross is that, because He had all your sins and mine passed on to Him when He received the baptism from John in the Jordan River, He received the punishment for those sins. We keep on committing sins until we die in the flesh. Jesus did not simply remove those sins by saying, *"It is finished!"* on the cross. He came to this earth in order to bear your sins and mine, and He bore them when He received the baptism from John the Baptist. What is all the righteousness that He spoke of when He said that it was fitting for them to fulfill all righteousness in this way? It is bearing all the sins of mankind. Not the sins of one man only, and not only the sins of the people of that time, but even the sins of the person who is born last on the day this earth ends—He bore them all, and went to the cross and received the judgment for sin, and said, *"It is finished!"* and died, and rose from the dead, and so gives the remission of sins to those who believe this gospel of the water and the Spirit, and gives the Holy Spirit as a gift to those who have received the remission of sins.

Therefore we receive the remission of sins by faith, and all

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the sins that we commit in the flesh are remitted before God as white as snow. That a silver cap was put on the wooden pillars of the tabernacle and the socket was made of bronze means that Jesus Christ received all the judgment in our stead and so clothed us with the grace of salvation and became the true Savior of you and me. Dear fellow believers, do you believe this? It means that our souls, which were dead because of sin, have come to live again by believing this Word, by believing God.

Just as the Holy Spirit came like a dove when Jesus received the baptism and came up from the water, so when we believe the fact that Jesus Christ had all your sins and mine passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John and was nailed to the cross and received all the judgment for all sins, we also receive the remission of sins and receive the Holy Spirit as a gift. By that Holy Spirit we come to call God Abba, Father. It is written, *"There is therefore now no condemnation to those who are in Christ Jesus, who do not walk according to the flesh, but according to the Spirit. For the law of the Spirit of life in Christ Jesus has made me free from the law of sin and death" (Romans 8:1–2)*. Our Lord has saved us in this way and has given us new life in this way.

As we meet Resurrection Sunday, we must remember how the Lord has saved us, and that you and I, who have been saved, have not only been saved but have also received new life. Just as Jesus Christ lived again, you and I also live again. Our souls have come alive, and this body also will live again and enter the eternal kingdom of heaven and live forever praising God and enjoying gladness. We have received this kind of blessing. I ask you to set your hope on the kingdom of heaven and to believe in your hearts the fact that He has given us new life. The world is growing darker and darker. In this sinful world, how can we be saved from sin? We are saved through Jesus Christ, by believing

this gospel of the water and the Spirit in our hearts. It is not received by praying prayers of repentance or by being sanctified. We commit so many sins in the flesh—how could we wash them all away by prayers of repentance? To teach in that way is to deceive people. We give thanks to God, who has given us new life, and to God, who has given us salvation and rest. ✉

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Sermon 3 by Paul C. Jong

Preach the gospel to the whole world

< Mark 16:14-18 >

"Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.'"

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"

When we look at this Word, Jesus appeared to His disciples and said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* I think, and I also believe, that this Word, this command, this work is the very work that we are to do and that I am to do. By now the preaching of the gospel has ripened to a certain degree and many things have been prepared.

So I have come to have the thought that I must go about in all the world and preach the gospel, and go to those countries

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and print books and hand them out, and, if God permits, hold meetings as well and preach the gospel—that I must devote my strength to this work. When I think that in order to go about in all the world I must travel to all six continents, it seems that I will be busy, but it is enough to begin with one thing at a time. I have it in mind that we may gradually widen our territory, beginning with the nearby countries of Asia, which can be reached in two or three hours by airplane.

This work is not mine alone but the work of all of us. We are now preaching the gospel through the Internet as well, and it is good in terms of effect, but in order for the gospel to be preached everywhere in the end, we must go about in all the world in person. We must go into those countries in person and hold meetings, and preach through every means, whether by booklets or by the lips. I know that only when we go in person does the work actually take place, and that there laborers rise up and are used as servants, and the work occurs in which they labor as fellow workers together with us.

The work that you and I are to do is this very work, going about in all the world and preaching the gospel to every creature. There are still countries where the gospel cannot be preached freely. The fellow workers in such places go about to the churches and hand out books even while receiving persecution, and those who have received the books read them and sometimes make contact and sometimes want to obtain more books. Since that is the situation, we must preach wisely, at times even while keeping ourselves out of danger.

The countries that are now closed will also have their doors opened. When the doors are opened, we must prepare books in advance so that the people of those countries may read them, and then go in. I believe that the gospel will enter even into lands where the gospel is closed.

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Now books are being translated into the languages of many countries and printed. When they are printed they will be sent to each country, and we will also send out workers toward Asia and preach the gospel. We must pray.

By all means, since He told us to go about in all the world and preach the gospel, we must preach the gospel by literature, by word, by faith, in every shape and form. I believe that those who must go about in all the world and preach the gospel are you and I, and the workers and laborers of the churches throughout the country. There is truly much work to do, but it does not come about by hurrying, and I am truly thankful that it is being accomplished step by step, one thing at a time. I think that if we are diligent, the gospel will enter into many countries of the world within a few years. Let us prepare our hearts and have the faith that we must go about in all the world and preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit.

He who believes and is baptized obtains salvation

The Lord told us to go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, and then He also told us what gospel we are to preach. He said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* He is telling us why, in believing in Jesus, there must be baptism. What is it that we must believe? It is that the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross have saved me from all sins. It is to believe that the Lord came to this earth in order to save me and received the baptism from John and had all our sins passed on to Him, and that He died on the cross and received all the judgment for our sins, and that He rose from the dead.

That is why we receive baptism as the sign that we believe. The token of faith is baptism. He said that he who does not believe will be condemned. That is, he has sin. If he has sin, then according to the Word that the wages of sin is death, he also receives judgment. It means that if a person does not believe this truth—that Jesus Christ came to this earth as a man and by receiving the baptism from John bore all the sins of mankind, the eternal sin of the whole world—his sin remains just as it is, and because he has sin he receives judgment.

But the person who believes, that is, the person who believes that Jesus Christ saved me by the water and the blood, receives baptism as the token of it. The gospel that we must tread all the world with our feet to preach to every creature is this very gospel. That Jesus came to this earth and received the baptism from John and had all our sins passed on to Him, and was nailed to the cross and received all the judgment for our sins, and rose again and saved us from death and from destruction—preaching this is the work that we are to do. This is the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

The person who believes this gospel is saved from sin and from judgment. Whoever does not believe this gospel is condemned, whether he has believed in Jesus for a long time or has believed from his mother's womb. Preaching this gospel is our duty, but this gospel is also this clear, and there is no other gospel besides this gospel. He who believes is saved, and he who does not believe perishes. I believe that the gospel we must preach is this very gospel. Do you also believe so?

What gospel shall we preach as we go about in all the world? Shall we preach a gospel that says, as some people do, that one has no sin by believing only the blood of the Cross? If that were so, why would the Bible have said to believe and be baptized? Why did the apostles have those who believed necessarily

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receive baptism in the name of Jesus Christ? It means that I believe in this way. Because I believe that Jesus had all my sins passed on to Him when He received the baptism from John, and that because He had them all passed on to Him He could not but die on the cross, and that He lived again from the dead, therefore after believing I receive baptism as the sign of it. Jesus Himself also said, *"Go therefore and make disciples of all the nations, baptizing them in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit, teaching them to observe all things that I have commanded you" (Matthew 28:19–20).*

That the Lord came to this earth in the body of a man and received the baptism from John and had all the sins of mankind passed on to Him, and died on the cross, and rose from the dead and saved us—this work is not the will of Jesus Christ alone. It is the complete will of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Spirit, that is, of the triune God. That is why He said to baptize in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit those who believe this gospel. This gospel is that important. We must go about in all the earth and give this gospel to every creature under heaven.

This is the work that you and I are to do. We must know how exact and how clear this gospel is, and how much the Bible proves it. In this gospel the baptism is absolute. Because Jesus received the baptism from John, He could die on the cross. Because Jesus came to this earth as our Savior and received the baptism from John, He became our true Savior. If He had not received the baptism from John and had the sins of mankind passed on to Him, He would in fact not have done the work of the Savior. But because He is faithful and true, He promised that He would come as the Savior, and when He came, the first thing He did in His public ministry was to receive the baptism from John. Because He received the baptism, He died on the cross,

and then He rose again. He is now in the kingdom of God, and in the hearts of those who have believed the baptism Jesus received from John and the Cross and have been baptized, the Holy Spirit dwells, and by the Holy Spirit He is with us and proves our salvation.

There are people who make light of this gospel even while saying that they preach the gospel. But wherever we look in the Bible, whether we look at it not by personal interpretation but by the original text, or look at it in substance, the sentences themselves are all this account. There are also many words saying that if we simply believe we obtain salvation, but He surely said to give baptism to those who believe. I believe that this is because Jesus came to this earth and received the baptism from John and had all your sins and mine passed on to Him. Do you also believe so?

We are preaching this gospel to the world. Our books testify that Jesus came to this earth and received the baptism from John and died on the cross and rose from the dead and became our Savior. A certain high school teacher in one country who corrected a translated manuscript said that he had wanted to do the work of God but had been putting it off because he did not know how, and that after reading our book he gained confidence to preach. He said that if this content is preached one surely receives the remission of sins, and that this content itself is so exact. So he was set on fire for the gospel and said that he would preach it to all the residents of the island where he lives. When we see fellow workers arising in this way, we realize how great the power of this gospel is.

Some people, after reading our books, send long writings and argue, asking why one must believe the baptism when one believes in Jesus. The more they argue, the better. Such a person has already come halfway into salvation. I explain a little more

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and tell him to read it once more and to say it is wrong if it is wrong. Even so, many people are exceedingly glad and thankful. I believe that God has entrusted this work to us so that this gospel may be preached to all the world, to all creation. This gospel is the truth, and we have been saved by believing this gospel, and those who do not believe will be judged for the sin in their hearts.

The signs that follow those who believe

The Lord went on to say this: *"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Those who believe cast out demons in the name of the Lord. In fact, when a person who has been born again commands a person possessed by a demon in the name of Jesus Christ, the demon goes out. There is such authority. But we should not think of casting out demons only in that form. When this gospel is preached, the demon disappears from within that person's heart. It runs away. In this world there are more people bound by demons than we think. There are many even among those who outwardly carry on social life without any problem. But when the gospel is preached, at the same time as that person receives the remission of sins the demon within his heart runs away, and the Holy Spirit comes into that heart. We who have been born again cast out demons by preaching this gospel, and we have also received from God the power to cast them out in the name of Jesus Christ.

That is why the evil spirit within a person who has not been born again makes its last desperate struggle when the gospel is

preached. When it comes to the decisive part—that Jesus had all our sins passed on to Him by receiving the baptism from John, and bore those sins and died on the cross and rose again and so fulfilled all righteousness—it suddenly makes him overcome with sleep or makes irritation rise up in him, so that he cannot hear the Word. But from the person who knows that this is wrong, endures well, and hears the Word, Satan the Devil runs away as soon as that person hears the Word. On the contrary, if a person takes the side of Satan the Devil and opposes and attacks the one who preaches the Word, that person continues to live in bondage. That one has received the remission of sins is the account of the demon having gone out. In fact, you and I also were those bound under the evil spirit when the Holy Spirit was not within us. That is why we hated the light and hated to hear about the truth; but at the very moment when we heard and believed this gospel of the truth, the demon that was within us ran away.

And He said that they will speak with new tongues. New tongues means a new language. Before being born again a person spoke merely the ordinary words of the world, but after being born again, even though he speaks the same Korean language, he speaks of the things of the kingdom of God. That is why the talk of those who have been born again is of a different dimension, so that among ourselves it communicates well, but those who have not been born again cannot understand it at all and wonder what this talk is. It is because they speak not the words of this earth but the truth of heaven. It is not the kind of tongues in which one rolls the tongue and makes sounds that cannot be understood; new tongues is speaking clearly and distinctly the truth of the kingdom of God, the truth of heaven that one has never once heard.

The Word that they will take up serpents and, if they drink anything deadly, will not be harmed must not be interpreted in a

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fleshly way. It is not an account saying that one may catch a venomous snake with the hand and drink poison that a man must not drink, and this body will not be harmed. Spiritually, it means that we are well able to deal by the truth with those who have become the servants of Satan the Devil; and it also means that even though a person who has been born again is wounded by hearing words that are poison to the soul in the world, if he hears the word of God and meets and fellowships with the servants and the people of God, that poison is completely neutralized and his soul revives again. Poison is by nature deadly when eaten. It is so for the flesh and so for the soul. If a person who has not been born again eats poison in his soul, he dies. But when a person who has been born again hears the word of the truth, that poison completely goes out.

He said, *"they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."* It means that if the person himself believes and the one who lays hands also believes what God has said and prays, God actually works. It is so when one is sick spiritually and so when one is sick physically. Of course there are also cases like that of the apostle Paul, in whom God did not heal the disease, so that Luke the physician accompanied and cared for him. In following after God there are certain hard passages, and there are hard passages for this body also. But when we are sick and hard-pressed, whether spiritually or physically, if we pray before God, and when I cannot pray, if the family members in the church pray for me with one accord, then by the power of that prayer, by the help of God, we obtain new strength and rise again. That is what He spoke of.

He says that those who believe have these signs. It is an exceedingly amazing blessing. And the work that those who believe are to do is to go about in all the world and preach the gospel. We actually do many things, but if we gather them all

together in conclusion, they are the preaching of the gospel. The greatest purpose and the greatest method of preaching the gospel is to go about in all the world and to give this gospel to every place. Whether we preach by books or preach by the mouth or preach by deeds, we preach it all.

The gospel that must be preached at a price

This is the work that we are to do and also the work that I am to do. God has told you and me to go about in all the world and preach the gospel. Do you believe that this is the work that this church is to do and the work that each one of you is to do? Let us prepare diligently and go about in all the world and preach the gospel. To go about with the workers to every place and preach the gospel all day long, and to hold meetings when meetings are requested—I think that is the work I am to do. Let us all do so.

The gospel of God is not preached without a price. There must surely be a price. There must be labor and sweat, and there must be sacrifice. I believe that if we truly give by faith and step out by faith, God will fill up and give us work to do and supply what is needed. Only, we must do it not in an unrealistic way but truly, by faith. Let us not be disappointed or discouraged because someone else does it on a large scale, but let us say that we too will take part by faith in this precious preaching of the gospel, even with a small strength. Whether great or small, what is offered by faith is the same within the power of God.

I hope that this year much gospel may be preached and that God may bless us. I ask you to pray. The books will go out far more than last year. Compared with the several billion people of the world it is still a small number, but because the content

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contained in these books is so precious and so certain, I believe that as one becomes two and two become four and so spread out, it will spread out tremendously. I believe that God will do so. Let us pray for what is lacking and strive to preach the gospel while paying the price. Not in an unrealistic way, but truly, by faith, let us all take part together in the preaching of this precious gospel of the water and the Spirit. ✉

Sermon 4 by Paul C. Jong

Let us have faith and preach the gospel to the whole world

< Mark 16:14-20 >

"Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

We must have the faith that the Lord has risen

When we look at verse 16 of this Word, it says, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* We must consider such parts as why a person who believes in Jesus must be baptized, and why

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he who does not believe is condemned. In the last chapter of Mark, Jesus rose again and appeared to His disciples several times, but the disciples did not believe the words they were told. So Jesus appeared while the eleven disciples were eating and rebuked them for their hardness of heart and for not believing the resurrection of the Lord. First of all I tell you that we must have the faith that believes that Jesus rose from the dead.

Our Lord died on the cross and rose again. And He appeared to His disciples and testified for forty days, and He sat down at the right hand of the throne of God, and He is alive even now. Within the faith that the Lord rose again, we hold firmly the hope that we also will live again. If there is no faith in our hearts that the Lord rose again, we cannot do the gospel, the work of God. Because there is the resurrection of the world to come, in which whenever we die we live again, our faith does not retreat because of fear, whatever present difficulty may come or even if death should come.

If Jesus had been nailed to the cross and died and simply remained in the tomb, what hope would there be? There would be no hope at all. That He rose again is because He was going to make us live again. In this world there are many great tombs of famous people. How great are the tombs of the kings of the old dynasties! But however great a tomb may be, those kings are already dead and shut up in the tomb, and they did not live again. However many achievements they had while they were alive, because they died, all that remains is the memory that there was a famous king. But our Lord alone rose again. That God rolled away the stone from the tomb and raised His Son again was in order to give the remission of sins to those who believe the gospel of the water and the blood, and to raise those who believe in Jesus again from death. Therefore, when we believe in the Lord, we must have the faith that has received the remission of

sins, but we must also have the faith that the Lord rose again.

"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature"

Our Lord said, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* It is the will of the Lord that the gospel be preached to every creature. But the scope of those who believe in Jesus is exceedingly narrow. They merely build the sanctuary of their own church neatly, and if they widen it a little, they establish a first church and a second church of the same name, and think that if they establish about a fifth church it is a great success. People think that if they do so they are faithful servants who have carried out all the will of the Lord. But when we look at the Word of the Bible, it is not so. Since it is the will of the Lord that we go about in all the world and preach the gospel to every creature, in order to carry out the will of the Lord we must go about in all the world and preach the gospel. Only then can we say that we have carried out the will of the Lord. And when we preach the gospel, rather than increasing my own church, preaching the gospel to peoples of other languages and to other nations is an exceedingly great work in the sight of God.

In our country also, in the old days, before well-known missionaries were formally sent in, there were countless nameless missionaries. The first work that was accomplished in order to preach the gospel to this country was literature mission. Missionaries whose names were hardly known preached the gospel in China and translated the Bible into Chinese, and through the people of our country whom they met in China they translated it again into our language. At first they translated a few pages of the word of God and brought them in and handed

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them out, and later they made portions such as Luke and John and handed them out. Only after that had been accomplished to a certain degree did missionaries formally come to be sent in. Because the Bible was translated and brought in not in difficult Chinese characters but in the vernacular script, anyone who had learned the vernacular script, whether lowly or high, could read the Bible, and there were many who read the Bible and believed. Literature mission was accomplished first, and through this literature, through the word of the Bible, people came to know who Jesus is.

Our Lord told us to go about in all the world and preach the gospel. Since the gospel was first preached to the people of Korea and the family of faith has been established to a certain degree, the work that we must basically do is to put our strength into world mission. I believe that God will attach laborers and cause souls to grow. I believe that this is the will of the Lord.

Why is it that he who believes and is baptized obtains salvation?

Then why must a person who believes in Jesus necessarily be baptized? In fact it is because Jesus washed away all our sins through the baptism. It is because Jesus, by receiving the baptism from John, had all our sins passed on to Him and so washed our hearts clean. The Cross is the instrument of execution on which He received the punishment for sin, that is, the judgment for sin that pays the price of life; it is not the place where sin is washed away. According to the law of paying an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth, because our Lord had our sins passed on to Him through the baptism He received from John, He had to receive the judgment in our stead, and that is

why Jesus died on the cross. The Cross of Jesus is important, but because Jesus washed away all our sins by receiving the baptism from John, he who believes in Jesus and is baptized is saved, and he who does not believe is condemned. And after dying on the cross the Lord rose again and completed this salvation.

In actual fact, can one receive the remission of sins without believing the baptism that Jesus received from John? Some people say that one receives the remission of sins even without believing it. But the Word recorded in the Bible says that for such a person there is absolutely no salvation. It said that he who does not believe is condemned. To be condemned means that he has sin, and that because he has sin he receives judgment. There are world-famous preachers and revivalists. They are people who preach in such a way that whether a physician hears them, or a scholar hears them, or a poor man hears them, or a rich man hears them, all are moved. But if they neither believe nor preach the baptism that Jesus received from John, then however world-renowned they may be, and even if they are people of whom it is said that if that man cannot go to heaven then who can, they are condemned. This is the Word that Jesus Himself spoke to His disciples after He died and rose again.

This Word, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned,"* is a Word not merely about whether one believes in Jesus or not, but about whether one believes or does not believe the baptism and the blood of the Cross by which Jesus saved us. When we actually meet people and talk with them, there is a difference between a person who has no Holy Spirit in his heart, however plausible his words may be, and a person who has the Holy Spirit. However clearly and sharply a person without the Holy Spirit speaks, the one who hears does not receive the remission of sins. But when a person who has the Spirit speaks, the one who hears

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receives the remission of sins. There is such a difference.

It is decided by whether one has the Holy Spirit or not

What the Lord looks at last is not whether you simply believed in Jesus or not, but whether there is the Holy Spirit in your heart or not. He judges and passes sentence by that. Then what relation is there between the Holy Spirit and the baptism that Jesus received? In the person who believes the fact that Jesus had all the sins of mankind passed on to Him when He received the baptism through John the Baptist, because he has received the remission of sins in his heart, the Holy Spirit surely dwells within him. But in the person who does not believe this, because the sin of his heart has not been washed away, the Holy Spirit cannot dwell. However certainly one may believe that Jesus is my Savior, when a man sins, sin is recorded in his heart; and if he does not know and does not believe that Jesus had all his sins passed on to Him and washed them away by the baptism He received from John, that sin is not washed away.

Let us think about the account of a disaster rescue team. When a great flood comes and people are swept away in the current, a rescue team appears in a helicopter and throws down a rope. But the person who takes hold of the rope with his own hands and climbs up loses his strength in the middle of being pulled up and falls. But the person who has tied the rope around his own body surely goes up as the helicopter leads, regardless of his own strength. That one has taken hold of the rope and that one has entrusted his body to the rope are different things. In the same way, the person who has believed the baptism that Jesus received and so has had all the sin of his heart washed away and

has received the Holy Spirit, and the person who tries to believe with all his strength and with all his will, are of different dimensions of faith. This is because whether one has received the Holy Spirit or not is decided by whether one believed or did not believe the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. That is why the risen Jesus said, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."*

That is why we must believe this Word that the Lord spoke exactly as it is. In a way, we must believe it to the point that it seems foolish. It is because the Word is the truth. Did the Lord speak in this way because He did not know how to speak? If that were so, He would simply have said that whoever believes in Jesus will be saved and whoever does not believe will be condemned. But He did not speak in that way; He said that he who believes and is baptized will be saved. All who believe in Jesus believe the blood of the Cross, but because it is the baptism Jesus received from John that washed away our sins, He surely attached this condition. You and I also have no sin in our hearts because we believed the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross. If we had believed while setting that baptism aside, we would be sinners.

In the old days, when I believed in Jesus, I believed for dear life in the blood of the Cross of Jesus alone. Believing only that blood, I drove away Satan the Devil and saw visions and worked wonders and did all sorts of things. Then and now, that faith of believing in Jesus is the same. But at that time, when I sinned there was sin in my heart, and even when I prayed prayers of repentance and it seemed that I had been washed, there was always sin recorded in my heart. There was not a single day on which I escaped from sin. Even when my faith was good in the morning, if I did wrong in the afternoon my heart was bound as

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a sinner, and I prayed prayers of repentance again. But after I believed the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross and the resurrection as my salvation, there was a clear change. It was that at that time there was no Holy Spirit in my heart, and now the Holy Spirit is in my heart, and that my sin has clearly been washed away. However insufficient I may be, if I do not deny the Word of the baptism Jesus received and of the blood of the Cross, then because the Lord has removed my sin, I have become a person who is without sin at all times.

So you and I also must truly ask ourselves once. Is the person who does not believe the baptism Jesus received from John truly judged for sin, or not? Even without believing that baptism, is it truly salvation or not; does he receive the Holy Spirit or not? We must ask ourselves and answer for ourselves. The Bible says that it is the truth. That it is the truth means that it is true and factual. What is true is that which fits exactly and has no contradiction whatever formula one applies to it. Just as He said to preach the gospel to all the world, we must preach to all the world this Word that he who believes and is baptized will be saved.

Our books are going out to the world, but many people at first only say that the spiritual knowledge of this book is amazing and that they praise God, who gave such wisdom, while they raise no question about what they themselves believe. They believe that what they believe is also right. But one person has the Holy Spirit in his heart and the other does not. All ten virgins waited for the Lord, but the five foolish ones had no oil. What one does not know—that is what is truly foolish. Even though there is sin in his heart, he supposes that because he believes in Jesus he will go to heaven; but that is a formula of doctrine made by men, not the formula of the truth. Even if one believes in Jesus, if he has sin he is a sinner. That has nothing to do with having believed in Jesus; rather it brings shame upon Jesus. To

such a one the Lord says that it would have been better for him not to have been born, and He rebukes him as the one who received one talent was rebuked for hiding it in the ground. When we believe in Jesus we must know the Bible properly and believe, and when we believe God we must not depart from the word of the Bible. If we believe apart from the Word, it is of no use.

There are people who believe blindly, without regard to the Word. I heard an account of some people of a certain mission organization who, while praying, said that they saw buses coming and going before their eyes, and said that this was God telling them to leave that place, and packed up and left. If we keep our eyes closed, buses can be seen and anything can be seen. If there is a desire in my heart to go somewhere, any picture can be drawn in the imagination. That is always one's own thought and imagination. We must act according to what the Word says, and according to what the Lord wants and what pleases Him.

This gospel of the water and the blood, that is, the gospel of the water and the Spirit, must be testified to in all the world. When people look at our books, at first they will say that it is easy and good, and that it is a spiritually new and amazing method. But when they go deeper, they will truly be challenged, and they will come to know that what they believed is different from the Word. And they will come with questions and will also challenge us. I believe that those who truly seek and seek will meet it properly. Who cannot say that if you simply believe in Jesus you are saved? If we were going to preach that kind of Jesus, what need would there be for us to walk this narrow way? It is not because it is a characteristic of our denomination, but because the Bible says this and this is the truth, that we do this. I wish that this book might go also to the seminaries and the scholars of countries where theology has developed, so that they

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might read it formally and ask if they have questions and challenge it if they have challenges. The conclusion is this. Even if one believes in Jesus, if he has no Holy Spirit there is sin in his heart; and if he has not received the remission of sins and has no Holy Spirit, he has not been saved. Only when we believe the baptism Jesus received from John and the blood of the Cross and the resurrection do we completely receive salvation and receive the Holy Spirit, and does the work of the Holy Spirit appear. Let us preach this gospel.

The true meaning of the signs that follow those who believe

Let us look at the Word from verse 17. *"And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."*

Those who believe have authority to cast out demons. Just as He said, *"All authority has been given to Me in heaven and on earth" (Matthew 28:18),* there is real authority. When a person who has been born again commands and opposes in the name of Jesus Christ, Satan cannot remain within that person. Because He gave the power to cast out demons to those who have received the remission of sins, when we actually do so, it actually appears.

Second, He said that they will speak with new tongues. We are speaking with new tongues. It is not the kind of tongues in which one makes sounds that cannot be understood; true new tongues is speaking the language of the kingdom of heaven. It is a new language. Even though we preach and speak in the same

language, to people this is a new word. When we preach the gospel, people listen and say that they have heard it for the first time, that they have heard it newly. It is because the words that a person who has been born again speaks, though they are the same words, are not the words of this earth. Because he speaks the gospel of heaven and preaches the Word concerning heaven, even though he speaks the Korean language he speaks new tongues, that is, the language of the kingdom of heaven.

Third, He said that they will take up serpents and, if they drink anything deadly, will not be harmed. But if a person who has not been born again believes this Word in a fleshly way and acts on it, a great disaster comes. In fact such things have happened. There was a person who misunderstood this Word and, saying that because he truly believed he would not be harmed, caught a venomous snake with his bare hands and lost his life; and there was also a person who misunderstood the Word that if they drink anything deadly they will not be harmed and drank strong lye and died. These are things that actually happened in our country.

This Word is entirely a Word spoken to those who have been born again. To take up serpents means that we are well able to oppose and deal by the truth with those who have become the servants of the Devil, and that if they drink anything deadly they will not be harmed means that even though the servants of the Devil put poison into their words, we are not harmed. They speak in this way: Look at the forefathers of faith; was not Abraham also saved by faith? But Abraham believed the word of God just as it was, and God also said to Abraham that he and his descendants must surely receive circumcision, and that this was the token of being My people. They also say that even if one has sin, since Jesus has removed sin there is no sin, and that if one believes in Jesus and yet has sin in his heart it is because he

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does not believe completely, and tell him to grit his teeth and try to believe. But even if one believes that way until he dies, sin is not removed. The sin remains just as it is. The Word that if they drink anything deadly they will not be harmed means that the person who has received the remission of sins, even though he has heard such nonsensical talk, is neutralized and made whole when he comes to church and hears the word of the truth.

And He said, *"they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover."* Truly, by faith in Jesus Christ, by faith in God the Father, we must exercise such power by faith if it is needed. In the course of ministry there will be times when it is needed. But we must not devote ourselves only to casting out demons, or try to show signs as a test every day, or go about every day only seeking out sick people to lay hands on them. This is a power that God has given to those who have received the remission of sins because it is needed while they preach the gospel and live on this earth, and a power by which they can shepherd.

The Bible records, *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs."* Preaching the word of God is our chief duty. The work that we are to do is to save souls, to drive out the evil one, to put our strength wholly into extending this gospel, and to work with the faith that the Lord is with us. Do you believe that Jesus Christ came to this earth and, through the baptism He received from John, had all our sins passed on to Him and washed them away, and died on the cross and rose again and saved us? This is not the doctrine of our denomination. If we must say it, we are of the party of Jesus. It is exactly as Jesus said.

We are the runners who have received the last baton

The Lord said that He came to cast fire upon this earth, and that His desire was that it were already kindled. But many people of the world, whether they say they believe in Jesus or do not believe, believe the baptism and the blood of the Cross and the resurrection by which Jesus saved them while leaving out some parts, and believing some parts according to their own will, and believing with the Bible closed. The frustration of it cannot be told. We may think that we are now preaching this gospel to the world at an elementary stage. It is not that the gospel has been preached fully throughout the whole world; it has only now set out. We must preach the gospel both to those who believe in Jesus and to those who do not believe, so how much work do we have to do!

The workers who go out overseas go out in order to preach the gospel, not because they like foreign countries. However good the environment may be, what they still long for is their homeland and the servants of God and the church, and when they are out there they are lonely. Even so, they must by all means keep the faith and, even though it seems slow, truly with faith sow step by step as the Bible says. Then within a few years the evangelization of the world will be accomplished. If we hastily build a sanctuary first and hastily raise up laborers and send them out, everything collapses. With this gospel, when we must be exceedingly detailed we must be exceedingly detailed, and in matters that are not important we must pass over generously. We must always pray for overseas mission and carry out this work by faith. From the viewpoint of the people of the world it seems that we have done a great work, but from the viewpoint of God we have not done a great work; we have only now taken one step

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of a toddler. The world is wide.

This present age is fully prepared. Genetic engineering has developed to the point that this has become an age that even speaks of cloning life. Before long, as the Bible says, the words that appear in Revelation—such as causing people to receive the mark of six hundred sixty-six, or restricting the buying and selling of goods, or those who believe being hated, or the world becoming disordered and a dictator appearing—will one after another be fulfilled on this earth within a short time. In this present age it is one of two things: whether one follows the truth of God or follows the world; whether one believes the gospel of the water and the Spirit and is born again or not; whether one believes the Word and receives the remission of sins and becomes righteous and goes to heaven whenever the Lord comes, or cannot go. There is no middle ground.

We are now the last runners. We are the last runners who have received the baton. Our great predecessors, the disciples of Jesus such as the apostle Peter and Paul and John, are those who received the first baton. Those who heard the gospel from them are those who received the second baton, and the church fathers after them were those who received the third baton. But by that age the gospel was greatly corrupted, and after that a long age of darkness has come down until now. Now we have received the last baton.

The work of the gospel that will take place at the last will be greater than the work of the gospel that has been accomplished until now, and those who will be saved at the last will be more than the souls that have been saved until now. We must know that. That is why we must preach step by step now, while it is quiet. Even though it seems now that no sprout comes up, when the time comes the sprout will come up, and at that time I believe that faith that believes according to the Word will arise and the

work of the Holy Spirit will arise strongly. To argue about who is great and who is small is wrong. Where is there anything more precious than the gospel of Jesus? However excellent a person's words may be and however powerful a person may be in this world, nothing has made so great a contribution to our human race as the salvation of Jesus Christ. We must have faith, and have eyes that see far, and carry out the present step by step. The world is wide, but if we carry it out step by step with faith, it is exceedingly narrow. At first it is slow, but when momentum is gained it goes exceedingly fast. But if we preach all at once to suit the taste of all the people of the world, we will surely fail. We must preach this Word just as we believe it.

This year also we must do this work faithfully and steadily. Let us farm the gospel for a year, and at the end of the year settle accounts before God and give thanks, and think about and pray over the work we must do the next year. Let us make this year a year of handing out and sowing much. If we sow in that way, the Lord will also do the reaping. Dear fellow believers, do you believe this? Let us not follow the fashions of men; we must preach this gospel of the water and the Spirit just as the Word of the Bible says. ✉

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Sermon 5 by Paul C. Jong

The stone has already been rolled away and the Lord has risen

< Mark 16:1-14 >

"Now when the Sabbath was past, Mary Magdalene, Mary the mother of James, and Salome bought spices, that they might come and anoint Him. Very early in the morning, on the first day of the week, they came to the tomb when the sun had risen. And they said among themselves, 'Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?' But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large. And entering the tomb, they saw a young man clothed in a long white robe sitting on the right side; and they were alarmed. But he said to them, 'Do not be alarmed. You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified. He is risen! He is not here. See the place where they laid Him. But go, tell His disciples—and Peter—that He is going before you into Galilee; there you will see Him, as He said to you.' So they went out quickly and fled from the tomb, for they trembled and were amazed. And they said nothing to anyone, for they were afraid. Now when He rose early on the first day of the week, He appeared first to Mary Magdalene, out of whom He had cast seven demons. She went and told those who had been with Him, as they mourned and wept. And when they heard that He was alive and had been seen by her, they did not believe. After that,

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He appeared in another form to two of them as they walked and went into the country. And they went and told it to the rest, but they did not believe them either. Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen."

Those who were walking toward the tomb

On the first day of the week, while the day was only just breaking, three women went toward the tomb. In their hands were spices. After Jesus died on the cross and was laid in a tomb, they set out to anoint the body of the One who had died. The expectation revealed in their action was not a meeting with the risen Lord. They did not go to meet One who was alive; they went to care for a body.

On that road there was a question that the women shared with one another. *"Who will roll away the stone from the door of the tomb for us?" (Mark 16:3)* That stone was actually large. It was an obstacle that could hardly be dealt with by the strength of the women alone. They had prepared spices, but they also knew the limit of their own strength. Even if they went as far as the tomb, if they could not move the stone they could not even use the spices they had prepared. Though they had not yet arrived, their conversation was already turned toward the closed door of the tomb.

We also often calculate first the stone that lies before us, as these women did. In the face of disease and old age, of parting and death, and of time that cannot be turned back, we ask who can move this stone for us. Even if a man does everything he can do, he cannot make a dead person live again. A loving heart does

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not overcome death, and much knowledge cannot open the door of the tomb and give life back. That is why death brings all the self-confidence of man to a stop. It shows most clearly the boundary of what we have and of what we can do.

But what the women came to see when they looked up was not the sight they had expected. *"But when they looked up, they saw that the stone had been rolled away—for it was very large" (Mark 16:4)* The stone they had been worried about was still a great stone, but it had already been rolled away. It was not that the stone had become smaller. Neither had the women suddenly become strong. Before they arrived, the stone had already been rolled away. Faith is not a heart that denies the size of the stone. It is to see the fact of the resurrection, which was accomplished before the obstacle that is before our eyes.

Our believing the resurrection is like this also. It is not to regard death lightly or to pretend that there is no sorrow. It is to know how great a barrier death is and yet to believe that God has already done the work of life beyond that barrier. The calculation of man ends before the door of the tomb, but the work of God does not end even there. The women discussed a way to move the stone, but when they arrived at the tomb the stone had already been rolled away and Jesus had risen. The morning of the resurrection did not begin from the possibility of man; it was opened by the power of God.

The One who was nailed to the cross has risen

When the women went into the tomb, a young man clothed in white was sitting on the right side. They were alarmed. But the young man said exactly whom they were seeking. *"You seek Jesus of Nazareth, who was crucified."* Here the object of the

resurrection is clearly made known. It was not some other person who rose again. The very Jesus who was nailed to the cross and died has risen.

When we speak of the resurrection, we must not blur the actual death of the Cross. Jesus did not merely appear to be dead and then come to Himself. Neither did He rise again only in the memory of men. He actually died on the cross and was laid in a tomb. Therefore the proclamation, *"He is risen! He is not here,"* also points to an actual event. Just as the death was actual, the resurrection also was actual.

The young man told them to see the empty place. The place where the body of Jesus had been laid was empty. The empty tomb alone cannot explain the whole meaning of the resurrection, but the empty tomb at least shows the fact that His body did not remain just as it was in the place of death. And immediately afterward Jesus showed Himself to people. Mary Magdalene saw Him, the two men who were walking along the road saw Him, and at last He appeared also in the place where the eleven disciples were together. The resurrection is not a story produced by the vague longing of men; it is an event confirmed by the risen Jesus appearing in person.

If we change the resurrection into nothing more than a recovery of heart or a restoration of circumstances, we lose this gospel. It is precious that one who was discouraged gains courage, and it is a thankful thing that one who has failed rises again. But such things are not the resurrection of Jesus itself. The resurrection of which Mark chapter 16 speaks is the event in which Jesus, who died on the cross, rose again from the dead. Because there is this actual resurrection, our hope also is not a simple positive expectation but stands upon an event that God accomplished.

Jesus is the Creator who made life, and He is the Son of God.

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Our bodies and souls and the life that we enjoy are also under His sovereignty. Therefore to believe in the resurrection of Jesus is not to believe that some created being escaped death by chance. It is to believe that the Lord of life has overcome death. The tomb could not hold Jesus. Death could not be His final master. He rose again, and He is alive even now.

Remember the promise before you look at the tomb

The young man told the women to say that they would see the Lord in Galilee. And he added a very important word. *"There you will see Him, as He said to you" (Mark 16:7)* The resurrection was not an exceptional event that arose suddenly. It was a thing accomplished just as Jesus had said before. The disciples had heard that Word, but before the Cross and death they could not remember it. The shock of reality covered over the Word.

When our faith is shaken also, for the most part reality looks greater than the Word. The tomb before our eyes is clear, and the promise we heard before feels distant. Sorrow can be grasped in the hand, but the resurrection feels as though it is not yet seen. But the word of God does not disappear because we do not remember it. Even while the disciples did not believe, Jesus rose again just as He had said. The forgetfulness of man cannot cancel the faithfulness of God.

The women trembled with fear. Their amazement was so great that they could not go on speaking at once. The Bible does not beautify their reaction. Those who first met the news of the resurrection also went through fear and bewilderment. Faith is not a proof that a man is always calm and bold. The ground of faith lies in this—that even though our hearts are shaken, the

event that God accomplished is not shaken. We do not guarantee the resurrection by the stability of our own emotions; we hold our hearts fast by the fact of the risen Jesus.

And the Lord told them to deliver the news not only to the disciples but also to Peter. Peter was the one who had denied Jesus, saying that he did not know Him. But in the news of the resurrection his name was not erased. The Lord did not forsake the disciple who had failed and gather only new people. The risen Lord opened a way for the one who had fallen to meet Him again. That meeting was not meant to make light of Peter's mistake; rather, it shows that the life and grace of the Lord are greater than a disciple's failure.

We also easily think of ourselves as finished people because of failure and weakness. Even after receiving the remission of sins, the insufficiency of the flesh is revealed. There also arise things that we must acknowledge as wrong and turn from. But the person who believes the salvation that Jesus accomplished is not one who returns to the standing of a sinner each time he fails. He is a righteous man who has received the remission of all the sin of his heart once and for all by believing the work in which Jesus bore all sins and was judged. That righteous standing rests not on the perfection of his own conduct but on the perfect salvation of the Lord.

This fact does not make us proud. Rather, when we fall it makes us return before the Word instead of establishing our own righteousness. When we think of the Lord, who called the name of Peter, there is no reason for us to go far from the Lord on the excuse of our own failure. The Lord of the resurrection does not tell us to hide our failure; He causes us to hear the Word again and to meet the Lord in the very place of failure. The resurrection is not a prize that only a perfect man can receive; it is the grace of the Lord, who makes the dead live.

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The heart that could not believe even after hearing the testimony

Mary Magdalene saw the risen Jesus and went and told those who were mourning and weeping. But even after they heard the word that Jesus had risen and the word that He had appeared to Mary, they did not believe. After that, two men met Jesus and came back and told them, but the rest of the disciples likewise did not believe. It seems as though one testimony was not enough, but even when testimony was added their hearts did not open.

This scene shows that unbelief is not merely a problem of having a little too little information. The disciples had been with Jesus and had heard His Word. Now they had also heard again and again the testimony of those who had seen the risen One. Still they did not believe. At last Jesus appeared while the eleven disciples were eating and rebuked their unbelief and their hardness of heart. The Lord did not treat the resurrection as an optional matter that one may believe or not believe.

Before we easily blame the disciples, we must look at our own hearts. We can read the Bible and still regard death and circumstances as the more certain reality. With our lips we can confess the resurrection while in actual life we fear and cling as though everything ended in this world. If there is no faith, the loss that is seen with the eyes becomes everything, and the present success and failure become the final verdict of life. Then the resurrection becomes a word that we take out only at the feast, and gives no strength at all to the choices of daily life.

The rebuke of Jesus was not a word meant to cast the disciples out. The Lord revealed their hardness and set them before the fact of the resurrection. The way out of unbelief does not lie in forcing our own hearts to be optimistic. It lies in seeing

the risen Jesus again. It lies in regarding the Word as more true than our own thoughts, and in trusting the event that the Lord accomplished more than our feelings. Rather than telling us to hide our doubt, the Lord tells us to lay down our hard hearts before the testimony of the resurrection.

Faith is not a bluff that speaks as though there were no death. Faith is to acknowledge that even though there is death, Jesus has overcome that death. Faith does not forbid sorrow. When Mary came, the people were mourning and weeping. The sorrow of losing one we love is actual. But faith does not give the last word to that sorrow. The last word is neither the empty tomb nor our tears, but is in the news of God, "*He is risen! He is not here.*"

The salvation accomplished by the baptism, the Cross, and the resurrection

Then why is the resurrection of Jesus good news to us? It is not because Jesus escaped from death only for Himself. He came in order to deliver us from sin and death, and He completely accomplished that work of salvation. In order to understand the resurrection rightly, we must look together at the baptism Jesus received from John and at His death on the cross. The resurrection is not a separate miracle apart from the work of salvation that went before.

The sinless Jesus, as He began His public ministry, received the baptism from John the Baptist, the representative of mankind. That was not simply showing the example of the baptism of water that a believer receives. Jesus took the sin of all mankind upon His own body through the baptism He received from John. Because all the sins of the world passed on to Him, Jesus bore those sins and went to the cross.

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The Cross was the place where Jesus received in our stead the judgment for the sins He had borne through the baptism. Because the wages of sin is death, He shed His blood and died because of our sins. The Cross is not merely a moving sacrifice that shows love, nor is it the place where Jesus ended His life unjustly without any relation to sin. He received the punishment for sin in our stead and actually died.

And on the third day He rose from the dead. The resurrection of Jesus is the confirmation that the salvation accomplished by the baptism and the Cross is true and perfect. The One who bore our sins received the judgment for sin to the end and rose again from the dead. If a man believes in his heart this salvation that Jesus accomplished, all his sins are removed once and for all, and he receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and becomes a born-again child of God. The remission of sins is not something we maintain by adding a price day by day; it is received by believing the work that Jesus completed.

Therefore the person who has received the remission of sins has no need to keep calling himself a sinner because of the insufficiency of his own flesh. This is not to say that our conduct is perfect. It means that we acknowledge wrong as wrong and turn from it, but do not set up again by our own feelings the sin that the Lord has removed. The person who believes the baptism and the Cross and the resurrection is a righteous man without sin before God and a child of God. The life of the risen Lord becomes for him the ground of a new life.

His rising again is our hope

The resurrection of Jesus causes the person who has received the remission of sins to look toward the resurrection of the body

that is to come. On this earth we live clothed in a body, and we grow old and become sick and at last meet death. Having believed the gospel does not mean that we have received a promise that the present body will no longer become weak. Faith in the resurrection is not a guarantee that we can avoid death, but the hope that death cannot hold us forever.

When we hold the funeral of one we love, death becomes not an idea but reality. Our hearts ache because of the fact that we cannot take his hand again and cannot hear his voice. Saints also weep. It is not because saints have no tears that they have hope. It is because Jesus actually rose again that even in the midst of tears they believe that death is not the end. To the person who does not believe the resurrection the tomb is the last farewell, but to the person who believes the risen Lord the tomb is not the last word of God.

It is the same when we think of our own death. Our bodies return to the dust, and our names may grow faint in the memory of people. The manner of a funeral or the size of a tomb does not determine our resurrection. The Lord of life makes us live. The power of God, who raised Jesus, is not limited by whatever state our bodies may be in. Therefore the hope of the saint lies not in his ability to preserve his own body but in God, who makes the dead live.

A great tomb of the world may commemorate the power and the achievements of a dead man. But however magnificent a tomb may be, it cannot bring to life the man inside it. The reason the tomb of Jesus is precious is not that it is great and splendid. It is because that tomb was empty. It is because the Lord rose again. The power of the world can leave behind a great tomb, but Jesus overcomes death and gives life. We believe not in the size of a tomb but in the power of the One who rose again.

If we have this hope, our present life also becomes different.

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To possess more in the world and to leave our name longer is not all of life. Neither is a life that suffers no loss at all the goal of faith. Because we know the life of the Lord, which continues even after death, we labor for the gospel, love our neighbors, and carry out the work the Lord has entrusted to us. Such labor does not pay the price of salvation. It is the fruit of a life offered with thanksgiving, in the hope of the resurrection, by a person who has already received the remission of sins and new life.

Faith in the resurrection does not make us flee from reality. Rather, it makes us live today rightly. If the end were nothing but death, we would want to stake everything on grasping what we can enjoy now. But the person who believes eternal life has no need to sell his conscience for immediate profit. He follows the truth even when it is disadvantageous for a while, loves even when he receives no reward, and is faithful within the gospel even when the result is delayed. This is because our future lies not in the evaluation of men but in the risen Lord.

Lift up your eyes and see the risen Lord

When the women went to the tomb, they looked at the stone and were worried. But when they lifted up their eyes, the stone had already been rolled away. The news they heard inside the tomb was not guidance about how to care for One who had died. It was news about where they would meet the risen Lord. Their plan lay in serving a dead body with spices, but the plan of God lay in making them witnesses of the resurrection.

We also can remain in the managing of a tomb in our life of faith. We can commemorate Jesus only as an excellent teacher of the past, preserve His Word only as good instruction, and keep only religious habits without the power of the resurrection. But

at the center of the Christian faith is the living Jesus. We are not people who follow the spirit of a great man who has died, but people who believe the Son of God, who rose from the dead.

Because the Lord has risen, our remission of sins is not a vain claim. Because the Lord has risen, the new life of those who have received the Holy Spirit is also actual. Because the Lord has risen, even though our bodies become weak and die, our hope does not disappear. Because the Lord has risen, a way to meet Him again was opened even for Peter, who had failed, and the disciples who could not believe were able to return before the Word. The resurrection does not give us a vague optimism that everything will go well, but gives us the assurance that in the midst of anything the salvation of the Lord does not collapse.

What is the great stone that now blocks your heart? There is no need to say that the stone is small. Death is great, parting is painful, and our strength is limited. But before all these things, look at the empty tomb of Jesus. Jesus, who died on the cross, has risen. The stone that could not be moved by the strength of man has already been rolled away, and the Lord, whom death tried to shut in, is not there.

Do not close your heart like the disciples, who heard the news of the resurrection and yet did not believe. Believe the faithfulness of the Lord, who accomplished it just as He had said before. Even though your feelings are still afraid and sorrowful, hold fast to the Word. The righteous man who has received the remission of sins has a life that does not end in death. This is because the rising again of Jesus guarantees our resurrection that is to come.

We are not people who do not know sorrow, but people who know the end of sorrow. We are not people who pretend that we will not die, but people who believe that after death there is resurrection. Therefore let us live today also giving thanks to the

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risen Lord. Let us not bow our heads toward the tomb and calculate only the stone, but lift up our eyes. Our Lord Jesus Christ has actually risen, and in Him we also have new life and the hope of the resurrection of the body that is to come. ✉

Sermon 6 by Paul C. Jong

The Lord who sent the rebuked disciples into all the world

< Mark 16:14-20 >

"Later He appeared to the eleven as they sat at the table; and He rebuked their unbelief and hardness of heart, because they did not believe those who had seen Him after He had risen. And He said to them, 'Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature. He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned. And these signs will follow those who believe: In My name they will cast out demons; they will speak with new tongues; they will take up serpents; and if they drink anything deadly, it will by no means hurt them; they will lay hands on the sick, and they will recover.' So then, after the Lord had spoken to them, He was received up into heaven, and sat down at the right hand of God. And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them and confirming the word through the accompanying signs. Amen."

The Lord who came to the table of unbelief

In the last scene of Mark we meet unexpected people. They were the people who were to preach the gospel to all the world,

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but they were not people who from the beginning were full of faith and courageous. The eleven disciples were eating, and the risen Jesus appeared in that place. The Lord rebuked their unbelief and their hardness of heart. They had already heard several times the testimony of those who had seen the risen Lord, but they did not believe.

We easily think that a person who preaches the gospel must be unshaken from the beginning. But the text does not hide the weakness of those who received the mission. They were afraid, they heard the testimony and did not believe, and their hearts were hard. The Lord did not acknowledge such a state as all right. He clearly rebuked their unbelief. This is because the resurrection is not one opinion among the opinions of men but an event of the salvation of God that must surely be believed.

Yet look at the Word that follows the rebuke of the Lord. The Lord did not cast them away. He did not say to the disciples who had no faith that now they could not be used. To those very men He commanded, *"Go into all the world and preach the gospel to every creature."* After the rebuke came the sending. The Lord revealed their hardness and corrected it, and established them upon the faith that believes the resurrection and sent them into the world.

This order gives us both great comfort and a great warning. We cannot draw back and say that because we are insufficient we can do nothing at all. At the same time we cannot leave unbelief alone by saying that it does not matter that we are insufficient. The Lord rebukes unbelief and causes us to carry out the mission by faith. The mission does not come out of our perfection, but neither is it a simple activity that can be carried out without believing the risen Lord.

The preaching of the gospel begins first with believing the risen Jesus. If the Lord were dead and remained in a tomb, there

would be no gospel to preach and no hope to hold when we meet death while carrying out the mission. But Jesus, who died on the cross, actually rose again and is alive even now. The reason the disciples could go into the world without looking only at the responses of people and at their own ability was that the One who sent them was the Lord, who had overcome death.

We too must examine our hearts before we preach the gospel. Do I know the resurrection only as one item of doctrine, or do I believe that the living Lord even now fulfills His own Word? When the result is slow or when people refuse, do I become discouraged as though everything were finished? If we believe the risen Lord, the refusal of men cannot end the work of God, and our weakness cannot cancel the power of the Lord. The Lord, who came to the table of unbelief, sends into the world the disciples who have risen up by faith.

The gospel toward all the world and every creature

In the command of the Lord a wide view is contained—that is, all the world and every creature. The gospel is not news given to remain with only one people or one language, one class or one region. A man wants to remain within the range that he knows and within comfortable relationships. It is also easy to think of the growth of the church only as the enlarging of one's own fence. But the sight of the Lord was turned toward all the world from the beginning.

To preach the gospel is not to make one's own name widely known or to increase the size of one's own gathering. That a church stands firmly in a certain region is a thankful thing, but that is not the whole of the command of the Lord. The same news of salvation must be delivered also to those who have not yet

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heard the gospel, to those who speak another language, and to those whom we do not easily meet. Before the word "every creature" we learn the heart of the Lord, which goes beyond the boundaries we are used to.

That we go about in all the world does not mean that every person must personally visit every country. Some go, some send, some translate, some help through literature and various channels, and some can preach to the neighbor who has come alongside them. What is important is that in our own places we join our hearts with the will of the Lord toward all the world. We must not choose only people who are comfortable for us and preach the gospel to them, or regard only those who are like us as the objects of the salvation of God.

The gospel must cross over language and must cross over the difference of culture as well. For that, there are times when merely changing the words is not enough. We must listen attentively to the words of the other and explain exactly and patiently so that he can understand. The purpose is not to make numbers hastily or to draw out an outward answer. As one sows seed, we must preach the Word step by step and wait for God to open the heart and make it grow.

In our country also, writings of the gospel and the Bible came in, and the Word was preached through the labor of people whose names were not widely known. Not everyone stands in a pulpit, but the labor of translating one sentence, of delivering one book, and of explaining to one soul widens the way of the gospel. Even though a man's name does not remain, the Word of the Lord crosses over. The command of the Lord is not a stage given only to a few famous people, but a way for the whole church to obey together.

Therefore we must not look only at the small range before our eyes and think that all our work is finished. The world is

wide, languages and cultures are diverse, and there are many who have not yet exactly heard the content of the gospel. But not to begin because it is wide is also not faith. The disciples did not change the whole world at once. They went out and preached everywhere. We must be faithful in the one step we can take today, and follow the one more step that the Lord opens tomorrow.

The content of the gospel that we must preach

The Lord did not tell us merely to spread abroad any religious words whatever. He told us to preach the gospel to every creature. As important as zeal in preaching is the content that we preach. Even if we preach zealously, if we leave out or change the salvation that Jesus accomplished, we cannot lead people to life. The gospel is not the secret of a man's success or an instruction that makes the heart comfortable; it is the salvation of Jesus Christ, who delivered sinners from sin and judgment.

The text says, *"He who believes and is baptized will be saved; but he who does not believe will be condemned."* Here we must not make the act of the baptism of water that a believer receives in the church into a merit of salvation. It is not that the rite of sprinkling water on the body or of being immersed automatically removes sin apart from faith. Neither is it that a man can demand salvation from God because he has performed a rite. Salvation is not the reward of a rite that a man has performed; it is received by believing the work that Jesus accomplished.

Then what is the salvation of Jesus that we must believe? The sinless Jesus took all the sins of mankind upon His own body by receiving the baptism from John the Baptist. That was not simply

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an example of humility. Through the baptism He received from John, the representative of mankind, the sin of the world passed on to Jesus, and He bore that sin and went to the cross. Here lies the reason we cannot speak of how sin passed on to Jesus and then leave only the Cross.

Jesus received in our stead, on the cross, the judgment for the sins He had borne through the baptism. By shedding His blood and dying He bore the punishment for sin and death. The Cross is not a place where our sins vaguely disappeared without ever having been on Jesus; it is the place where He received the righteous judgment for the sins He had already borne through the baptism He received from John. Jesus is the sinless One, but because He bore our sins He died in our stead.

And He rose from the dead. The risen Lord stood before the eleven disciples and commanded them to preach this gospel to every creature. His resurrection confirms that the judgment for sin was completely finished and that salvation was completed. The baptism Jesus received from John, His death on the cross, and His resurrection from the dead are not three events to be believed separately; they are one gospel by which He saved us.

The person who believes this gospel in his heart has all his sins removed once and for all, and receives the Holy Spirit as a gift and is born again as a child of God. He is not saved by holding fast to his own resolve; he receives the remission of sins by believing the work that the Lord accomplished. It is not the act of going into the water or church activity that saves him. What faith takes hold of is the salvation that Jesus has already accomplished by the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Therefore the preacher must not bind people to himself but must clearly preach this perfect salvation.

Neither can we lightly pass over the Word that he who does not believe will be condemned. The gospel is not only a pleasant

proposal but the truth of God that saves from sin and judgment. But we must not use this Word as a tool for recklessly disparaging others. Rather, so that not one person may remain under condemnation because of an incomplete gospel, we must preach exactly, explain with long patience, and serve them so that they may believe in their hearts the salvation that Jesus accomplished.

It is not a faith that holds on by one's own strength

Man thinks that he must hold on to salvation also by his own strength. He regards it as though he will be saved if he makes his resolve firmer, makes his emotions hotter, and does not let go to the end. But our strength does not last long. Just as one who tries to hold a rescue rope in dangerous waters with the strength of his hands alone and climb up loses his strength before long, the person who tries to maintain salvation by his own resolve cannot but always be anxious.

To believe the gospel is not to boast of the strength of one's own faith. It is to entrust oneself to the salvation of the Lord, who has taken hold of us. It is to believe the Word just as it is: that Jesus bore all our sin through the baptism, received all the judgment for that sin on the Cross, and rose from the dead. The ground of salvation is not how strongly we have taken hold of the Lord, but how completely the Lord has removed our sins.

This faith is not a vague attitude of heart. What we believe must be clear. If we speak only of the blood of the Cross and leave out the work in which Jesus bore sin through the baptism He received from John, we cannot explain how sin passed on to Him. On the contrary, if we speak only of the baptism and leave out the judgment of the Cross and the resurrection, it is not the

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complete gospel either. We must completely believe and preach the whole course of salvation to which the Bible testifies.

Even after we have received the remission of sins, our feelings rise and fall and our flesh is weak. On a day when the ministry goes well our faith seems great, and on a day when there is no response we can feel as though everything has collapsed. But salvation does not depend on the results of ministry. Whether we preached to one person or to a thousand does not determine our remission of sins. Salvation is received by the work that Jesus accomplished, and the preaching of the gospel is the fruit that a saved person bears in thanksgiving and faith.

When this distinction is clear, we neither boast of results nor give up under the weight of failure. When much fruit is seen we give thanks to the Lord, and when fruit is not yet seen we honestly sow the Word and wait. If the record of evangelism were the price of salvation, we would try to manufacture the responses of people by force. But if preaching is the fruit of the salvation we have received, we love the other person, do not damage the truth, and entrust the result to the Lord.

Do not turn the signs into a test

In verses 17 and 18 the signs that follow those who believe are recorded. They are the Word that they will cast out demons and speak with new tongues, that they will take up serpents and drink poison and not be harmed, and that if they lay hands on the sick, the sick will recover. When we read this Word, the first thing to remember is the fact that the signs do not take the place of the gospel. Verse 20 makes clear that when the disciples preached the Word, the Lord worked with them and surely testified to the Word by the signs that followed. The center is the

Word that was preached, and the signs are the work of the Lord that testifies to that Word.

Therefore verses 17 and 18 are not a command to do dangerous things on purpose. To handle a venomous snake or drink poison in order to prove one's faith is not to trust the Lord but to turn the Word into an act of testing. In fact, if we misunderstand the Word in this way we can lose our lives. The Bible does not teach us to create danger and then see whether a miracle occurs. We must not call recklessness that regards life lightly by the name of faith.

Neither must the Word about laying hands on the sick be used as a personal guarantee that every disease will always be healed at once. God is able to heal the sick, and the church can pray for those who are ill. But we cannot condemn a patient as lacking faith, or judge that he has not believed the gospel, because healing did not appear in the time and the manner he wanted. The signs are not a technique that man controls, nor are they a tool for displaying the ability of a minister.

Moreover we must not make the signs a condition of salvation. If we say that only the person who has experienced some special phenomenon is a saved person, we set up the experience of man as the standard instead of the salvation that Jesus accomplished. The remission of sins is not received by performing signs but by believing the gospel of the water and the Spirit. The signs do not rule over the gospel; they must be understood as the work by which the Lord testifies to the Word as it is needed.

Concerning new tongues also, we must not use them as a means of showing off our own speech or looking down on others. The gospel must actually be preached to different languages and cultural spheres, and God uses various gifts and ways for that work. But no phenomenon in itself automatically guarantees the

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truthfulness of the gospel. We must examine by the Word whether the content that is preached rightly testifies to the baptism and the Cross and the resurrection of Jesus.

The work of casting out demons also must not become a performance that frightens people or exalts a minister. It is clear that the name and the authority of the risen Jesus are greater than the evil spirit. But the purpose of the text is not to make us go about seeking signs, but to make us preach the gospel boldly. The disciples did not preach signs; they preached the gospel, and the Lord worked together with them as it was needed.

Therefore, when we read verses 17 and 18, we must not misuse them as a promise that tests danger or guarantees healing. Neither must we think that the gospel is weak if signs do not appear. The One who surely testifies to the Word is the Lord, and our responsibility is to preach the gospel exactly and with love. In what manner the Lord will work must be entrusted to His wisdom and sovereignty.

He ascended into heaven, yet He works together with us

After the Lord Jesus had finished speaking, He was received up into heaven and sat down at the right hand of God. If we look only at this scene, we can think that He has become distant from His disciples. But the very next verse tells an amazing fact. *"And they went out and preached everywhere, the Lord working with them" (Mark 16:20)*. The Lord, who ascended into heaven, did not leave His disciples and do nothing. As the King who sat down at the right hand of God, He worked together with them.

The disciples went out, and the Lord worked with them. We must not divide these two things. It is not that the disciples did

nothing and the Lord preached in their stead. On the contrary, neither did the disciples change the world by their own wisdom and strength alone. When they obeyed the command of the Lord and went out and preached the Word, the risen Lord accompanied them and testified to the Word.

This is the right form of the ministry of the gospel. We cannot say that since the Lord will do it, let us stay still. Neither can we drive ourselves, saying that since all the responsibility is ours we must produce results by any means whatever. We obey the Word He has sent, and we depend for the result and the power upon the Lord, who works together with us. Obedience and dependence must be together.

In the place of ministry we can feel loneliness. The person who preaches the gospel in another language and culture may have to leave familiar relationships, and the person who preaches to a near neighbor may also meet refusal and misunderstanding. There are also times when the labor of translating a book, of handing out literature, and of serving one person for a long time seems to disappear without any fruit. But the preacher does not work alone. Though it is not seen with the eyes, the risen Lord works together with the Word.

The Lord's accompanying us is not a guarantee that every plan will succeed at once. The disciples also went through difficulty and persecution, and the gospel was preached in the midst of much refusal. If we equate the Lord's presence with comfortable circumstances, we will mistakenly think that the Lord has departed when difficulty comes. The Lord's accompanying us does not mean that there is no suffering, but that even in the midst of suffering He fulfills the Word and upholds the preacher.

Therefore do not be ashamed of a small beginning. The work of explaining the gospel to one person, of translating one

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sentence exactly, of helping with prayer and material means those who preach the gospel, and of sharing the truth with long patience with a family member who does not yet believe may look small. But if the Lord works together with us, that labor is not in vain. We are not people who boast of size but stewards who have been entrusted with the Word.

The mission of sharing the salvation we have received

If we make the preaching of the gospel the price of salvation, a man comes to work driven by fear. He feels as though he will lose salvation if he does not preach enough, and thinks that if he preaches much he will be more recognized by God. Then, even while preaching the gospel, competition and anxiety rather than thanksgiving take their place in his heart. He compares himself with the fruit of others and tries to prove himself by numbers.

But the order of the Bible is different. Jesus accomplished salvation by the baptism and the Cross and the resurrection, and after we believe that gospel and receive the remission of sins and the Holy Spirit, we are sent into the world. Preaching is not a condition for obtaining salvation but the fruit of faith that shares the life we have already received. Only when this order is clear is grace not damaged and the mission not made light.

That it is not a condition of salvation does not mean that it is all right not to preach. The Lord clearly commanded it. The person who truly knows grace does not want this news of life to remain with himself alone. He desires that the person who is under sin and condemnation may hear the work Jesus accomplished and receive the remission of sins. We preach because we love, and we obey because it is the will of the Lord.

We are not dragged along by a sense of duty alone; the grace we have received moves us.

We cannot change the core of the gospel in order to suit the tastes of people. It seems that they would receive it more easily if we left out the baptism, that refusals would decrease if we did not speak of sin and judgment, and that it would look modern if we spoke of the resurrection only as a symbol. But even if many people gather in that way, we have not preached the gospel that the Lord commanded. We must speak gently and wisely, but we must clearly keep the content.

At the same time we must not speak roughly and proudly on the ground of keeping the truth. The person who preaches the gospel must not forget that he also is one who was saved by grace. He must not look at the other person as an object of debate to be defeated, but as a soul whom God loves. He must listen to questions, explain again the parts that are not understood, and serve with a love that is long-suffering rather than with a hasty verdict. Truth is not the opposite of love.

The world is wide and our strength is small. But the One who gave the command has risen and is seated at the right hand of God and works together with us even now. Therefore we do not give up because we look at our own scale. We steadily do the work that we can do, we ask the Lord for the next way, and we keep sowing the seed of the gospel. Because we believe that the One who makes the fruit grow is the Lord, we choose faithfulness instead of impatience.

Let us go out and preach everywhere

The text does not end with the disciples having heard the command. It records, *"And they went out and preached*

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everywhere" (Mark 16:20). Faith did not remain only in the agreement of the heart but went on to the steps of the feet. Those who had once not believed the testimony of the resurrection now went out as witnesses of the resurrection. They accepted the rebuke of the Lord, they believed the Lord who had risen, and by that faith they obeyed the command.

We also must not remain only in the place where we heard the Word. The way that is open to each person is different, but the people to whom we may preach the gospel are near at hand. We can share the gospel with family and friends, with colleagues at work, with neighbors who speak another language, and with those we meet through writing and media. In the church, those who go and those who send, those who translate and those who teach, those who pray and those who serve must together take part in the mission toward every creature.

Every time we preach, we ourselves must first clearly believe the gospel. Jesus bore all sins by the baptism He received from John, received the judgment for those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead. The person who believes this gospel and has received the remission of all his sins once and for all and has received the Holy Spirit becomes a preacher. What we preach is not a method of self-cultivation but the salvation that God has completed.

Do not try to make signs; preach the Word. Do not try to prove your faith by dangerous actions, and do not lay a burden on the sick by guaranteeing results. Let us entrust it to the Lord to work in the manner He needs, and let us preach the truth exactly. The signs must not exalt us but must show that the Word of the Lord is sure. The center is always the gospel of Jesus Christ.

Even if the result is slow, do not be discouraged. The beginning of the disciples was a table where they were rebuked

for unbelief. But the risen Lord sent them, and when they went out and preached He worked together with them. Even though our beginning is small and weak, the same Lord is alive. The Lord does not tell us to come after we have proved the qualifications of a perfect man; He tells us to believe Him and to obey the Word and go out.

Now let us widen our gaze from our own fence to all the world and every creature. Let us go forward not with a heart that wants to make our own name great, but with a love that desires that even one soul may hear the true gospel. Let us preach not as servants who work in order to obtain salvation, but as children of God who have already received the remission of sins and new life. Let us not set forth results as the evidence of salvation, but be faithful with the fruit of the grace we have received.

The Lord, who ascended into heaven, is not One who is far away. The Lord, who sat down at the right hand of God, even now works together with His own Word. With this faith, let us open our mouths to one person near at hand, and let us also add our hearts and hands to the work of the gospel toward far places. The Lord, who sent the rebuked disciples into all the world, calls us also today into the way of the gospel. Let us go out according to the command of the risen Lord, and, relying on the Lord who works together with us, let us preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit to every creature. ✉

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◇ About the Next Series

The ***'Biblical Exposition & Sermon Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit'*** will continue to be published following this book.

We sincerely hope that the books by Pastor Paul C. Jong, which will continue to be published, will serve as spiritual nourishment to strengthen your faith.

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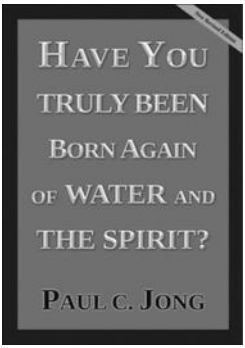
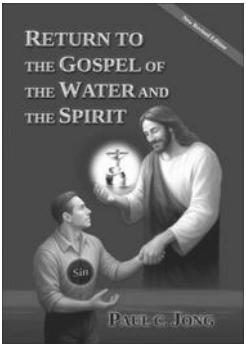
Paul C. Jong's Sermons

HAVE YOU TRULY BEEN BORN AGAIN OF WATER AND THE SPIRIT? [New Revised Edition]



Among many Christian books written about being born again, this is the first book of our time to preach the gospel of the water and the Spirit in strict accordance with the Scriptures. Man can't enter the Kingdom of Heaven without being born again of water and the Spirit. To be born again means that a sinner is saved from all his lifelong sins by believing in the baptism of Jesus and His blood of the Cross. Let's believe in the gospel of the water and the Spirit and enter the Kingdom of Heaven as the righteous who have no sin.

RETURN TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT [New Revised Edition]



Let's return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Theology and doctrines themselves can't save us. However, many Christians still follow them, and consequently have not been born again yet. This book clearly tells us what mistakes theology and doctrines have made and how we can believe in Jesus in the most accurate and certain way.

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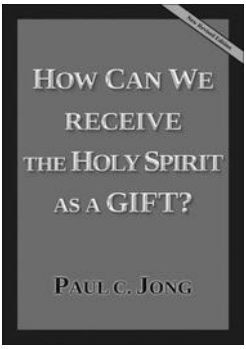
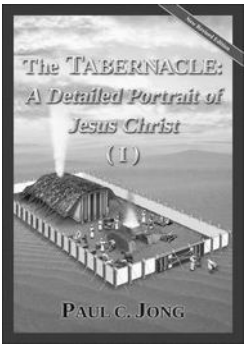
HOW CAN WE RECEIVE THE HOLY SPIRIT AS A GIFT? [New Revised Edition]



In Christianity, the most significantly discussed issue is salvation from sins and the indwelling of the Holy Spirit. However, few people have the exact knowledge of these two topics. Nevertheless, in reality people say that they believe in Jesus Christ while they are ignorant of true redemption and the Holy Spirit.

Do you know the true gospel that makes you receive the Holy Spirit? If you want to ask God for the indwelling of the Holy Spirit, then you must first know the gospel of the water and the Spirit and have faith in it. This book will certainly lead all Christians worldwide to receive the Holy Spirit through the washing away of all their sins.

The TABERNACLE : A Detailed Portrait of Jesus Christ (I) [New Revised Edition]



How can we find out the truth hidden in the Tabernacle? Only by knowing the gospel of the water and the Spirit, the real substance of the Tabernacle, can we correctly understand and know the answer to this question.

In fact, the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen manifested in the gate of the Tabernacle's court show us the works of Jesus Christ in the New Testament's time that have saved the mankind. In this way, the Old Testament's Word of the Tabernacle and the Word of the New Testament are closely and definitely related to each other, like fine woven linen. But, unfortunately, this truth has been hidden for a long time to every truth seeker in Christianity.

Coming to this earth, Jesus Christ was baptized by John and shed His blood on the Cross. Without understanding and believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit, none of us can ever find out the truth revealed in the Tabernacle. We must now learn this truth of the Tabernacle and believe in it. We all need to realize and believe in the truth manifested in the blue, purple, and scarlet thread and the fine woven linen of the gate of the Tabernacle's court.

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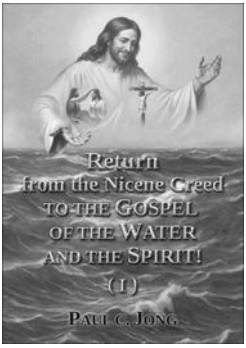
Return from the Nicene Creed TO THE GOSPEL OF THE WATER AND THE SPIRIT! (I)



-Why must we return from the Nicene Creed to the gospel of the water and the Spirit? –

The gospel that the early church preached was precisely the gospel of the water and the Spirit. That gospel was the gospel that Jesus actually shouldered and washed away the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John.

The baptism Jesus received from John was to fulfill the law of the sacrificial system found in Leviticus. That is, just as sin was transferred to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands, the substance of that sacrificial law was fulfilled through Jesus's baptism.

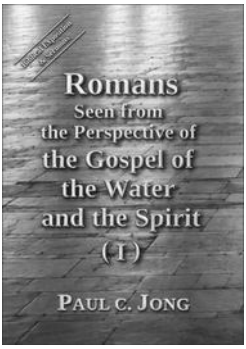
However, in the process of the Nicene Creed's formation, the ministry of Jesus having the sin of the world transferred to Him by being baptized by John was deleted from the creed's contents. As a result, this truth has been passed down in a hidden state within Christianity for about 1,700 years, reaching the present day.

Today, many people are struggling to receive the removal of their sins without knowing when their sins were transferred to Jesus. Because of this, even while saying they believe in the gospel of the cross, they fail to reach true assurance of salvation and live amidst repetitive repentance and the pangs of conscience.

The reason we must return to the gospel of the water and the Spirit is clear. This is because only this gospel allows us to meet the Jesus who became the sacrificial offering as the sin of the world was transferred to His body, and thereby have assurance of salvation.

Paul C. Jong's Biblical Exposition & Sermons

Romans seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)



When Looking at Romans from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit,

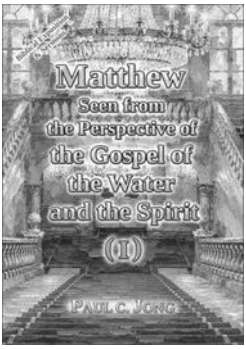
A person who embraces the gospel of the water and the Spirit in their heart comes to read Romans completely differently. The moment one opens this letter holding onto the gospel that Jesus had the sins of the world transferred to Him by receiving baptism from John, completely received the judgment of those sins on the cross, and resurrected, it finally begins to be seen why Paul introduced himself as a "debtor to the gospel" and so boldly declared, "I am not ashamed of the gospel."

The Apostle Paul, after revealing the sins of the Gentiles and the hypocrisy of religious people in turn, proclaims the righteousness of God manifested apart from the law. That righteousness is not a righteousness built up by human moral effort, but the righteousness completed by the baptism Jesus received from John, the blood of the cross, and the resurrection. The righteousness Abraham received when he was uncircumcised is the evidence of it, and the "blessing of not imputing sin" that David sang of is the result of it.

A person who believes this gospel knows that he is one who has already been justified. Only upon that conviction does peace with God reside, and the path opens where even tribulation leads to perseverance, character, and hope. This mystery—that a life which was placed under the reign of death over sin through one man, Adam, has received the removal of sins through one person, Jesus Christ, and has been transferred under the reign of righteousness—takes its place within us.

Salvation has already been completed at once. Now, what remains is the matter of receiving that gospel with the heart and living as a righteous person.

Matthew seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (6-Volume Series)



Why does sin still remain in your heart, even after believing in Jesus, reading the Bible for years, and attending church faithfully? Through Matthew chapters 1–4, this book answers clearly from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Tracing Jesus' birth and the wise men's worship, the ministry of John the Baptist as the last high priest, the saving work Jesus began with His baptism in the Jordan, the temptation in the wilderness, and the proclamation of the gospel of the kingdom of heaven, this book testifies that through His baptism by John the Baptist, Jesus took the sins of mankind upon Himself, was judged and died on the cross, and rose from the dead, overcoming sin and death.

If you know the blood of the cross but not when and where your sins were passed on to Jesus, look to the unchanging word of salvation rather than your feelings. In the Bible-based gospel of the water and the Spirit, see what the 'all righteousness' God fulfilled truly is.

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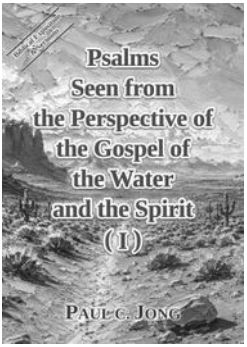
Psalm seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (I)

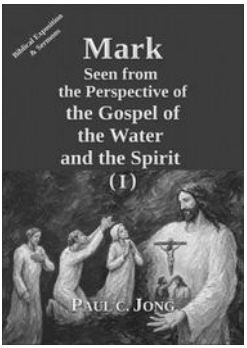


For long ages the Psalms have been the prayer book and the hymnal of the saints. Yet if we read them only as beautiful religious poetry or as an expression of emotion, we easily miss the meaning of these songs of praise. For David's laments and praises ultimately point to Jesus Christ, the Savior who is to come.

This book is a biblical exposition that unfolds the Psalms from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. David's songs are not an outpouring of emotion but the confession of a righteous man who has received the remission of sins, a prophetic praise that looked up to the Christ who is to come. The blessing, righteousness, and peace of the Psalms do not come from human goodness but from the salvation God accomplished in Christ.

Beneath it all flows a single gospel. It is the gospel of the water and the Spirit, by which Jesus took our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John, paid the price of those sins on the cross, and rose from the dead to make us righteous. When you open the Psalms with this gospel, the old songs come alive as your own confession, and this book leads you to the blessed place of those clothed in the righteousness of God.

Mark Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)



Who do you believe Jesus to be? Through Mark chapters 1–4, this book testifies to the beginning of the gospel, the Lord's authority to remit sins, and the ground of the heart that hears the Word.

Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, Jesus had all the sins of the world passed onto Him, bore the punishment for those sins in our place on the Cross, and rose from the dead and gave us eternal life. Whoever believes this gospel of the water and the Spirit receives the remission of all his sins at once and the Holy Spirit as a gift.

Do not read this book merely to add to your knowledge. Examine what kind of ground your own heart is, and lay down your own righteousness and religious stubbornness. Receive the Word of life just as it is and enjoy true rest, and relying on the Lord even in the storms of life, bear the fruit of faith.

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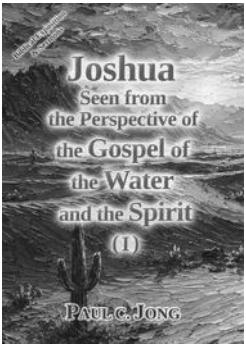
Joshua Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit (2-Volume Series)

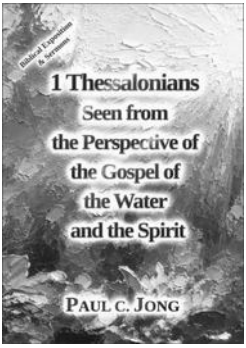


The Book of Joshua is often read as the story of Israel's conquest of Canaan and its victories in war. But the heart of Joshua chapters 1 through 12 is not human courage or strength; it is God's salvation. It shows how God leads sinners across the Jordan into the land of promise and makes them enjoy the remission of sins and true rest.

This book explains Joshua chapters 1 through 12 from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit. From the death of Moses and the crossing of the Jordan to the fall of Jericho and the defeat of the kings of Canaan, Joshua points to Jesus Christ the Savior. Jesus took all our sins upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, died shedding His blood on the Cross, and rose from death to complete salvation.

Discover the true victory that is obtained not by human strength but by believing the Word of God. Lay down your own righteousness, rise again from failure, be united with the Church of God, and walk boldly in the rest and the spiritual inheritance God has already given.

1 Thessalonians seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit



The young church in Thessalonica, established not long before, might well have collapsed under the persecution that pressed in from every side; yet with firm faith, love, and hope it carried the gospel throughout the whole region. What kept these weak people from falling? It was not a religion delivered in word only, but the gospel of the water and the Spirit, which came in power, in the Holy Spirit, and in much assurance.

This book opens the five chapters of First Thessalonians anew with that very gospel. It is the gospel by which Jesus received baptism from John the Baptist and bore the sin of the world, was judged in our place for that sin on the cross, and rose again from death, delivering us from sin and death. This gospel of the water and the Spirit is the power of God that turns a sinner into a righteous one, and turns the fear of death into living hope.

If you desire a faith unshaken in the last days, open this book. Here is the sure word by which you receive the remission of sins—life and true comfort for you.

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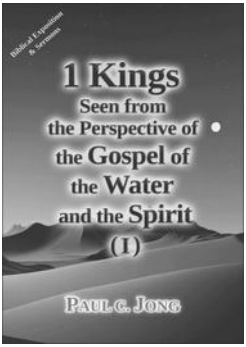
1 Kings seen from the perspective of the gospel of the water and the Spirit (4-Volume Series)

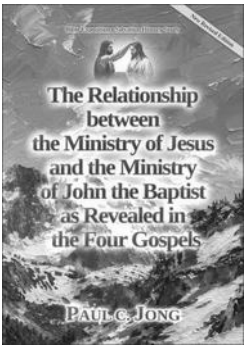


Why did Solomon, who received great wisdom from God, spend more time building his own palace than the Temple? Through David's old age and Adonijah's fall, and Solomon's accession and the building of the Temple, 1 Kings chapters 1–7 show that the glory of man fades, but the faith that fears God endures forever.

This book reveals the gospel of the water and the Spirit contained in the Temple and its furnishings. Jesus took the sins of the world upon Himself through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete salvation.

Do not rely on your own wisdom and your own kingdom. Use the wisdom, wealth, and time you have received for the gospel and for souls, and serve Jesus Christ as the King of your heart, building the house of God.

The Relationship between the Ministry of Jesus and the Ministry of John the Baptist as Revealed in the Four Gospels



The Ministry of Jesus and John the Baptist — Preparation and Fulfillment: The Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, Believed in the Order the Bible Records It

Why do the four Gospels introduce John the Baptist before speaking of Jesus' public ministry? Matthew records the baptism by which He fulfilled all righteousness; Mark, the messenger who prepared the way; Luke, the birth into a priestly family; and John, the testimony of the Lamb who takes away the sin of the world. These four books of the Bible—the four Gospels—together shed light on the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist.

This book makes clear that we receive the remission of sins not by human zeal, but by believing in the gospel of the water and the Spirit. Just as sins were passed on to the sacrificial offering through the laying on of hands in the Old Testament, so Jesus took upon Himself the sin of the world through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, was judged and died on the Cross, and rose again to complete our salvation.

We must believe in the ministry of Jesus and the ministry of John the Baptist exactly as the Bible records them, receive the remission of sins, abide in the assurance of this completed salvation, and live as witnesses to it.

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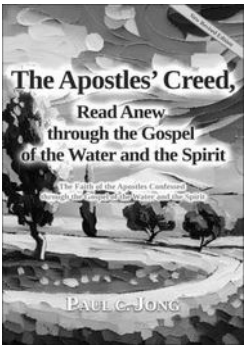
Paul C. Jong's Special Features

The Apostles' Creed, Read Anew through the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit [New Revised Edition]

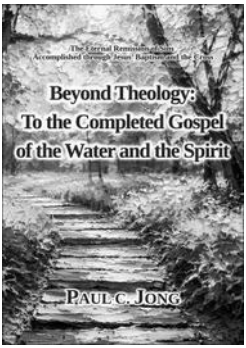


As you recite the Apostles' Creed every week, have you ever asked whether its statements are consistent with the gospel of the water and the Spirit proclaimed in the Bible? Countless Christians recite the Apostles' Creed, yet live without assurance as to whether they themselves have received the remission of sins and been born again.

This book examines this confession of faith, shaped and refined by people, article by article in the light of the "gospel of the water and the Spirit" to which Scripture testifies. In the light of this gospel—the gospel in which Jesus took upon Himself all the sins of the world by being baptized by John, bore the judgment for sin in our place by shedding His blood and dying on the Cross, and completed salvation by rising from the dead on the third day—this book points out what the Apostles' Creed leaves out.

The aim of this book is not to help the reader recite the Creed more skillfully. "Have I truly been born again through the gospel of the water and the Spirit?" When we come to answer this question through the Word, we will at last offer a living confession as those who have received the remission of sins and been born again.

Beyond Theology: To the Completed Gospel of the Water and the Spirit



Even as we confess that we have been saved, why does the weight of sin still remain in one corner of our hearts?

Countless saints live carrying this question. Each denomination has a different answer, but the Bible testifies to one story from beginning to end.

This book does not belong to any denomination. It sets out what each tradition—Calvinism, Lutheranism, Methodism, Catholicism, and others—teaches, acknowledges their contributions, and then brings them all before the gospel of the water and the Spirit. It is the gospel by which Jesus bore the sins of the world through the baptism He received from John, was judged on the Cross, and completed our eternal salvation through His resurrection from death.

This book does not condemn any church. It only invites you to lay down your familiar theology for a moment and to discover anew, before the gospel of the water and the Spirit, where unshakable assurance begins.

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If there is a coworker officially certified by our mission in your area, we will deliver the free books you have requested.

Would you like to join us in our mission of bringing the word of truth to more people around the world? If so, we would greatly appreciate it if you could link to our website on your blog, social media, website, etc.

►www.bjnewlife.org

Please help us spread the true gospel of Jesus Christ through our books so that more people can be born again of the water and the Spirit. We would also be grateful if you could introduce our website and books to many people and invite them to visit.

THE NEW LIFE MISSION
Contact: John Shin, General Secretary
E-mail: newlife@bjnewlife.org



Recommendation for E-book and Audiobook Storage and Downloads

In preparation for rapidly advancing AI, rapidly changing world affairs, and environmental changes, we strongly recommend downloading and storing God's true sermon messages to your personal storage devices.

Please prepare in advance by saving e-books and audiobooks to your external hard drives, USB drives, CDs, mobile phones, or MP3 players, so you can read and listen to them from your personal storage during the last days.

We pray that you will live a victorious life through God's blessings in these last days within the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

"The New Life Mission's sermon series and audiobooks are available worldwide in multiple languages, offering both paid books and free e-books."

www.bjnewlife.org

Sincerely,
The New Life Mission



Pastor PAUL C. JONG

Currently, Pastor Paul C. Jong leads 'The New Life Mission', where he and his fellow workers are spreading the gospel of the water and the Spirit.

Although he believed in the crucified Jesus, he suffered for a long time because his problem of sin remained unresolved. In the midst of this agony, he came to believe that Jesus took upon Himself the sins of the world through His baptism by John the Baptist, and subsequently bore the judgment in our place on the cross.

For the past 40 years since then, he has been preaching the gospel of the water and the Spirit to those who only believe in the cross, documenting his actual sermons in writing. The compilation of these manuscripts has given rise to today's 'Biblical Exposition Series from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit.'

His works, comprising an ongoing 100-volume series, have been translated into more than 110 languages and are read in over 160 countries. E-books and audiobooks are available for free at www.bjnewlife.org, while physical books can be purchased on Amazon.

You can download Rev. Paul C. Jong's Christian Books to Computer, Tablet or Smartphone.

Mark 13–16 Seen from the Perspective of the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit

Everything that people boast in or rely on will eventually fall. So do not let your heart be captivated by what is passing away. Stand firm on the Gospel of the Water and the Spirit, which has brought you eternal life through perfect salvation, and wait in faith for the Lord who will come again.

Jesus' words concerning the last days are not so much about identifying when that time will come as about discerning false teachings and keeping our faith in the midst of tribulation. Yet when Jesus was arrested, His disciples fled, and Peter denied Him three times. Good intentions and firm resolve alone cannot keep a person's faith—but Jesus obeyed the Father's will to the very end.

This is how Jesus accomplished our salvation. Through the baptism He received from John the Baptist, He took upon Himself all the sins of the world; on the Cross He received the full punishment for those sins, died, and was buried; and on the third day He rose again, overcoming sin and death.

The empty tomb testifies that the Cross was not a defeat. The risen Jesus did not forsake His weak disciples but established them as witnesses of the gospel. Do not look at the Cross as a sad religious story. Believe that your sins were judged there, and that Jesus, who rose from the tomb, is your Savior.

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